PRINCIPAL EVALUATION:

A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

A Dissertation by

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PRINCIPAL EVALUATION:

A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and
recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
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DEDICATION

To My Family

Failures persist not because of the ignorance of the individual or ineptitude of the organization, but because we fail to recognize that the development of the knowledge and skills required for exemplary leadership performance takes time, practice, feedback, coaching, and evaluation.

Dr. Douglas Reeves

Assessing Educational Leaders: Evaluating Performance for Improved Individual and Organizational Results

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research gathered perceptions of Southeast Nebraska public school elementary principals, superintendents, and assistant superintendents to ascertain elements of an evaluation system that promotes professional growth. Participants were purposively selected based on three criteria: (1) titled as a public school elementary principal, assistant superintendent, or superintendent; (2) employment in a Southeast Nebraska public school, within 120 miles of the researcher; and (3) administrative experience of at least one year. Three variables including gender, ethnic minority, and rural or urban public school employment were used to complete the selection process. Twenty-one public school administrators participated in individual interviews. Seven evaluation documents were collected during these interviews. Data collected from interviews were analyzed using a constant comparative method. Content analysis method was used to analyze data collected from the review of evaluation documents.

Four categories for elementary principal evaluations emerged from the findings. These categories consisted of: (a) structure, (b) feedback, (c) self-evaluation and reflection, and (d) improvement of evaluation systems. Five elements for an evaluation system promoting professional growth emerged from the conclusions and literature review. The elements included: a) leadership standards; (b) professional growth plans;

(c) frequent formative feedback; (d) self-evaluation and reflections; and

(e) fairness. These five elements were used to develop a principal evaluation

framework for consideration by superintendents.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND NOMENCLATURE

Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium ....ISLLC

Nebraska Department of Education ....NDE

CHAPTER 1

Accountability of schools was the mantra heard throughout the school reform movement at the turn of the 21st Century. Particularly evident was the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, a complex law that increased federal education funding for schools (Yell & Drasgow, 2005). State departments of education across the country demanded accountability of schools for students to meet academic standards developed at the state and local levels. The emphasis on accountability affected students during the learning process, teachers as they performed various instructional duties, and building-level administrators as instructional leaders of their schools (Yell & Drasgow).

Based on increasing accountability, building-level administrators have faced challenges and expectations for student performance and targeted learning outcomes (Brown & Irby, 1998; Checkley, 2000; Dyer, 2001; Franklin, 2000; Glasman & Heck, 1992; Reeves, 2004; Thomas & Vornberg, 1991; Yell & Drasgow, 2005). Principals have been compelled to juggle accountability demands from internal and external stakeholders, including increased student achievement, employment of qualified teachers, and management of school facilities for the community. Various expectations from external stakeholders have increased accountability and emphasized the building-level administrator's role as an instructional leader (Glasman & Heck).

Collectively, educational organizations supported the expectation of building-level administrators to provide instructional leadership (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, 1996). The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) comprised of 32 educational agencies and 13 administrative education organizations, developed 6 standards for educational administrators. These standards emphasized principals' roles in learning, teaching, and creating powerful, complex learning environments. Therefore, a multi-faceted evaluation system that provides formative and summative feedback on principal performance is crucial for professional growth of principals (Brown & Irby, 1998; Daresh & Playko, 1995; Peterson, 1991; Thomas & Vornberg, 1991).

Initially, the researcher made two assumptions about the process for elementary principal evaluations. First, the evaluation process should be formative and facilitate professional growth while supporting improvement of leadership skills and competencies (Brown & Irby, 1998; Reeves, 2004; Smither, 1998). Second, the evaluation process should provide frequent feedback to principals on their job performance (Moravec, 1996; Reeves, 1998). Frequent feedback on job performances is needed to sustain improvement of leadership skills and professional growth of principals.

<u>Background Information: Principal Appraisal Systems</u>

The quest for performance appraisal of elementary principals was a common theme in current literature. Unlike most teacher evaluation

systems, which contained very specific criteria and standards, principal evaluations lacked a depth of empirical research that supported specific appraisal approaches (Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Gingsberg & Thompson, 1992). A synthesis of literature conducted by Ginsberg and Berry (1990) indicated a lack of empirical research on elementary principal evaluation systems. Many traditional forms of appraisals have failed to assess the daily work of elementary principals. The unique duties of principals require an evaluation system that provides an accurate and fair appraisal of job performances (Ginsberg & Berry; Ginsberg & Thompson).

The complex nature of the elementary principalship has made evaluation difficult. Schein (1980), an organizational psychologist, indicated that job performance follows a blueprint that is unique to positions within an organization. He maintained that each member of an organization had a unique job description and responsibilities. For example, principals have juggled the roles of manager and educator on a daily basis (Checkley, 2000; Ginsberg & Thompson, 1992). They have also managed far more than administrative tasks traditionally associated with running a school (Checkley; Glasman & Heck, 1992). For example, elementary principals have spent hours assisting with school improvement activities and completing pages of reports requested from state education departments. The literature indicated principals' responsibilities ranged from secretarial and nursing

duties that involved students, to supervision of students and faculty (Checkley; Franklin, 2000; Glasman & Heck).

Three key areas were identified for improvement in principal evaluations (a) promoting professional growth in leadership skills, (b) improving the quality of leadership, and (c) providing feedback on principals' leadership skills. The literature referred to these three areas for improvement in principal evaluations (Brown, 1997; Brown, 1997b; Gilliland, 1998; Ginsberg, 1990). First was to encompass an appraisal of principals' job performances that promote professional growth in leadership skills (Brown & Irby, 1998; Fontana, 1994; Ginsberg & Thompson, 1992; Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, 1996; Thomas & Vornberg, 1991). Second was to include accountability issues driven by state educational agencies, which support principals as quality leaders (Lashway, 2000; Reeves, 1998). Third was to create evaluation systems that provide frequent feedback on leadership skills of principals (Brown & Irby; Calabrese, 2000; Cardy, 1998; Daresh & Playko, 1995; Dyer, 2001; Meadows & Dyal, 1999). Together, these components were expected to improve the effectiveness of principal evaluations.

Performance-based appraisals of principals appeared throughout the literature as possible alternatives to traditional evaluation approaches. This type of evaluation system is data driven and supports professional growth for principals (Brown & Irby, 1995, 1996; Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Ediger,

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1998). Cardy (1998) believed that performance- or results-based evaluations were fair, unbiased, and supported professional growth. In general, the literature recommended performance- or results-based evaluations.

<center>Statement of the Problem</center>

Principal evaluations, for the most part, fail to enhance professional growth. Many evaluation systems are considered traditional methods and often failed to provide frequent, formative feedback (Brown & Irby, 1998; Castetter, 1992). Often, traditional evaluations are summative reports about tidy buildings or narratives that identify organized activities documented in monthly reports (Fontana, 1994). According to Peterson (1991), summative evaluations are more structured, with the goal to precisely evaluate principals, thereby facilitating tenure and compensation decisions. This type of evaluation, however, rarely promotes professional growth or changes in principals' behaviors and leadership skills (Fontana).

Another lament in the current literature was that traditional forms of principal appraisals struggle to provide support for professional growth in leadership skills (Brown, Irby, & Chance, 1997; Fontana, 1994; Ginsberg & Berry, 1990; Peterson, 1991; Thomas & Vornberg, 1991). Evaluation systems that promote professional growth in leadership skills require frequent, formative feedback on the tasks and roles expected of elementary principals.

Principal evaluations, for the most part, do not assess key principal tasks. Lack of formative feedback does not provide timely or necessary

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guidance for improvement of job performance and professional growth. Therefore, a need exists for a more complex performance appraisal of elementary principals.

<p align="center">Purpose of the Research</p>

The purpose of this research was to determine the elements of an evaluation system that promotes professional growth for elementary principals. Sources of data were the perceptions of Southeast Nebraska elementary principals, superintendents, assistant superintendents, and review of evaluation documents. This research culminated in the development of an evaluation framework that can be used by districts to design elementary principals evaluation systems.

The research answered three questions:

1. What are elementary principals' perceptions about processes and procedures that would improve elementary principal evaluation?

2. What are superintendents' perceptions about processes and procedures that would improve elementary principal evaluation?

3. What are the necessary elements of a performance-based evaluation model for elementary principals?

The research questions provided guidance for the development of the design and methodology of the research.

Overview of the Research Design

This research used a qualitative paradigm to answer the three overarching questions. Qualitative research allowed an in-depth study of phenomena in a natural setting (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). Gay (1996) stated, "Behavior occurs in context and a complete understanding of the behavior requires understanding of the context in which it occurs" (p. 13). The researcher made sense of phenomena under study in its natural environment, not in a laboratory. Qualitative research was information-rich and very deep (Erlandson et al.; Patton, 1990). As Merriam (2001) stated, "Meaning is embedded in peoples' experiences" (p. 6). In addition, this type of research generates important and useful knowledge in the field of education (Erlandson et al.; Merriam). The qualitative paradigm allowed the researcher to understand how people made sense of their world.

Elementary principal evaluations required collaborative interaction between supervisors and principals (Fletcher, 2001; Heck & Glasman, 1993). To understand the interactions between supervisors and principals, the researcher employed methods that allowed participants to provide meaning of the evaluation process in their own words. Qualitative research was required to explore the phenomenon of relationships between supervisors and principals in an evaluation setting.

<u>Participant Selection</u>

The researcher used purposive sampling to select participants. Purposive sampling allowed the researcher to select participants, who provided rich information about the phenomena under study (Erlandson, et al, 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2002; Patton, 1990). This sampling strategy allowed the researcher to identify participants who were able to provide insights and in-depth information about promoting professional growth through elementary principal evaluation process. Establishment of criteria was the first step of implementing purposive sampling (Merriam).

Participants, to be involved, met three criteria and three variables. The first criterion was to be a public school elementary principal or superintendent. Two superintendents, who did not evaluate principals, declined participation. Their assistant superintendents replaced them as research participants. Employment in Southeast Nebraska and within 120 miles of the researcher defined the second criterion. The final criterion was a minimum of one-year experience as an elementary principal, superintendent, or assistant superintendent. The three variables addressed the issue of equity among participants. The researcher sought to gain a balanced and representative sample in gender, ethnicity, and employment. Equity among participants in gender ensured perspectives from males and females about elementary principal evaluation were identified in the research. Also, equity of minority participants provided a means to identify culturally defined

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issues and concerns about elementary principal evaluation in this research. The employment issue addressed equity among participants according to their employment in a rural or urban school district.

Data Collection Methods

Data collection methods consisted of interviews and document review. Interviews allowed the researcher to collect data from research participants. The document review provided written data about evaluation processes.

Interviews. The researcher sought to gain perspectives from elementary principals, superintendents, and assistant superintendents about elementary principal evaluations. Erlandson and associates (1993) defined interviews as a conversation with a purpose to make sense of a person's perceptions about a topic under study. Qualitative interviewing provided a framework in which respondents could express their understanding of a situation in their own terms (Merriam, 2001; Patton, 1990). Interviews permit data to be collected in a manner that allows participants to tell their stories in their own words.

Document review. Documents provided a rich source of data that were stable and could not be obtained from other data collection methods. They provided information about events that could not be directly observed (Patton, 1990). Documents also provided the researcher with stable information about the context of the situation under investigation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba believed that documents are a rich source of

information, precisely because "they appear in the natural language of the setting" (p. 277). Review of evaluation documents provided the researcher with a historical perspective of the instruments and procedures used during the evaluation of elementary principals.

<u>Data Analysis</u>

Analysis of qualitative research required examining, comparing, and contrasting data to identify categories and themes. Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended constant-comparative method and content analysis as strategies to interpret and make sense of qualitative data. In referring to constant comparative method, Merriam (2001) stated, "The basic strategy of the method is to do what the name implies—constantly compare. The researcher begins with a particular incident . . . and compares it with another incident" (p. 159). Constant comparison and contrast of data identified categories and themes in this research. Content analysis provided the strategy for making sense of data gleaned from the review of documents. Data gleaned from evaluation documents were systematically analyzed for inclusion into the data set (Lincoln & Guba). The researcher identified categories and themes, as well as specific findings, by interactively analyzing data collected from interviews and the review of evaluation documents.

Analysis of the data led to trustworthiness through careful implementation of the research. A brief description of trustworthiness is presented in the next section.

Trustworthiness of Data

Credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability

established trustworthiness of data in this qualitative research (Erlandson et

al., 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990). The following section

describes these concepts.

Credibility. Credibility guaranteed truthfulness of the research report

through member checking, peer debriefing, and triangulating data

(Erlandson et al., 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990). The researcher

established accuracy by sending each participant his or her interview

transcript. Each participant reviewed the transcript for accuracy and made

annotations, where appropriate. Erlandson and associates termed this

process as member check.

Peer debriefing, the second element, supported credibility of the

research (Erlandson et al., 1993). The peer debriefer, a person outside the

context of the research, analyzed research materials and communicated with

the researcher about ideas and concerns raised during the research. The peer

debriefer attempted to maintain objectivity and to prevent biases from

entering the research (Erlandson et al.).

The third element, triangulation of data, was established through

verification of data from different sources and different methodologies. This

process added credence to research results (Merriam, 2001). Lincoln and

Guba (1985) claimed that triangulation occurred by comparing data from

different sources, different data collection methodologies, and different researchers. The researcher verified data through multiple interviews and review of evaluation documents from public school administrators in Southeast Nebraska.

Dependability. Dependability referred to the criterion of consistency (Erlandson et al., 1993). An auditor conducted a dependability review, resulting in a trail consisting of transcribed field notes from interviews, notes from document review, and a reflexive journal (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Further, the auditor traced the findings from Chapter 4 to interview transcripts and notes from document review. The processes established the prudence of decisions made by the researcher that led to interpretations.

Confirmability. Confirmability reflected the degree to which findings related to data reducing researcher bias. Guba and Lincoln (1989) claimed, "Confirmability is concerned with assuring that data, interpretations, and outcomes of inquiries are rooted in context and persons apart from the evaluator and are not simply figments of the evaluator's imagination" (pp. 42-43). The researcher developed a reflexive journal as a part of the audit trail to support confirmability, as well as credibility, dependability, and transferability. It was used on a regular basis to record information about the implementation of the research, including information about the researcher's schedule, reasons for methodological decisions made during the research, and insights recorded throughout the research implementation. The auditor's

tracking of findings to data also established the elements of confirmability in this research (Erlandson et al.).

Transferability. Transferability referred to the extent that readers were able to apply findings of the research to other contexts. To support this process The researcher provides a final report that allows those not involved with the research to "view life through the eyes of the respondent" (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 25). The thick description of the final report allows the reader to make informed decisions about transferability. It is through this thick description of a given context that enables readers to make generalizations of the study to their own situation (Erlandson et al.). Administrators from small rural to large urban school districts shared their perspectives on principal evaluations and suggested areas of improvement that would lead to professional growth.

<div align="center">Confidentiality</div>

The researcher guaranteed confidentiality of participants in this research. Interview transcripts and audiotapes did not contain names or identification marks that could be traced back to individual participants (Patton, 1990). In addition, the researcher sought to gain further knowledge about elementary principal evaluations that promote professional growth without compromising participants' confidentiality.

Reference to participants' specific location is limited to the identified region of this research. Participants were guaranteed confidentiality in the final report.

Limitations of the Research

Limitations of the research were events not controlled by the researcher. Three limitations existed in this research. The first limitation involved the amount of time elementary principals, superintendents, and assistant superintendents were available for interviews. Busy schedules may have precluded administrators from scheduling sufficient time for in-depth interviews or completing scheduled interviews. The second limitation involved time constraints for the researcher while conducting the research. Interviews were scheduled during release time from the researcher's professional responsibilities. The final limitation involved a large, urban school district's policy that prevented school administrators from participation in the research. Some of those administrators were ethnic, minority elementary principals.

Definition of Terms

The following definition of terminology will assist the reader in understanding the meaning of specific terms used in this research:

Effective Evaluation Systems: The "systematic determination of merit, worth, or significance" (Scriven, 1999, p. 1) that produces professional growth through the assessment of job performance in a given context.

Feedback: Input gathered from sources that may include self, supervisor, peers, and documents. This also provides opportunities to receive input from multiple sources (Fletcher, 2001; Smither, 1998).

Fairness: The extent to which an evaluation tool is perceived as justified, consistent, and appropriate through evaluation procedures, process, and feedback for determining the job performance level of an elementary principal (Gilliland & Langdon, 1998).

Formative Feedback: Verbal and written information given to a principal, throughout the evaluation cycle, for the purpose of improving skills, leadership competencies, and progress toward achievement of performance goals (Castetter, 1992; Gilliland & Langdon, 1998).

Goals: Target areas established by a principal that are linked to standards, leadership skills, and school improvement (Seijts, 2001).

ISLLC Standards: Six assessment standards developed by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) for school leaders. These standards are grounded in the knowledge and understanding of teaching and learning (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, 1996). These six standards may be found in Appendix A.

Performance-Based Appraisal: A data-driven evaluation system for principals linked to a district's leadership standards, objectives, and school improvement. An example would be a portfolio (Brown & Irby, 1998; Harrington-Lueker, 1996).

Reflection: A written or unwritten process that contains an investigation of thought processes conducted by principals to evaluate the impact of their actions on teaching and learning. This can be a basis for a self-evaluation of an individual's leadership abilities and behaviors (Brown & Irby, 1998; Reeves, 1998).

Rural: An area with a population range of fewer than 2,499 or less inhabitants per square mile and located 10 miles outside an urban area or cluster (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001).

Self-evaluation: An assessment that an elementary principal completes of his or her own performance, skills, and attributes. The self-evaluation, which is based on reflections, may include self-ratings (Brown & Irby, 1998; London, 1995; Reeves, 1998).

Summative Feedback: Provides consequential decisions about a principal's performance at the end of an evaluation cycle (Castetter, 1992; Danielson & McGreal, 2000).

Traditional Evaluation Systems: Structures that assess a principal's job performance based on psychometric traits or attributes. An example is a checklist (Ginsberg & Berry, 1990; Harrington-Lueker, 1996).

Urban: A densely populated area of 2,500 or more inhabitants per square mile in an urbanized area (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001).

Significance of Research

The literature indicated traditional evaluation systems used outdated and limited criteria to assess the job performance of principals. These evaluation systems were viewed as lacking shared values and assumptions for what constitutes the multifaceted job of school principals (Brown & Irby, 1998; Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, 1996). Advocates for the development and implementation of performance-based appraisals for principals believed that evaluations should be accurate and fair (Daresh & Playko, 1995; Harrison & Peterson, 1986; Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium; Lashway, 1998; Meadows & Dyal, 1999). Little data in the literature, however, addressed the accuracy and fairness of elementary principal evaluations.

The literature revealed the need for an evaluation framework that promotes professional growth of principals. Data collected during this research led to the development of an evaluation framework that promotes professional growth. The evaluation framework model is intended for superintendents to use in designing elementary principal evaluations. This research identified the need for future investigations of evaluation systems as a formative tool for assessing elementary principals' leadership skills and professional growth.

<u>Outline of the Research Document</u>

This dissertation consists of six chapters. It also includes appendices that support the research design.

The first chapter begins with an introduction and background information on the explored topic. It contains: (a) the statement of the problem, (b) purpose, (c) overview of the research design, (d) trustworthiness, (e) limitations, (f) definition of terms, (g) the significance of the research, and (h) the outline of the research document.

Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature, which includes information found in searches of ERIC, InfoTrac, and other databases. The primary libraries searched included: (a) Wichita State University Library, (b) Peru State College Library, and (c) public and academic libraries in Kansas and Nebraska. A search of the World Wide Web focused on information contained in organizations such as: (a) the American Association of School Administrators, (b) Consortium for Research on Educational Accountability and Teacher Evaluation, and (c) Regional Education Laboratories. Literature from education and organizational psychology are contained in the literature review.

Chapter 3 describes and presents a rationale of the research design. The chapter also contains descriptions of: (a) purposive sampling strategy, (b) data collection methodologies, and (c) data analyses procedures used in this research.

Chapter 4 consists of research results gleaned from data collected from 21 interviews and 7 evaluation documents. The story of the research contains statements from 15 elementary principals, 4 superintendents, and 2 assistant superintendents.

Chapter 5 includes conclusions and implications of the research. Conclusions and implications were developed from the findings and supported by literature, as applicable. A discussion of recommendations for further research concludes this chapter.

Chapter 6 presents an evaluation framework based on collected data and theory contained in the literature review. A description of the practical application of the evaluation framework is provided for education practitioners to apply or modify for use in their own setting.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of literature begins with a definition and purpose of principal evaluation. Next, a historical review of principal evaluation is presented, followed by a description of traditional appraisal methods used to assess principals' job performances. Dilemmas for principal evaluations are presented, including a discussion of limitations of traditional evaluation systems that prevent effective principal evaluations.

Components for effective principal evaluations are explored in the next section. Leadership standards, collaboration, goal setting, documentation of goal attainment, reflection, feedback, and perceived fairness are critical components discussed in the literature for improvement of principal evaluations. The literature review concludes with suggestions to improve principal evaluations, a description of The Personnel Standards, an example of a performance-based principal evaluation system, a portfolio system.

Definition and Purposes of Evaluation

Evaluation in 20th Century America focused on job performance. Evaluation for improvement of job performance involved measuring and collecting data against established standards (Boulmetis & Dutwin, 2000; Cardy, 1998). In 1956, Benjamin Bloom devised a taxonomy of educational objectives for the cognitive domain in which he identified evaluation as the

highest level of cognition in his taxonomy (Bloom, 1984). Bloom believed that a person could not "refrain from evaluating, judging, appraising, or valuing almost everything which comes within his purview" (p. 185). It was Bloom's belief that people would always evaluate ideas, work, solutions, methods, and job performance. Forty-three years later, Scriven (1999) held to a similar definition for evaluation. He maintained, "evaluation is a systematic way to determine the merit, worth, or significance" (p. 3) of a person or program. Evaluation was identified as a means for assessing the outcomes of performances for people and programs.

Boulmetis and Dutwin (2000) offered additional definitions for evaluation. Two definitions illustrated the purposes of the evaluation. The first definition described evaluation as a systemic process of collecting and analyzing data to determine if something was effective in its purpose. The second definition implied that evaluation determines a value for a project, event, or person in relation to the overall operation of the situation (Boulmetis & Dutwin). According to Boulmetis and Dutwin, a possible definition for personnel evaluation of principals could be a precise measurement of merit and worth in a given context that produced an improvement in job performance.

