

PROFESSIONAL GROWTH PLANS:
AN OUTCOME EVALUATION OF AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
PILOT PROGRAM

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Abstract

This study is concerned with the piloting of a formative evaluation process at an elementary school in the Rocky Mountain School District, Golden Zone. The formative evaluation process was provided as an option to teachers at this school in lieu of their scheduled summative evaluations.

The purpose of this study was to determine if formative evaluation resulted in more professional growth than summative evaluation. All six teachers scheduled for a summative evaluation at this school chose to participate in pilot and each was interviewed with respect to the evaluation system as piloted. The teachers reported that the piloted formative evaluation system did result in more professional growth than the previous summative evaluation process. As well, the teachers' responses supported the current literature on formative evaluation in stressing the importance of collegiality, teacher ownership, and the meeting of personal needs as an essential component of an effective evaluation model for promoting professional growth.

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Introduction

Background

In June of 1998, teachers at one of the larger elementary schools in Rocky Mountain School District were given the option by administration of undertaking a formative evaluation system in lieu of five-year interval summative evaluations or, as per past practice, summative evaluations undertaken due to a change in teaching assignment. Due to the timing of this proposal (suggested in June, 1998) and concerns raised by the local teachers' association, the implementation of this pilot was delayed until January of 1999. The parties felt that this time interval could be used to address the concerns of all prior to the pilot's implementation.

The school's administrator proposed this alternative form of evaluation for the following reasons:

1. He saw little value in conducting summative evaluations of teachers he knew were competent.
2. He did not wish to put a great deal of time and effort into an exercise he viewed as deficient in promoting professional growth.
3. He believed that formative evaluation was a vehicle that promotes professional development.

Although the formative evaluation pilot was open to all the teachers at this particular school, only those six teachers who were due for a summative evaluation chose to participate in this pilot. It must be noted that the administrator reserved the right, as per the *School Act*, to use a summative evaluation system with new teachers or those with whom he had concerns.

Research Question

Does a formative evaluation result in more professional development than summative evaluation?

The Current Summative Evaluation Process

The following is a description, as per the collective agreement, of the current summative evaluation process being implemented in the district:

1. The purpose of the evaluation program is to promote the development and maintenance of excellence in the quality of instruction.
2. A teacher evaluation report may be prepared on the teacher's general performance in the school and the learning situation in the teacher's class at any time after the first twenty instructional days of the commencement of a teaching assignment. Reports shall be based primarily on the teacher's assignment in his/her main area of qualifications and/or experience. The content of a teaching report shall be a specific description of the teacher's performance based solely on the personal observation of the evaluator(s). Judgements shall be adequately substantiated.
3. Teacher evaluation reports shall be prepared at least once every five years.
4. Each written report shall be based on at least three comprehensive classroom visits in accordance with (7.) which reflect the teacher's assignment. The teacher shall have the opportunity to select the initial two observation times. The classroom visits for the purpose of preparing the teacher evaluation report can occur at any time consistent with (2.) above, but shall not occur after April 30th of a school year.
5. Involvement or non-involvement of a teacher in extra-curricular activities,

participation in union activities or participation in matters not directly related to teaching duties are outside the scope of the formal evaluation report.

6. The formal evaluation report shall be prepared only by the Superintendent of Schools, an Assistant Superintendent, or an Administrative Officer of a school to which that teachers is assigned and shall be prepared and written based on independently collected data.

7. When the evaluation process is about to begin the following steps shall be taken:

a. The teacher shall be notified in writing at least two weeks in advance that the evaluation process is about to commence.

b. A pre-evaluation conference shall be held and the evaluator shall consult and attempt to reach agreement with the teacher on the objectives of the evaluation, the time span and schedule, and the criteria of the evaluation process.

c. The process shall include a series of classroom visits each followed by an observation conference; a post-evaluation conference to discuss the proposed report; presentation of a draft copy of the report to the teacher at least 48 hours prior to the preparation of the final copy; a conference to discuss the final draft report; opportunity to submit a written commentary to be attached with the report; and filing of the final written report with the Superintendent of Schools.

d. A teacher who, in advance of the evaluation has concerns respecting the fairness of the proposed evaluator, shall express those concerns in writing, including reasons, to the Superintendent and may request a change in evaluators. The decision of the Superintendent shall be final.

8. Where appropriate, and always in the case of a less than satisfactory report, a written plan for improving instruction shall be developed jointly by the teacher and the evaluator. The plan shall be adequately funded and completed before another report is initiated. In the case of a third less than satisfactory report that results in dismissal, no such plan will be developed.

9. In the case of an impending less than satisfactory report or a less than satisfactory report, and if the teachers so requests, he or she shall be accompanied by a representative of the association when meeting with the evaluator.

10. The final report shall be placed in the teacher's personnel files. A copy shall be given to the teacher at the time of filing. There shall be no other copies of the report in files in the district. No attachments of any kind shall be appended to the final copy of the report, except where the teacher wishes to attach a written comment regarding the report.

Teacher Criticisms of the Current Summative Evaluation Process

The author has spoken with teachers in the district regarding the current summative evaluation process both on an informal basis and in a more formal role as the president of the local teachers' association. Through these discussions, the author believes that teachers perceive the merit in the current summative evaluation system as limited for a variety of reasons. Their concerns regarding the current evaluation system can be summarized as follows:

1. Focuses on minimal competence.
2. Pays little attention to ongoing professional development.
3. Relies solely on the evaluator as the "expert".

4. Involves a series of “hoop jumping”.
5. Creates undue stress and anxiety.

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine if the formative evaluation system as piloted resulted in more professional growth than the current summative evaluation process being used in the district.

A review of recent related literature was conducted to provide background information for the study. The literature review identified the common themes regarding summative and formative evaluation. The themes enabled the development of an interview blueprint to be used with the participants in the study. The questions derived from this blueprint were asked of all the participants in the study.

The results of the interviews are analyzed in the Study Results section of this paper. The themes, as derived from the literature review and used in the development of the interview blueprint, are used to format this section. A summary of the study and suggested recommendations complete this report.

Literature Review

Introduction

The following literature review was conducted in order to identify the themes around “best practice” with regard to formative evaluation. The themes were then used to construct the interview questions for the study.

Purpose of Evaluation - Formative Evaluation Defined

Rooney (1993), a principal, described her school district’s summative evaluation process as follows:

Our teacher evaluation system wasn’t working. It was the traditional model of preconference, observation, and postconference, to which nontenured teachers were obligated every year; tenured teachers every other year. I would arrive at the prearranged time toting my legal-size yellow tablet for script taping. The teacher would be well prepared; and the children, understanding better than anyone what was going on, would behave in an exemplary manner. I took copious notes.

Evaluation conferences usually went well. The teacher and I reviewed the highlights of the lesson, and I pointed out effective strategies and why they worked. Where applicable, we discussed “areas for improvement”. My written comments were constructed meticulously – always positive and constructive. When the conference ended, we would both smile. I often wondered if this was an expression of relief or the mutual acknowledgement that we had just completed a process with little meaning to either of us” (p. 43).

In support of this sentiment, Edwards (1995), while conducting unstructured interviews, found that teacher after teacher stated that the traditional summative

evaluation system did little or nothing to improve their teaching and student learning. “Teachers flatly stated that the process had become a meaningless ritual and a waste of time” (p. 72). Duke (1993) further argues that a less meaningful ritual for the majority of experienced teachers would be hard to find.

Wagner and Hill (1996) offer the following explanation given in a 1989 paper by Boyd:

Experienced teachers often state that evaluations are not productive. One contributing factor to their perception is the lack of a clear link between teacher evaluation and teacher development. For the evaluation process to be a positive experience for teachers and administrators, it must be meaningful, and not just an empty, disconnected exercise (p.6).

Wagner and Hill (1996) contend that the ultimate goal of the evaluation process is to promote reflective practice that enhances teacher motivation and professional growth.

Mertler and Peterson (1997) highlight a 1978 study by Bailey that lists the following disadvantages of the summative evaluation model:

1. The teacher is almost totally dependent on the evaluator to collect and analyze information.
2. The quality of improvement of instruction is closely aligned with the accuracy of a single evaluator’s perceptions.
3. The evaluator seldom takes the time to share methods, processes, or techniques that could assist the teacher in correcting weaknesses and maintaining that behaviour.
4. Teachers often perceive these evaluation activities as a threat (p.7).

Formative evaluation focuses on showing continual growth and improvement, rather than finding the incompetent within the profession (McGreal, 1983). McGreal, in a discussion with Brant (1996), suggests that administrators know who is doing good work and who is not. It is the daily contact with teachers, parents and students, he sums, rather than required observations that measure competence. Barber (1990) argues that an evaluation system is formative if the data generated is retained by the teachers for their use in improvement of their teaching techniques or styles, and never used to make judgements about them by one who can alter placement, status, tenure, or conditions. Evans (1992) explains that evaluation that focuses on improvement and enhancement is a formative process, while evaluation for the purposes of retention or dismissal is primarily a summative activity.

