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# Chicago Public School Administrators' Experiences Implementing the Special Education Addendum

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CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS' EXPERIENCES

IMPLEMENTING SPECIAL EDUCATION ADDENDUM

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## ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study examined the insights, thoughts, and perspectives that administrators in Chicago Public Schools experienced when implementing the district's new Special Education Addendum.  A strong emphasis was placed on the perceptions, feelings, and thoughts that principals and assistant principals employed when utilizing the addendum to evaluate teachers. Teacher evaluation is an essential component of teacher practice, providing a common language, expectations, and standards to improve teachers' practice (Danielson & McGreal, 2000).  This research provides narrative accounts that policymakers, politicians, and district supervisors can use to consult with principals as conversation starters to improve special education teachers' practice and special education students' achievement.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my parents, Julian Sr. and Lugusta Rucker. You always told me that I could accomplish anything if I put my mind to it. I also dedicate this study to my in-laws, Carl and Esther Watson. Thank you for being a voice of reason and strength when I needed you. Finally, I dedicate this work to all individuals who work hard to serve in our poor, high-risk, low-performing urban schools. To all those individuals who have been told you are not good enough or don't belong somewhere—let this paper prove them wrong.

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# INTRODUCTION

## Introduction

In an open letter to the American people, the National Commission on Excellence in Education detailed the results of a rigorous, 18-month examination of U.S. education quality. Among other areas, the letter included an assessment of teaching and learning quality in U.S. public and private schools. For anyone who thought that America held unchallenged supremacy in innovation, education, commerce, science, and industry, the findings detailed in the letter were disturbing. America's educational institutions steadily were eroding from an incessant stream of mediocrity, the crumbling of high expectations that school leaders, teachers, and students once held, and the disappearance of any semblance of a disciplined effort from education-arena stakeholders to get up off the proverbial couch and do something. America's educational system—the foundation of the country's advancements, innovations, and business initiatives, initially built upon love, respect, and appreciation for learning—a was disintegrating in the dust of competitors worldwide. That letter was issued in 1983.

Politicians and policymakers were concerned that the nation had lost its educational edge. Internationally recognized assessment initiatives, such as the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), a survey that evaluates education systems worldwide by testing the skills and knowledge among 15-year-olds, confirmed a plunge in U.S. rankings compared with Finland, China, Canada, and other developed nations (Gardner, 1983). Not only to get back in the race, but also to reclaim its long-lost position atop the world's educational systems, the federal government demanded a complete education system overhaul, replete with data, measurable outcomes, and accountability standards. While *A Nation at Risk* (Gardner, 1983)

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chronicled the country's defects, the report also demanded that states improve public education or lose funding.

Thus, state education leaders got off the couch and into the race to improve the quality of their public education systems. Resources to advance this reform effort and to help create life-changing, sustainable outcomes for America's students were made available. Providing $100 billion for novel and existing federal education programs, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) funded several areas of education, including Title I, Part A, and the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*, Part B. In June 2010, members of the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) launched the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI) to improve national education. While the CCSSI was in development, President Obama signed the ARRA into law. In addition to other goals, this new legislation promoted education reform by funding innovative initiatives to improve learning outcomes and actualize long-term gains in schools.

One such federal initiative, the Race to the Top (RTTT) fund, was a competitive grant that invested $4.35 billion in the country's educational overhaul. Government funds were awarded based on a state's advances toward education reform. This initiative created a competitive scramble for states as they quickly tried to develop and implement policies, programs, and new teacher evaluation tools to prove that their schools were embracing and adapting education reform, performing at the highest standards, and ensuring a quality education for all students. However, RTTT came with an expensive price tag for states and school districts. In exchange for RTTT grants that were awarded to states, the government demanded measurable results and accountability from school administrators, teachers, and students. More

specifically, the federal government wanted states to develop a way to link student achievement to teacher performance (Corcoran, 2010; Hull, 2013). The new evaluation systems focused specifically on standardized testing outcomes and principal-conducted teacher observations (Anderson, 2012), both of which have been criticized as problematic evaluation tools in and of themselves (Baker et al., 2010; Corcoran, 2010; Jiang & Sport, 2016; Vandevoort, 2004).

Many states changed course. They discarded outdated, subjective, and ineffectual teacher evaluations that were principal-friendly, inconsistent, and unfair to teachers. District leaders adopted new models, hoping to improve teacher practice and student outcomes (McGuinn, 2012). Principals' accountability for recruiting, developing, mentoring, leading, coaching, evaluating, and retaining teams of teacher-leaders in their schools is one of the most effective ways to improve schools (Bartoletti, Connelly, Domenech, & Robinson, 2014). Without an active, creative, and exceptional teacher-leader at the helm of each classroom across America, children and teachers often miss educational opportunities filled with exciting discoveries, critical-thinking activities, and engaging discussions. Disorganized, haphazard, lackadaisical, and unmonitored play time was over, and better instruction, quantifiable student learning, standards-based evaluation systems, and measurable outcomes were necessary and required to yield results (Bartoletti et al., 2014; Milanowski, Kimbo, & White, 2004).

The nation's educational reform movement centered around accountability. Teacher practice (i.e., pedagogy) was spotlighted as one measure to improve the nation's schools and increase student achievement. Educators' skills, abilities, and knowledge were considered the most important factors in determining students' academic success (Paris et al., 2014; Vandevoort et al., 2004). However, evaluating a teacher's quality and value remains an arduous research task. Nonetheless, more than forty states initiated, changed, or improved their measures for

principals to use when evaluating their teachers, including student achievement test scores, formal classroom observations, student surveys, parent surveys, lesson plan reviews, student portfolios, and teacher self-reflection processes (Baker, Oluwole, & Green, 2013; Hull, 2013).

Determining teacher accountability is based on several factors, including administrator observations of each teacher interacting with students and implementing thoughtful, well-prepared lessons. Principals and assistant principals typically observe student and teacher interactions while using a district-approved evaluation model. Once a teacher assessment's various components are calculated, teachers receive formal end-of-the-year summative ratings based on several factors: student growth as identified through student scores, teacher practice as identified through administrator observations, and professional practice as identified through professional development and ethical standards in the teaching profession, among other components. The vast majority of districts' summative evaluation systems allow administrators to assess teachers throughout the school year based on each teacher's number of years of service, subjects taught, and previous observations (Callahan, Golway, & Sadeghi, 2012).

The emphasis on connecting or linking student growth and teacher instruction have been part of the plan in national educational reform initiatives nationwide, including small and large school districts such as Chicago, Newark, and Houston. Most recent evaluation standards have focused on the value-added model (VAM) as a tool to improve teacher practice (Corcoran, 2010). VAMs define the relationship between teacher efficacy and student academic achievement through weighted statistical formulas that incorporate values from a variety of measurements, including teacher observation scores and student achievement scores.

Under former President George W. Bush's No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), all students—regardless of physical, emotional, or intellectual challenges—were to receive a

quality public education (Hickok, 2002).  Both NCLB and RTTT ensured that highly qualified

teachers would educate students with disabilities (SWDs) that and well-trained, certified school

administrators would assess those educators annually (Sporte et al., 2013).  NCLB and RTTT

support was especially crucial to Illinois and to districts such as Chicago Public Schools' (CPS)

District 299, where the special education population of SWDs accounted for 18% %of the city's

student populace (Jiang & Sporte, 2016).  For decades, SWDs have earned lower scores on

national assessment tests and elicited lower acceptance rates into U.S. colleges and universities

than general education students.  Based on these low scores and this academic achievement gap,

one can understand the emphasis on administrative evaluation of teacher performance. When

administrators are trained adequately, they can conduct fair evaluations of special education

teachers, thereby making good on the promise that every student will receive a quality education

regardless of disability.

   This study's focus was on exploring principals' and assistant principals' experiences in

evaluating special education teachers using CPS' REACH Special Education Addendum. In

Illinois, special education teachers are referred to as "learning behavioral specialists" and

"teachers of diverse learners."  The State of Illinois differentiates special education teachers,

through job titles, from their general education colleagues.  It implies that a different type of

teaching is taking place, and they use different resources in these classroom environments to

control classroom behavior and provide quality instruction.  Even at a quick glance, it is easy for

the untrained observer to identify significant differences between a general education classroom

setting and a special education classroom setting.  Students with disabilities have individualized

needs, so special education teachers approach daily preparation and implementation of lesson

plans differently than general education teachers. Unlike those in the general education

classroom, special education classroom teachers employ Individual Education Plans (IEPs) to drive planning, behavior, and instruction for each special education student. Special education teachers plan and assess their students' abilities using specific benchmarks found in each student's IEP. These teachers differentiate, model, and consistently assess classroom instruction. Special education teachers also implement separate Functional Behavioral Plans (FBPs) to address these students' behavior.

Although researchers have suggested that the best and most useful evaluation programs include those that are outcome/value-added (Stufflebeam, 2001), the value-added model remains controversial. It is unclear whether VAMs, when used as the single indicator of a teacher's value and effectiveness, adequately address accountability or, instead, are detrimental to a teacher's career, especially to a special education teacher's career (Midgley, Tyler, Danaher, & Mander, 2016). For example, the context dependence of value-added and observation scores was the focus of a recent investigation that the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research conducted, a study that was motivated, in part, by teachers' lingering concerns over the use of these measures in their evaluations. The consortium's researchers found that potential context-based sensitivities tied to teachers, students, and school characteristics suggested a need for further improvement in VAMs, adding to extant research similarly recommending further research into and improvements of the model (Hong, 2010; Jiang & Sporte, 2016).

Jiang and Sporte's study (2016) also identified teacher observations as being context-dependent: The researchers found that minority and male teachers registered lower observation ratings than white and female teachers, despite finding no statistical differences on their reading or math value-added scores. The inconsistency in scoring sheds light on an important figure in teacher evaluations: the principal. Principals are crucial in evaluating their teachers, as

principals are identified as schools' instructional leaders and teacher coaches. The expectation is that principals are well-versed in all matters of classroom instruction, models, and behavior. However, reactions to recent reform efforts highlight the intense, and sometimes unrealistic, demands placed on these administrators since RTTT's inception (Anderson, 2012).

For general education and special education teachers alike, school principals are essential to the creation, implementation, and success of a fair teacher evaluation process. Principals are their schools' instructional leaders and, ideally, are best-equipped to observe, evaluate, and provide useful teacher feedback. However, providing useful feedback to teachers is not an easy task. It is critical that principals receive rigorous training in how to evaluate both general education and special education teachers. When principals are not trained or prepared to assess teachers correctly, thoroughly, and objectively, they are not adding value to the teaching and learning taking place in their schools. If school leaders cannot provide useful feedback for teachers to embrace and implement, then an evaluation does nothing to inspire the teacher being evaluated to continue excelling or to improve on practice. The lack of accurate feedback is especially important when principals attempt to evaluate special education teachers.

Much extant research on principal-led special education evaluations has concluded that new, one-size-fits-all national evaluation measures are not appropriate for special education instructors. The development of a suitable special education evaluation model already has proven difficult due to several factors: diversity within the special education field, the history of unresolved labor and professional challenges, and a lack of empirical evidence on teacher evaluations that extends specifically to special education (Johnson & Semmelroth, 2014). Most new teacher evaluation systems are based on a general education framework. These teacher evaluation systems assume that their evaluation measures can be transferred effectively to special

education, a broad generalization that is evident in the CPS teacher evaluation system called Recognizing Educators Advancing Chicago's Students (REACH Students), adopted in August 2016.  A recent article noted that 68% %of administrators in the CPS system agreed or strongly agreed that the teacher evaluation process was so overwhelming and challenging that it increased their stress and anxiety, with over 40% %agreeing or strongly agreeing that the whole evaluation process demanded more effort than the results were worth (Sporte & Jiang, 2016).  Since principals are invaluable in the evaluation process (Romay, Magee, & Slater, 2016), it is crucial for policymakers to understand and incorporate administrators' experiences, needs, and perspectives concerning new teacher evaluation systems fully to create effective policy and accurate results that improve teacher practice and propel student achievement.

In response to the argument that special education teachers should not be evaluated using general education models, CPS published the REACH Special Education Addendum (CPS Office of Diverse Learner Supports and Services and the Office of Professional Learning, 2013). In 2016, almost five years after CPS adopted the new REACH teacher-evaluation system, CPS administrators were directed to attend professional development training sessions regarding the optional implementation of the Special Education Addendum.

## Problem Statement

Extant studies have focused on teacher evaluation, but few, if any, have investigated Chicago principals' experiences implementing the REACH Special Education Addendum. Although existing teacher-evaluation studies have generalized the implementation process of teacher evaluation, none has examined principals' experiences in evaluating special education teachers, explicitly using the new Special Education Addendum.  In 2012, CPS solicited administrative feedback before selecting an evaluation system.  The board introduced the

REACH general education teacher evaluation with media announcements, pilot programs, and intensive training.

However, the REACH Special Education Addendum to evaluate special education teachers received no accolades or fanfare.  Thus, neglecting to introduce the addendum properly was problematic for special education teachers, whom REACH impacted significantly.  A report released after REACH's second year found that special education teachers comprised a high proportion of educators stressed by and unsure of the new evaluation system's accuracy (Jiang & Sporte, 2014).  A teacher who is under stress cannot entirely focus and bring his or her best efforts into a classroom of students, whether in general or special education.  It is inevitable that problems will occur when untrained school principals evaluate special education teachers using an unfamiliar tool in an instructionally-different classroom environment.  When instructional leaders have little knowledge of special education classroom practices, procedures, and pedagogy (e.g., IEPs), and when these observers assess special education teachers using the Chicago Public Schools' Special Education Addendum, school evaluators misidentify supportive practices and enter erroneous teacher ratings for special education teachers.  These erroneous evaluations have led to a high number of special education teachers in Chicago being placed on remediation, development, and termination plans (Johnson & Semmelroth, 2014).

Many papers have been written describing teachers' narratives regarding the adoption of new teacher evaluations, but administrators have received research attention in teacher evaluation contexts (Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, & Keeling, 2009).  Identifying and sharing the experiences, challenges, and issues that Chicago school principals face when integrating a new Special Education Addendum into their teacher evaluation responsibilities may help to enhance

this new special education teacher evaluation tool and improve teacher practice by acting as a catalyst for students' achievement.

## Purpose

This study's purpose was to explore, examine, and describe CPS principals' experiences during the implementation of the REACH Special Education Addendum. Specifically, the research aimed to identify principals' feelings, perceptions, and actions while implementing the addendum. In examining the implementation process and investigating how the administrator-evaluators felt while conducting those evaluations, a greater understanding was sought concerning the thought processes, actions, and justifications resulting in the high incidence of poor evaluations for special education teachers. Special education teachers have criticized REACH since its inception for not correctly assessing the special education setting's uniqueness. Under CPS policy, teachers earning low evaluation scores risk dismissal, and these terminated teachers often exercise their union right to file grievances against the evaluating principal.

This study's purpose was not to justify the dire need for a separate, detailed special education teacher evaluation system, but rather to provide an in-depth critique of REACH, as several extant studies already have documented teachers' perspectives (Weisberg et al., 2009). Instead, this study was concerned with principals' experiences and thoughts during the implementation of the REACH Special Education Addendum, after having received little-to-no training or district support. The onus of assessing special education teachers' efficacy has been assigned to principals, and extant literature had covered this topic minimally. However, extant studies have addressed concerns related to principals' ability to implement useful teacher evaluation models (Paris & Meador, 2013). The detailed narrative revealed in the present study illustrated these concerns in the case of the Special Education Addendum. Specifically,

seventeen administrators from Chicago Public Schools' most extensive network, Network 11, were selected from the northern, southern, eastern, and western sections of the network to participate in this qualitative study.

## Research Questions

This qualitative inquiry study answered the following research questions:

RQ1. What are CPS administrators' views about the new REACH Special Education Addendum?

RQ2. What factors do school administrators consider to be hindrances when implementing the REACH Special Education Addendum?

TQ3. What factors do school administrators consider helpful when implementing the REACH Special Education Addendum?

## Theoretical Framework

When examining a process as complex as implementing the new policy, it is crucial to do so through the appropriate theoretical lens.  One of the pioneers in communicating and implementing organizational change is Everett Rogers, the renowned U.S. communication theorist and sociologist who originated the Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) Theory and introduced the term *early adopter*.  Rogers' DOI Theory, first published in 1962, explains how, why, and at what rate new ideas spread within a group or organization (LaMorte, 2016).  Rogers' DOI Theory emphasized how change is transferred through members of an organization.  CPS administrators were encouraged to implement the new REACH Special Education Addendum, and Rogers' theory explains how and why administrators accepted the addendum.  How one implements a change is critical to its successful implementation, and how CPS implemented the addendum was critical to its success and effectiveness for REACH evaluations.  The DOI Theory

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explains how people "buy in" to ideas of change as well as actions that are critical to success in implementing a new policy. Moreover, the DOI Theory explains how cultures and organizations accept change and ideas, the way an idea is implemented by a group or individual, and the complete absorption of an innovative change into a society or organization.

This process comprises five steps: (a) *Diffusion* is knowledge of or initial exposure to the innovation or idea; (b) *persuasion* is when a person becomes interested in and wants to know more about an idea; (c) *decision* occurs when a person decides whether he or she will implement the idea; (d) *implementation* happens when individuals or a group begins to use the idea; and (e) *confirmation* requires that the person employ the new idea (Rogers, 2003).

According to Rogers (2003), the diffusion process goes through five categories of adopters, or groups, that eventually accept an idea. The first category comprises those who generally initiate and accept new ideas—i.e., *innovators*, who are risk-takers. The next category is the *early adopters*, who cannot afford to take risks and typically show more caution when making decisions. As for the third category, once an idea is adopted, it moves along to the *early majority,* the first significant segment of a group or organization that accepts the idea or innovation. The *late majority* usually follows this group and typically adopts an idea or product after everyone else has accepted it as a low risk. The final category to embrace the idea or innovation is the *laggards*. When most of the organization already has accepted the new idea, the laggards' acceptance is almost expected because the idea, innovation, or product is now safely mainstreamed within the organization (Rogers, 2003).

Rogers (2003) defined *diffusion* as the process by which an innovation is communicated over time among participants in a social system. Understanding how, when, and to what extent individuals accept new policies, procedures, and initiatives is vital in many areas, but few social

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systems have benefitted from this idea more than education (Rogers, 2003).  Rogers' DOI

Theory directly demonstrates the importance of the implementation and evaluation of outcomes

such as teacher practice.  The present study took an in-depth look at the implementation of the

Special Education Addendum teacher evaluation method, emphasizing CPS administrators'

experiences while implementing the addendum.  The researcher has applied Rogers' DOI Theory

to CPS implementation of the addendum in order to identify administrators' beliefs, hindrances,

and supports when evaluating special education teachers.

## Study's Significance

This study is significant for several reasons. Special education teacher evaluations are

high-stakes endeavors that impact tenure, compensation, legal issues, student success, and

personnel issues in Chicago Public Schools and elsewhere.  CPS' special education teachers have

filed an inordinate number of grievances alleging that they were deprived of accurate and useful

evaluation feedback, resulting in due process hearings.  The fallout has cost CPS millions of

dollars in legal defense fees, depleting an already deficit-battered budget.  This study adds to  the

limited extant of research from principals' perspectives.  Collecting, analyzing, and sharing this

study's results adds value to policymakers, administrators, educators, and politicians' efforts to

design and implement appropriate special education teacher evaluations, which account for and

measure special education classrooms' unique attributes.  This study's findings will support

quality teaching as well as improve teacher practice and student outcomes.

This study will also add to limited extant research focusing on the challenges that

principals face in implementing teacher evaluations, especially special education teacher

evaluations.  Armed with research that acknowledges current challenges and presents solutions,

educational stakeholders can more efficiently and effectively "roll out" or diffuse new systems

such as the Special Education Addendum to improve instruction and student outcomes.  This study may be able to provide evidence that politicians, policymakers, and administrators can use to ensure a more efficient process to communicate the adoption of new policies and programs in profoundly critical areas such as special education.

## Procedure

Through individual interviews and a focus group, this qualitative study garnered stories, responses, answers, opinions, and perspectives from CPS principals and assistant principals who have implemented the Special Education Addendum to evaluate special education teachers in their schools.  Administrator participants came from CPS District 299's Network 11, where 13% of students are identified as SWDs, 8% of teachers are special education teachers, and two administrative supervisors are assigned to each school.

Administrator participants became REACH certified within one year of the district's implementation of the REACH teacher evaluation model, with twelve participants having agreed to confidential, private, face-to-face interviews with the researcher and five having participated in a focus group.  While 6 administrators were secured for the focus group initially, 1 canceled a few hours before meeting with the group, thereby reducing the number of participants to 17.  The participants responded to open-ended questions based on their experiences, perceptions, and expectations in implementing the REACH Special Education Addendum.  The use of open-ended questions elicited the sharing of rich personal experiences and narratives, unlike simple "yes" and "no" answers.

## Limitations

This study contained some weaknesses. Participants were expected and assumed to answer all questions honestly. As previously mentioned, one participant changed her mind and canceled right before the focus group session, and the other focus group members were informed upon their arrival that there would be five administrators participating in the group instead of six. Although participants were encouraged to respond to all interview and focus group questions, some chose not to respond in great depth to every question, as evidenced by the brevity of certain responses. It is not possible to know whether all participants answered the questions honestly and thoroughly. Administrators' ability to answer every question honestly may have been tied to a variety of factors, including fear of retaliation from supervisors. The small sample size limited the study in that it may not have adequately represented the entire CPS principal community's experiences, thoughts, and opinions.

## Definitions of Key Terms

*Accountability*: Holding schools, districts, educators, and students responsible for results (Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, 2004).

*Bias*: Prejudice in favor of or against a thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair.

*Chicago Public Schools District 299*: A sizable local CPS district.

*Chief Executive Officer (CEO)*: A selected officer charged with leading the CPS system.

*Director*: A supervisor of a large department within CPS.

*Due Process*: The legal requirement that a state must respect all legal rights owed to any person.

*Executive*: A managing leader charged with guiding the educational well-being of the city's public-school system.

*Evaluator*: An administrator who conducts teacher evaluations.

*General education classroom*: A classroom that contains no students with a diagnosed or documented disability.

*General education teacher*: A teacher who instructs non-disabled students and does not hold certification specific to teaching students with disabilities. This type of teacher holds a general education teaching certification.

*Individual Education Plan (IEP)*: A unique education plan individually designed specifically for one particular student with one or more disabilities.

*Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA)*: A nonprofit organization that has assessed over 4.5 million students. NWEA has a presence in 49 foreign countries, 50 states, and 3,400 districts

*Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)*: An online assessment aligned with Common Core standards.

*Office of Diverse Learner Students (ODLS)*: A CPS department responsible for the education, safety, and compliance of students with disabilities.

*Perception*: A person's awareness, consciousness, or perspective.

*School administrator*: A leader who is responsible for a school's daily operations – an umbrella term for principals and assistant principals.

*Special education classroom*: A self-contained classroom for students with disabilities.