Organizational goals, accountability, advancement, and professional development determined the purpose of personnel evaluation (Castetter & Heisler, 1971; Duke, 1992; Fletcher, 2001). These authors asserted that the

value of personnel evaluation or performance appraisal provided the opportunity to identify and correct problems and encourage successful job performances. Several authors maintained that the purpose of personnel evaluation was improvement of job performance (Daresh & Playko, 1995; Fontana, 1994; Peterson, 1991). These authors further indicated that improvement of job performance or change of behavior occurred during formative, rather than with summative evaluations.

Formative evaluations had the potential to promote professional growth, which many principals regarded as an important purpose of evaluation (Duke & Stiggins, 1985). Daresh and Playko (1995) defined formative evaluation as having a "goal of providing feedback to an individual so that modifications might be made to activities or behaviors" (p. 14). They stated that a formative evaluation had the capacity to support professional growth and improvement of performance. Formative evaluations were typically informal and focused on helping principals improve their job performances (Peterson, 1991). Frequent feedback to principals concerning job performance provided a foundation for new skills. Fontana (1994) advocated ongoing formative evaluations promoted by the use of corrections and encouragement in the development of new skills and talents.

On the other hand, summative evaluations produced certain absolute decisions about a person's job performance (Daresh & Playko, 1995). These

decisions included rewards or termination as well as decisions on a principal's tenure and compensation (Peterson, 1991). Fontana (1994) concluded that summative evaluations rarely bring about professional growth or change in principals' performance.

Specific limitations of principal evaluations were described in the literature. One limitation indicated that evaluations do not guarantee a change or improvement in principals' performance (Castetter, 1992; Daresh & Playko, 1995). In a situation where a specific performance indicator received a low mark, such as "School and Community Relations," a principal may not consider this an area for improvement. Another limitation indicated principals' fear of scrutiny and criticism from supervisors (Boulmetis & Dutwin, 2000). A poor evaluation tended to create an environment of fear of losing a job within the school district. Finally, other limitations suggested some principals created artificial settings, behaved differently during the evaluation, or provided inaccurate responses for data collection. (Casetter; Daresh & Playko). These identified limitations repressed the potential benefits of principal evaluations.

<u>Historical View of Principal Evaluations</u>

A synthesis of the literature conducted by Ginsberg and Berry (1990), revealed that little empirical research existed on principal evaluation systems. The literature described several traditional systems used in the evaluation process of principals.

Traditional evaluation systems employed a variety of methods to determine the professional performance of principals. Examples of traditional evaluation systems implemented in various school districts consisted of ratings, checklists, grading, and ranking. These psychometrically oriented evaluation systems resulted in little change in job performances (Glasman & Heck, 1992; Redfern, 1972). Psychometrically oriented evaluation systems were used to rate principals on predetermined indicators instead of performance oriented standards with input from principals. Many principals found such evaluations to provide little to no feedback that promoted changes in performance behavior (Glasman & Heck; Redfern). Other forms of traditional principal evaluations included self-ratings, ratings by pupils, supervisors, colleagues, outside professionals, and lay citizens (Castetter, 1992). The traditional evaluation systems provided little incentives for improving principal performance.

Traditional evaluation systems such as ratings, checklists, and ranking focused on personality traits or preconceived characteristics that were identified as essential to the principalship (Castetter, 1992; Ginsberg & Berry, 1990; Harrington-Lueker, 1996). Many of these traditional evaluation techniques were used to appraise the performance of principals and other school personnel. Castetter (1992), however, identified several weaknesses in these techniques, including personality traits, rater bias, and

a lack of organizational expectations in evaluation plans. These weaknesses were perceived to promote little change in an individual's behavior and failed to link to the organization's goals (Castetter).

Ginsberg and Berry's (1990) synthesis of the literature on principal evaluations identified five categories: home recipes, guidelines and textbooks, self-reported surveys of practices, and research and evaluation studies. The first category, home recipes, included reports of local practices that described instruments, methods, and opinions with minimal empirical support for the approaches mentioned in the literature review. The second category was comprised of guidelines and textbooks published by several administrator organizations for practitioners. The textbooks offered "no conclusive evidence as to which is the best approach to utilize" (Ginsberg & Berry, p. 214).

Another category included a summary of self-reported surveys of principal evaluation practices that inquired about the types of principal evaluation systems implemented in different school districts and states (Ginsberg & Berry 1990). These self-reported surveys indicated that the principal's evaluation was "left in the hands of local officials" (p. 217). The self-reported surveys suggested that many states and local districts were in the development process of formal evaluation systems. The final category discussed by Ginsberg and Berry included a few older studies that recommended continued research or developing quality evaluation systems.

The older studies, conducted from the late 1960s through the 1980s, identified goal-setting, feedback and linkage to school improvement efforts in the evaluation process for principals. The conclusion reached by Gingberg and Berry was that principal evaluations needed to be researched-based instead of based on myths and traditions.

Dilemmas

Several dilemmas concerning school principals' evaluations such as the complexity of the position, the "one-size-fits-all" approach, the lack of research, and fair assessment of a principal surfaced throughout the literature. Specifically, the nature of the principals' work created difficulties with evaluations. Ginsberg and Berry (1990) found that principals face multiple expectations and demands for accountability. This increased the difficulty in identifying appropriate objectives for principal evaluations (Ginsberg & Thompson, 1992). For evaluations to be useful, principals had to be knowledgeable about stakeholders' expectations (Ginsberg & Thompson).

Another dilemma in the field of principal evaluation was the idea of one-size-fits-all; that a single evaluation instrument or system applicable to all principals could be developed. Rammer (1991) and Meadows and Dyal (1999) believed that the one-size-fits-all approach should not be applied to principal evaluations. Because characteristics of districts and principals varied, evaluations should also be diverse. Duke and Stiggins (1985) also

emphasized that the one-size-fits-all was a problem in evaluations of elementary and secondary principals, stating that principal evaluations were often perfunctory, complex, and time consuming. Evaluation systems used to ascertain leadership, interpersonal skills, and management skills varied from district to district depending on the needs of the organization and the individual administrator.

An additional dilemma noted by several authors was the lack of research conducted on principal evaluations (Fontana, 1994; Ginsberg & Berry, 1990; Ginsberg & Thompson, 1992; Heck & Marcoulides, 1996; Rammer, 1991). Ginsberg and Berry suggested that principal evaluations were in the "stone age" (p. 226) of their development. They posited that principal evaluations, which had taken place since the early years of the twentieth century, were based on the opinion of supervisors rather than research. Ginsberg and Berry maintained that traditional appraisal systems based solely on supervisors' opinions were dehumanizing and needed to change.

A final dilemma identified in the literature for both evaluators and principals was fair assessment of principals' leadership abilities. Franklin (2000) argued, "The need to evaluate principals in ways that are fair and constructive, help ensure school and student success" (p. 8). District supervisors had unfair expectations for a principal to be responsible for achieving desired organizational outcomes, when many educators in a

district worked with children. Some situations in a school; however, were considered beyond the control of a principal, such as lack of sufficient resources to achieve outcomes or bewilderment as to which outcomes students were expected to achieve (Duke, 1992).

Although more than 40 states had formal evaluation systems, the quality of these systems and the corresponding assessment of principals' performances had not improved (Heck & Marcoulides, 1996). Dilemmas included "one-size-fits-all" evaluation systems, lack of empirical research on evaluation systems used to evaluate principals, and unfair assessment of principals' leadership abilities (Ginsberg & Berry, 1990).

Limitations of Traditional Evaluation Systems

Increased awareness of accountability in the research identified limitations of traditional evaluation systems (Lashway, 2000; Reeves, 2004). Many evaluation systems were based on traits rather than leadership standards. Also, the principal's role had been in a constant state of change during the past century (Glassman & Heck, 1992). Further, the lack of appropriate feedback hampered principals' ability to improve job performances.

The research on school effectiveness in the 1970s and early 1980s identified factors within schools that impacted student learning. Consistently, these studies found indicators of principal leadership correlated with student achievement. Glassman and Heck (1992) surveyed

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effective schools literature, which indicated that effective principals demonstrated commitment to academic goals, created a climate of high expectations for student progress, and allocated important resources with a clear vision for discipline.

Nevertheless, a definite gap existed between traditional evaluation systems used for appraising the quality of school leaders and their leadership skills (Glasman & Heck, 1992). Earlier research often focused on traits of principals, which were found to be unrelated to leadership skills (Castetter, 1992, Ginsberg & Berry, 1990, Glasman & Heck).

The changing definition of the principal's role was identified as a problem in linking a principal's job performance and school effectiveness. Glasman and Heck (1992) stated that the principal's role had "evolved from manager to street-level bureaucrat, instructional manager, instructional leader, and transformational leader" (p. 8). In addition, these changing roles and expectations had resulted in increased external demands for educational accountability and school reform (Glassman & Heck). The study results were unclear about the linkage between principal leadership and school-wide achievement.

Another shortcoming of traditional evaluation involved appropriate supervisors feedback to principals that would improve job performance systems (Dyer, 2001; Fletcher, 2001). Dyer maintained that it was difficult for principals to "receive specific, constructive feedback" enabling them to

determine whether they were behaving in ways that were "consistent with their intentions or expectations of the district" (p. 35). Many principals saw their immediate supervisor only when the need arose or time allowed. He further said that educators looked to the business world for solutions, ideas, theories, models, and practices. Dyer believed principals who received feedback were permitted the opportunity to learn from their past decisions and mistakes through reflection. Fontana (1994) also advocated that principals should be treated as adult learners by receiving formative feedback on their job performances. Often, principals received little to no feedback at the appropriate time for learning from a given situation. Traditional evaluation systems were described as lacking components that would make them an effective tool for evaluating principals and lead to improvement in job performance.

<div align="center">Components for Effective Principal Evaluations</div>

Leadership standards, collaboration, target goals and artifacts, reflections, feedback, and fairness were identified as important elements of an evaluation system in the literature review. These elements are presented in the following sections.

Standards of Leadership

In 1994 the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) formed and developed a framework to reshape the complex and multifaceted role of school leaders. By 1996 ISSLC developed and adopted 6 standards.

These six standards integrated the research between educational leadership and effective schools (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, 1996). This perspective represented a 20th century quest to form a deeper and productive understanding of school leadership.

The ISSLC Standards applied to all leadership positions in a district. Several administrator training programs, states, and school districts have used the framework to develop local leadership standards for administrators. Furthermore, several districts have used these standards as a foundation for principal evaluation systems (Murphy, 2001). The ISSLC Standards provided a framework for educational leadership programs as well as for evaluation systems. The 6 ISSLC standards included nearly 200 knowledge dispositions and performance benchmarks designed to facilitate the development of school administrators. These standards (see Appendix A) identified characteristics of school leaders that support success for all students.

The primary goals of ISLLC were twofold. First, the standards raised the bar for those interested in becoming school leaders, as well as those continuing in the profession. Second, they reshaped the concepts of educational leadership. Thirty-five states adopted or adapted the ISSLC standards, which supported the belief that school leaders were strong educators who anchored their work on central issues of learning, teaching,

and school improvement (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, 1996).

Collaboration between Principal and Superintendent

Collaboration, defined as a process for bringing people together to share ideas, knowledge, and common goals had been characterized as an important element in shared responsibility among superintendents, principals, and teachers (Conzemius & O'Neill, 2001). Collaboration among superintendents, principals, and teachers provided a communication strategy for discussion of district goals and idea sharing that developed into school improvement plans and goal-setting for evaluation purposes. Complex issues, such as goal identification for professional development created a need for principals to work collaboratively with superintendents (Brown & Irby, 1998; Danielson & McGreal, 2000). The relationship between superintendents and principals had offered a unique opportunity for accomplishment of identified goals. This relationship, dependent on the establishment of trust and rapport between evaluator and principal, was viewed as an important element of collaboration (Duke, 1992; Goleman, 1998; Wildy & Wallace, 1998). A collaborative environment, historically, had been conducive to continuous improvement for teachers, principals, and superintendents. Collaboration with superintendents provided principals a structure to reflect on the past, present, and future performances in leadership skills. Conzemius and O'Neill (2001) indicated that collaboration

was an essential dimension for learning within a community because it built

interdependent relationships.

Finally, establishment of expectations and target goals used in the

evaluation process had required principals' input (Brown & Irby, 1998). The

opportunity for input in the evaluation process was a valuable learning

experience for both principals and superintendents (Brown, 1996; Thomas &

Vornberg, 1991). A shared vision of the evaluation process provided

principals with a different perspective regarding areas to be targeted for

improvement (Danielson & McGreal, 2000).

<u>Goal Setting</u>

Goal setting, a motivational tool, had been implemented effectively in

various business and educational organizations (Seijts, 2001). Three

motivational mechanisms affected job performance goals: choice, effort, and

persistence (Seijts). Teachers and building-level administrators, as part of

the evaluation process, used goal setting. A sense of accomplishment and

efficacy was gained from attaining these specific and challenging goals

(Seyfarth, 1991).

Seijts (2001) summarized three guidelines for individuals engaged in

goal setting. First, set specific, challenging goals, which lead to higher job

performance. If a goal, however, was beyond a person's ability to achieve,

then goal setting did not work. Specified goals needed to be realistic for a

positive impact on performance (Seijts). Second, frequent feedback, an

element necessary for goal attainment, allowed for adjustments by an individual to develop skills and knowledge. Seijts indicated that feedback was important for increased job performance. The third guideline, participation in goal setting was considered a valuable approach used to gain a commitment to goals. Yearta, Maitlis, and Briner (1995) claimed, "Allowing participation in the goal setting process increases an individual's perception of control and fairness, which leads to greater goal performance" (p. 238). Collaborative goal setting and frequent feedback would create purpose and guidance to meet the purpose.

Principals as adult learners implemented goal setting to demonstrate their leadership abilities (Reeves, 2003; Yearta et al., 1995). Those involved with the evaluation process needed to know the expectations for principals (Ginsberg & Thompson, 1992; Reeves, 2003). Consequently, local and national leadership standards had become important to the evaluation process. Competencies based on identified leadership standards could be woven into job descriptions providing a framework for performance evaluation (Fontana, 1994; Martin-Kneip, 1999).

Goals established collaboratively between principals and their supervisors focused on professional and personal growth. Duke and Stiggins (1985) believed that particular goals related to deficiencies of prior evaluations were linked to new goals by supervisors rather than principals. When principals established goals, identified resources, selected learning

activities, and evaluated their learning, they were involved in self-directed learning (Fontana, 1994). This contemporary view of evaluation was noted in the early 1970s and 1980s by several authors in the literature review (Castetter & Heisler, 1971; Duke & Stiggins, 1985).

Identified goals provided a framework for evaluation when used as part of the performance appraisal process (Daresh & Playko, 1995). However, a clear delineation of which goals were personal and which were linked to district goals was needed. Once goals were targeted, artifacts were collected in order to document goals that were achieved completely or partially (Daresh & Playko). Documentation of artifacts needed to be aligned with the standards and performance criteria outlined by districts and target goals selected by principals.

Documentation of Goal Attainment

Collection of documentation or artifacts was similar to developing a portfolio. Painter (2001) argued that knowing the difference between a portfolio and a folio was important. A folio was defined as a collection of documents that a person accesses when creating a portfolio (Brown, 1997b; Devlin-Scherer, 2000; Guaglianone, 1998). Hence, the folio became a collection of artifacts or documents that referenced local standards and goals.

When a principal selected an artifact for the performance folio, several factors were contemplated. First, he or she considered why a

particular artifact was better than others. Second, selected artifacts provided evidence of growth and success against one or more performance standards. Third, selected artifacts represented the principal submitting documentation. Fourth, a principal provided a rationale for the importance of selected artifacts to those viewing it out of context (Painter, 2001). Artifacts were considered as half of the documentation that supported a principal's evidence of goal achievement. Reflection statements prepared by a principal further indicated achievement of identified goals (Brown & Irby, 1997b).

Martin-Kneip (1999) also advocated for periodic reflection on progress toward goal attainment, which she believed was critical for administrators. She further maintained that careful consideration of artifacts should demonstrate a link between leadership competency and accompanying reflections. In addition, several authors highlighted the importance of principals clearly identifying the significance of each artifact in a reflection by specifying which objective or goal it supported (Brown & Irby, 1995; Daresh & Playko, 1995).

Reflective Practice

Japanese and other Asian cultures believed in *hansei*, self-evaluation or reflection (Reeves, 1998). Serious principal self-reflection of districts' leadership indicators, decision-making, and future strategies became an

integral part of the evaluation process. Principals promoted their own professional growth when they became reflective practitioners.

Educators reflective practice has received much attention in the past 30 years. Redfern (1972) theorized that reflection allowed principals to:

Weigh strengths and weaknesses; to measure accomplishment against declared goals; to admit failures as well as accept successes; and to evaluate the achievement in terms of one's own concept of satisfactory service rather than in terms of comparing accomplishment with that of the others who are doing the same type of job in the school system. (p. 6)

When principals' embarked on self-assessment, they started a comprehensive evaluation of their individual job performance effectiveness.

Written reflections about one's abilities, skills, and job performance were considered an essential element for professional growth. Daresh and Playko (1995) advocated the value of reflection and identification of areas addressed directly in the future. Principals as reflective practitioners were perceived to facilitate their journey of self-assessment and identification of areas for improvement (Martin-Kneip, 1999). Furthermore, principals needed to find ways to foster reflection and inquiry for themselves and other educators (Martin-Kneip).

Brown and Irby (1997b) believed that principals engaged in reflective thinking and writing to develop insights into their strengths and

weaknesses. They stated, "Much of the current literature on successful leadership emphasizes the importance of reflection to improve the organization" (p. 23). Principals' who planned for reflection of leadership performance were led to improved practice. In addition, reflection enhanced school and teacher effectiveness and improved student learning (Brown & Irby; Martin-Kneip, 1999).

Brown and Irby (1997b) identified five stages in the reflection as a self-evaluation process. First, principals selected artifacts that denoted their leadership goals or abilities. Second, they described the events for each artifact, using who, what, when, and where. Next, principals wrote an analysis of why each artifact was selected and explained the relationship of the events, leadership issues or beliefs, and the decisions that occurred. Fourth, principals evaluated the impact and appropriateness of their actions. This self-assessment was considered an important part of the reflection process. The final stage of the reflection cycle occurred when principals used newly discovered insights to change their practice. In addition, Guaglianone and Yerkes (1998) noted that writing reflections was a significant way to assess one's professional development.

Thoughtful analysis of practices, events, and experiences provided valuable insights into principals' leadership development. Reflections were a critical support for artifacts selected in the evaluation process (Brown & Irby, 1997b). Personal reflection had a solid basis if selected artifacts

supported principals' practices, identified patterns of behavior, and incorporated change into the practice of educational administration (Guaglianone & Yerkes, 1998).

<u>Feedback</u>

Goleman (1998) encapsulated the essence of feedback in the workplace. He stated, "Feedback lies at the heart of change" (p. 269). Feedback, a critical step in the appraisal process, involved two-way communication relative to principal performance. Principals who received feedback on their job performances were better able to set new goals for the next appraisal cycle (Gilliland & Langdon, 1998). Consequently, feedback was determined to be an important component of effective evaluation systems.

The best supervisors did not wait for annual performance reviews— they provided feedback daily, weekly, and monthly. Reeves (1998) maintained that to hold principals accountable "effective feedback must be frequent" (p. 4). Ideally, feedback from several sources, such as peers, self, and supervisors were combined in a narrative form. Moravec (1996) stated that effective feedback had the ability to provide information that helped employees improve future performance. Receiving feedback from staff, parents, the superintendent, and community members provided several levels of information on principal job performance.

A significant trend in evaluation was the use of multi-source feedback, or "360-degrees feedback" (London & Smither, 1995). This type of feedback was "grounded in the philosophy and practice of survey feedback and performance appraisal" (p. 804). It also included perceptions from different levels within the organization. Appropriate evaluation contained feedback from survey instruments, peers, supervisor, students, parents, staff, and community members (Dyer, 2001; Graddick & Lane, 1998).

Several companies and corporations reported benefits gained from multi-source feedback (Graddick & Lane, 1998). This meant that feedback came from different sources not just from the supervisor. Multi-source feedback yielded important information about an organization's culture as well as how someone was perceived. These perceptions provided a way for an executive, like a principal, to obtain candid feedback used for professional development (Graddick & Lane).

For feedback to improve performance, a trusting environment was required (Conzemius & O'Neill, 2001). A trusting environment provided the foundation for perceived fairness by giving principals a voice during the feedback process. In a trusting environment, a professional relationship existed between the person providing feedback and the person receiving feedback (Calabrese, 2000). Feedback allowed principals to discuss problems and to share ideas with superintendents.

<u>Fairness</u>

Perceived fairness during the evaluation process influenced attitudes and behaviors. Fairness generally referred to the procedures and outcomes perceived to be appropriate, consistent, and justified (Gilliland & Langdon, 1998). When evaluations were productive for principals and superintendents, the perception of fairness and trust became evident. Fair treatment led to building trust between supervisor and subordinate, commitment to the organization, motivation to improve performance, and job satisfaction (Gilliland & Langdon).

Fairness was a component of the Propriety Standards listed in The Personnel Evaluation Standards (1988). Stufflebeam and Nevo (1993) noted that the Propriety Standards were placed first in the set of four standards. These standards maintained that evaluation systems "may violate or fail to address certain ethical and legal principles" (p. 38). Their purpose was to ensure that rights of those affected by the evaluation system were protected (Stufflebeam & Nevo).

Gilliland and Langdon (1998) identified three categories leading to perceived fairness: (a) procedural, (b) interpersonal, and (c) outcome fairness. They believed the three categories relevant to the appraisal process. Procedural fairness determined whether the evaluatee had a chance to offer input in decisions made regarding performance. Interpersonal fairness referred to the honesty and timeliness of

communication and feedback received during the evaluation process.

Outcome fairness related to formal structures for the appeal of decisions

and the appropriateness of outcomes associated with the decision of

evaluations.

Several suggestions were posed for addressing fairness of principal

evaluations. First, principals needed the opportunity to establish goals and

know the criteria for their job performance (Ediger, 1998). Goal setting and

knowledge of evaluation criteria were a fairness issue for principals. Second,

feedback and communication were timely and informative (Moravec, 1996).