Barber (1990) defines formative evaluation as a set of procedures designed to assist teachers in improving their own teaching. He explains that formative evaluation is a continuous and on-going process rather than a single, one-time event. It involves accurately identifying current behaviours, identifying problem areas and improving them, and evaluating new behaviours to determine effectiveness. In other words, formative evaluation allows teachers to plan, implement those plans, and evaluate the results of those plans.

McGreal (1983) concludes that “there is no area in education that has more potential impact on the improvement of instruction and hence the improvement of schools than a successful teacher evaluation system” (p. 149).

Collegiality - The Importance of Positive, Supportive Learning Environments

Formative evaluation is a helping, caring process that provides data to teachers for making decisions about how they can best improve their own teaching techniques, styles, or strategies (Barber, 1990). Edwards (1995) discovered that fear, lack of trust, and heavily bureaucratic practices were some of the barriers to real teacher improvement. To improve teaching through formative evaluation, a teacher must admit that he or she is doing something less than perfectly and that his or her behaviour can be improved. Such an admission requires much trust among the evaluator, colleagues, and the teacher being evaluated.

Butt (1995) offers the results of a 1966 study by Marcum to support this notion. Marcum classified thirty schools according to climate and innovativeness and found that open school climates exhibited the most innovations. Butt (1995) also presents a later study by Marcum and Johnson (1967) which identified fifteen of the most and fifteen of the least innovative schools in five western states and then measured school climate. The results clearly showed that the most innovative schools had the most open climates whereas the least innovative schools had closed climates.

Wagner and Hill (1996) found that the culture of the school has a great impact on the effectiveness of a growth-oriented approach to evaluation. With trusting environments and collaborative relationships, teachers and administrators will feel comfortable in revealing, sharing, and celebrating what works for them. This type of culture fosters reflective practice and contributes to teachers' capacity for growth. Both administrators and teachers can contribute to a school culture that supports professional

growth by working together collaboratively to build trusting relationships that encourage risk-taking and creativity.

In support of the notion that positive, supportive climates offer environments conducive to professional growth, Day (1995) argues that “time spent chatting with staff, very often about matters far removed from teaching, is not time wasted; it is part of the relationship web that enables professional exchange to take place in an effective and meaningful manner...”(p. 117). Alternatively, he describes cultures where the sharing of problems and issues are viewed as weakness, as detrimental to the purpose of effective professional development. Barber (1990) suggests that formative evaluation, where it is allowed to flourish in a nonpunitive environment, supports the internal drive in all professional teachers to improve their teaching. This drive, he argues, is far more powerful than external requirements or demands placed on teachers by others.

McGreal (1983) points out that leadership at the top of an organization must be committed to and support the aims and directions of an evaluation system before it can be expected to succeed. He argues that supervision is not a passive activity. Supervisors should be actively involved in helping teachers achieve their development goals. This belief is supported by Day (1995) who believes that the key role of administrators is to create the conditions that encourage professional learning and enhance professional development.

Barber (1990) describes successful evaluators as those who provide non-judgmental feedback that allows teachers to make their own judgements about how to improve their teaching. Furthermore, McGreal (1983) suggests that formative evaluation implemented in such a manner can foster a positive relationship between the teacher and

evaluator, whether the evaluator is a colleague or administrator. Edwards (1995) also explains that growth and development are best achieved in an environment of mutual respect and trust.

By moving from summative to formative evaluations, a number of barriers are removed from professional growth. Under a formative process, the teacher is assured that he/she cannot be adversely affected by attempting challenging goals, as failure to achieve such goals cannot lead to negative action. Relations between teachers and administrators become less adversarial because teachers know no harm can befall them while they are involved in a growth-oriented formative evaluation process (Duke, 1993).

In summary, formative evaluation is effective when supported within a culture of collaboration with a leadership which is prepared to deal positively with the constraints of time and the control of bureaucracy (Day, 1995).

Change & Teacher Ownership – The Grassroots Approach

Formative evaluation is supported by the belief that teachers can and will evaluate themselves and modify their performance in order to improve their teaching (Barber, 1990). Such a system of evaluation requires the teacher to participate willingly and direct its progression. Therefore, as Clark (1992) explains, “Teachers should take charge of their own professional development because adult development is voluntary – no one can force a person to learn, change or grow” (p. 77). Furthermore, as argued by Day (1995), “We cannot develop the children or adults with whom we work. We can only provide opportunities for their development. Development, ultimately, is in the hands of the individual” (p. 109).

Butt (1995) argues that the most influential factor on the success of professional development activities is teachers themselves. Just as some teaching strategies work best with some students and not others, professional development programs need to be adapted to fit various teachers' characteristics and attitude.

McGreal (1983) explains that the goal-setting approach inherent in formative evaluation emphasizes the individualized approach to evaluation and, he argues, there is an inherent logic in this approach as the clearer the idea a person has of what is to be accomplished, the greater the chances of success. Clark (1992) also suggests that research shows "that teachers are more active than passive, more ready to learn than resistant, more wise and knowledgeable than deficient, and more diverse and unique than they are homogeneous" (p. 76). In order for formative evaluation to be effective it must focus on the unique professional growth needs of each teacher. Day (1995) supports this notion with, "whilst every teacher has the responsibility to engage in development over a career, it must be differentiated according to individual need" (p. 125).

Holly (1982) interviewed 102 teachers (K-12) from urban, rural, and suburban Michigan school districts. She asked ten open-ended questions dealing with what teachers perceive as valuable about in-service programs. Teachers in the sample generally found value in self-chosen, informal, participatory activities. They preferred activities that allowed them to work with other teachers. Teachers described their colleagues as valuable sources of practical ideas and information, helpful advisors on professional problems, the most useful evaluators of teaching skills, and understanding allies. The study concludes that effective in-service programs must involve teachers in the planning,

implementing and evaluating of the programs and foster collegial sharing of information and ideas among teachers.

Connelly and Ben-Peretz (1977) believe that teachers are not properly seen as implementers of “experts” ideas, but are best seen as independent agents with an important educative function in curriculum development and implementation. They view teachers as having autonomy over instructional acts wherein the teacher becomes the curriculum decision maker and developer. Connelly explains this process via a quotation from an article he wrote in 1972:

“The strength and major contribution of a developer are that he works with and can translate involved ideas into a form useful for teachers and students. However, the developer cannot imagine, let alone account for, the full range of teaching situations that arise. It is here that the teacher’s experience and wisdom enters into the curriculum planning in a way that cannot adequately be replaced. The characteristics and needs of the actual classroom situation are the first and final factors determining what should be done in that classroom. The teacher is inescapably the arbitrator between the demands of curriculum materials and of the instructional situation. Only rarely will arbitration lead to a settlement exclusively favouring the developer’s intentions” (p. 181).

The sense of involvement and resulting commitment is the bottom-line in formative evaluation. Without the willingness of the teacher to be an active participant in the process, everyone involved has a tendency to start walking through the activity and merely meeting the requirements of the plan (McGreal, 1983). Edwards (1995) concludes that “if we respect our teachers and believe that they are capable of making professional

choices about their growth ... our students will reap the benefits ... and teachers will grow” (p. 74).

Personal vs. Institutional Needs – Whose Agenda?

Duke (1993) explains that “a profession is never mastered. Professionals grow older and face different life circumstances. Clients change. New research and technology appear. Social and political priorities are reordered” (p. 702). Professional growth, according to Duke, is a qualitative change. He describes professional growth as a “movement to a new level of understanding, the realization of a sense of efficacy not previously enjoyed” (p. 703).

Ann Lieberman (1997) described a study of teacher development in California by Judith Warren Little which reported, despite the tremendous amount of money being spent, that most staff development made little difference in the way that teachers worked with students. The study revealed that the kinds of development that the teachers said they needed did not meet what others were planning for them.

McLaughlin (1997) noted in his studies that, with few exceptions, visits by outside consultants and other outside “experts” were not considered particularly helpful. Teachers in his studies complained that most visiting consultants could not relate to the particular problems they were experiencing in their classrooms, or that their advice was too abstract to be helpful.

When adults feel that they are in control of a process of change that they have voluntarily chosen, they are much more likely to realize the value from it than when they are coerced into training situations in which they have little to say about the timing, the process or the goals (Clark, 1992). Often, reforms in areas such as curriculum, student

assessment, governance of schools, and accreditation are not always in congruence with teachers' prior experience, established beliefs and present practice. Therefore, these externally imposed innovations often sap commitment (Day, 1995).

Unfortunately, today's resource allocation favours the use of short, one-shot solution oriented training options or awareness raising in-service days designed to disseminate specific sets of knowledge, ideas, practices or curriculum materials (Day, 1995). A 1990 study by Cowan and Wright, described by Day (1995), surveyed the use of legislated professional development days in England and found a lack of coherence and continuity, lack of follow through and an expressed feeling of cynicism, frustration and dissatisfaction among teachers. Butt (1995) offers a 1974 study by Lawrence that found that most research on institutional improvement has indicated that in-service programs consisting of single sessions are largely ineffective.

