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ACTION RESEARCH: TEACHER EVALUATION AND REFLECTION

by

Courtney Lynne Landry

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A Dissertation Presented to the  
FACULTY OF THE MORGRIDGE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION  
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Requirements for the Degree  
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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Courtney Lynne Landry

### **Dedication**

This paper is dedicated to individuals who have made immeasurable impact on me as a person, teacher, daughter, and mother.

First, to my father, Carlton Landry, who was not here to see this journey, but has been with me every step of the way. Dad, you have always been my biggest supporter and the person that I could always count on to push me past my limits to give even more than I thought I could. For that I will be forever grateful in this world and the next.

Mom, the one person who has been more to me than anyone could ever ask for or hope for, Dr. Landry, I thank you. You have been there with me for every day, every tear, and every joy. I cannot even begin to repay you for the hours of advice, comfort, and love that you have given me that has made it possible for me to make it through the hard times and appreciate the good ones.

Finally, to my children, Greyson and Lorelei, you are my heart. It is my hope that through this struggle your lives will be richer and brighter. That you will know the value of education, hard work, and dedication because you have lived it with me. You are the reason for all things; you are the light that shows me the way. I can always do better, because you are watching, and you are everything.

Dad, Mom, Greyson, and Lorelei, I dedicate this piece to you for all the love and encouragement you have given me that has made this possible. For being the voices in my head and the motivation to go just a little bit further than seemed possible. I love you all.

### **Acknowledgements**

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I would like to thank the cohort of students that sat in class with me every week, supported me when I had questions or was feeling frustrated. Specifically, I want to thank Shawn Graziani, Ashley Idrees and Lorna Beckett for their constant support and willingness to answer a text or email regardless of the time of day or night. Your support and friendship helped me every day to do a little more.

Trina Norris-Buck, the former principal at Vikan Middle School, thank you for the numerous interviews for projects along the way. Your mentorship and guidance over the years has been an inspiration to me and provided a model of the kind of leader I hope to be.

Finally, thank you to the participants of this study who gave up hours after school and during their independent time to support this project. I hope that this research makes a positive impact within the school and district, so that your voices can be heard.

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### Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative action research study was to create an improved learning log procedure, based on the theory of action that the use of professional learning logs will improve self-reflection, which will increase teacher self-efficacy. Data collected through interviews, focus groups, and a research action committee have led to the assertions that (a) reflection is a necessary and welcomed part of being a professional; (b) procedures for reflection must be easily accessed and consistent; (c) teachers should have autonomy over their choice of reflection method to gain meaning; (d) though the learning log process allows for autonomy, the purpose of the learning log is ambiguous and needs further defining. Addressing these assertions, a series of recommendations is made to improve the overall process of reflection within the school.

## CHAPTER ONE: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

As Alice walked into the staff meeting, she looked up at the projector screen with trepidation. She had received an email letting her know to bring an electronic device and any notes that needed to be added to her learning log. Today staff development would be time to work on documenting annual goals in the individual learning log. “*Well, it’s February, nothing like waiting until the last minute*”, Alice thought. As she sat down in her learning group the conversation was already underway.

“How many entries do you have?” asked a male teacher.

“I haven’t even started!” exclaimed another.

“I have a few entries from the beginning of school, but that’s it,” Alice replied.

“I don’t even really remember my goal,” stated another concerned teacher.

This is common discourse regarding the learning log. Each year, it is introduced in September, mentioned sporadically at Professional Learning Communities (PLC), and then re-emphasized in April for evaluation deadlines. Alice often wondered what the purpose was. There was little to no follow-up from the evaluators, and she would most likely pick a new goal next year and forget about this year’s. It is just another hoop to jump - just another box to check. Alice’s frustration is the result of an evaluation system that espouses the purpose of growing teachers and reflection, but it is more of a chore than an authentic learning opportunity.

**Why Evaluation?**

The United States has experienced rapid growth in the areas of accountability and evaluation since the 1980s, following the release of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 by the National Commission on Excellence in Education. *A Nation at Risk* attempted to confront the perceived decline in American education that was identified as the catalyst for increased unemployment

and job loss in the U.S. (“Good, 2010; “Race to the top Executive Summary”, 2009). Holloway (2017) states that over the past 30 years, teachers “have been subjected to high-stakes accountability policies and practices that rely on calculating tools and punitive actions that have fundamentally reshaped teacher subjectivities” (p. 1). The pathway to such teacher evaluations has evolved over time in combination with continuous research on the impact of effective teachers on student achievement.

Research has consistently indicated that teachers have the greatest effect on student achievement (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2011; Rockoff, 2003; Rowan, 2004). Knowing this, it is essential that teachers are held accountable for the growth and achievement of their students. Evaluating teacher effectiveness has become a national concern as the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 introduced additional funding for states willing to incorporate several new reform efforts, including "recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers" (“Race to the top executive summary”, 2009, p. 2). The ARRA introduced Race to the Top, which provides federal dollars to states willing to adopt more rigorous standards as well as establish evaluation systems to identify teachers who are making a positive impact on student achievement.

Teacher accountability is important in maintaining the integrity of the profession. For this reason, it is necessary to ensure the evaluation system which holds teachers accountable is both useful and accurate. Firestone (2014) suggests that there are challenges with both intrinsic and extrinsic forms of motivation for teacher evaluation; ranging from teaching to the test and teacher misconduct to misaligned goals and beliefs. States and school districts must adopt an evaluation system that meets the needs of the system and students, while also addressing the needs of teachers.

**Local context.** SD27J is a rural school district in Brighton, Colorado that has adopted and adapted a new evaluation system over the past several years. According to the district website ([www.sd27j.net](http://www.sd27j.net)) it is the second largest school district in Adams County. In October 2016, the district reported a total population of 16,526 students with 44% identifying as Hispanic, 53% as white and 2% as Black, Asian, and Native American (SD27J Official October Count, 2016). The school district currently employs approximately 750 certified teachers who are evaluated with the current teacher evaluation system.

In 2008 administrators and the teachers' unions came together in dissatisfaction over the evaluation system that was in place. The previous evaluation system was deemed to be "too subjective and artificial" and "lacked meaningful feedback and dialogue between administrator and teacher that could have led to growth and improvement" (SD27J, 2014, p. 2). A joint effort was made to "modernize and fundamentally change" the system focused on research around "human learning and motivation" (SD27J, 2014, p. 2). There is no documentation of the evaluation system that was in place prior to 2008. The district committee began by organizing the beliefs and values around evaluation. The seminal beliefs included the statement that

Evaluation should be about growth and improvement and not about punishment; one size does not fit all. Teacher evaluation must be flexible and provide for individualization based on experience and interests; only the teacher can do the learning- the process is supported by administrators and colleagues; its outcomes are owned by the individual teacher (SD27J, 2014).

**SD27J evaluation process.** The SD27J evaluation system is divided into four parts: (a) goal setting, (b) learning log and reflections, (c) observations and feedback, and (d) summary conversations. These four areas of focus "create the leverage points needed to actualize a power implementation empowering change in behaviors" (SD27J, 2014, p. 6). These components have been developed by the evaluation committee to establish an educator focused evaluation system.

According to the current principal at Vikan Middle School and a member of the district evaluation committee, the ideal behind the creation of this system was a system that supported educator practice and professional growth through self-reflection and feedback.

The process begins with a goal setting conversation with the teacher and his/her evaluator that must occur within the first twenty student contact days of the school year (District Evaluator Overview, 2014). The teacher -selected learning goal must align with the Colorado Performance Standards for Teachers. Next the teacher creates a Learning Log, where he/she writes reflections and learning as it connects to the learning goal. The educator is the owner of this document; however, the evaluator has joint responsibility in documenting feedback on the process (SD27J, 2014). Observations and feedback are also included in the process. District documents clearly state that administrators are to be in classrooms; however, there is not a designated number of observations. The evaluator and the teacher may both provide reflections and feedback in the teacher's learning log (p. 9). The final step in the evaluation process is a summary conversation. This step is completed before the last two weeks of student contact days. The conversation should be reflective of the learning of the educator and include feedback from the administrator (p. 11). This evaluation process makes up 50% of the overall teacher evaluation. The other 50% is comprised of 25% individual teacher data, 12.5% school data, and 12.5% district data.

### **Problem of Practice**

Evaluation has taken on different designs over the years. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965) enacted by Lyndon B. Johnson and reauthorized in 2002 (No Child Left Behind) established a set of basic criteria that teachers must meet to be considered highly qualified: a bachelor's degree, state certification of licensure, and verified demonstration of content knowledge in the content being taught. Since that time schools have worked to attain

100% highly qualified teachers. The shift from having a highly-qualified teacher workforce to a highly effective teacher workforce has occurred in recent years. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (2009) encouraged states to "improve teacher effectiveness and ensure equitable distribution of teachers" (Rowland, 2009, p. 114).

Though there has been a call for highly effective teachers via federal legislation, the definition of what *effective* means is unclear. This leaves states and local school districts with the burden of defining *teacher effectiveness* to appropriately set goals to meet national requirements. Herring, Curran, Stone, Davidson, Ahrabi-Fard, and Zhbanova (2015) created a tool called *The Emerging Qualities of Effective Teaching Continuum* that focuses on the shift from teacher-centered teaching to shared student-teacher experiences. The authors here define effective teaching as the "type of teaching that is going to lead to students' success in the learning process" (p. 164). The continuum includes three phases:

- a. traditional where the focus is on the teacher as the expert providing knowledge to a single or similar type of student;
- b. responsive which focus on a reflective and self-aware educator who provides rigorous content with more student-centered and informed pedagogical skills; and
- c. transformative qualities linking teacher and learner at the core of the learning environment (Herring et al., 2015).

Teachers' understanding of where they are on the continuum provides insight into needed professional development and planning for transformative shifts. Ideally, teachers should be progressing toward a transformative level of effectiveness (Herring et al., 2015). Stronge (2007) also identifies effectiveness to be an outcome-related process. He identifies that the most important result of teacher effectiveness is student learning, and teachers have the greatest

impact on such outcomes. Synthesizing these ideas, the definition of effective teaching in this research is transformative teaching that empowers students to own their learning and is measured by student outcomes.

Teachers participate in the evaluation process on a regular basis via classroom walk-throughs, student achievement, and meetings with evaluators. In SD27J teachers set goals tied to the Colorado Quality Standards that support the school's Unified Improvement Plan (UIP). According to the district's evaluation overview, the teacher and evaluator will meet to identify one to two quality standards that the teacher will focus on for the year. These goals are based on district and building level goals, teacher experience and interest, and any relevant student achievement data, as well as classroom observation data. Progress towards these goals is reflected upon and tracked in interactive learning logs. The learning logs are shared between the evaluator and the teacher, and may vary in content, such as readings, administrator and peer observations, and reflective questions and responses (see Appendix D for sample log) (SD27J, 2014). The issue lies in the notion that learning goals and learning logs are designed to empower teachers and reflect on their practice; yet it is often just another assignment that they must do in their busy day. Additional research on this issue needs to be conducted to inform the practice of teacher reflection and evaluation that builds teacher self-efficacy. This leads to the following research question (a) How can learning logs be used to improve practice and increase self-efficacy? As well as the sub question (b) How does the learning log process hinder or support authentic teacher self-reflection?

School District 27J has two categories of evaluation data: student data and teacher data. Twenty-five percent of the student data is teacher specific, the other 25 percent is school-wide and district-wide student data. Teacher data accounts for 50 percent of the evaluation and is

gathered through classroom observations, teacher self-assessment, and independent learning logs. According to the *SD27J Evaluator Overview* (2014) the evaluation system begins with goal setting. Each teacher must establish, with his or her evaluator, a Professional Learning Goal (PLG), aligned with the Colorado Performance Standards for Teachers. Once a goal has been established, the teacher will document progress towards the goal in an Interactive Learning Log (ILL). The ILL is owned by the educator to write reflections and learning around the PLG. Evaluator guidelines state that there is autonomy in this process to allow each building to establish a system that “works best for communication and support of leaning” (p. 8). The autonomy provided by the learning log was created intentionally; however, there is no mention of specific evidence or guidance on the type of reflection. In an independent assessment of the evaluation system conducted by APA Consulting (2015), 79 percent of teachers understood how the professional learning logs could inform their instruction, and 71 percent were clear that the learning logs could guide their professional development. This leaves greater than 20 percent of teachers who are completing the learning log out of compliance and not out of a clear understanding of its purpose or outcome.