Two-way communication between principals and superintendents

throughout the evaluation process had been considered important for

professional growth to flourish. Last, a formal structure was required for

appealing decisions (Gilliland & Langdon, 1998). A procedure for redress of

decisions made from an evaluation was deemed an important aspect of an

evaluation system.

<u>Improving Principal Evaluations</u>

Recommendations for improving principal evaluations are presented

in this section, followed with a summary of The Personnel Evaluation

Standards (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation,

1988). A performance-based evaluation approach, the portfolio, concludes

the exploration of improving principal evaluations.

Recommendations for Improving Principal Evaluations

Evaluation promoted accountability in the educational system. Accountability began with educational leaders, and eventually embraced teachers and then students. According to Reeves (2004), no student, teacher, or staff member became "more accountable than the leaders in the system" (p. 20). This statement pointed to the importance for development of an evaluation system that supports principals' accountability.

Several researchers made suggestions for improvement of evaluation systems: (a) adapt the performance appraisal to the position, (b) list criteria and standards against which principals would be measured, (c) implement goal setting, and (d) provide frequent feedback. These suggestions were made for new and veteran principals. An additional suggestion from the literature review indicated that districts provide mentoring for new principals so those leadership behaviors modeled by veteran principals were observed (Brown et al., 1997; Cardy, 1998; Fontana, 1994; Peterson, 1991; Reeves, 1998).

Criteria supported by leadership standards needed to be woven into job descriptions for principals, so that all constituents knew the expectations of a district (Brown & Irby, 1998; Brown, Irby, & Chance, 1997; Ginsberg & Berry, 1990; Thomas, 1991). A district's expectations then became the foundation for principals' to base their goals.

Goal setting by principals surfaced in the literature review. Evaluation systems that used goal setting, incorporated school improvement or building goals developed through site-based management. Also, personal goals were deemed appropriate when integrated into individual improvement plans (Brown & Irby, 1997b; Fletcher, 2001; Seijts, 2001; Seyfarth, 1991).

Provision for frequent feedback was a missing element for improvement of principals' job performances (Calabrese, 2000; Reeves, 1998). Multi-sources of feedback, such as 360-degree feedback, might be integrated into the formative aspect of performance appraisal. Fletcher (2001) advocated for investigating the impact of feedback on goal setting and goal achievement. Feedback from superintendents, teachers, staff, students, and parents could help principals develop their professional growth plans (Calabrese; Reeves).

Summative evaluations rarely brought about professional growth or change. Formative evaluations, however, permitted principals to focus on corrections and to promote the development of new leadership skills (Calabrese, 2000; Fontana, 1994). Formative feedback, given frequently, helped principals to monitor their progress on goals in professional growth plans.

Stufflebeam and Nevo (1993) maintained that there was a heavy emphasis on professional activities or staff development of school

administrators in the early 1990s. Professional activities focused on mentors, regional networks, or principal academies compelled principals and superintendents to examine the big picture. Engagement in professional activities based on principals' assessed needs and interests combined with formative feedback had the potential to improve principal evaluations (Stufflebeam & Nevo).

Efforts made to improve principal evaluations in the 1970s and 1980s were poor. Stufflebeam and Nevo (1993) mentioned the development of The Personnel Evaluation Standards as an example of principal evaluation improvement. These standards (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1988) consisted of four broad categories that had three to eight standards per category. Stufflebeam and Nevo strongly recommended that educators involved with the development of principal evaluation systems, study and apply these standards to improve principal evaluations.

The Personnel Evaluation Standards

The Personnel Evaluation Standards (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1988) consisted of Propriety Standards, Utility Standards, Feasibility Standards, and Accuracy Standards. Stufflebeam and Nevo (1993) suggested individuals involved with the development of evaluation systems use these standards to assess and improve evaluation systems for principals.

The *Propriety Standards* ensured the rights of all stakeholders, such as students, teachers, administrators, and evaluators affected by an evaluation. Five standards were listed in this category. These standards required that evaluations be conducted ethically and legally.

The *Utility Standards* provided timely information for the assessment and improvement of principal evaluations. Five standards were listed in this category. Stufflebeam and Nevo (1993) believed these standards provided useful information for the improvement of principals' evaluation systems.

The *Feasibility Standards* required that evaluations be easy to implement and use available resources, such as time and funding in an efficient manner. Three standards were listed in this category. These standards promoted personnel evaluations that were usable within an organization.

Last, the *Accuracy Standard*s determined whether data obtained were accurate and linked to conclusions about a job performance. Eight standards were listed in this category. Stufflebeam and Nevo (1993) maintained that evaluation should "validly measure job qualifications and performance" (p. 40).

Five general steps were recommended by the Joint Committee as a methodical approach for applying *The Personnel Evaluation Standards* to principal appraisals (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational

Evaluation, 1988). These recommendations included an understanding of the standards, clarification of the purpose for the principal appraisal, a description of the evaluation method, examination of the system, and recommendations for improvement of the existing evaluation system.

<u>Principal Portfolio</u>

Performance-based principal evaluation systems frequently included portfolios, which were defined in several ways in the literature. Stiggins (2001) noted that a portfolio might be comprised of a student's work, which represented achievement. Martin-Kneip (1999), concluded that portfolios might be loosely or tightly structured and that "professional portfolios were highly contextualized and needed to be customized to the needs of both developers and readers" (p. 12). In addition, Brown and Irby (1995) maintained that principal portfolios were "a purposeful, self-selected collection of artifacts and reflective entries which represents an administrator's growth" (p. 1). The portfolios described here had a common element of documenting authentic evidence of someone's work. Portfolios also provided a means for structured reflection by an individual on their growth in learning, teaching, or leading.

Formative and summative evaluations were documented with an evaluation portfolio. Daresh and Playko (1995) believed that the difference between the two forms of evaluation had "little impact on the actual structure of portfolios when they are prepared to guide the appraisal

process" (p. 15). Principals engaged in goal setting with their superintendents developed action plans for professional growth. The goals related to a district's goals or school improvement plans. With regard to principal portfolios, Guaglianone and Yerkes (1998) stated, "This visual evaluation tool takes into account changing expectations of constituents, traditional problems with isolation of administrators, and concerns about the value of traditional evaluation methods for administrators" (p. 4).

Components of evaluation portfolios. Recommendations for evaluation portfolios' content included target goals, artifacts, and reflections, which support identified expectations of a school district (Brown & Irby, 1997b; Daresh & Playko, 1995; Devlin-Scherer, Devlin-Scherer, & Couture, 2000; Green & Smyser, 1996; Guaglianone, 1996; Martin-Kneip, 1999; Wildy & Wallace, 1998). Portfolio contents were to be aligned with standards, performance criteria outlined by the district, and target goals selected by principals. The temptation to include too much information usually overwhelms those developing an evaluation portfolio.

Specific components of an evaluation portfolio included: (a) current resume, (b) platform statements, (c) articulated short- and long-term professional goal statements, and (d) artifacts (Brown, 1997b; Daresh, 1995; Martin-Kneip, 1999; Meadows, 1999). Goals provided a framework for the portfolio when used as part of the performance appraisal process (Daresh & Playko, 1995). In addition, district goals might overlap individual goals,

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which could be viewed as additions to achieving the principal's purpose. "There must be a clear delineation of which goals are personal and which ones are institutional in nature" (Daresh & Playko, p. 16). Equally important were artifacts that indicated whether goals were achieved completely or partially.

Several authors stressed the importance for principals to clearly articulate the significance of each particular artifact (Brown & Irby, 1997a, 1998; Daresh & Playko, 1995; Devlin-Scherer et al., 2000; Guaglianone & Yerkes, 1998; Martin-Kneip, 1999; Wildy & Wallace, 1998). Each reflection that accompanied an artifact, needed to explain why it was included in the portfolio by a clearly stated description of which objective or goal it supported.

Formative and summative evaluations required that selected artifacts and reflections be referenced to the individual's demonstration of established district competencies in leadership and management (Brown & Irby, 1996). Once a principal knew the district's criteria, then he or she needed to spend time reflecting on a philosophy of teaching and learning, leadership, and management skills. Simultaneously, the principal considered what evidence could assist him or her in illustrating those competencies.

The value of a portfolio resided within the artifacts and reflections. A portfolio process had the potential to provide one approach for assessment of

principals' job performances. Daresh and Playko (1995) advocated this approach as a more productive assessment than current evaluation approaches based on assumptions of management-by-objectives used in private industry.

The purpose of a portfolio was considered before the collection of artifacts and reflections. Daresh and Playko (1995) argued that adopting a portfolio appraisal system should turn the evaluation process into a more useful and proactive activity focused on professional growth and improvement.

<u>Summary of the Review of Literature</u>

Evaluation ranks at the top of cognition in Bloom's Taxonomy (1956). Bloom (1984) theorized that people had a desire to evaluate everything, such as ideas and job performances. Moreover, the review of literature indicated that evaluating personnel involved the identification and collection of data from multiple sources.

The accountability of students, teachers, and principals made evaluations important and necessary. The problems with principal evaluations identified in the literature included a focus on personality traits, lack of contribution to the organization, and changing roles and expectations for principals.

The lack of empirical research in the area of principal evaluation was noticeable. Many traditional and performance-based evaluation methods

were not supported by research or linked to professional standards. In addition, the ISLLC Standards provided a foundation for assessment of principals' leadership abilities.

An effective evaluation system added depth, breadth, and objectivity to principals' evaluations. It also allowed principals' input into the appraisal process. Lashway (1998) maintained, "It promotes the kind of self-reflection that fuels professional growth" (p. 1). The evaluation process included goals, artifacts or evidences, and reflections that supported important aspects of principals' performances. Also, the evaluation process was data driven, which allowed principals ownership to identify their strengths and areas for improvement. Also, an effective evaluation system promoted collaboration, supported feedback, and enhanced the perception of fairness in performance management.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter describes research design, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness of data, and confidentiality. The first section presents the research design followed, in the second section, by descriptions for selection of participants, interviews, and document review. The third section describes data collection methods used in this research and the fourth section describes data analysis. The chapter concludes with a description of the trustworthiness measures applied to the data and a discussion of confidentiality.

A qualitative paradigm was used to conduct the research. This type of inquiry allowed the researcher to understand and explain the meaning people constructed about social phenomena being investigated (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993; Merriam, 2001; Patton, 1990). It also allowed for an accurate description of interactions that occurred in any setting (Patton). The researcher chose this paradigm with its five characteristics in mind: (1) research involves an *emic* or insider's perspective, as opposed to an outsider's, such as the researcher's perspective; (2) the researcher is the primary instrument for collecting and analyzing data; (3) fieldwork is accomplished with people in their contextual setting; (4) the research is an inductive process, defined as "building toward

a theory from the intuitive understandings gained in the field" (Merriam, 2001, p. 7).; and (5) research describes with words, rather than numbers, what the researcher has learned about the phenomenon under study (Merriam). Qualitative research provided rich information for this study.

Qualitative data collection methods were used to answer the research questions. Merriam (2001) noted that these methods include observations, interviews, and document review. The researcher used interviews and document review for data collection to answer the following questions:

1. What are elementary principals' perceptions about processes and procedures that would improve elementary principal evaluation?

2. What are superintendents' perceptions about processes and procedures that would improve elementary principal evaluation?

3. What are the necessary elements of a performance-based evaluation model for elementary principals?

Information obtained from interviews was used in the development of an evaluation framework.

<div align="center">Participant Selection</div>

According to Erlandson and associates (1993) in qualitative research, purposive sampling is used to allow participants to be selected because of their expertise in the topic being studied. An explanation of the participant selection strategies used in this research is presented in the next two subsections, purposive sampling criteria and participant selection process.

Purposive or purposeful sampling was chosen based on the supposition that the researcher wanted to "discover, understand, and gain insight and must select a sample from which the most is learned" (Merriam, 2001, p. 61). Patton (1990) also maintained that the power of purposive sampling is to select information-rich participants. Information richness rather than information bulk was the data collection goal. Elementary principals, superintendents, and assistant superintendents provided the researcher with information-rich data concerning elementary principal evaluations.

The first step in sampling was to identify a pool of participants. Selection was based on three criteria. The three criteria required participants to: (a) be an elementary principal or superintendent, (b) be employed in Southeast Nebraska public school districts within 120 miles of the researcher, and (c) more than one-year of experience as an elementary principal or superintendent. Three variables targeted a balanced and representative sample of participants with respect to (a) gender, (b) ethnicity, and (c) rural and urban school district employment.

The first criterion targeted participants who were public school elementary principals or superintendents in Southeast Nebraska. Two superintendents, who did not evaluate principals, declined to participate in

the research and suggested that their assistant superintendents participate in the research.

The second criterion targeted participants employed in Nebraska public school districts within 120 miles of the researcher in Southeast Nebraska. Limiting the sample of participants to Southeast Nebraska provided the researcher flexibility and more time to gather in-depth data.

The next criterion targeted individuals that had more than one year of experience as an elementary principal or superintendent. Leaders with less than one-year employment had not participated in elementary principal evaluations. The researcher desired to collect data that revealed what experienced elementary principals, superintendents, and assistant superintendents believed would improve evaluation processes for elementary principals' professional growth.

Three variables for sample selection included gender, ethnic minority, and rural or urban employment, which allowed the researcher to focus on subgroups within the population. Because males and females had different perspectives on elementary principal evaluations, the researcher maintained the option to select additional males or females depending on their responses within other subgroups. This strategy provided an opportunity for members of subgroups to tell the uniqueness of their story.

The next variable reflected the minority ethnicity of the population. The researcher believed that elementary principals and superintendents of

various minority ethnic backgrounds would provide information that indicated a need for further study. This also ensured that all perspectives were included in data collection. The researcher, however, was unable to obtain data from ethnic minority participants. Participants identified as members of ethnic minorities, from a large, urban district were unable to participate due to district policy against participation in research projects.

Other districts in Southeast Nebraska either did not employ ethnic minorities as elementary principals or superintendents, or members in this subgroup were in their first year as school administrators. The lack of ethnic minorities in leadership roles, coupled with restriction of participation, resulted in exclusion of an ethnic minority voice in this research.

The last variable was based on representation of elementary principals and superintendents employed in rural or urban school districts. The geographic location of school districts was determined as rural or urban based on the definition developed by the U. S. Census Bureau (2001). Rural areas were identified as those with a population of fewer than 2,499 or less inhabitants per square mile and located 10 miles outside an urban area or cluster (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). Urban areas were defined as densely populated of 2,500 or more inhabitants per square mile and located within an urbanized area (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). The fourteen counties of Southeast Nebraska consisted of two large cities and several rural towns

within 120 miles of the researcher (Nebraska Department of Education, 2001-2002).

The first task for the researcher was to obtain a list of elementary principals and superintendents from the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE). The researcher contacted NDE by telephone and requested a printout that identified a list of elementary principals and superintendents that met the three criteria and three variables for participation in the research.

Next, the researcher forwarded two lists with a letter to faculty of educational leadership programs at seven institutions of higher learning (see Appendix B). One was a list of 247 elementary principals, and the other was a list of 52 superintendents employed in Nebraska public school districts. Both lists contained the two research criteria of employment in Southeast Nebraska public schools and having more than one year of experience as an elementary principal or superintendent. The lists also included two variables of gender and minority ethnicity. School districts were classified as Class 1 to Class 6 based on definitions for rural and urban areas developed by the U.S. Census Bureau (2001). The researcher used information contained in the *Nebraska Blue Book 2002-03* (Anderson, 2001) and *Nebraska Department of Education 2001-2002 Directory* (Nebraska Department of Education, 2001-2002) to determine the appropriate classification of school districts as rural or urban.

According to Anderson (2001) and the Nebraska Department of Education (2001-2002), the Nebraska school districts' classifications were based on residents within a district's borders and grade levels offered by the district. A Class 1 district maintained elementary only or "grades K-6 or K-8," while Class 2 district contained "K-12 grades with a population of 1,000 or less" residents. A Class 3 district encompassed "K-12 grades with a population of 1,001 to 149,000 residents, and Class 4 districts included "K-12 grades with a population of 100,000 or more residents and having a primary class city within the district." Class 5 districts had "K-12 grades with a population of 200,000 or more residents and a "metropolitan class city within the district." Finally Class 6 districts maintained a high school only or grades 7-12" (Anderson, 2001, p. 873; Nebraska Department of Education, 2001-2002, p. 185). The panel of experts was asked to identify elementary principals and superintendents they believed to be knowledgeable about elementary principal evaluations.

Faculty members of five educational leadership programs responded to the request. These experts identified elementary principals and superintendents who could provide information-rich data about elementary principal evaluations. Members of the population were identified that represented males, females, ethnic minorities, and rural and urban school administrators. Subgroups, whose experiences with principal evaluations

offered a different perspective, were sampled in greater numbers to allow for variation of data.

Additionally, input from educational leadership faculty members from Nebraska higher learning institutions helped the researcher compile a list of 100 elementary principals and 27 superintendents to contact for interviews. Elementary principals and superintendents, who were identified by multiple recommendations and met the three criteria and three variables were compiled into a master list.

From the master list, the researcher identified a purposive sample that reflected the three variables of gender, minority ethnicity, and rural versus urban public school employment. The criteria of proximity and years of service were included in the sample recommended by the panel of experts. The researcher selected a sample of 45 elementary principals and 15 superintendents based on frequency of nomination by the panel of experts. This purposive sampling technique identified elementary principals and superintendents who were knowledgeable in providing data to answer the three research questions and to "maximize the range of specific information that can be obtained from and about the context" (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 33). Gender, minority ethnicity, and rural or urban employment in public schools provided the potential to collect divergent data.

The participant pool was sorted into appropriate subgroups of gender, minority ethnicity, and rural or urban public school employment. Some

individuals were in more than one subgroup, such as a female, elementary principal in an urban setting. The sample for interviews was selected by maintaining equity among the three variables when appropriate.

The number of individuals identified in the sample allowed the researcher flexibility to purposively select interview participants. Lincoln and Guba (1985), however, believed that purposive sampling should be terminated when a researcher reached the point of information redundancy. Fifteen elementary principals, two assistant superintendents, and four superintendents participated in interviews during the data collection process. Table 1, Participant Characteristics, illustrates the number of participants that met the variables of (a) gender, (b) position, and (c) rural or urban public school employment in Southeast Nebraska.

Table 1

Participant Characteristics

Gender and Position	Rural	Urban
FEP	--	3
MEP	6	3
FAS	--	1
MAS	--	1
FS	--	1
MS	3	--

Note. FEP represents female elementary principals,

MEP represents male elementary principals,

FAS represents female assistant superintendents,

MAS represents male assistant superintendents,

FS represents female superintendents, and

MS represents male superintendents.

Participant Selection Process

The researcher's purposive sampling process permitted an ongoing

participant selection process. The number of participants selected within

each subgroup depended upon appreciable variation in their responses

compared to participants in other subgroups. Appreciable variation

indicated a need to select additional participants in that subgroup to ensure

data reflected their stories. Fewer participants were selected from

subgroups whose responses were consistent with responses from

participants in other subgroups. This strategy allowed the researcher to

pursue data from a broader cross section of participants (Erlandon et al.,

1993; Merriam, 2001; Patton, 1990).

Analysis of data from the initial set of participants' interviews

permitted the researcher to compare and contrast information

simultaneously, while conducting additional participant selection. Five

elementary principals and three superintendents were interviewed initially

to obtain data that aided the researcher in determining the next participant

to be interviewed.

Based on the analysis of data collected during the first set of

interviews, five additional elementary principals, two assistant

superintendents, and one superintendent were invited to participate in

interviews. Two of the urban superintendents selected for interviews were

not involved in the evaluation of their principals, so they requested that

their assistant superintendents, because of their expertise, participate in

the research. The interview data collected from the third set of participants

consisted of five additional elementary principals. A cover letter and consent

form (see Appendices C & D) was sent to each elementary principal,

superintendent, and assistant superintendent selected to participate in an

interview. The sample consisted of fifteen elementary principals, two assistant superintendents, and four superintendents.

<div align="center">Data Collection</div>

This section contains a description of methods used for data collection. The researcher used two data collection methods: interviews and document review. Lincoln and Guba (1985) advocated the use of multiple sources of data to increase credibility and dependability. They further maintained that multiple methods increase the strength of one method of inquiry, which compensates for the weaknesses of another. The researcher collected interview data from elementary principals, superintendents, and assistant superintendents.

Interviews

Data were collected using person-to-person interviews, which allowed the researcher to gain participant's in-depth perspective of the situation being studied. Erlandson et al. (1993) and Merriam (2001) defined interviewing as a conversation with a purpose to make sense of a person's perceptions about a topic. The purpose of these interviews was to obtain a special kind of information that could not be directly observed, such as thoughts, feelings, and intentions. Patton (1990) maintained that interviews allow the researcher to enter another person's viewpoint and to make these perspectives known. Interviews allowed the researcher and respondent to travel back and forth in time (Erlandson et al.; Patton).

The researcher used a combination of the general interview guide approach and the standardized open-ended interview to collect data. According to Patton (1990), interviews could be approached in three ways: the informal conversational interview, the general interview guide approach, and the standardized open-ended interview. The elementary principal interview protocol (see Appendix E) and the superintendent interview protocol (see Appendix F) contained a list of questions to be explored between the researcher and participant being interviewed. Patton maintained that "questions may be worded precisely in a predetermined fashion" while the researcher "explores certain subjects in greater depth or undertake new areas of inquiry not originally included in the original interview instrument" (Patton, 1990, p. 287).

The general interview approach was a semi-structured approach that allowed the researcher to be flexible and probe for additional information that was specific to the respondent and the context of the actual interview. The general interview guide served as a basic checklist to ensure that all relevant topics were covered efficiently during the interview (Patton, 1990). The researcher was aware that with the interview guide approach, important topics might be omitted or flexibility of wording and sequence of questions might result in different responses, affecting comparability of those responses (Patton).

Conversely, the standardized open-ended interview approach is very structured with questions "carefully worded and arranged with the intention of taking each respondent through the same sequence and asking each respondent the same questions with the same words" (Patton, 1990, p. 280). This approach reduced bias and minimized variation in questions asked of interviewees (Patton). The standardized open-ended protocol, however, allowed little flexibility during the interview, but its primary strength was its facilitation of data analysis.

The combination of the general interview guide and standardized open-ended interview contained specific questions that were asked of every interview participant. The primary advantage of using a combination interview approach was that it allowed individual perspectives and experiences to emerge, while the interviewer determines the best way to use the limited time available for each interview (Patton, 1990). The interview guide format allows the researcher to "respond to the situation at hand" (Merriam, 2001, p. 74).