Day (1995) suggests that professional development must be designed so that it fosters the development of teachers as whole persons throughout their careers, recognizing that there is a natural connection between a person's work life and all other aspects of life. He states, "who we are as a person should not and cannot always be separated from who we are as a professional. The one is nested in the other, the two are interdependent, two parts of one whole" (p. 110). Bunting (1997) notes that teachers with diverse interests are usually happier, more energetic, and potentially more effective in the classroom. At different times throughout a teacher's career, professional development may predominantly focus on the personal needs, the long-term professional needs, or the classroom practitioner needs of that teacher. These aspects of professional development

provide for enhancement of job skills and the development of personal and organizational vision as deemed necessary by the individual teacher.

Summary

The goal of the literature review was to establish the themes surrounding “best practice” with regard to formative evaluation. The intent of revealing the practices of successful formative evaluation systems was to aid in the development of the parameters for the pilot project being pursued at the elementary school study site.

With this goal in mind the following themes, which are used in part as headings for sections of the literature review, were identified and considered in the construction of the parameters for the formative evaluation pilot:

1. The importance of positive, supportive learning environments.
2. The importance of teacher ownership of the change process.
3. The importance of addressing both personal and professional needs.

Study Design

Creating a New Approach to Teacher Evaluation

Concerns with the current summative evaluation model have been raised by the school's administrator, teachers, and have been described in the literature review. A summary of these concerns can be listed as follows:

1. Summative evaluations are inappropriate when administration already knows the teacher to be evaluated is competent; this system appears to be primarily for the purposes of determining retention or dismissal.

2. Summative evaluations are limited in promoting professional growth; the system lacks reflective practice; this system does little to improve teaching and student learning.

3. Summative evaluations are perceived as a meaningless disconnected exercise; the process appears to have become a meaningless ritual and a waste of time; the system involves a series of "hoop jumping" exercises.

4. Summative evaluations rely solely on the evaluator as the "expert"; the teacher is almost totally dependent on the evaluator to collect and analyze data.

5. Summative evaluations are viewed as threatening and cause undue stress and anxiety.

Given these common concerns with the summative evaluation process and with regard to the "best practice" described in the literature review, a new approach to teacher evaluation was devised and a pilot study was undertaken at the administrator's school. As this was a new endeavor as far as an evaluation process and the teachers' association had concerns in altering current evaluation provisions in the collective agreement, the

following parameters were established by the teachers participating in the pilot in conjunction with administration and the teachers' association:

1. Participation in this activity is voluntary.
2. Participation in this activity will be in lieu of the scheduled summative evaluation for this school year (1998/99).
3. The teacher will establish the goal(s) he/she wishes to achieve.
4. The teacher will establish a plan of how to meet the goal(s).
5. The teacher will have control of the area(s) he/she wishes to develop, whether that is personal or professional.
6. The teacher will meet with the administrator in January and make him aware of the goal(s) and the plan of how to achieve it/them.
7. The teacher will have the option of working on his/her own, with colleagues, or with the administrator in pursuing the goal(s).
8. The teacher will have access to the professional development funding, as made available to every other teacher in the district, in order to achieve the goal(s).
9. The teacher will meet with the administrator in June in order to update him on his/her progress.
10. The teacher will have total control of the plan, in that the teacher will decide where the plan is stored/filed or if the plan should be stored/filed at all.
11. The plan shall not be used in any way as either a reason to implement a summative evaluation or as part of a future summative evaluation.

The aim of the parameters was to allow for the pursuit of the individual teacher's goals as per the themes and practices identified in the literature review. Generally, the

parameters are intended to allow for a positive, supportive environment where the teacher is able to take ownership of the change process and attend to both personal and professional needs.

The teachers' association believed that these parameters allowed the flexibility for teachers to pursue the areas of interest to them and, at the same time, provided for the "safeguards" found in the collective agreement. The participating teachers and the administrator were also in agreement with the parameters and were pleased that the summative evaluation process could be by-passed this school year.

Participants

Six teachers volunteered to undertake the pilot and participate in this study. All were scheduled for their either a five-year interval or change of assignment summative evaluation. Their experience is broken down as follows:

Teacher One – Thirty-one years

Teacher Two – Thirty years

Teacher Three – Twenty-five to Thirty years

Teacher Four – Seventeen years

Teacher Five – Fifteen years

Teacher Six – Five years

Methodology

Interviews were conducted with the six participants in the pilot. The interviews occurred in April of 1999 – the mid-point of the pilot. Interviewing the participants at this time allowed for responses that reflected the teachers' opinions/feelings while in the midst of the pilot. This hopefully avoided the *Alumni effect* as described by Mrazek

(1998), where the recollection of experiences seems less negative (more positive) once the task(s) is completed.

All interviewees were provided with an outline of the interview, derived from the interview blueprint questions, prior to the scheduled interview. The outline should allowed the participants to focus their thoughts prior to the commencement of the interviews.

The interviews took place either in an empty classroom or another vacant room in the school where adequate privacy was assured, and were tape-recorded and transcribed by myself.

Interview Blueprint

The following blueprint was used as a guide for the interviews. The components, with the exception of the biographical information, were established as per the themes identified from the literature review.

Themes

1. Biographical Information
2. Purpose of Summative Evaluation
3. Purpose of Formative Evaluation
4. Collegiality - Positive, Supportive Learning Environments
5. Change & Teacher Ownership
6. Personal vs. Institutional Needs

Questions

1. In total, how many years have you been teaching?
2. How many years have you taught at this school?

3. How many times have you been evaluated at this school?
4. When was the last time you were evaluated?
5. Describe the current summative evaluation system.
6. What is the purpose of the current summative evaluation system?
7. Describe how the summative evaluation system has had a positive impact for you?
8. Describe how the summative evaluation system has had a negative impact for you?
9. Does the summative evaluation system promote professional growth?
10. Describe the formative evaluation system implemented as a pilot.
11. What is the purpose of the formative evaluation system?
12. Describe how the formative evaluation system has had a positive impact for you?
13. Describe how the formative evaluation system has had a negative impact for you?
14. Does the formative evaluation system promote professional growth?

These are the questions for which I sought answers. As this was blueprint for the interviews, the actual questions vary somewhat depending on the responses to previous questions asked. However, I avoided leading questions and attempted to use mostly probes that provided open questions so that the interviewees determined the depth of the dialogue and my biases were minimized.

Schedule of Activities

June 1998: Administrative officer at the elementary school raises the idea of

using professional growth plans in lieu of the current summative evaluation process.

September, 1998 – December, 1998: Literature review on formative evaluation.

October, 1998 – March, 1999: Preparation of study design.

October, 1998: Teachers' association discusses concerns and issues regarding pilot project.

November, 1998: Establishment of growth plan parameters.

November, 1998: Five teachers agree to pilot professional growth plans and participate in this study.

January, 1999: Pilot begins as per parameters.

April, 1999: Pilot participants interviewed.

April, 1999- May, 1999: Analyze evaluation information and interpret results.

May - June, 1999: Prepare preliminary evaluation report.

July, 1999: Prepare final evaluation report.

Limitations

The scope of this study is limited to the Golden Zone of School district No.6 (Rocky Mountain) or to a school district with similar characteristics. The target population is elementary school teachers who were scheduled for evaluation during the 1998 – 1999 school year. Unfortunately, the short period of time for this study (November, 1998 – April, 1999) precluded the collection of long-term data.

There may be a problem in that I was the current president of the local teachers' association, and therefore there is a danger that the participating teachers may have given me the answers they felt I was seeking (*Pygmalion effect*). I attempted to limit this problem by staying as objective as possible during discussions about formative

evaluation and during the development of the “parameters” surrounding this pilot. Furthermore, I did not (at least not until the conclusion of the study) relay the hypothesis of this study to the participants, rather I have explained to them that the purpose of the study was to compare the positive and negatives of summative versus formative evaluation.

The *Hawthorne effect* is another danger in this study. Since the participants knew this was a study, their answers may have been reflective of what they perceived to be the “right” answer. I attempted to limit this effect by ensuring the interviewees that there were no right or wrong answers; the “right” answer was the one that reflected their true feelings/experiences about the issues.

Only experienced elementary teachers (5-31 years teaching experience) who were due for a summative evaluation volunteered to participate in the study. They may view the exercise quite differently than less experienced teachers, or those teachers who would choose to undertake formative evaluation for its own merits rather than in lieu of a scheduled summative evaluation. Therefore, population validity is certainly questionable.

Since I conducted the interviews, and I knew all the teachers in the district, anonymity between the interviewer and interviewee is not an option. This difficulty was dealt with by ensuring the interviewees that all information obtained would be kept and reported in an anonymous fashion (ie. Teacher One, etc.).

Study Results

Biographical Information

Six teachers were interviewed: five females and one male. The teaching experience of the interviewees ranged from five to thirty-one years. The teaching experience of these participants at this school ranged from one to thirty-one years. As far as the number of summative evaluations these participants have been involved in at this school, the range is from none to about nine. The interviewees reported that their most recent summative evaluation occurred from three to six years ago.