*Special education teacher*: an educational instructor who is certified and hired to educate students with disabilities. This type of teacher holds a Learning Behavior Specialist (LBS1) license certification.

*Student Growth*: Typically refers to a measure dictating how each student in a school performs on state tests from one year to the next compared with other students in other regions with similar achievement levels. It also can refer to how students with disabilities progress emotionally and behaviorally throughout a school year.

*Students with Disabilities (SWDs)*: Students with Individualized Education Plans. A special education teacher instructs them.

*Validity*: The extent to which a test measures what it claims to measure.

*Value-Added Model (VAM)*: A statistical model that takes students' standardized test scores and measures the "value" that a teacher adds to students' learning through complicated formulas meant to factor out all other influences and emerge with a valid assessment of how effective a teacher has been in students' learning.

## Chapter Summary

In recent years, education reform has undergone a paradigm shift. A mixture of federal laws and political motivations has forced school systems nationwide to overhaul ineffective student assessment and teacher evaluation methods. Although generally perceived as a positive initiative in Chicago's Public Schools, serious concerns have surfaced regarding the evaluation of special education teachers, who have been evaluated using the same standards as those used with general education teachers. Extant research has shown that new evaluation systems are imperfect and that accurate special education evaluations generally are scarce. Furthermore, although principals play a significant role in teacher evaluations, extant research detailing their

role with special education evaluations is limited.  No substantial research on CPS principals' experiences in implementing the new Special Education Addendum, which CPS published after implementing REACH, has been conducted.  Without a proven research-based special education evaluation design and the time to administer proper evaluations and professional development, administrators have nothing they can use to gauge the Special Education Addendum's efficacy.  The special education community requires and deserves more details and insights into this addition to REACH.

This study adds to the limited extant research on the challenges, experiences, and issues that principals face when implementing a new special education teacher evaluation system.  More specifically, this qualitative case study's purpose was to analyze, explore, and examine the shortcomings and celebrations that principals and other certified administrators have experienced while implementing the REACH Special Education Addendum.  Twelve REACH-certified principals and assistant principals participated in open-ended, 45-minute interviews with the researcher.  Also, a focus group of five additional principals shared their thoughts and experiences on implementing the new Special Education Addendum.  CPS employs all participants, and all participants work at schools located in Network 11.  Interview questions for both the face-to-face interviews and the focus group centered around their beliefs and experiences related to the new evaluation plan, including its execution.

# CHAPTER II

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

This study adds to the limited scope of extant literature on the perceptions, challenges, and concerns that school principals face while trying to implement, conduct, and manage special education teacher evaluations confidently and effectively at their schools. Specifically, this qualitative case study identified, explored, analyzed, and described the frustrations and fears that principals and other certified administrators felt when tasked with implementing CPS' new REACH Special Education Addendum without receiving prior collaboration opportunities or training resources from the CPS Board of Education. The addendum is the current CPS standard for evaluating special education teachers.

### Literature Search Methods

Online databases, traditional library references, radio interviews, documents from CPS databases, and public discussions were employed to collect information for this dissertation. The University of Chicago Library, DePaul University Library, Chicago Public Library database, peer-reviewed journals, texts, and websites, Chicago Public School Executive Educational Reports, Chicago School of Research Publications, and the Chicago Consortium on School Research were all utilized as resources in this study. The computerized databases used included Dissertation Abstracts, EBSCOhost, SAGE, ERIC research databases, JSTOR, ProQuest, Google, and Google Scholar. Keyword search terms included *principal evaluations*, *special education evaluation*, *principal accountability*, *rethinking evaluation*, *education reform, teacher evaluation*, *teacher reform*, *teacher evaluation*, *validity*, *reliability*, and *principal challenges with new reform*.

**Chapter Organization**

The literature review identified studies that addressed the overarching common and unprecedented issues of school administrators when implementing, conducting, and making decisions based on general education and special education teacher evaluations. Throughout the review, administrators, teachers, and other stakeholders' experiences facing challenges trying to embrace education reforms and choosing evaluation models were spotlighted as they related to teacher evaluations.

The present chapter opens with a brief history of teacher evaluations in America, beginning with the groundbreaking ideas that brought teacher evaluations into standard practice. It includes contributions made in the field by 19th century Professor Frederick Taylor, 20th century Professor Ellwood Cubberley, and 20th century Professor Edward Thorndike. The chapter then transitions into a brief history of how teacher evaluations have evolved in the specific Chicago Public Schools (CPS) district that is the present study's focus. The next section includes a review of extant research on CPS' historic transition from an inferior TeacherFit evaluation system to the district's current REACH Students evaluation model. Next, recent extant studies on several models for teacher evaluations will be examined.

This chapter then examines the many challenges, issues, and concerns that administrators face regarding teacher evaluations. The next section affirms that while extant studies have examined many challenges that CPS administrators face, a gap in the literature exists regarding administrators' perceptions of addressing, handling, resolving, and avoiding these challenges. Identifying how principals have handled challenges through experience may help many in the field to avoid such issues, including new principals, principals in the making, other administrators who evaluate special education teachers, and any other educational stakeholders

interested in identifying and retaining exceptional special education teachers. The chapter

concludes with a summary of how Rogers' DOI Theory factored into administrators' roles at

CPS during the school system's numerous implementations of new teacher evaluation system.

<div align="center">**Brief History of Teacher Evaluation Systems**</div>

**History of Teacher Evaluation Pioneers**

Professors Frederick Taylor, Ellwood Cubberley, and Edward Thorndike conceptualized

and implemented the groundbreaking ideas of observing, evaluating, and motivating workers,

shepherding the concept of teacher evaluations into standard practice.

**Frederick Taylor**. An American mechanical engineer, management consultant, and

intellectual leader of the 19th century, Taylor significantly contributed to workplace efficiency

by pioneering the idea of applying scientific-management principles to how employees are

selected, hired, trained, and developed. Taylor's seminal work encompassed the belief that

observing and measuring how workers behave and physically do their jobs can identify and

correct unnecessary, time-wasting steps in a work process, leading to improvement, productivity,

and efficiency even in the educational arena (Marzano, Livingston, Frontier, & ASCD, 2011).

The goals of Taylor's standardization method for evaluating workers were to improve employee

competence and streamline efficiency for producing desired outcomes (Hodson & Sullivan,

2011).

**Ellwood Cubberley.** A superintendent of schools in San Diego and Dean at Stanford

Graduate School of Education before his retirement, Cubberley was a catalyst for and theorist of

educational administration at a time in history when no formal textbooks existed on how to teach

educational administrators how to become lead-by-example agents of change for their staff.

Inspired by Taylor's standardized, top-down management style first employed in factories,

Cubberley conceptualized and launched the idea of a quantitative school survey to identify strengths and weaknesses in U.S. public schools (Cubberley, 1919). Cubberley believed that training teachers must begin with a model of core professional standards and that evaluations of teachers must include specific feedback that identifies not only a teacher's surface errors but also these errors' underlying causes. Cubberley identified specific ways in which school principals can apply this scientific approach to observing and evaluating teachers as well as diverse types of effective feedback principles to use after observation. As a result of Cubberley's work, teacher evaluations began to focus on helping teachers develop specific skills rather than simply on identifying where they lacked skills.

**Edward Thorndike**. A 20th century psychologist who contributed to the education field around the same time as Cubberley, Thorndike created the Law of Effect concept (Nevin, 2013), which posited that a reward system can influence employees' behaviors and motives. According to Thorndike, rewarding employees for demonstrating desired behaviors would inspire more desired behaviors. Conversely, unrewarded staff members who displayed undesirable behaviors would feel uncomfortable and be less likely to continue performing undesirable behaviors. Thorndike believed that this theory had significant applications for teacher evaluations. To increase teacher proficiency, Thorndike initiated this individual accountability concept, providing a more scientific approach to evaluating educators (Thorndike, 1911).

**History of Teacher Evaluations in Chicago Public Schools (CPS)**

22

**TeacherFit System.**  From the 1970s until 2006, CPS employed a highly subjective, principal-friendly checklist system for principal evaluators to rate their schools' classroom teachers.  Using the TeacherFit Checklist (Jiang & Sporte, 2014), principals simply chose from the terms *strength* or *weakness* to identify and measure what they perceived to be the teacher's performance for each surface-level component in a long list of teacher, classroom setting, and lesson plan observables.  Some of these elements included such ineffectual components as what the teacher was wearing, how the teacher handled daily administrative tasks, and how the bulletin boards were decorated (University of Chicago Consortium on School Research, 2016).  Although this evaluation system was used for nearly 40 years, no formal definition of *strength* or *weakness* was ever presented.

Furthermore, following the checklist's completion, the evaluating administrator typically chose either *excellent* or *superior* to rate the teacher's overall performance, even though lower rating levels were an option.  As a result of using this antiquated, ineffective, and subjective checklist system, fewer than 0.3% of Chicago's teachers were rated *unsatisfactory* at using instructional practices (Kraft & Gilmour, 2017).  However, these teacher evaluation results did not match the teaching and learning that was taking place in classrooms.  Despite the supposedly exceptional teaching going on behind closed classroom doors, Chicago's school district was considered one of the lowest-performing districts in the nation (Jiang & Sporte, 2014).

Furthermore, the checklist evaluation system neither identified nor assessed whether the observed teacher was making an actual *impact* on his or her students' learning, and the evaluator did not provide much-needed insight, specific guidance, or useful support to help the teacher improve or continue to excel (Haefele, 1993; Wakamatsu, 2016).  According to Haefele (1993), a clearly defined purpose needs to be the foundation of a teacher evaluation system, and CPS'

TeacherFit checklist system lacked this fundamental component (see Figure 1). Also, for nearly

four decades, feedback or recommendations to embrace specific professional development

opportunities never formally accompanied CPS' teacher evaluations.

Principal evaluators' suggestions, recommendations, and useful feedback are valuable,

welcomed, and necessary components of the teacher evaluation process (Wakamatsu, 2016).
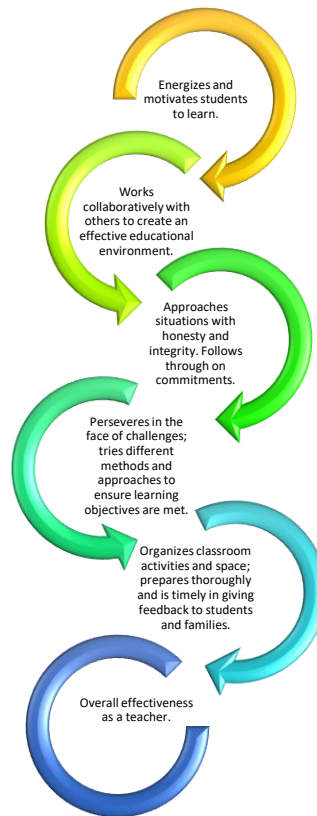


Figure 1. TeacherFit components. *Note:* Haefele, D. (1993). Evaluating teachers: A call for change. *Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education*, *7*(1), 21-31.

Excellence in Teaching Project (EITP). Finally, in 2006, CPS and the Chicago Teachers

Union (CTU) collaborated to rethink and redesign its substandard and uninspiring protocols for

conducting teacher evaluations that could not discriminate objectively between effective and

ineffective teachers, which is an integral ingredient of successful teacher evaluation models

(Marzano, 2012). Two years later, the Excellence in Teaching Project (EITP) was launched.

First implemented in 44 CPS elementary schools in 2008, the EITP included rigorous and comprehensive training for principal evaluators on how to conduct evidence-based, rubric-focused classroom observations.  This pilot study was a modified version of the evidence-based teacher evaluation system called the Framework for Teaching, designed by Charlotte Danielson, an economist turned teacher, turned administrator, turned -consultant (Danielson, 2007).  The new system was aligned with Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) standards, which has underpinnings in constructivism.  The Danielson model gave teachers and administrators a common language to improve teacher practice and thus increase student learning.

**Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA).** In 2010, the State of Illinois' Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA) was launched, requiring Illinois school districts to conceptualize, design, and implement new evaluation systems that not only assessed teachers and principals' professional skills but also incorporated measures of student growth.  Also, any new teacher evaluation systems had to include succinct descriptions of what professional excellence should look like, evaluators had to be trained and prequalified to conduct observations, and specific measures of student growth had to be selected and conveyed to staff.  Finally, the act required that all teachers and administrators be rated using only one of four performance categories: *Excellent*, *Proficient*, *Needs Improvement*, or *Unsatisfactory*.

**Race to the Top (RTTT**).  In 2011, the U.S. Department of Education created the Race to the Top (RTTT) initiative, which awarded $200 million in grant money to states that were designing new solution-focused and innovative teacher evaluation plans.  Illinois was one of seven states awarded a $200 million federal grant from the program.  Motivated by RTTT funding and the PERA initiatives, in 2016, CPS launched Recognizing Educators Advancing

Chicago's Students (REACH Students), a new teacher evaluation system to assess all teachers' performance, regardless of subject content, students' disabilities, or teaching experience.

The REACH evaluation model included three components: teacher practice, student learning, and student feedback. Only CPS-certified administrators, principals, assistant principals, and resident principals could conduct teacher evaluations. CPS system stakeholders and policymakers hoped that the new initiative would help catapult the U.S. education system back to a more globally competitive level by transforming and improving student academics and employing and sustaining only exceptional teachers. Under the new REACH system, 8% of teachers included in the initial launch earned an "unsatisfactory" rating, compared with the aforementioned 0.3% from the previous checklist evaluation system. Along with identifying more teachers as "unsatisfactory," the new REACH model armed administrators with documentation on subpar teachers, who either must improve their teaching skills or be denied a teaching contract for the next school year.

By 2013, the RTTT fund required that all teachers be evaluated using VAM as a measure of teacher efficacy (U.S. Department of Education, 2015), which further helped administrators to identify both exceptional and ineffectual teachers. While these new evaluation standards forced general education teachers to be more accountable for students' learning, the new REACH model failed to consider that the new one-size-fits-all evaluation model would not fit and could not fit in the evaluation of special education teachers.

To address this missing component of the REACH model, CPS published the REACH Special Education Addendum in October 2013 (Special Education Addendum, 2013). However, the addendum did not receive public fanfare like the REACH general education evaluation system had. More significantly, no collaborative efforts among teachers, administrators, or focus

groups were conducted to evaluate the efficacy of this new evaluation tool for special education

teachers before the addendum was published.  Moreover, many administrators were unaware that

the addendum even existed.  This lackadaisical and negligible attitude contributed to making

evaluations of special education teachers challenging, stressful, and complicated for both

principals and special education teachers.

　In 2016, four years after CPS adopted the original REACH teacher evaluation system

and three years after the Special Education Addendum was quietly rolled out, CPS administrators

were directed to attend professional development sessions regarding the implementation of the

Special Education Addendum.  However, the Board of Education never officially directed or

mentioned this training to evaluators or provided support to principals on how to use the

addendum.

## Teacher Evaluation Models

### Value-Added Model (VAM)

One popular but debated teacher accountability measure is the value-added model (VAM;

see Figure 2).  School districts use this sophisticated statistical application to help determine

objectively whether a teacher's students are performing *as expected, better than expected*, or *less

than expected* on an annual standardized test.  While VAM statistical methods are used annually

to capture a student's past, current, and future test results, their focus is not so much on each

student's particular abilities at the time of the test as on how much the student has improved

between testing periods (Darling-Hammond, Amrein-Beardsley, & Rothstein, 2012; Ehlert,

Koedel, Parsons, & Podgursky, 2016).  The VAM also measures the growth of a given teacher's

students compared with that of similar students elsewhere in a district (Ehlert et al., 2016).  In

addition, the VAM is used not only to approximate the value that a teacher adds to student

learning from one annual achievement test to the next but also to rank teachers who teach the same subject and grade level or same subject and a previous grade level (Lenkeit, 2013; Raudenbush, 2009).

The VAM's proponents contend that measuring and comparing teachers' value help to identify effective teachers within a school, which is significant: As Chetty, Friedman, and Rockoff (2011) found, quality teachers influence and contribute to America's economy.  A 2011 study found that a teacher labeled *useful* had the influence and skills to inspire and help her students earn an additional $250,000+ throughout their lifetimes (Chetty et al., 2011). Furthermore, Hanushek (2011) found that by firing the bottom 8% of teachers who are identified as not adding any, or adding only limited, value to student learning and hiring even *average* teachers in their place could lead to trillions of dollars in U.S. economic growth.  Value-added scores provide a standard matrix for teacher effort, accountability, and impact (Buzick, Jones, Buzick, & Turkan, 2013).  Jacob and Lefgren (2008) examined how well principals can differentiate between more effective and less effective teachers.  They examined 201 teachers in a midsize school district in a Western state and compared principal evaluations with teacher education, experience, and value-added measures based on student achievement.  They found that principals could identify teachers who realized large and small achievement gains but not teachers in the middle-achievement range.

Those who support VAMs appreciate their clarity around the notion that good teaching is highly influential and directly impacts student achievement (Weisberg et al., 2009).  Increasing student achievement is almost exclusively the result of good teaching, and VAMs identify good teaching practices evidenced by the concrete measurements of students' annual test scores.

Those who actively support VAMs view the model as the best way to hold teachers accountable and increase student learning (Sawchuk, 2015).

Value Added Models are based on national standardized tests that are perceived to be more accurate than other student evaluation models that use psychometric properties (Buzick & Laitusis, 2010). Other models do not emphasize the impact of teacher instruction on students' learning (Goldhaber, Liddle, & Theobald, 2012). The VAM is unbiased, focusing on student knowledge and skills and not on a student's socioeconomic background. The VAM bases a student's growth on the individual student's progress within a year and not on where the student lives or his or her race, religion, or what the student's parents do for a living (Ehlert et al., 2016). VAMs measure students against themselves, not against each other or percentile rankings. Scores are used to measure how one student develops from one year to the next rather than on how the student ranks with peers. VAMs can be used to evaluate not only student growth but also the school district and the state's efficacy (Duffrin, 2011). Finally, VAMs can be used to weed out ineffective teachers and reward excellent teaching practices (Mangiante, 2011). No other model isolates the effect that a teacher has on student growth (Baker, Oluwole, & Green, 2013).

However, the VAM has some flaws. Many researchers have found the model to be ineffective in measuring teacher quality because of inherent problems in heavily weighting students' test scores when evaluating teachers. Immeasurable, uncontrollable variables can affect and influence a student's ability to learn—e.g., the ability to focus and be in the right mindset on the day of a scheduled annual standardized test (Baker et al., 2010). Additionally, factors outside the school that affect both test scores and students' ability to learn at school varied. Some external forces that can affect students' performance include lack of parental

presence and involvement in the home environment; student health issues or special needs; student attendance; an unstable home environment and/or homelessness; lack of access to nutritious, hot meals for breakfast and dinner; and the student's proximity to criminal activities (Goldhaber, Brewer, & Anderson, 1999). These external, beyond-the-campus factors account for as much as 60% of the variance in students' test scores, with teachers' influence accounting for approximately 9% (Goldhaber et al., 1999). In a 2004 study, teachers' influence accounted for only 13% of the variance in students' math test score gains and only roughly 7% of reading test score gains (Nye, Konstantopoulos, & Hedges, 2004).

Other issues with the VAM include its use of sophisticated statistical data that not every teacher and administrator can understand and interpret effectively, as well as its use of jargon that not every parent and student may understand readily (Pearson Education, 2004). Also, the correct interpretation of VAM data requires an understanding of the difference between percentages and percentiles—two terms that often are confused. Criticism also has been leveled at the difficult-to-interpret VAM calculations themselves (Kurtz, 2018). For example, VAM scores can change up or down when teachers switch grades, can be inconsistent with principal observation scores, and cannot evaluate content that other teachers are using to teach the same subject matter (Amrein-Beardsley & Collins, 2012). The model also does not pinpoint specific tools or skills that a teacher could employ to improve his or her performance, and it cannot correctly identify ineffective teaching performance based merely on low-to-no student growth. It also does not identify how or what teachers need to improve their instructional practice. In a 2012 mixed methods study on the consequences of using VAMs in a district, researchers Amrein-Beardsley and Collins found that over half of the teacher participants said their VAM reports did not match their principal evaluators' evaluation scores. Furthermore, 10% of the

teachers sampled noted that they had been evaluated erroneously and held accountable for content that a co-teacher taught during the same class time (Amrein-Beardsley & Collins, 2012).

While the VAM neatly and systematically generates statistics from annual test scores, it should not be embraced as the sole source for gauging teacher efficacy. Surely, teacher portfolios, student work samples, lesson plans, and teacher observations should carry significant weight as well. Problems also were identified with the use of student test scores to evaluate teachers (Baker et al., 2010). First, student test scores alone are not valid indicators of teacher efficacy, primarily when the results are used in such high-stakes personnel decision-making. Ercikan (2013) argued that administrators in the decision-making process of renewing a teacher's contract should not include the teacher's VAM scores as a critical component that influences such a high-stakes personnel decision. Second, while VAM can be a good indicator of future academic growth, it can be ineffective in identifying teachers who need additional assistance (Schochet & Chiang, 2010). In addition, many states' annual tests have been accused of bias against minority students, and students' backgrounds, such as socioeconomic status, can affect VAMs adversely, especially when a classroom comprises an unbalanced mixture of advantaged and disadvantaged students (Hong, 2010).

Furthermore, VAMs only gauge a small instructional component of teacher efficacy. Teacher practice is more than an annual one-hour test. Finally, VAMs are too high-stakes—i.e., a VAM evaluation can affect a teacher's reputation, career, future teaching endeavors, and pay. Haertel (2013) suggested that VAMs should not be weighted heavily in personnel matters, such as using scores to favor one teacher over another. Ultimately, teachers are losing their jobs based on a formula founded on an assessment administered to students once a year for an hour or two.

Whether stakeholders involved in the education of America's youth are for or against VAMs, the consensus among politicians, principals, and teachers is that student achievement begins with good teaching (Buzick et al., 2013).
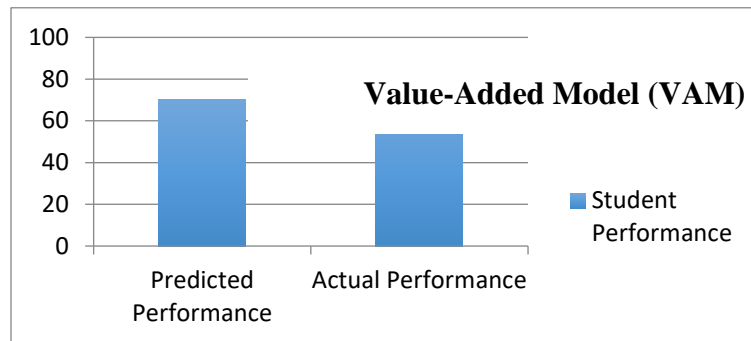


Figure 2. *Value-added model.* Note: Haefele, D. (1993). Evaluating teachers: A call for change. *Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education*, *7*(1), 21-31.