The purpose of this action research study is to create an improved learning log procedure, based on the theory of action that the use of professional learning logs will improve self-reflection, which will increase teacher self-efficacy. Learning logs have been an established protocol in the district’s evaluation model; therefore, it is important that they are used with fidelity and with meaningful reflection by teachers. This study will manipulate the current compliance-based protocol to a teacher driven authentic reflection of practice. I will do this by working with an action research team to create a focused reflection tool designed to increase teacher self-efficacy and provide authentic reflection opportunities. This invested team of



professionals will assess and reflect on the current process, and then build and implement an improved process. Once the action research team field tests the new learning log process and makes additional adjustments, the data will be collected to determine if improvements have resulted in increased teacher self-efficacy.

Reflective practices are often cited as an indicator of effective teaching (Stronge, 2007; Frontier & Mielke, 2016; Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011). Mortari (2012) identifies reflection as “a necessary condition to acquiring expertise;” and “a mental practice that allows practitioners to transform from the role of technicians to that of competent professionals” (p. 525). It is fair to assume that reflection on one’s learning will provide a deeper understanding of how learning is taking place and what further learning still needs to happen. This study explores whether mandated reflection is as productive as organic, natural self-reflection.

The significance of this research lies in the value found in teacher self-reflection and empowerment towards improving practice. Identifying properties of effective learning logs will inform districts and states using teacher reflection in the evaluation process to establish and adopt a learning log protocol that will foster authentic reflection and build teacher self-efficacy towards individual attainment of professional goals. This study assumes that evaluation systems that adopt reflection tools, such as learning logs, are receiving compliance based reflection, rather than authentic reflection that will lead to improved practice and ideally increased student achievement. Understanding that the findings in this study may not be generalizable beyond the specific district, there are opportunities to build from the research done here to inform other such policies.

## Summary

In review, this study will examine how learning logs can be used to improve practice and increase teacher self-efficacy and how the current process hinders or fosters self-reflection? Current literature, as this paper will explain below, promotes reflection but does not provide guidance on how to promote authentic reflection. In this paper, I hope to identify the practices and processes that make authentic reflection a practical and useful tool for teachers as well as administrators in the evaluation process.

## Key Terms

**Learning Log:** The learning log used in SD27J is an interactive tool used by both the teacher and evaluator to log activities and results tied to the teacher's learning goal.

**Authentic reflection:** In this study, the term authentic reflection means, reflection that is unaffected by the prompting of peers or evaluators. An authentic reflection is one's own reflection of the process and outcomes without the influence of others.

**Effective teaching:** transformative teaching that empowers students to own their learning and is measured by student outcomes.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### **A Short History of Evaluation**

The origins of teacher evaluation reach back before the 1700s, when education was not considered a professional discipline. From the beginning of formal education to the mid-1800s a shift occurred recognizing “pedagogical skills are a necessary component of effective teaching” (Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011, p. 13). Towards the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the works of John Dewey and Ellwood Cubberley expressed prominent, yet diverging ideas of teacher evaluation. Cubberley, on the other hand, took a more scientific route focusing on the work of Frederick Taylor and the factory model of education (Marzano, et al., 2011). In 1916, Cubberley published the first iteration of *Public School Administration* where he emphasized the factory model where successful practices were studied and replicated to produce increased successful output (students) (Marzano, et al., 2011). Understanding the intended formal purpose of education is necessary to understand the role of the teacher and the expectations on teachers within the education system.

Post-World War II saw a shift from the scientific approach of teaching to viewing the teacher as an individual. Elsie Coleman (1945) in an article for *Educational Leadership* identified the fundamental understanding of the teacher as a person, unique in his qualities which impact his environment. Here Coleman shows an empathetic view of teaching and the individuality and growth that can be cultivated. Lewis and Leps (as cited in Marzano, et. al., 2011) identified five qualities of a supervisory model as having, “democratic ideals, opportunities for initiative, understanding human limitations, shared decision making, and delegation of responsibility” (p.16). These elements connect to Coleman’s perspective of the teacher as an individual with the need for connection and responsibility within the process.

Lewis and Leps' guidelines do not overly emphasize teaching or observation of teaching within the supervisory roles, in fact, another work by Swearengin (1946) identified various roles of the principal such as building maintenance, the teaching situation, cooperative groups, emotional quality of the classroom, etc. The various duties of the principal as evaluator and building manager were defined in the post-war era, and most significantly a consensus was established on the need and importance of teacher observations (Marzano, et al., 2011). In 1958 Morris Cogan, professor at Harvard's Masters of Art and Teaching, was lecturing on what he called the "cycle of clinical supervision" that was developed through trial and error working with student teachers (Marzano, et. al., 2011). Goldhammer (1969) defined the process as the "symbiotic relationship between practitioner and resident, where observation and discussion drove both parties to higher levels of growth and effectiveness" (Marzano et al., 2011, p. 18).

Whitehead (1952) noted that though observations were not new, they were often, "abused by administrative officers who make a series of casual, purposeless, unplanned inspectional tours of their schools" (p. 102). In his study, Whitehead surveyed 115 teachers within a North Carolina school district. Sixty-five percent of the teachers said that the principal did not stay for the entire class period, and 72 percent reported that the visits were unscheduled. There was also a mixed perception by the teachers as to the purpose of the visitations: 80% believed the visitations to be for improving instruction, while 20 % stated the visitations were for giving teacher ratings and inspecting the physical classroom (p. 102). Whitehead found that even though these observations lacked structure, they still made a positive impact due to the face to face interaction; however, in summation he claimed that there should be more attention paid by administrators on effective teaching (Whitehead, 1952). Hollingsworth et al. (2013) cites Whitehead's research as leading the way towards a more effective observation and evaluation tool, while Marzano et al. (2011)

also quoted Whitehead's claim that administrators need pay more attention to the area of effective teaching (p. 17). Ibara (2013) identifies instructional supervision as both a concept and a process designed to improve instruction, and clinical supervision uses both concepts of counseling and skill training to achieve this.

Bruce and Hoehn (as cited in Marzano et al., 2011) found that 90 percent of administrators were using some variation of clinical supervision by 1980. A study sponsored by the RAND corporation in the 1980s, set out to identify the types of supervisory practices that were being implemented. The study was conducted following the 1983 release of *A Nation at Risk* and President Ronald Regan's endorsement of merit pay for teachers, which prompted a need for examination of teacher evaluation systems (Wise, Darling-Hammond, McLaughlin, & Bernstein, 1985). Thirty-two sites were selected using reputational sampling to identify school districts with "highly developed teacher evaluation practices" (p. 63). A general finding in the study was that evaluation systems that were more focused on development and reflection were often viewed as lacking specificity to increase effective practices (Wise, et al., 1985). The study identified four common issues with supervision and evaluation: (1) principals' inability to evaluate accurately, (2) teacher resistance to feedback, (3) inconsistent evaluation practices, and (4) principals received insufficient training.

The next wave of evaluation models brought in the Danielson model, spearheaded by Charlotte Danielson in 1996. Marzano et al. (2011) states that "The Danielson model must be the reference point for any new proposals regarding supervision and evaluation" (p. 23). The Danielson model identifies 22 components of teaching divided into four domains: planning and preparation, the classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities (Danielson, 2007). Danielson's model sought to recognize the complexity of teaching, with the 22

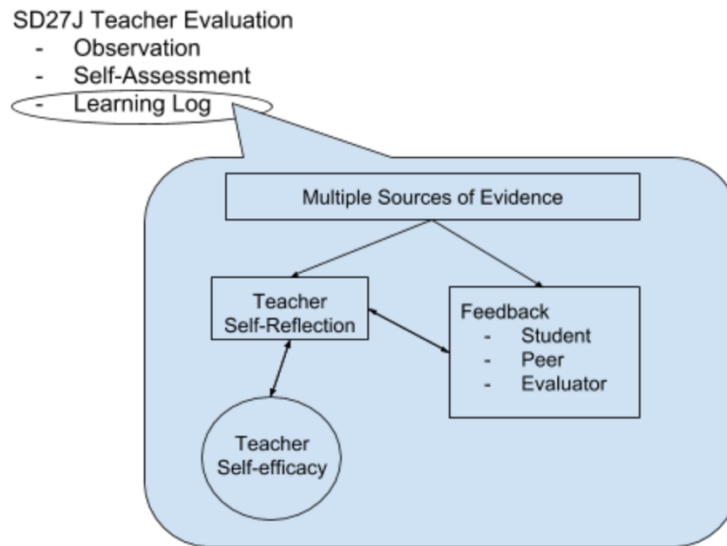
components, as well as establish a baseline for professional dialogue regarding evaluation. This model also incorporates a structure for self-reflection and assessment of professional practice (Danielson, 2007; Marzano, et al., 2011).

This history of the evolution of evaluation and supervision provides a foundation for the purpose for evaluation and the traditional components of an evaluation system. Overall concerns are based on the uniform implementation and training of evaluators, which was identified throughout the literature. The desire for evaluation systems that support professional growth and reflection is also prevalent throughout, as is seen within the SD27J evaluation model.

With evaluation comes the question of accuracy. How do you know if evaluations are fair and honest? Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, and Keeling (2009) identified what they titled the *widget effect* happening within evaluation systems. The widget effect occurs when all teachers are rated high, underperforming teachers are not identified, and professional development is lacking for all teachers (Weisberg et al, 2009). This study found that in districts utilizing a binary scale of satisfactory or unsatisfactory rated 99% of teachers as satisfactory, where districts that had a more extended scale of proficiency still rated 94% of teachers within the top rankings (Weisberg et al, 2009). This over saturation of high ranking teachers with an increase in low performing students, did not connect, which led to a need for more rigorous and specific evaluation criteria.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework seen in Figure 1 explains a model for the relationship between the learning log, evidence, feedback, reflection, and on teacher self-efficacy. This study will consider incorporating multiple sources of evidence into the learning log and how teacher reflection and the feedback provided is documented to establish/improve teacher self-efficacy.



*Figure A.* Conceptual framework. The framework shown here is a representation of the teacher component of the evaluation process making up 50% of teachers' total evaluation. The four components show how the reflection and feedback included in the learning log lead to teacher self-efficacy.

**Multiple sources.** Derrington (2011) stated that the process of principal as supervisor and evaluator of teachers will continue to be the norm, however, there needs to be “a more comprehensive model of formative and summative evaluation that incorporates a larger body of evidence and will produce a better-rounded picture of a teacher’s competencies” (p. 51). States such as Washington and countries such as Chile have embraced the idea of multiple sources of evidence. Demonstration of student learning such as achievement data, work samples, and test scores, along with teacher self-assessments and reflection, and stakeholder feedback are all incorporated into the evaluation process (Derrington, 2011). Danielson & McGreal (2000) also advocate for multiple and specific sources of evidence for teacher evaluation, more in line with a portfolio of teacher evidence and reflection. The use of an teacher portfolio or a collection of specific artifacts and reflections indicating a teacher’s progress towards his or her growth, would be an opportunity for evidence, reflection, and evaluation towards teacher growth (Derrington, 2011).

With each piece of evidence toward learning goals, there will be multiple forms of feedback. Feedback from peers (i.e. PLC, content planning, etc.), students (e.g. formative and summative data, exit tickets, engagement), and evaluators/coaches. Marzano (2011) claimed that focused feedback and practice are essential to the development of teacher expertise. Also, he states that the feedback must be focused and tied to specific strategies and behaviors in order to be effective for professional growth. Ford, Van Sickle, Clark, Fazio-Brunson, and Schween (2017) refer to self determination theory (SDT) as it connects with feedback. Three focus areas of competence, autonomy, and relatedness are connected to meet the psychological needs of teacher intrinsic motivation (Ford et al, 2017). Therefore, feedback should be focused on performance with the autonomy and support to act on the feedback and impact practice (Ford et al., 2017; Darling-Hammond, 2014). Firestone (2014) states that intrinsic motivation theory assumes that the reward given is a result of the feedback received. The literature here indicates a connection between the feedback received and the desire to act on the feedback in a positive way. Both the intrinsic motivation inherent in the feedback as well as the psychological desire to have the freedom and support to use the feedback to improve practice suggest that feedback is a motivating factor in developing teacher expertise.

