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Evaluation of Teachers of Students With Low-Incidence Disabilities

MartyAnn Guiney

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERISTY

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MartyAnn Guiney

Abstract

Current reforms of teacher evaluation systems in the state of Michigan are meant to improve teacher effectiveness, resulting in increased student growth and achievement. However, little research exists to support best practices in the evaluation of special education teachers. The evaluation of special education teachers involves many unique challenges which are especially apparent when evaluating teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities. The tools and processes being proposed by the state are born from research within general education and, consequently, may not be effective in meeting the unique challenges of evaluating special education teachers.

The perceptions of special education administrators regarding the effectiveness of tools/systems currently being used in Michigan to evaluate teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities are examined in this study. In addition, the perceptions of special education administrators regarding the importance of certain evaluation components within evaluation tools/systems to be used with teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities are also examined.

The perceived effectiveness varied across respondents. However, the perceived effectiveness of evaluation tools was higher when the tool had been modified specifically for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities. The components of evaluation rated most important by respondents were ones that were most unique to special education teachers. It is concluded that current tools/systems being used to evaluate teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities need to be modified in order to be effective.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Problem Statement

Many teacher evaluation tools/processes used today do not effectively evaluate teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities. In *Examining the Use of Classroom Observations in the Evaluation of Special Education Teachers*, Nathan Jones and Mary Brownell (2014) state, "Students with disabilities depend on effective special education teachers to achieve their goals; we need valid observation systems to ensure that the special education teachers are prepared to provide high-quality education to students with disabilities," (p. 122). While researchers and educators recognize the need for valid evaluation systems, there is a lack of empirical evidence surrounding teacher evaluation in special education and many challenges to evaluating special education teachers exist (Johnson & Semmelroth, 2014). These challenges make the use of traditional teacher evaluation tools that are based on research within general education difficult, especially in programs for students with low-incidence disabilities. The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) recognizes the need to have teacher evaluation systems that measure the use of evidence-based practices that have proven to be effective for special education and incorporate multiple measures of student growth that consider a teacher's contribution to not just academic areas, but to developmental, behavioral, and functional areas as well (CEC, 2013). In order to ensure effective teacher evaluation practices and tools for special education teachers, we should involve administrators and teachers who are trained in special education in the process of developing teacher evaluation instruments and procedures (Holdheide, Goe, Croft, & Reschly, 2010).

Rationale

Research conducted by Rivkin, Hanushek, and Kain (2005) shows that teacher effectiveness is the most influential factor on student achievement. Given that student growth and achievement are the overall goals of education, having systems in place that help improve teacher effectiveness should be a priority. According to a report by the New Teacher Project, traditional teacher evaluation systems used in the past have failed to determine effectiveness of teachers (Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, & Keeling, 2009). This realization, coupled with the identification of the impact of teacher effectiveness on student achievement, has resulted in increased initiatives for improving teacher evaluation systems (Jones & Brownell, 2014). However a deficit in empirical evidence on teacher evaluation in special education continues despite the recent changes to teacher evaluation systems (Johnson & Semmelroth, 2013). According to Jones and Brownell (2014), researchers often define effective teaching in special education by evidence-based practices, and there is substantial research that establishes evidence-based practices in special education. However, it is questionable if these evidence-based practices for special education are considered when developing teacher evaluation tools that are traditionally based on effective teaching in general education. When examining the research on the validity of current teacher evaluation processes, Jones and Brownell (2014) state the following:

> Though these research efforts are yielding important information about the effectiveness of general education teachers, particularly those providing language arts and mathematics instruction, they have not included special education

> teachers, leaving states and districts grappling with how to adjust evaluation systems to deal with the unique needs of these teachers." (p. 112).

Effective teaching practices in special education differ at times from general education. Thus, teacher evaluation tools that focus on best teaching practices in general education might not contain what is best practice in special education. The current study, designed to examine whether the current evaluation tools and procedures being used in Michigan are effective in evaluating teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities, will provide a much-needed perspective from special education professionals on teacher evaluation. This shared perspective may lead to a better understanding of effective practices for the evaluation of special education teachers and help guide future decision-making.

Valid and reliable evaluation instruments are necessary in determining the effectiveness of special education teachers because results of evaluations will be used for several purposes that can affect students in addition to individual teachers. First, results of teacher evaluations should be used to guide decisions about continuous professional development for teachers (Carlson, Lee, & Schroll, 2004). MCL 380.1249 in Michigan's Revised School Code (1976, Am. 2014) indicates that the annual year-end evaluations shall include performance goals and recommendations for training that would assist the teacher in meeting those goals. In order to make effective decisions about professional development needs, one must have a valid tool to evaluate teacher effectiveness on which to base those decisions about needs. Secondly, teacher evaluation systems are meant to be used to inform decisions regarding teacher tenure, retention, promotion, and termination (The Revised School Code, Am. 2014). The legislation includes provisions

that school districts must dismiss teachers rated as ineffective on three consecutive year-end evaluations. Because the stakes are high for both students and teachers, the Council for Exceptional Children (2013) declares that "evaluations must be based on multiple reliable measures and indicators that support valid measurement of special education teacher effectiveness," (p. 75).

The evaluation of special education teachers brings with it many challenges that are not necessarily present when evaluating general education teachers. Among these, special education teachers often work with a diverse group of students with varying abilities and needs across a variety of settings, and students with disabilities often require specific instructional strategies that will meet their individual needs (Johnson & Semmelroth, 2014). Capturing this complexity in roles and strategies can be difficult within a teacher evaluation tool designed with the typical general education teacher in mind. Also, while typical teacher evaluation instruments focus on instruction, special education teachers have many additional responsibilities that go beyond instruction (Jones & Brownell, 2014) that are essential to their jobs and should be captured in the evaluation process. These may include writing Individualized Education Plans (IEP's), attending team meetings, modifying curriculum, and handling difficult behaviors. In addition to the traditional reliance on observations of classroom instruction when evaluating teacher performance, teacher evaluations now often include a student growth component. Evaluation procedures that rely on calculated student growth and achievement based on student test scores bring challenges when evaluating teachers in special education (Buzick & Laitusis, 2010), especially with students with low incidence disabilities who can be very difficult to assess through traditional methods. Additionally,

Jones and Brownell (2014) point out that "academic achievement is not the only important outcome for students with disabilities: positive behavioral, social, adaptive, communication, and transition outcomes are also considered goals for many of these students," (p. 114). These many challenges make designing one tool that effectively captures effective teaching for a population of teachers including general education and special education teachers a daunting task. Teacher evaluation instruments and procedures that can capture effective, evidence-based instructional practices of special education teachers, address the many roles and responsibilities that are critical to being an effective special education teacher, and capture student growth using valid and reliable measures are needed (CEC, 2012).

Teacher evaluation is a hot topic in education today in Michigan. Legislators are making decisions regarding teacher evaluation instruments to be used and procedures surrounding the use of student growth data. Because the evaluation of special education teachers has many challenges, it is important that we involve administrators of special education who are conducting evaluations of special education teachers and have first-hand knowledge of these challenges in the discussions and decision-making processes regarding teacher evaluation.