**Context, Input, Process, and Product Model (CIPP)**

Created by Daniel Stufflebeam in the 1960s, this model was designed initially to assess business organizations. Like many evaluation systems, the CIPP's objective is not only to help evaluators make sound, evidence-supported decisions based on observable data, but also to improve the practice of the person observed. Similar to the REACH and Danielson evaluations, CIPP begins with a planning stage and emphasizes a formative and summative assessment component (Stufflebeam, 2003). The four components are (a) Context Goals, (b) Input is Planning, (c) Process Action, and (d) Product is Outcomes. They resemble the four teacher evaluation domains: Pre-observation (set up goals), Observation (the process of observing tasks), and Post-observation (discussion of outcomes; Robinson, 2002).

CIPP is based on reviewing baseline data, implementing a plan of action, then applying the four components—context, input, process, and product evaluation—to ensure growth in learning (see Figure 3). This approach aims not only to ensure accountability but also to

improve the evaluation process. This user-friendly model is ongoing, as it contains formative

elements and a summative portion designed to improve the model over time. When used in the

educational arena, the CIPP model begins with a needs assessment that addresses the program's

objective: first, formulate a plan to meet the objective; next, execute the plan; finally, conclude

and provide feedback to evaluated teachers. Stufflebeam (2001) argued that the best and most

useful evaluation programs are outcome-based or contain a value-added measure.

**Context, Input, Process, and Product Model**
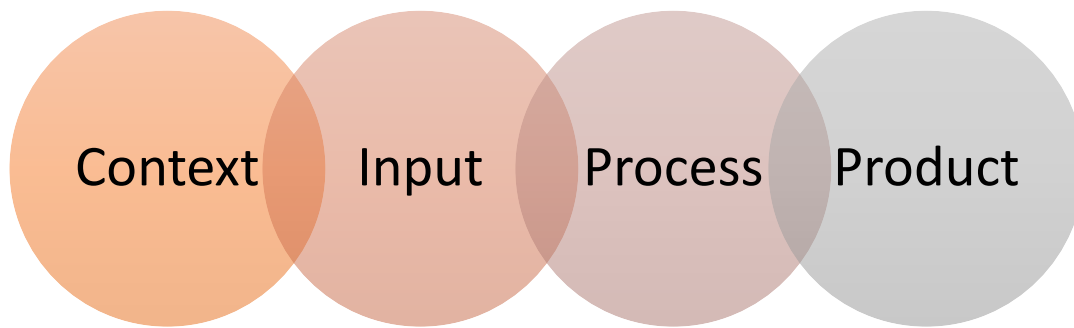


Figure 3. CIPP model. *Note:* Stufflebeam, D. (2001). Evaluation models. *New Directions for Evaluation*, *2001*(89), 7. doi:10.1002/ev.3

**Danielson Framework for Teaching Model**

Danielson's Framework for Teaching model is a recipe for both teacher instruction and

administrator evaluation. The model includes four clearly defined areas of expertise for

classroom teachers to incorporate and display in their daily pedagogy and for administrators to

identify while observing teachers. As Figure 4 illustrates, the four elements are planning and

preparation, classroom environment, instruction, and other professional responsibilities. Each of

the four areas contains a list of specific elements that an exceptional teacher easily can demonstrate and that a trained observer/evaluator easily can identify throughout a class lesson (Benedict, Thomas, Kimberling, & Lecho, 2013).

The Danielson model provides a snapshot of what productive teachers should demonstrate in a classroom (Benedict et al., 2013). Danielson focuses on characteristics typically associated with high-performing, engaged, and proactive classroom environments. For teachers who may lack skills and experience, Danielson's framework serves as a user-friendly compass that steadfastly points toward each educator and evaluator's desired destination—i.e., the next performance level in teaching—helping teachers to make ongoing improvements. The model provides a rubric that describes a classroom's potential for a rating between *unsatisfactory* and *distinguished*.

## REACH Students Model

Implemented in 2012 throughout Chicago's public-school system, Recognizing Educators Advancing Chicago's Students (REACH Students) is a comprehensive teacher evaluation system that provides teachers with new tools and specific support to improve their pedagogy and student learning. Unlike CPS' TeacherFit Checklist, the district's current REACH system encompasses the VAM component.

Immediately upon implementing the new evaluation system, school principals underwent rigorous training to become certified evaluators. Principals and other administrators were required to complete a REACH certification course within a year. In Chicago, Teachscape provided REACH training in which principals and assistant principals completed training modules based on general education classroom observations. During the observation-training portion of REACH, Teachscape acquaints administrators with the new teaching framework.

Administrators learn that observations are scored using an adaptation of Danielson's Framework for Teaching, which measures teaching across four domains: (a) planning and preparation; (b) classroom environment; (c) instruction; and (d) professional responsibilities. Under Teachscape, school evaluators receive one year to complete a rigorous series of four evaluation modules, each of which includes a series of quizzes. Evaluators must earn a minimum score of 80% on the modules or else retake the entire course. This training is not only comprehensive but also tedious. The training module was created to ensure objectivity and teacher support as well as to eliminate prejudice and bias when evaluating teachers.

# The Danielson Framework for Teaching Model



- Demonstrating knowledge of content and pedagogy
- Demonstrating knowledge of students
- Setting instructional outcomes
- Demonstrating knowledge of resources
- Designing coherent instruc[tion]
- Designing student assessments

**PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Creating an environment of respect and rapport
- Establishing a culture for learning
- Managing classroom procedures
- Managing student behavior
- Organizing physical space

**CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT**

**PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

- Reflecting on teaching
- Maintaining accurate records
- Communicating with families
- Participating in the professional community
- Growing and developing professionally
- Showing professionalism

**INSTRUCTION**

- Communicating with students
- Using questioning and discussion techniques
- Engaging students in learning
- Using assessment in instruction
- Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness

*Figure 4.* Danielson Framework for Teaching Model. *Note*: Danielson, C. (2013). The framework for teaching evaluation instrument. The Danielson Group.

When CPS revealed the new REACH evaluation system to stakeholders, the district

introduced the meticulous plan in three stages.  Stage 1 occurred during the first year when CPS

embraced the new system.  During this stage only, non-tenured and tenured teachers were

observed just once.  During Stage 2, the second year, both tenured and non-tenured teachers were

evaluated under the REACH system.  Also, non-tenured teachers received a report about their

evaluation from the prior year, while tenured teachers received a REACH score.  By the third

year—at Stage 3 in transitioning to the REACH evaluation system—all teachers received a

summative evaluation score.

REACH does have advocates.  Overall, principals were optimistic about REACH and its

ability to improve teacher practice and student outcomes (see Figure 5).  Principals noted

improvements in teacher practices since its inception as well (Sporte et al., 2013). Administrators

reported that teachers changed their instruction methods and made improvements in their

classrooms.  Communication between principals and staff improved and collaboration among

colleagues blossomed.  When asked about the fairness of assessments in measuring student

growth, most principals agreed that student growth is an excellent measure of teacher efficacy.

Principals were optimistic about the usefulness of observations and used the results to provide

specific support for teachers.  Additionally, they reported that REACH helps to identify effective

teachers, encourages all teachers to reflect on their practice, and helps to identify areas for

professional development (Jiang & Sporte, 2014).

Although better than Chicago's subjective TeacherFit checklist system, problems with

REACH exist, as it uses the VAM component.  Approximately 30% of a teacher's evaluation

score stems from his or her students' test scores from one year to the next.  The VAM

component measures each teacher's impact on students' academic growth resulting from

standardized assessments or performance tasks.  REACH requires numerous classroom

observations and conferences, including pre- and post-conferences to provide substantive

feedback to teachers and improve their teaching practice.  Many principals reported that REACH

was time-intensive and added workloads for principals.  It requires principals to schedule,

prepare for, and participate in pre- and post-conferences, in addition to conducting the actual

observations.  Principals then enter their results into the system.  It was difficult for principals to balance their new obligations under REACH with their existing obligations (Jiang & Sporte, 2014).

In the second year of the REACH implementation, principals' workloads and stress increased, with tenured teachers now included in the REACH evaluation system.  Most principals felt that the REACH evaluation results were not worth the effort (Jiang & Sporte, 2014).  While Teachscape training was useful, implementation of REACH forced principals to begin training for evaluator certification overnight while simultaneously handling a plethora of other duties.  Consequently, teachers were placed in a high-stakes setting with newly trained evaluators who had no experience using REACH to evaluate them.  REACH calls for principals to spend as much as five hours on each observation, preparing, observing, assessing, and providing feedback during post-conferences.  For an administrator who conducts forty observations per school year, that equates to two-hundred hours per year devoted solely to the REACH program.  Furthermore, only a small fraction of this time is dedicated to coaching teachers on best practices.  Teachers' jobs and practices are dependent on their principals' ability to provide accurate, fair, and useful information to improve teachers' performance so that the teacher can, in turn, continue to advance students' learning (Bartoletti & Connelly, 2013).  In the end,  evaluations from stressed-out, inexperienced evaluators do not guarantee desired outcomes.

**REACH Students Model**
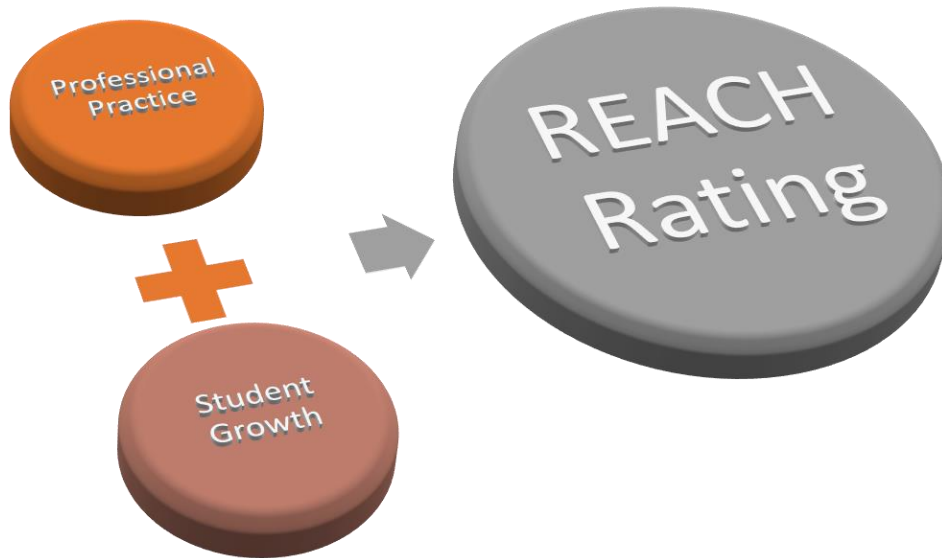


Figure 5. REACH Students Model. *Note:* Jiang, J., & Sporte, S. (2014). Teacher Evaluation in Practice, Year 2 Teacher and Administrator Perceptions of REACH. University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research.

## REACH Special Education Addendum

With the launch of the new REACH Students model, CPS directed principals to campaign for the model in the hope of changing the minds of teachers, parents, community members, and other stakeholders who were opposed to the new teacher evaluation system. Some principals and administrators were uncomfortable with or took offense at the board's directives that they serve as promotional mouthpieces and present themselves as steadfast advocates of the new system. Instead, school principals publicly shared their thoughts regarding the board's request, stating that the REACH Students evaluation model could not be used effectively in

special education classrooms and had the potential to elicit staff terminations (LavRaviere, 2014).

In October 2013, CPS published the REACH Special Education Addendum (see Figure 6). The addendum did not receive the publicity or fanfare that the original REACH model rollout did. Furthermore, no collaborative efforts among teachers, administrators, or focus groups were conducted to evaluate this newly-added evaluation tool's efficacy. Moreover, many school administrators did not even know that the addendum existed, which is alarming considering that only 10% of the principals observing teachers have a documented special education certification endorsement and less than 10% of administrators overall have any meaningful background in special education. Yet, these principals are expected to assess special education teachers in a high-stakes setting.

Presently, the evaluation system remains a source of controversy. Efforts such as additional evaluator training and more Board of Education resources are underway to repair the damage from the addendum not being implemented effectively. In 2016, almost five years after CPS adopted the new REACH teacher evaluation system, CPS administrators were directed to attend a professional development session regarding the optional implementation of the Special Education Addendum, just as they did for the initial launch of REACH. However, the Board of Education never officially directed or mentioned this training to evaluators or provided support on how to use the addendum. Additionally, CPS has yet to put forth a collaborative effort to ensure that special education teachers are fairly evaluated.
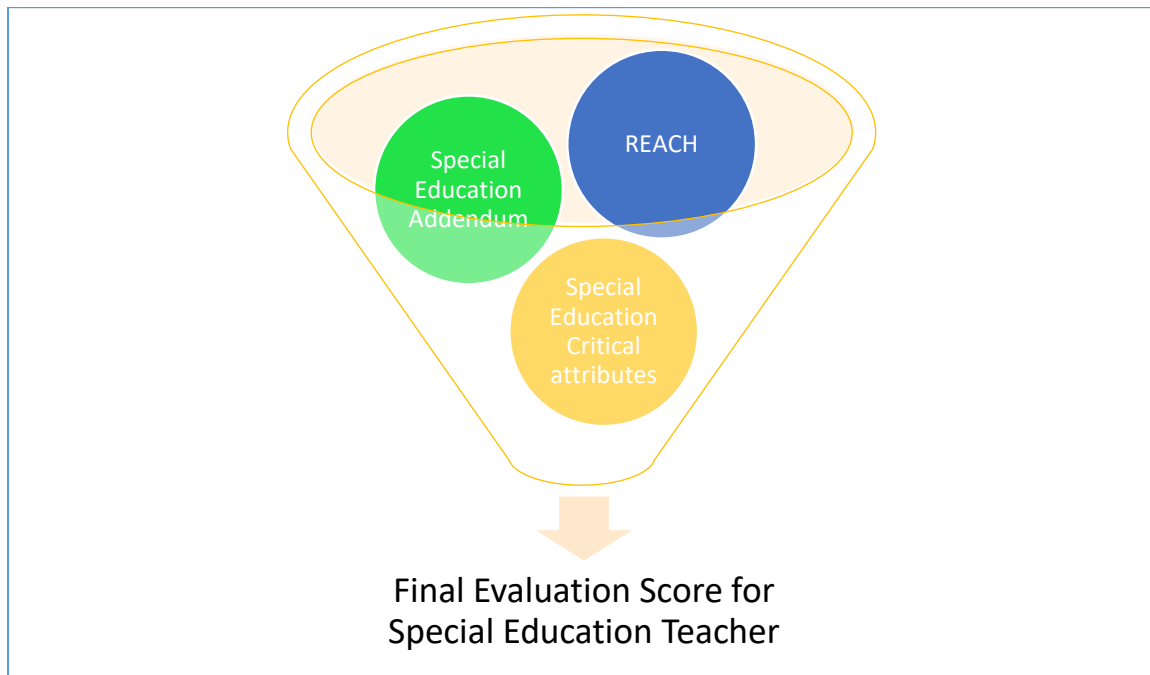
Figure 6. Special Education Addendum Usage for Teacher Evaluation. *Note:* Chicago Public Schools. (2016). *REACH educator evaluation handbook*. Retrieved from https://www.nctq.org/dmsView/CPSREACHHandbookfor201617

## Common Challenges That Principals Face When Evaluating Teachers

From being unprepared, untrained, or anxious, to not having the proper evaluation tools or enough time during the day, to being burdened with knowing the profound power held in such high-stakes decision-making, school administrators face many challenges regarding their role in formally evaluating teachers.  To improve student achievement in school, one of the most important roles for principals is teacher evaluation (Valentine, 1992).

**Lack of Training Before Implementation**

Once a school district decides to embrace a new teacher evaluation system, the race is on to implement it, often without properly training administrators before conducting any teacher

evaluations using the new model.  When this occurs, frustration, confusion, lost time, and inaccurate evaluations can result.  Derrington (2013) investigated principals' perceptions of teacher evaluations and found two areas lacking in implementing teacher evaluations confidently and competently: The principals received neither adequate training nor comprehensive information in advance.  When principals are not armed with necessary information beforehand and do not undergo thorough training on how to teach the new evaluation system's concepts, how can administrators be expected to provide accurate, meaningful feedback to special education teachers?  Moreover, how can administrators explain the teacher evaluation process to the teachers being evaluated?  Principals reported feeling ineffectual in their leadership roles and ill-equipped to answer teachers' questions regarding various facets of the evaluation process (Darling-Hammond et al., 2013; Derrington, 2014).

The realities that teachers view evaluations as an activity that their principals administer and manage and that these evaluations yield formal assessments of their work that go into their professional files add to administrators' anxieties in being ill-prepared and lacking adequate training in the process (Lacireno-Paquet, Bocala, & Bailey, 2016).  As school leaders, principals want the teacher evaluation process to be as succinct, thorough, helpful, inspiring, and worthwhile as possible.  Providing positive, helpful feedback is difficult to accomplish, and if principals' training is nonexistent or so brief that no time is available to internalize the new evaluation model's nuances, then time is wasted.

**Lack of Time**

Administrators are agents of change and, as such, principals and assistant principals are tasked to lead by example and manage time effectively.  School leadership is challenging when principals are trying to learn, master, and teach a new teacher evaluation system while

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simultaneously trying to implement the new system. Masterfully attending to all demands that are vying for their time and attention during the school day is a challenging task for many instructional leaders as well. Thus, the unexpected roadblocks and the inordinate amount of time it takes to get through a new evaluation process during a school year compounds the challenges that a school administrator experiences when blindly working with a new system.

In a two-year, multi-site, qualitative study examining principals' perspectives regarding a new First to the Top (FTTT)-funded teacher evaluation system implemented to increase the amount of time devoted to conducting observations, Derrington (2014) found that principals spent more time reporting and monitoring teacher evaluations and less time sitting in teachers' classrooms observing teachers in action. This time spent away from observing teachers to complete other components of the new evaluation system behind the scenes is problematic.

In another study, Firestone et al. (2014) found that on issues related to implementing new teacher evaluations, proper evaluator training, time management, and data management were the most challenging issues. Similarly, in a 2011 study on challenges that Chicago public school administrators faced regarding teacher evaluations, principals said the new data management tool was difficult to understand and that conducting scheduled observations and providing relevant feedback when last-minute scheduling conflicts arise suddenly (such as for an emergency meeting) were common challenges (Sartain et al., 2010). In a Paris and Meador (2013) study, principals on the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and National Association of Elementary School Principals' (NAESP) joint evaluation committees cited lack of time as the most overwhelming factor related to teacher evaluations.

As school budgets dictate the elimination of assistant principals and other instructional support, along with the management of 40/60 support staff, principals have little time during a

school year to evaluate every teacher in their schools effectively and accurately.  Paris and

Meador's 2013 study found that it can take as many as fifteen hours per teacher throughout one

school year to conduct teacher evaluations properly.  The study also identified other concerns

that principals face beyond lack of time, including lack of evidence that principal observations of

teachers lead to improved teaching or learning, insufficient training on how to complete teacher

evaluations that allow principals to differentiate performance to engage in effective coaching,

vague rubrics for observations, and insufficient suggestions for both feedback methods and ways

to develop meaningful principal/teacher relationships (Paris & Meador, 2013).

**Lack of Juggling/Multitasking Skills**

Trying to multitask numerous responsibilities throughout a school day is also a genuine

challenge for administrators.  Replacing more casual, subjective methods of evaluating teachers

that required one annual observation with intensified observations demanding multiple formal

observations of each teacher throughout a school year steals time from other essential

responsibilities for which the state, district, and stakeholders hold school administrators

accountable.  Principals often find that the time spent observing teachers is prioritized over their

leadership philosophies and other enjoyable responsibilities, such as being a physical presence,

walking the halls, visiting classrooms randomly, and learning students' names and personalities

through individual interactions (Derrington, 2014; Flores & Derrington, 2017).  Stallings' (2015)

survey of twelve principals from a New Jersey school district to identify their perceptions of

implementing their district's new teacher evaluation system found recurring themes among

principals' responses.  The top concern was being able to manage and prioritize teacher

evaluation duties with other responsibilities throughout the day.  Other issues identified included

lack of support from the state board of education in implementing the new evaluation process,

lack of rigorous and appropriate training provided to implement the new system efficiently, and not being asked to contribute during pre-implementation discussions as trusted, respected, and expert school leaders (Stallings, 2015).

**Lack of Clarity Regarding Purpose for Evaluating Teachers**

Findings from a 2017 study on U.S. and Portuguese principals' views of teacher evaluation policies showed that school administrators often generally held conflicting perceptions of teacher evaluations' purpose (Flores & Derrington, 2017). The principals in the two empirical studies that Flores and Derrington analyzed identified two different purposes that administrators expressed regarding teacher evaluations, one of which was to support the formative professional growth of teachers and the other of which was to conduct a summative evaluation judgment. A 2012 Darling-Hammond study found that teacher evaluations are opportune times to provide feedback to teachers and help them connect with professional development opportunities. In another study, principals viewed the teacher evaluation process as transformational and constructive (Abu-Hussain & Essawi, 2014). The aforementioned Stallings study found that teacher evaluations gave administrators the opportunity not only to make specific recommendations that help teachers become better practitioners but also to show support and encourage teachers to participate in professional development initiatives (Stallings, 2015). A 2014 study on school principals' perceptions of the purpose of teacher evaluations in Arab school systems in Israel found that a few of the principals viewed teacher evaluations merely as a way for administrators to exercise control over schools, determine teachers' compensation, and demonstrate overall ultimate authority (Abu-Hussain & Essawi, 2014).

**Lack of Collaboration**

Hull (2013) argued that collaboration among stakeholders, including teachers and administrators, is essential for successful design, feedback, and utilization of a variety of accurate tools to measure teacher effectiveness.  Furthermore, collaboration among colleagues and other school professionals inspires buy-in from both the principals who will be required to use the evaluation measure and the teachers who will be evaluated (Hull, 2013).  Collaboration goes beyond the school's front door and filters into the bigger context of education. Administrators' perceptions and experiences must be considered and recognized so that policymakers can prepare, design, and implement new and complex evaluation systems (Paufler et al., 2014).  One of the recommendations that the NASSP and NAESP committees enumerated was school districts' respecting principals' judgment and opinions as well as integrating principals' direct feedback into the creation, use, and implementation of teacher evaluation models to ensure that the models used lead to improved teaching and learning in schools (Paris & Meador, 2013).

**Lack of a Good Fit**

Many evaluation models were not designed with special education teachers in mind, and forcing them to fit into the special education classroom environment is not a viable option. Though widely used, VAMs are not perfect measures of teacher efficacy, yet principals still must use them as a component of the district's evaluation model of choice.  Two-thirds of special education teachers in a Jiang and Sporte survey (2014) felt that VAMs were not good indicators of their effectiveness as teachers or of their students' learning.  In another study, researchers found that more extensive research, including empirical evidence of reliability, is needed on the value-added model, along with more accurate systems for teacher evaluations (Konstantopoulos, 2014).