**Feedback.** Feedback is a necessary factor in an evaluation system designed to improve practice. These development efforts are most successful when they are tied to supportive relationships between the teacher receiving the feedback and those providing it (Stuhlman, Hamre, Downer, & Pianta, 2010). Faiza (2012) presented an interactive intervention tool centered on providing teachers with feedback. The My Teaching Partner (MTP) tool was used at nine sites across the country with 335 teachers divided into a consultancy group (173) and a control group (162). The control group was not given any interventions, but the consultancy



group met regularly with a consultant to review and discuss video feedback of the participant's teaching. Every two weeks the teacher would submit video of a lesson, which the consultant, who is non-evaluative, would then review and edit into one to two minute segments, including questions and prompts. The consultant would upload the feedback to the MTP website and the teacher would respond to the feedback followed by a video conference to further discuss and set goals for the next round. Using the Teacher's Sense of Self Efficacy 12 item scale, divided into three categories: (a) efficacy for instructional strategies, (b) efficacy for classroom management, (c) efficacy for student engagement, Faiza found that teachers participating in the consultancy group reported higher levels of self-efficacy in the area of efficacy for instructional strategies than that of the control group ( $p=.007$ ). However, there was no effect on self-efficacy in the areas of classroom management and student engagement (Faiza, 2010). This study indicates that there are some effects of feedback on teachers' self-efficacy as it connects to instructional strategies; however, the lack of change in classroom management and student engagement are interesting. Faiza predicted that the effect size of all three categories would be higher, and noted that the changes within the categories of student engagement and classroom management defied his hypothesis. Both instructional strategies and disciplinary self-efficacy are addressed in this study to broaden the scope of teachers' self-efficacy. While many may focus on instructional challenges, some may be more intuned to the behavioral aspects of classroom management.

Hattie and Timperley (2007) conducted an analysis of 12 meta-analyses where they found that the average effect size for providing feedback was 0.79, which is nearly double the effect size of the average educational intervention. In an earlier study, Hattie (1999) produced a synthesis of over 500 meta-analyses with nearly half a million effect sizes from 180,000 studies on the many influences of student achievement (p. 82). Feedback was found to have one of the

largest effect sizes (0.95). When further disaggregated into the types of feedback, the most effective forms of feedback were those including cues such as video, audio, or computer assisted feedback directly related to goals. Feedback that produced lower effects included praise, punishment, programmed instruction and extrinsic rewards. Identifying the role of feedback within the evaluation system will inform leaders of the most effective types of feedback.

**Reflection.** Reflective thinking, as defined by Dewey (1933) is “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it and the further consequences to which it leads” (p. 9). Here Dewey indicates that reflection is essential to questioning beliefs and accepting the consequences of that questioning. Brookfield (1995) identified those consequences, evolution and refinement of practice, as an essential component of professional development. Thus connecting to Dewey’s belief that the process should result in growth of one’s own practice. Mortari (2012) identifies reflection as playing a significant role in professional life as well as being necessary for acquiring professional expertise.

The use of autobiographical writing is seen as a positive means of improving reflective learning (Brookfield, 1995). It is imperative that we explore the connection of written self reflection to the professional learning logs as required within the SD27J evaluation process. There is little in the literature regarding the use of written reflections as a means of building self-efficacy. Researchers, such as Brookfield (1995), promote the use of journals and portfolios as a means of reflective practice.

Pedro, Abodeeb-Gentile, and Courtney (2012) conducted a study of online reflections in a literacy course of 20 preservice teachers. Through the process they were able to identify various levels of reflection: clarifying, enhancing, providing evidence, challenging, and different

thinking. Clarifying reflections brought greater understanding to the topic, enhancing understanding, by providing evidence teachers were able to connect their personal thinking to the group with evidence from experiences (personal or through fieldwork). Challenging occurs when a member of the group pushes or questions thinking in order to dig deeper into the reflection, and different thinking occurs when challenging results in a new perspective or understanding of the topic (Pedro et al, 2012). In this study they found that the majority of responses were clarifying and providing evidence, relatively low level reflection skills, possibly as a result of new material or unfamiliarity with classmates. However, throughout the course the depth of reflection grew as teachers became more familiar with the content. This indicates that reflection can be improved or enhanced with familiarity and knowledge.

Adult learning theory is paramount to the understanding of how educators will reflect, process, and internalize learning towards improving practice. John Dewey (1933) believed that reflection was a necessary component of learning. He defined reflection as:

Active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and further conclusions to which it leads. . . it includes a conscious and voluntary effort to establish belief upon a firm basis of evidence and rationality (p.9).

Mezirow's (1991) theory of transformative adult learning centered around degrees of critical self-reflection, which he coined perspective transformation. An individual's perspective is made up of unique experiences that serve as a lens for learning and reflection. Although these perspectives assist in making meaning and understanding, they can also distort the learning (Dewey, 1933). For this reason, Mezirow encourages critical reflection which can reformulate perspectives. Mezirow (1990) states that "reflection enables us to correct distortions in our beliefs and errors in problem solving. Critical reflection involves a critique of the

presuppositions on which our beliefs have been built” (p. 1). Reflection provides an opportunity to confront personal misconceptions that may impact perceptions.

Schön (1983) explains that often the longer that a practitioner specializes in an area, the more likely that he/she is to become complacent and “drawn to patterns of error which he cannot correct” (p. 61). Reflection in this instance can serve as a correction to over learning; “Through reflection, he can surface and criticize the tacit understandings that have grown up around the repetitive experiences of a specialized practice” (Schön, 1983).

Mezirow (1990) distinguishes the difference between “thoughtful action” and “reflective action”, terms which may be easily confused. Thoughtful action occurs when individuals “reflexively draw” on prior knowledge to make decisions (p. 6). Thoughtful action differs from reflective action in that reflection requires a pause to critically examine one’s beliefs (Mezirow, 1990). Though different, they are not opposite; in fact, the two are closely related.

Zeichner and Liston (1996) explain that relying exclusively on individual reflection can lead to self-deception by only viewing one’s practice through one’s own beliefs and assumptions. Much like the informal collaborative reflections conducted in this study Degeling and Prilla (2011) conducted a set of three case studies, where they observed that collaborative reflection takes place between colleagues in various forms throughout the work day. In addition, Degeling and Prilla (2011) also noted the occurrence of scheduled reflection, described in the findings as prescribed reflection, and spontaneous reflection. In these case studies time was designated in staff meetings or other such formal gatherings to specifically reflect on practice; as well as colleagues found time in passing or common time to reflect on their practice.

Tinsley and Lebak (2009) found that projects of graduate students were greatly impacted by the input of their peer groups. They stated that the reflection of established shared goals lead

to cognitive development. In Beatty's (1999) study of teacher reflective practices in a study group, it was suggested that collaborative reflection in smaller focus groups could provide the emotional and moral support for teachers and facilitate professional growth and the development of learning organizations.

It is important to note that the learning log, as discussed here, is a common teaching strategy used to establish an open dialogue between student and teacher. Learning logs provide opportunities for teachers to be responsive to students' individual needs and personalize learning (Sulzberger, 2014). Learning logs, or reflection logs, are often used in new teacher programs. For example, Maskat (2010) found that learning logs were useful in new teacher indoctrination as a means of guiding pedagogy, lesson planning, and assessments. In this study, new teachers were provided guided reflection logs that required teachers to engage in action learning. There was no research suggesting that similar results would result from the use of learning logs with veteran or seasoned teachers.

**Self-efficacy.** Bandura (1994), the founder of Social Cognitive Theory defined self-efficacy as "the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations" (p. 74). In relation to teacher self-efficacy, it is the teacher's belief that he or she can impact student achievement regardless of circumstances such as students coming in below grade level and lack of supplies (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy & Hoy, 1998; Awkard, 2017). Research has found that there is a connection between teacher efficacy and a teacher's willingness to experiment with instruction and new techniques, as well as the teacher's willingness to engage in professional learning activities (Berman, McLaughlin, Bass, Pauly, & Zellman, 1977; Gusley, 1988; Stein & Wang, 1988; Geisel, Slegers, Leithwood, & Jantzi, 2009).

Bandura (1994) identified four sources of efficacy: mastery experiences, physiological and emotional states, vicarious experiences, and social persuasion. Mastery experiences involve first hand successes or achievements that build self-efficacy whereas a failure would produce an opposite effect. One's emotional state can impact perceptions of self-efficacy, as depression, stress, or tension can have a negative effect, positive emotions can have a boosting effect. Observing the successes of others through vicarious experiences produces confidence that the individual can also accomplish these tasks and therefore increases self-efficacy. The fourth source of efficacy, social persuasion, is created from outside, social influences. This source of efficacy is the result of encouragement and praise that persuade an individual that he or she can accomplish a task (Bandura, 1994, 1995). Of these experiences mastery experiences is credited with having the greatest impact on efficacy- finding that one's perception of success increases efficacy whereas the perception of failure decreases efficacy beliefs.

Ebmeier (2003) found that principal supervision had an indirect, yet significant impact on teacher self-efficacy. Using a reduced self-efficacy scale of 16 questions this study found that the combination of the teachers' belief that they could overcome external obstacles with the belief that their supervisor was supportive of their teaching made up about 47% of the variance (Ebmeier, 2003). This connection indicates that teacher self-efficacy is closely tied to direct supervision.

High self-efficacy is positively connected with teacher's ability to thrive in unsupported environments (Milner & Woolfolk Hoy, 2003), student achievement (Bandura, 1997; Tschannen-Milner & Woolfolk Hoy, 2003), and reduced instances of teacher burnout (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). Conversely, poor teacher self-efficacy has been connected to a decrease in teacher effort (Atay, 2007) and higher levels of stress (Betoret, 2006).

In a case study of one teacher, Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2003) found that there were many outside factors that impacted teacher self-efficacy. In this case study the researcher observed a single veteran teacher for five months to learn the nature of the teacher's efficacy. This particular teacher was an African American woman, working in a primarily white school, where she stated that she did not feel welcomed or accepted, even after many years of working there. In this study the teacher felt a personal obligation and pressure as an African American woman in a largely White setting to "change, demystify, and challenge" negative stereotypical beliefs (p. 273). One of the ways that this teacher was able to maintain her self-efficacy in this unsupportive environment was by focusing on two specific accomplishments: attaining her PhD and the respect of her students and their families.

In a study conducted by Beatty (1999) to "investigate professional growth as an individually reflective and authentically collaborative phenomenon" (p. 1), findings showed that six out of seven participants showed increased levels of efficacy following the establishment of a collaborative study group. Over the course of five months the study group met to collaboratively reflect and discuss practice. Through interviews, questionnaire results, and some journal writings and participant observations, Beatty's (1999) research suggested ties to collaborative reflection and increased levels of teacher self-efficacy.

While the research suggests that collaborative environments support teacher self-efficacy, there is also evidence to suggest that teacher autonomy is connected to self-efficacy and empowerment. Short (1994) identified both autonomy and self-efficacy as dimensions of teacher empowerment. Firestone (1991) states that schools that support risk taking by teachers builds their sense of autonomy. When teachers are permitted to explore and implement new ideas they feel a greater sense of control over their practice and environment. In a study by

Noormohammadi (2014), 172 teachers in Iran completed a series of three surveys to determine if there is a connection between reflection, self-efficacy, and autonomy. Using the English Language Reflective Inventory (ELRI), Teacher Self-efficacy Scale (TSES), and the Teacher Autonomy Inventory (TAI) this study identified that reflectivity leads to efficacy for teachers, which then can help teachers be more autonomous in their classrooms. This study supports the idea that teacher autonomy is a factor in their feelings of self-efficacy. Noormohammadi's (2014) findings state that "reflection increases job satisfaction and would help foster autonomy and independence and also have the confidence [efficacy] to participate" in policy making within the school. This connection will be further examined in this action research project.