Background of Problem

While teacher evaluation is a hot topic in Michigan education right now, it is not a newly- debated topic. Ellwood Cubberley suggested the use of rating scales for teacher evaluations in 1929. In that same year, William Wetzel proposed using measurements of student learning to determine teacher effectiveness (Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011). While the debate has taken different twists and turns through the years, we find

ourselves back at a place of determining how to best rate teachers' practices in the classroom and use student growth data to determine teacher effectiveness. The passing of the No Child Left behind Act (NCLB) in 2002 put teacher effectiveness in the spotlight, looking toward increasing teacher effectiveness as one of the solutions to closing the achievement gap (Learning Points Associates, 2005). Early in the 21st century, two major studies heavily criticized current teacher evaluation practices in the United States: Toch and Rothman's *Rush to Judgment* (2008) and *The Widget Effect* (Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, & Keeling, 2009). Criticisms from these studies included that current systems did not identify teacher effectiveness in relation to instruction and student achievement, nor did they differentiate quality and performance between teachers (Marzano, et. al., 2011). The Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) project, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and started in 2010, studied how teacher evaluation systems could fairly and reliably assess teacher effectiveness, thus adding to the body of research on teacher evaluation and the growing recommendations resulting from it (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2013).

In 2011, Michigan's Governor Snyder passed into law legislation that would change rules about tenure and teacher evaluation (Austin, 2014). Among other things, this legislation created the Michigan Council for Educator Effectiveness (MCEE), a commission with the charge of developing recommendations for a state-wide system for teacher and administrator evaluations (Ball, 2014). The final recommendations from MCEE were released in July of 2013. With the Michigan State Board of Education supporting the recommendations of the MCEE (Austin, 2014), the Legislature set to work creating legislation that incorporated the recommendations. House Bills 5223 and 5224,

which incorporate many of the recommendations, were passed by the House on May 14, 2014, but were stalled in the Senate. Provisions of the bills included requiring a student growth component to teacher evaluations and including the four MCEE- recommended teacher evaluation instruments (Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching, the Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model, The Thoughtful Classroom, and Five Dimensions of Teaching and Learning) on the Michigan Department of Education's (MDE) list of approved teacher evaluation tools (Ball, 2014). The Senate was able to pass Senate Bill No. 817 which amended section 1249 of the State School Code (MCL 380.1249) and was approved by the governor in June of 2014. While this bill included many of the components of the House bills, it did not specifically name the four recommended tools. Also, while the House bills made some minimal references to special education and tools for teachers of students with low incidence disabilities (Hunault, 2014), the Senate bill does not.

Very little of the discussion around teacher evaluation includes anything about special education teachers. Although little research exists to help guide the development of effective evaluation practices and tools for use with teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities, the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (TQ Center) have published reports intended to inform discussion and to give recommendations to policy-makers as they form policy around the evaluation of special educators (Holdheide, et. al., 2010 & CEC, 2012).

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the perceptions of special education administrators related to the effectiveness of teacher evaluation tools and processes currently being used in Michigan to evaluate teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities. To this end, special education administrators currently evaluating teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities will be surveyed to determine their perceptions of the effectiveness of the instruments and procedures that they currently use, to obtain their informed opinions of what is important to include in evaluation instruments for this population of teachers, and to examine how well the tools/processes currently being used match what special education administrators rate as important to include in evaluations of teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities.

Research Questions

1. How effective do special education administrators view current evaluation tools/systems being used in Michigan in evaluating teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities?
2. How would special education administrators in Michigan rate the importance of including certain components of teacher evaluation in tools/systems designed to evaluate teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities?
3. Do current teacher evaluation tools/systems being used in Michigan effectively address what special education administrators think is important to include in evaluations for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities?

Design, Data Collection, and Analysis

This study involves descriptive research using survey methods to obtain opinion data from special education administrators regarding the evaluation of teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities and the effectiveness of current evaluation practices with this group of teachers. Special education administrators who supervise teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities in Michigan were provided a survey to complete electronically. The email addresses of special education administrators were obtained from intermediate school district (ISD) and local district websites as well as from the Michigan Association of Administrators of Special Education (MAASE) Supervisors of Low-Incidence Populations (SLIP) email list. The survey was distributed to a total of 219 special education administrators throughout the state. While the intent was to conduct a census of administrators supervising teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities in Michigan, some of the targeted population may have been missed due to the limitations of databases. Because the study involves human subjects, approval as an exempt study was obtained from The Human Research Review Committee of Grand Valley State University prior to the dispersal of the survey.

The survey was developed by the researcher to address the research questions, focusing on what is important to include in teacher evaluations and the perceived effectiveness of current tools/systems in evaluating teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities. The survey questions were based on the theoretical framework provided by Danielson and McGreal (2000) and the recommendations of the Council for Exceptional Children (2012) The survey was field-tested prior to distribution with special education administrators who did not participate in the study. The survey was distributed

through email, completed electronically, and returned to the researcher electronically. The deadline for completion was two weeks after the survey was first dispersed, with a second dispersal occurring after one week to all administrators who did not complete the survey the first time. All of the data from the survey was represented quantitatively except for one question that allowed respondents to provide comments. Assistance was obtained from the Grand Valley State University Statistical Consulting Center in the development of the survey instrument, the collection of data, and the statistical analysis of the data collected.

Frequencies and percentages were determined for responses to survey items to allow for the examination of trends in opinions about the effectiveness of tools/systems and the importance of including certain items within teacher evaluations. Cross tabulations of data from survey items addressing the evaluation tool being used and survey items addressing the effectiveness of tools/systems were done to examine perceived effectiveness for the different tools being used and for the different types of modifications to tools being made. Averages were calculated for the survey item asking respondents to rate the importance of components of evaluation and the survey item asking respondents to rank order the components. The averages for these items were then used to determine overall ratings of the different components for the group of respondents.

Definition of Terms

Center-based programs: Center-based programs are special education programs for students who typically have low-incidence disabilities that are separate from general

education programs. Students in these settings typically need extensive supports and are involved in modified curriculums.

Cognitive Impairments: Cognitive impairments are defined in the Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education (2013) as impairments where development is at a rate at or below approximately two standard deviations below the mean on intellectual testing (typically an IQ of 70 or lower). Students with cognitive impairments also have low academic achievement and adaptive skills. Cognitive impairments are categorized as being mild, moderate, or severe depending on the severity of the impairment, reflective of IQ scores. (MDE, 2013)

Evidence-based practice: Evidence-based practices are interventions that have been determined to be effective based on high-quality research (Hudson, Browder, & Wood, 2013).

Individual Education Program (IEP): An IEP is a written individualized plan for a student with a disability who receives special education services. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004) requires that IEPs be updated annually for each student receiving special education services. The IEP document outlines the student's current level of academic and functional performance, goals, transition-related needs and supports, programs and services, and supplementary aids and services.

Low-incidence disabilities: Low incidence disabilities are defined for this study as disabilities that are significant and occur at a lower rate (typically 1% or less of the population of students would have such a disability). They include moderate to severe cognitive impairments, severe multiple impairments, and severe autism.