Teacher Projects

The teachers involved in the study aimed at achieving a variety of goals. Most of the teachers focussed on one or two specific goals. Two of the participants worked together to meet their shared goals. Although the effectiveness of the formative evaluation system in promoting professional growth will be dealt with in latter sections, the following is a summary of the goals pursued by the participating teachers:

Teacher One and Teacher Two chose to work together and focus on early reading and the brain's role in learning. Together, the teachers researched the topics, attended workshops, observed each other teaching, and visited and observed other teachers in their classrooms. Teacher One and Teacher Two said that they found these topics fascinating and that the goals are a work in progress and will continue during the next few years.

Teacher Three chose learning about and implementing guided reading and increasing his/her knowledge about the computer lab as her goals. This teacher worked with other teachers in the school to increase knowledge of knowledge in both these areas.

He/she described the willingness of other teachers to work with him/her before and after school and during preparation periods in pursuing these goals.

Teacher Four chose guided reading and increasing parent participation as his/her goals. This teacher accessed the willing and available teachers on staff to help with the guided reading topic and consciously went out of his/her way to encourage parental involvement in every aspect of his/her teaching experience.

Teacher Five chose as his/her goal to improve in the French language. As the district no longer has itinerant teachers available to teach the French component of the curriculum, “regular” classroom teachers are mandated to cover this area. Teacher Five attended conversational French classes at the local community college during the evening. The teacher reported being much more confident in teaching this part of the curriculum following these classes.

Teacher Six pursued three goals. One goal was to limit his/her volunteering at school to one day a week. As this teacher only works one day a week, he/she has found that in previous years she has spent much of her “spare” time working at the school. Her second goal was to improve his/her work with the social studies curriculum. He/she spoke with and observed other teacher of the same grade at other schools and adopted many of their strategies and techniques. His/her third goal was to work with a school committee to promote reading in the school. This committee was composed of a number of school staff members. The teacher worked with this group to research and develop effective means of promoting reading to the student body.

The Current Summative Evaluation Process

Participants were asked to describe the current evaluation system used in the district. The teachers reported a rather subjective process where the administrator was in the role of the “teaching expert”. Descriptions were common and included:

“Near as I can tell, what it is they come in and watch you put on a show ... and then they go away and write up what they think ...”

“... she (administrator) came in a couple of times and, on a pre-organized visit, and then popped in a couple of times ...”

“... the A.O. notifies the teacher ... you had a meeting with the A.O. to discuss how the evaluation was to take place ... the teacher chose two or three times when the A.O. would come in to observe you ... the A.O. usually would come an additional one or two times, unannounced ... then following each observation, you would sit down and meet the A.O. and go over what happened in your room ... the A.O. would draft up a rough copy and provide you with an opportunity to go over the rough copy, add any comments, feedback to it ... there would be a final copy drawn up and, um, that, once you’ve read it and sign it, is sent off to the superintendent.”

“... the way I have seen it work is that you are visited in your classroom a number of times and on that basis a report is written about you.”

“... the A.O. would come in and he would have anywhere from three to ten observations and, I guess, make notes. And, get together and talk about some of the lessons. Where he thought you may have great strengths or some weaknesses. And, basically, the report is made out after a few months.”

“... she came into my room, I believe it was between three and five times and she observed me ... she did let me know what day she was coming in ... then she gave me feedback each time after, after each day I went to her office and we just talked about what she saw and then at the end of the process she gave me a written report.”

As viewed by the participants, the current evaluation system is aimed at ensuring teacher competence, and is therefore summative in nature. Its fundamental function is accountability. The following statements represent the teachers' explanations of the purpose of the current evaluation system:

“I, I don't know. I really never thought about that because it was just part of the system and I really don't know if I saw a purpose. I guess, basically, was that what I felt was the purpose was to see if we were doing a satisfactory job of teaching.”

“... to assess what sort of job you were doing ...”

“Well, it's supposed to be to see if we're good teachers...”

“I guess just to promote excellence in teaching and to provide an opportunity for you to improve in different areas, to hear some suggestions from the A.O. as to what you can be doing differently...”

“Well, I think it's sort of to keep you on your toes. To make sure that you're sort of following along with the I.R.P.s and that you're, you know, doing basically what you're supposed to be doing, teaching, and making sure that your not teaching something you shouldn't be.”

“Um, I would hope it would be, to make sure that I’m teaching the curriculum and that I’m being appropriate with children. That everything that is going on in my classroom is appropriate.”

Comments about the positive impacts of the current summative evaluation varied. Two of the participants reported no positive impact, while the other four described the collegial interactions between the evaluator and teacher that they viewed as positive.

Those participants reporting no positive impact stated:

“It didn’t really because you always felt they weren’t seeing what actually happened in the classroom and you would have had the evaluation one day and the next day wonderful things were happening, and you would think, oh, I wish they could see this...”

“... It has not had a positive impact for me.”

Those participants reporting positive impacts of summative evaluation stated:

“Well, I looked over some of my evaluations and they were very “warm and fuzzy”. Very nice things were said and it is always nice to know those things that you are doing right ...”

“It helped me develop a certain level of confidence with the A.O. because, I mean, you are involved in a lot of meetings and just having that figure in your classroom, watching you for forty-five minutes or an hour, so, I think it did force you to, you know, become somewhat more comfortable with an authority figure in your room ... in my case any ways, I always got positive feedback, and it feels good to have someone tell you you’re doing a good job.”

“... They point out, “Here is where”, you know, they think that you may be able to improve. And it does make you a little more aware of, you know, and of course it is nice to get a pat on the back about your strengths.”

“I, I think it makes me , even the fact that someone’s coming into watch, makes me aware of what I’m doing and how I’m doing it, how I’m talking, and find that ... I’m much more thoughtful of what I’m doing as I’m doing it.”

Descriptions about the negative impact of summative evaluations were more consistent and reflected much of the literature on the topic. Teachers reported issues such as the stress associated with being evaluated, the act of putting on a “show”, and the subjective nature of the evaluator’s observations as negative aspects to the current system. Participant statements included:

“You always feel under the gun, you always feel a lot of pressure when it’s evaluation time, you always scurry around and clean up your room, check out your evaluation system. You’ve got to jump through some hoops. You know what it is that people – the evaluator will be looking for so you make sure those things are in place, when in actual fact it’s almost like playing a game – just make sure they see what you want them to see.”

“... I lose a lot of sleep prior to it. I do a lot of busy work. I prepare a lot of stuff for show because that’s what’s required of me in order to try to prove to somebody that I’ve been teaching kids.”

“... there is a certain degree of stress...you’re sort of always on your guard...all that energy you spend preparing for meetings, preparing for observation times, it’s energy taken away from your regular teaching, you know,

from preparing for your everyday lessons the way you would normally operate...we really don't prepare day plans that way and we really don't teach that way, so, you know, is it really valid?"

"... I think sometimes you're caught off guard or have a bad day or whatever, it could make a difference to some extent on your report...what they think is happening, sometimes, is not exactly what is happening..."

When the participants were asked if the current evaluation system promoted professional growth, three felt that it does to some degree and three felt that it definitely does not. Participants who felt that the current system encouraged professional development to some degree discussed the need to be reflective about their practice (at least in the short term), the possibility that an evaluator may be able to identify areas that need work, and the effects of positive reinforcement. These respondents made the following comments:

"In the short term. I think, kind of as it's happening it does. It makes you think about that day you're being observed or that time, but, I'm not sure about long term growth."

"To a point. I don't think it does as much as the new system. I mean, they might point out, the A.O. might point out perhaps where you might be a little weak, you might be able to get some professional growth..."

"...If you're encouraged and you feel good about what they are doing, then you are spurred on to do professional growth when it does make you feel like better ... maybe the "warm fuzzies" do make you feel like, "Hey, I am doing a

good job”, and then you do want to do better because of it ... I imagine if I had a negative report, I’d have scurried around and done things better.”

Participants who felt that the summative evaluation system in no way promoted professional growth questioned the process validity. Responses were as follows:

“Um, I have to say no. Only because, I mean, as I mentioned earlier, how valid is it? How true is it? It really doesn’t allow for the teacher to reflect on herself, her needs, her goals, both professionally and personally. And when I think of professional growth, I think of learning new ideas and meeting with other teachers, working collaboratively, and, you know, possibly visiting other classrooms, maybe, taking courses and, you know, um, these sort of things, so I don’t know, I have to say you really don’t have that opportunity when you’re doing the evaluation system that we had set up right now.”

“No. No. Not in my case.”

“No. No, because there is no, there was no, you know, if you did A, B, C, D, to extend yourself the last report was the last report, there was no extension after that.”

Formative Evaluation Defined

The participants described the formative evaluation system as implemented in the pilot as follows:

“Well I think it’s a system where you are aware of your professional growth, it sort of forces you, I guess, to make a choice of something you can improve in and then, of course, you meet with the A.O. and collaborate on it and decide if it’s worthwhile pursuing.”

“Basically, we come up with a plan with some goal areas we want to work on and we wrote that up. Um, I met with (administrator) and talked about it ... there’s a plan May or June to re-meet and discuss what’s happened.”