Bruce, Esmonde, Ross, Dookie, & Beatty (2010) conducted a mixed method analysis to study how teacher efficacy tied to student achievement. The study included pre and post teacher surveys measuring teacher self-efficacy in teaching mathematics as well as student achievement scores. A professional learning intervention was put in place for teachers in two districts. The intervention required teachers to participate in a two day process of goal setting, planning, and coteaching a three part lesson. Student data was collected and the lesson was revised and retaught. This process took place six times throughout the course of the study. Teacher self-efficacy was assessed at the beginning of the study and again at the end. Bruce et al. (2010) found that participants' confidence in their abilities to support student learning improved over the course of the study. This confidence was exhibited in participants' increasing willingness to take risks and volunteer to co-teach and lead meetings.

Teacher self-efficacy has also been tied to reduced risk of teacher burnout. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2010) identified teacher burnout as mental and physical fatigue that can lead to depersonalization. Using survey results the researchers completed a confirmatory factory



analysis using a second order teacher self-efficacy variable, and two burnout variables: emotional exhaustion (-.29) and depersonalization (-.41). Findings in this study were that teacher self-efficacy is negatively related to mental exhaustion and depersonalization (Skaalvic & Skaalvic, 2010). These findings promote the need to build the capacity of self-efficacy in teachers in order to combat the effects of teacher burnout.

### **Summary**

Teacher evaluation has evolved over the years from relatively informal check-ins to state and federally mandated processes. The research above shows that there has been a question of accuracy over time and the appropriate indicators of teacher performance. SD27J has identified, through values and beliefs, what indicators will be used to assess teacher effectiveness. The major component as discussed here is the professional learning log or teacher self-reflection. Mezirow has done extensive research in the area of transformative and adult learning. His work identifies a need for reflective practices in adult learning. This suggests that processes such as the professional learning log should be useful to improve learning and practice. Self reflection should highlight the deficiencies or misconceptions that are present as well as what positive traits are present in practice. Reflection in this case should be fueled by consistent feedback from evaluators, peers, and students in order to influence teachers' professional efficacy.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

**Qualitative Approach**

This action research study was approached from a transformative worldview. According to Creswell (2011), transformative research “contains an action plan that may change the lives of the participants, the institutions in which individuals work or live, and the researcher’s life” (p. 8). I believe using a transformative lens for this research aided in understanding the need for change and the implications and consequences that come with change. Action research is a systematic inquiry conducted by teachers, administrators, or other invested party into a specific, actionable problem of practice (Mertler, 2017); this approach worked best with the topic to examine the current learning log tool and develop an updated tool based on the results of the study.

The tool currently utilized by SD27J is a teacher driven reflective tool based on individual teacher learning goals that support each school’s unique Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) goals. The issue, based on anecdotal evidence, is that teachers are not taking ownership of these logs and are completing them for compliance rather than to actualize professional growth. The district evaluation documents espouse the ideal of creating a teacher driven evaluation system that provides autonomy in goals and outcome; however, the autonomy, over time, has become the compliance of accomplishing a required task. Ideally the data collected through this process will enhance professional growth and improve teacher self-efficacy. The action research took place over a period of two months (mid-March-early May) during Spring of the 2017-2018 school year. Teacher evaluation meetings are conducted before the first of May each year; therefore, it was necessary for each of the action research cycles to be completed as close to that deadline as possible. This study best lent itself to action research as the purpose was to design a

more functional tool, based on the results of the study that uphold the intent of the learning log and maintain the fidelity of the evaluation system.

**Selected site.** School District 27J is located northeast of the Denver Metro Area. It straddles the Weld and Adams County line and includes the city of Brighton and parts of Commerce City. The district has researched and created their own evaluation system in compliance with state regulations and SB-191. Serving nearly 17,000 students, the district has no schools on priority improvement, according to state and federal regulations. Vikan Middle School is one of the oldest schools in the district and maintains a diverse population with Hispanic, Mixed-race, and African American making up greater than 50% of all students.

The teaching population at Vikan range in experience, ethnicity, and gender. This site was chosen for several reasons. Using a convenience sample was necessary as the researcher is a member of this organization and familiar with the site, policies, and procedures. Being a working employee in the district and school provided greater access to information and participants. Also, the unique nature of the evaluation system in the district made it an appropriate site for such a study.

**Participants.** The initial fact finding stage of the research included two small focus groups of teachers from varying grade levels and disciplines within the school. Each focus group included four to five certified teachers currently working in the building. Participants were currently evaluated, certified teachers who have participated in a minimum of two evaluation cycles within the district. Participation was on a voluntary basis and resulted in a total of nine total focus group participants ranging in experience from six to 20 years of experience. Content areas of Special Education, Language Arts, Science, Math, Spanish, and Social Studies were represented from grades six through eight. It would have been ideal to include a higher number

of participants for this stage; however, schedules and events going on within the school did not allow for that.

The first group consisted of four female teachers who teach various grade levels and contents such as 6<sup>th</sup> grade science/math, reading intervention, Spanish, and the gifted and talented coordinator. A range of experience was presented from seven to 18 years.

The second focus group also met in the library for convenience and consistency. This group was comprised of five teachers (four female and one male), plus the researcher. Contents in this group included Significant Identifiable Emotional Disability (SIED) director, special education case manager, 8<sup>th</sup> grade language arts, 7<sup>th</sup> grade social studies, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade math. Experience within the group ranged from six to 17 years. The transcripts from both groups were coded for themes that would then be used by the action committee.

From the initial focus groups, an action committee of five teachers, including the researcher, were recruited to review the data and create a new reflection tool to supplement the learning log that is currently in place. Participants all volunteered, which provided a convenience sample to conduct the research. The action committee was made up of three male and two female teachers (one being the researcher). Ranging from 13 to 24 years of experience, the group came from diverse contents including technology, reading intervention, 6<sup>th</sup> grade language arts/social studies, 8<sup>th</sup> grade social studies, and 7<sup>th</sup> grade language arts. There was one teacher who participated in the focus group and the first action committee meeting, but was unable to complete the study due to the birth of his child.

During the initial phase, an interview was conducted with the building principal (primary evaluator) to gain a supervisory understanding of the use and purpose of the learning logs and how they are currently used and how they can be more effective in assisting with the evaluation

process (see Appendix E for interview protocol). To protect the integrity of the focus groups, administrators were not included.

Figure B identifies the teacher's perceived self-efficacy based on the results of the modified Bandura's Teacher Self Efficacy Scale (see Appendix B). Each of the two sections, Instructional Self-Efficacy and Disciplinary

Self-Efficacy, were averaged to produce two scores. The Likert style scale asked a series of nine questions (six instructional and three discipline). Each section has a potential score of 100. There was no clear scoring process in the research, therefore I identified a high score is identified as 70% or higher and a low score is 69% or lower. Table 1 shows that there are no significant trends. The fact that there were no teachers in the category of High Instructional self-efficacy and Low Disciplinary self-efficacy, could be a result of the overall average of the disciplinary results were 75.42%. This information helped to understand the participant's baseline measure of self-efficacy.

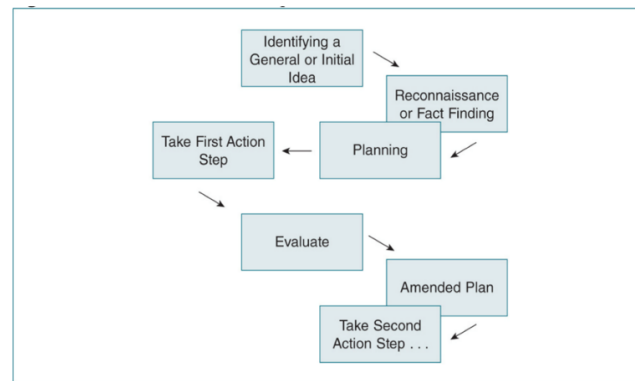
<b>High I X High D</b>	<b>High I X Low D</b>
Special Education (20) Language Arts (18) Language Arts (14) Social Studies (13) Special Education (11)	NONE
<b>High D X Low I</b>	<b>Low D X Low I</b>
Science/Math (16) Language Arts (15) Spanish (7) Math (6)	Social Studies (13) Technology (24)

*Figure B.* Participant Perceived Self-Efficacy. The figure above indicates the teacher's content area and years of service is in parenthesis.

### Action Research Process

The research cycle was modeled after Kurt Lewin's research spiral (see Figure B), with multiple iterations of planning, implementing, evaluating and revising (McKernan, 1996).

Lewin's model was used for this study due to the regular cycle of research, action and revision that can potentially repeat indefinitely. This provides the researcher and the research team with opportunities to refine their work until it meets the purpose of the research.



*Figure C.* Lewin's Research Cycle. This figure illustrates the cyclical processes of action research.

**Fact finding.** During this initial phase of the research two focus groups of four to five teachers met to discuss the current reflection and learning log process, including challenges and successes. Focus groups were held in the school library after contract hours for the convenience of participants. Smaller focus groups were conducted to allow for more voices to be heard and to foster a safe and open sharing environment. The purpose of the focus groups was to gain a broader understanding for how teachers use the current learning log, their beliefs and expectations for the logs, and their ideas for what would make the learning log process more meaningful to their individual professional development (see Appendix A for focus group protocol). All participants completed an abbreviated version of Bandura's Instrument Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (See Appendix B). The transcripts from the focus groups and principal

interview were coded to identify recurring themes that were then presented to the Action Committee.

The Action Committee of five teachers then gathered to analyze the themes from the focus groups and principal interview and determine next steps. The action committee met in a classroom within the school for convenience of the participants. The committee began by examining multiple pieces of literature related to teacher reflection, evaluation practices and tools, and efficacy. Each member of the committee also completed an abbreviated version of Bandura's Instrument Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (See Appendix B).

Bandura's Instrument of Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale was chosen for this study for the straightforward and focused questions as well as the easy to manage Likert scoring. Williams and Coombs (1996) conducted a study to determine the validity and reliability of Bandura's Multidimensional Scales of Perceived Self-efficacy (MSPSE). In this study of 500 high school students, researchers used a three-factor analysis of Cronbach's alpha, divergent validity using subscale correlations, and construct validity using principal axes factor analysis (p. 2). This study found that alpha coefficients ranged from 0.61 to 0.87 indicating adequate response consistency. Divergent validity showed a low rate of overlap scoring noting that the instrument could discriminate between self-efficacy constructs being measured. For construct validity eight factors were identified as accounting for 89% of the total variance (Williams & Coombs, 1996). Bandura's scale has been widely used and adapted as a measurement of self-efficacy.

**Planning.** With the data from the focus group, administrative interviews and literature, a collaborative effort took place among the action committee to revise and/or redesign the learning log model. A meeting protocol was used beginning with the establishment of group norms and expectations, to include the level of participation in the project. Care was taken by the

researcher to ensure that all voices were heard and that there were opportunities to clarify and review the committee plan before moving forward (see Appendix C for protocol outline).

Committee meetings were recorded, sent to a transcription service to be transcribed, and hand coded using both axial and in vivo coding methods to analyze data at each step of the process.

Creswell (2014) explains in vivo coding as using the participants own language to guide codes.

Axial coding is described more in depth by Saldana (2009) as describing the “properties and dimensions” of the categories and how the categories and themes connect to each other (p. 150).

Saldaña (2009) states that coding should take place multiple times to narrow the focus.

Initial focus group and principal interview transcripts were coded using a combination of axial (Saldaña, 2009) and in vivo (Creswell, 2014) coding. In vivo coding occurred to identify recurring/similar words or phrases across participants. Once these recurring phrases were identified themes emerged through axial coding. These themes were then compiled to be presented to the action committee for further examination.

**First action step.** In the initial meeting the committee was presented with the data from the focus groups, principal interview, and a summary of the literature presented in chapter 1. Using this foundation, the committee went on to discuss the challenges with the current process and the different possibilities for reflection. It was determined that in this first cycle, participants would explore the different forms of reflection that are meaningful and convenient to them. Each member used this format of reflection for initial two-week action research cycle. The committee determined that each participant would reflect a minimum of three times over the cycle to provide feedback in the next stage.