Severe multiple impairments: To be eligible as a student with severe multiple impairments, a student must have a combination of a moderate to severe cognitive impairment and at least one or two of the following: severe hearing impairment, severe visual impairment, severe health impairment, or a severe physical impairment (MDE, 2013)

Value-Added Modeling (VAM): Value added modeling is a method of measuring a teacher's impact on student achievement that attempts to weed out other factors that affect student performance scores such as individual ability levels and socioeconomic status (Goldhaber, 2010).

Delimitations of Study

Surveys were sent to all known special education administrators supervising center-based programs with teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities in the state in order to reduce sampling bias and ensure maximum participation. The intent was to get enough participation in this study so the results could be generalized to administrators of teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities throughout the state of Michigan. Because the state is enforcing new laws regarding teacher evaluation, teacher evaluation systems across the state should be becoming more similar to one another. Thus, given enough participation, the results from this study would have generalized fairly well across the state as districts begin using similar evaluation instruments to the ones recommended by Michigan Council for Educator Effectiveness (MCEE). It is difficult to generalize the results in other states where different evaluation systems and instruments are being used. However, in light of federal initiatives such as No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top, Michigan has started to implement teacher

evaluation policies and procedures that are similar to what other states have or will be using. Unfortunately, the response rate for this study was only 16%. This is not a high enough response rate to ensure validity when generalizing the results to the greater targeted population.

This study does not answer which of the tools recommended by the Michigan Council for Educator Effectiveness is considered most effective by the special education administrators being surveyed. While the survey respondents were grouped according to the tool they use in order to look at results related to effectiveness within each grouping, the results could not be compared between the groups based on tools used because the response rates were too low and the group sizes varied significantly.

This study does not examine the different ways that the targeted population is modifying the evaluation tools it is using. While a survey item did address whether the tool being used was modified for the entire district or specifically for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities, specifics regarding *how* tools have been modified were not explored. Likewise, this study does not provide guidance on how tools should be modified to be more effective for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities, although it does provide perception data that can act as a foundation for discussions regarding how tools should be modified.

Finally, while this study does provide information regarding the demographics of the respondents, it does not provide correlations between demographic data and perception data. For example, this study does not look at the relationship between the years that the tool has been used or the experience of the administrator and the perceived effectiveness of the tool.

Limitations of Study

Limitations of the study exist that result in concerns with the validity and reliability of the results. First, there are concerns with the validity of the survey as it was developed by the researcher and may contain unintentional bias. To reduce potential bias, the survey was based on research found within the literature review and was trialed on special education administrators prior to being used with the targeted population. Components of evaluation included in the survey were chosen based on the theoretical framework of Danielson and McGreal (2000) and the recommendations by the CEC (2012), not by the experience and knowledge-base of the researcher.

Another limitation of the study is that it most likely does not constitute a true census of the intended population. A definitive list of contact information for all administrators supervising teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities was not available. As a result, the researcher formulated a list from ISD and local district websites, a method that involved limitations due to the varying availability of needed information.

A third limitation of this study is that it relies on the willingness of those given the survey to respond in order to collect data. Low participation from those given the survey has increased nonresponse bias, resulting in decreased validity when looking at generalizing the responses and making conclusions pertaining to the evaluation of teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities throughout Michigan. To increase participation, the survey was sent out twice to the target population, but only 34 respondents completed the survey out of the 219 people given the survey. Those who chose to respond to the survey may not adequately represent the targeted population as a

whole due to self-selection. For example, those who chose to respond may have stronger opinions one way or the other than nonrespondents and, therefore, would not be representative of the targeted population. While there are some concerns regarding the validity of generalizations of the results of this study to all special education administrators evaluating teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities in the state of Michigan, the results do illustrate the opinions of a group of administrators on the topic of evaluation that can be used as a starting point for discussions and further research.

Organization of the Study

This concludes Chapter One which provides an overview of this study. Chapter Two focuses on a thorough review of the literature focusing on the topic of teacher evaluation which includes the theoretical framework used to guide the study, the research and legislation behind current teacher evaluation reform, and guiding reports on evaluating special education teachers from researchers and professional organizations. Chapter Three provides details about the design of the research. Chapter Four will include the results of the study including demographic information about the respondents and findings related to the research questions. Chapter Five will include a summary of the thesis consisting of conclusions, discussion, recommendations, and implications for policy and practice.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter serves as a review of literature addressing the current trends in teacher evaluation and the implications these policies and practices have on special education teachers. In order to have an understanding about the effectiveness of teacher evaluation policy and practices in Michigan, one must understand the research that sparked the movement toward reform of teacher evaluation policies and practices nation-wide, the legislation that supported the reform, and the challenges that have resulted from the reform. This chapter provides the reader with this foundational knowledge by reviewing (1) a comprehensive framework for effective teacher evaluation, (2) research that identifies problems within current teacher evaluation processes, (3) research and positional papers that offer recommendations for more effective teacher evaluation systems, (4) research done within Michigan addressing the recommended tools and procedures, (5) information about the four evaluation tools recommended by the MCEE, (6) research and positional papers addressing the challenges specific to evaluating special education teachers, and (7) recommendations from researchers and organizations for effective development and implementation of evaluation systems for special education teachers. There exists very little research on the effects of current teacher evaluation practices when applied to special education teachers. Most research or positional papers reviewed in this chapter express the need for further research on this topic.

Theoretical Framework

The framework for teacher evaluation posed by Charlotte Danielson and Thomas McGreal looks at two main purposes and three essential elements of teacher evaluation. In their book, *Teacher Evaluation to Enhance Professional Practice*, Danielson and

McGreal (2000) explain that the two main purposes of teacher evaluation are to encourage professional learning and to ensure quality of teaching. They propose three essential elements to effective teacher evaluation: a clear definition of effective teaching and the standards for acceptable performance (described as the "what" of teacher evaluation), procedures for assessing all aspects of teaching (described as the "how" of teacher evaluation), and well-trained evaluators.

Professional learning is fostered through the evaluation process when it involves self-assessment, reflection on practice, and collaboration with other professionals (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). In other words, the procedures and techniques involved in the *how* of the process are very important to ensuring professional growth. According to Danielson and McGreal, "if evaluation systems are well designed, teachers take an active role in the process and learn from their participation," (2000, p. 28). While the procedures involved in the process have a great effect on whether or not the system promotes professional learning, the *what* is also important. In order to engage in reflection about practice and collaboration with others, one should have a definition of effective teaching practices that is research-based and understood by all (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). Danielson and McGreal recognize the benefits that teachers receive from engaging in professional dialogue about effective teaching practices and levels of performance.

Quality of teaching is ensured when teachers and evaluators are provided a teacher evaluation system that includes a clear and coherent definition of effective teaching that is based on research (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). Equally important, standards of performance which allow for a collective understanding of levels of

performance and the relative importance of different evaluation criteria must be defined. This constitutes the *what* of the teacher evaluation system. The *how* of the system, specifically how teachers are provided opportunities to demonstrate performance of the effective teaching criteria defined in the teacher evaluation system, is also important in ensuring quality of teaching. Danielson and McGreal emphasize the importance of ensuring equitable procedures for participants and including opportunities to provide assistance to teachers who are not demonstrating adequate performance (2000).