“Well, what we did was decided on some areas that we wanted to ... that we wanted to get better at ... we wanted to work on and then we wrote out a growth plan and talked with our administrator and from there we went about implementing the plan ... um ... I’ve gone to workshops, I’ve gone to other schools to visit.”

“Well, we had to decide our own goals and that’s been good in the sense of pushing yourself a little bit further because you’ve sort of committed to fulfil this goal ... We set our own goals and planned sort of a timeline to implement them.”

“... the teacher devotes some time reflecting on what he or she feels would be an area that they would like to work on or expand in or learn more about ... then the teacher outlines two or three goals for that teaching year ... then, the A.O. sits down with you and you discuss your goals and your strategies for implementation ... the teacher spends the majority of the year carrying out the personal growth plans and working towards these goals ... then you meet again ... with the A.O. to reflect upon success and, um, you now, sort of fill him or her in on how the goals were met ...”

“It was to choose a couple of areas that I thought I would like to Work on in my teaching. Things that I felt a need for, that would help teaching in my classroom to improve.”

When the participants were asked to describe the purpose of the formative evaluation system piloted, responses were consistent in that they focussed on the importance of reflective practice and teacher choice in the areas to be improved. The responses to the question follow:

“... To help us look at our own teaching and decide, “How can we make this teaching be better”, so that the kids learn more.”

“... it’s for teachers to be reflective ... look at what they are doing and then look at ways they could develop and enhance ... areas they could improve ... Teachers are their worst critics. We all know the areas we need to improve in. we also know what we want to do, not just need to do. Want is important. When people are given a chance it empowers them. Autonomy is incredibly important.”

“... I think the purpose is the same as the other evaluation system. It is just to promote and foster teaching excellence and help teachers develop, um, their goals and, in turn, become better teachers.”

“... to extend yourself professionally, to branch out, to try new things, to push a little harder in certain areas.”

“I think it’s probably for me to identify what I want to do better at; what areas I want to improve in.”

“I think it forces you to make yourself aware that there are areas that, you know, you could definitely improve in. I think every teacher has areas they can improve in. So, this sort of forces you to pick an area rather than a wishy-washy, “Well, I think I’m pretty good at this.” ... you know there are areas that you can

improve in ... So this sort of forces you to have a look closer at some of these areas and do something about it.”

When asked how the formative evaluation system had a positive impact, all participants reported positives, which included the following themes: a sense of commitment; a sense of ownership; and recognition as a professional. The participants responded to the question as follows:

“Well, it’s sort of given me a little push to get on with things ... you’re sort of committed to see it through.”

“It’s been great. The things I chose to do were things that I was planning to do anyway. And I was able to consciously make those my stress for this year, my point of focus for this year ... because they were my focus I took the time to really draw them and look at them instead of just wondering through them...”

“I think it’s made me think more long term ... what I want to grow, what I want to do better. And, it also ... I was really encouraged to do a personal, something personal for me, which I wouldn’t have done in the other system.”

“... I think it has forced me to pursue an area that I knew I was weak in and to do it ... This sort of forces you to focus in and say, “Look. O.K., I know I have an area I need to improvement in so I’ll do it in this area”.”

“... it has honoured professional growth that I have made. I have always tried to grow professionally and always done, you know, I’ve always set a goal for each year, something that I want to improve on, but it’s never been recognized, and ... it’s good to be recognized.”

“Well, I think there’s a lot less stress with it. Certainly a lot less meetings. Definitely there’s a sense of real openness. You can choose to work on your own or with another person or group of people ... there’s a lot of freedom in that respect. The teachers really in control and sets the parameters of success. So, you have a lot of autonomy. And it really allows you to examine yourself and your needs, your goals at that particular time in your life.”

When the participants were asked to describe the negative impacts of formative evaluation, one respondent mentioned concerns regarding the possible lack of feedback and another respondent was concerned about the potential of not meeting or completing the established goals. The other four participants reported no negative impacts. The participants responses were as follows:

“I actually can’t think of any at this point ... I’ve actually really enjoyed it. I think it’s actually been a really good experience ... it’s actually been definitely a growing experience for me this year.”

“As we are doing it, it really hasn’t ...”

“No.”

“It hasn’t. Even the meeting I had with (administrator) at the beginning of this when (administrator) and I had our personal meeting I was under, I had no stress, no tension, no loss of sleep ... It was not something that I did that was a waste of time to try to impress (administrator). It was something that I did that helped me focus where I was going.”

“Well, I don’t think so, in a sense I like the idea like the old system that someone is giving you an evaluation, there’s someone else’s opinion involved. I

like the sense you get some feedback. Um, on the other hand, when we've had colleagues observing in my room, and they actually do give you some feedback. Feedback is really important and maybe that's something that I think is lacking in this ... I think feedback, even if it's, you know, collegially, is really important."

"... The negative side, sometimes you just, you know, you don't really get to all the things that you wanted to."

When the participants were asked if the piloted formative evaluation system promoted professional growth, all participants were unanimous in their responses. The participants responded as follows:

"Well, it has for me because, you know, we did, you know, certain goals were laid out and I really feel, especially in (goal), that I moved forwards a lot and that that is part of it, on the other hand, it was an area I was already interested in so I was already committed to doing some things."

"Yes ... it does."

"I don't see how it could not promote professional growth. Of course it does."

"I have to say so, yes."

"Yes, just because I think even ... even if I don't meet my goals, I still had to identify them and I've had to think about things that I want to improve. And I think that's worth something."

"I think it does in my case. I really think it does."

Collegiality

Participants reported the presence of a supportive and collegial environment while

piloting the summative evaluation process. Participants described an open process, a supportive and accommodating administrator, a chance to work collaboratively with colleagues, recognition of effort, and the absence of stress. Relevant responses follow:

“Definitely there’s a sense of real openness. You can choose to work on your own or with another person or a group of people.”

“... (administrator) did say that anytime during the year if you wanted him (administrator) to, you know, if you wanted him to sit down and discuss anything with you he would certainly be more than willing to do that.”

“... I was able to get extra coverage, (administrator) took my class so I could meet with (teacher), and different things where I was accommodated to make some plans, and carry out some activities and because I was given this extra time I was better able to do these things ...”

“... the meeting I had with (administrator) ... I was under, I had no stress, no tension, no loss of sleep.”

“... when we’ve had colleagues observing in my room, and they actually do give some feedback.”

“... (teacher) and I are working as a team for our growth in (goal) and that’s been worthwhile because we’re working as a team ...”

“... it (formative evaluation) has honoured professional growth that I have made ... this time professional growth is recognized, and again, it’s good to recognized.”

Change & Teacher Ownership

The participants reported the importance of owning the change process. It allowed the teachers to be reflective about their practice, take ownership and make a commitment for their own growth. Relevant responses included:

“The teacher’s really in control and sets the parameters of success. So, you have a lot more autonomy.”

“... (I) identify what I want to do better at; what areas I want to improve in.”

“... (I chose) a couple of things that I thought I would like to work on in my teaching.”

“... we had to decide our own goals and that’s been good be in the sense of pushing yourself a little bit further because you’ve sort of committed to fulfill this goal.”

“... make a choice of something you can improve in ...”

“... it’s forced me to pursue an area that I knew I was weak in and do it.”

“... (formative evaluation) does force you to look at yourself a little closer and say, “look, there are areas that I definitely, you know, need to improve on”.”

“Choice is important. Teachers are their worst critics. We all know the areas we need to improve in.”

Personal vs. Institutional Needs

All of the respondents spoke about this process giving them the ability to focus on those areas that they felt they needed to address. Again, teachers spoke about the

importance of being recognized as competent, reflective practitioners. Relevant responses include:

“... it really allows you to examine yourself and your needs, your goals at that particular time in your life.”

“... I was really encouraged to do a personal, something personal for me ...”

“... it was an area I was already interested in so I was already committed to doing some things.”

“The items that I chose to do were things that I was planning to do anyway. And I was able to consciously make those my stress for this year, my point of focus for this year.”

“We also know what we want to do, not just need to do. Want is important. When people are given a chance it empowers them. Autonomy is incredibly important.”

Summary

The study aimed to answer the Evaluation Question, “Does a formative evaluation result in more professional development than summative evaluation?” Based on the participants’ answers to the interview questions, the answer to this question is a resounding, yes.

As far as the current summative evaluation system, participants reported mostly negative aspects including: the questionably subjective opinion of the evaluator; the feeling that their competence is being questioned; the “jumping through the hoops” mentality; and the associated stress with the process.

With regard to the formative evaluation system as piloted, participants reported mostly positive aspects including: the requirement to be reflective; the importance of teacher choice; the sense of teacher ownership and resulting commitment; recognition as a professional; an open process; a supportive collegial environment; recognition of effort; and a supportive and accommodating administrator.