**Evaluate and amend.** After the first action research cycle, the action committee met to evaluate the reflection method used. The committee discussed the individual methods of



reflection they had engaged in over the two-week cycle and compared it to previous methods of reflection using the learning log. This reflection was used to inform the next level of adjustments. During this stage, a common theme of the discussion was collaborative reflection and the use of evidence as a grounding force for reflection. The committee determined the next cycle of research would be to identify evidence they wanted to collect then reflect on the evidence collaboratively with a partner or team.

**Data analysis.** Data analysis took place in all stages of the research cycle. In the initial focus groups and principal interview, the discussions were transcribed by an external company and coded using in vivo coding, then further grouped into themes. This data was then used to inform the action committee as they determined interventions and revisions for the learning log.

After each meeting of the Action Committee recordings were transcribed and coded using a set of in vivo codes from the conceptual framework then recoded using axial coding to determine themes and connections to the conceptual framework. This allowed for adjustments and discussion along the way regarding the themes that arose throughout the process as well as the identification of themes across the focus groups and action committee.

Each of the codes were listed out in a spread sheet, then quantified by how many times they occurred throughout the first, second, and third committee meeting. For instance, access as a code appeared 11 times, however the idea of procedures in “the way we do things” also emerged and connected with access. For this reason, access and procedure were combined to identify the need for an improved procedure. Codes were not counted multiple times if they were a continuation of a participants comments or if they were stated multiple times within a participants marks. The coding spreadsheet can be found in Appendix F. Through the repetition

of codes, themes began to emerge throughout the process. These themes were expanded in the assertions made in Chapter 5.

**Next steps.** Potential next steps would be a larger implementation of the entire staff and over time throughout the district. The recommendations being made based on the data collected must be viable and accessible to all members of the staff, regardless of their content or position; for this reason, it was necessary to not only have a multi-disciplinary group serve on the committee, but also to test out the recommendations to ensure their compatibility in a wide range of classrooms. See the action plan outlined in Chapter 5.

### **Trustworthiness**

The use of multiple small focus groups to guide the work of the action committee provided an opportunity to consider issues that affect a larger population and be a basis for the newly designed tool. Using a collaborative process to revise and edit also allowed for multiple perspectives to be incorporated into the work. Similarly, recruiting group members from various disciplines and experiences established a diverse group with multiple perspectives to draw from.

Member checking was attempted; however, only one participant responded with comments about the findings. This participant agreed with the findings of the committee's work as well as the recommendations found later in Chapter 5. Due to the time constrictions and end of the school year, member checking did not catch all participants before they left for the summer, resulting in the lack of responses.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Approval to conduct this research was granted by both SD27J and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Denver. The school district required an outline of the research and the scope of who would be involved. Prior to approval the district asked that the

research be contingent upon IRP approval and a presentation of the findings to the district's Chief Human Resource Officer. Approval was granted by the IRB on March 7, 2018.

### **Researcher Positionality**

The researcher in this study is a current employee of the research site. As a certified teacher bound by the evaluation process being studied, there is potential for bias. This bias has been considered to bracket and separate it from the study. Additionally, the researcher will be an active participant in the action research group.

As a tenured teacher with more than 13 years in education, I have strong beliefs about evaluation and how it should impact teachers and students. These beliefs were considered to limit their impact on the group and potentially bias the group. I have experienced various types of evaluation systems in my career and have researched many others. This knowledge will be valuable to the group, but must be done with care to avoid contamination of group or lead them in any specific direction.

### **Biases and Limitations**

Action research lends itself to potential researcher bias as it often involves studying the effectiveness of a program or intervention in which the researcher may have direct personal interest. In this case, I am employed with the district and am subject to the evaluation system and learning log discussed. Though there is a potential for bias I worked to ensure that it was not injected into the data collected or my interpretation of the data. By using emerging themes and allowing the action team to discuss their experiences organically, I, as a member of the team, only added to their discussion rather than guide it. In addition, a bias may be suggested in terms of avoiding potential negative effects of unfavorable results. By gaining the approval of both building administration and the school district, the findings here are free of such bias.

Limitations to this process did occur, which may impact the generalization of these findings, but should not limit the replication of the research process. The first limitation is that of time. As the IRB process took longer than expected and there was a very specific timeframe enforced by the district to collect data, time was limited both for the collection of data and for the opportunity to member check all members of the group. This required shorter research cycles than desired and led to the second limitation of availability.

Several factors contributed to the availability of members of the committee as well as the availability of individuals who were interested in participating, but could not. First, the end of a school year is a very busy time. In this small school of approximately 40 eligible teachers, many were conflicted with time for coaching, after school activities, and other commitments. In addition, a large portion of the staff, including the principal, were preparing to open a new school within the district; which consumed much of their time after school and limited their ability to participate. The result was a smaller action group than desired.

The third limitation was cross topic conversation. Throughout the research process participants often got off topic and went into alternate discussions that were outside of the scope of this research. For example, the discussion about access and the process of reflection was a theme that emerged from these divergent conversations. The issue of the access to the formal reflection was so large that it had to be addressed within the study.

The lack of response to member checking also limits the results of these findings. While the one participant who did respond agreed with the findings and recommendations, the lack of response from the other participants does provide for alternative positions.

**Significance**

The results of this action research will provide guidance to the human resources department, the evaluation committee, and building leaders about potential adjustments to the learning log and reflection process for teachers. The action research model used here can be replicated and used for multiple purposes within the building, as well as continuing to work with collaborative groups to discuss the various methods of reflection and reporting of reflection through the learning log.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Over the past two chapters I have presented my reasoning for this research on evaluation and reflection along with evidence from the literature as to its importance. My conceptual framework identified the components of the SD27J evaluation process, focusing on the teacher learning log. The framework looks at evidence, feedback, and self-reflection connecting to improve teacher self-efficacy. In chapter three I detailed the action research process that used qualitative data to formulate the results outlined in this chapter. Results from this study will be presented in a series of assertions and supported through participant quotes and common themes throughout the process.

### **Findings**

The first step in the data collection process began with an interview with the school principal, who is also the primary evaluator in the building. This interview was transcribed and coded using in vivo and axial coding, identifying recurring themes. Some themes that emerged from this interview were that the learning log is a “holding place” (Principal Interview, March 2018) for teacher data and that there are varying levels of reflection in the log depending on the individual. This will be discussed in more detail in the assertions section below.

Following the principal interview, focus groups were conducted to gather more data on how teachers currently interact with the learning logs to guide professional development and improve practice. Recordings from the focus groups were sent to a transcription company; transcripts were coded using in vivo and axial coding, where themes such as time, collaboration, autonomy, access, and purpose emerged (see Appendix F). These emerging themes and that of the principal interview were presented to the action committee in its initial meeting along with some of the literature presented in Chapter 2. The action committee used this data as a starting

point for their discussion on how to best improve the learning log process within the school to build teacher self-efficacy.

In addition to their participation in the focus group and action committee, each participant was asked to complete a modified Bandura's Instrument Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (see Table 1). This scale was intended to get a baseline understanding of how efficacious the participants felt going into the action research process. The self-efficacy survey showed the various contents represented as well as the years of experience for teachers. Though it is a broad range from six years to 24, participating teachers were experienced teachers. Because there were no identifiable patterns between years of experience and levels of efficacy it was not seen as a significant factor in this project. The average levels of efficacy were 68.8% for instructional efficacy and 75.425% for disciplinary efficacy. This suggests that as a group teachers generally felt efficacious, yet there is room to grow to build efficacy.

The second meeting brought back ideas on various ways to reflect and how participants chose to reflect during the first cycle. Participants had chosen to reflect using photos, videos, audio recordings, and in collaboration with colleagues. As discussion went on, it steered towards the need for evidence and collaboration to reflect and gain multiple perspectives to push thinking. It was determined that the next cycle would incorporate the identification of specific evidence, then collaborating with a colleague about the evidence. The nature of the physical entry could be determined by the participant.

At the final meeting of the committee four members were present to discuss how the evidence and collaboration affected reflection and final thoughts on self-efficacy as it related to the reflection process and the interventions that were implemented. From this meeting and the previous two, several assertions were made (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Assertions and Themes.**

Themes	Assertions
<p><i>Reflection</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reflection can come in various forms and may occur in various situations/locations outside of a formal “reflection”.</li> <li>2. Collaborating with peers was a preferred method of reflection.</li> <li>3. Feedback drives the reflective process.</li> </ol>	<p>Reflection is a welcomed and necessary part of being a professional.</p>
<p><i>Access</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A complicated and lengthy process for accessing the learning log served as a detriment to individual reflection logs.</li> <li>2. While autonomy is greatly appreciated, it is desired that there are prescribed times built into the schedule for reflection as individuals and with peers.</li> </ol>	<p>Procedures and access to reflection methods must be easy and consistent.</p>
<p><i>Autonomy</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The autonomy of why, how, and what the reflection will be is important to teachers.</li> <li>2. Lack of knowledge regarding the autonomy of the learning log may have impacted teachers’ reflection styles.</li> </ol>	<p>Though autonomy exists within the learning log process, the individuals’ connection to their own reflection is the driver of self-efficacy.</p>
<p><i>Self-Efficacy</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Ownership of the learning log and goals drives teachers to focus on specific aspects of practice.</li> <li>4. The learning log reflection is not a necessary component of teacher self-efficacy and reflection.</li> </ol>	
<p><i>Purpose</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The learning log is a “holding place” for teacher individual goals</li> <li>2. It can also be a form of documentation for remedial action</li> <li>3. The learning log outcomes have little significance on a teacher’s overall evaluation.</li> </ol>	<p>Although the learning log is used as a means of professional communication between evaluator and teacher, it does not hold significant weight or impact on the evaluation process.</p>

*Note.* This table shows themes that emerged from the data and the assertions that followed.

### **Assertion 1: Reflection**

Reflection was a clear theme, as it is the foundation of this research. Initial codes were established for reflection in general. Under deeper review the idea of reflection encompassed



many different types of reflection and crossed over into other codes such as collaboration and time. Once broken down, various forms of reflection occurred throughout the action committee meetings by all members of the group, with collaborative reflection being the most frequent. Reflection is a welcomed and necessary part of being a professional and (a) can come in various forms, which may occur in assorted situations/locations outside of a formal “reflection”, and (b) is enhanced through collaboration with peers.

**Multiple forms of reflection.** There are multiple forms of reflection that individuals engage in both formally and informally. In this study, the types of reflection most commonly discussed were self-reflection, prescribed and authentic reflection, informal reflection, and collaborative reflection. Each type of reflection directly tied to the individuals’ preference, specific situation, and level of comfort.

**Self-reflection.** A common theme was the importance of self-reflection. Self-reflection was mentioned by all members of the action group and was mostly used to correct individual lessons or immediate response to situations. Any statement that participants made regarding reflecting on their own or reviewing their own evidence was determined to be self-reflection. One participant said, “I think that’s the value, is when I’m on my student teacher to do certain things, that really makes me question my practice. If I expect her to do it, then I need to expect myself to do it. I need to practice what I preach, which is he reflection (Social Studies Teacher, April 18, 2018).” By observing others and providing feedback, it may provide insight into one’s own practice, therefore influencing teacher self-efficacy through the feedback process. Another participant noted the self-reflection in the log has an element of safety rather than having to admit a mistake or failure; “It’s like the one place you can kind of. . . I gotta express that I failed at something in class, this didn’t work and you know how do I make myself better, and so I can

kind of write cause and effect. I did this, it didn't work, so you now I'm coming back, and I can reflect upon it again right away what I did and I feel like I don't have to tell the whole team, like I screwed up. . . ." (Technology teacher, April 18, 2018). Being able to conduct a self-reflection of practice provides teachers with a level of privacy and security to become vulnerable and admit failure that may not be as comfortable in a group setting. As discussed in the literature presented above, collaborative reflection requires a level of vulnerability that is not as direct when reflecting internally on your own practice.