In Danielson and McGreal's framework for teacher evaluation, training for evaluators and teachers is the third component of ensuring the intended results of quality assurance and professional learning within teacher evaluation systems (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). Training will lead to greater accuracy and consistency between evaluators when rating performance, thus increasing reliability. Also, by engaging in training around teacher evaluation, evaluators and teachers will experience professional learning through their involvement in dialogue around effective teaching practices (Danielson & McGreal, 2000).

This framework for teacher evaluation can be applied to evaluation systems meant for general education teachers as well as for those designed for evaluating special education teachers. It is helpful to use a framework such as this when determining the value of evaluation tools or systems, largely rooted in research within general education settings, as they are applied with teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities.

Synthesis of Research Literature

A Flawed System

Teacher effectiveness positively influences student achievement (MCEE, 2013; Weisberg, et al., 2009; Rivkin, et al., 2005). According to the theoretical framework of Danielson and McGreal (2000), teacher evaluation systems are intended to determine teacher effectiveness to ensure the quality of teaching and provide an avenue for professional growth in order to improve teacher effectiveness, and, consequently, improve student achievement. Research conducted by Robert Marzano (2012) in which he surveyed educators to determine their opinions regarding the two basic purposes of teacher evaluations (measurement of teacher quality and development of teachers' skills) showed that a majority of educators thought that teacher evaluations should be done for both purposes, but that the emphasis should be on teacher development. However, many argue that past practices around teacher evaluation have failed in both purposes (Marzano, 2012; Weisberg, et al., 2009).

The Widget Effect, a report prepared by The New Teacher Project in 2009, greatly criticizes teacher evaluation practices used at the time, stating several problems with the systems employed including that they do not differentiate performance among teachers as almost all teachers are rated as good or great, that they are not used to identify areas for professional development, and that poor performance goes unaddressed (Weisberg, et al., 2009). The report goes on to name flaws in the implementation of teacher evaluation systems as well, including that evaluations are often incomprehensive and rely on short, infrequent observations and that evaluators often lack training.

Recommendations for Effective Teacher Evaluation Practices

Acknowledging the importance of teacher effectiveness as well as the flaws within teacher evaluation practices, teacher evaluation has been on the forefront of education research and reform for the past several years. A result of this is a collection of recommendations for best practices for teacher evaluation. The Race to the Top (RTT) program, a federal competitive grant program administered by the U.S. Department of Education which began in 2009, provided guidance on teacher evaluations that include establishing approaches to measure student achievement growth, using multiple rating categories, conducting annual teacher evaluations that include constructive feedback to teachers, and using evaluations to inform decisions about professional development and personnel decisions (Hallgren, James-Burdumy, & Perez-Johnson, 2014). Under RTT, twelve states were granted nearly four billion over four years to spend on areas to reform K-12 education, including the development and implementation of teacher and administrator evaluation systems (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2013). Research done in 2013 that examined the progress that the RTT states were making in developing and implementing their evaluation systems based on RTT recommendations revealed several challenges in the process across the states involved, including difficulty ensuring that administrators conducted evaluations consistently, challenges related to addressing teachers' concerns with the changes to the system, and challenges related to building capacity and the sustainability of the new evaluation systems (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2013). The research did not include challenges specifically related to using the new systems with special education teachers.

The Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) project, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, was an extensive research project involving academics, thousands of educators from seven states, and educational organizations (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2013). The project's goal was to find better ways to identify and develop effective teaching in order to promote student growth and increase student preparedness for college and beyond. Lessons learned from the project include that the validity of evaluation results increased if observers were well-trained and multiple observations were conducted by different observers. The results also suggested that student surveys provide a good source of information on teacher effectiveness, that there should be multiple measures of teacher quality (including student growth data) that are balanced in weight to make the overall score, and that video is an effective means of providing feedback and training (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2013) .

Reform in Michigan

Born from Michigan's teacher tenure reform efforts (PA 102 of 2011), the Michigan Council for Educator Effectiveness (MCEE) sought to improve teacher effectiveness by developing a "fair, transparent, and feasible evaluation system for teachers and school administrators" (MCEE, 2013). To do this, the MCEE (in partnership with the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research) conducted a pilot study of teacher evaluation tools in thirteen local educational agencies (LEA's) that included frequent opportunities for local educators to provide feedback about the tools. In addition to the pilot study, the MCEE also conducted reviews of research on teacher evaluation, consulted with numerous experts in the area of teacher evaluation from across the country, and conducted several meetings with committee and community members.

The result of the committee's work was a report detailing recommendations on teacher evaluation, administrator evaluation, and professional teacher certification (MCEE, 2013). Recommendations for teacher evaluation included specifics about observations and procedures pertaining to the use of student growth. According to MCEE, evaluations should include the use of one of four recommended tools (Danielson's FFT, Marzano, 5D+, and Thoughtful Classroom), observers should be given training on using the tool and providing feedback, multiple observations must be conducted with at least one being unannounced, and qualified peers can conduct some of the observations. Recommendations about student growth included that the state should be involved in developing and supporting assessments in core-content areas, that the state should provide value-added modeling (VAM) scores for educators on state-provided assessments, that state-provided growth data can be used on teachers even if they do not directly teach the subject, and that school-level VAMs can be used for no more than 10% of a teacher's student growth component (MCEE, 2013). In content areas where no state growth data is available, acceptable alternative measures of student growth should be used for teacher evaluations according to the MCEE recommendations.

The report put out in December, 2013, by the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research detailing the results of its pilot study on the use of the recommended observation tools and VAM scores for teacher evaluation in Michigan brought up several concerns (Rowan, Schilling, Spain, Bhandari, Berger, & Graves, 2013). The pilot study involved thirteen participating school districts throughout Michigan who used one of the four MCEE-recommended teacher observation tools during the 2012-2013 school year. Data from the study showed that observations were only conducted by administrators in

all districts, but that teachers had involvement in the student growth portion of their evaluations. The median number of observations per teachers was four, the median number of teachers to evaluate per administrator was 25, and median number of hours spent throughout the year on teacher evaluation for an administrator was 248 hours (or 31 full days). Training was provided by vendors to all participating evaluators; however, only 39% of administrators reported confidence that their scoring would be comparable to others. Results of the study showed low reliability of scoring and low fidelity in scoring procedures. Evaluators often did not use the tool in the manner prescribed by the vendor. Reliability was improved with more evaluator training, increased number of observations, and the involvement of more than one observer. Principals had more favorable opinions of the tools and the quality of the process than teachers did overall, both teachers and principals expressed favorable views of conferencing activities involved in the process, and nearly half of all teachers and principals reported feeling that they spent too much time on the evaluation process (Rowan, et al., 2013).