Interview questions, whose development was guided by the literature review, provided a framework during each interview. Interview protocols were piloted (Merriam, 2001) with two Southeast Nebraska elementary principals and two superintendents who were not research participants. Each interview instrument was given to pilot respondents for review in a face-to-face conversation that was scheduled at the convenience of each

individual. The researcher asked pilot principals and superintendents what each question on the interview protocol meant to them. She also asked for suggestions for protocol revisions. This pilot allowed the researcher to identify confusing questions that needed to be reworded or questions that might produce useless data. Changes were made to the two interview protocols based on those suggestions.

Fifteen elementary principals, 4 superintendents, and 2 assistant superintendents within 120 miles of the researcher in Southeast Nebraska were interviewed. The number of participants used in the research were based on three factors: (a) time constraints for the researcher to make on-site visits, (b) keeping the research manageable for one researcher, and (c) purposive sample selection to the point of redundancy in collected data.

The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews in seventeen school districts. Each participant's interview was scheduled by letter and confirmed by telephone. Interviews were conducted at the participant's work site or other mutually agreed upon location.

Each interview was tape-recorded by the researcher. Patton (1990) believed that tape-recording interviews increased accuracy of data collection and permitted the interviewer to be attentive to the interviewee. Tape recording also allowed the researcher to probe for further information without taking copious notes during each interview session. This approach ensured that valuable data were not lost during each interview. The consent

form included a statement requesting permission to tape-record the interview. The researcher transcribed twenty-one audiotapes from interviews, a strategy recommended by Patton. These transcriptions became useful in data analysis and preserved quotations collected from each interview.

Document Review

The term document, as defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985), referred to "written or recorded material *other than a record* [italicized in book]" (p. 277). An example of documents such as letters, diaries, or television scripts were suggested by Lincoln and Guba as sources of rich data. Documents provided data about procedures and past decisions that could not be observed directly by the researcher (Patton, 1990).

Documents in this study included various elementary principal evaluations and written procedures. Seven evaluation instruments were collected during the interview process for the document review. Elementary principal evaluation instruments furnished the researcher with information concerning of rural and urban districts in Southeast Nebraska. In addition, they provided insights supporting the perceptions gleaned from participants' interviews. Evaluation documents were examined for evidence of feedback and timelines. The researcher analyzed and identified themes and findings from data collected during interviews and from a review of the evaluation documents.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began simultaneously with data collection, as consistent with qualitative research (Merriam, 2001). Data analysis for this research was an interactive process between collection and examination of the data. Data analysis involved organizing and refining data while it was being collected during interviews (Erlandson et al., 1993). The constant-comparative method was used to review, analyze, unitize, and categorize data collected from interviews and field notes. Content analysis was used to analyze evaluation documents.

The constant-comparative method required reducing data into the smallest units of meaning (Erlandson et al., 1993). Unitized data were as small as a few words, a sentence, or a whole paragraph. Erlandson et al. defined unitizing data as "Disaggregating data into the smallest pieces of information that may stand alone as independent thoughts" (p. 117).

This data analysis method consisted of developing themes and categories by constantly comparing data while it was being collected throughout the research. Developing categories and themes was largely intuitive and involved the researcher looking for patterns within and across data (Erlandson et al., 1993; Merriam, 2001; Patton, 1990). This technique allowed the researcher to move back and forth between meaningful pieces of data to construct the findings of the study.

Content analysis guided the review of evaluation documents.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), content analysis of documents was

the systematic analysis of textual material according to a predetermined set

of rules or procedures. In this research, the content of documents was

analyzed to obtain data relevant to the three research questions. The

researcher separated transcripts of data from interviews, field notes, and

documents review into units of meaning, which were then entered into an

electronic database, FileMaker Pro®, which allowed the researcher to sort

data into themes and categories.

<center>Trustworthiness of Data</center>

Trustworthiness of qualitative research depends upon

"methodological soundness" (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 131). Credibility,

confirmability, dependability, and transferability established

trustworthiness in this qualitative research. Trustworthiness of qualitative

research provided the reader with a clear, detailed depiction of the

phenomenon, so that the researcher's conclusions make sense (Merriam,

2001). A description of each of these attributes follows.

Credibility

Credibility ensured truthfulness of the research report (Erlandson et

al., 1993; Guba & Lincoln, 1989). One method of establishing credibility in

qualitative research is triangulation of data (Erlandson et al.). Multiple

interviews and documents provide a greater degree of convergence of the

data. It also provides support for emerging findings. Patton (1990) maintained, however, that no single method of collecting data provides credibility.

Different qualitative methods, interview and documents; multiple perspectives, 21 school administrators; and purposeful sampling, selection participants who were identified as knowledgeable about the topic under investigation were used to triangulate data. Triangulation of data allowed the researcher to compare data and determine agreements and disagreements among participant responses. Triangulation occurred between the combination of twenty-one sets of data into a single database and two sets of data from content analysis. Data collected from the various interviews and documents were triangulated to determine credible findings.

Another credibility-building technique used by the researcher was member checking, which allowed the researcher to review data collected from participants. This process permitted participants to correct errors of fact and verify accuracy of interpretations (Erlandson et al., 1993). The researcher conducted member checking at the end of each interview. In addition, a member check letter was sent to each elementary principal (see Appendix G), assistant superintendent, and superintendent (see Appendix H), with a copy of his or her interview transcript, for correction of errors or misinterpretation of data. Corrections of interview transcripts were made before analysis of data.

A third technique used to build credibility was peer debriefing. This process allowed the researcher to confirm results of the research (Erlandson et al., 1993). A peer debriefer was utilized to enhance credibility, dependability, and transferability of the research. The peer debriefer, who was a colleague and assistant professor at a Nebraska State College, was not involved in the study but understood qualitative research and the phenomenon under investigation. The debriefer asked the researcher probing questions about the research design and findings. Such interactions between the researcher and peer debriefer were included in the audit trail. The debriefer also performed as the auditor.

Dependability

Dependability and credibility are interdependent. Lincoln and Guba (1985) maintained that research could not have one without the other. Dependability was ensured through an audit trail that was maintained during the research for the auditor's examination. The auditor reviewed the researcher's field notes, transcriptions of field notes from interviews, findings from data, and reflexive log or researcher's journal (Erlandson et al., 1993).

In addition, the researcher kept a reflexive journal, which helped to provide insight into methodological decisions made during the research. The reflexive journal supported credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability of the research (Erlandson et al., 1993). It provided

information addressing the researcher's schedule, conversations with the peer debriefer, and reasons for decisions made throughout the design and implementation of the research. A copy of the reflexive journal was kept as part of the audit trail.

Confirmability

Confirmability of a study depends upon the findings that result from data and its' source; not from researcher bias. This is supported through an audit trail and triangulation of data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Objectivity is established by providing a means for tracking data to its sources and guarding against the researcher's biases. Interview transcripts, documents, and the reflexive journal were retained by the researcher and available for review. Also, the researcher kept the FileMaker Pro® database containing the unitized data, themes, and categories. The auditor reviewed the audit trail to assist in the establishment of confirmability.

Transferability

Transferability refers to a thick description that enables readers to decide the applicability of the research findings to their settings. Merriam (2001) described a thick description as a "complete, literal description of the incident or entity being investigated" (p. 29-30). The thick description brings readers into the setting of the study and allows them to determine if the findings can be transferred (Merriam). It further provided a thorough portrayal of findings that emerged during analysis of data. Purposive

sampling, used for data collection in this study, was essential to gathering information-rich data for the research.

In addition, an evaluation framework was developed to assist superintendents in designing an evaluation system for elementary principals. This framework was not designed as a one size that fits all situations. The evaluation framework was developed using information collected from participants and aligned with indications presented in the literature review.

<div align="center">Confidentiality</div>

An ethical responsibility of social researchers is confidentiality (Babbie, 2001). Participants were asked to sign a consent form before their interviews. Confidentiality for each participant was granted in writing before collecting data. The consent form explained the confidentiality process.

Two strategies were used to establish confidentiality. First, participants or school districts were not identified in the data or in the final report. Also, the researcher promised not to publicly identify each person's responses to questions. Patton (1990) maintained that the participant's names, location, and other identifying information be kept confidential to ensure that data were kept clear of participant identification.

Second, consent forms and data were kept in separate locations. This strategy kept the participants safe from identification and the data free of

cross-contamination. Erlandson et al. (1993) maintained that the researcher must proactively guard against doing harm to participants involved with the research project; therefore, measures were taken to prevent raw or processed data from being linked to specific participants. For example, all items were identified using a special key that was kept separate from the data. Ethical sensitivity was implemented with participants during and after the completion of the research.

Summary

This chapter presented a rationale for the research design, methods of data collection, and a description of data analysis. This qualitative research design used a purposive selection of participants in Southeast Nebraska. Interviews and document review were used to gather elementary principals', assistant superintendents', and superintendents' perspectives on elementary principal evaluations systems. Data analysis included triangulation of data, member checking, peer debriefing, an audit trail, and a reflexive journal to facilitate the study's trustworthiness. Finally, the researcher ensured confidentiality. Participants' names and location information were not disclosed in the final report. The next chapter discusses findings that emerged from the data collected for this research.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The results of this research tell a story of Southeast Nebraska

elementary principal evaluations. Rural and urban elementary principals,

superintendents, and assistant superintendents provided their perceptions

of how elementary principal evaluations contributed to professional growth.

The research identified goal setting and collaboration as evaluation

strengths. It also identified lack of standards and formative feedback as

areas of evaluation needing improvement. Interviews and review of

evaluation documents provided data for this research. In addition to a

narrative description of the research results, this chapter presents

demographics of Southeast Nebraska and other information about the

research context.

<u>Demographics of Southeast Nebraska</u>

A review of Southeast Nebraska demographics provided details on

industry, population, and education. The mainly rural area employed

farming, related agri-business, and education. The declining Southeast

Nebraska population supported 87 public school districts and several

institutions of higher learning.

<u>Industry</u>

The primary industries of Southeast Nebraska were agriculture,

manufacturing, and education. The agriculture industry consisted of

farming and agri-business, with corn, winter wheat, soybeans, and alfalfa accounting for most of the farm income.

Although agriculture was a significant aspect of the economy, more revenue resulted from manufacturing and service industries. Most manufacturing industries were located in the urban areas of Southeast Nebraska. Five of them were listed in the Fortune 500 for having the largest revenue of Nebraska industry and service corporations. Further, they provided services in health and life insurance, railroad, engineering and construction, food processing, and investment (Anderson, 2001).

Education was another major area of employment in Southeast Nebraska, which had several private and state institutions of higher education including two-year community colleges. These institutions of higher learning offered either technical or academic education. One was a state college, and two were university campus sites. Several public school districts and private schools were located in rural and urban settings in Southeast Nebraska. Five educational service units provided professional development and other services to school districts (Anderson, 2001).

Reduction of educational positions, programs, and institutions became a focal point of discussion during the budget crisis between 2001 and 2004. The reductions placed a strain on communities, education administrators, and teachers. As a result, small rural schools were closing and consolidating through redrawn district boundaries. To avoid this, many

districts shared teachers and other resources to reduce costs for educating children.

Population

Southeast Nebraska's population was largely comprised of white ethnic groups. According to the U. S. 2000 Census, rural areas indicated a decline in population. Many communities in Southeast Nebraska had a population of less than 2,500 people. Most of the residents of these small communities mirrored the white ethnic population of Southeast Nebraska (Anderson, 2001).

Urban communities, which had a greater diverse population, became even more diverse after 1990. The Hispanic population was the fastest growing ethnic group followed by African-Americans and Asian-Americans. According to the Nebraska Blue Book (Anderson, 2001), two-thirds of Nebraska residents lived in urban areas, which were defined as towns of more than 2,500 people.

Fourteen counties in Southeast Nebraska were represented in the research. The population in these rural areas was approximately 178,216, while the population in the urban areas was approximately 836,471 (Anderson, 2001).

Education

Nebraska's public education system was based on the Nebraska state constitution adopted in 1875, which directed the Legislature to offer free

education to people between the ages of 5 and 21 years old. The first public schools were one-room schoolhouses scattered throughout the state. Although most school districts adopted a multiple-building setting, some districts still provide K-5 education in one-room schoolhouses.

Southeast Nebraska was home to 87 public school districts, 110 private schools, and 5 educational service units. The rural setting consisted of 81 public school districts, 16 private schools, and 3 educational service units. The urban setting represented 6 public school districts, 94 private schools, and 2 educational service centers. Southeast Nebraska's 87 public school districts accounted for 15% of Nebraska's public school districts (Nebraska Department of Education, 2001-2002).

Eight members serve on the Nebraska Board of Education and supervise the state educational system. These members were elected for four-years and represented seven regions in the state. A board-appointed Commissioner of Education supervised administration of the state education system.

Governance and leadership of rural schools in Southeast Nebraska had various forms. A six- or nine-member school board governed public school districts. Members of the Board of Education were elected to four-year terms. Superintendents were appointed to supervise administration of districts' schools. Administrative leadership of rural districts ranged from a

superintendent who also served as a building principal to districts with several buildings each having a principal.

Public school facilities in Southeast Nebraska varied in building size and age. Some school districts' buildings were constructed in the early 1900s, while other school districts had recently constructed facilities. The researcher observed that most Southeast Nebraska public educational facilities were built of brick and were well maintained. Two of the 12 rural school sites were situated in the countryside to accommodate several rural communities.

According to Anderson (2001) and the Nebraska Department of Education (2001-2002), Nebraska school districts were classified according to residents within a district's borders and grade levels offered by the district. Six different classifications existed for school districts: (a) a Class 1 district maintained elementary only, which consisted of a combination of "grades K-6 or K-8"; (b) a Class 2 district included "K-12 grades with a resident population of 1,000 or less"; (c) a Class 3 district had "K-12 grades with a resident population of 1,001 to 149,999"; (d) a Class 4 district maintained K-12 grades with a resident "population of 100,000 or more and had a primary class city within the district"; (e) a Class 5 district supported K-12 grades with a resident "population of 200,000 or more and a metropolitan class city within the district"; (f) a Class 6 district had a high school only or grades 7-12 (Anderson, p. 873).

Data were gathered from identified elementary principals, superintendents, and assistant superintendents, who represented Class 3 and Class 4 public school districts. Class 3 districts varied in enrollment with a range of 200 to 19,330 students in K-12 grades. The only Class 4 district that participated in the research had a student population of 31,581. Class 1, 2, and 5 school administrators were not identified to participate in this research by the faculty of educational leadership programs at seven Nebraska institutions of higher education. Class 6 school administrators were identified for participation, but were prevented from participating in interviews for this research. School administrators, who participated, had one or more years of administrative experience in Nebraska's schools.

Principal Evaluation in Nebraska

All information contained here was in accordance with the Nebraska Revised Statutes sections 79-824 to 79-842. Principals were considered probationary for the first three years of employment during which principals and teachers were required to be evaluated each semester. After the third year of successful employment administrators and teachers received "permanent certification" and were evaluated once a year or according to the district's evaluation plan. If an administrator or teacher left the district to assume employment somewhere else in Nebraska, the process started over. School districts were required by Nebraska Chapter 79 statutes 79-824 to 79-842 to have their evaluation plans approved by the

Nebraska Department of Education (NDE). If a district updated or revised the evaluation plan, it had to be re-approved by NDE (Nebraska Unicameral Legislature, 1996).

<div align="center">Data Analysis and Findings</div>

Evaluation systems should provide formative and summative feedback, which can lead to professional growth for elementary principals. Identification of elements for an evaluation system that promotes professional growth will provide pertinent information to superintendents. The purpose of this research was to determine elements of an evaluation system that promotes professional growth for elementary principals. The research addressed three questions:

1. What are elementary principals' perceptions about processes and procedures that would improve elementary principal evaluation?

2. What are superintendents' perceptions about processes and procedures that would improve elementary principal evaluation?

3. What are the necessary elements of a performance-based evaluation model for elementary principals?

The research questions were answered by data collected from 21 interviews and 7 evaluation documents. Results were discussed by research question. The constant comparative method recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985) was used to analyze interview data. The researcher also used content analysis method (Patton, 1990) to analyze data collected from evaluation

documents. Four categories, which will be discussed in the next section, emerged from the data: (a) structure, (b) feedback, (c) self-evaluation and reflection, and (d) improvement of evaluation systems. Quotations represent common perceptions shared by research participants.

<div align="center">Research Questions One and Two</div>

Research questions one and two are combined to allow the reader to compare and contrast the perspectives of elementary principals, superintendents, and assistant superintendents. Research question one asked, "What are elementary principals' perceptions about processes and procedures that would improve elementary principal evaluation?" Research question two asked, "What are superintendents' perceptions about processes and procedures that would improve elementary principal evaluation?" The findings for these two questions are organized by various themes around three categories: (a) structure, (b) feedback, and (c) self-evaluation and reflection. The findings are italicized throughout the discussion.

Structure

Five themes emerged from the data for this category: (a) formality, (b) types, (c) criteria, (d) frequency of evaluations, and (e) fairness. The findings are presented within these five themes.

Formality. Small rural Class 3 school district elementary principals were classified into two categories. Some elementary principals assumed the

sole duties of building leader, while others had the combined duties of superintendent and building leader.

Elementary principals of small, rural Class 3 school districts, whether building leader or combination superintendent and building leader, perceived that they were evaluated using an informal approach. Informal evaluations primarily consisted of checklists or written narratives about elementary principals' job performances. A female elementary principal in a small rural school district stated, "It [evaluation] is not as detailed for the principals as it [evaluation] is for teachers." The rural districts that used written evaluations for elementary principals were broad and open-ended compared to the district's teacher evaluations, which were very specific.

Another approach to the evaluation of rural, elementary principals involved superintendents' informal discourse throughout the school year. The evaluation focused on interaction with staffs, budgets, student discipline, and general building management. A male, rural elementary principal shared that he received informal, unwritten evaluations. He stated, "Our evaluations here have not been formalized. I have not received a written evaluation." This situation was repeated in other rural districts. Another male, rural elementary principal stated he had experienced, "Fairly informal evaluations with two different superintendents; however, both superintendents knew what was going on in my building." Elementary principals, who did not also serve as superintendents, perceived their job

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performance was evaluated with informal evaluation policies and procedures.

Two small rural Class 3 school districts employed an administrator, who accomplished the combined duties of superintendent and elementary principal. The combination superintendent-principal in these small districts received informal evaluations from the school boards. A male administrator in one of these districts stated, "When you don't get evaluated you can assume that you are meeting the expectations of your supervisor. In this case, it was the board of education, but you really have no way of knowing." The other male superintendent-principal confirmed that he was not evaluated, but stated, "I should be and I have talked to the board several times about a formal, written evaluation." The combination superintendent-principals reported that they depended on self-evaluations or reflections and verbal feedback from parents, staff, and community for monitoring their job performances. These informal processes contrasted with the evaluation experiences of large Class 3 and Class 4 school districts' elementary principals.

Elementary principals of large Class 3 and Class 4 school districts perceived their evaluation to be a structured process. For example, a female, rural elementary principal shared that her district used an evaluation approach similar to a portfolio. She stated, "Mine [evaluation] will be a portfolio. I put my resume in it, philosophy, and belief statements." She also

included artifacts to support professional goals linked to the improvement plan for her school. Many rural and urban elementary principals indicated they used a system similar to a portfolio. A female, urban elementary principal stated, "We set goals for ourselves and for our growth plan." She further stated, "We have worked on our evaluation; we are always trying to make it better. A female, urban elementary principal stated that she had a framework in terms of how her professional growth plan and goals were to be written.

A male, rural elementary principal described his district's evaluation process as goal driven. He stated that he sets goals and conferences throughout the year with his superintendent about his goals. This elementary principal concluded his description of the evaluation process with "he [superintendent] writes up a formal summary of how he thinks we are doing basically. This summary is submitted to us to review."

Superintendents of small rural Class 3 school districts, who were not also the elementary principal, perceived that elementary principals received formal evaluations. In contrast to the elementary principals, superintendents of small rural Class 3 school districts stated that they used formal approaches to evaluate elementary principals. One male, rural superintendent described major categories to evaluate principals, such as classroom management, communication, planning and preparation, knowledge of subject matter, evaluation, and professional and interpersonal

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qualities. Another male, rural superintendent offered a different type of criteria for evaluation. He stated, "A list of tasks the elementary principal can do are divided up into actual day to day duties or types of tasks such as being in charge of instructional programs." Feedback in these areas, according to rural superintendents, was presented in narrative summaries to elementary principals. A male, rural superintendent stated, "Formal evaluation is done once a year. I usually sit down with the principal in June." Another male, rural superintendent stated, "There are formative evaluations as well. We will sit and discuss their [principals'] goals, since we meet weekly. I write up a synopsis of our discussions."

Superintendents of large rural Class 3 and urban Class 4 school districts reported a formal structured evaluation process for elementary principals. Consistent with elementary principals' perceptions, superintendents described formal evaluation systems that used a goal setting process similar to portfolios to evaluate elementary principals. The superintendents' perceptions, however, were inconsistent with Class 3 small, rural school principals. A male, rural superintendent stated, "The components of the evaluation process we use are a formal evaluation that consists of a list of tasks that the elementary principal can do." The superintendent further stated that the evaluation process also included professional goals established by each principal. Another male, rural superintendent shared, "We do something similar to a portfolio. The

principals say 'Here is what we have done or here is what we are going to do.'" He further explained that this approach helped principals' plan for the school year. A female, urban superintendent also explained an evaluation system similar to a portfolio. She further stated, "We worked on three goals this year. Sometimes we have a fourth goal, such as a district initiative." A male, urban superintendent maintained that district expectations needed to be explicit. He stated, "Our goal was to show some consistency between what our expectations were in the classroom and what our expectations were with other people as well." A male, urban assistant superintendent summarized the evaluation process used in his district, "Principals put together a performance portfolio that shows their work with documents that specifically list the performance indicators and data sources." Many of the evaluation documents described policies, procedures, and instruments that described evaluation procedures for elementary principals.

Types of evaluations. Three types of evaluations were used to assess elementary principals in Southeast Nebraska. The three types included: (a) checklists, (b) goal setting, and (c) a combination of both. Three types of evaluation systems were based on performance indicators and job descriptions rather than national standards such as the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC). Elementary principals of small, Class 3 school districts experienced no evaluations or checklist evaluations of their job performance. Building level administrators from large Class 3

and Class 4 school districts experienced goal setting or combination checklist and goal setting.