***Authentic reflection.*** Authentic reflection was discussed briefly as it related to the current process of the evaluator writing in individual reflection logs with questions and the authenticity of reflecting at the end of year evaluation conference. Although it was brought up, the discussion never continued to produce further data. The term authentic is used here as defined by the researcher. The term authentic reflection indicates, reflection that is unaffected by the prompting of peers or evaluators. An authentic reflection is one's own reflection of the process and outcomes without the influence of others.

***Informal reflection.*** Another participant noted that conducting the reflection in real time was more meaningful. Participants used regularly scheduled data meetings, meetings outside of work, evaluation meetings, and team meetings to reflect on their goals with peers. Informal reflection in this study indicates reflection that takes place separately from the learning log. Reflection that is done through discussions with peers or feedback from students and not a specifically defined time or method of reflection. In a focus group, one participant stated, "I don't always think reflection is a one-person thing. For me, I like to have that reflection with a parent, another teacher, someone that I can talk about because sometimes talking it out, I hear things that are different that maybe I missed" (Social Studies teacher, April 5, 2018). Here the

teachers identified with the need for different perspective and different voices within the reflection process. Being able to process through a problem or lesson with a partner provided an opportunity to explore different angles. Many reflection opportunities come in the moment and offer opportunities for immediate adjustments. These informal reflections occur multiple times throughout the day possibly without the teacher even realizing it, and are often not documented in a more formal reflection.

***Collaborative reflection.*** Participants found self-reflection is most useful when combined with collaborative reflection. Collaborative reflection is referenced in the literature as teachers working collaboratively with colleagues to gain varied perspectives (Van Gyn, 1996). According to Van Gyn (1996) teachers who are working to improve their reflective, have a lower probability of achieving success if working alone rather than collaboratively? This notion is supported by the Social Studies teacher who said, “There are a lot of teachers on staff that I would absolutely want to give me feedback” (April 5, 2018). The teachers felt comfortable getting feedback from their peers and in some cases thought they may be able to provide them more meaningful feedback.

Using additional feedback loops such as peer observations and collaboration were discussed as an alternative to evaluator observation and feedback that would provide more opportunities for feedback as well as more open communication that may not occur with an evaluator. One participant noted, “As I listened back [to recorded reflection with a colleague] I actually then the next day sat down with her again. It actually let me process it twice, because I was listening to what we had talked about. It made it more effective” (Intervention teacher, April 18, 2018). This participant found that through collaboration with a peer, she could reflect on her practice and adjust, therefore making her feel more efficacious in her practice. Having the ability

to record the conversation and process it with a colleague deepened the reflective process, allowing multiple opportunities for individuals to revisit the conversation or go back and refine ideas discussed.

The first assertion that reflection is a welcomed and necessary part of being a professional, came from the large amount of conversation tied to reflection being needed and valued. Most concerns with the process were directly tied to the process and access of reflection as it occurs in the school. While negative comments occurred pertaining to these processes, no one stated that reflection was unnecessary or unwelcomed as part of professional practice. In fact, it was discussed in each stage of the research that reflection with a peer has great value to participants. One participant stated, “ [Typing] actually is not a motivator for me to jump on the old keyboard. If I even found an opportunity to record something and then maybe that we used it in conversations along the way, it might be more meaningful to me” (Language Arts teacher, April 5, 2018). Embedding reflection into the regular routine of teachers would provide both a set time to reflect as well as opportunities for collaborative reflection that do not currently exist in any formal way. Using time that already exists, where peers are together provides opportunities to reflect collaboratively, such as Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), where the facilitation of peer reflection could naturally take place.

The quality of reflection was discussed by three participants, questioning the length and number of entries needed for the learning log. This topic was discussed in the principal interview: when asked about the quality of reflection being seen in learning logs she stated, “I’ve seen us use the log a lot better in the last couple years, and I think it’s become more meaningful. From what I see, the quality of reflection has increased than when we first started with this

process” (Principal interview, March 2018). The question of whether the improvement was an intentional act she replied

I think some of it has come about intentionally. I know that when I became principal, that was something I Really wanted to focus on because. . . what I was seeing in logs was ‘I did this. And I did that,’ which is important, but it’s really what did you learn because of that, towards your goal? (Principal Interview, March 2018).

These responses from the school’s primary evaluator indicate that there has been development of the learning log and reflection processes over the years since it has been included in the learning log process. Reflection is often an individual process that, that requires the autonomy to reflect in a singular way, while also being able to act on that reflection. A focus group participant explained that she is hesitant to reflect with peers, as it makes her vulnerable to show areas of weakness or failure. She stated, “I don’t necessarily process with other people. It tends to be for me a lot of internal and just identifying things that were strengths or weaknesses, but it’s not something I feel super comfortable making myself vulnerable about” (Science teacher, April 5, 2018). This participant was somewhat of an outlier in the group, as all other participants identified talking with a peer as a preferred method of reflection. However, it should be considered that not all teachers will choose to reflect collaboratively, and there should be options to do so independently.

Throughout the data collection both members of the focus group and the action committee discussed that feedback and collaboration from peers was a major factor in their daily reflection. Collaboration was a preferred method of reflection for four out of five participants on the action committee, with the fifth sharing a preference for collaboration, but was trying something new with media. During the second research cycle the action committee planned to identify evidence and collaborate with a peer on that evidence to reflect. Collaborative reflection

was identified at each stage as an opportunity to talk through specific issues as well as gain the perspective of a colleague in order to see circumstances from all angles and generate solutions.

Another driver of the reflection process was feedback. Feedback from the evaluator, peers, even student feedback was found to be helpful in challenging teachers to reflect on their practice. One statement that was echoed by the group was that learning logs are most effective when given direct feedback from the evaluator or instructional coach (Social Studies teacher, April 5, 2018). This type of formal feedback is useful in driving reflection; however, it is not consistent or regular. This type of feedback from the evaluator, where she identifies observations and asks clarifying questions was discussed questioning the authenticity of such a reflection. If the reflection is being prompted and focused on answering the evaluator's questions about what she saw, is that an authentic reflection? This is a question to be answered in a further study.

Depending on levels of need, observations may be sparse or daily. For the veteran teachers who participated in this research team, feedback from the evaluator or instructional coach was not provided very often, between once a month to once a quarter. Due to the various other obligations of these evaluators; the group discussed the need for additional forms of feedback to use in reflection, such as peer observations and observations from outside mentors. Based on the data gathered, teachers desire the feedback of others on their work. They want to improve and reflect on their practice, and are open to formal and informal channels of feedback.

### **Assertion 2: Access**

Another theme that continued to resurface from all members of the group was the limited or challenging access to the learning log document. This led to the assertion that procedures and access to reflection methods must be easy and consistent. If the system is too complicated or cumbersome, teachers are likely to avoid it, which limits visible reflection from the evaluator.

One participant stated, “For me I think it’s where it’s located, I don’t know if it for me would be like if I just sat down and shot myself an email and if I could keep a folder in my email, I think I would do it more often.” In the generally fast pace of the school day teachers often do not have time to complete all that is necessary within the school building. It is common for teachers to take work home to grade, plan, etc. A reflection protocol that is cumbersome and not easily accessed from anywhere increases barriers that are already created by the commodity of time. Another participant expressed frustration at the program saying, “It’s hard to get to. It’s a pain in the ass. I gotta go to the site, then I gotta go here. . .” (Technology teacher, April 5, 2018), and another participant followed up with, “It seems like I’ll go five steps to get into it, and by that time I’m like, you know that sounds like too much work” (Language Arts teacher, April 5, 2018). The annoyance with a newly implemented online system for housing the learning log became clear throughout the process as early on as focus groups. One participant stated that “it’s not that accessible or user friendly” (Social Studies teacher, April 5, 2018). This is one of the various reasons that were given for lack of participation in the formal reflection log, even though the log is where the evaluator provides observation feedback. A participant in both the focus group and action committee stated that he had not accessed the log at all at the time of meeting in early April. This lack of easy access to the reflection process served as a deterrent to an already time consuming task. During coding, the concern regarding access to the learning log was discussed by five out of six participants directly and was also closely tied into the codes for procedures and time, which were also mentioned by five out of six participants on the action committee.

Current procedures for the learning log include the document being stored in a desktop sync program called Egnyte which, despite being cloud based, is most easily accessed from the

school network. The primary evaluator in the school (the principal) writes in teachers' learning logs during observations, where she puts basic notes about the observation and what she saw, also asks probing questions about what was observed: where the teacher is going with the lesson, how he/she is collecting data, and other questions about the teacher's learning goal, etc. In theory, the teacher will check the log for observation notes and respond to those questions for a reflection. At least three different participants discussed that the process for accessing the learning log kept them from retrieving feedback from their observations.

Additionally, the desire for prescribed time to reflect whether collaboratively or individually was discussed throughout. Having a set time each week, month, quarter, etc. to reflect in the log would provide the reminder and the needed time to interact with the log and reflect on goals. One action committee member stated "I feel like just how we do quarterly grades, I feel like if we had a quarterly check-in, whether it's with a partner, it doesn't have to be admin. It could just be checking in with someone in the building, who's working on a similar goal. I think it would help me stay more on task if I was doing it quarterly" (Language Arts teacher, April 18, 2018). Being able to collect data and reflect on it or have regularly scheduled times to reflect with others keeps the goal and learning log visible and on track. Focus group participants noted that they only write in their log when they are told to do so, or when they know there is observation feedback. Between the cumbersome process and other timely priorities, the log is often put at the bottom of the list.

### **Assertion 3: Autonomy**

The third assertion is that teachers value the freedom to make autonomous decisions about methods of reflection and evidence used for reflection. The code for autonomy was used when individuals discussed using an alternative method for reflection, trying something new for



their reflection, and making individual decisions about evidence. Autonomy was mentioned by six out of six participants in various ways throughout the action committee meetings as well as during both focus groups. One focus group participant stated, “I really value that it’s centered on us and that we get our choice” (Science teacher, March 14, 2018). As teachers set their own goals for the year and develop their path to goal completion, the process allows for individual development. During the final action committee meeting one participant stated, “I really like the option [to reflect as in individual ways]. And whether we’ve always had the option, I think in people’s minds. . .they’re just like ‘log, I gotta type, I gotta write’” (Language Arts teacher, May 7 2018). This statement echoed several comments regarding a potential misconception that the learning log must be a typed narrative rather than alternative forms of reflection, which were explored by this committee.

Efficacy was also discussed, primarily as it tied to the process of reflection, more so than connecting to the learning log itself. One participant stated

I think in terms of my efficacy, the process of reflection is important to me because I like going back and thinking about it, but in terms of "did my conversation with [evaluator] necessarily make me feel more efficacious? More effective? I don't know. And the answer's not really, I felt like there's just a level of me talking through it on my own, but also collaborating with my peers, that's more effective, to me, than collaborating with my evaluator. So, I think, in terms of "do I feel like I have a higher level of efficacy?" Yes. But did I need to write it in my log to get there? I think we've kind of determined that's not necessarily true (Social Studies teacher, May 6, 2018).

This discussion about taking authentic reflection whether done alone or collaboratively with peers, and translating it into the log was discussed by four out of six participants. However, having the autonomy to reflect in a way that is meaningful, loses some aspects of autonomy when the result is a prescribed format. “To be able to do it [reflect] more formally with an audio recording, or video recording, or whatever works or you, I feel that that would be, for me, more meaningful than writing it down in the log” (Language Arts teacher, April 18, 2018) stated one

participant expressing frustration with the extra step of putting an autonomous reflection into a prescribed learning log. Further concern about the standardization of the current system was expressed by another Language Arts teacher:

I feel like that [autonomous options for reflection] really opens up the different ways that we can use the log to hopefully build that efficacy because I feel like we don't look at our kids and want them, expect them to all be exactly the same, and to process exactly the same, and to come up with the exact same end product. That's sort of how I feel this is, you all need to process the same way and the reality is that we just don't" (April 18, 2018).