The University of Michigan study also looked at the use of value-added modeling (VAM) scores in Michigan. According to the authors of the study, "value-added modeling attempts to measure a teacher's impact on student achievement (the 'value' he or she adds) apart from other factors that influence students' achievement, such as individual ability, socio-economic factors, and peer influences," (Rowan, et al., 2013, p. 20). The pilot study unveiled many poor practices being used when determining student growth for teacher evaluations. Among them, there was much inconsistency in what was used to measure growth among and within school districts. Also, schools often used teacher-developed or locally-developed assessment results to determine growth, which

made researchers question the meaningfulness of the data collected. The use of VAM scores can help to make the measurement of student growth for teacher evaluation a more uniformed process; however, the study points out some problems with using VAM in Michigan. Primarily, Michigan's current system of state assessment is not set up in a way that would provide scores for use on teacher evaluation in a timely manner, and only about 33% of teachers at best would be able to receive a VAM score because of the limited number of teachers who are involved with students in grades and subjects currently tested by the state (Rowan, et al., 2013). Overall, the authors of the study had made recommendations to the state of Michigan regarding how to more reliably use observation tools and utilize student data to measure growth. However, there was no mention of the effectiveness of the teacher evaluation tools with special education teachers, and there was no discussion of the use of VAM measurements with this population of teachers in this report.

Recommended Teacher Evaluation Tools

The MCEE and subsequent legislation has recommended four teacher evaluation tools: Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching (FFT), the Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model, the Thoughtful Classroom Teacher Effectiveness Framework (TC), and the 5 Dimensions of Teaching and Learning (MCEE, 2013; Ball, 2014).

Charlotte Danielson's framework for teaching. Charlotte Danielson has been a strong voice in the world of teacher evaluation (Danielson & McGreal, 2000; U.S. Department of Education, 2011). She argues that teacher evaluation should be based on research-based teaching standards, should include a range of sources of data and information, should provide opportunities for teachers at different stages to be involved

in different learning activities, and should be focused on professional learning (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). The Framework for Teaching includes 22 components including 76 smaller elements all organized into four domains: planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities (Danielson, 2014). Examining the different elements, there appear to be no elements that explicitly mention special education. However, several elements can be used to assess skills or attributes that are important in teachers of students with disabilities. They include knowledge of the various needs of students, differentiated outcomes, supervision of paraprofessionals, monitoring of student behavior, response to students (capturing teachable moments, persistence, seeking alternate approaches to help students be successful), engagement of families in the instructional program, and service to students. The Danielson Group does provide some resources for special education teachers and administrators on their website, including a webinar on using the FFT in special education and a paper that applies the FFT rubrics to special education scenarios (The Danielson Group, 2013). The FFT got the highest recommendation from the pilot study conducted by the University of Michigan Institute for Social Research, mostly due to its good measurement properties, sound technical systems, and preparedness to meet training needs (Rowan, et al., 2013).

The Marzano teacher evaluation model. This model is based on thousands of studies that span multiple decades (Marzano, 2011). It includes 60 elements across four domains: classroom strategies and behaviors, preparing and planning, reflecting on teaching, and collegiality and professionalism. There are elements in domains one and two that specifically address working with students with disabilities. These include

demonstrating value and respect for low expectancy students, asking questions of low expectancy students, probing incorrect answers with low expectancy students, and planning and preparing for the needs of special education students (Marzano, 2011). The resources provided by the Marzano Center to assist evaluators and teachers do not cover applying the tool with special education teachers. The University of Michigan Institute for Social Research expressed some concerns about the Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model in its pilot study, mainly about the complexity of the instrument and the high rates of inconsistency that users in the pilot study had regarding when and how to score items (Rowan et al., 2013).

The thoughtful classroom teacher effectiveness framework. This tool is based on a wide body of research on effective teaching as well as insight from over 250 teachers and administrators in the field (Silver Strong & Associates, 2014). The framework provides four cornerstones of effective instruction: organization, rules, and procedures; positive relationships; a culture of thinking and learning; and engagement and enjoyment (Weber, 2012). These four dimensions are considered to be the foundations of all successful classrooms. Five additional dimensions address instructional strategies used in five steps within a learning sequence: preparing students for new learning, presenting new learning, deepening and reinforcing learning, applying learning, and reflecting on and celebrating learning (Weber, 2012). The final dimension looks at professional practice, specifically around professional growth, commitment to the school and community, and professionalism (Silver Strong & Associates, 2014). Supporters of the Thoughtful Classroom Teacher Effectiveness Framework appreciate the simplicity of the tool (Weber, 2012). Again, while the tool does not specifically mention

special education, it does include components that are very applicable to special education teachers such as: organizes the classroom for safety and learning; provides clear directions for classroom tasks using a variety of modalities (e.g., verbal, visual, physical demonstration) and checks to make sure students understand their roles and responsibilities; develops an effective plan for managing student behavior that includes positive consequences, negative consequences, and an appropriate level of home involvement; works effectively with other adults in the classroom; manages non-instructional tasks efficiently; assesses students' background knowledge, skills, and interests; differentiates instruction and assessments to meet students' needs; shows care and concern for students as individuals; and communicates with students and the home (Silver Strong & Associates, 2014).

The 5D+ teacher evaluation rubric. This rubric was developed by the Center for Educational Leadership at the University of Washington and is the fourth teacher evaluation tool recommended by the MCEE. This tool consists of the five dimensions from the Five Dimensions of Teaching and Learning (purpose, student engagement, curriculum and pedagogy, assessment for student learning, and classroom environment and culture) as well as a sixth dimension, professional collaboration and communication (Center for Educational Leadership, 2012). These dimensions are further broken down into 13 sub-dimensions and 37 indicators. As with the other tools, several of the indicators found within this tool can address skills and attributes important for special educators: connection to standards, broader purpose and transferable skill; strategies that capitalize on the learning needs of students; differentiated instruction; scaffolding tasks; accessibility and use of materials; managing student behavior; and collaboration with peers and administrators to improve student learning (Center for Educational Leadership,

2012). The pilot study conducted by the University of Michigan Institute for Social Research did indicate some concerns regarding the use of the 5D tool, specifically that it is lengthy and that some users reported lower satisfaction with the vendor's technical systems. Overall, the study did recommend it as a tool (Rowan et al., 2013).

In studying the four recommended teacher evaluation tools, it is quite apparent to see how parts of the tools could be used with teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities. However, it is not clear whether the tools provide a comprehensive measurement encompassing all the areas that define an effective special education teacher. Also, much of the evidence or examples included in the tools that illustrate the different elements apply more to a general education setting with typically-developing students, leaving it up to the observer to identify applicable evidence for teachers of students with disabilities. Only one of the four tool vendors indicates on their website that they provide any relevant training or resources that address how to effectively use the tool with special education teachers. The lack of adequate training and resources is a trend being seen throughout the United States as only 12.4% of special education administrator respondents in a study done by the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality said that they received training designed specifically for evaluators of special education teachers, although 60.2% had mandated training on general teacher evaluation (Holdheide, et al., 2010).