Recommendations

Based on this study, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. The summative evaluation process should be reserved for those teachers who are new to the district, teachers who have significantly changed their teaching assignment, and/or times when concerns arise about a teacher's competence.
2. The results of this study should be shared with teachers and administration so that any questions or concerns may be addressed prior to the continuation of any form of formative evaluation process.
3. The formative evaluation process, as piloted, should be expanded to include other schools in Rocky Mountain School District. This will allow for more data to be gathered and a constructive dialogue to begin regarding implementation of a new evaluation system.
4. When it becomes necessary to alter any of the parameters, which are seen to "safeguard" teachers against the misuse of a formative evaluation system, a process of consultation must be set up to ensure that consensus among the interest groups (teachers and administration) regarding any changes is established in order to ensure the continuation of the trusting environment that has developed during this pilot's implementation.

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Appendix

Transcripts of Interviews

Teacher One

Q: In total, how many years have you been teaching?

A: This year I'll have been teaching for about thirty-one years.

Q: O.K.. How many years have you taught at this school?

A: Thirty-one years.

Q: How many times have you been evaluated at this school?

A: More than six ... probably between six and seven ... I'm not sure.

Q: O.K.. When was your last evaluation?

A: 1992/93.

Q: Can you describe the current summative evaluation system?

A: Can I describe it? Well, the way I have seen it work is that you are visited in your classroom a number of times and on that basis a report is written about you.

Q: What do you think it is that the administrator is looking for?

A: You mean, what is the purpose of it?

Q: Yeah.

A: I, I don't know. I really never thought about that because it was just part of the system and I really don't know if I saw any purpose. I guess, basically, was that what I felt was the purpose was to see if we were doing a satisfactory job teaching.

Q: Good. Describe how the summative evaluation system had a positive impact for you.

A: Well, I looked over some of my evaluations and they were very "warm and

fuzzy”. Very nice things were said and it is always nice to know those things that you are doing right and a lot of the evaluations that I had did clearly say that I was doing a lot of things well, and you want to know you are doing things well. So, that was positive.

Q: O.K. How has that system had a negative impact on you?

A: You always feel under the gun, you always feel a lot of pressure when it’s evaluation time, you always scurry around and clean up your room, check out your evaluation system. You’ve got to jump through some hoops. You know what it is that people – the evaluator will be looking for and so you make sure those things are in place, when in actual fact it’s almost like your playing a game – just make sure they see what you want them to see.

Q: Good. Do you feel that system promotes professional growth?

A: Well, people that are encouraged ... If you’re encouraged and you feel good about what they are doing, then you are spurred on to do professional growth when it does make you feel like better. I don’t know whether it’s the system necessarily that makes you feel like a professional, you know to go on and become better at it, but um, or maybe the “warm fuzzies” do make you feel like, “Hey, I am doing a good job”, and then you want to do better because of it. But in actual fact, that hasn’t really impacted on me because I’ve always been interested in professional growth. But I imagine if I had a negative report, I’d have scurried around and done things better.

Q: Good. Describe the formative evaluation system you’ve been piloting.

A: Well, what we did was we decided on some areas that we wanted to ... that we wanted to get better at ... we wanted to work on and then we wrote out a growth plan and talked with our administrator and from there we went about implementing the plan

...um...I've gone to workshop, I've gone to other schools to visit.

Q: What is the purpose of formative evaluation?

A: Well, I guess, it's for the teacher to be reflective ... look at what they are doing and then look at ways they could develop and enhance ... areas they could improve.

Choice is important. Teachers are their worst critics. We all know the areas we need to improve in. We also know what we want to do, not just need to do. Want is important.

When people are given a chance it empowers them. Autonomy is incredibly important.

Q: How has this new system had a positive impact for you?

A: I think basically what it's done is ... it has honoured professional growth that I have made. I have always tried to grow professionally and always done, you know, I've always set a goal for each year, something that I want to improve on, but it's never been recognized and this time professional growth is recognized, and again, it's good to be recognized.

Q: So it's something you were doing anyway.

A: Something I was doing anyway, but being recognized for it I think is important too.

Q: O.K. Has the formative evaluation system had any negative impact for you?

A: As we're doing it, it really hasn't. Um, it's been quite benign. I haven't felt any real pressure.

Q: Last question. Do you feel that formative evaluation promotes professional growth?

A: I don't see how it could not promote professional growth. Of course it does.

Q: Is there anything else you would like to say?

A: Scrap this.

Q: Thank you for the interview.

Teacher Two

Q: In total, how many years have you been teaching?

A: About fifteen.

Q: How many years have you taught at this school?

A: Well, I think it's nine, but I can't really remember.

Q: How many times have you been evaluated at this school?

A: Once

Q: Once in nine years?

A: At this school.

Q: O.K.. Good. When was the last time you were evaluated?

A: Well, I think it was about five years ago. Around that time.

Q: Alright, can you describe the current summative evaluation system?

A: That's the previous system?

Q: That's right.

A: O.K., when, um, well (previous administrator) evaluated me and she came in a couple of times and, on a pre-organized visit, and then popped in a couple of times. It was quite easy.

Q: What was the purpose of that system?

A: Well, I suppose to give you an evaluation. To assess what sort of job you were doing. I didn't feel, in a sense it did get to the heart of what you were doing.

Q: Good. Describe how that system had a positive impact for you.

A: It didn't really because you always felt they weren't seeing what actually happened in the classroom and you would have had the evaluation one day and the next day wonderful things are happening, and you would think, oh I wish they could see this! You know, this is what I think is important and this is what is important to me, but that's not what they saw. They (administrator) actually saw a lesson on punctuation or something like that, which, that wasn't really what I thought was really important. So, you're always grappling with what was actually seen and what you wished had been seen.

Q: What about negative impact?

A: Sort of the same answer, I suppose.

Q: Does summative evaluation, in your mind, promote professional growth?

A: No. No, because there is no, there was no, you know, if you did A, B, C, D, to extend yourself the last report was the last report, there was no extension after that.

Q: Good. Can you describe the formative evaluation system you're piloting?

A: Well, we had to decide our own goals and that's been good in the sense of pushing yourself a little bit further because you've sort of committed to fulfil this goal. So, I've liked that part of it. We set our own goals and planned sort of a timeline to implement them.

Q: What do you feel is the purpose of formative evaluation?

A: Well, I suppose to, you know, extend yourself professionally, to branch out, to try new things, to push a little harder in certain areas.

Q: How has the formative evaluation system had a positive impact for you?

A: Well, it's sort of given me a little push to get on with things, you tend to "yes,

I'll get to that, I'll get that", you're sort of committed to see it through.

Q: O.K. Any negative impacts with the system?

A: Well, I don't think so, in a sense I like the idea like the old system that someone is giving you an evaluation, there's someone else's opinion involved. I like the sense that you get some feedback. Um, on the other hand, when we've had colleagues observing in my room, and they actually do give you some feedback. Feedback is really important and maybe that's something that I think is lacking in this. I'm not saying in the summative evaluation I didn't feel that they really got to the heart of what you were really doing, but on the other hand, I think feedback, even if it's, you know, collegially, is important.

Q: So in the formative evaluation system you're piloting now, could probably be improved with more feedback?

A: I think so. I think so. I think that's something, in a sense, lacking because who knows exactly if you're getting anywhere with your goals except yourself. I, maybe if we worked in collegially to provide feedback for each other, I think it might be worthwhile. You wouldn't because really, in all seriousness, you wouldn't have to do a thing. I think we do things because, you know, we're responsible.

Q: Are there checks within this formative evaluation system. Do you meet with administration or ...?

A: Well, we met once at the beginning. I think we meet again.

Q: Do you think it would be better to meet more often?

A: Maybe once in the middle. On the other hand, we're meeting'd to death. So you know, that could be, "Oh groan". That might not work either. I'm not sure what I'm

suggesting, but I think there's ... even if you worked, and in a sense (teacher) and I are working in a team for our growth in (goal) and that's been worthwhile because we're working as a team because, you know we're sort of moving forwards together. So I think that's important. I think if you were doing things totally alone, without any feedback, maybe you wouldn't get anywhere.

Q: O.K.. In your opinion, does the formative evaluation system promote professional growth?

A: Well, it has for me because, you know, we did, you know, certain goals were laid out and I really feel, especially in (goal), that I moved forwards a lot and that that is part of it, on the other hand, it was an area I was already interested in so I was already committed to doing some things.

Q: O.K.. Great. Anything else you wanted to add?

A: No, I think that's fine. Thanks.

Q: Thank you for participating.

Teacher Three

Q: In total, how many years have you been teaching?

A: I'm not sure, somewhere between twenty-five and thirty.

Q: How many years have you taught at this school?

A: This is my first year here. No, I taught here half a year before.

Q: How many times have you been evaluated at this school?

A: Not.

Q: How many times have you been evaluated in this district?

A: One, two, three ... three or four.

Q: How many years have you been in this district?

A: Eight.

Q: When was the last time you were evaluated?

A: Three years ago.

Q: Describe the current summative evaluation system.

A: You mean ... what it means to me?

Q: Describe the process.

A: Near as I can tell, what it is they come in and watch you put on a show. Pardon me, teach a few lessons. And then they go away and write up what they think. And they pour over your notes that you've got at your desk. And their not really evaluating whether the kids learn something, whether the kids are benefiting from your teaching. All their evaluating is what you've got written down.