Unlike the VAM, the Charlotte Danielson model was created to improve teacher practices with important administrative feedback, not test scores. Danielson intended the Danielson model to be used in teacher self-assessment, preparation, recruitment, hiring, mentoring, peer coaching, supervision, and evaluation. The Danielson Framework for Teaching is considered the "go to" set of teaching standards for districts that want to operationalize their standards for teacher evaluation. It was designed to be used with teachers across the continuum of experience, ranging from new teacher recruits to experienced veteran teachers, using multiple sources of evidence and very specific assessment rubrics to measure efficacy. However, special education teachers were left out of this research loop (Danielson, 2007; Kimball, White, Milanowski, & Borman, 2004; Song, 2006).

Despite its popularity, the Danielson Framework—which underpins the REACH Students model—is still met with questions concerning its efficacy, especially when assessing special education teachers. The framework was not designed to include special education teachers, who regularly collaborate with paraprofessionals in the classroom and work with students individually and in small groups (Johnson & Semmelroth, 2014; Odom et al., 2010; Vaughn, Linan-Thompson, & Hickman, 2003). Furthermore, the model requires interpretation of a rubric that was designed with the traditional classroom environment in mind. Evans, Wills, and Moretti (2015) found that teachers of special needs students were concerned that an administrator who performs an evaluation based on the poor-fitting Danielson Framework—with little or no prior knowledge of the students, their actions, or their behaviors—would provide inaccurate, inappropriate evaluations.

If schools cannot implement or produce a separate evaluation method for special education instructors, at the very least they should provide a modified version of a value-added

model for these teachers.  Furthermore, it is vital that principals and their special education teachers collaborate on the nature of these evaluation methods.  Sporte et al. (2013) found that CPS assessments (e.g., NWA Map, REACH, and EPAS) were poor tools to measure special education teachers' instructional practices.  Special education teachers felt that these assessments did not accommodate their students' cognitive abilities and shortcomings effectively, as special education students should not be held to the same standards as students in regular education.

Recent years have seen an explosion in research regarding best instructional practices for special education teachers, but few of these practices have found their way into schools (Johnson & Semmelroth, 2014), and the extant literature affirms that even fewer are applied in special education evaluation contexts.  In their study, "Special Education Teacher Evaluation: Why it Matters, What Makes it Challenging, and How to Address these Challenges," Johnson and Semmelroth (2014) found that, contextually, student-growth percentiles offer a potential solution concerning the need to use individualized outcome measures for students with disabilities. However, what remains unanswered is how growth will be defined, with little to no empirical extant research that correlates special education students and the value-added model of growth (Holdheide et al., 2012; Johnson & Semmelroth, 2014).  Specific issues related to measuring special education growth include the following: (a) determining a reasonable rate of growth for students; (b) the impact of testing accommodations on student performance; (c) the impact of test difficulty; and (d) the longitudinal characteristics of students with disabilities (Buzick & Laitusis, 2010).  Special education students are not a large population to be used quantitatively to measure growth. Furthermore, special education classrooms include a wide variety of disabilities in one classroom setting.

**Lack of Experience in Special Education**

Adding to a principal's already full plate of responsibilities, concerns, and challenges regarding general education teacher evaluations is the process of evaluating special education teachers. As popular as the Danielson evaluation model is throughout the twenty states where it has been implemented, this evaluation system would be a challenge for an administrator lacking extensive teaching knowledge in special education (Benedict et al., 2013). Particularly in a special education classroom, an observer who is not privy to the student dynamics presented at the beginning of the school year would have difficulty determining how much students have improved since then and how these students' behavior and academic achievements have affected their learning.

Lacking much-needed expertise and understanding of special education pedagogy, an administrator evaluating a special education teacher could mistakenly identify behaviors, actions, or strategies within the Danielson model's four domains that should not or could not be demonstrated in a special education classroom setting. Inadequate knowledge of the special education field may lead to insufficient teacher evaluations and instructional progress (Wakamatsu, 2016).

With public school principals' limited exposure to and personal experience with the special education context, a widespread problem thrives. For example, a principal with a language arts teaching credential would possess enough knowledge of history to evaluate a history teacher. Even though the principal did not major in history in college, the teacher likely completed various history-related courses in college and during K-12 schooling while pursuing his specialty in language arts. Also, the principal evaluating a history teacher undoubtedly would be evaluating all history teachers in the school, an experience that provides a well-rounded and

overarching understanding of the subject matter's foundations. However, most administrators lack overall exposure to special education teachers, students, and the field in general, and other unfamiliar variables in this learning environment only exacerbate the problem (Wakamatsu, 2016). Some of these variables include how tables are often employed in special education courses instead of desks, how students of various ages are taught in the same classroom, the use of ambulatory and technological devices in such classrooms, and the presence of other adults/assistants who work with individual students exclusively (Wakamatsu, 2016).

Special education teachers wear many different hats, and accurately identifying an effective special education teacher's appropriate qualities and skills in a classroom setting is difficult and usually requires an observer with a background in special education (Holdheide et al., 2012). Furthermore, rater reliability may fluctuate in a special education classroom. One administrative observer or rater may be less accurate because of the large amount of information and activity present in a special education classroom during an observation period (Ho, Kane, Gates, & Gates, 2013; Kane & Cantrell, 2013). Accurate classroom observations need clear goals and certified evaluators with strong backgrounds in the specific content being evaluated and in multiple formal observations (Kane, Staiger, Gates, & Gates, 2012; Martineau, 2006). Principals have the challenge of addressing these many issues in evaluating special education teachers under the same measures as general education teachers. One issue is that SWDs often work with numerous education specialists for various purposes throughout each day, making it difficult to target a singular source of student results (Johnson, 2011). SWDs function best under a prescriptivist approach rather than general education's constructivist approach, the latter of which the observation guidelines favor (Boe et al., 2008; Holdheide et al., 2012; Spooner et al., 2010). Special education teachers are mandated legally to complete IEPs for each student, and

creating IEPs is time-consuming, thereby making the formulation of a useful one-size-fits-all observation guide quite challenging, if not impossible (Council for Exceptional Children, 2012; Holdheide, 2012; Semmelroth & Johnson, 2014). On standardized tests, SWDs often use accommodations that, if inappropriately applied, can affect their final scores negatively (Stempien & Loeb, 2002). However, SWDs' achievement is not limited to academics; for instance, if a special education student makes behavioral progress in a specific year, that critical progress would be ignored under standard evaluations (Connelly & Graham, 2009; McLeskey & Billingsley, 2008).

Teacher complaints and dissatisfaction with evaluation results are common challenges that principals face when evaluating their professional staff. Results from a 2012 survey showed that 61% of high school teachers who received value-added scores based on their students' performance on standardized tests felt that they were unfair and did not reflect their students' true achievement or their teaching efficacy (Jiang & Sporte, 2014). Survey participants suggested that additional assessment methods need to be incorporated when calculating evaluation scores, including multiple formal classroom observations, teacher portfolios of creative and effective lesson plans, and portfolios with samples of exceptional student work. A report released after REACH's second year of implementation identified special education teachers representing a high proportion of educators stressed by and unsure of the new evaluation measures' accuracy (Jiang & Sporte, 2014).

In 2014, a principal asked now-former CPS Chief Executive Barbara Byrd-Bennett, during a leadership and professional development training session, whether CPS needed a separate evaluation standard for the special education rubric. Byrd-Bennett's curt response was to use the original REACH evaluation initiative's model (Brackett, 2013). Not surprisingly,

evaluating special education teachers was not part of the rigorous Teachscape training that principals had to complete to become certified evaluators.

Not surprisingly, a large number of special education teachers that untrained administrators evaluated during that time suddenly found themselves placed on remediation, development, or termination plans.  This unexpected and uncalled-for shakeup in Chicago's special education department led to dozens of teachers filing expensive grievances, a development that was publicized during the 2014 union contract negotiations (Johnson & Semmelroth, 2014).  The cuts in special education positions also disproportionately affected schools with high populations of special needs students across all district schools.  Schools with a higher special education student percentage than the city average of 12.2% experienced a net reduction of 656 positions compared with a net loss of 26% across schools that were below average (Chicago Teachers Union, 2015).  After considering principals' appeals over special education losses, CPS restored almost 150 special education positions system-wide (Fox 32 News, 2015).

Unlike general education teachers, special education teachers work in a variety of classroom settings, including self-contained classroom models, cluster class models, and co-teaching classroom models, depending on students' IEP mandates.  Moreover, special education teachers regularly work with students, clinicians, outside organizations, and individuals in small groups (Johnson & Semmelroth, 2014; Odom et al., 2010; Vaughn et al., 2003).  These differences alone warrant the need for a different evaluation model.

**Lack of an "Owner's Manual"**

In response to the argument that special education teachers should not be evaluated using general education models, CPS created the Special Education Addendum.  A 2015 Chicago

Teachers Union (CTU) report addressed the fact that CPS' Special Education Services office was in a crisis as a direct result of the REACH model not initially accounting for the specifics of special needs classrooms. The CTU (2016) advocated for additional guidance on the REACH evaluation process specific to REACH-evaluated special education teachers' various needs in different teaching settings. As a result, CPS released the Special Education Addendum, which provides some support and is found at the CPS Knowledge Center. However, this addendum has its own issues because it does not fully address or resolve all of the challenges in observing co-taught and inclusion classrooms, and it is a separate document from the original framework (Chicago Teachers Union, 2016). CPS has not fully rolled out the REACH Special Education Addendum and has stated that the addendum is merely a tool, not the primary framework for observing special education teachers. Furthermore, no mention is made of training evaluators on how to use the new addendum properly. In the CTU's new 2016 REACH evaluator handbook, only one bullet point under professional practices provides a link to where the addendum can be found, with the brief statement: "Educators and evaluators will benefit from referencing these materials during Pre- and Post-Observation Conferences" (2016, p. 18).

### Rogers' Theory in CPS: Administrators' Roles as Innovators and Diffusers

Rogers' DOI Theory is ever-present throughout CPS' history of various teacher evaluation systems, including how CPS administrators worked to implement each new system successfully. For nearly forty years, from the 1970s until 2006, CPS employed the TeacherFit system. For CPS administrators, this teacher evaluation system was principal friendly because it enabled administrators to be highly subjective in how they evaluated their schools' teaching staff. At CPS, administrators were required simply to choose between the terms *strength* or *weakness* to identify and measure what they perceived to be the teacher's performance for each

surface-level component on a long list of observable criteria. Since no formal definitions of *strength* and *weakness* were ever included with the evaluation system, the teaching staff had no concrete, effective rubric to use to debate or challenge any of the principals' selections. However, with the TeacherFit system, both CPS administrators and teaching staff were content, as school administrators only seemed to choose *excellent* or *superior* to rate each teacher's overall performance, even though lower rating levels were options. However, the problem was that this antiquated and subjective checklist system resulted in less than 0.3% of Chicago's teachers being rated *unsatisfactory* using instructional practices. These impressive results from the administrators' subjective evaluations did not match the actual (substandard) teaching and (lack of) learning occurring in classrooms. Despite the supposedly exceptional teaching going on behind closed classroom doors, Chicago schools were still one of the nation's lowest-performing districts. As a result of CPS' TeacherFit checklist system's lack of ability to evaluate teachers objectively and fairly, administrators and teaching staff needed to implement and adopt a new system that can succinctly assess the actual *impact* that an observed teacher makes on his or her students' learning.

In 2006, the Excellence in Teaching Project (EITP) was launched to replace the TeacherFit system, which could not objectively discriminate between effective and ineffective teachers. Rogers' DOI Theory emphasized perspectives on how change is transferred through members of an organization before the change is implemented. The theory explains how and why individuals will accept new ideas. Under CPS, it was necessary for individuals to accept the idea of a new teacher evaluation system that differentiates effective teachers from weak ones so that all students would have access to competent teachers. The new system was implemented initially through a pilot study. In 2008, forty-four CPS elementary schools implemented the new

teacher evaluation system. School administrators' roles were, first, to embrace and complete rigorous and comprehensive training on how to conduct evidence-based, rubric-focused classroom observations. Once the principal evaluators felt confident enough to utilize this new system, it was easier for the staff to embrace it as well. Of course, the teachers who were ineffective and knew that they were subpar were not early adopters. According to Rogers' theory, the first adopter category comprises those who generally accept the new idea—i.e., *innovators*. Since school principals were not the ones who came up with the idea to change the forty-year-old TeacherFit evaluation system, their role was not as innovators or risk-takers. Instead, the principals would be considered early adopters who cannot afford to take risks and typically demonstrate more caution when making decisions. Since the principals were required to implement this new evaluation system, they could not afford to go against the grain and continue using the TeacherFit system. The early majority adopters during this transition into a new system were effective teachers. The last adopter group to embrace the idea or innovation was the laggards, who dragged their feet and lagged all others in embracing the new system. These teachers tended to be ineffective teachers, and Rogers said that they were the last to embrace a new concept because they feared that they would now be "found out" and that their positions would be in jeopardy and/or they would be required to participate in additional, extensive training to help transform them into effective teachers. The effective teachers were from both the early adopters and early majority group. They were delighted that their efforts and knowledge would be evaluated differently from those teachers who were barely getting by. The administrators now had a huge responsibility not only to understand, launch, and promote this new evaluation system but also to demonstrate expertise in implementing it during teacher evaluations.

Two years later, in 2010, the State of Illinois established the Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA), another new system that administrators had to implement. PERA required Illinois school districts to conceptualize, design, and implement new evaluation systems that not only assessed teachers and principals' professional skills but that also incorporated measures of student growth. This new system required succinct descriptions of what professional excellence should look like; evaluators had to be trained and prequalified to conduct observations and specific measures of student growth had to be selected and made known to the staff. Furthermore, PERA demanded that all teachers and administrators be rated using only one of four performance categories: *Excellent*, *Proficient, Needs Improvement*, or *Unsatisfactory*. Again, the CPS administrator's ultimate role when implementing yet another new evaluation system was to show that he or she was confident and qualified to move staff through the five steps of Rogers' DOI process regarding this new system. The CPS administrator had to demonstrate knowledge of the new system when initially introducing it to the staff. The administrator's role also required that he or she effectively persuade the staff to embrace the new system and learn about it. After persuading other administrators, administrators helped their staff members to implement the new teacher evaluation system. Thus, the administrator's role is to implement the system effectively and confirm its launch into the school's teacher evaluation protocols.

Over the past decade, CPS principals have piled up lots of practice and experience as innovators and diffusers of what Rogers' theory represents. In 2012, administrators were required to embrace and implement yet another teacher evaluation system. With support from Race to the Top (RTTT) funding through the U.S. Department of Education and PERA initiatives, CPS began implementation of the Recognizing Educators Advancing Chicago's

Students (REACH Students) system, a new teacher evaluation system for all teachers regardless of subject matter, students' disabilities, or teacher experience. As with previous evaluation systems that had to be diffused into the CPS system, the REACH Students system also required that principals accept it from the beginning. To spread the idea of this new teacher evaluation system effectively, administrators were required to embrace the four principal elements of Rogers' theory that help to influence the spread and acceptance of new ideas or systems. These included the new teacher evaluation system itself, creating open channels of communication to reach stakeholders effectively, the time required to implement the system without a hitch, and its successful acceptance throughout each administrator's school and the CPS at large. The administrators were at the floodgates when the system was launched. Though they did not write it or create it from scratch, they were given the responsibility to implement, manage, and promote it as well as ensure that all other adapters were on board with it.

However, despite the seemingly constant move forward in improving the REACH Students teacher evaluation system throughout CPS, a glitch existed, and it was a significant one: It failed to differentiate and address special education teachers' specific, unique teaching demands. This new one-size-fits-all evaluation model would not and could not fit into the evaluation context of special education teachers. To address this missing component of the REACH model, CPS published the REACH Special Education Addendum in October 2013 (Special Education Addendum, 2013). Perhaps it was here, in this step on the path to improving the teacher evaluation system at CPS, that the administrators' roles, choices, and actions could not demonstrate Rogers' DOI Theory successfully. The Special Education Addendum did not receive publicity or fanfare like the original REACH Students evaluation system did when it was launched in 2012. When CPS launched the addendum, no collaborative efforts among teachers,

administrators, or focus groups were conducted to evaluate the new evaluation tool's efficacy for special education teachers.  The board neglected to provide prior publication of the addendum, and many school administrators were not notified that an addendum even existed.  This lackadaisical and negligible attitude on the part of the district's leaders and individual schools' principals contributed to making evaluations of special education teachers even more challenging, stressful, and complicated for both principals and special education teachers.

In 2016, four years after CPS adopted the initial REACH evaluation system, CPS administrators were directed to attend professional development sessions regarding the Special Education Addendum's implementation.  Three years after the addendum was quietly slipped into the REACH model, The Board of Education failed to launch the addendum properly by never officially spotlighting or even mentioning this training to principals.

Rogers (2003) defined *diffusion* as the process by which an innovation—like a new teacher evaluation system—is communicated over time among participants, such as principals and teachers in a social system.  Without fully understanding or realizing how, when, and to what extent administrators and teachers accept new policies, procedures, and initiatives, the new system's full benefits cannot be actualized.  Rogers' DOI Theory directly demonstrates the importance of both implementation and outcomes regarding new initiatives, not only concerning fair and practical evaluations of teachers but also concerning administrators' successful and fully committed implementations of the new initiatives.

## Chapter II Summary

Chapter II opened with a brief history of teacher evaluation in America.  The chapter discusses various teacher evaluation models, specifically Chicago Public schools' Special Education Addendum.  The chapter also acknowledged the limited proficiency in administrators'

experiences implementing special education teacher evaluation systems in America. Conversely, this qualitative case study explores the evaluation process from a different perspective, focusing on school administrators and their experiences evaluating special education classroom teachers.

Moreover, this chapter has acknowledged how most extant literature on teacher evaluation is set in a general education context and focuses on teachers' experiences, the evaluation process in general, or special education evaluation models. The chapter also has identified the challenges that administrators have experienced while implementing teacher evaluations. The chapter then introduced a brief history of teacher evaluation in America through the work of Professors Frederick Taylor, Ellwood Cubberley, and Edward Thorndike. In the 19th century, Taylor, a mechanical engineer, was the first to evaluate workers in the workplace. By the 20th century, two major supporters of teacher evaluations emerged: Cubberley, from the University of Stanford, and Thorndike, a psychologist from Columbia University's Teachers College. These three theorists laid the groundwork for modern-day teacher evaluation and accountability.

Later, the chapter narrowed the focus from a general history of teacher evaluation to a more specific history of teacher evaluation in Chicago. The action then transitioned the discussion to teacher evaluation, explicitly focusing on Chicago Public Schools' District 299. This section introduced the previous teacher evaluation system, TeacherFit, a checklist model. Although not authentically accurate in assessing teachers, the basic checklist was user-friendly and fast; therefore, principals consistently used it to rate teachers for over forty years. Interestingly, under this teacher checklist, the clear majority of CPS teachers were rated *excellent* even though the district has demonstrated slumping students' scores and has maintained an unusually high failure rate. It was apparent that the district needed a new teacher evaluation

system.  The chapter explained a new evaluation model, the Excellence in Teaching Project, which evolved into the current REACH teacher evaluation model.  REACH was introduced with much publicity and fanfare.  The board received millions of dollars from the federal government, and school administrators were trained in how to use REACH within a year.  Toward the end of the chapter, various teacher evaluation models that were incorporated into the creation of REACH were addressed.

One controversial model discussed is the value-added Model (VAM), a formula that measures the annual growth of students' knowledge in reading and writing on a national assessment.  VAM measures student growth and attributes any growth or decline to specific teacher practices.  The second model discussed is the context, input, process, and product model (CIPP), a four-component model intended to improve teachers' practice through reviewing baseline data, creating an improvement plan, executing the improvement plan, assessing the progression of the plan, and providing supportive feedback to teachers.  The third and most popular model discussed in the chapter is Charlotte Danielson's Teacher Framework Model. Danielson also has four domains. Like the CIPP model, Danielson's Teacher Framework focuses on qualitative data that are seen, heard, and understood in the classroom.  Danielson's model and the CIPP model are both primarily concerned with improving teacher practice through evaluators' observations.  Danielson and CIPP have much in common, with both providing a snapshot of a teacher's practice and a personal plan to improve that practice in the form of embedded feedback that the evaluator provides.

CPS' REACH Students model comprises the Danielson and CIPP models, but the district added a component: the Value-Added Model.  By integrating the three models, CPS sought to improve teacher practice and to emphasize the value-added component in teaching and

accountability.  The final model examined—and this study's focus—is the REACH Special

Education Addendum.  CPS created the addendum to evaluate special education teachers.  This

model did not receive the fanfare, funding, or training that its REACH predecessor received.  As

a result, school administrators experienced various challenges, issues, and concerns with the

addendum.  These, detailed in the chapter, included lack of training on how to implement the

addendum, lack of ongoing support from the board regarding application of the addendum, lack

of clarity as to how they were expected to utilize the addendum, a feeling of being overwhelmed

by the whole process, and feelings of inadequacy due to being inexperienced in evaluating

special education teachers correctly.  The chapter ends with a look at how Rogers' DOI Theory

factored into administrators' roles at CPS during the school system's numerous implementations

of new teacher evaluation systems.

## Chapter III

## RESEARCH METHODS

### Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the challenges, perspectives, "a-ha" moments, and roadblocks that CPS' school principals and assistant principals experienced when implementing the new Special Education Addendum for special education teacher evaluations.

### Rationale

This study was concerned with creating research-based evidence that might assist school administrators in embracing, conducting, managing, and perceiving special education teacher evaluations in such a way that the evaluation process is efficient, collaborative, fair, unique, and enjoyable. By proactively identifying challenges, frustrations, and missteps that administrators have experienced in implementing the new Special Education Addendum, the research findings may save other administrators and special education teachers from undue stress and wasted time due to avoidable missteps in the evaluation process.

### Research Design

The qualitative research design was chosen for this study for several reasons. First, its narrative qualities uniquely position the researcher to receive firsthand information and insights obtained from participants who hold individual and unique thoughts and perspectives regarding some aspect of the research and who are, thus, profoundly knowledgeable regarding the problem at hand from their personal, unique experiences (Creswell, 2013). This form of exploration is rich in content because participants often feel free and even compelled to share feelings and opinions on the topic that they might usually freely articulate as openly or sincerely to someone

else.  By embracing a qualitative research design for this study, the researcher could learn and document under what circumstances school administrators have experienced challenges when implementing the Special Education Addendum.

Second, the qualitative research design encompasses descriptive practices.  With this element, descriptive data are collected by the researcher going out "into the field" and writing field notes on what is observed rather than drawing inferences based on numerical/quantitative data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2002; Ravitch, 2016).  Data obtained from qualitative research can contain quotations, interviews, transcripts, field notes, photos, videotapes, audio tapes, personal documents, memos, and official records.  Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research is not limited to numbers, formulas, and empirical evidence.  Descriptive researchers do not reduce pages of narration and other data into numerical symbols (Bogdan & Biklen, 2002).  This research design tool is perfectly aligned with the investigation of CPS administrators' personal perceptions of the introduction and application of the new Special Education Addendum at their schools.