Challenges in the Evaluation of Special Education Teachers

There is a lack of research addressing the effectiveness of teacher evaluation processes in determining teacher quality in special education teachers, which may be the result of the many challenges associated with measuring teacher effectiveness in special

education (Jones & Brownell, 2014). Among these challenges is the fact that special education teachers are often required to take on different roles to meet the needs of a highly-diverse student population with varying needs (CEC, 2012; Johnson & Semmelroth, 2013). For example, special education teachers may provide direct one-on-one instruction, collaborate with another teacher in a co-taught classroom, or serve a consultative role to teachers throughout a school (CEC, 2012). In addition, special education teachers are required to take on additional duties and responsibilities beyond instruction that are usually not required to the same degree of general education teachers, but that are essential to their success as educators of students with disabilities (CEC, 2012; Holdheide, et al., 2010; Johnson & Semmelroth., 2013; Jones & Brownell, 2014). These duties include IEP development, increased parent/guardian engagement, meeting coordination and facilitation, compliance with legal mandates, collaboration with other professionals on student needs and care, providing social and behavioral interventions, and numerous paperwork requirements (Holdheide, et al., 2010). Johnson and Semmelroth (2013) explain the challenges with evaluating special education teachers when they state, "The variability in conditions, environments, student populations, and even student goals makes the development of a single evaluation system problematic," (p. 72).

Besides added responsibilities, special educators also often need to employ instructional methods that differ from those found effective in general education. "Although many teacher evaluation instruments explicitly address teachers' contributions to meeting the needs of 'diverse' learners, they may not consider the special skills and evidence-based instructional methods for students with disabilities," (Holdheide, et al.,

2010, p. 1). Several studies demonstrate the effectiveness of systematic instruction, consisting of such methods as task analysis, systematic prompting and fading, and generalization of skills, when teaching students with severe disabilities (Collins, 2012; Spooner, Knight, Browder, Jimenez, & DiBiase, 2011; Spooner, Knight, Browder, & Smith, 2012). The National Professional Development Center on ASD has also identified evidence-based practices (several considered a part of systematic instruction) that have been found to be effective with students with autism including prompting, time delay, reinforcement, task analysis and chaining, shaping, computer-assisted instruction, functional behavior assessment, peer-mediated instruction, positive behavior interventions and supports, social skills groups, response interruption and redirection, visual supports, voice output communication aids, video modeling, social stories, and picture exchange communication system, among others (The Exceptional Children Division, 2011). The tools recommended by the MCEE do not contain these types of evidence-based practices specifically, requiring observers to have knowledge of these practices and how they might fit into the elements found within the tools. For example, managing student behavior (which is found in some manner in each tool) could include evidence-based practices such as the use of positive behavior interventions and supports, social stories, systematic prompting, video modeling, and response interruption and redirection.

In a study conducted by the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality where state special education directors and members of the CEC Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE) were surveyed, 55.7% of respondents indicated that they modified the observation tool they used in some way to differentiate it

for special education teachers (Holdheide, et al., 2010). The authors of the study point out that this practice is "unsystematic and, therefore, highly dependent on the knowledge base and skill set of the evaluator," (Holdheide, et al., 2010, p. 16). They go on to suggest that "this rather subjective method could be replaced with a skillfully and explicitly designed rubric delineating clear expectations and criteria for performance," (Holdheide, et al., 2010, p. 16).

The measurement of student growth, a key component in the teacher evaluation systems being introduced throughout the United States today, is another area that brings with it many challenges in special education. A significant challenge for using data from standardized state assessments is that there are typically small sample sizes in special education, making results statistically less reliable (Buzick & Laitusis, 2010; Holdheide, et al., 2010; Johnson & Semmelroth, 2013). This is especially true in programs for students with low-incidence disabilities. Researchers also point out the difficulty in developing standards of growth for students with disabilities and pose the question of what constitutes enough growth (Holdheide, et al., 2010; Johnson & Semmelroth, 2013). Because students with disabilities make up such a heterogeneous group with high variability in performance levels, what constitutes as low growth for one student may be high growth for another. A third area of challenge is how accommodations used on tests affect the overall outcomes of measuring growth (Buzick & Laitusis, 2010). Because student growth measures typically involve results from tests taken at different times throughout the year or from year to year, changes in accommodations provided on the tests could affect outcomes. "The implication is that the change in test scores from year to year may be related to inconsistency in the use of accommodations and modifications

rather than true changes in knowledge, skills, and abilities over time," (Buzick & Laitusis, 2010).

Because of the difficulties with using student growth models based on standardized tests, many schools are looking at alternative ways to measure growth (Holdheide, et al., 2010; Johnson & Semmelroth, 2013). While the use of Student Learning Objectives or IEP goals as evidence of student growth may seem a more feasible option, caution is to be taken because of the high reliance on the teacher's capability to write high-quality goals and utilize reliable and valid data to monitor growth (Holdheide, et al., 2010). The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) does not support the use of a student's IEP goals as evidence of student growth for teacher evaluations because it argues that in doing so, one could compromise the integrity of the IEP (CEC, 2012).

Recommendations for the Evaluation of Special Education Teachers

Many recommendations have been made regarding the development of teacher evaluation systems for special education teachers. The CEC and others recommend the use of one teacher evaluation system for all educators, instead of using a separate tool or system for special education teachers (CEC, 2012; Holdheide, 2013). This practice will help to support collaboration between general education and special education, will encourage inclusive practices where all teachers and administrators share accountability in the progress of students with disabilities, and will provide a common understanding of evidence-based practices that can support academic and social growth of students (Holdheide, 2013). However, these inclusive teacher evaluation systems should take into account the different roles and responsibilities that special education teachers take on and

the different contexts in which they teach (CEC, 2012; Holdheide, et al, 2010), should include evidence-based practices that have been shown to be effective in special education (CEC, 2012; Holdheide, 2013; Johnson & Semmelroth, 2013), and should address the unique curricular needs of students with disabilities such as transition-related or behavioral needs (Holdheide, 2013). To do this, Holdheide (2013) recommends strengthening existing observational tools by including explicit examples that address these areas. This should be done by teams at the state or district level to avoid the subjectivity resulting from leaving this task up to individual evaluators. She also recommends utilizing the pre-observation conference to include in-depth discussion about the use of instructional strategies effective with students with disabilities (Holdheide, 2013). In addition, evaluators must be provided with professional development that specifically addresses using observation tools to evaluate special education teachers (Holdheide, et al., 2010).

The study by the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality referenced earlier in this paper indicated that a majority of special education administrators surveyed from across the country agreed that student achievement data should be used as a source when determining teacher effectiveness through the evaluation process (Holdheide, et al., 2010). However, there has been little research on using this strategy with special education teachers, leading the CEC to warn that student growth data should not be the sole indicator of teacher effectiveness in teacher evaluations and that more research should be done regarding the effectiveness of statistical models such as value-added models (VAM) before they are applied to teachers (CEC, 2012). Guidance needs to be provided regarding the selection and/or development of appropriate assessments or

Student Learning Objectives, the weighting of growth measures, and the appropriate use of accommodations (Holdheide, 2013).