Participants stated that the exploration of different methods of reflection did make them feel more efficacious than typing directly into the learning log document. One participant said, "I felt really effective because I would do the observation third period talk to [student teacher] at lunch and she would make changes and then I could see the efficacy of my feedback to her" (Social Studies teacher, May 6, 2018). By exploring methods of reflection and collaborating with a peer, or in this case student teacher, the participant saw tangible evidence of improvement, which created an efficacious experience.

#### **Assertion 4: Purpose**

The final assertion is connected to the purpose of the learning log within the evaluation process. Based on the data collected the learning log is used as a means of professional communication between the evaluator and the teacher; a place to share what is being done and what has been observed. The learning log does not hold significant value within the evaluation process, which brings about a question of its purpose.

When asked how the learning log is utilized in the evaluation process, the evaluator stated that the log is "a holding place" and "I think that the learning log is as important as the people want to make it" (Principal interview, March 2018). A holding place does not suggest necessity or importance, which brings to question the significance of the log.

The evaluator went on to state that she tries to “stress every year about why we have the log. The log is a place to hold your reflection, and still, there’s varying levels of reflection” (Principal interview, March 2018). The depth and frequency of reflection varies from teacher to teacher. The evaluator stated that “a lot of what I was seeing in logs was, ‘I did this, I did that,’ which is important but it’s really what did you learn because of that towards your goal?” (Principal interview, March 2018). This statement suggests that a large amount of learning logs are being completed with lower cognitive engagement. Nevertheless, the principal did state that there has been improvement in this over the past several years due to the intentionality of professional development.

These statements are consistent with that of the focus group and action committee in questioning the purpose of the learning log. When asked how often they reflect in the learning log, the most repeated answer was “When I’m told to” or some variation of the same statement. If the purpose and evaluator’s use of the log is not clear to teachers, their motivation to set aside time sensitive tasks such as grading and planning to reflect, will be diminished. There was one outlier in the focus group who stated that she sets aside time each month to reflect in her log.

When asked how the learning log is utilized in the evaluation process, the principal stated that “It’s more of a place to hold, kind of what I’m seeing and then document any conversations I’ve had” (Principal interview, March 2018). This statement identifies the learning log as more of a communication of contact than specifically a means for reflection which supports the use of feedback. However, when further questioned about how the learning log builds self-efficacy in teachers, the principal stated that it

Feels a little nebulous for some people, myself included, because I think there are some people who have written so much in their log, that to me is an indication that this is helping them. One person in particular, I don’t know that they are feeling very efficacious right now, but they’re really trying to tackle this problem and figure it out, so that in itself must

be, like they're not giving up, right, so they must feel some empowerment to keep at it and keep trying. Then there are other who maybe just don't see the log a powerful of tools as it could be, but I don't know that that doesn't mean that they're not building self-efficacy either. I think it really comes down to, you are either having conversations in the log or you're having conversations with individuals face to face (Principal interview, March 2018).

This uncertainty about the effects of the log on teacher self-efficacy is another indication that changes may need to occur within the learning log process to create clear messaging about the learning log and how it lives within the evaluation process.

### **Summary**

Overall four assertions were made from the findings of the action committee. Analysis of the transcriptions of the action committee meeting were used to identify themes and establish these assertions from the data.

#### Research Question Two Assertions:

- Reflection is a welcomed and necessary part of being a professional.
- Though autonomy exists within the learning log process, the individuals' connection to their own reflection is the driver of self-efficacy.
- While the learning log is used as a means of professional communication between the evaluator and the teacher, it does not hold significant weight or impact on the evaluation process.

#### Research Sub-Question One Assertion:

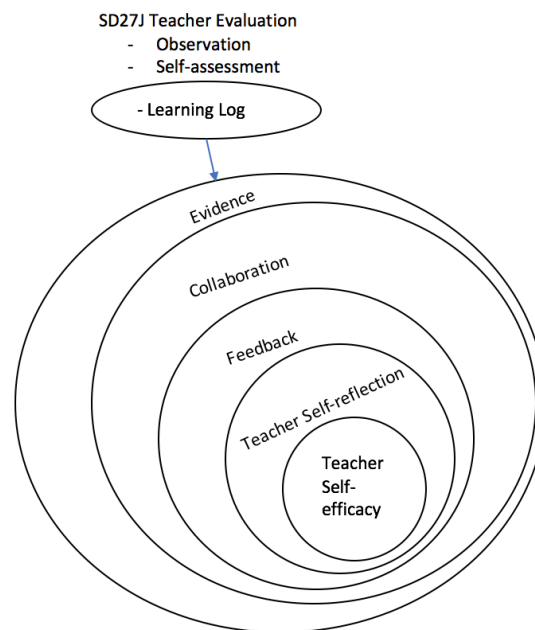
- Procedures and access to reflection methods must be easy and consistent.

In the following chapter I will discuss the findings and how they will impact future research and policy within the evaluation system. These findings will be used to make recommendations for improving the current learning log process and teacher reflection to build teacher self-efficacy.

## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this action research study was to create an improved learning log procedure based on the theory of action that the use of professional learning logs would improve self-reflection, which would increase teacher self-efficacy. Throughout this process several themes arose that indicated the desire for authentic reflection as well as processes that are currently hindering the full actualization of the learning log process in promoting reflection and therefore teacher self-efficacy. In the discussion below I will explain how the literature intersects with the findings of this study and recommendations for next steps.

After analyzing the data for this study, an unexpected component emerged that required a revision of the initial conceptual framework. Collaboration as a means of reflection extended beyond the category of feedback, and therefore needed to be added to the framework. The revised framework can be found in figure C below.



*Figure D.* Revised Conceptual Framework. This framework has been modified to show that each of the elements are intertwined with each other to impact teacher self-efficacy.

The revised conceptual framework uses circles within each other to illustrate how the components are imbedded within each other to produce a teacher's self-efficacy. This connectedness is designed to indicate the flow of each element into the others. For example, evidence may be a component of self-reflection, but it can also tie to collaboration and feedback. In this framework, each of the components are connected to develop the individual teacher's self-efficacy.

### **Assertion 1: Reflection**

Participants in this study agreed that reflection is necessary and is in fact part of their daily practice. Informal self-reflections manifest as quick changes to lessons or adjustments to daily practices; however, formal reflections primarily occur at the direction of an evaluator or time sensitive deadline. As stated in the literature review, self-determination theory (SDT) requires that the areas of competence, autonomy, and relatedness connect to meet the psychological needs of teacher intrinsic motivation (Ford et al., 2017). This aligns with the findings that reflection should be connected to teacher goals. Firestone (2014) stated that intrinsic motivation theory assumes that the feedback given is the result of the feedback received, which supports the findings that feedback is a necessary component to authentic reflection. In this study teachers stated that they value the feedback from evaluators; however, the feedback was not consistent. Additional means for feedback must be implemented to support teacher reflection on practice. The use of peer observations and collaborative reflection were two suggestions that came out of the action committee work. Bandura (1994) suggests that observing the success of others vicariously, produces confidence that the individual can also accomplish such tasks; therefore, increasing individual self-efficacy. This makes a case for using peer observations as a form of feedback to help teachers reflect on their practice.

In a study by Pedro et al. (2012) discussed in the review of the literature it was identified that many of the responses to reflective questions were lower cognitive level, focusing on clarifying and providing evidence. The findings here suggest that these lower level cognitive reflections are being supported by the current process of reflection. When the evaluator observes and comments/questions the teacher in the learning log, the teachers are producing explanations and clarifications to those questions, thus providing low level cognitive reflections. The current system must be modified to support more authentic and higher cognitive reflection (i.e. different thinking) processes.

**Assertion 2: Access**

Procedures and access to the reflection method must be easy and consistent for participants to commit and use with fidelity. Throughout the research gathering it was made clear that the format for the reflection was a hindrance to the process. By requiring that individuals reflect in the learning log that takes multiple steps to access and not easily accessed away from the district network, the reflection process became cumbersome and participants found it not to be user friendly. There is little literature tied to the process of reflection on efficacy; however, if the process hinders accessibility and is not used as intended, it will not produce intended results. In the results section I discuss how this system can be modified for more teacher engagement.

**Assertion 3: Autonomy**

Though autonomy exists within the learning log process, the individuals' connection to their own reflection is the driver of self-efficacy. In this study individuals gained a greater sense of self-efficacy when they reflected in ways that were meaningful to their own personality and styles. In addition, being able to collaborate with a trusted colleague allowed them to become vulnerable to their process of reflection, thus influencing their self-efficacy. The prescription of a

set format or method of reflection, does not promote risk taking and experimentation as Firestone (1991) suggests building teachers' sense of autonomy. By providing multiple options and methods of reflection, as well as to document such reflection, the process can be re-designed to empower teachers in their reflection, building autonomy which research suggests will in turn increase self-efficacy.

As discussed in the review of the literature above, there is a connection between teacher self-efficacy and the willingness to try new strategies and engage in professional learning (Berman et al., 1977; Geisel et al., 2009; Gusley, 1988; Stein & Wang, 1988). Similarly, in this study, as teachers were given the autonomy to try new forms of self-reflection and engage in collaborative discussions they began to explore further ways to reflect and engage in reflective practices such as study groups, content partners, video self-observations, audio recording, etc. This willingness to explore the various forms of reflection allowed within the autonomy of the system provided creative solutions to a basic problem; one size fits all reflection.

#### **Assertion 4: Purpose**

Throughout the research process the idea of purpose continued to arise. As teachers commonly referred to the learning log as a hoop they needed to jump through or a box to check to keep their jobs, it became evident that few teachers in this study utilized the learning log for its intended purpose: to improve practice. The teachers in this study value the concept of setting goals and focusing on those goals throughout the year; however, five out of five participants stated that the learning log was not a meaningful part of that process for them.

In addition, the somewhat nebulous effects of the learning log on teacher self-efficacy bring about concerns for the need of the learning log. The literature presented above emphasizes that reflective practices are a necessary component towards autonomy and self-efficacy;



however, the current process is not producing the desired effects of the district evaluation system. This indicates that the system requires adjustments to support the espoused intent of the district's evaluation system. Ebmeier (2003) found that principal supervision had an indirect, yet significant impact on teacher self-efficacy; which is consistent with the data collected in this study. Teachers want to have interaction and feedback about their practice. The current learning log process is not meeting that need, nor is it promoting healthy reflective practices.

### **Recommendations**

The next phase of action research calls for reflection on the data and recommendations for the future. The findings in this study call for several adjustments to the current learning log and reflection process.

The first recommendation is for teachers to have prescribed times to both reflect collaboratively and individually. The formal reflection process, while deemed important to all participants, is a task that often falls to the bottom of the list in favor of more pressing issues such as grading and planning. As stated by each of the participants the log loses priority when there is not a set deadline. This research suggests that there should be set guidelines regarding when teachers should be interacting with their learning logs, for instance a quarterly reflection when grades are due. This set increment of time will provide teachers with markers of progress throughout the year and establish the reflection log as a priority to improve practice and efficacy.

Along with prescribed times to reflect, there should also be regularly established opportunities for professionals to reflect collaboratively. In this school, each team meets weekly in professional learning communities (PLCs) as well as meeting weekly with a content partner to discuss data. Either of these already present collaborative times could be used to reflect collaboratively about individual and collective goals. This time can be used to observe and

provide feedback to peers or to reflect on shared data to determine if interventions or strategies are working. This time should be designated as collaborative reflection time.

The next recommendation is for a streamlined system for reflection that is straightforward and accessible from multiple locations. The current system is viewed as complex and not user friendly which hinders teachers from accessing regularly and easily. Using a more universal system, such as Google Docs, would allow individual teachers and their evaluator to access the document easily from any location, even mobile, at any time. Participants in this study found that even though autonomous processes such as audio and video recordings are within the guidelines, these files were not able to be inserted into the learning log document in the Egnyte system. A more universal system would allow for a variety of media uploads and therefore increase the autonomy of the reflection process as well as the ease of use for teachers and evaluators.