Third, qualitative researchers need not seek data to prove or disprove a hypothesis.  On the contrary, they formulate a larger picture from human experiences to determine what transpired.  Qualitative research differs significantly from quantitative research, in which the researcher engages in deductive reasoning.  Finally, meaning is an essential concern for the qualitative researcher.  Qualitative research often centers on how people navigate their feelings or make sense of their lives, unlike quantitative research, which emphasizes the quantity of data and its product, not the process.

In this qualitative research proposal, the interest was CPS' use of principals to champion the Special Education Addendum.  Specifically, the focus is on uncovering CPS administrators'

experiences and perceptions as they implemented the addendum. These administrators had no

formal training on how to implement the addendum, no formal training on how to train special

education teachers on the new evaluation system, no identifiable alignment with special

education classrooms, no pilot program or focus groups prior to the official implementation of

the new evaluation system from which to garner feedback and ideas prior to its development, and

no formal, districtwide notice concerning the addendum's creation and launch.

Qualitative design is the best method to capture CPS stakeholders' exact sentiments,

considering that the district's shift from the TeacherFit system to the REACH Special Education

Addendum affects them the most, as the qualitative design provides a neutral, unbiased, and

comfortable platform through which administrators can share their narratives. For this study, the

primary data gathering mode entailed two data collection methods: face-to-face, open-ended,

individual interviews with twelve administrators and one focus group with five administrators.

Creswell (2013) identified several elements that are combined into a research design that

employs a qualitative approach, including transformative worldviews, dialogues, and open-ended

interviewing. Given group dynamics, focus groups enable the researcher to collect data that

otherwise may not be obtained during individual interviews (Ravitch, 2016).

### Population

This research study focused on a large urban district in the Midwest U.S.: Chicago Public

Schools' District 299, which serves over 396,000 students throughout 660 schools. Within this

district are thirteen networks, each of which is based in one of four city sections. The fourth

largest school district in the U.S., Chicago Public School District 299 serves approximately 16%

special-needs students. The Southside Network comprises forty-two schools, with a combined

total of approximately 6,000 special-needs students. The seventeen administrators used in the

study were selected from four schools in Network 11, each of which represented one of the four geographical areas of the network (the North, South, East, and West Sides). Each of the four schools employs an average of six special education teachers, with approximately two per grade: primary, intermediate, and middle school. Principals and assistant principals were chosen because these school administrators conduct 99% of teacher observations in schools, and the district mandates that they complete teacher-observation certification training.

## Instrumentation

The interview protocol for this study was derived from Vincent Stallings' dissertation, *The Challenges Associated with Implementation of the New Teacher Evaluation Model Achieve NJ* (Stallings, 2015), in combination with Rutgers University's two-year external assessment of teacher evaluations (Firestone et al., 2013). A list of tentative questions, observation tools, and data-management models that known responders utilized helped to facilitate the process. The sampling strategy served to identify principal respondents based on school size, special education population, background/content certification, age, experience, and gender. To ensure the data's accuracy (e.g., probability, dependability, and credibility), each participant and the researcher agreed on the interview sites (Merriam, 2009).

Letters were mailed to administrators from the South Side network requesting their participation in this study. Two sets of questions were used to ascertain participants' professional backgrounds and experience in the field. The set of questions aimed to acquire an understanding of the help and hindrances associated with implementing the addendum. Some questions were modeled after CPS' annual schoolwide survey, "My School, My Voice." All individual interview sessions and the focus-group sessions were audio recorded. Participants' responses were transcribed within one day of each completed interview and the focus group meeting to

ensure that each interview experience was fresh in the researcher's mind and field notes. All participants' privacy was protected, and coded letters with numbers were assigned instead of participants' actual names.

## Data Collection

Before conducting the research, a study proposal was submitted to Seton Hall's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to seek permission to obtain data from human participants. Once permission to proceed was acquired, introductory letters explaining both the study's purpose and participants' anonymity were mailed through the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) to school administrators. Once seventeen principals confirmed their desire to participate in the study, individual, in-person interviews were scheduled with twelve administrators, with times and site locations chosen at each participant's convenience. Likewise, the focus group was scheduled to accommodate the other five participants. Interviewing is necessary when soliciting human emotions, feelings, and interpretations of an event (Merriam, 2009). A focus group comprises purposefully selected people gathered for a non-threatening, planned discussion of a topic on which they all can provide knowledge, opinions, and expertise (Merriam, 2009).

It was critical to have between twelve and twenty confirmed participants to formulate a strong representation of administrators' perceptions during the implementation of the Special Education Addendum and while conducting special education teacher evaluations. Before the scheduled interviews and focus groups were held, all participants received—via USPS—printed copies of the open-ended interview questions, detailed instructions on the interview process, and a signed affirmation from the researcher ensuring their anonymity and confidentiality. Before each interview and the focus group session, a prepared, standardized script was read to participants to reiterate the study's privacy, reliability, and validity.

The essential elements in qualitative studies are interviews, observations, and document collections (Merriam, 2009). While demographic questions about participants' backgrounds and educational experiences were solicited, as well as data concerning the participants' schools, all participating administrators were assigned a code instead of their legal names. For example, "IP1" was the code for "Interviewed Participant 1" and "FGP1" was the code for "Focus Group Participant 1." This coding was used with all participants.

Strategic writing and open-ended questions are essential to garnering responses that produce detailed narratives from study participants. Although all of the aforementioned essential elements were employed, asking open-ended questions was the primary evidence-gathering method, as it enabled the researcher to hear, firsthand, each administrator's perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and intentions regarding the responsibility and process of conducting special education teacher evaluations (Patton, 2015). An interview is a process in which a researcher and participant engage in communication focused on questions related to a research study (Merriam, 2009). Each interview lasted between forty-five and sixty minutes to secure verbal answers to predetermined questions; answers were collected via notetaking and audio recording. In some circumstances, secondary, follow-up questions were asked to acquire more details, specific examples, or clarifications of previous responses to initial questions (Merriam, 2009). The focus group met once for sixty minutes.

## Data Analysis

Transcripts of the audio-recorded individual interviews and the focus group were created. To code the raw data most effectively, all words, fillers, literal representations of pauses, mispronounced words, grammatical errors, slang, colloquial language, and sounds that participants uttered in their answers during the individual interviews or as part of the discussion

in the focus group were typed verbatim into a Microsoft Word file. To make the coding process a tactile experience and to facilitate the coding process further, the transcripts were printed, perused, highlighted, and filled with purposefully placed Post-It notes. The coding process entailed the researcher searching through the raw data and identifying central concepts and salient words, phrases, and passages, then highlighting them. The research was then related to the study's overarching research questions. Brief and succinct codes were assigned to the highlighted data; the codes were written on the right side of the paper, eliciting a long list of codes on the transcripts. When returning to the transcripts multiple times, it was necessary to refine the codes iteratively as new ideas surfaced from the raw data. Next, the revised codes were sorted into groups to create broad categories. Throughout the process, analytical memos were employed, serving as an additional analytical tool to document, then revisit, the researcher's thoughts, interpretations, and understandings of the emerging themes and provide an overall picture of what the data were uncovering and how they connected to the study. From the categories created from the codes that were revisited, analyzed, and generated from the raw data transcribed from the audio recordings, four overarching themes developed that related to the study's research questions.

## Assumptions

Four primary assumptions were made in this study, all of which related to the participants. First, it was assumed that all participants acted in good faith and wanted to contribute to the research study in a meaningful way so that their real concerns and opinions on conducting special education teacher evaluations could be identified, addressed, and shared to help other administrators avoid problems in the future. Next, the researcher assumed that each participant was focused during either his or her interview or focus group session and that

unrelated thoughts, other commitments, or external stimuli such as phone calls or text messages did not distract them.  A third assumption was that each participant would answer the interview questions thoughtfully, thoroughly, and honestly.  The last assumption was that the threat of a teacher strike would not influence participants' responses, particularly those responses shared in the focus group, or that any information provided to the researcher that explicitly dealt with teacher assessment and grievances would be used against them.  In past years, administrators were asked to direct all questions to CPS Media Relations and, thus, were not given the opportunity to express their personal and professional views and experiences on issues related to teacher evaluations.

## Limitations

Potential weaknesses were inherent in this study.  The twelve participants in the individualized interviews and the five participants in the focus group were volunteers who were not required to complete their interviews or remain for the entire length of the focus group. Administrators or participants may have been hesitant to respond to all questions thoroughly and honestly.  If they chose not to be forthright, this might have been out of fear that the CPS Board of Education might use the results or their specific answers in legal or grievance proceedings. Participants may have feared that they would receive reprimands or a gag order because of the high number of special education teacher grievances that deride the REACH Students model as a faulty system.

## Ethical Assurance

Seton Hall's IRB is an enforcement committee established to protect the rights, health, and welfare of human research participants in research experiments conducted under the auspices of an institution such as Seton Hall University.  The IRB reviews, then ultimately approves or

denies, proposals for research that entail using human subjects. The IRB must approve all research involving human participants and has the authority to review, end, or approve research activities under federal regulations and institutional policy. The IRB comprises at least five members, of which one is a scientist, who review activities involving human research and certify studies' institutional, legal, scientific, and social justifications. IRB approval was sought for participants after Seton Hall confirmed that the study would not violate participants' human rights nor endanger their safety.

## Chapter III Summary

In qualitative studies, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Merriam, 2009); thus, the researcher's sensitivity and integrity should guide the study. Completing a research study is an opportunity to obtain credible, worthwhile evidence that is expected to support, change, inform, inspire, or improve lives, policies, or protocols. Researchers must be careful not to risk violating the rights, safety, and employment of those participating in any study. The strength of the qualitative research approach is that it accounts for and includes differences in ideology, epistemology, methodology, and, most importantly, humanity (Merriam, 2009).

**CHAPTER IV**

**RESULTS**

**Overview**

This study's purpose was to explore, examine, and find meaning from CPS principals and assistant principals' experiences while implementing the district's new REACH Special Education Addendum. By discovering what the administrators are feeling, thinking, and experiencing while implementing the addendum, one can identify potential hindrances to and essential components in the process. It is hoped that the study's findings will arm, prepare, and support future and current administrators when given this important task of implementing a new special education evaluation model. Additionally, the research may help to improve teacher practice by providing more accurate and relevant feedback, consequently improving special education students' educational experiences in general. Three overarching research questions were answered concerning the REACH Special Education Addendum's implementation:

RQ1: What are CPS administrators' beliefs about the new REACH Special Education

Addendum's procedures?

RQ2: What factors do school administrators consider to be hindrances when

implementing the REACH Special Education Addendum?

RQ3: What factors do school administrators consider helpful when implementing the

REACH Special Education Addendum?

The objective of asking these questions was to identify themes shared among participants' responses that would provide informative, insightful, and in-depth answers that might help other school administrators who are confronted with the challenge of implementing an evaluation system designed exclusively to evaluate special education teachers. Participants'

responses were transcribed from audio recordings, coded, then analyzed to formulate five

significant themes: time, training, expertise, tailored teaching, and educational partnership.

## Sample Population Summary

The study's participants were administrators from Chicago Public Schools' most

extensive network, Network 11, with five administrators participating in a one-time, one-hour

focus group and twelve other administrators answering research questions individually via face-

to-face interviews with the researcher.  All seventeen study participants were in leadership roles

at schools in the network, and their administrative positions required them to evaluate teachers at

their schools formally, including special education teachers.  As a result, all seventeen

participants had some experience employing the district's Special Education Addendum to

evaluate special education teachers in their schools.  Beyond leadership roles, administrators'

experiences implementing the new addendum, as well as their ages, gender, race, and

educational backgrounds, varied.  This diversity enabled the researcher to discover their diverse

perspectives on a single subject, unifying experiences as participants maneuver successfully

through the addendum to evaluate special education teachers in classrooms.

### Gender, Race, and Education Levels

As illustrated in Table 1, of the seventeen study participants, five were male and twelve

were female.  Seven were black, two were Hispanic, and eight were white.  Four of the school

leaders held PhDs, eleven had master's degrees, and two were pursuing doctorates.

Table 1

*Summary of Participants' Gender, Race, and Education Level*

|  | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Gender |  |  |
| Male | 5 | 29% |
| Female | 12 | 71% |
|  |  |  |
| Race |  |  |
| Black | 7 | 41% |
| Hispanic | 2 | 12% |
| White | 8 | 47% |
|  |  |  |
| Education Level |  |  |
| Ph.D. | 4 | 24% |
| Master's | 11 | 65% |
| Master's Pursuing Ph.D. | 2 | 11% |

**Teaching and Administrative Experience**

Table 2 shows that fourteen of the school leaders had previous experience as formal classroom teachers, three had no previous classroom teaching experience, and none had any experience or certification as a full-time special education teacher. Four of the administrators had been in their leadership roles for one to four years, eight had been in their roles for five to eight years, and five have been in their positions between nine and eleven or more years.

Table 2

*Summary of Participants' General Education Teaching Experience, Special Education Teaching Experience, and Administrative Experience*

|  | Frequency | Percent |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Teaching Experience |  |  |
| Formal Classroom Teacher | 14 | 82% |
| No Teaching Experience | 3 | 18% |
| Fulltime Special Education Teaching Experience | 0 | 0% |
|  |  |  |
| Administrative Experience |  |  |
| 1 to 4 years | 4 | 24% |
| 5 to 8 years | 8 | 47% |
| 9 to 11 years | 5 | 29% |

**Annual Workload for Evaluating Teachers**

Varying degrees of workload responsibility existed among participants with respect to the number of teachers that each participant was responsible for evaluating during one school year.

As Table 3 illustrates, two administrators were responsible for evaluating between one and ten teachers per academic year, four evaluated between eleven and twenty, and eleven said that they evaluated between twenty-one and forty.

Table 3

*Summary of Participants' Teacher Evaluation Workload Responsibility*

|  | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Workload Responsibility Regarding Evaluations |  |  |
| 1 to 10 per year | 2 | 12% |
| 11 to 20 per year | 4 | 23% |
| 21 to 40 per year | 11 | 65% |

## Major Findings

### Five Beliefs That Emerged from Administrators' Shared Experiences

Throughout this study, five beliefs emerged from participants' data, as administrative participants collectively identified these five beliefs as actions or decisions that profoundly impacted whether the administrative community accepted or rejected the new CPS Special Education Addendum. Each belief was identified as a hindrance or helpful support. Hindrances are actions that disrupt or distract administrators from implementing the new addendum. Thus, hindrances sequentially steered administrators away from embracing the addendum. A belief also could be a helpful support. Helpful supports (helps) were those actions that aided

administrators in implementing the addendum and provided clarity or revelations.  These beliefs were then analyzed to answer the study's initial three research questions.  It is important to note that several of the beliefs are integrated and recur as hindrances and necessary supports.

**Findings analysis for Research Question 1:** After interviewing all seventeen study participants, the researcher discovered several emerging beliefs that centered around (a) time, (b) training, (c) limited real-world expertise, (d) tailored teaching, and (e) no educational partnership.

**Time: Participants felt that they had limited hours each day to complete their administrative tasks and implement the REACH Special Education Addendum.** The administrators repeatedly expressed how they had limited hours each day to complete daily operational tasks and lead their schools.  These professionals found it difficult to complete routine duties such as coaching, training staff, inspecting schools for safety, completing emergency drills, overseeing IEP meetings, administering disciplinary actions, submitting reports, conducting research, surveying staff, reviewing data, collaborating with paraprofessionals, consulting with community members, and leading professional development sessions with teachers.

All the school leaders explicitly said they did not have enough time to conduct rigorous, comprehensive evaluations.  For example, a principal with seven years of administrative experience stated,

> The new addendum demands a lot more time than even the regular REACH evaluation
> system, which is also very time-consuming. We still must do all the meetings, the
> observations, and the writing of the evaluations vs. that old method of a checklist.  Now,
> with the Special Education Addendum, there is even more work involved. An

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administrator must be prepared to distinguish how and what is observed in the special

education classrooms, so we can provide a rigorous, comprehensive evaluation. (IP8,

winter 2018)

A participant with two years of experience in a leadership role said,

My time management goals get disrupted when it is time to do teacher evaluations. As

you all know, evaluating teachers demands hours of work during any given school day.

Time is needed for the pre-conference and post-conference, the assessment of the

teacher's portfolio, completing important observations in the actual classrooms, writing

reports, and many other responsibilities that are all too demanding of our time, energy,

and attention. (FGP1, winter 2018)

A female with four years of administrative experience stated, "There is never enough time

to do any teacher evaluations properly, let alone new special education evaluations" (IP1, winter

2018). The administrators expressed strong recurring language with phrases such as "stressed

out by demands of my time," "feeling overwhelmed trying to find the time," "trying to find the

time to internalize and master the new evaluation protocol," and "making the time to focus on an

evaluation without being disrupted." A veteran school leader said she needed time "to reflect on

what's observed and provide thoughtful, supportive feedback to the special education teacher"

(FGP3, winter 2018). There was not enough time to handle other responsibilities while

simultaneously trying to conduct evaluations. Again, strong recurring words and phrases were

used: "stressed," "exhausted," "long days," and "constant rescheduling."

A female administrator (IP2) with five years of experience who conducts about twenty-

five evaluations per year stated, "I like my staff and students to see me do walk-throughs and

unannounced classroom visits throughout the day. It is impossible for me to do this on the days

that I am scheduled to conduct teacher evaluations. I am stressed" (IP2, winter 2018). A male administrator who conducts about twenty evaluations per year added, "Now having to learn an additional way to evaluate special education teachers requires more time away from our daily leadership responsibilities at our schools" (FGP2, winter 2018).

Overall, the consensus from the seventeen interviewees was that not enough time was available to learn the Special Education Addendum before it was implemented and incorporated into the CPS teacher evaluation program. A female principal with nine years of experience states, "I had no formal training or time to learn the Special Education Addendum; I was given the district's *CPS Framework for Teaching Companion Guide*, Version 1.0, and was told I should be able to find everything I need in there" (IP4, winter 2018). The respondent added, "I contacted some of my colleagues in other buildings to see how they handled it and what they could recommend" (IP4, winter 2018).

"Quite frankly," noted a female administrator with eleven years of experience as a principal, "in the beginning, I have rescheduled evaluations I was supposed to do with special education teachers because I felt I was not prepared because I did not have personal time to read the district's guide with the Special Education Addendum in it" (IP3, winter 2018). Recurring words and phrases under this subcategory were "time wasted," "personal time," "after hours," and "time allotted."

**Training: Respondents believed they received limited training, support, and assistance from CPS' District 299.** Limited or no training was another common complaint from research participants. A male principal with seven years of administrative experience who conducts thirty-four evaluations per school year said,

When the original REACH Students evaluation system was the first introduced to us back in 2012, all administrators were required to receive formal, comprehensive training from Teachscape to become certified evaluators. The new evaluation system unfolded over stages back then, and we had time to get used to it, to use Teachscape as a resource, and even to collaborate with our colleagues if we had any questions or issues. With this new Special Education Addendum, it just seems like an afterthought, and nobody at the district level made any big deal about it or how we should be trained in it. (IP6, winter 2018)

Administrator FGP5, who holds a master's degree but has no teaching experience, expressed frustration:

As an instructional leader, it is imperative that I can confidently and correctly utilize the district's established evaluation rubric, demonstrate that I avoid bias in my evaluations, and ensure succinct accuracy regarding all of my teacher evaluations, including my special education teachers. I cannot effectively accomplish this if I am not provided with high-quality training and ongoing professional development initiatives. Quality training was not provided to me when I was informed about the special education addendum. (FGP5, winter 2018)

Respondent FGP4, who holds a Ph.D in educational leadership and has over twenty years of teaching experience, stated, "Even letting us know that the addendum existed was done so quietly; it is no surprise extensive training and professional development initiatives did not accompany its implementation" (FGP4, winter 2018).

Lack of support was another recurring sub-belief. During the subject interviews, IP2, who holds a master's degree, said, "I feel the district set us up to fail by not providing any

training with the Special Education Addendum" (IP2, winter 2018).  IP11, an administrator with

over eight years of experience, explained,

> As wonderful of a rapport I would like to think I have with my school's special education
>
> teachers, I was not comfortable sharing with them that I was not completely sure how to
>
> implement the new evaluation system correctly.  I had not been given support from CPS.
>
> I was the one responsible at my school to understand the addendum and to implement it
>
> without any significant support from the district. (IP11, winter 2018)

A participant who conducts thirty-nine evaluations per school year stated, "I

brainstormed and collaborated with my colleagues at other schools when I need support or help.

In addition, we all used the guide, webinars, and videos as a possible source of information;

everything was about REACH.  There was nothing about the Special Education Addendum"

(IP9, winter 2018).

A male subject interviewee with seven years of administrative experience who is

pursuing his Ph.D concluded, "There was a lack of support, which allowed me to feel

disappointment that the district did not provide assistance or ongoing training." He added,

"Whether with technology, documentation protocols, or simply practices, looking for a good

example would have been nice, but the district gave nothing—no checklist, rubric, or call center

as a reference" (IP6 winter 2018).

IP12, a male administrator with nine years of experience at a medium-size public school,

said,

> I want to feel like assistance is readily available to me.  I do not feel that way today.  I
>
> feel the assistance and support have been lacking.  CPS did not offer helpline staff with

an expert Special Education Addendum person because there was no such person. When

I call the Office of Diverse Learning Department, no one answered. (IP12, winter 2018)

**Participant administrators believed that administrators had limited real-world**

**expertise when implementing the Special Education Addendum**. Subject interviewees felt

that CPS should have first piloted the Special Education Addendum. As IP8, a leader at one of

the more challenging schools, explained, "I anticipated special education classroom behavior

should look and feel a certain way, but the classroom environment was very different from what

I presumed. With no reference or experience, I was a little lost. I felt like I was looking for

something that was not there" (IP8, winter 2018).

Ten out of the twelve participants interviewed explained that without a background in

special education, they were forced to presume what special education classroom behavior would

be like. One administrator with eleven years of experience as a teacher in the classroom, but

with no experience in a special education classroom, said, "Before receiving the *Companion*

*Guide* to the *REACH Students Evaluation Guide*, I know I often found myself looking for certain

behaviors, whether from the teacher or students in the classroom" (IP7, winter 2018). IP7 further

stated, "I realize now I could not completely understand the operations of a special education

classroom; I need to be more familiar with the overall expectations and agenda" (IP7, winter

2018).

In the words of FGP1, "Although I understood the distinctions of the special education

classroom and how it was set up, it was completely different from a general education classroom.

I was surprised by how disorganized it appeared to me. I was not sure if this was just from the

day's challenges or part of the special education model. The teacher did not get a chance to

return things to their proper places.  Students were shouting and leaving their seats" (FGP1, winter 2018).

According to FGP3, "While the teacher was working with a small group of students, I was unsure whether the teacher wanted or realized that one of her students was casually walking around the room on his own, stopping to touch or explore different things" (FGP3, winter 2018).