Summary

While research has demonstrated the significant impact that teacher effectiveness has on student achievement, many have argued that teacher evaluation systems meant to rate teacher quality and improve teaching have traditionally failed (Marzano, 2012; Weisberg, 2009; Danielson & McGreal, 2000). The federal government has had multiple initiatives and changes in legislation within the last several years that have focused on teacher evaluation. These have included the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 (Learning Points Associates, 2007) and the Race to the Top federal grant program started in 2009 (National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, 2014).

As a result of federal reform around teacher evaluation, Michigan and other states have worked to adopt new legislation about teacher evaluation in order to create more effective systems state-wide. PA 102 of 2011 created the Michigan Council for Educator Effectiveness (MCEE), a committee that held discussions with community members and experts in teacher evaluation and conducted research in partnership with the University of Michigan on teacher evaluation in Michigan. The result of the committee's work was a report detailing recommendations on teacher evaluation, including recommended teacher evaluation tools and recommended practices for including student growth (MCEE, 2013).

While the changes in practice and tools hold promise, the research behind them has not included special education. In response to the push toward reform of teacher evaluation systems and despite a general lack of research specifically related to the evaluation of special education teachers, the Council for Exceptional Children and others

in special education have provided guidance on developing systems of evaluation for special education teachers (CEC, 2012; Holdheide, et. al., 2013). In doing so, the many challenges of evaluating teachers in special education have been brought to light. These include the challenge of capturing the complexity and variability of special education teachers' roles and responsibilities within a teacher evaluation tool (CEC, 2012; Holdheide, et. al, 2013; Johnson & Semmelroth, 2013; Jones & Brownwell, 2014), the need to include evidence-based practices that are effective with students with disabilities that may differ from those used with students without disabilities (Holdheide, et. al, 2013; Johnson & Semmelroth, 2013; Jones & Brownell, 2013), and the challenges with using student growth data with special education teachers (Buzick & Laitusis, 2010; Holdheide, et al., 2013).

Conclusion

In regards to all aspects of teacher evaluation systems, special education teachers and administrators should be involved in the process of developing the system (CEC, 2012; Holdheide, et al., 2010). It is only by doing so that the full richness of a special education teachers' effectiveness can be captured within the evaluation process. In reviewing the literature, it appears as though special education has largely been left out of the discussion and research regarding teacher evaluation. This study attempts to include administrators of special education in that discussion by gleaning their opinions about current practices and best practices.

Chapter Three: Research Design

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the perceptions of special education administrators related to the evaluations of teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities and the effectiveness of teacher evaluation tools and processes currently being used in Michigan with this population of teachers.

The following are the research questions this study addresses:

1. How effective do special education administrators view current evaluation tools/systems being used in Michigan in evaluating teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities?
2. How would special education administrators in Michigan rate the importance of including certain components of teacher evaluation in tools/systems designed to evaluate teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities?
3. Do current teacher evaluation tools/systems being used in Michigan effectively address what special education administrators think is important to include in evaluations for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities?

This chapter will give an overview of the procedures employed in the collection of data for this study. Specifically, it will look at the participants of the study, the survey instrument to be used, methods for collecting data, and how the data will be analyzed.

Participants

The target population in this study includes all special education administrators who supervise teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities in Michigan. The list of administrators to receive a survey for completion was formulated through a review of ISD and local district websites to obtain names and emails of special education

administrators who may supervise teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities. The names and email addresses collected through this process were compared to email lists obtained from the Michigan Association of Administrators of Special Education (MAASE) Supervisors of Low Incidence Populations (SLIP) committee. While the intent was to conduct a census of administrators who supervise teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities, some administrators may have unintentionally been missed due to limitations of databases and of the self-identification of administrators. Because this study involves human subjects, approval was obtained from the Human Research Review Committee through Grand Valley State University prior to the dispersal of the survey.

This population of evaluators was specifically targeted because of the lack of studies regarding the evaluation of special education teachers and because of the significant difficulties faced when trying to apply recommended evaluation processes and tools to teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities. Administrators who are evaluating teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities have first-hand knowledge about the difficulties of evaluating this population of teachers. Through experience, they will have informed opinions about what is important to have in evaluation tools and processes for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities. They will also have opinions about the effectiveness of current systems based on their experience evaluating teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities. Additionally, the target population was chosen because the voices of administrators of special education programs for students with low-incidence disabilities have traditionally not been included in the research on effective teacher evaluation practices.

Instrumentation

A survey was developed with the assistance of the Grand Valley State University Statistical Consulting Center to address the research questions. Because the instrument was developed by the researcher, no copyright permissions were required. The survey contains contextual questions about the respondent's experience in special education administration, his or her experience with teacher evaluations, and the current evaluation instruments/processes that he or she is using. It contains statements regarding the effectiveness of different aspects of the evaluation tools currently being used. The participant responded by choosing the degree of which he or she agreed with each statement. The survey also contains items in which the respondent could rate the importance of the inclusion of certain components within an instrument for the evaluation of teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities. The evaluation components for consideration that were included in the survey were based on the research found within the literature review of this study, with specific influence from the work of Danielson and McGreal (2000) as well as recommendations from the Council for Exceptional Children (2013). To assess its effectiveness, the survey was tested on a group of special education administrators not involved in the study prior to its use.

Danielson and McGreal (2000) built a framework for teacher evaluation based on the two main purposes of teacher evaluation (quality assurance and professional learning) and the three main components of effective evaluation (a clear definition of effective teaching, techniques and procedures that support the purpose, and training). Table 1 shows how the survey questions are connected to these purposes and main components of teacher evaluation.

Table 1: Use of Danielson and McGreal's Work in the Development of Survey

		Main Purposes of Teacher Evaluation	
		Teaching Quality Assurance	**Professional Learning**
Main Components of Evaluation	**Definition of effective teaching, including levels of performance (What)**	Survey Items: My teacher evaluation tool/system adequately includes evidence-based practices for teaching students with low incidence disabilities. My current evaluation tool/system includes only instructional strategies that are applicable to teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities. My teacher evaluation tool/system adequately measures a teacher's effectiveness within the various roles and responsibilities of a teacher of students with low-incidence disabilities. My current evaluation system provides a clear picture of effective teaching and the standards by which teachers will be assessed in a way that teachers of students with low incidence disabilities understand what is expected of them.	Survey items: My current evaluation tool/system adequately provides feedback to teachers of students with low incidence disabilities about their teaching practices in order to assist them in determining areas for improvement and developing their skills.
	Techniques and procedures (How)	My current evaluation tool/system adequately provides for the use of multiple sources of data regarding teacher effectiveness. My teacher evaluation tool/system effectively and fairly uses students' growth data as part of the teacher evaluation system for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities.	My current evaluation tool/system effectively ties the teacher evaluation process to professional development opportunities for teachers of students with low incidence disabilities. My current evaluation system provides adequate opportunities for teachers to be involved in self-

		We have clear processes and procedures for completing teacher evaluations that ensure reliability.	assessment/reflection processes and collaboration with other teachers and administrators about effective teaching practices for students with low-incidence disabilities.
	Training for evaluators and teachers	I have received adequate training on how to effectively use my current evaluation tool/system to evaluate teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities.	I have received adequate training on how to effectively use my current evaluation tool/system to evaluate teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities.