Elementary principals, superintendents, and assistant superintendents of large Class 3 and Class 4 school districts perceived checklists, goal setting, or a combination of both drove their evaluations. Checklist evaluation instruments were based on elementary principals' job descriptions. A female, rural elementary principal stated the evaluation she received was basically a checklist, which included areas where the superintendent could write a narrative for her summative evaluation. Elementary principals, however, claimed that checklist evaluations were less than satisfactory. A male, rural elementary principal stated that he received a quick checklist evaluation that took five to ten minutes to complete. A female, urban elementary principal stated that she preferred goal setting to a checklist, since a checklist was "not very comprehensive." Elementary principals claimed that checklist evaluations were unacceptable for assessing their job performances.

Superintendents also perceived checklist evaluations had limited value and did not change elementary principal behaviors. A male, rural superintendent stated that he had used a checklist in the past. He further stated, "I think they are worthless." Another male, rural superintendent stated, "There would be checklists, I would hand [the evaluation] to you and

you would sign and I'd sign and life would go one." He further asserted, "The checklist does not challenge people to do better."

Elementary principals, superintendents, and assistant superintendents of large Class 3 and Class 4 school districts perceived goal setting as a major component of several evaluation systems. Elementary principals claimed goal setting to be a preferred form of evaluation. Rural and urban elementary principals, who experienced goal setting, established written professional goals to guide their decisions and enhance their professional development. A male, rural elementary principal stated, "Most of my goals are for professional purposes." In many situations, elementary principals reported using personal goal setting to enhance their professional growth for each school year. A female, rural elementary principal reported, "One of the things I wanted to look at this year [is] for our teachers to become more proficient in the area of technology. So, that was a personal goal for me to encourage this [technology staff development] to happen." Many elementary principals claimed that goal setting was a valuable avenue for input with their districts' evaluation systems.

Superintendents and assistant superintendents of large Class 3 and Class 4 school districts confirmed that their elementary principals used goal setting. A male, rural superintendent stated, "We have a more goals-driven evaluation." Elementary principals in his district were expected to write two to three goals for the school year. A female, urban superintendent described

goal setting in her district as "everybody working on the same goals." This superintendent wanted school improvement to drive goals established by elementary principals within her district. A male, assistant superintendent from an urban school district explained how the elementary principals established goals in his district. He stated, "At the beginning of the year we meet with all of our principals. We have them set mutual commitments."

Superintendents indicated that they met with elementary principals to review the principals' goals and their progress towards achievement. A male, rural superintendent stated, "We sit down, and I ask them to explain their goals to me or I ask if I am interpreting their goals correctly." A female, urban superintendent reported she met frequently with her elementary principals to discuss goals throughout the year, "about three to four times a year." A female, urban elementary principal from the same district affirmed that she discussed her progress toward school improvement goals and professional goals with her superintendent during meetings throughout the year.

Elementary principals, superintendents, and assistant superintendents of large Class 3 and Class 4 school districts perceived goal-setting evaluation systems as a collaborative effort between elementary principals and evaluators. Respondents described collaborative goal setting efforts. A female, urban elementary principal discussed a collaborative process, "It [goal setting] is a real collaborative thing." The principal

expanded her comments by stating that she discussed the collaborative process with her superintendent when they met at the beginning of the year to establish goals for the school year. She continued that she met with the superintendent periodically throughout the year to discuss her progress towards goal achievement. Another male, urban elementary principal described the collaboration process in detail. He stated, "We go ahead and sit down with the superintendent and develop our goals." One male, rural elementary principal expressed a different view about collaboration and goal setting. The principal stated he did not meet with the superintendent for goal setting. He, however, claimed that he and the superintendent met to monitor his progress.

Superintendents and assistant superintendents confirmed the principals' views about collaborative goal setting. A female, urban assistant superintendent stated, "We review the goals they [elementary principals] have established for themselves." Superintendents also reported meeting with elementary principals to collaborate on goals for the school year. A male, rural superintendent stated, "We sit down, and I ask them to explain their goals to me or ask if I am interpreting these [goals] correctly." A superintendent claimed that survey information provided input for elementary principal goals. A male, urban assistant superintendent stated that he set goals collaboratively with elementary principals, based on

feedback from parent and staff surveys. The two statements were the only mention of survey data.

Elementary principals, superintendents, and assistant superintendents of large Class 3 and Class 4 school districts perceived goal-setting evaluation systems, in many instances, were linked to school and district improvement plans. Several elementary principals, who indicated goal setting was a component of their evaluation, linked their goals to building and district goals. School improvement goals helped principals focus their goals on student achievement in their buildings. In relating his goals to the district goals, a male, rural elementary principal said, "District wide we do have some school improvement goals." Another male, rural elementary principal stated, "The goals that I talked about are both internal to my building and district wide."

Urban assistant superintendents reported that goal setting evaluation systems were linked to strategic plans within their school districts. Some rural superintendents reported this as well. Rural and urban superintendents and urban assistant superintendents reported that elementary principals integrated district goals with building-level goals that were linked with school improvement. A female, urban superintendent shared her perspective:

> Right now, we use yearly goals. An elementary principal's evaluation
> is based on a set of yearly expectations. Those usually include a

district goal, a growth goal to learn about something, and a general

performance goal. Sometimes they set their own goals.

The use of goal setting, however, was not implemented in all rural school

districts. A male, rural superintendent reported the evaluation system used

in his district included a list of tasks that an elementary principal could do

and indicators of professional and personal attributes. Another male, rural

superintendent described an evaluation system that used goal setting and a

variation of a checklist that contained leadership indicators.

Elementary principals, superintendents, and assistant

superintendents of large Class 3 and Class 4 school districts perceived goal

setting was used to develop performance growth plans for evaluation of

elementary principals. Elementary principals who used goal setting, stated

that they developed performance growth plans with their goals. These

performance growth plans provided structure for the documentation of

completing goals. A female, urban elementary principal stated that she met

with her assistant superintendent to "go through and look at her growth

plan." One elementary principal referred to the professional growth plan as

"a goal driven action plan." Another female, urban principal stated, "I turn

in a document that contains my professional goals at the beginning of the

year outlining what our building goal is, the action plan, and what the

evaluation plan will be." A male, urban elementary principal offered a

different view when he indicated that he was evaluated using two sets of

goals. He stated, "We have a couple sets of goals. We have our own personal self-development goals and then we have district goals."

Documentation of goals was described as important to the evaluation process. A male, rural elementary principal explained, "You have to be able to measure how you are going to judge whether you achieved this goal or not. I then hand in the documentation of everything that supports my goals." A female, rural elementary principal described the documentation for her goals. She stated, "You keep records or logs of meetings and contacts with teachers or whatever to prove the achievement of goals." Evaluation documents that were reviewed, such as district evaluation policies, indicated written procedures and forms for performance growth plans.

Participants clearly spoke to goal setting as an element of the evaluation process. They articulated that goals were developed into an action plan as part of the evaluation process. A female, urban assistant superintendent stated, "That is the first part of the appraisal process in the first meeting we have in the course of their appraisal year. We review the goals they have established for themselves." She further stated that most elementary principals' goals are related to their school plans. Principals developed a plan of action and collected artifacts that demonstrated achievement for each goal. The female, urban assistant superintendent stated that the information she always wanted to know could be gathered by asking "Is their work organized?"

Some goals were not attainable in one year. A male, rural superintendent stated that implementation of goals may take more than one year. In referring to goal achievement, he further stated, "They need to determine how they are going to get where they are going. Then they collect data to determine if they accomplished those goals." A male, urban assistant superintendent maintained that frequent meetings with an individual elementary principal throughout the year provided support and focus on established goals.

All evaluation documents illustrated examples of specific forms or formats for performance growth plans that elementary principals followed as they documented achievement of goals for professional growth. Evaluation documents showed that professional growth plans followed the same format in rural and urban school districts: (a) goals, (b) resources, (c) steps for completion, (d) timeline, and (e) evidence of performance for each goal.

Elementary principals, superintendents, and assistant superintendents of large Class 3 and Class 4 school districts perceived the systems used to document goal achievement were similar to portfolios. A female, urban assistant superintendent reported elementary principals used an approach similar to a portfolio for documentation of goals. This approach appeared to provide structure for this district's three-year evaluation of elementary principals. The female, urban assistant superintendent

explained, "They [elementary principals] are formally appraised every three years. Just like teachers. It is the same statutory requirements for principals and teachers in the State of Nebraska." A male, urban assistant superintendent described a scrapbook, an approach similar to portfolio, used in his district to evaluate elementary principals. The scrapbook captured documents that were used to assess achievement of "Mutual Commitments", which was their terms for goals. He stated, "Each principal has a notebook with tabs. It will say performance action plan #1, #2, #3 up through fourteen." He further stated, "I don't want them to spend huge amounts of time assembling a scrapbook." This assistant superintendent asserted that elementary principals in his district responded well to the district's structure of the notebook and tabs that organized the notebook into performance categories. Principals were instructed to place their mutual commitments [goals] and documentation to support these commitments within the notebooks according to the appropriate performance category.

Superintendents and assistant superintendents reported that elementary principals submitted written summaries of achievement for each goal. A male, rural superintendent remarked that elementary principals in his district were required to gather and keep track of performance evidence and write a summary for each goal. The superintendent further stated:

When we talk about the completion of their [principals'] goals, they

give me a summary of what they have done. They [principals] show

me through documentation whether or not they have achieved each

goal or things they wanted to do to make sure they achieve those

goals.

A male, urban assistant superintendent described written narratives completed by his elementary principals. He stated, "An elementary principal may have 50 pages of documents and reflections saying this is how I met this goal."

Some elementary principals, superintendents, and assistant superintendents of large Class 3 and Class 4 school districts perceived combination of goal setting and checklists was used in districts to evaluate job performances of elementary principals. Large Class 3 and 4 school districts' rural and urban superintendents and elementary principals reported integrating checklists and goal setting as an evaluation system. A male, rural elementary principal maintained that his evaluation consisted of both a checklist and a goal setting process. A female, urban elementary principal stated that her evaluation was "a little bit of both [goal setting and checklist] and in some ways resembled a checklist." She further reported that principals within her district received "feedback with our building goal presentation; there is a lot of dialogue." Principals in this urban district selected a goal and presented the outcome for this goal during an administrative team meeting. Another female, urban elementary principal believed that "just a checklist is not very comprehensive. I think the two of

them [checklist and goal setting] combined allows me to show the district my work. I like that."

Elementary principals who received this combination of goal setting and checklist form of evaluation found the goal setting piece to be more beneficial for professional growth than the checklist portion. A female, urban elementary principal shared, "I think the building goal is more valuable to me than the checklist." Another female, urban elementary principal supported this belief when she stated, "The building goal for me is more valuable."

Superintendents had similar perceptions about combination checklist and goal setting evaluation systems. A conversation with a male, rural superintendent confirmed that elementary principal evaluations consisted of checklists and performance growth plans with goal setting. He stated the evaluation instrument contained two parts, "a list of tasks that the elementary principal can do" and "goals that the principal wants to accomplish professionally in his or her building and personal goals." Several Southeast Nebraska school districts' evaluation documents contained guidance on the use of checklists and goal setting with performance growth plans. A superintendent claimed that goals were more valuable than a checklist in the evaluation process. Another male, rural superintendent agreed, "The checklist does not challenge people to do better. We have a more goals driven evaluation."

Criteria. *Elementary principals, superintendents, and assistant*
superintendents of large Class 3 and Class 4 school districts perceived rural
and urban evaluation documents linked evaluation to performance
indicators. Rural evaluation documents described specific performance
indicators for principals to complete throughout the school year. The
indicators were grouped into six categories: (a) climate control,
(b) communication skills, (c) instructional leadership, (d) professional
growth, (e) professional and personal qualities, and (f) assessment skills.
Climate control examined the learning environment, management of
facilities, and school improvement goals. Communication skills focused on
elementary principals' intrapersonal and interpersonal skills with students,
staff, and parents. Instructional leadership referred to the elementary
principals' abilities to monitor teachers' instructional plans for students and
supervision of school improvement goals. Professional growth explored
elementary principals' involvement and participation in workshops related
to administration, district activities, and professional organizations.
Professional and personal qualities examined elementary principals'
leadership, professional development, and school improvement. Assessment
skills referred to elementary principals' abilities to monitor assessment of
student learning and the faculty's professional development.

Urban evaluation documents described similar specific performance indicators for principals to complete throughout the school year. These indicators were grouped into five categories: (a) instructional leadership, (b) management skills, (c) school and community relations skills, (d) professional growth, and (e) personnel management. Instructional leadership skills referred to elementary principals' abilities to monitor the district's curriculum and implement its instructional policies, procedures, and goals for student learning. Management skills referred to elementary principals' abilities to organize resources effectively, organize and maintain educational facilities, and follow the district's procedures and policies. School and community relations examined elementary principals' effective use of two-way communication (interpersonal and intrapersonal skills) with parents, staff, and students. Professional growth referred to elementary principals' abilities to design and participate in professional self-development and self-appraisal to improve job performance. The final category of personnel management referred to elementary principals' abilities to implement district policies, and to design, and implement building-level inservice for faculty.

Elementary principals, superintendents, and assistant superintendents of small and large Class 3 and Class 4 school districts perceived that elementary principal evaluations were linked to job descriptions. Elementary principals believed that the criteria for evaluating

their performance were not linked to leadership standards. Some principals did not know the basis for their district's criteria. A male, rural elementary principal stated, "I do not know how they determined what their criteria are or how the job description was developed." Another male, rural elementary principal stated that he believed his district developed the job description criteria. He stated, "I think it is basically district ones that they came up with."

Elementary principals asserted that the district's criteria gave them a framework for accomplishing specific duties within their buildings, such as instruction and curriculum, management of facilities, management of staff performance, and the building's budget. A female, rural elementary principal stated, "Basically it's just like a big umbrella with instruction, curriculum, standards, and assessments." Another female, urban elementary principal also described her perceptions of the evaluation categories and criteria used in her district. She stated:

> Leadership, school community relations, personnel, finance, court service, communication, curriculum and instruction, and student achievement and supervision would be the large categories with criteria underneath each. The criteria are not really tied to any state standards. They are requirements of my position.

A male, urban elementary principal stated, "They take a close look at the educational structure of leadership skills, administrative management skills, communication of interpersonal skills, and personal qualities."

Evaluation documents from large Class 3 and Class 4 school districts included specific categories for elementary principal evaluations. Rural and urban evaluation documents' indicators included knowledge of subject matter, communication skills, professional and interpersonal qualities, and effective planning. The evaluation documents also supported elementary principals' beliefs that their appraisal systems were not linked to leadership standards. This corroborated elementary principals' statements that evaluations were linked to job descriptions and not to leadership standards.

Superintendents of small and large Class 3 and Class 4 school districts perceived that their evaluation systems were based on locally defined standards, such as job descriptions and research on leadership. A male, rural superintendent indicated that his district's evaluation for elementary principals was based on a job description. A female, urban assistant superintendent stated, "We have identified areas that we think are effective indicators of administrative leadership." This district based its elementary principal evaluation on research for effective leadership. The evaluation system covered five areas: (a) personnel management, (b) curriculum and instruction, (c) school-community relations,

(d) professional growth, and (e) management skills. She further stated that the effective schools' research was integrated into job descriptions, tasks, and linked with performance growth plans that included goal setting. A male, urban assistant superintendent stated, "We have identified areas that we think are effective indicators of administration leadership." These areas included such leadership roles as mentoring, presentations at conferences, chairing district committees, and commitment to the community. He further explained, "These areas were used to support mutual commitments [goals] established by elementary principals."

Frequency of evaluation. *Elementary principals, superintendents, and assistant superintendents of small and large Class 3 and Class 4 school districts indicated that frequency of evaluations varied among Southeast Nebraska school districts.* Evaluations, according to participants, ranged from never being conducted to being conducted twice a year, once a year, or every third year. Respondents stated that evaluations were twice a year for non-tenured principals. Principals, who received tenure after the third year, were evaluated once a year or once every three years.

Participants reported that frequency of evaluations varied for elementary principals. A female, rural elementary principal stated, "The superintendent evaluates me twice a year." She stated further, "That's also how our non-tenured teachers are evaluated, twice a year. Tenured teachers just do it once." There was some disagreement among elementary principals

about the terminology of "tenure" or "permanent" status. A male, rural elementary principal mentioned, "It is not tenure in the State of Nebraska. We are considered permanent." Principals receive a tenured or permanent status after the third year. One male, rural superintendent stated, "After the third year they have gained tenure, then it is done once a year. I usually sit down with the principal in June." Superintendents and assistant superintendents and review of evaluation documents agreed on the frequency of evaluations for elementary principals. A male, rural superintendent stated, "It is done twice a year for new principals. Once they have tenure it is done once a year." Large urban districts' assistant superintendents only evaluated elementary principals once every three, due to the greater number of elementary principals.

Fairness. *Elementary principals of large Class 3 and Class 4 school districts, who have goal setting as an element of their evaluations, perceived their districts' appraisal systems as fair for measuring their professional growth.* Building level administrators, who engaged in goal setting, perceived their evaluation process as fair for assessing professional growth. A female, urban elementary principal stated, "I think it is fair. I ask myself 'Did I grow in the area I said I was going to grow in?'" Elementary principals reported "feeling good" about the amount of participation they had with their evaluation systems. A male, urban elementary principal reported, "We get more input and are free to say, 'I don't agree with that' or 'Yes, I do

agree with that and I would like to add that piece to my growth plan.'" Most elementary principals reported opportunities for written or verbal input toward their evaluations. This input varied from goal setting to writing a rebuttal to open discussion with superintendents about their job performance. A female, urban elementary principal also claimed, "We are able to write comments at the end of our evaluations." Input, written or verbal, by elementary principals created a perception of fairness concerning their evaluations.

In contrast, elementary principals who experienced a checklist evaluation did not perceive this system as a fair assessment of their professional growth. A female, urban elementary principal stated, "I think a building goal is more valuable to me than this checklist." Some principals received an evaluation that included a combination of goal setting and checklist. A female, urban elementary principal who received a combination of goal setting and checklist evaluation believed a checklist was not comprehensive, but goal setting allowed her to display her level of competency in several areas. She further stated, "I think the building goal is in the right direction."

Superintendents and assistant superintendents of large Class 3 and Class 4 school districts perceived that evaluations were a fair process for assessing professional growth of elementary principals. One element that made evaluations fair, according to superintendents, was goal setting. A

male, rural superintendent stated that the goal setting evaluation system "allows principals an opportunity to look at areas that they want to improve on personally." A male, urban assistant superintendent remarked that he was evaluated using a similar type of evaluation process. He believed the goal setting system created accountability and motivated him to accomplish his job. He stated:

> It lights a fire under me to go oops, you know what? One of the things I was going to work on was the recruitment report. It is something that I have not been focused on, and I need to get on it. I think that is what makes this a different form of evaluation, what I think is fair about it. There are no surprises.

He commented that goal setting had the same effect on principals as it did for him. A male, rural superintendent presented a different slant about fairness. He asserted that evaluations should be "affirming what elementary principals are doing well; not a 'gotcha' type of situation." He further stated, "I think so many times teachers and administrators feel like it is a process to find what they are doing wrong."

Feedback

Four themes emerged from the data: (a) frequency of feedback, (b) multiple sources of data, (c) types of feedback, and (d) enhancing professional growth. The findings are described within these four themes.

Frequency of feedback. *There was a difference of perceptions between Class 3 and Class 4 principals and their district administrators, superintendents and assistant superintendents, about the frequency of feedback from evaluations.* A female, rural elementary principal stated, "The superintendent does comment frequently. We do have weekly administrative team meetings. At that time we are able to discuss district wide issues as well as building level things." Another female, rural elementary principal shared a similar situation. She explained that because her district was small, she had weekly meetings with the superintendent. The opposite occurred for another female, rural elementary principal, "It is kind of hit and miss. If I have a reason to invite my supervisor, we sit down." Some rural elementary principals believed that feedback should occur more frequently. A male, rural principal indicated feedback "is infrequent, but occurs on a semester basis." This elementary principal stated he wanted more feedback about his job performance. A female, urban elementary principal also stated she wanted "more frequent feedback." Several rural principals agreed that more feedback was necessary.

Experiences varied regarding the frequency of feedback among urban elementary principals and rural elementary principals. The urban elementary principals participated in monthly administrative team meetings, which usually allowed principals to share ideas with each other and their superintendent. It also provided opportunities for elementary

principals to meet individually with superintendents. A female, urban

elementary principal stated, "We meet often as a whole administrative

team." She further stated that her superintendent sent a memo midyear to

confer with her about her progress toward goals. Another female, urban

elementary principal reported, "Most of the supervisors in this district

supervise five to six principals at the elementary level. Those six principals

get together with their supervisor once a month." A female, urban

elementary principal explained that she received ongoing feedback and

communication from her superintendent or supervisor, usually the assistant

superintendent.

Rural superintendents of small and large Class 3 school districts

reported that their elementary principals received periodic feedback about

their performances. A male, rural superintendent stated that elementary

principals were getting constant feedback on their job performance. Another

male, rural superintendent expressed a slightly different view, "It

[feedback] is face-to-face every nine weeks." Yet, another male, rural

superintendent addressed frequency of feedback in less specific terms, "It

[feedback] is probably done informally, but periodically throughout the year

with written feedback given at the end of the year."

In urban settings, assistant superintendents provided the feedback

to elementary principals. A female, urban assistant superintendent

maintained she kept in recurrent contact with first-year principals as

outlined by her district's mentoring policy. A male, urban assistant superintendent reported that feedback occurred weekly to monthly. Some supervisors provided less frequent feedback. A female, urban superintendent stated that she gave feedback quarterly and during each semester. She continued by stating that a formal evaluation with feedback was given during the third quarter and summer.

Multiple sources for feedback. *Principal evaluation systems that used goal setting included multiple sources of data.* Multiple sources of data were elements of elementary principal evaluation systems that used goal setting. Elementary principals indicated that they experienced data-driven evaluations using multiple sources of information. Review of evaluation documents further clarified the sources of information. Multiple sources consisted of data from: (a) observations and interactions with the elementary principals or on-site visits, (b) staff surveys, (c) parents surveys and telephone interviews, (d) written reflections by elementary principals' on accomplishments of professional and personal self-development goals, and (e) superintendents' annual written summaries.