**Respondents felt progress is measured differently in a special education classroom.** A female administrator from a medium-size school said, "I believe the addendum exposed me to a new educational world.  By being required to adhere to the Special Education Addendum, it has enabled me to embrace, appreciate, and be aware of all the subtle student improvements that happen daily in a special education classroom, for example, the IEP is a crucial component of students' development and progress" (FGP5, winter 2018).  IP7, who taught for several years before becoming an administrator, echoed the importance of special education students' IEPs as progress-monitoring tools:

> I have a deeper appreciation for IEPs and measuring special education students through benchmark accomplishments, rather than NWEA data.  Although one of our special-needs students may not be able to complete his assignment on matching pictures correctly, his progress is measured and acknowledged when he can control his anger in the classroom and no longer try to hit anyone. (IP7, winter 2018)

**Participants believed they developed a new appreciation for tailored teaching.** According to all the subject interviewees, the special education teachers' use of IEPs is critical to defining each student's specific needs and learning goals as they pertain to that student's access to the general education curriculum.  An IEP is a legal document ensuring that a fair and appropriate education will be provided through the administration of specialized services in a

classroom.  Respondents acknowledged that general education and special education classroom settings were different.  When sharing their beliefs about the Special Education Addendum, all seventeen administrators, who had to implement the addendum, stated or acknowledged in agreement with other respondents that it forced them to focus on specific and tailored instruction. IP3 noted, "I had an 'a-ha' moment when I received the Special Education Addendum.  The addendum highlights the differences between general education and special education classrooms; it is my CliffsNotes" (IP3, winter 2018).

Before the district added the separate special education section to the *REACH Students Guide*, administrators evaluated their schools' special education teachers just as they did their general education teachers, using the same standards, protocols, and criteria to evaluate the learning and teaching occurring in both classroom settings.

Ironically, when asked individually and in the focus group, "Did the Special Education Addendum offer a fair assessment of teachers?," all seventeen administrators said that it was very fair.  Despite participants' lack of confidence in implementing the addendum, these administrators were thankful for the knowledge and experience that the addendum provided when evaluating classrooms.  All interviewees acknowledged that having an evaluation tool with which to evaluate their special education teachers was paramount.

**Renewed awareness: Special Education Addendum as an evaluation system.**  Nine of the administrators said that they knew for quite some time that the previous method of evaluating special education teachers in the exact same way as general education teachers was flawed inherently, but they did not know what to do about it.  However, with an understanding of special education and tailored teaching practices, administrators felt some relief when going into special education classrooms.  The school leaders used terms such as "clarifying," "focusing,"

"understanding," "appreciating," "explaining," "learning," and "communicating" to describe their experiences in a special education classroom and using the Special Education Addendum.

FGP5 stated, "Through the Special Education Addendum, I was able to hold focused, agenda-based conversations with the teacher; this creates a connection between evaluators and special education teachers. Suddenly, the special education teacher realizes I am there to help him or her and coach him or her to be the best special education teacher possible" (FGP5, winter 2018).

IP4, an administrator, who has seventeen special education teachers at her school, added, "Having conversations with special education teachers about teaching goals and student expectations before the formal evaluation helps me to have a clearer focus on what I am observing in the classroom. It also helps the teacher feel understood" (IP4, winter 2018). FGP4, who has over twenty years of experience as an educator, agreed: "Pre- and post-conferences give both parties the opportunity to explain their goals, expectations, and desired outcomes" (FGP4, winter 2018).

However, respondent IP8, an administrator for seven years, disagreed:

My time during any given workday is already stretched to the max. Having to schedule a conference before the evaluation, then do the evaluation, and then meet with the teacher again after the evaluation is a waste of time. I have found it more time-efficient and productive to write my honest evaluations and findings in the report and allow the teacher to rebut, explain, or provide further information on any negative statements that may have been in my report and need clarifying. (IP8, winter 2018)

Most interviewees said that they felt left out of the decision-making process.

**Administrators said the district did not consult them before implementing the Special Education Addendum, which led to low administrative "buy-in" (i.e., support).** The principals and assistant principals consistently expressed frustration with the board for not piloting or requesting input from administrators when designing the Special Education Addendum. FGP4 said, "CPS wanted us to support the Special Education Addendum, but gave us no agency, authority, or identity with the addendum's creation" (FGP4, winter 2018). A female administrator with four years of experience as the principal of a small public school stated, "I was confused. I thought the board wanted to be an educational partner. It seems that the district wants a bunch of principals to be 'yes' men and women. Our opinions, our school rankings, and our formal education do not matter. The district wants automatic 'buy-in' no matter what initiative they create, good or bad" (IP1, winter 2018).

IP3 said, "Chicago Public Schools presumed that principals and assistant principals would give immediate consensus to the Special Education Addendum. They did not provide us with ample time to review the Special Education Addendum, nor did they invite us as a conversation partner. They covertly sent us a message two years after the fact that the Special Education Addendum was a resource and can be found through the Knowledge Center" (IP3, winter 2018).

**Findings analysis for Research Question 2: What factors did school administrators consider hindrances when implementing the REACH Special Education Addendum?** Overall, respondents agreed that they encountered significant hindrances when implementing the REACH Special Education Addendum. These hindrances also came up during discussions of their beliefs about the addendum, and they were similar among participants: lack of time, lack of training, lack of expertise, and limited administrative voice.

**Lack of Time**

A lack of time caused administrators to be stressed and exhausted from working long days and constantly rescheduling. The response to needing to handle so many simultaneous responsibilities led to one interviewee lamenting, "I already feel there are not enough hours in the day to accomplish daily operational tasks. Now, I am feeling overwhelmed with the evaluation process added to my responsibilities, especially since I am not that familiar with the Special Education Addendum" (IP2, winter 2018). Another participant added, "I am already knee-deep in paperwork and have to constantly wear many hats. Having to refresh myself and study the addendum before I evaluate a special education teacher is extremely time-consuming" (FGP2, winter 2018). School leaders also emphasized the lack of time to conduct rigorous evaluations. "There are only twenty-four hours in a day. I feel like twenty-three are used for the Special Education Addendum" (FGP4, winter 2018). FGP2 stated, "The district expects us to split an atom or work all day just to ensure the special education teachers are evaluated by collective-bargaining agreements" (FGP2, winter 2018).

Common phrases included being "stressed out by demands of my time," "feeling overwhelmed trying to find the time," "trying to find the time to internalize and master the new evaluation protocol," and "making the time to focus on an evaluation without being disrupted." The female principal of a medium-size school with sixteen special education teachers said, "I would like to make the time to focus on an evaluation without being disrupted, but as the instructional leader of my building, this is impossible, as I am constantly pulled and needed" (IP8, winter 2018).

A female principal who conducts twenty evaluations per school year stated,

My time-management goals get disrupted when it is time to do teacher evaluations. As

you all know, evaluating teachers demands hours of work during any given school day.

Time is needed for the pre-conference and post-conference, the assessment of the

teacher's portfolio, completing meaningful observations in the actual classrooms, writing

reports, and many other responsibilities that are all too demanding of our time, energy,

and attention. (FGP1, winter 2018)

IP1 stated, "There is never enough time to do any teacher evaluations properly, let alone new

special education evaluations" (IP1, winter 2018).

**Participants believed that they did not have the training to learn the Special**

**Education Addendum.** The educational leaders felt that the board provided neither the time nor

exposure to the new Special Education Addendum. Every subject interviewee who has multiple

evaluations to conduct each school year and no experience as a special education teacher said

that they dealt with insufficient schedules and insufficient exposure to special education

classrooms. Principals described a scarcity of resources to help them understand and practice

evaluations using the addendum. Participants also felt that they needed more time to learn the

addendum's nuances before incorporating it.

IP12 and other respondents consistently held that "CPS did not develop or execute a pilot

program of the Special Education Addendum before implementing it. Unlike with REACH, CPS

piloted the program before introducing it to administrators" (IP12, winter 2018).

According to FGP5, "The board gave us no training; administrators were on their own. CPS

should have shown us how to use it before its implementation" (FGP5, winter 2018).

This lack of administrative training, exposure, and assistance forced administrators to

employ different measures to work around this issue. For example, one subject replied,

I was highly embarrassed when I evaluated a special education teacher, and she brought

up the addendum. I was unaware that it existed and had to immediately reach out to

colleagues for understanding on the correct way to use the Special Education Addendum

to evaluate teachers. They were also just as confused as me because we had not been

trained on how to use the addendum for evaluations. (IP5, winter 2018)

Another participant, who had ten years of experience as an administrator, said, "CPS did

not think it was important to train the evaluators? Seriously, this was a major component to

accurate evaluation" (IP10, winter 2018). Their recurring words and phrases describe their

frustrations: "time wasted," "personal time," "after hours," and "time allotted." IP4 epitomized

the use of personal time after hours and time allotted, stating,

I had no formal training. I was given the district's *CPS Framework for Teaching*

*Companion Guide,* Version 1.0, and was told I should be able to find everything I need in

there. I do not consider this training or being able to understand the proper way to

implement this tool. Frustration came over me, and I had to spend many hours of my

time examining the document. (IP4, winter 2018)

IP9 added, "The lack of training not only hurts evaluators, but it hurts students. Without being

properly trained, administrators cannot provide useful feedback to teachers to help special-needs

students" (IP9, winter 2018).

**Respondents felt that the lack of assistance was a hindrance to implementing the**

**Special Education Addendum.** The lack of assistance worked against teachers and put them at

a disadvantage, hindering their time, accuracy, and competence. As one research participant

stated,

It would have been nice to have known about this addendum when it first came out.  I

most likely would have given a lot of teachers better ratings if I had known the addendum

existed.  I was rating them as if their classes should reflect the same characteristics and

attributes as a general education room, according to the REACH evaluation guidelines.

(FGP4, winter 2018).

In the words of FGP5, "Training is highly connected with competence.  I cannot be competent in

my position if I am being asked to use something I have not been trained to use to evaluate

teachers.  If I were a special education teacher getting evaluated, knowing this would make me

feel uncomfortable" (FGP5, winter 2018).  In the words of IP6,

When I found out from another principal through a casual conversation that the Special

Education Addendum existed in the Knowledge Center, I remember feeling misled and

cheated.  After all the training we went through, why wouldn't they make sure we were

trained on this as well?" (IP6, winter 2018).

**Administrators felt they lacked expertise when implementing the Special Education**

**Addendum.**  The research respondents expressed their lack of expertise as another hindrance to

proper implementation of the Special Education Addendum: "If I had had more experience to

master the Special Education Addendum, I would feel more confident evaluating special

education teachers, but without that expertise, I feel like I am consistently being challenged by

teachers" (IP2, winter 2018).  Commonly, administrators were finding themselves looking for

pedagogy that would not exist in a special education classroom:

When I realized that I was looking for different pedagogical practices, I became highly

confused as to what proficient and distinguished ratings looked like in a special education

classroom.  How can these attributes be realistic in all special education settings?  We

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have multiple settings for a special education room, depending on the needs of the

students.  Knowing when something should apply and not apply based on the various

settings in special education is something we should be trained to identify if we are going

to evaluate and rate a special education teacher. (IP7, winter 2018)

A veteran school leader with no teaching experience (FGP3) stated, "I did not understand the

significance and importance of the IEP to measure special education students' progress in the

classroom.  Special education classrooms are more than you see" (FGP3, winter 2018).

FGP5, who holds a master's degree and is a principal at a small-size public school, said,

"Special education teachers instruct differently.  The addendum highlights those differences"

(FGP5, winter 2018).  Another male administrator's confusion was exemplified in his statement:

"There were several paraprofessionals in the classroom and, quite honestly, I did not know for

certain exactly who or what the special education teacher was responsible for doing on that given

day" (FGP2, winter 2018).


**The belief that CPS did not value administrators' knowledge: CPS should have
asked the Principals Association for feedback before they launched this Special Education
Addendum.**  "This addendum seems rushed and insufficient" (FG1, winter 2018).

"Where did it come from?  When did the board introduce the addendum to principals?  I

did not know about this Special Education Addendum until a few months ago; no one asked my

colleagues or me to pilot it or be a part of the discussions" (FG3, winter 2018).

"After I found the Special Education Addendum in the Knowledge Center, I reviewed it.

I now see why they slipped it in and didn't ask principals for our opinion; it is confusing" (FG5,

winter 2018).

IP10, a male administrator who evaluates twenty-one teachers per year, of whom thirteen are special education teachers, expressed disappointment that CPS chose not to include administrators' input or feedback, stating, "I am disappointed the board did not include administrators in the selection of the Special Education Addendum. By not soliciting administrative feedback, this was a wasted opportunity" (IP10, winter 2018).

**Findings analysis for Research Question 3: What factors do school administrators consider helpful when implementing the REACH Special Education Addendum?** While interviewees conveyed some negative experiences regarding the implementation of the addendum, not all were negative, as some definite, sustainable outcomes were revealed: It improved communication and connections among teachers and administrators, it provided evaluators with a better understanding of special education teachers' responsibilities, and it introduced administrators to a different measure to monitor special education teachers' progress.

"Communication and feedback are essential to good evaluations. One positive result from implementing the Special Education Addendum was improved connections with teachers. During the pre/post conferences, special education teachers seemed to explain and identify the differences of their students and special education instruction" (IP7, winter 2018).

**Cross-Categorical Analysis of Experience and No Experience.**

A cross-case analysis identified a difference between participants with teaching experience and those with none, selectees, or interim administrators. General administrators with at least five years of teaching experience seemed to acknowledge the Special Education Addendum as being useful compared with no special education teacher assessment. Their concern seemed to focus on a need for more exposure, but overall, these participants felt

confident in their abilities to observe special education teachers in their classrooms and provide feedback.

FGP3 and FGP5 have no teaching experience. One is a retired appointee, and the other is an interim instructional support leader (coach). FGP3 is concerned more with reflection than compliance, and accountability. The Focus Group Participant 3 expressed a need for more exposure, The administrator wanted more understanding, not compliance, like the more experienced administrators. FGP3 stated, "To reflect on what's observed and provide thoughtful, supportive feedback to the special education teacher" (FGP3, Winter 2018). FGP3 goes on to suggest a need for exposure and understanding in the statement, "While the teacher was working with a small group of students, I was unsure if the teacher wanted or realized that one of her students was casually walking around the room on his own, stopping to touch or explore different things" (FGP3, winter 2018). Finally, this misunderstanding is confirmed: "I did not understand the significance and importance of the IEP to measure special education students' progress in the classroom. Special education classrooms are more than you see" (FGP3, winter 2018).

In conclusion, unlike tenured principals and assistant principals, FGP3 is reflective and demonstrates an appreciation for learning: "I learned a lot from the special education teachers during the conferences. When special education teachers introduced their lessons, they went into detail to explain how they accommodate and modify the curriculum to meet the needs of their students. Some of them drew attention to the differences between special education and general education. Conferencing with special education teachers taught me a lot. I appreciated the clarity and collegial communication. It was like professional development on special education classrooms" (FGP3, winter 2018).

FGP3 evaluates roughly 20 teachers per school year and stated, "I learned a lot from the special education teachers during the conferences. When special education teachers introduced their lessons, they went into detail to explain how they accommodate and modify the curriculum to meet the needs of their students. Some of them drew attention to the differences between special education and general education. Conferencing with special education teachers taught me a lot. I appreciated the clarity and collegial communication. It was like professional development on special education classrooms" (FGP3, winter 2018).

In a similar manner, FGP5 also is appreciative and reflective. This participant is again more concerned with learning and exposure to special education classrooms, rather than completing evaluations for accountability and compliance like more experienced administrators. "As an instructional leader, it is imperative that I can confidently and correctly utilize the district's established evaluation rubric, demonstrate that I avoid bias in my evaluations, and ensure succinct accuracy regarding all of my teacher evaluations, including my Special Education Teachers. I cannot effectively accomplish this if I am not provided with high-quality training and ongoing professional development initiatives. Professional development was not provided to me when I was informed about the Special Education Addendum" (FGP5, winter 2018). Again, like FGP3, FGP5 expresses a need for exposure: "I believe the addendum exposed me to a new educational world. By being required to adhere to the Special Education Addendum, it has enabled me to embrace, appreciate, and be aware of all the subtle student improvements that happen daily in a special education classroom. For example, the IEP is a crucial component of students' development and progress" (FGP5, winter 2018). Finally, in the same vein as FGP3, FGP5 expresses an appreciation for the experience and a newfound understanding of the special education setting:

**Understanding Special Education Responsibilities**

Understanding special education responsibilities was a common advantage that participants encountered when implementing the REACH Special Education Addendum. Research subjects used recurring words and phrases such as "clarifying," "focusing," "understanding," "appreciating," "explaining," "learning," and "communicating." Female principal FGP5 said, "Focused, agenda-based conversations create connections. Instead of an experience where I pointed out how the special education teacher did not meet the proficient or distinguished level rating on the rubric, it turned into two professionals looking at the Special Education Addendum and having productive conversations where we agreed on the ratings and used the evaluation as a tool for areas of growth" (FGP5, winter 2018). Another participant added, "The pre-conference portion of the evaluation is the most critical time to gain understanding and go over the Special Education Addendum together. This helps focus the evaluation" (IP4, winter 2018).

"The value of growth and learning for both the administrator and special education teacher comes from the pre- and post-conferences; they give both parties the chance to learn from one another and explain attributes to their teaching practices that may be unseen in an evaluation" (FGP4, winter 2018).

However, IP12, a male principal at a medium-size public school, was not necessarily in agreement, saying, "If CPS had the time to train me or even send me an email to alert me that the addendum exists; I would have been great. I do not feel I should have to take my own time to look for another way to evaluate a special education teacher. How was I supposed to know another evaluation tool existed! If I am untrained, I should not be the one evaluating a special education teacher. They should train someone from the network and send them to my school to

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conduct the evaluation.  This way, the teacher is fairly evaluated by someone who is trained to

understand the special education room.  Individuality is why the Board of Education has

individuals hold an entirely different certification for special education because special education

is different from general education.  We need to recognize this as evaluators and be trained on

the differences if we are going to evaluate effectively.  The Special Education Addendum does

not help me, and conferences should not look like opportunities to learn from each other.

Evaluation conferences should be an evaluation of a teacher's ability to teach" (IP12, winter

2018).  IP11 adds, "Understanding special education classes were very different, each student

required specialized learning plans based on their IEP goals.  The current REACH Evaluation

System does not recognize student individuality" (IP11, winter 2018).

**Progress Measured Differently**

Another helpful outcome from the Special Education Addendum's implementation was

that administrators learned that special education students' progress is measured differently.  A

female administrator of a small school (FGP5) said, "By being required to adhere to the Special

Education Addendum, it has enabled me to embrace, appreciate, and be aware of all the subtle

student improvements that happen on a daily basis in a special education classroom" (FGP5,

winter 2018).

"I still am trying to understand the correct way to identify whether the IEP goals that

teachers are writing in the IEPs align with the student's needs.  Likewise, how would I be able to

effectively assess the teacher if I do not read all the IEPs and look at individualized data myself

to determine whether the individual needs of the students are being met, which is very time-

consuming and time I do not have?  Also, I am still confused as to how the IEP goals should

align with the standards that are being taught in the lesson.  I have special education teachers that

are co-teachers, and I need to understand the difference between their evaluation and the special education teachers who teach in a cluster room.  They are completely different, and the addendum does not specify the differences" (IP7, winter 2018).

All the educational leaders recognized that special education classrooms measure achievement, behavior, and progress very differently when compared with general education classrooms.  IP4 stated, "Unlike in general education, the main priority for special education teachers is students' IEP.  In general education, the focus seems to be on annual assessment, but the criteria for special education teachers are individualized and cater to those students' deficits. It is more important for a child to meet the IEP benchmark progress than to reach attainment on NWEA" (IP4, winter 2018).  A female administrator with seven years of experience noted, "Diverse learning is different; we need a Special Education Addendum, especially for classroom management" (IP9, winter 2018).

FGP2 stated, "Progress is measured in growth, rather than attainment for special education classrooms.  It seems that students are expected to show progress on standardized tests, rather than earn a criteria-based score of attainment.  Therefore, administrators should know that information before observing classrooms" (FGP2, winter 2018).

**Administrators' Experiences and Rogers' Theory of Innovation**

The Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) Theory introduced the term *early adopter* to explain how, why, and at what rate new ideas spread within a group or organization.  As expressed in this study's survey responses, CPS administrators wanted to be exceptional leaders and implement new protocols and systems effectively.  However, transferring change into a system demands more than simply being willing to or wanting to do it.  While many administrators, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders agreed that changes had to be made in the CPS teacher

evaluation system to ensure the absolute best learning outcomes for all students, administrators' experiences while trying to implement those changes were not easy. In particular, the experience of implementing the REACH Students evaluation system and the Special Education Addendum component proved challenging.

Since none of the 17 administrators who participated in this study had previous experience as certified or licensed special education teachers, their ability in their professional role in launching the special education teacher evaluation component was compromised from the beginning. For DOI to be successful, according to Rogers' theory, five steps must be taken. The evaluators must know what it was they were trying to implement, or diffuse, for it to be successful. Although all 17 administrators had previous experience evaluating special education teachers using the traditional REACH Students system, they all expressed different levels of uneasiness with their actual ability to evaluate teaching and learning quality in special education classrooms using the addendum's protocols. The administrators found that the Board of Education did very little to help persuade them into becoming interested in taking initiatives to know more about the addendum. This lack of interest and commitment was evident when the addendum finally came out, as no districtwide announcement was made to ensure that all administrators would be aware of it amid the already-demanding onslaught of notices, announcements, and emails they get daily.

The next step in Rogers' theory is decisions. Rogers explains how deciding a course of action is necessary when implementing a new initiative successfully. In this case, individual school administrators all agreed that to be an exceptional leader, to be fair to special education teachers, and to be fair to students in special education programs, they had no choice but to implement the idea with all the passion, professionalism, and skills they had. Through

implementing the addendum – the next step – they found a renewed appreciation and awareness for the tailored teaching that special education teachers accomplish at their schools. When sharing their beliefs about the addendum, all 17 administrators expressed – in one way or another, as their own personal thoughts or in agreeing with another administrator during the focus-group discussion – whether having to implement the addendum forced them to look deeper into the educational-sustainability variations in special education.

Rogers' finally step in launching a new initiative was most notable when this study's research respondents were asked to describe (individually and in the focus group) the ways in which the addendum offered a fair assessment of teachers. All 17 subject interviewees viewed the addendum as fair, despite the lack of confidence that many evaluators previously shared regarding their knowledge-and expertise in the field of special education. Administrators also acknowledged that being required to use a different tool to evaluate their special education teachers was a welcome way to build confidence in both themselves and in their special education teachers. Nine of the administrators said they knew for quite some time that the previous method of evaluating special education teachers, i.e., using the same criteria for evaluating general education teachers, inherently was flawed. The problem was that they did not know how to remedy the situation. Their hands were tied until they were given the addendum, implemented two years after evaluators first received it. All the administrators agreed that to be most successful in their roles, open and ongoing lines of communication must be established between the district's lead administrators and each school's leadership team.