Q: O.K.. What do you think the purpose of that system is?

A: Well, it's supposed to be to see if we're good teachers. Supposed to be.

Q: Describe how that system's had a positive impact for you.

A: Nope.

Q: No, it hasn't had a positive impact.

A: You got it. It has not had a positive impact for me.

Q: O.K.. Can you describe how it's had a negative impact for you?

A: Yes, I lose a lot of sleep prior to it. I do a lot of busy work. I prepare a lot of stuff for show because that's what's required of me in order to try to prove to somebody that I've been teaching kids.

Q: Does the summative evaluation system promote professional growth?

A: No. No. Not in my case.

Q: Alright, can you describe the formative evaluation system you are piloting?

A: It was to choose a couple of areas that I thought that I would like to work on in my teaching. Things that I felt a need for, that would help teaching in my classroom to improve.

Q: What do you think the purpose of that system is?

A: To make better teachers. To help us look at our own teaching and decide, “How can we make this teaching be better” so that the kids learn more.

Q: How has the formative evaluation system had a positive impact for you?

A: It’s been great. The items that I chose to do were things that I was planning to do anyway. And I was able to consciously make those my stress for this year, my point of focus for this year. And because it was considered to be part of this process we were doing, then I was able to get extra coverage, (administrator) took my class so I could meet with (teacher), and different things where I was accommodated to make some plans, and carry out some activities and because I was given this extra time I was better able to do these things than I would have been if I didn’t have them drawn up as my focus. And because they were my focus, then I took the time to really draw them and look at them instead of just wonder through them. I did have specific purpose and things come up and I think, “Ah, I should do that because that will help me meet that focus”.

Q: Good. O.K.. Describe how that evaluation system has had a negative impact for you.

A: It hasn’t. Even the meeting I had with (administrator) at the beginning of this

when (administrator) and I had our personal meeting I was under, I had no stress, no tension, no loss of sleep. I put in half an hours worth of time to put on paper my focus in order to meet with (administrator), but that was a half hour worth of time to put that on paper that was of benefit to me. It was not something that I did that was a waste of time to try to impress (administrator). It was something that I did that helped me focus where I was going.

Q: Good. Does the formative evaluation system promote professional growth?

A: I think it does in my case. I really think it does.

Q: O.K.. Anything else you want to add.

A: Nope.

Q: Thank you very much.

Teacher Four

Q: In total, how many years have you been teaching?

A: Five.

Q: How many years have you taught at this school?

A: One.

Q: How many times have you been evaluated at this school?

A: This will be the first time.

Q: When was the last time you were evaluated?

A: I think it was 96/97. Yes.

Q: O.K.. Describe the current summative evaluation system.

A: From what I can remember, um, the A.O. notifies the teachers, sometime in the

early fall, it usually seemed to be around October, usually, I think that was in written form, and then you had a meeting with the A.O. to discuss how the evaluation was going to take place. I think that was usually October, or so. And then, the teacher chose two or three times when the A.O. would come into the classroom and observe you, and you tried to pick different lessons. And, um, the A.O. usually would come in an additional one to two times, unannounced, so just pop in. And then following each observation, you would sit down and meet with the A.O. and go over what happened in your room and sort of a debriefing, post-conference. And then the A.O. would draft up a rough copy and provide you with an opportunity to go over the rough copy, add any comments, feedback to it. Following that there would be a final copy drawn up and, um, that, once you've read it and sign it, is sent off to the superintendent.

Q: O.K.. What do you think the purpose of that system was?

A: I guess just to promote excellence in teaching and to provide an opportunity for you to improve in different areas, to hear some suggestion from the A.O. as to what you can be doing differently. And to get some positive feedback, as well.

Q: O.K.. Can you describe how that system had a positive impact for you?

A: It helped me develop a certain level of confidence with the A.O. because, I mean, you are involved in a lot of meetings and just having that figure in your classroom, watching you for forty-five minutes or an hour, so, I think it did force you to, you know, become somewhat more comfortable with an authority figure in your room. So that would be a positive. And I'd say, this is kind of a funny one, but the years that you are evaluated, I know myself, your previews, your overviews, your day plans, well things are more thorough because you know their coming to check up. So, and I'm just being honest

in saying that, I'm probably sure, you know, that most people are like that too. And, I guess the other thing is, just, you know you're doing a good job, and, or at least I feel I'm doing a good job, but it does provide you with some reassurance. You know, in my case any ways, I always got positive feedback, and it feels good to have someone tell you you're doing a good job.

Q: O.K.. What about negative impact?

A: Well, there is a certain degree of stress, so, I have to say that would be one of the first things. Not that it was tremendously stressful or anything, but, you know, you're sort of always on your guard. And, um, the only other thing I can think of is, because there's so many meetings, and, um, you know, all these visits that are planned, I think all that energy that you spend preparing for meetings, preparing for the observation times, it's energy taken away from your regular teaching, you know, from preparing for your everyday lessons the way you would normally operate. How valid is the evaluation? Because after all, most of us, like I'm speaking for most of us, we really don't prepare day plans that way and we really don't teach that way, so, you know, is it really valid?

Q: Good. Do you think that summative evaluation system promotes professional growth?

A: Um, I have to say no. Only because, I mean, as I mentioned earlier, how valid is it? How true is it? It doesn't really allow for the teacher to reflect on herself, her needs, her goals, both professionally and personally. And when I think of professional growth, I think of learning new ideas and meeting with other teachers, working collaboratively, and, you know, possibly visiting other classrooms, and maybe, taking courses and, you know, um, these sort of things, so I don't know, I'd have to say you

really don't have that opportunity when you're doing the evaluation system that we had set up right now.

Q: Describe the formative evaluation system you are implementing as a pilot.

A: In the early fall, the teacher devotes some time reflecting on what he or she feels would be an area that they would like to work on or expand in or learn more about. And. Um. (administrator) gave us, I guess, until November to do that, so, a couple of months. And then the teacher outlines two or three goals for that teaching year, and these goals can be either personal or professional goals. And then the A.O. meets with you, and you sit down and you discuss your goals and your strategies for implementation sometime before Christmas. Um, the teacher spends the majority of the year carrying out the personal growth plans and working towards these goals. And then you meet again, as far as I understand, you meet again, springtime with the A.O. to reflect upon success and, um, you know, to sort of fill him or her in on how the goals were met. And (administrator) did say that anytime during the year if you wanted him to, you know, if you wanted him to sit down and discuss anything with you he would certainly be more than willing to do that.

Q: O.K.. What do you think is the purpose formative evaluation?

A: I have to say, I mean, I think the purpose is the same as the other evaluation system. It is just to promote and foster teaching excellence and help teachers develop, um, their goals and, in turn, become better teachers.

Q: O.K.. Can you describe how the new system has had a positive impact on you?

A: Well, I think there's a lot less stress with it. Certainly a lot less meetings.

Definitely there's a sense of real openness. You can choose to work on your own or with another person or a group of people. It's really up to the teacher so there's a lot of freedom in that respect. The teacher's really in control and sets the parameters of success. So, you have a lot more autonomy. And it really allows you to examine yourself and your needs, your goals at that particular time in your life.

Q: O.K.. What about negative impacts?

A: I actually can't think of any at this point, but I haven't had my meeting with (administrator) at the end of the year so I'm, perhaps there will be some, but I've actually really enjoyed it. I think it's actually been a really good experience. I'd have to say, you know, at the beginning of the year when (administrator) approached me with this I thought, "Oh, you know, that's kind of a different way of doing evaluation". I really wasn't sure, but I thought, "Well, you know, give it a try, see how it goes". But, I actually really did and it's been definitely a growing experience for me this year.

Q: In your opinion, does it promote professional growth?

A: I have to say so, yes.

Q: Anything you want to add?

A: No.

Q: Thank you very much.

Teacher Five

Q: In total, how many years have you been teaching?

A: This will be my thirty-third year.

Q: How many years have you taught at this school?

A: Thirty

Q: How many times have you been evaluated at this school?

A: I think probably about eight. It could have been eight or nine.

Q: When was the last time you were evaluated?

A: 1994.

Q: Describe the current summative evaluation system.

A: Well, let me see. Well, in the past, the A.O. would come in and he would have anywhere from three to ten observations and, I guess, make notes. And, get together and talk about some of the lessons. Where he thought you may have had great strengths or some weaknesses. And, basically, the report is made out after a few months.

Q: What do you think is the purpose of that evaluation system?

A: Well, I think it's to sort of keep you on your toes. To make sure that you're sort of following along with the I.R.P.s and that you're, you know, doing basically what you're supposed to be doing, teaching, and making sure that your not teaching something you shouldn't be.

Q: O.K.. Can you describe how the summative evaluation system has had a positive impact for you?

A: Well, I think it makes you a little bit more aware of where your strengths and weaknesses are. And, at least you have a base to go on, say, when you get together with the A.O.. They point out, "Here is where", you know, they think that you may be able to improve. And it does make you a little more aware of, you know, and of course it's nice to get a pat on the back about your strengths.