Rural and urban elementary principals of large Class 3 and Class 4 school districts reported that assistant superintendents or superintendents conducted on-site visits. A male, rural elementary principal stated that his superintendent made informal, casual visits. A male, urban elementary principal addressed on-site visits by the assistant superintendent. He

stated, "She spends as much time as she feels she needs. It could be three hours or two hours. It depends on how many years you have been a principal." He further stated, "With a newer principal, she spends more time. She is very good about giving whatever attention needs to be given."

Superintendents and assistant superintendents confirmed that they scheduled on-site visits with elementary principals to observe them as they performed their jobs. A female, urban superintendent stated, "We visit formally throughout the year; about three to four times a year." A male, urban assistant superintendent concurred, "We as supervisors probably meet with them on-site, a minimum of six to eight times a year."

Surveys were commonly used in Southeast Nebraska to provide data for elementary principal evaluations. Elementary principals of large Class 3 and Class 4 school districts in rural and urban settings indicated that they received feedback gathered from surveys completed by parents and staff. The elementary principals also received feedback from their teachers through self-developed surveys or professionally designed school climate surveys. A male, rural elementary principal stated, "There are probably many ways information could be gained from teachers and parents." He indicated that he developed his own surveys that were given to parents and staff.

Urban districts differed from rural districts in that they provided surveys to collect data from building staff. A female, urban elementary

principal reported that once a year her district conducted a school climate survey, which provided information from staff, parents, and upper grade students. Survey information was given to the superintendent. The central office staff would compile this information, and the superintendent would use it in the feedback loop to the elementary principal. A male, urban elementary principal stated, "Surveys were put together by the central office team and given to students, staff, and parents to complete."

Rural and urban elementary principals of large Class 3 and Class 4 school districts perceived that teachers should have an active role in providing feedback for elementary principals' evaluations. A rural, female elementary principal shared, "I have a separate form that I use for myself, but the superintendent also gets feedback from the teachers." Other elementary principals believed that teachers should have the opportunity to provide input or feedback rather than direct involvement in elementary principal evaluations. An urban, female principal expressed uncertainty that teachers should have an active role in principal evaluation. She stated, "I don't know about elementary principal evaluations. I think teachers have a role in feedback."

Some superintendents and assistant superintendents of large Class 3 and Class 4 school districts emphasized the use of multiple sources of data to assist with feedback given to elementary principals. Respondents stated that staff input was important in providing additional feedback about the

principal's administrative behaviors. Staff input, which was collected through survey instruments, was anonymous to encourage honest contributions from teachers and staff. A male, rural superintendent explained the process used in his school district with surveys and elementary principal evaluations:

Once a year everybody that works in the [elementary principal's] building will get one of these [surveys]. They fill it out and send it to my secretary. She tabulates it for me and puts it all together in a chart. I then send it out to the principals. They get an overall picture of how they were rated and how they are perceived on certain things.

A female, urban assistant superintendent agreed with this approach. She stated, "Teachers fill out a survey along with classified staff, and a random sample of parents in each building." These surveys provided a forum for teachers to voice their needs and desires concerning the climate of the school. A male, rural superintendent also reported, "Teachers get a chance to tell what they like or what they would like to change. It is not all negative."

Some rural and urban superintendents, however, stated that they do not require formal staff input as part of the evaluation process. A female, urban superintendent reported, "We don't do that. Some [elementary principals] do a survey with their staff; it does not come from me. It is not part of their formal evaluation."

Participants reported written reflections from elementary principals, who have an action or growth plan as another source of information for superintendents. A rural, female elementary principal explained how critical this was for her. She claimed that sitting down, thinking, and writing about decisions made during the week and the year were very important for her professional growth. "I reflect at the end of the year on the goals I set for myself. You are always going back to them [goals]." She used these probes to facilitate her written reflections: "Have I made some progress?" or "What is it that I need to do?" Incremental reflections were made as she proceeded through the year, such as mid-year, and finally at the end of the year for the summative evaluation. A male, urban elementary principal completed similar written reflections in quarterly reports given to his assistant superintendent. A male, rural superintendent and male, urban assistant superintendent pointed out that their elementary principals wrote reflections on how they reached their goals. Elementary principals' written reflections and data gathered from multiple sources provided information for annual narrative reports developed by their supervisor.

Types of feedback. *Elementary principals, superintendents, and assistant superintendents of Class 3 and Class 4 school districts perceived that both formative and summative feedback were aspects of the evaluation process.* Elementary principals reported that they received formative and summative feedback during their evaluations. A rural, female elementary

principal stated, "Most of the feedback is verbal; although the summative is written." Another rural, female elementary principal stated that she also received formative and summative feedback on her job performance. A male, rural elementary principal did not receive verbal feedback. He stated that he received only written feedback at the end of the year. A male, rural elementary principal stated that he received written summative feedback his first year and only verbal feedback since that time. Several other rural elementary principals echoed similar remarks.

Superintendents and assistant superintendents indicated that they gave formative and summative feedback to elementary principals. Typically, formative feedback was ongoing and given verbally, whereas summative feedback was provided in a written narrative report. A male, rural superintendent shared, "Feedback is both verbal and in writing. I give copies to the principals and put it into a file." A female, urban superintendent explained that she also gave summative feedback in writing. She further stated, "Written narrative means more to principals. They know what they need to look at, what they can get better at, and what they really do well." Evaluation documents revealed that summative feedback required a written narrative. Superintendents and assistant superintendents claimed that they wanted an evaluation process to enhance elementary principals' professional growth. A female, urban assistant superintendent noted, "Appraisal should reinforce and commend principals for doing things very

well within their buildings." Most elementary principals, superintendents, and assistant superintendents stated that feedback, verbal and written, provided data to enhance improvements.

Professional growth. *Elementary principals, superintendents, and assistant superintendents of large Class 3 and Class 4 school districts perceived that feedback from evaluations enhanced professional growth.* A female, rural elementary principal stated, "Feedback does enhance my professional growth." A female, urban elementary principal stated that she needed feedback "because when things were going well, it was difficult to tell herself, you need to get better." Two male, rural elementary principals shared the belief that feedback enhances professional growth. The first principal stated that feedback does enhance his professional growth. The second principal echoed this remark by stating that he values feedback as a foundation for his improvement.

Superintendents and assistant superintendents shared the belief about the value of the feedback in evaluations. A female, urban assistant superintendent expressed the value of feedback in creating strong leaders. In responding to the question "How does feedback during evaluation facilitate professional growth?" she stated that feedback was effective in creating a strong leader. She said, "I certainly hope so. It [feedback] is clear that strong principal leadership is essential for student achievement. It [leadership] makes all the difference in the world. We do everything we can

to help principals become instructional leaders." A male, rural principal provided the lone remark that feedback does not enhance professional growth. He stated that, personally, feedback from his superintendent did not enhance his professional growth.

Self-evaluation and Reflection

Two themes emerged from the data for this category: (a) self-evaluations and (b) reflection. Findings are described within these two themes.

Self-evaluation. *Elementary principals, superintendents, and assistant superintendents of Class 3 and Class 4 school districts perceived that self-evaluation was not a formal element of building level administrators' evaluations.* Rural and urban elementary principals stated that they were not required to complete an official self-evaluation. A female, urban elementary principal stated, "It [self-evaluation] isn't something we are asked to do. I think it [self-evaluation] is certainly something that should be done." A male, urban elementary principal asserted, "I don't think I have ever gone through and written up an evaluation on myself."

Superintendents and assistant superintendents had a slightly different view about self-evaluations. They concurred that principals were not asked to perform formal self-evaluations, but believed they usually conducted an informal self-evaluation. A male, rural superintendent stated, "Every semester they [building principals] revisit their goals. We talk about

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their goals on a weekly basis." He continued by summarizing that this resulted in principals accomplishing informal self-evaluations. A male, urban assistant superintendent agreed that principals performed informal self-evaluations saying, "Elementary principals do a self assessment when they fill out performance growth plans." Another male, rural superintendent summarized the belief that principals conducted informal self-evaluations by stating that he did not give elementary principals an instrument and direct them to "rank yourself." He believed that the elementary principals, in many instances, engaged in self-assessment. A male, rural elementary principal integrated the principals' and superintendents' beliefs by stating, "I am always looking for ways to improve even though nobody is telling me to." Although self-evaluation was not a formal component of the evaluation process, principals were expected to thoughtfully examine their work.

Reflection. *Elementary principals, superintendents, and assistant superintendents of small and large Class 3 and Class 4 school districts perceived that building level administrators engaged in reflective practice.* Elementary principals responded that they used reflective practice often during the school year. A male, rural elementary principal stated, "I don't think I could have survived 20 years being a principal without reflecting. It's great because you sit back and look at things." A male, rural elementary principal stated, "There are ample opportunities for reflection." He continued that each day provided him with many opportunities to reflect

about decisions and interactions with students, staff, and parents that could improve his job performance.

Elementary principals from large Class 3 and Class 4 school districts, who had a performance growth plan, stated that they used reflection to assess their growth. A rural, female elementary principal stated, "I write reflections for all of my growth targets and include them in my portfolio." A female, urban principal explained how her questions drove her reflection. She stated, "We have to say: 'Did I do this year what I should have done?' and 'Did I grow in the area I said I was going to grow in?'" A male, urban elementary principal had a different twist to self-assessing with his professional growth plan. He described that he shared his growth plan with his staff as he reflected on his target goals. He stated, "It can be a real bond. You can share with staff; this is what I am working on; I think that helps."

A problem for elementary principals involved the issue of setting time aside on a daily basis to reflect. A rural, female elementary principal stated that because her district is small, she wears many different hats and it can be difficult to find time to reflect. She stated, "I need to find the time. It [reflection] is so valuable and critical for my leadership." Another female, rural elementary principal described how she finds time to reflect. She stated, "I write a memo to myself to actually take the time to reflect on the events of the day. That is critical to set time aside to reflect." Elementary

principals maintained an expectation that time for reflection needs to be set aside within the school day and throughout the year.

Rural superintendents and urban assistant superintendents from large Class 3 and Class 4 school districts perceived that elementary principals integrated reflection with performance growth plans. A male, rural superintendent explained, "The reflection piece is built in by principals reflecting how they have reached their goals. They [elementary principals] think about what they had to do to get to the end of the goal." He further stated that his elementary principals met with him to review the reflection part of their performance growth plan. A male, urban assistant superintendent explained that during administrative team meetings, where group reflective sessions occurred, he often asked elementary principals, "If you could do it over again; what would you have done differently?" He considered this a form of reflection.

Elementary principals, superintendents, and assistant superintendents of Class 3 and Class 4 school districts considered reflection to be a necessary activity to engage in before, during, and after decision-making processes. Elementary principals believed that reflection was an ongoing, continuous activity that they engaged in as they performed administrative tasks. A male, rural elementary principal stated, "There are so many things that come up; what is a priority one week is a small priority a month later. With our ever changing jobs, you never know what is going to

happen from day to day." A male, urban elementary principal eloquently explained, "I would say that the nature of the position ought to lend anybody in it to think about decisions they have made and things they are trying to accomplish." This changing nature of the principalship had led many Southeast Nebraska elementary principals to reflect on the challenges they face on a daily basis. A rural, female elementary principal claimed, "Having to wear so many hats, it [reflection] is great. It does give me time to practice what I preach." This principal believed in modeling reflective practice for her teaching staff.

Superintendents and assistant superintendents believed that reflective practice was a valuable tool for elementary principals. A male, rural superintendent shared his approach for reflective practice during administrative meetings, "We [elementary principals and superintendent] reflect on issues for curriculum or discipline, things that we think have gone really well or have not gone well. We re-examine things we have done and see what we can learn." A male, rural superintendent stated that his elementary principals engaged in reflection on a daily basis. Another male, rural superintendent stated:

> I think the reflection piece is built in by the elementary principals
> reflecting how they have reached their goals. The principals
> document what they had to do to get to the end of the goal, meet with

me to go over the reflection part, and for me to give them a final summative evaluation.

Urban superintendents and assistant superintendents also confirmed that their elementary principals engaged in reflective practice. A male, assistant superintendent stated, "Some of them do it naturally. Some of them journal, some of them do a reflection piece all the time, and some meet in groups to reflect." Not all principals devoted the same amount of time and energy to reflective practice. A female, urban superintendent summed up reflective practice completed by elementary principals, "Some do reflection more than others."

Research Question Three

Research question three asked, "What are the necessary elements of a performance-based evaluation model for elementary principals?" The findings for this question emerged from data collected from interviews of 15 elementary principals, 4 superintendents, and 2 assistant superintendents of small and large Class 3 and Class 4 schools. No contributions were collected from Class 1, 2, and 6 school administrators because they were not identified by the faculties from educational leadership programs at seven Nebraska institutions of higher education. Class 5 school administrators were prevented from participation in this research by district policy. The findings gleaned from the elementary principals' data are compared and

contrasted with the findings identified from superintendents and assistant superintendents' data.

Improvement of Evaluation Systems

Findings for this section were grouped according to two perspectives: (a) elementary principals' perceptions and (b) superintendents' and assistant superintendents' perceptions. The findings are italicized and supported with quotes from participants.

Elementary principals' perceptions. *Elementary principals of large Class 3 and Class 4 school districts perceived the need for additional feedback from superintendents or assistant superintendents.* One female, urban elementary principal shared, "We have been reading about the power of feedback with kids that is timely. I think it is the same for adults." A rural, female elementary principal stated, "I think it [feedback] is human nature to want it [feedback] more often. I would like to have more feedback. It would be better for me or for any principal." Elementary principals stated that they preferred additional feedback through face-to-face communication, rather than through emails or memos. A female, urban elementary principal stated, "It has to be that face-to-face communication."

Urban elementary principals of large Class 3 and Class 4 school districts perceived a need for more frequent meetings with supervisors to receive evaluation feedback. One male, urban elementary principal stated that he wanted to be able to sit down with his supervisor and discuss where

he is with his goals. He claimed that this provided him with opportunities to obtain feedback and receive direction on his goals. Another male, urban elementary principal stated, "I think more contact with the central office supervisor would be helpful." A male, urban elementary principal described his frustration with infrequent checkpoints. He stated:

> I think if we [elementary principal and supervisor] could sit down [and talk] more than once or twice when we do my growth plan and the final [summative meeting]. I could discuss with my evaluator where I am at; we could discuss if there is something I could be doing that is more pertainable to this goal.

A female, urban elementary principal confirmed a desire for dialogue with her supervisor. She wanted "more opportunities to dialogue with my superiors." Frequent checkpoints and discussions were cited numerous times as a way to enhance elementary principals' professional growth.

Elementary principals of Class 3 and Class 4 school districts perceived that a lack of time was devoted to their evaluations. An elementary principal stated that he believed insufficient time for superintendents or assistant superintendents was a factor in not receiving frequent feedback or additional checkpoints. Time constraints were attributed to hindering the type of feedback necessary for adequate formative, verbal feedback. A female, urban elementary principal believed it would be beneficial for the assistant superintendent to see "what's going on in a building" by making

more on-site visits. Such an experience would provide a superintendent or assistant superintendent with hands-on knowledge of day-to-day tasks and interactions among the building principal, students, and staff. A male, urban elementary principal, however, noted, "When one person is responsible for evaluating 50 building principals it is difficult to have that in-depth time with her [assistant superintendent]." However, while superintendents did not report a need to give more feedback to principals, they did indicate a need to have additional time to spend with principals.

Superintendents' and assistant superintendents' perceptions. Superintendents and assistant superintendents of Class 3 and Class 4 school districts offered a variety of suggestions for enhancing elementary principal evaluations. Superintendents were reticent in offering suggestions for improving evaluation systems. Probing was required before superintendents provided suggestions for improvement of elementary principal evaluation systems. Assistant superintendents freely offered suggestions. The supervisors suggested: (a) developing a formalized evaluation system, (b) integrating more multiple sources of data for feedback, (c) professional development and conversation points (checkpoints) for elementary principals, and (d) scheduling more time for evaluations.

Superintendents of small Class 3 school districts perceived a need for more formal evaluation systems. A female, urban superintendent stated she

desired to make the district's evaluation process for principals a more formal performance evaluation. A male, rural superintendent also desired a more formalized evaluation process. He stated, "I would formalize it [the evaluation] more. This is probably more my challenge than theirs. I do not sit down on specific times and say 'Let's go back and revisit your goals', I should probably formalize it better."

Superintendents suggested receiving input from students as part of their multiple sources for feedback. A female, urban superintendent declared she would like to improve the evaluation process in her district. She stated that she wanted middle school and older students to provide input about the school climate created by their principals. A male, rural superintendent pointed out, however, that his district's elementary principal evaluation was recently revised, but that he would like additional input from students even at the elementary level.

Superintendents and assistant superintendents of Class 3 and Class 4 school districts offered suggestions that included professional development and frequent conversation points for elementary principals. A male, rural superintendent stated, "One of the things that I feel strongly about is staff development." He further stated that staff development for elementary principals could include presentations to faculty and attendance at national conferences. Evaluation documents indicated that continuous improvement of skills was an expectation for professional growth. In addition to

professional development, a female, urban superintendent suggested

additional conversation points with her elementary principals would

facilitate their professional growth. She stated that "more conversation

points along the way" would make appraisal of elementary principals a

stronger foundation for professional growth in job performance. She further

declared, "It would be nice as part of the formal process to have more

conversation points."

A final suggestion offered by assistant superintendents was the issue

of time. A male, urban assistant superintendent mentioned, "I don't think

six visits are enough. Maybe it is a time issue. I would love to spend more

time [with the principal]." Assistant superintendents claimed that the issue

of infrequent meetings with elementary principals needed to be addressed

in the evaluation process. A female, urban assistant superintendent

believed that scheduling time to spend half a day in each building with an

elementary principal would benefit the evaluation process.

<u>Summary</u>

This research examined elements for an evaluation system that

promotes professional growth for elementary principals. The researcher

answered three overarching questions from data collected from interviews

and document review. The data collected were analyzed to find emerging

categories and themes. Triangulation of data across inquiry methods, the

constant comparative method, and content analysis confirmed or identified

differences from the data. Four categories were synthesized and used to facilitate discussion of findings for each research question. The findings that led to the conclusions and implications are included in the next chapter, as well as contributing data for the evaluation framework in the final chapter.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Rural and urban elementary principals, superintendents, and assistant superintendents in Southeast Nebraska provide their perceptions about how elementary principal evaluations contribute to professional growth. A brief description of the purpose of the research and a summary of the results precede the conclusions and implications.

<u>Purpose of the Research</u>

This research determines the elements of an evaluation system that have potential to promote professional growth of elementary principals. Findings and conclusions provide support for the development of an evaluation framework that enhances professional growth for elementary principals. Three overarching questions provided a direction for the research, generated data identifying the perceptions of participants, and ultimately guided the development of an evaluation framework. The three research questions were:

1. What are elementary principals' perceptions about processes and procedures that would improve elementary principal evaluation?

2. What are superintendents' perceptions about processes and procedures that would improve elementary principal evaluation?

3. What are the necessary elements of a performance-based evaluation model for elementary principals?

Summary of Findings

The findings are organized into four categories: (a) structure,

(b) feedback, (c) self-evaluation and reflection, (d) and improvement of

evaluation systems. Themes emerge in each category. The first category,

structure, consists of five themes: (a) formality, (b) types, (c) criteria,

(d) frequency of evaluations, and (e) fairness. The second category, feedback,

includes four themes: (a) frequency of feedback, (b) multiple sources of data,

(c) types of feedback, and (d) enhancing professional growth. The next

category, self-evaluation and reflection, have two themes: (a) self-evaluation

and (b) reflection. In the fourth category, improvement of evaluation

systems, two themes emerge: (a) elementary principals' perceptions and

(b) superintendents' perceptions. The conclusions and literature review

provide support for the elements that form the basis for the evaluation

framework, which is described in Chapter 6.

Conclusions

Cross-category analyses were used to develop eleven conclusions,

which are supported by literature. These conclusions are emphasized with

italics in the text. The implications evolve from the conclusions and

complete the discussion of this chapter.

Disparity exists among elementary principals, superintendents, and

assistant superintendents about the formality, written or unwritten, of

elementary principal evaluation systems. Written, formal evaluation systems

versus unwritten, informal evaluation systems depend on the size of school districts. School districts with written systems clearly provide procedures for the evaluation and expectations of elementary principals' performance, whereby principals receive information about the evaluation process and job performance outcomes. At the other end of the spectrum, school districts with unwritten evaluation systems provide unstructured procedures and vague expectations for their elementary principals' performances. Some informal, unwritten, evaluation systems include perfunctory checklists or informal goal-based systems. Small rural districts with combination elementary principal-superintendent positions often have an unwritten evaluation system. Large Class 3 and Class 4 school districts, rural and urban, all have written evaluation systems.

Researchers indicate that current principal evaluations lack clarity of expectations, which was the case in this study. Instead, principal evaluations should account for differing conditions and differing styles of leadership (Brown, Irby, & Chance, 1997; Harrison & Peterson, 1986; Peterson, 1991; Reeves, 2003). Petersen and Reeves claim that school districts must define precisely in writing what they want to gain from principal evaluations and refrain from overstepping that definition.

Goal setting, an element of written evaluations, appears to enhance professional growth and school improvement. Elementary principals who engage in goal setting also link their professional goals with building or

district improvement plans. Goals may focus on academic learning, social development, learning environment, faculty and staff development, faculty and staff involvement, parent involvement and satisfaction, or on professional growth. The principal's professional growth plan addresses specific criteria relevant to school improvement. This research reveals that goal setting linked to the school or district improvement plan is a preferable method for evaluation of elementary principals.

Connecting principals' goals with a school improvement plan is one possible approach for motivating principals to monitor teachers' instructional strategies and their impact on student achievement, which was the case in this research. Superintendents require elementary principals to establish goals that tie to school improvement plans and students' achievement.

Many written evaluation systems include goal setting. Goal setting is a collaborative effort between elementary principals and superintendents or assistant superintendents. Rural and urban elementary principals who use goal setting as part of their evaluations establish goals collaboratively with their assistant superintendents or superintendents. Superintendents and assistant superintendents in this study require elementary principals to identify at least one goal that integrates school improvement targets. Elementary principals may choose to focus their professional goals on curriculum and instruction, or student achievement, or both.