### Chapter IV Summary

Four significant findings – and categories within these themes – were presented here from the data collected from both interviews with 12 school administrators and one focus-group

of five administrators.  While all the questions were answered and discussed, themes emerged

from recurring words, phrases, and perspectives when the data were analyzed.  The four themes

– time, training, expertise, and tailored teaching – collectively answered this study's three

research questions.

The first research question addressed the beliefs administrators held about the new

REACH Addendum procedure.  Administrators said that they already did not feel that they had

enough hours in the day to get everything done and that having to follow a new addendum to the

district's teacher evaluation guide felt like more work without sufficient time allotted to do it.

Much of the addendum requires that administrators continue doing what they have been doing

since the implementation of the district's new REACH Students evaluation program, plus the

addendum.  They now must implement the four domains through the lens of a special education

classroom, instead of through the lens of a regular-education classroom, as they had been doing

previously.  Hence, administrators were asked to identify what these domains should look like in

a special education classroom.  They had to review and internalize the addendum as best they

could on their own, as little, if any, specialized training was provided for this special evaluation

process.  Data from administrators' responses also show that implementing a new procedure

now, when evaluating their special education teachers, does not help alleviate their lack of

confidence or discomfort regarding having no previous experience working as certified special

education teachers themselves.  Nevertheless, the data showed that overall, the 17 administrators

believed that the addendum was worthwhile and helpful, as it inspired in many of them a

renewed way to acknowledge, appreciate, and respect the differences found in a special

education classroom compared with a general education classroom.

The second research question addressed the possible hindrances that administrators identified when implementing the addendum.  Lack of time, lack of training, Taylored teaching and lack of expertise in special education were the recurring themes in response to this overarching question.  While the perceived lack of expertise that administrators shared was generated because none of them had experience working as special education teachers, th need for them to address the differences between special education and general education teaching during the evaluations perhaps makes their feelings of inadequacy more poignant.  Conversely, the administrators said that what is required to address and evaluate special education teachers differently enables the administrators to understand those nuances much better.

The third question addressed the factors that school administrators considered to be helpful when implementing the addendum.  Again, they acknowledged that special education classroom activities differ from those in general education classrooms and, as a result, the administrators now can take a closer look at those differences, understand them, and appreciate them.  Within that same theme is the process of conducting pre- and post-conferences as part of the special education evaluation protocol.  All but three of the administrators found these conferences to be helpful.  These three administrators said they understood more about what they could expect to observe and look for during the special education teacher evaluation, but these administrators also felt that being given the opportunity to meet with special education teachers again during the post-evaluation to be helpful.  During the post-evaluation, the teacher and the administrator had the opportunity to clarify or question anything regarding the evaluation process for better understanding.  This chapter ends with a look at administrators' experiences in implementing change in the teacher evaluation system and how it relates to Rogers' DOI Theory.

## CHAPTER V

## DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Introduction

This final chapter summarizes and discusses the study's significant findings.  It addresses the four major "takeaways" and includes recommendations on initiatives that could be undertaken to elicit further awareness of how administrators can improve the process of evaluating special education teachers with confidence, competence, *and* a fervent desire to acknowledge, observe, and contribute to the continued success of special education teachers. The chapter ends with a brief conclusion on how future research on issues addressed in this study may help further the cause of improving special education teacher evaluations.

### Discussion and Recommendations

In 2012, when CPS implemented the new teacher evaluation system for evaluating *all* teachers districtwide regardless of subject content, students' disabilities, or teaching experience, the district failed to realize that the new teacher evaluation model could not possibly help school administrators effectively evaluate their schools' special education teachers.  It did not seem like the district's special education office was even on the Top 100 list of factors to be considered while designing the REACH Students model.  Nevertheless, school principals continued adhering to that one-size-surely-can-fit-all teacher evaluation model when evaluating special education teachers.  A year later, the district formally acknowledged the need for a separate evaluation component for the district's special education teachers and released an addendum to the original 2012 REACH model.  However, as the 17 CPS school administrators noted during this study, the addendum only slowly and quietly seeped into schools across the district, bringing with it many more concerns and issues for school administrators, along with an "a-ha moment"

or two.  Specifically, four takeaways regarding the Special Education Addendum's implementation emerged through the experiences, perspectives, and insights that 17 Chicago school district administrators shared in this study.

**Training**

Administrator training on the addendum needs to be substantial and specific.  For school principals to be able to understand and implement the addendum competently and confidently, formal training must be involved.  For decades, administrators throughout CPS have been evaluating special education teachers using the same criteria used to evaluate general education teachers.  In 2012, when the original REACH system was launched, the new teacher evaluation model was implemented in a three-stage process.  It was introduced to administrators and CTU personnel, then Chicago's school administrators were required to complete rigorous Teachscape training within a year.  Finally, the REACH evaluation system was piloted in over two dozen schools.

This formal professional training initiative was launched not only to ensure objectivity, teacher support, and the elimination of prejudice and bias when administrators were evaluating their schools' teachers but also to ensure that administrators felt competent and confident when discussing and implementing the district's new teacher evaluation system with their staff.  That important training requirement covered a series of detailed evaluation modules on planning and preparation, the classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities. Administrators were required to take quizzes on what they were learning in the teacher evaluation system and had to earn a score of at least 80% on each module – or be forced to retake the entire course.  Upon successful completion of the four modules, administrators became certified general education teacher evaluators.  That comprehensive, districtwide, specialized

training scenario was not repeated when the district unveiled the Special Education Addendum in 2013, despite the fact that what happens and how learning and lessons unfold in a special education classroom are entirely different from what school administrators were trained (and certified) to look for in general education classrooms.

This training takeaway from the study also encompasses ongoing support and assistance. School administrators want to know that additional resources, qualified people, user-friendly materials, and easily accessible vendor support are "out there" if and when they are needed. While training and certifying principals to become *special education* teacher evaluators is ideal, professional development initiatives cannot stop there. New technologies, resources, and solutions continually are being developed to improve teaching in the classroom, as well as special education teaching strategies. When proactively thinking special education teachers integrate new and useful methodologies into their learning environments, administrators want to learn about them, too. They want to be able to recommend new ideas and strategies for their special education teachers.

**What can be Done?**

To develop further competence and confidence within administrators who evaluate special education teachers, administrators perhaps can create "think tank" sessions after hours or before school, where they can collaborate and share their knowledge, expertise, ideas, and skills with each other. Thorndike's concept of Law of Effect may apply well here. As mentioned in Chapter II, Thorndike posited that rewarding employees for demonstrating desired behaviors and motives inspired even more desired behaviors. Whether administrators take it upon themselves to seek out and obtain training on how to evaluate special education teachers most effectively, orchestrate groups, or mentor other administrators, if the district rewards them for their

initiatives and contributions to the success of the district's students, staff, and community, it could influence other administrators to do the same. These rewards could come in the form of monetary bonuses, free dinners or movies from community businesses, or featured articles in district, local, or national publications.

The list of possible rewards is as endless as the ways in which administrators and a school district can collaborate to achieve the same overarching goals.

**Time.** Uninterrupted, specific time needs to be devoted to all things special. "Lack of time," "not enough time," "wasted time," "out of time," "Where does the time go?" and "Is it time?" are just a few phrases captured from administrators' narratives in this study regarding their experiences when implementing the district's special education component of the REACH Students teacher evaluation guide. One need not be a school administrator to realize and experience firsthand that time is an irreplaceable and priceless commodity that never can be recaptured or revisited. Being mindful of this realization enables one to be truly present in the moment, regardless of the activity, conversation, classroom observation, or teacher evaluation taking place. A handful of participants in this study confided that they had conducted teacher evaluations in such a distracted, hurried, unfocused, and unprepared fashion that they felt that they were a waste of time. In hindsight, as shared during the data-collection process for this study, administrators admitted that if they somehow found the time to be prepared and excited to observe the teaching and learning occurring in one of their special- education classrooms on any given teacher evaluation day, they would have been better, more insightful coaches for those teachers being evaluated.

This time taken away from the study also encompasses making time for other school responsibilities during the day as well as professional development initiatives for the

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administrator.  Having the time to be prepared to conduct special education teacher evaluations without needing to worry about meeting with an IT vendor, calming a concerned parent, or disciplining a student enables the school administrator to be fully present in that ever-important evaluation session and enjoy what is unfolding in front of him or her.

While the onus is on the school administrator as to what happens in a school on any given school day, some strategies and decisions can be employed to provide a reprieve for the administrator from the never-ending list of things to do.  Lead-by-example school administrators have found it useful to relinquish any micromanaging mindset and instead delegate responsibilities to the school's team of fully capable, creative, and willing staff members. Chicago schools are brimming with talented staff members, and these in-house resources should be tapped and embraced so that the school's culture is operating as one collaborative unit, vs. separate units of subject matter and departments.

**Expertise.** Some level of real understanding of what goes on in a special education classroom needs to be acquired.  As addressed in Chapter II, lifelong education leader Ellwood Cubberley posited that for administrators to evaluate teachers' work effectively and successfully, that evaluation process *must* include the principal providing the teacher with substantive feedback and viable suggestions.  Cubberley said the essence of the evaluation process must encompass much more than merely identifying issues, missteps, or problems observed during the evaluation process.  To make a difference, principals must encourage and inspire the teacher to continue to excel and develop into the best educator possible.  The administrator also must be able to provide insight and ideas regarding the underlying *causes* of various issues observed. That was in the late 1800s.  Cubberley felt that way about teacher evaluations when he was the superintendent of a school district in California before he taught at Stanford, before he earned his

Ph.D. at Columbia, and before he became the dean of Stanford's School of Education. What he researched, experienced, and believed over a century ago regarding U.S. public schools' strengths and weaknesses still holds true today, especially in the special education classroom.

As evidenced through administrators' experiences and perspectives shared in this study, teacher evaluations still need to focus on helping teachers develop specific skills vs. simply identifying where skills are lacking. Otherwise, the development of a teacher's practice becomes stifled, and a student's learning does not advance. With school administrators saying that they feel like they are not adequately armed with the knowledge, skills, resources, and expertise to even know what to observe in a special education environment, let alone provide meaningful insight on how the special education teacher might improve, they are left stymied.

Of the 17 school administrators who participated in this study, they all expressed how their lack of professional experience in special education has impacted their ability to provide insights and ideas confidently to special education teachers. One common concern is that SWDs often work with a collaborating team of education specialists for various purposes, making it difficult to target a singular source of a student's results or of the teacher's specific responsibilities to that child on any given day (Johnson & Semmelroth, 2014). Another concern is that SWDs function best under a prescriptive approach, rather than general education's constructivist approach, the latter of which the observation guidelines favor (Boe, Cook, & Sunderland, 2008; Holdheide, Browder, Warren, Buzick, & Jones, 2012; Spooner, Algozzine, Wood, & Hicks, 2010). Special education teachers create unique and individualized plans for each student, thereby making a useful catch-all observation guide quite challenging, if not impossible, to create (Holdheide et al., 2012; Semmelroth & Johnson, 2014). On standardized tests, SWDs often use accommodations that, if inappropriately applied, can hurt their final scores

(Stempien & Loeb, 2002). Often, SWDs' achievement is not limited to academics. For example, if an SWD makes *behavioral* progress over a certain period, that critical progress would be ignored under standard evaluations (Connelly & Graham, 2009; McLeskey & Billingsley, 2008). With all this unique and highly specialized "stuff" going on in a special education classroom and with special education learners, the Special Education Addendum clearly was long overdue. However, to ensure its success and its ability to help special education teachers become even better in the special and unique role in which they serve, the evaluation process for special education teachers must be done with confidence and competence.

Magnified by the fact that none of the school administrators in the study had any formal experience, certification, or training as special education teachers themselves was the lack of resources, support, and information that the district made available to them regarding how to evaluate a special education classroom's nuances. While it is not necessary to experience every component of someone else's journey or area of expertise to observe it, appreciate it, or provide questions or ideas, it is necessary to have more than just a fundamental understanding of it to contribute any real improvement or insight. Just as someone reading a book can glean details and substantially reflect upon it only as much as his or her own lived experiences and previous knowledge provide from the outset, so is the ability of an administrator to identify, understand, and contribute while observing and evaluating a special education classroom.

When instructional leaders have little knowledge of special education classroom practices, procedures, and pedagogy (e.g., IEPs), and when these observers are expected to assess special education teachers using Chicago Public Schools' Special Education Addendum, school evaluators risk *mis*identifying supportive practices and assigning erroneous teacher ratings for those special education teachers. It is easy for one to deduce that the inaccurate

evaluations and terminations happened before the addendum was introduced. These erroneous evaluations have led to a high number of special education teachers in Chicago being placed on remediation, development, and termination plans (Johnson & Semmelroth, 2014).

Perhaps the district needs to plan and orchestrate districtwide, ongoing training on the various nuances that make up a special education classroom.  Perhaps principals can be mentored, with those who are experienced and confident in evaluating special education teachers serving as regular mentors and coaches to colleagues who are lacking in this competency.  On a grander, broader scale, it might be prudent for district HR specialists to create administrator-recruiting programs to attract special education teachers-turned-administrators and hire school principals who have the skills and authenticity to encourage and inspire special education teachers to pursue advanced degrees and become administrators themselves.

**Crystal-clear awareness.**  Administrators in this study shared "a-ha" moments during the data-collection process.  By being "forced" to acknowledge that special education teachers warranted their own special education evaluation protocols, many administrators in this study said the addendum provided them with awareness and insight that they previously overlooked or left on the back-burner during teacher evaluations.  Connected to the expertise takeaway, this renewed insight, as a result of needing to utilize the new Special Education Addendum, has enabled administrators to acknowledge that the special education classroom – from how it is set up and the materials used to the number of professionals in the room and what the students are doing – is going to look and operate differently from the general education classroom, despite the fact that just a few years earlier, administrators were evaluating special education teachers using the same criteria to measure their success (and their students' success) as they were using for general education teachers and their students.

This awareness takeaway also encompasses the pre- and post-conference experiences with special education teachers. Although the 2012 REACH Students evaluation model required the implementation of the conferences, these meetings have made a large impact because administrators are now looking for, acknowledging, and seeing special education services as the separate and special services that they are. Unfortunately, the district missed an excellent opportunity to spotlight the importance of the district's special education services when it failed to contact the media, distribute information throughout the community, and create any flair and fanfare like what was orchestrated during the implementation of the original REACH Students model in 2012.

Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) Theory can be implemented. When 17 administrators in a study all share some aspects of acknowledging and appreciating special education in a new and better light, this renewed awareness can spread like wildfire throughout a district. Rogers' theory explains how and why individuals would embrace and implement new ideas. Had the district celebrated the addition of the much-needed Special Education Addendum even half as much as when they openly announced and celebrated the original REACH Students model, more administrators, teachers, community members, and other stakeholders surely would have had "a-ha" moments as well. Waiting a year to add the addendum to the initial model, then waiting another three years to recommend that administrators engage in professional development on the addendum, hardly inspires or encourages anyone in the district to "buy in" to the new addendum or serve as an agent of change representing the special education department's uniqueness and importance. It is never too late to celebrate an initiative that will elicit a profound effect on the personal and professional lives of so many others – and of generations to follow.

## Conclusion

Additional studies on related topics can further help ensure that special education teachers are fairly and competently evaluated in their specialty and not merely or haphazardly evaluated against the same criteria used to evaluate general education teachers. A study involving only participants who were once special education teachers before they became school administrators may shed a different light on how their special education teachers are evaluated. In addition, researchers can use administrators' experiences to explore further what can be done to make change easier and more seamless in schools from the perspectives not only of administrators who act as innovators and diffusers, but also of teachers and students, as they are also integral to the whole interpersonal communication channel necessary for change to take place smoothly.

## Recommendations

Many participating principals and assistant principals interviewed felt that the Special Education Addendum was a systematic failure. It is recommend that CPS learn from its mistakes and reinstate the policy employed during the REACH evaluation implementation. Correctly implementing a new special education teacher evaluation model would be an overhaul of the addendum. Overall, this would not mean changing the document. Instead, administrators would enroll in courses to better understand the special education setting and be able to provide more supportive feedback, specifically to special education teachers. Also, administrators must be required to partake in the creation and implementation of Individual Education Plans to gain an understanding of how these documents' components impact the special education classroom and teacher practice specifically, as well as how they address student-benchmark assessments,

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functional analysis, and least-restrictive environments.  These are standards and components within the special education setting that must be grasped to provide teachers with supportive feedback.  These special education components are standard in special education classrooms, but rarely are experience in general education classrooms.  By providing time, training, experience, and exposure, CPS is arming administrators with reliable, positive tools that are needed to impact special education teachers' practice and pedagogy.  This plan of action – to train principals and assistant principals who will, in turn, provide special education teachers with helpful feedback – will improve instruction and assessment, thereby improving students' instructional achievement and behavior.  It is imperative that CPS develop a comprehensive system to evaluate special education teachers appropriately for all special education settings.  Implementing this process should be done with incremental benchmarks that cater to the entire special education environment, from the least restrictive to the most restrictive school settings.

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# APPENDIX A

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### Regarding Participants' Roles and Experience

1. What is your current position?

2. How many years have you worked in your current position?

3. How many years of experience do you have in school administration?

4. What was your previous job before becoming a school administrator?

5. What inspired you to go into school leadership?

6. What degrees, in what specialties, do you possess?

7. Do you possess a Special Education Certificate?

8. Throughout your career, how many special education teachers have you evaluated?

9. How many special education teachers work in your school?

10. Do other administrators work at your school? If so, do they conduct teacher evaluations as well?

**APPENDIX B**

**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

**Regarding Special education Evaluations**

1. How do you define an "informal" teacher observation?

2. How do you define a "formal" teacher observation?

3. During the 2017-2018 school year, how many formal observations have you completed using the new Special Education Addendum system?

4. How many informal observations have you conducted this year?

5. How much time is dedicated to formal observations vs. informal observations?

6. How many walk-through observations did you complete during the past school year?

7. What are you looking for/at during a walk-through observation?

8. What is your biggest challenge when trying to schedule and conduct evaluations?

9. What suggestions do you have to streamline the teacher evaluation process?

10. What are the steps involved in conducting a formal teacher observation and how long does it take to complete one from start to finish?

11. What, if any, professional development courses have you taken to help you implement the new Special Education Addendum system?

12. How many professional development hours did you receive for the data-management system?

13. How has the new Special Education Addendum evaluation system affected your other administrative responsibilities?

14. What impact does the new system have on your time management and other responsibilities?

15. What were your concerns with the data-management system and were they addressed in a timely fashion?

16. Can you describe your district's assistance quality when implementing the Special Education Addendum before, during, and after the addendum was first introduced?

17. What were your concerns with the Special Education Addendum and were they addressed promptly?

18. What, in your opinion, were some of the major challenges with the Special Education Addendum system?

19. How would you compare the new special education evaluation system's efficacy with that of the old system?

20. 20. whether they think the new system offers a fair assessment of teachers, and if the answer is yes, in what ways?

21. What was your experience with the data-management tool?

22. Did the pre- and post-conferences benefit you and the teacher in your opinion?

23. Did you receive adequate support from the district on how to implement the Special Education Addendum properly?

# APPENDIX C

## LETTER OF SOLICITATION FOR FOCUS GROUP

Dear School Administrator:

I am a doctoral student in the Department of Education Leadership, Management, and Policy at Seton Hall University in New Jersey.  I am conducting a research study to ascertain certified REACH evaluators' experiences implementing Chicago Public Schools' REACH Special Education Addendum.

I am requesting your participation in this study, which will involve being part of a six-person focus group of administrators who will explore, examine, describe, and share your experiences while implementing the REACH Special Education Addendum.  The focus group will meet once, and the expected duration of your participation in this research via the focus group would be approximately 90 minutes.  Your participation in this study is voluntary.  You would not be penalized should you choose not to participate or withdraw from the study at any time.  While the results of the study may be published, your name would not be used.

Participating in this study carries no risks, nor does it offer any direct benefits.

If you choose to participate and have any questions about the research after the focus group's activities are completed, you could contact me at the phone number or email address provided above, or else contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Daniel Gutmore, at (973) 275 2853 or daniel.gutmore@shu.edu.

Seton Hall University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) has approved this research.  If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this study, or if you feel that you have been placed at risk, you can contact Seton Hall University's IRB at (973) 313-6314 or at irb@shu.edu.

Returning the completed questionnaire listing the questions that would be asked in the focus group would be considered your consent to participate.  Thank you.

Sincerely,

Aaron Rucker

| *Topic of Research Study:* |
| --- |
| Chicago Public School Administrators' Experiences Implementing the REACH, Special Education Addendum Teacher |

## LETTER OF SOLICITATION FOR INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

Dear School Administrator:

I am a doctoral student in the Department of Education, Leadership Management Policy, Educational Administration and Supervision at Seton Hall University in New Jersey.  I am conducting a research study to ascertain certified REACH evaluators' experiences implementing Chicago Public Schools' REACH Special Education Addendum.

I am requesting your participation in this study, which will involve exploring, examining, describing, and sharing your experiences while implementing the REACH Special Education Addendum.  The expected duration of your participation in this research via an interview would be approximately 45-90 minutes.  Your participation in this study is voluntary.  You would not be penalized should you choose not to participate or withdraw from the study at any time.  If at any time you drop out of the survey, your results would be discarded.  While the results of the research study may be published, your name would not be used.

Participating in this study carries no risks, nor does it offer any direct benefits.

At the conclusion of the interview, if you have any questions about the research, you are welcome to contact me at the phone number or email address provided above, or you may contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Daniel Gutmore, at (973) 275-2853 or daniel.gutmore@shu.edu.

Seton Hall University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) has approved this research.  If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this study, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact Seton Hall University's IRB at (973) 313-6314 or at irb@shu.edu.

Returning the completed questionnaire would be considered your consent to participate.  Thank you.