Q: Can you describe how the summative evaluation system has had a negative impact for you?

A: Well, I think sometimes you're caught off guard or have a bad day or whatever, it could make a difference to some extent on your report, I'm not sure, but I just think that, like I've been evaluated just twice, you know, two classroom visits and then the reports made up. And what they think is happening, sometimes, is not exactly what is happening. So, I know that perhaps, the more times they come in to observe you the better, but, you know, you get a little shaky when their sitting at the back watching every single move you make. And, uh, (past administrator), can I mention names?

Q: Sure.

A: (Past administrator), and he had this I.T.I.P., the I.T.I.P. Program, Initial Teaching Into Practice Theory, and he went around and made notes on every single kid, what that kid was doing during my teaching. You know, it was a bit scary. He also said, "Well, you didn't ask this side of the classroom as many questions as you did this side, and do you realize that you asked more questions of the girls than the boys?"

Q: Do you think the summative evaluation system promotes professional growth?

A: To a point. I don't think it does as much as the new system. I mean, they might point out, the A.O. might point out perhaps where you might be a little bit weak, you might be able to get some professional growth. I don't know, I've never been told that, but, on the other hand, I was told that I haven't really gone outside the district to that many workshops or whatever. Maybe I should have upgraded myself in some area I suppose. To some extent I think, yes.

Q: O.K.. Can you describe the formative evaluation system you're implementing as a pilot?

A: Well, I think it's a system where you are aware of your professional growth, it

sort of forces you, I guess, to make a choice of something you can improve in and then, of course, you meet with the A.O. and collaborate on it and decide if it's worthwhile pursuing.

Q: What do you think the purpose is of this formative evaluation system?

A: I think it forces you to make yourself aware that there are areas that, you know, you could definitely improve in. I think every teacher has areas they can improve in. So, this sort of forces you to pick an area rather than a wishy-washy, "Well, I think I'm pretty good at this." It's when you get something like computers, the new programs, you know (goal), and a few others that you know that you're fairly weak in and you can improve anyway. Art, P.E., things like that, you know that there are areas that you can improve in. So this sort of forces you to have a look closer at some of these areas and do something about it.

Q: Can you describe how that system has had a positive impact for you?

A: Well, like I said, I think it's forced me to pursue an area that I knew I was weak in and do it. You know, rather than say, "Well, I think I might some day." This sort of forces you to focus in and say, "Look, O.K., I know I have an area I need improvement in so I'll do it in this area".

Q: Good. Any negative impacts?

A: Well, sometimes negative impacts might be you can't quite, you know, get to each area that you want. What when you've made up your growth plan. There may not be enough money available for you to go here there and whatever else. Um, or materials, but so far I like it. I think it's forced me to really, you know, to do a few things that I wouldn't of. To, for example, I'm taking (goal) this year. And I'm taking a (course) at

(institution), which I don't think I would have done if this didn't come up. And also, I went to a few other workshops, you know, that I may have thought at first, "Oh, yeah, it looks pretty good, but". So you go, and you decide you're going to make up flash cards and you're going to improve this. So, you know, that's the positive side. The negative side, sometimes you just, you know, you don't really get to all the things that you want to do.

Q: So, under this system, what happens if you don't get to those things?

A: I'm not sure. I think, as long as I've tried, you know, made a really good effort, I can't see where they can fail me. You know, get a failing report. Like I'm not really worried about it. You try hard, and I think it's, uh, done me good ... and I'm confident in that area now.

Q: So, in your opinion, does formative evaluation promote professional growth?

A: Yes ... it does.

Q: Anything else you want to add?

A: Well, I don't know yet. I have feeling I have to talk with (administrator) to just see what he thinks. First he said, "Well, I start out with (goal)." So, I don't know what he's going to say. I don't think it's quite as intimidating, you know, as the current evaluation system. With that you never know how you're going to be rated. And this way, you sort of have an idea where your goals are and what you have to do there. As I said with (past administrator), it disturbed me a bit. Maybe, in a way, maybe it was good because maybe I wasn't aware that I was asking, you know, more girls' questions than boys. But, then I think I had more girls in my class and that's, you know, that maybe I

didn't stop long enough, you know, you're walking around looking at assignments and should have paid a little more attention this kid, whatever. That was, you know, a little bit intimidating in that respect. It all depends on who your evaluator is. Whereas, I think with this professional growth plan, again, I think the old method is good for teachers who are just starting out. Maybe for the first ten years, just to sort of keep them on their toes. I think if you sort of establish yourself as an experienced competent teacher, what are they really going to...are they really going to fail you, as long as your doing your job and everything. I think it's good, you know, for teachers, say after ten years to start looking back and say, "Maybe there are certain areas I can improve on". You know, I may be good, but I know I'm not going to...fail or whatever and, uh, get an unsatisfactory report, it's not the point, it just does force you to look at yourself a little closer and say, "Look, there are areas that I definitely, you know, need improvement on." Well, as you know too, like, anyone can improve themselves in any area, and this just sort of forces you to pursue that.

Q: Good. Thanks, (teacher).

Teacher Six

Q: In total, how many years have you been teaching?

A: And that's out of this district as well, right?

Q: Right.

A: O.K.. I think it's about seventeen.

Q: How many years have you taught at this school?

A: This time around, I think it's four years and I've taught there for one year previously.

Q: O.K.. How many times have you been evaluated at this school?

A: This would be my second.

Q: When was the last time you were evaluated?

A: It was (past administrator), so I would say it was, now I'm guessing, I'm guessing three years.

Q: O.K.. Can you describe the current summative evaluation system?

A: So, what I did in this process?

Q: No, the old process.

A: The old process, when I was evaluated?

Q: Yeah.

A: Um, she came to my room, I believe it was between three and five times and she observed me. I could have had notification of when she came, but I preferred actually not to because I didn't want to have to worry about someone coming in my room and plan a lesson for that purpose. So, um, she did let me know what day what day she was coming in, but I didn't want to know specifically what time. And then she gave me feedback each time after, after each day I went to her office and we just talked about what she saw and then at the end of the process she gave me a written report.

Q: O.K.. What do you think the purpose is of that system?

A: Um, I would hope it would be, to make sure that I'm teaching the curriculum and that I'm being appropriate with children. That everything that is going on in my classroom is appropriate.

Q: O.K.. Describe how the summative evaluation system has had a positive impact for you.

A: I, I think it makes me, even the fact that someone's coming into watch, makes me really aware of what I'm doing and how I'm doing it, how I'm talking, and I find that even if a parent-helper is in the room, I'm much more thoughtful of what I'm doing as I'm doing it.

Q: Good. O.K.. Can you describe how it's had a negative impact for you?

A: I don't think it ever has. Yeah, yeah, I've always found it useful.

Q: O.K.. Do you think that the summative evaluation system promotes professional growth?

A: In the short term. I think, kind of as it's happening it does. It makes you think about that day you're being observed or that time, but, I'm not sure about long term growth.

Q: Alright. Can you describe the formative evaluation system you're implementing as a pilot?

A: Right now?

Q: Right.

A: Basically, we come up with a plan with some goal areas we want to work on and we wrote that up. Um, I met with (administrator) and talked about it. And, now I've, basically, just been on my own since, and I believe there's a plan May or June to re-meet and discuss what's happened.

Q: What do you think is the purpose of that system?

A: I think it's probably for me to identify what I want to do better at; what areas I want to improve in.

Q: Can you describe how that's had a positive impact for you?

A: I think it's made me think more long term, where the other, I think, was short term. Just get through the observation and the person watching. Get through, sort of, that day. I think this is more a long term, what I want to grow, what I want to do better. And, it also, I notice this one more, I was really encourage to do a personal, something personal for me, which I wouldn't have done in the other system.

Q: Has the formative evaluation system had any negative impacts?

A: No.

Q: O.K.. Do you feel that formative evaluation promotes professional growth?

A: Yes. Just, because I think even, like I think I said it back at the initial meeting, even if I don't meet my goals, I still had to identify them and I've had to think about things that I want to improve. And I think that's worth something.

Q: Anything else you want to add?

A: I think under the current system, if I'm pre-warned when an administrator comes into my room, I can fudge a lesson. If I know their coming for an hour block to watch language arts, I can create the most dynamic lesson for that hour. I think, in fact, what would happen, even if I was a good teacher, I would put all my energy into planning that hour, where the rest of the four hours of the day I'd quickly throw something together and maybe left by the wayside and I don't think that's really appropriate. And that's why when (past administrator) observed me before, I told her I don't want to know what you're coming to see, I want you to come and see me when you want to and I want you to evaluate what I'm like all the time, not for one lesson that I know you're coming. And, I think, administrators should be popping in the room all the time, just making sure what we're doing is appropriate because, I think, that's for the protection of the kids. You

know, and not necessarily then, I think. I also think, the other flip of that is, teachers, if we have problems, they should be in a role of getting us help. It shouldn't be just that you are a bad teacher. It should be, here's some areas, and here's how we're going to help you improve. And it should be courses and reading, and, I think, that's areas that have fallen down too.

Q: Good. Thank you very much, (teacher).