Elementary principals, who use goal setting, also collect artifacts and write reflective summaries to document the achievement of goals. Rural and urban school districts' use evaluation formats that are similar to the portfolio process. Elementary principals who use goal setting submit evidence that documents achievement of their goals at the end of the year. School administrators stress the importance that the collection of artifacts is a manageable process for elementary principals.

Job descriptions form the foundation for elementary principal evaluations and exclude national leadership standards. Rural and urban school districts' base their evaluation systems on elementary principals' job descriptions and leadership dispositions. Elementary principals' job descriptions include: (a) monitoring student achievement, (b) selecting new staff, (c) developing curriculum, (d) managing facilities, (e) developing and managing the budget, and (f) keeping records. Evaluation systems of school districts integrate leadership dispositions from effective schools research. Elementary principals' leadership skills in the evaluation documents include: (a) integrity, (b) ethics, (c) effective communication, and (d) good decision-making.

School districts in Southeast Nebraska did not integrate leadership standards, such as the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) into the development of their principal evaluation systems. Several researchers suggest leadership standards serve as a foundation for an

evaluation system (Brown & Irby, 1998; Ginsberg & Thompson, 1992; Glasman & Heck, 1992; Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, 1996; Murphy, 2001; Reeves, 2003; Thomas & Vornberg, 1991). Evaluation systems that link leadership standards into the process provide clearer expectations and guidance to principals. Districts that align their evaluation system with leadership standards communicate their expectations for elementary principals' performances. Furthermore, leadership standards provide opportunities for fair, accurate, and comprehensive evaluations of elementary principals (Reeves, 2003).

Principals believe that goal setting, feedback, and consistency contribute to the fairness of evaluation systems. Goal setting provides elementary principals with voice and evaluation criteria. Also, supervisors' feedback allows principals to make adjustments about their performances during the evaluation period. Consistency enables principals to know criteria for the evaluation process and performance expectations.

School administrators in this research believe their evaluation processes provide clear expectations and consistent implementation as fair systems. Leadership standards and clear expectations in evaluation systems provide opportunities for precise, extensive, and fair appraisals of school administrators (Reeves, 2003).

Frequency of feedback varies between supervisors and elementary principals. Most rural elementary principals receive feedback weekly during

face-to-face meetings, while others acquire it on a quarterly basis. Urban elementary principals receive feedback periodically through monthly administrative meetings and infrequent on-site visits by their supervisors.

Recommendation from leadership experts includes frequent feedback to ensure changes in principals' leadership behaviors (Calabrese, 2000; Seijts, 2001; Smither, 1998). Superintendents believe they provide constant feedback to their elementary principals. Frequent feedback from superintendents or assistant superintendents occur at weekly or monthly meetings.

Multiple sources of data provide information for superintendents and assistant superintendents to give as formative and summative feedback to elementary principals throughout the school year. Formative and summative feedback from multiple sources occurs for elementary principals. Multiple sources include: (a) surveys, (b) administrative meeting discussions, and (c) on-site observations. Verbal feedback occurs throughout the year, whereas written feedback happens during the summative process at year's end. Participants describe multiple sources of data as: (a) parent surveys and staff surveys, (b) weekly or monthly administrative meeting discussions, and (c) observations during on-site visitations. Parent surveys and staff surveys include close-ended and open-ended items. Weekly meeting discussions typically involve one-on-one sessions between elementary principals and superintendents. During monthly meetings

discussions involve the entire administrative team in receiving updates and dialogue about district issues. Additionally, superintendents make on-site visits during observational sojourns to school buildings. The intent of elementary principals visits is to observe them engage in their duties and interactions with students and faculty. District staff completes this aspect of the evaluation cycle by providing written narrative to elementary principals. Elementary principals, then integrate this information into their decision-making processes and make changes in their interactions with students, faculty, staff, and the community.

Feedback from multiple sources facilitates professional growth for principals in this research. Dyer (2001) claims that school administrators, who receive feedback from different sources, reassess their skills, address weaknesses, and become more valuable to their schools and districts. School administrators believe that feedback from parents, staff, and superintendents enhances professional growth. Multiple sources provide principals with more dimensions of data to assess their experiences.

Formative and summative feedback facilitates elementary principals professional growth. Elementary principals' evaluation systems contain formative and summative feedback. Formative feedback typically occurs as a verbal exchange between elementary principals and superintendents. Summative feedback occurs in a written narrative given to elementary

principals at the end of the year. Both forms of feedback help facilitate professional growth of elementary principals.

Frequent, formative and summative feedback is important during the evaluation cycle (Calabrese, 2000; Cardy, 1998; Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Moravec, 1996; Thomas & Vornberg, 1991). In this study, elementary principals receive frequent, verbal, formative feedback. Once a year, elementary principals receive written, summative feedback. Most principals want and need feedback to improve job performance. The need for both types of feedback is crucial for elementary principals to improve their job performances (Brown & Irby, 1998).

Superintendents and assistant superintendents encourage elementary principals to engage in reflective practice, but self-evaluation is not part of Southeast Nebraska evaluation systems. Assistant superintendents and superintendents value and encourage elementary principals to include reflection as an element of self-assessment. Self-evaluation, however, is not an element in formal evaluation systems in Southeast Nebraska. This appears to be a disconnection between district personnel's expressed beliefs and their actual practices of districts' evaluation systems.

A disparity exists among elementary principals and between superintendents and assistant superintendents about the need to improve evaluation systems. Elementary principals who use goal setting for the evaluation process, identify only minor needs for improvement, whereas

elementary principals who receive an evaluation with a checklist, have major concerns with their systems. A common belief among principals is that a definite schedule for feedback would improve evaluation systems that are based on goal setting.

Checklist evaluations receive a harsher critique from elementary principals about their effectiveness. Principals who experience a checklist evaluation system claim they receive no meaningful feedback that facilitates their professional growth. Further, elementary principals who experience a checklist found this type of evaluation tool does not allow for consistency of evaluations from one time period to the next.

Elementary principals, superintendents, and assistant superintendents do not completely agree about the need for improvement of elementary principal evaluations. Superintendents and assistant superintendents believe their evaluation systems are adequate for appraising elementary principals' performances. While the superintendents and assistant superintendents believe there is room for improvement, they trust the evaluation systems are meeting the needs of their districts. Elementary principals, superintendents, and assistant superintendents share one common belief: more time is necessary for the evaluation process to be effective. An increase in frequency of feedback and periodic checks of progress for goal achievement requires additional time for principals and their supervisors.

Implications of the Research

This research identifies elements of an evaluation system that promotes professional growth of elementary principals. Findings and conclusions support five implications for consideration when developing an elementary principal evaluation system. Readers must ascertain whether the findings, conclusions, and implications in Chapters 4 and 5 are transferable to their particular contexts. Each implication is italicized for ease of identification and supported by the research and literature.

Superintendents should develop written formal, goals-based elementary principal evaluation systems that identify leadership standards appropriate for their context. As was evident in this study, elementary principals experience informal and formal evaluation systems. An evaluation system should consist of written formal procedures that guide superintendents in conducting an appraisal of elementary principals' job performance. Evaluation systems, however, that are not based on written, formal procedures tend to rely on seniority as a basis for personnel actions (Castetter, 1992). A formal evaluation system consists of written procedures and expectations. This research and the literature indicate school districts should define precisely what leadership behaviors they expect from principals. The literature does recommend that districts develop evaluation systems that use local or national leadership standards (Brown & Irby, 1998; Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, 1996; Lashway,

1998; Reeves, 2003). Study participants lacked knowledge about the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISSLC) leadership standards as an available source to draw upon in the development of their evaluation systems. Leadership standards have the potential of identifying indicators for elementary principals' job performance.

Elementary principals who are knowledgeable of a district's expectations have information that can direct their professional goals. The literature indicates that principals, who experience goal-based evaluation systems, report an increase in ownership of their professional growth (Seijts, 2001; Yearta et al., 1995). Also, elementary principals who use a goal setting process should know how their various goals will be assessed by the superintendent (Seijts,; Yearta et al.,).

Superintendents should develop a specific format for professional growth plans that leads to achievement of goals. Elementary principals use professional growth plans in goal-based evaluation systems. This study supports specific formats that articulate the development of professional growth plans. Professional growth plans should relate to statements of purpose, long-range plans, goals, and reflection. Many districts that use a goal-based evaluation system require principals to link their professional growth plans to the school's improvement plan. An evaluation system that suggests a format for writing a professional growth plan and how to

document achievement of goals provides elementary principals with guidance for developing a written plan for implementing the goals.

Study participants who use professional growth plans indicate the format provides a means for elementary principals to monitor achievement of goals, to self evaluate professional growth, and to document specific competencies. Further, it provides principals with opportunities to review, reflect, and analyze past events. The literature describes the use of personal reflection to evaluate educational practice, identify patterns of behavior, and incorporate change into a principal's practice of educational administration (Guaglianone & Yerkes, 1998; Meadows & Dyal, 1999; Reeves, 1998).

Superintendents should ensure that the evaluation system is fair by aligning it to goals and values of the school district. Many elementary principals in Southeast Nebraska experience evaluation systems that are fair in providing an appraisal that promotes professional growth. However, the literature indicates that if there is a perception the evaluation process is inaccurate, irrelevant or unfair; it undermines that particular appraisal system (Lashway, 1998; Reeves, 2003).

Superintendents should provide frequent, regular feedback with multiple sources of data. Frequent feedback varies among elementary principals in Southeast Nebraska. However, systematic feedback is a crucial and desirable element for evaluating job performance of subordinates (Cardy, 1998; Graddick & Lane, 1998; Moravec, 1996). Superintendents

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should develop a culture that supports feedback for professional growth of their elementary principals. Elementary principals report that they receive sporadic to weekly feedback from their superintendents throughout the year. Frequent feedback from multiple sources should make a difference in elementary principals' leadership and management behaviors (Ginsberg & Berry, 1990; London & Smither, 1995; Reeves, 1998). Many study participants indicate feedback from multiple sources helps develop an understanding of how others perceive them, which can facilitate areas for performance improvement

Superintendents should ensure that self-evaluation and reflection are part of elementary principal evaluation systems. The elementary principals who participated in this study engage in reflection to self-assess their performance. Evaluation and reflection provide a means for examining what has been accomplished in the past and for determining what to do in the future (Brown & Irby, 1998; Ediger, 1998; Reeves, 1998). When elementary principals who participated in this research select artifacts and reflections that directly reference goals in their professional growth plans, this documents achievement of their identified goals. Self-evaluation and reflective practice can aid principals to improve upon, portray, and assess their work (Brown & Irby, 1996; London & Smither, 1995; Martin-Kneip, 1999; Thomas & Vornberg, 1991).

This research raises a concern about evaluation systems and minority voice. Urban school districts that prohibit or dissuade staff from participating in research diminish the voice of minority educators.

<u>Recommendations for Further Research</u>

This qualitative research explored the perceptions of elementary principals, superintendents, and assistant superintendents in Southeast Nebraska about elementary principal evaluations that promote professional growth. Conclusions and implications emerge from the findings and the literature review. This research provides a foundation for further study in several areas.

Conclusions indicate that further investigation of elementary principal evaluation systems for the entire state of Nebraska or other states are needed to further the knowledge of school administrators' appraisal processes. Additional research is also required to determine specific elements in evaluation systems for the professional growth of both middle school and high school principals. Also, ethnic minority educators' perceptions of elementary principal evaluations should be explored to facilitate the development of evaluation systems that promote professional growth for ethnic, minority school administrators.

<u>Summary</u>

The researcher gained understanding from interviews with Southeast Nebraska public school administrators in four major areas concerning

elementary principal evaluations that promote professional growth. The first two areas encompassed the issue of formality of evaluation systems. A disparity existed between small rural school districts and large rural and urban school districts regarding principal evaluation systems. Small rural districts employed an informal principal evaluation system, whereas the large rural school districts used a formal evaluation system. The second area dealt with small rural districts. Elementary principals believed that their evaluations were informal, whereas superintendents believed these evaluations were formal.

The third area, goal setting, was tied to district size. Small, rural district elementary principal evaluation systems did not include goal setting as did the large, rural and urban school districts. The formality of elementary principal evaluations depended, in large part, on the inclusion of goal setting. Principals, superintendents, and assistant superintendents agreed that goal setting should drive elementary principal evaluations. Most evaluation systems investigated during the research contained goal setting. The informality versus formality paralleled school size, as does goal setting.

The fourth area, reflection and self-evaluation, was described in the literature as an essential element for assessing goal achievement. Principal evaluations that contained goal setting incorporated reflection as part of the process. Elementary principals in many instances practiced a reflective

process. Self-evaluation, which should be built on reflection, was not part of elementary principal evaluation systems.

Chapter 6 presents a description of an evaluation framework that emerged from research data and a review of literature. Theoretical support and application of the evaluation framework are explored in-depth in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6

AN EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

This research identifies elements of an evaluation system that

promotes professional growth of elementary principals. Findings and

conclusions support five implications for consideration when developing an

elementary principal evaluation system. Readers must ascertain whether

the findings, conclusions, and implications in Chapters 4 and 5 are

transferable to their particular contexts. Each implication is italicized for

ease of identification in the evaluation framework. A culmination of this

research is an evaluation framework. Fifteen elementary principals, four

superintendents, and two assistant superintendents, all from Southeast

Nebraska, contributed to the research by participating in interviews.

Review of seven evaluation documents supplied additional data for the

evaluation format. The literature provided a theoretical base and additional

practical knowledge about principal evaluation.

Framework for Application

The evaluation framework offers a structure for superintendents to

consider as they develop a written evaluation system for elementary

principals. The evaluation framework contains five interactive elements:

(a) national or local leadership standards, (b) creation of a professional

growth plan, (c) frequent formative feedback, (d) self-evaluation and

reflection, and (e) fairness. Figure 1 (see Appendix I) graphically illustrates

the evaluation framework. This graphic illustration clarifies the evaluation framework process.

Elements of the framework contain specific aspects that serve a distinct purpose of evaluation. Leadership standards are indicators developed at the local level or by national organizations. The professional growth plan contains goals, a timeline, a plan of action for identified goals, and measurement for each goal. Feedback should occur in a two-way dialogue between superintendents and principals. It is essential that two-way communication is part of the feedback process. Principals should receive verbal and written formative and summative feedback. This feedback is interactive with self-evaluation and reflections. Superintendents should encourage principals to engage in a form of self-assessment of their job performances. The fairness element ensures that elementary principals have a voice and ownership in the evaluation processes.

The evaluation framework is not an evaluation system for all settings and school districts. It, however, supplies a structure that can fit many contextual settings. Superintendents, with the collaboration of other educational leaders, can use this framework to add procedures that will meet requirements of their setting. Other educational leaders might include principals, curriculum directors, and district staff. A narrative description of each component outlines the details of the evaluation framework system.

Figure 2 (see Appendix J) is a graphic organizer that summarizes the steps for applying the evaluation framework.

Leadership Standards

Superintendents should develop written formal, goals-based elementary principal evaluation systems that identify leadership standards appropriate for their context.

Development of an evaluation system is an important endeavor for superintendents. First, a school district's evaluation system needs to specify expectations that integrate leadership standards and precisely describe performance indicators for principals (Brown, Irby, & Chance, 1997; Ginsberg & Berry, 1990; Hart, 1994; Smither, 1998). Evaluation systems should be grounded in local or national leadership standards. National standards are available through various educational organizations, such as the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, 1996; Lambert, 1998; Reeves, 2003). Leadership standards should be the foundation for evaluation systems and a starting place for superintendents.

A school district should articulate explicitly, rather than implicitly, expectations for elementary principals. Expectations that align with leadership standards provide elementary principals knowledge of how to move from one level of performance to the next. Elementary principals should know what their position requires for performance appraisal.

Principal evaluation expectations should clearly relate to elementary

principals' job descriptions and to the evaluation process.

Only the leadership standards that fit the district's vision should be

in the evaluation system. For example, an elementary principal is expected

to communicate the district's vision to students, parents, faculty, and

community. The following ISLLC benchmark aligns with the evaluation

system: "The administrator models the core beliefs of the school's vision to

all stakeholders" (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, 1996).

Leadership standards that align with a district's expectations provide a

foundation for the elementary principal to develop goals.

<u>Professional Growth Plans</u>

Superintendents should develop a specific format for professional

growth plans that leads to achievement of goals. The evaluation framework's

professional growth plan consists of four elements: (a) goal setting, (b) plan

development, (c) an implementation timeline, and (d) goal completion

assessment (Guaglianone & Yerkes, 1998; Moravec, 1996; Reeves, 2003;

Smither, 1998; Wildy & Wallace, 1998).

Once elementary principals know districts' expectations and vision,

they can determine three to four goals. In collaboration with

superintendents, principals develop goals for inclusion in professional

growth plans.

Elementary principals should implement a professional growth plan with goals. The professional growth plan template (see Appendix K) is similar to a portfolio. The template provides structure for elementary principals to document progress towards and achievement of goals (Brown & Irby, 1997a; Daresh & Playko, 1995; Ediger, 1998). Superintendents will distribute a template for a professional growth plan to school administrators.

Superintendents and elementary principals will revisit the professional growth plan periodically throughout the evaluation period. This provides opportunities for frequent formative feedback from superintendents to elementary principals throughout the school year. Revisiting the professional growth plan also facilitates careful monitoring of progress and achievement of goals.

Feedback

Superintendents should provide frequent, regular feedback with multiple sources of data. The feedback loop supports elementary principals' professional growth (Castetter, 1992; Fontana, 1994; Reeves, 2003; Smither, 1998). A formative feedback loop is a critical ingredient in combination with reflections that sustain forward movement of professional growth for elementary principals (Fontana; Reeves; Smither).

In order to be useful for professional growth, feedback should combine multiple sources of data, such as parent, student, faculty surveys, on-site

observations, and weekly administrative meetings (Dyer, 2001). Superintendents may compile feedback they receive from multiple sources into written narratives for elementary principals. Written feedback provides elementary principals with concrete data to use in their professional growth plan (Dyer). Superintendents should provide written, summative feedback once a year to elementary principals. Written, summative feedback provides, at a minimum, documentation of meeting the district's expectations (Peterson, 1991; Thomas & Vornberg, 1991).

Throughout the evaluation process, elementary principals are given a voice and ownership through professional growth plans and dialogue involving verbal and written feedback (Moravec, 1996). Encouragement should be given to elementary principals to take advantage of opportunities to respond to verbal and written feedback. This provides elementary principals with a chance to discuss problems and share ideas with superintendents and has potential for producing higher satisfaction with the feedback process (Moravec).

Self-evaluation and Reflection

Superintendents should ensure that self-evaluation or reflections are part of elementary principal evaluation systems. Self-evaluation or reflective practice should be a significant element of the professional growth plan.

Reflection provides a means for monitoring professional growth and decision-making processes by elementary principals. The literature

describes the use of personal reflection to evaluate educational practice, identify patterns of behavior, and incorporate change into a principal's practice of educational administration (Guaglianone & Yerkes, 1998; Meadows & Dyal, 1999; Reeves, 1998). Without reflection or some form of self-evaluation elementary principals will have little to base direction for future professional growth. Elementary principals should determine specific areas for professional development and growth. Self-evaluation and reflective practice can aid principals to improve upon, portray, and assess their work (Brown & Irby, 1996; London & Smither, 1995; Martin-Kneip, 1999; Thomas & Vornberg, 1991). This allows elementary principals to look at previous performance and plan for future behaviors (Reeves, 2003; Smither, 1998).

Elementary principals should engage in verbal and written self-assessment and reflection throughout the school year. As an integral partner in school learning communities, elementary principals know their strengths and weaknesses. They should seek ways to improve leadership performance, even if it is already commendable (Brown & Irby, 1997b; Stufflebeam & Nevo, 1993).

The professional growth plan should provide structure for self-evaluation and reflection on each identified goal that leads to a deeper understanding of elementary principals' professional selves. When elementary principals who participated in this research select artifacts and

reflections that directly reference goals in their professional growth plans, this documents achievement of their identified goals. Elementary principals submit a written narrative of progress or achievement towards each goal identified in the professional growth plan. Superintendents might consider supplying reflective probes, such as: "What have I accomplished to date on this goal? Do I need to modify or adjust this goal? Is progress towards this goal appropriate? Why or why not? The written narrative reflection facilitates ownership of professional growth" (Brown & Irby, 1997b).

<u>Fairness</u>

Superintendents should ensure that the evaluation system is fair by aligning it to goals and values of the school district. The evaluation system should align with a school district's goals and values. The process begins with elementary principals' goal setting that is linked to school districts' goals. The professional growth plan provides a catalyst for discussion with superintendents. During these discussions, superintendents and elementary principals should agree upon specific goals, which are linked to the school improvement goals. Elementary principals implement their professional growth goals. Documentation of goal achievement provides the foundation for formative and summative feedback from superintendents throughout the evaluation process (Brown & Irby, 1997b; Glasman & Heck, 1992; Peterson, 1991).

Superintendents should address issues of fairness in the evaluation system. One element that creates fairness is when elementary principals have a voice and ownership in the evaluation process. This occurs during superintendents' and elementary principals' collaboration of goal setting and development of professional growth plans. Another element that solidifies fairness in the evaluation process happens when superintendents communicate district goals, values, and expectations. Clear, concise expectations should be explicitly conveyed to elementary principals through careful articulation of district's expectations (Thomas & Vornberg, 1991).

Articulation of district goals, values, and expectations should be part of elementary principals' job description (Ginsberg & Thompson, 1992; Hart, 1994; Moravec, 1996). Since the evaluation process is job relevant, consistent job descriptions for elementary principals' and use of the evaluation system should occur throughout the school district. Variation of the evaluation system can lead to perceptions of unfair treatment and lack of trust with the supervisor (Moravec).