Sincerely,

Aaron Rucker

| *Topic of Research Study:* |
| --- |
| Chicago Public School Administrators' Experiences Implementing the REACH, Special Education Addendum Teacher |

**APPENDIX E**

**PREVIOUS CPS TEACHER EVALUATION CHECKLIST**

**CLASSROOM TEACHER VISITATION**
**This form is required.  It should be used in conjunction with the "Post Observation Framework Feedback Form" (Form 5B).    Teacher's Name: _____ Room_____ Date _____ School _____ Subject/Grade (Place a (3) or brief comment in the appropriate column.)**

| I. Instruction | Strength | Weakness | Does not Apply |
|---|---|---|---|
| a) Provides written lesson plans and preparation in accordance with the objectives of the instructional program. | | | |
| b) Establishes positive learning-expectation standards for all students | | | |
| c) Periodically evaluates students' progress and keeps up-to-date records of students' achievements. | | | |
| d) Applies contemporary principles of learning theory and teaching methodology. | | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **e) Draws from the range of instructional materials available at the school.** | _____ | | |
| **f) Exhibits willingness to participate in the development and implementation of new ideas and teaching techniques.** | | | |
| **g) Provides bulletin board and interest areas reflective of current student work.** | _____ | . | |
| **h) Exhibits and applies knowledge of curriculum content related to subject area and instructional level.** | | | |
| **i) Shows evidence of student performance and progress.** | _____ | . | |
| **II. School Environment** | **Strength** | **Weakness** | **Does not Apply** |
| **a) Establishes and maintains reasonable rules of conduct within the classroom consistent with the provisions of the Student Code of Conduct.** | _____ | . | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **b) Maintains attendance books, lesson plan, seating chart(s), and grade book accurately.** | | | |
| **c) Uses recommendations and suggestions from the conference and special education staffing.** | _____ | | |
| **d) Encourages student growth in self-discipline and positive self-concept.** | _____ | | |
| **e) Makes students aware of the teacher's objectives and expectations.** | _____ _____ | | |
| **f) Practices fairness in teacher-student relationships.** | | | |
| **g) Exhibits understanding and respect for students as individuals.** | | | |
| **III. Professional and Personal Standards** | | | |
| **a) Presents an appearance that does not adversely affect students' ability to learn.** | | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **b) Demonstrates proper diction and grammatical usage when addressing students.** | | | |
| **c) Uses sound and professional judgment.** | | | |

**IV. Local School Unit Criteria**

**a) CPS Framework for Teaching and related process**

**b)** _____

**c)** _____

**Comments:**

_____
_____

# APPENDIX F

## FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

**Focus Group Participant 1**

Coded: FGP1, Winter 2018

CPS District 299

Network 11

Gender: Female

Race: Hispanic

Language: English

Native Language: Spanish

Education Level: Master's

Evaluation Workload: 20 per year

Teaching experience: 15 years

**Focus Group Participant 2**

Coded: FGP2, Winter 2018

CPS District 299

Network 11

Gender: Male

Race: White

Language: English

Native Language: English

Education Level: Master's

Evaluation Workload: 20 per year

Teaching experience: 15 years

**Focus Group Participant 3**

Coded: FGP3, Winter 2018

CPS District 299

Network 11

Gender: Female

Race: White

Language: English

Native Language: English

Education Level: Master's

Evaluation Workload: 20 per year

Teaching experience: 0 years

**Focus Group Participant 4**

Coded: FGP4, Winter 2018

CPS District 299

Network 11

Gender: Female

Race: Black

Language: English

Native Language: English

Education Level: Ph.D.

Evaluation Workload: 20 per year

Teaching experience: 20 years

APPENDIX G

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

**Individual Participant 1**
Coded: IP1, Winter 2018
CPS District 299
Network 11
Gender: Female
Race: White
Language: English
Native Language: English
Education Level: Master's
Evaluation Workload: eight per year
Teaching Experience: five years
Administrative Experience: four years
Special Ed. Teaching Experience: 0
School: small size, public
Special Ed. Teachers: Six
Percentage of Special Ed. Students: 9%

**Individual Participant 2**
Coded: IP2, Winter 2018
CPS District 299
Network 11
Gender: Female
Race: White
Language: English
Native Language: English
Education Level: Master's
Evaluation Workload: 25 per year
Teaching Experience: five years
Administrative Experience: four years
Special Ed. Teaching Experience: 0
School: medium size, public
Special Ed. Teachers: 13
Percentage of Special Ed. Students: 20%

**Individual Participant 3**
Coded: IP3, Winter 2018
CPS District 299
Network 11
Gender: Female
Race: Black
Language: English
Native Language: English
Education Level: Master's pursuing Ph.D.
Evaluation Workload: 22 per year
Teaching Experience:  10 years
Administrative Experience: 11 years
Special Ed. Teaching Experience: 0
School: medium size, public
Special Ed. Teachers: 15
Percentage of Special Ed. Students: 20%

**Individual Participant 4**
Coded: IP4, Winter 2018
CPS District 299
Network 11
Gender: Female
Race: Hispanic
Language: English
Native Language: Spanish
Education Level: Master's
Evaluation Workload: 29 per year
Teaching Experience: 10 years
Administrative Experience: nine years
Special Ed. Teaching Experience: 0
School: medium size, public
Special Ed. Teachers: 17
Percentage of Special Ed. Students: 26%

**Individual Participant 5**
Coded: IP5, Winter 2018
CPS District 299
Network 11
Gender: Female
Race: White
Language: English
Native Language: English
Education Level: Master's
Evaluation Workload: 25 per year
Teaching Experience: five years
Administrative Experience: three years
Special Ed. Teaching Experience: 0
School: medium size, public
Special Ed. Teachers: 19
Percentage of Special Ed. Students: 27%

**Individual Participant 6**
Coded: IP6, Winter 2018
CPS District 299
Network 11
Gender: Male
Race: White
Language: English
Native Language: English
Education Level: Master's pursuing Ph.D.
Evaluation Workload: 34 per year
Teaching Experience: eight years
Administrative Experience:  seven years
Special Ed. Teaching Experience: 0
School: medium size, public
Special Ed. Teachers: 16
Percentage of Special Ed. Students: 21%

**Individual Participant 7**
Coded: IP7, Winter 2018
CPS District 299
Network 11
Gender: Female
Race: Black
Language: English
Native Language: English
Education Level: Ph.D.
Evaluation Workload: 25 per year
Teaching Experience: 11 years
Administrative Experience: eight years
Special Ed. Teaching Experience: 0
School: medium size, public
Special Ed. Teachers: 22
Percentage of Special Ed. Students: 30%

**Individual Participant 8**
Coded: IP8, Winter 2018
CPS District 299
Network 11
Gender: Female
Race: White
Language: English
Native Language: English
Education Level: Master's
Evaluation Workload: 28 per year
Teaching Experience: seven years
Administrative Experience: seven years
Special Ed. Teaching Experience: 0
School: medium size, public
Special Ed. Teachers: 16
Percentage of Special Ed. Students: 33%

**Individual Participant 9**
Coded: IP9, Winter 2018
CPS District 299
Network 11
Gender: Female
Race: Black
Language: English
Native Language: English
Education Level: Master's
Evaluation Workload: 39 per year
Teaching Experience: six years
Administrative Experience: seven years
Special Ed. Teaching Experience: 0
School: medium size, public
Special Ed. Teachers: 23
Percentage of Special Ed. Students: 38%

**Individual Participant 10**
Coded: IP10, Winter 2018
CPS District 299
Network 11
Gender: Male
Race: Black
Language: English
Native Language: English
Education Level: Ph.D.
Evaluation Workload: 21 per year
Teaching Experience: four years
Administrative Experience: 10 years
Special Ed. Teaching Experience: 0
School: medium size, public
Special Ed. Teachers: 13
Percentage of Special Ed. Students: 18%

**Individual Participant 11**
Coded: IP11, Winter 2018
CPS District 299
Network 11
Gender: Male
Race: Black
Language: English
Native Language: English
Education Level: Ph.D.
Evaluation Workload: 20 per year
Teaching Experience: nine years
Administrative Experience: eight years
Special Ed. Teaching Experience: 0
School: medium size, public
Special Ed. Teachers: 13
Percentage of Special Ed. Students: 18%

**Individual Participant 12**
Coded: IP12, Winter 2018
CPS District 299
Network 11
Gender: male
Race: White
Language: English
Native Language: English
Education Level: Master's
Evaluation Workload: 25 per year
Teaching Experience: seven years
Administrative Experience: nine years
Special Ed. Teaching Experience: 0
School: medium size, public
Special Ed. Teachers: 22
Percentage of Special Ed. Students: 27%

**Focus Group Participant One:**

**FGP1**

"Although I understood the distinctions of the special education classroom and how it was set up, it was completely different from a general education classroom. I was surprised by how disorganized it appeared to me. I was not sure whether this was just from the day's challenges or part of the special education model. The teacher did not get a chance to return things to their proper places. Students were shouting and leaving their seats" (FGP1, winter 2018).

"My time-management goals get disrupted when it's time to do teacher evaluations. As you all know, evaluating teachers demands hours of work during any given school day. Time is needed for the pre-conference and post-conference, the assessment of the teacher's portfolio, completing meaningful observations in the actual classrooms, writing reports, and many other responsibilities that are all just too demanding of our time, energy, and attention" (FGP1, winter 2018).

**Focus Group Participant Two:**

**FGP2**

"Now having to learn an additional way to evaluate special education teachers requires more time away from our daily leadership responsibilities at our schools" (FGP2, winter 2018).

"I am already knee-deep in paperwork and have to constantly wear many hats. Having to refresh myself and study the addendum before I evaluate a special education teacher is extremely time-consuming" (FGP2, winter 2018).

"The district expects us to split an atom or work all day just to ensure the special education teachers are evaluated by collective-bargaining agreements" (FGP2, winter 2018).

"There were several paraprofessionals in the classroom and, quite honestly, I did not know for certain exactly who or what the special education teacher was responsible for doing on that given day" (FGP2, winter 2018).

"Progress is measured in growth, rather than attainment, for special education classrooms. It seems to me that students are expected to show progress on standardized tests rather than earn a criteria-based score of attainment. Therefore, administrators should know that information before observing classrooms" (FGP2, winter 2018).

**Focus Group Participant Three**

**FGP3**

"To reflect on what's observed and provide thoughtful, supportive feedback to the special education teacher" (FGP3, Winter 2018).

"While the teacher was working with a small group of students, I was unsure whether the teacher wanted or realized that one of her students was casually walking around the room on his own, stopping to touch or explore different things" (FGP3, winter 2018).

"I did not understand the significance and importance of the IEP to measure special education students' progress in the classroom. Special education classrooms are more than you see" (FGP3, winter 2018).

"I really learned a lot from the special education teachers during the conferences. When special education teachers introduced their lessons, they went into detail to explain how they accommodate and modify the curriculum to meet the needs of their students. Some of them drew attention to the differences between special education and general education. This taught me a lot. I appreciated the clarity and collegial communication. It was like professional development on special education classrooms" (FGP3, winter 2018).

**Focus Group Participant Four:**

**FGP4**

"Even letting us know that the addendum existed was done so quietly, it's no surprise extensive training and professional development initiatives didn't accompany its implementation" (FGP4, winter 2018).

"Pre- and post-conferences give both parties the opportunity to explain their goals, expectations, and desired outcomes" (FGP4, winter 2018).

"CPS wants us to support the Special Education Addendum, but gave us no agency, authority, or identity with the addendum's creation" (FGP4, winter 2018).

"There are only 24 hours in a day. I feel like 23 are used for the Special Education Addendum" (FGP4, winter 2018).

"It would have been nice to have known about this addendum when it first came out, as I most likely would have given a lot of teachers better ratings if I had known the addendum existed. I was rating them as if their classes should reflect the same characteristics and attributes as a general education room according to the REACH evaluation guidelines" (FGP4, winter 2018).

"The value of growth and learning for both the administrator and the special education teacher really comes from the pre-and post-conferences; they give both parties the chance to learn from each other and explain attributes to their teaching practices that may be unseen in an evaluation" (FGP4, winter 2018).

**Focus Group Participant Five:**

**FGP5**

"As an instructional leader, it is imperative that I can confidently and correctly utilize the district's established evaluation rubric, demonstrate that I avoid bias in my evaluations, and ensure succinct accuracy regarding all of my teacher evaluations, including my special education teachers. I can't effectively accomplish this if I am not provided with high-quality training and ongoing professional development initiatives. This was not provided to me when I was informed about the Special Education Addendum" (FGP5, winter 2018).

"I believe the addendum exposed me to a new educational world. By being required to adhere to the Special Education Addendum, it has enabled me to embrace, appreciate, and be aware of all the subtle student improvements that happen daily in a special education classroom. For example, the IEP is a crucial component of students' development and progress" (FGP5, winter 2018).

"Through the Special Education Addendum, I was able to hold focused, agenda-based conversations with the teacher; this creates a connection between evaluators and special education teachers. Suddenly, the special education teacher realizes I am there to help him or her and coach him or her to be the best special education teacher possible" (FGP5, winter 2018).

"The board gave us no training; administrators were on their own. CPS should have shown us how to use it prior to its implementation" (FGP5 winter 2018).

"Training is highly connected with competence. I cannot be competent in my position if I am being asked to use something I have not been trained to use to evaluate teachers. If I were a special education teacher getting evaluated, knowing this would make me feel uncomfortable" (FGP5, winter 2018).

"Special education teachers instruct differently.  The addendum highlights those differences" (FGP5, winter 2018).

"Focused, agenda-based conversations create connections.  Instead of it being an experience where I pointed out how the special education teacher did not meet the proficient or distinguished level rating on the rubric, it turned into two professionals looking at the Special Education Addendum and having productive conversations where we agreed on the ratings and used the evaluation as a tool for areas of growth" (FGP5, winter 2018).

"By being required to adhere to the Special Education Addendum, it has enabled me to embrace, appreciate, and be aware of all the subtle student improvements that happen on a daily basis in a special education classroom" (FGP5, winter 2018).

**Individual Interviews Participant Quotes:**

**Individual Participant One:**

**IP1**

"There is never enough time to do any teacher evaluations properly, let alone new special education evaluations" (IP1, winter 2018).

"I was confused. I thought the board wanted to be an educational partner. It seems to me that the district just wants a bunch of principals to be 'yes' men and women. Our opinions, our school rankings, and our formal education do not matter. The district wants automatic 'buy-in' no matter what initiative they create, good or bad" (IP1, winter 2018).

**Individual Participant Two:**

**IP2**

"I like my staff and students to see me do walk-throughs and unannounced classroom visits throughout the day.  It is impossible for me to do this on the days that I am scheduled to conduct teacher evaluations. I'm stressed" (IP2, winter 2018).

"I feel the district set us up to fail by not providing any training with the Special Education Addendum" (IP2, winter 2018).

"I already feel there are not enough hours in the day to accomplish daily operational tasks.  Now, I am feeling overwhelmed with the evaluation process added to my responsibilities, especially since I am not that familiar with the Special Education Addendum" (IP2, winter 2018).

"If I had had more experience to master the Special Education Addendum, I would feel more confident evaluating special education teachers, but without that expertise, I feel like I am consistently being challenged by teachers" (IP2, winter 2018).

**Individual Participant Three:**

**IP3**

"Quite frankly (notes a female administrator with 11 years of experience as a principal), in the beginning, I've rescheduled evaluations I was supposed to do with special education teachers because I felt I wasn't prepared because I didn't have personal time to read the district's guide with the Special Education Addendum in it" (IP3, winter 2018).

"I had an "A-ha" moment when I received the Special Education Addendum. The addendum highlights the differences between general education and special education classrooms; it's my CliffsNotes" (IP3, winter 2018).

"Chicago Public Schools presumed that principals and assistant principals would give immediate consensus to the Special Education Addendum. They did not provide us ample time to review the Special Education Addendum, nor did they invite us as a conversation partner. They covertly sent us a message two years after the fact that the Special Education Addendum was a resource and can be found through the Knowledge Center" (IP3, winter 2018).

**Individual Participant Four:**

**IP4**

"I had no formal training or time to learn the Special Education Addendum; I was given the district's *CPS Framework for Teaching Companion Guide*, Version 1.0, and was told I should be able to find everything I need in there" (IP4, winter 2018).

"I contacted some of my colleagues in other buildings to see how they handled it and what they could recommend" (IP4, winter 2018).

"Having conversations with special education teachers about teaching goals and student expectations prior to the formal evaluation helps me to have a clearer focus on what I am observing in the classroom. It also helps the teacher to feel understood" (IP4, winter 2018).

I do not consider this training or being able to clearly understand the proper way to implement this tool. Frustration came over me, and I had to spend many hours of my own personal time examining the document" (IP4, winter 2018).

"The pre-conference portion of the evaluation is the most critical time to gain understanding and go over the Special Education Addendum. Together, this helps focus the evaluation" (IP4, winter 2018).

"Unlike in general education, the main priority for special education teachers is the students' IEP. In general education, the focus seems to be on annual assessment, but the criteria for special education teachers is individualized and caters to those students' deficits. It is more important for a child to meet the IEP benchmark progress than to reach attainment on NWEA" (IP4, winter 2018).

**Individual Participant Five:**

**IP5**

      For example, one subject replied, "I was highly embarrassed when I evaluated a special education teacher, and she brought up the addendum. I was unaware that it existed and had to immediately reach out to colleagues for understanding on the correct way to use the Special Education Addendum to evaluate teachers. They were also just as confused as myself because we had not been trained on how to use the addendum for evaluations" (IP5, winter 2018).

**Individual Participant Six:**

**IP6**

"When the original REACH student's evaluation system was first introduced to us back in 2012, all administrators were required to receive formal, comprehensive training from Teachscape to become certified evaluators.  The new evaluation system unfolded over stages back then, and we had time to get used to it, to use Teachscape as a resource, and even to collaborate with our colleagues if we had any questions or issues.  With this new Special Education Addendum, it just seems like an afterthought, and nobody at the district level made any big deal about it or how we should be trained in it" (IP6, winter 2018).

"There was a lack of support which allowed me to feel disappointment that the district did not provide assistance or ongoing  training(IP6,Winter)."

"Whether with technology, documentation protocols, or simply practices looking for a good example would have been nice, but the district gave us nothing – no checklist, rubric, or call center as a reference" (IP6 winter 2018).

 "When I found out from another principal through casual conversation that the Special Education Addendum existed in the Knowledge Center, I remember feeling misled and cheated.  After all the training we went through, why wouldn't they make sure we were trained on this as well" (IP6, winter 2018)?

**Individual Participant Seven:**

**IP7**

"Before receiving the *Companion Guide* to the *REACH Student Evaluation Guide*, I know I often found myself looking for certain behaviors, whether from the teacher or the students, in the classroom" (IP7, winter 2018).

"I realize now I could not completely understand the operations of a special education classroom; I need to be more familiar with the overall expectations and agenda" (IP7, winter 2018).

"I have a deeper appreciation for IEPs and measuring special education students through benchmark accomplishments rather than NWEA data.  Although one of our special-needs students may not be able to complete his assignment on matching pictures correctly, his progress is measured and acknowledged when he can control his anger in the classroom and no longer tries to hit anyone" (IP7, winter 2018).

"And when I realized that I was looking for different pedagogical practices, I became highly confused as to what proficient and distinguished ratings looked like in a special education classroom. How can these attributes be realistic in all special education settings?  We have multiple settings for special education rooms, depending on the needs of the students.  Knowing when something should apply and/or not apply based on the various settings in special education is definitely something we should be trained to identify if we are going to evaluate and rate a special education teacher" (IP7, winter 2018).

"Communication and feedback are essential to good evaluations. One positive result from implementing the Special Education Addendum was improved connections with teachers.  During the pre- and post-conferences, special education teachers really seemed to explain and identify the differences of their students and special education instruction" (IP7, winter 2018).

"I still am trying to understand the correct way to identify whether the IEP goals that teachers are writing in the IEPs align with the students' needs.  Likewise, how would I be able to effectively assess the teacher if I do not read all the IEPs and look at individualized data myself to determine whether the individual needs of the students are being met, which is very time-consuming and time I do not have.  Also, I am still confused as to how the IEP goals should align with the standards that are being taught in the lesson.  I have special education teachers that are co-teachers, and I need to understand the difference between their evaluation and the special education teachers who teach in a cluster room.  They are completely different, and the addendum does not clearly specify the differences" (IP7, winter 2018).

**Individual Participant Eight:**

**IP8**

"The new addendum demands a lot more time than even the regular REACH evaluation system, which is also very time-consuming. We still must do all the meetings, the observations, and the writing of the evaluations vs. that old method of a checklist. Now, with the Special Education Addendum, there is even more work involved. An administrator must be prepared to distinguish how and what is observed in the special education classrooms, so we can provide a rigorous, comprehensive evaluation" (IP8, winter 2018).

"I anticipated special education classroom behavior should look and feel a certain way, but the classroom environment was very different from what I presumed. With no reference or experience, I was a little lost. I felt like I was looking for something that was not there" (IP8, winter 2018).

"My time during any given workday is already stretched to the max. Having to schedule a conference before the evaluation, then do the evaluation, and then meet with the teacher again after the evaluation is a waste of time. I have found it more time-efficient and productive to write my honest evaluations and findings in the report and allow the teacher to rebut, explain, or provide further information on any negative statements that may have been in my report and need clarifying" (IP8, winter 2018).

"I would like to make the time to focus on an evaluation without being disrupted, but as the instructional leader of my building, this is impossible, as I am constantly pulled and needed" (IP8, winter 2018).

**Individual Participant Nine:**

**IP9**

"I brainstormed and collaborated with my colleagues at other schools when I need support or help (stated respondent who conducts 39 evaluations in a school year). In addition, we all used the guide, webinars, and videos as a possible source of information. Everything was about REACH. There was nothing about the Special Education Addendum" (IP9, winter 2018).

"The lack of training not only hurts evaluators, but it hurts students. Without being properly trained, administrators can't provide useful feedback to teachers to help special-needs students" (IP9, winter 2018).

"Diverse learning is different; we need a Special Education Addendum, especially for classroom management" (IP9, winter 2018).

**Individual Participant Ten:**

**IP10**

"I am disappointed the board did not include administrators in the selection of the Special Education Addendum. This was a wasted opportunity" (IP10, winter 2018).

"CPS did not think it was important to train the evaluators?  Seriously, this was a major component to accurate evaluation" (IP10, winter 2018).

**Individual Participant Eleven:**

**IP11**

"As wonderful of a rapport I'd like to think I have with my school's special education teachers, I wasn't comfortable sharing with them that I was not completely sure how to implement the new evaluation system correctly. I had not been given support from CPS. I was the one responsible at my school to understand the addendum and to implement it without any significant support from the district" (IP11, winter 2018).

"Understanding special education classes was very different; each student required specialized learning plans based on their IEP goals. The current REACH Evaluation System does not recognize student individuality" (IP11, winter 2018).

**Individual Participant Twelve:**

**IP12**

"I want to feel like assistance is readily available to me. I don't feel that way today. I feel the assistance and support have been lacking. CPS did not offer helpline staff with an expert Special Education Addendum person because there was no such person. When I called the Office of Diverse Learning Department, no one answered" (IP12, winter 2018).

"CPS did not develop or execute a pilot program of the Special Education Addendum prior to implementing it. Unlike with REACH, CPS piloted the program before introducing it to administrators" (IP12, winter 2018).

"If CPS doesn't have the time to train me or even send me an email to alert me that the addendum exists, I don't feel I should have to take my own time to look for another way to evaluate a special education teacher. How was I supposed to know another evaluation tool existed! If I am untrained, I should not be the one evaluating a special education teacher. They should train someone from the network and send them to my school to conduct the evaluation. This way, the teacher is being fairly evaluated by someone who is trained to understand the special education room. This is why the Board of Education has individuals to hold an entirely different certification for special education, because special education is different from general education. We need to recognize this as evaluators and be trained on the differences if we are going to effectively evaluate. The Special Education Addendum does not help me, conferences should not look like opportunities to learn from each other, and evaluation conferences should be an evaluation of a teacher's ability to teach" (IP12, winter 2018).