The third recommendation is for a greater reality of autonomy. There is currently a veiled sense of autonomy in the log; however, the limited access and limited knowledge of the system inhibits users from exploring alternate reflective processes. Through this action research, participants explored different methods of reflecting and utilizing the learning log to reflect on their practice. Though there is autonomy in the log, knowledge of 'what is allowed' is not widely known. Within this recommendation is the addition of professional support for the reflection process. A transparent explanation of the learning log and reflection process should be provided to all teachers being evaluated within the system. Through this professional development, the reflection process can be made more individualized, giving the process more individual meaning, and potentially increase teacher self-efficacy.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

The purpose of this study was to design a more functional tool for teacher self-reflection that empowers teachers to improve their practice. This was not fully actualized as there were barriers to full re-design of the process. However, further research should be done to determine how reflection influences teacher self-efficacy and the most meaningful forms of reflection for professional development. By identifying the most meaningful forms of reflection for teachers' professional development, the district will be better prepared to adapt the learning log process into a process that is aligned to the espoused intent of building capacity in teachers for greater self-efficacy.

### **Reflection**

I have had a passion for evaluation since my career started in 2003. Designing and implementing this action research study has given me the opportunity to look deeper into the evaluation process and how it impacts teachers. This study really focused on one aspect of a much larger process of evaluation, specifically the portion that teachers can control, their own reflection. By focusing on teacher reflection of practice, I could gain a greater understanding of the motivation and roadblocks to improving practice. It is my hope that this research will be a foundation for not only further research on the topic of self-reflection and its impact on self-efficacy, but also to promote change within the system.

This study tied into my transformative world view in that systems are constantly changing and evolving. By engaging in action research, we can challenge the status quo and implement policies and procedures that impact the profession for the ultimate benefit of students.

### **Action Plan**

The following action plan should be followed to further the reflection process and inform the district evaluation committee regarding needed adjustments. The action committee will

continue to meet into the next school year focusing on the revision of a new learning log document and process. The following outlines the work of that group:

*Cycle 1 August-September*

Committee will research alternative reflection processes that have been used in other districts and professions. Each member will choose a format to use for the cycle and report back at the next meeting

*Cycle 2 October- December*

Committee will discuss the processes used during the month and identify the positive attributes and the negative or change needed attributes. From here the team will utilize elements from the positive attributes to create a sample learning log for the next cycle.

*Cycle 3 January-February*

The committee will come together with experiences and reflections using the sample log and make revisions as needed. Each member will pilot the new document/procedures for four to six weeks before moving into the final cycle.

*Cycle 4 March-May*

The final stage will require committee members to use the new learning log/procedure to demonstrate growth towards their goal for the evaluator. A final meeting for discussion and lessons learned will take place before moving toward school-wide implementation (pending school approval).

Following the completion of the Action Research the following steps will be taken:

1. Meet with district Human Resources Director to discuss findings and recommendations. This was a stipulation of the district's approval for research. At

this meeting, I will present my findings and recommendations and I hope to gain support for further research on the topic.

2. Provide development opportunities to offer staff various options for recording reflection and interacting with the learning log (September-December 2018).
3. Focusing on the pieces of the conceptual framework a workshop/staff development will be conducted to incorporate the various forms of reflection, feedback, and collaboration that can be used within the learning log to reflect on practice. This is an area that staff, especially those new to the district, are not aware of and that could impact their reflective practice.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the findings of this study and explored potential adjustments to the reflection process to improve overall effectiveness and increase teacher self-efficacy. Through expanding and educating teachers about their reflection options and providing a system in which they can easily access and input information, the district will see greater use of the learning log and potentially increased teacher self-efficacy throughout the district. I have provided an action plan that will inform the district as well as increase teacher awareness of their reflection options to improve practice.

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Appendix A  
Teacher Focus Group Questions

**Research Question:** How can learning logs be used to improve practice and increase self-efficacy?

**Focus Group Protocol:** Focus groups will be comprised teachers from the middle school used in this study. Participation in the focus group will be on a voluntary basis. Focus group will take place off school property to preserve the privacy of participants. Focus group discussions will be recorded.

**Focus Group Prompt:** Thinking about the district's evaluation process and use of professional learning logs, today we are going to discuss how the learning log in its present state is benefiting individual professional learning and meeting the district's goal of autonomous professional growth. For the purpose of this discussion the term self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief that he/she can accomplish a task or influence an outcome. *Please know if you do not feel comfortable sharing personal examples from your evaluation rating, you do not need to today.*

Question	Rationale
1. Please go around the room and introduce yourself. Include your name, years of teaching experience, current grade/content level and years of teaching at this school.	<i>Characteristics of participant:</i> Identifying the years in education will be used to distinguish trends among like and unlike participants.
2. What do you believe is the purpose of the interactive learning log?	<i>Perspective of participants:</i> This question is designed to understand the orientation of each teacher toward the learning log. It will be answered by each participant.
3. a. Think about your experiences with reflection throughout your career. b. How has the process supported or inhibited your professional growth and development in the past?	<i>Perspective of participants:</i> This question is designed to glean an understanding of the past experiences with reflection and its impact on professional learning.
4. In what ways do you generally reflect on your practice?	<i>Perspective of participants:</i> This question is designed to glean an understanding of how teachers authentically reflect on their practice.
5. How often do you reflect using your interactive learning log? What prompts this reflection?	<i>Perspective of participants:</i> This question is designed to glean an understanding of teacher's frequency of reflection as well as the motivation to do so.
6. How can the reflection process within the teacher evaluation system be more effective in promoting professional reflection and growth?	<i>Perspective of participants:</i> This question is designed to illicit ideas from the group on how to improve the current learning log system and process.
7. How does the learning log add to your professional self-efficacy?	<i>Perspective of Participants:</i> This question is designed to illicit ideas from the group about the intent of the learning log.

Appendix B  
Bandura's Instrument

Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale

This questionnaire is designed to help us gain a better understanding of the kinds of things that create difficulties for teachers in their school activities. Please indicate your opinions about each of the statements below by circling the appropriate number. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential and will not be identified by name.

**Instructional Self-Efficacy**

How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite a Bit		A Great Deal

How much can you do to promote learning when there is lack of support from the home?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite a Bit		A Great Deal

How much can you do to keep students on task on difficult assignments?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite a Bit		A Great Deal

How much can you do to increase students' memory of what they have been taught in previous lessons?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite a Bit		A Great Deal

How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in schoolwork?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite a Bit		A Great Deal

How much can you do to get students to work together?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite a Bit		A Great Deal

How much can you do to overcome the influence of adverse community conditions on students' learning?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite a Bit		A Great Deal

How much can you do to get children to do their homework?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite a Bit		A Great Deal

**Disciplinary Self-Efficacy**

How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite a Bit		A Great Deal

How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite a Bit		A Great Deal

How much can you do to prevent problem behavior on the school grounds?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite a Bit		A Great Deal



### Appendix C Action Committee Protocol

**Who:** Committee members must meet the requirements of the study; Teacher at the school for at least one evaluation year cycle.

**When:** Committee members will convene initially one week following the focus group. After the initial meeting protocol will be developed by the committee to reflect and implement interventions for the learning log process.

**Where:** The committee will meet off school property to ensure privacy and promote open communication.

- Committee members will complete a self-efficacy survey prior to the first meeting to obtain a baseline efficacy score.
- Committee meetings will be recorded as well as have an official note taker for the researcher to facilitate the meeting.

**Agenda:**

1. Greeting and introduction: Members introduce themselves stating: name, years in the school, current position
2. Identify the purpose of the study and responsibilities of the group.
3. Provide an over view of the evaluation process, focusing on the use of learning logs for professional growth
4. Committee members will read the literature review on evaluation and the components of the conceptual framework as a starting point for discussion.
5. Open floor for discussion about the learning log and feedback process.

What are the benefits of the current learning log protocol?	
Do you feel that this process impacts your personal professional growth?	
How could it be more useful in impacting your personal professional growth?	
In what ways does the current system of reflection impact your professional self-efficacy?	

6. Committee members will discuss the merits of the current system and identify adjustments or improvements to the system for intervention.
7. The committee will establish a time frame for implementing the intervention and determine the next meeting time, no earlier than two weeks later.

Appendix D  
27J Teacher Evaluation Learning Log

**Summary of Evaluation Process**

**Name of Teacher:** [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Job Title:** [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Name of Evaluator:** [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Name of Evaluator's Supervisor:** [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Work Site:** [Click here to enter text.](#)

**School Year:**

**Teacher learning goal(s)**

[Click here to enter text.](#)

**Teacher Quality Standards which align with goals** (choose at least one)

- Teacher demonstrates mastery of and pedagogical expertise in the content they teach. [Choose an item.](#)
- Teacher establishes a safe, inclusive and respectful learning environment for a diverse population of students. [Choose an item.](#)
- Teacher plans and delivers effective instruction and creates an environment that facilitates learning for his/her students. [Choose an item.](#)
- Teacher reflects on his/her practice. [Choose an item.](#)
- Teacher demonstrates leadership. [Choose an item.](#)

**How learning/growth will be measured**

Collectively attributed measure of student growth

[Click here to enter text.](#)

Individually attributed measure of student growth

[Click here to enter text.](#)

Other(s)

Click here to enter text.

<b>EOY Student Growth Ratings (Teacher: highlight or circle one)</b>			
Much lower than expected/typical growth	Lower	Expected/typical	Higher than expected/more than typical

**Professional Growth/Learning Log\***

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Event:</b>	<b>Comments:</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>Event:</b>	<b>Comments:</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>Event:</b>	<b>Comments:</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>Event:</b>	<b>Comments:</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>Event:</b>	<b>Comments:</b>

**Certification of the Process**

I certify that the evaluation process documented above occurred as represented; that the teacher has participated in this evaluation in good faith; and that the teacher has made growth in meeting the components of teacher quality.

I recommend that the teacher continue on the growth track next year.

Evaluator Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I certify that the evaluation process documented above occurred as represented and that the supervisor has participated in this evaluation in good faith. I provide this feedback on the process:

Teacher Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I certify that I have read this summary document and that it meets the expectations for the process as laid out in the 27J Agreement between 27J and BEA.

Evaluator's Supervisor Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Appendix E  
Administrator Interview Protocol

Purpose: This interview will provide an administrator perspective of the learning log. Information from this interview will be used to gain an understanding of the use and purpose of the learning logs and how they can be more effective in assisting with the evaluation process from an administrator's perspective.

Interviews will be conducted at the school and recorded, with permission from the participant.

Question	Rationale
1. How would you define the importance of the interactive learning log in the evaluation process?	<b><i>Perspective of Participants:</i></b> This question will provide a basis of understanding for the process and the administrator's knowledge and perspective of the learning log.
2. In what ways do you utilize the teachers' learning logs in the evaluation process?	<b><i>Perspective of Participants:</i></b> This question is designed to understand in what ways the learning log is useful in their evaluation or understandings of teachers.
3. How do you work to build capacity for self-efficacy in your staff?	<b><i>Perspective of Participants:</i></b> This question will provide an understanding of actions outside of the learning log that are designed to build self-efficacy.
4. In what ways do you engage with teachers about their learning and reflection in the learning log?	<b><i>Perspective of Participants:</i></b> This question will show the various ways that administrators use the learning log to engage with teachers about their learning.
5. How does the learning log build self-efficacy in teachers?	<b><i>Perspective of Participants:</i></b> This question is meant to show an understanding of the connection between the intended use of the learning log and practice.
6. What changes would you like to see in the learning log to make it more relevant to your role in the evaluation process?	<b><i>Perspective of Participants:</i></b> This question will provide an opportunity for input into potential interventions tied to the learning log.

Appendix F  
In Vivo Coding Key

Below you will find the code counts used to further identify themes throughout the process. These themes led to the assertions outlined in Chapter 5.

<b>Codes</b>	<b>Initial</b>	<b>Cycle 1</b>	<b>Cycle 2</b>	<b>Total</b>
Reflection	11	7	5	23
Self-reflection	3	5	0	8
Prescribed reflection	3	6	1	10
Collaborative reflection	4	13	6	23
Authentic reflection	2	0	1	3
Efficacy	2	0	2	4
Feedback	6	4	1	11
Evidence	0	3	2	5
Procedural	5	5	1	11
Face to face/collaboration	5	7	5	17
Autonomy	6	7	8	21
Access	9	0	2	11
Time	2	4	4	10