<u>Summary</u>

Five components from the research offer an evaluation framework for superintendents to consider as they develop an evaluation system for elementary principals. These components include (a) alignment to district expectations and national or local leadership standards, (b) the creation of a professional growth plans, (c) frequent formative feedback, (d) self-

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evaluation and reflection, and (e) fairness. The evaluation framework

provides guidance in the development of an evaluation system that

promotes professional growth for elementary principals.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

SUMMARY OF ISLLC LEADERSHIP STANDARDS

Standard 1 refers to an educational leader who "facilitates the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community" (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, 1996, p. 10). Standard 1 includes 6 knowledge indicators, 7 dispositions, and 15 performance benchmarks.**

Standard 2 refers to an educational leader who advocates, nurtures, and sustains "a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth" (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, 1996, p. 12). Standard 2 includes 11 knowledge indicators, 8 dispositions, and 20 performance benchmarks.**

Standard 3 refers to an educational leader who ensures the "management of the organization, operations, and resources for safe, efficient, and effective learning environment" (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, 1996, p. 14). Standard 3 includes 8 knowledge indicators, 7 dispositions, and 21 performance benchmarks.**

Standard 4 refers to an educational leader who collaborates "with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community of resources" (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, 1996, p. 16). Standard 4 consists of 5 knowledge indicators, 8 dispositions, and 16 performance benchmarks.**

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Standard 5 refers to an educational leader who acts "with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner" (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, 1996, p. 18). Standard 5 includes 5 knowledge indicators, 8 dispositions, and 16 performance benchmarks.**

Standards 6 refers to an educational leader who understands, responds to, and influences a larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context" (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, 1996, p. 20). Standard 6 includes 8 knowledge indicators, 5 dispositions, and 6 performance benchmarks.**

** The Council of Chief State School Officers' web site:

www.ccsso.org/isslc.html.

APPENDIX B

HIGHER EDUCATION EXPERT LETTER

WSU Letterhead

Dear Higher Education Expert,

My name is Rhonda Johnson. I am a doctoral candidate at Wichita State University, Wichita, Kansas. During the spring of 2003, I will be conducting a research study. This study will investigate elementary principals' and superintendents' perceptions of elementary principal evaluations. I am requesting your assistance in identifying elementary principals and superintendents for participation in this research project.

The purpose of this study is to determine elements of evaluations that promote professional growth for elementary principals. The study will identify elementary principals' and superintendents' perceptions of elementary principal evaluations that promote professional growth and develop an evaluation framework for designing elementary principal evaluations.

I have enclosed lists of elementary principals and superintendents based on the following criteria: public school administrators, geographic location, gender, rural and urban districts, and minority ethnicity. Using the enclosed lists, I need you to identify 25-30 elementary principals and 10-15 superintendents you perceive to have knowledge of elementary principal evaluations.

Please return your selection of elementary principals and superintendents in the stamped, self-addressed envelope by February 15, 2003. I appreciate your assistance with this study. If you have questions about completing the identification of principals and superintendents, please call me at home 402-872-5385 or at my office 402-872-2398, or email at pjohnson01@alltel.net.

Sincerely,

Rhonda Johnson
Box 52
Peru, NE 68421

APPENDIX C

ELEMENTARY PRINCIPAL CONSENT LETTER AND FORM

WSU Letterhead

Dear Elementary Principal:

I am conducting a research study regarding principal evaluation in Nebraska. I am interested in your perceptions concerning principal evaluations and its impact on your professional growth.

You are invited to participate in an interview. The interview will take place at your convenience. The interview will last approximately 1 hour. I will contact you by telephone to make an appointment with you to conduct the interview.

All responses made during the interview will remain confidential, and you will not be personally identified in any way in the written report. If you agree to participate, please complete the enclosed form and return it to me in the envelope provided by (date). Your signature on the attached form signifies agreement to participate in the research described in this letter. If you choose not to participate, your decision will not be held against you in any way. If you participate and decide later to withdraw, you may do so by (date).

If you have any questions about this research, please contact me at my home telephone 402-872-5385 or office telephone 402-872-2398. If you have any questions pertaining to your rights as a research participant, you can contact the Office of Research Administration at Wichita State University, Wichita, Kansas, 67260-0007, (316) 978-3285.

Sincerely,

Rhonda Johnson
Doctoral Student WSU
P.O. Box 52
Peru, NE 68421

APPENDIX C (continued)

Participation Consent Form

Elementary Principal Evaluation

I have read the enclosed letter and agree to participate in an interview. The interview will be conducted at a time and location to be determined and agreed upon in advance.

_____

Participant's Name (please print)

_____

Participant's Signature

Please return this form to:

          Rhonda Johnson
          P.O. Box 52
          Peru, NE 68421

APPENDIX D

SUPERINTENDENT CONSENT LETTER AND FORM

WSU Letterhead

Dear Superintendent's Name:

I am conducting a research study regarding principal evaluation in Nebraska. I am interested in your perceptions concerning principal evaluations and its impact on a principal's professional growth.

You are invited to participate in an interview. The interview will take place at your convenience. The interview will last approximately one hour. I will contact you by telephone to make an appointment with you to conduct the interview.

All responses made during the interview will remain confidential, and you will not be personally identified in any way in the written report. Please complete the enclosed form and return it to me in the envelope provided by March (date). Your signature on the attached form signifies agreement to participate in the research described in this letter. If you choose not to participate, your decision will not be held against you in any way. If you participate and decide later to withdraw, you may do so by (date).

If you have any questions about this research, please contact me at my home telephone 402-872-5385 or my office telephone 402-872-2398. If you have any questions pertaining to your rights as a research participant, you can contact the Office of Research Administration at Wichita State University, Wichita, Kansas, 67260-0007, (316) 978-3285.

Sincerely,

Rhonda Johnson
Doctoral Student WSU
P.O. Box 52
Peru, NE 68421

APPENDIX D (continued)

Participation Consent Form

Elementary Principal Evaluation

I have read the enclosed letter and agree to participate in an interview. The interview will be conducted at a time and location to be determined and agreed upon in advance.

_____

Participant's Name (please print)

_____

Participant's Signature

Please return this form to:
                Rhonda Johnson
                P.O. Box 52
                Peru, NE 68421

APPENDIX E

ELEMENTARY PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Hello, my name is Rhonda Johnson. I am a doctoral candidate from Wichita State University located in Wichita, Kansas. I am collecting information for a research project that I am conducting about elementary principals' perceptions of their evaluation system promoting professional growth.

The purpose for this study is to determine what elements of an evaluation system promotes professional growth for elementary principals. Although we are on a first name basis, no names will be used in the final report of the study. You can be assured of complete confidentiality. I will be scripting this interview as we talk. This interview will take 45 minutes to one hour of your time. I would like your permission to tape-record this interview. I will transcribe the audiotape of this interview and send you a copy for review and verification of its accuracy. May I tape record this interview?

Please introduce yourself by telling me your name, job title, and how long you have been with this district.

1. What are the components of the evaluation process for elementary principals in your district?
   Probe: Is the evaluation linked to district or national leadership standards?
   Probe: What criteria are used to evaluate principals' job performance?

2. What kinds of goals do you set for yourself each year?
   Probe: Do you set goals collaboratively with your superintendent?
   Probe: Are these goals linked to district goals or plans?
   Probe: How do you document achievement of those goals?

3. How do you receive feedback on your job performance?
   Probe: What types of feedback do you receive? (written, verbal, both)
   Probe: How frequently do you receive feedback on your job performance? (formative and summative, summative only)

4. How does the feedback received during the evaluation process facilitate professional growth?

5. What makes the district's evaluation process fair for evaluation of professional growth?

Probe: Does the evaluation process provide for improvement in areas of weakness?
Probe: What opportunities does the evaluation process allow you to provide input for decisions made about your performance?

6. Does your evaluation system allow you to complete a self-evaluation?
Probe: How often do you complete a self-evaluation?

7. How is reflection integrated into your evaluation process?

8. If you could improve how you are evaluated, what changes would you make? Why?

9. Do you think teachers should have a role in evaluating the principal?
Probe: If yes, what would the teachers' role be in the evaluation process?

10. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about elementary the principal evaluation system in your district?

APPENDIX F

SUPERINTENDENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Hello, my name is Rhonda Johnson. I am a doctoral candidate from Wichita State University located in Wichita, Kansas. I am collecting information for a research project that I am conducting about superintendents' perceptions of elementary principal evaluation systems that promote professional growth.

The purpose for this study is to determine what elements of an evaluation system promotes professional growth for elementary principals. Although we are on a first name basis, no names will be used in the final report of the study. You can be assured of complete confidentiality. I will be scripting this interview as we talk. This interview will take 45 minutes to one hour of your time. I would like your permission to tape-record this interview. I will transcribe the audiotape of this interview and send you a copy for review and verification of its accuracy. May I tape record this interview?

Please introduce yourself by telling me your name, job title, and how long you have been with this district.

1. What are the components of the evaluation process for elementary principals in your district?
     Probe: Is the evaluation linked to district or national leadership standards?
     Probe: What criteria are used to evaluate elementary principals' job performance?

2. What kinds of goals are established for elementary principals each year?
     Probe: Do you set goals collaboratively with your elementary principal?
     Probe: Are these goals linked to district goals or plans?
     Probe: How do elementary principals document achievement of those goals?

3. How do you give feedback on an elementary principal's job performance?
     Probe: What types of feedback do you give? (written, verbal, both)
     Probe: How frequently do you give feedback to an elementary principal addressing job performance? (formative and summative, summative only)

4. How does the feedback given during the evaluation process facilitate professional growth?

5. What makes the district's evaluation process fair for evaluation of professional growth?

    Probe: Does the evaluation process provide for improvement in areas of weakness?

    Probe: What opportunities does the evaluation process allow an elementary principal to provide input for decisions made about his or her performance?

6. Does your evaluation system allow elementary principals to complete a self-evaluation?

    Probe: How often do elementary principals complete a self-evaluation?

7. How is reflection integrated into your evaluation process?

    Probe: Thinking about the decisions he or she makes throughout each school day?

8. If you could improve how elementary principals are evaluated, what changes would you make? Why?

9. Do you think teachers should have a role in evaluating the elementary principal?

    Probe: If yes, what would the teachers' role be in the evaluation process?

10. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about the elementary principal evaluation in your district?

APPENDIX G

ELEMENTARY PRINCIPAL MEMBER CHECK LETTER

WSU Letterhead

Dear Elementary Principal:

　　Enclosed is a copy of the transcript of our interview on (date). Please indicate on the enclosed form if I need to contact you for additional information or changes. Please return this form to me using the stamped, self-addressed envelope by (date). Rest assured that the interview is confidential. You or your district will not be identified in the study nor can anyone identify comments you shared with me during the interview.

　　Thank you for the time you set aside to assist me with my study. I appreciate your allowing me to interview you and for reviewing the transcript information. I will send you a copy of my findings at the conclusion of my study. Once again, thank you for helping me with this study. If you have any questions, you may reach me at 402-872-2398 (work), 872-5385 (home) or by email pjohnson01@alltel.net.

Sincerely,

Rhonda Johnson
P.O. Box 52
Peru, NE 68421

Transcript Approval Form

_____This transcript is approved for use in your research.

_____Please contact me by telephone for additions and/or revisions of

transcript. You may reach me at_____.

Telephone Number

_____

Signature of Interviewee   Date

APPENDIX H

SUPERINTENDENT MEMBER CHECK LETTER

WSU Letterhead

Dear Superintendent:

Enclosed is a copy of the transcript of our interview on (date). Please indicate on the enclosed form if I need to contact you for additional information or changes. Please return this form to me using the stamped, self-addressed envelope by (date). Rest assured that the interview is confidential. You or your district will not be identified in the study nor can anyone identify comments you shared with me during the interview.

Thank you for the time you set aside to assist me with my study. I appreciate your allowing me to interview you and for reviewing the transcript information. I will send you a copy of my findings at the conclusion of my study. Once again, thank you for helping me with this study. If you have any questions, you may reach me at 402-872-2398 (work), 872-5385 (home) or by email pjohnson01@alltel.net.

Sincerely,

Rhonda Johnson
P.O. Box 52
Peru, NE 68421

APPENDIX H (continued)

Transcript Approval Form

____This transcript is approved for use in your research.

_____Please contact me by telephone for additions and/or revisions of

transcript. You may reach me at_____.

Telephone Number

_____
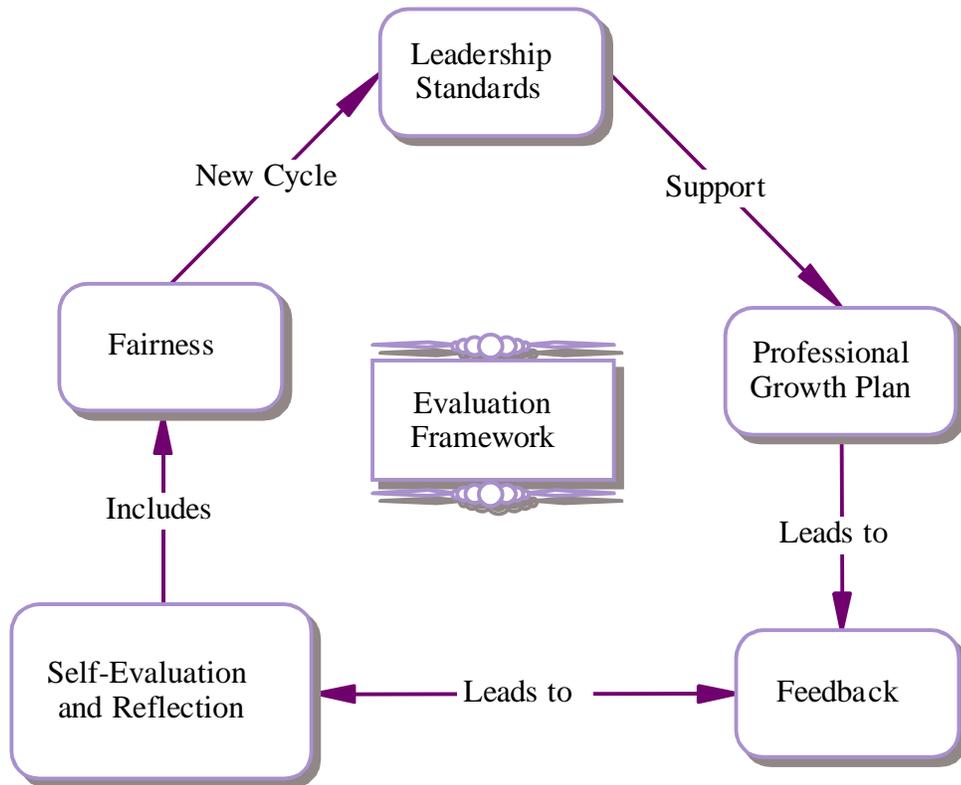
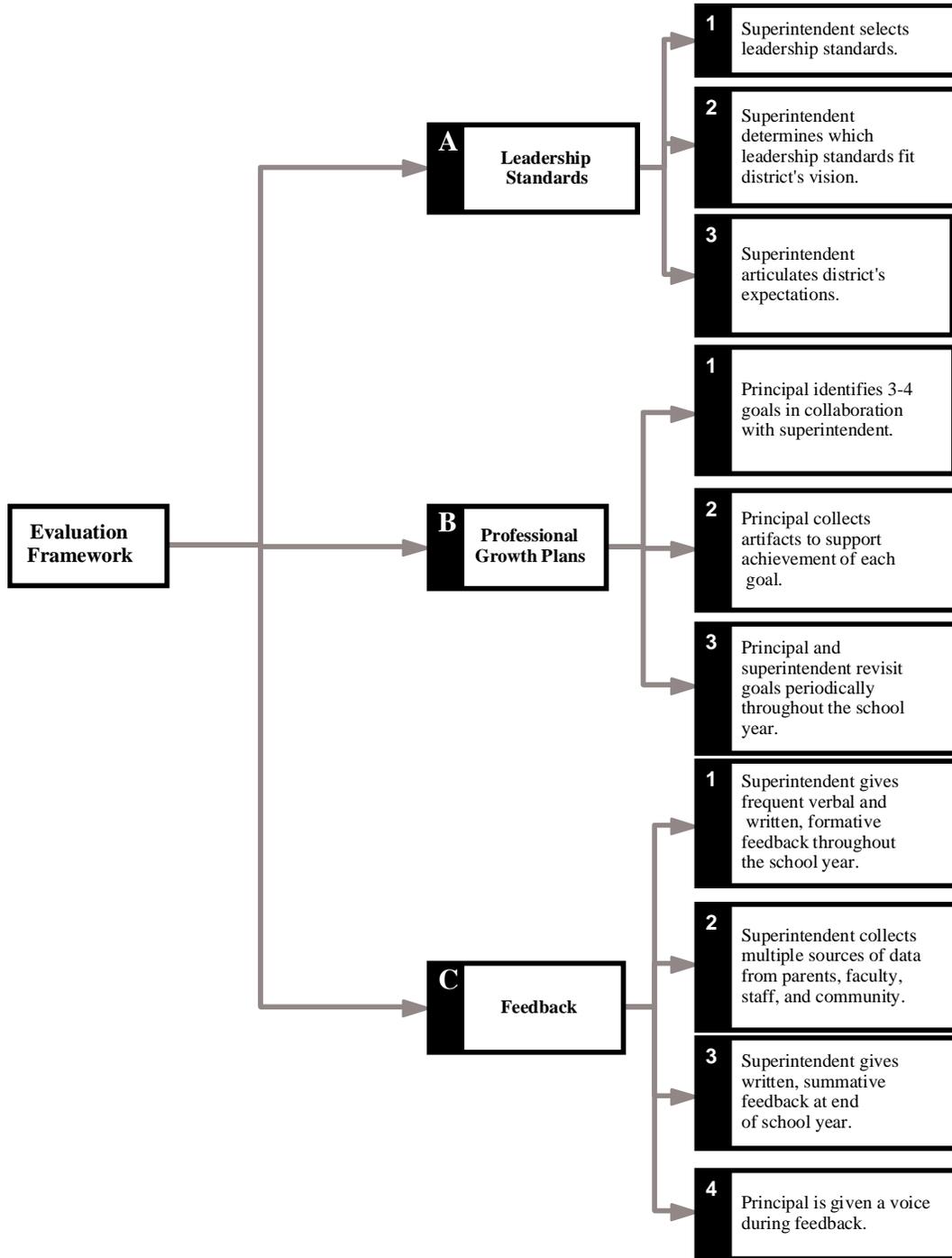Signature of Interviewee   Date
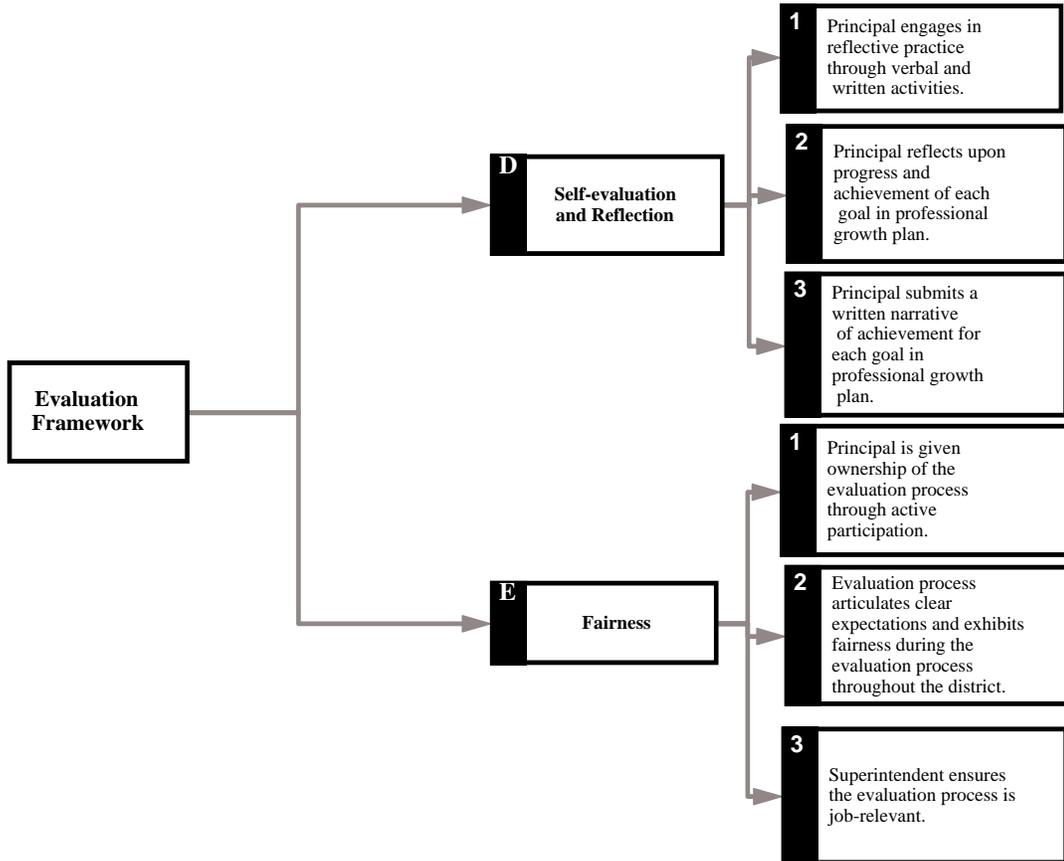
FIGURE 1. EVALUATION FRAMEWORK
GRAPHIC ILLUSTRATION

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                        ┌──────────────┐
                        │  Leadership  │
                        │  Standards   │
                        └──────────────┘
            New Cycle                      Support

   ┌──────────────┐      ┌──────────────┐      ┌──────────────┐
   │   Fairness   │      │  Evaluation  │      │ Professional │
   │              │      │  Framework   │      │ Growth Plan  │
   └──────────────┘      └──────────────┘      └──────────────┘

        Includes                              Leads to

   ┌──────────────┐                       ┌──────────────┐
   │Self-Evaluation│     Leads to         │   Feedback   │
   │and Reflection │ ←───────────────→    │              │
   └──────────────┘                       └──────────────┘
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FIGURE 2. SUMMARY OF STEPS FOR THE EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

FIGURE 2. SUMMARY OF STEPS FOR THE EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

APPENDIX K

PROFESSIONAL GROWTH PLAN TEMPLATE

Name: _____

School Year: _____

I.   Goal (What do you want to accomplish?):

II.   Plan of Action (Steps for achievement of goal.):

III.   Timeline (Indicate progress of each step in the Plan of Action for the

        goal.):

IV.   Evidence of Performance (What data or products will provide

        evidence accomplishment of goal?):

V.   Self-assessment/reflection (A written summary of how completion of

        goal benefits students, faculty, and you as an educator.):

VI.   Monitor Professional Growth Plan (Checkpoint Dates with

        superintendent to revisit Professional Growth Plan):

        Date_____   Date_____

        Date_____   Date_____

_____   _____
Evaluator's Signature   Date

_____   _____
Employee's Signature   Date