Based on *Teacher evaluation to enhance professional practice* (Danielson & McGreal, 2000).

Table 2 illustrates the connections between survey items and specific recommendations made by the CEC (2012) regarding the evaluation of special education teachers. In addition to the survey items included in Table 2, the recommendations by the CEC were also used to determine the components of evaluation to include in survey items that ask respondents to rate the importance of the inclusion of those components within evaluations of teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities.

Table 2: Use of CEC Recommendations in Development of Survey

CEC Recommendation	Survey Item
Evaluations should measure the use of evidence-based practices	My teacher evaluation tool/system adequately includes evidence-based practices for teaching students with low incidence disabilities.
Evaluations should identify the complex role of the special education teacher	My teacher evaluation tool/system adequately measures a teacher's effectiveness within the various roles and responsibilities of a teacher of students with low-incidence disabilities.
Evaluation should be based on multiple measures and indicators	My current evaluation tool/system adequately provides for the use of multiple sources of data regarding teacher effectiveness.
Evaluators must be trained in effective evaluation practices	I have received adequate training on how to effectively use my current evaluation tool/system to evaluate teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities.
Evaluation should include fair and accurate representations of student growth	My teacher evaluation tool/system effectively and fairly uses students' growth data as part of the teacher evaluation system for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities.
Evaluation systems must identify appropriate professional development opportunities and support continuous improvement	My current evaluation tool/system effectively ties the teacher evaluation process to professional development opportunities for teachers of students with low incidence disabilities. My current evaluation tool/system adequately provides feedback to teachers of students with low incidence disabilities about their teaching practices in order to assist them in determining areas for improvement and developing their skills.

CEC recommendations taken from *The Council for Exceptional Children's position on special education teacher evaluation* (CEC, 2012).

Data Collection

The survey was distributed in January of 2015 by email to the intended recipients. It was distributed a second time after one week to those who did not respond to the first distribution. The deadline for completion was two weeks after the survey was first dispersed. The email addresses of the intended recipients (special education administrators supervising teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities) were obtained from ISD and local district websites as well as from the MAASE Supervisors of Low-Incidence Populations (SLIP) email list.

Data Analysis

Assistance was obtained from the Grand Valley State University Statistical Consulting Center in the development of the survey instrument, the collection of data, and the statistical analysis of the data collected. The statistical analysis of the data focuses on answering the research questions. The analysis looks at trends in opinions about what is important to include in evaluations of teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities as well as trends in perceptions about the effectiveness of the tools/systems used. Trends were determined by looking at frequencies and percentages of responses within given survey items. Data from questions regarding the effectiveness of the tools/systems were cross tabulated with data from questions regarding tools used for evaluation and the modifications of the given tools. The cross tabulations allow for the data regarding effectiveness to be analyzed for different tools and for different types of modifications of tools. Table 3 provides details of the statistical analysis used to examine the survey results.

Table 3: Statistical Analysis to Answer Research Questions

Research Question	Correlating Survey Items	Statistical Analysis
How effective do special education administrators view current evaluation systems being used in Michigan in evaluating teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities?	Survey Item 3: What teacher evaluation tool does your school use? a. Tool b. Modification Survey Item 10: Please indicate your agreement with the following statements: • My current evaluation tool/system adequately provides feedback to teachers of students with low incidence disabilities about their teaching practices in order to assist them in determining areas for improvement and developing their skills Survey Item 11: Please indicate your agreement with the following statements: • My current evaluation system provides a clear picture of effective teaching and the standards by which teachers will be assessed in a way that teachers of students with low incidence disabilities understand what is expected of them • We have clear processes and procedures for completing teacher evaluations that ensure reliability Survey Item 12: : Please indicate your agreement with the following statements: • My current evaluation tool/system adequately determines the effectiveness of teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities. • I have to modify my current evaluation tool/process to make it applicable and/or effective for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities.	For Survey Item 3: • Frequencies/Percentages • Cross tabulation of tool used by modification. For Survey Items 10, 11, and 12: • Frequencies/ Percentages • Cross tabulation of tool used by agreement with the statement about effectiveness • Cross tabulation of modification to tool by agreement with the statement about effectiveness
How would special education administrators in Michigan rate the importance of including certain components of teacher evaluation in tools/systems for the evaluation of teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities?	Survey Item 7: Please rate the following components to indicate the importance of their inclusion in an evaluation system for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities: • Evidence based practices for teaching students with low-incidence disabilities • The roles and responsibilities of special education teachers • Student growth data • Multiple sources of data regarding teacher effectiveness • Opportunities for professional learning embedded within the evaluation process • Plans for professional growth and development tied to the evaluation process • Training of evaluators Survey Item 8: Please rank order from 1 to 7 the importance of the following components of teacher evaluations for teachers of students with low incidence disabilities. The most important component would be	For Survey Items 7 and 8: • Frequencies/ Percentages • Average of scores to provide an overall rank order of evaluation components

	numbered 1 and the least important would be numbered 7: • Evidence based practices for teaching students with low incidence disabilities • The roles and responsibilities of special education teachers • Student growth data • Multiple sources of data regarding teacher effectiveness • Opportunities for professional learning embedded within the evaluation process • Plans for professional growth and development tied to the evaluation process • Training of evaluators	
Do current teacher evaluation tools/processes being used in Michigan effectively address what special education administrators think is important to include in evaluations for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities?	Survey Item 3: What teacher evaluation tool does your school use? • Tool • Modification Survey Item 7: Please rate the following components to indicate the importance of their inclusion in an evaluation system for teachers of students with low incidence disabilities • Evidence based practices for teaching students with low-incidence disabilities • The roles and responsibilities of special education teachers • Student growth data • Multiple sources of data regarding teacher effectiveness • Opportunities for professional learning embedded within the evaluation process • Plans for professional growth and development tied to the evaluation process • Training of evaluators Survey Item 8: Please rank order from 1 to 7 the importance of the following components of teacher evaluations for teachers of students with low incidence disabilities. The most important component would be numbered 1 and the least important would be numbered 7: • Evidence based practices for teaching students with low-incidence disabilities • The roles and responsibilities of special education teachers • Student growth data • Multiple sources of data regarding teacher effectiveness • Opportunities for professional learning embedded within the evaluation process • Plans for professional growth and development tied to the evaluation process • Training of evaluators	For Survey Item 3: • Frequencies/Percentages • Cross tabulation of tool used by modification. For Survey Items 7 and 8: • Frequencies/ Percentages • Average of scores to provide an overall rank order of evaluation components For Survey Items 9, 10, and 11: • Frequencies/ Percentages • Cross tabulation of tool used by agreement with the statement about effectiveness • Cross tabulation of modification to tool by agreement with the statement about effectiveness

	Survey Item 9: Please indicate your agreement with the following statements: • My current evaluation tool/system adequately includes evidence-based practices for teaching students with low- incidence disabilities • My current evaluation tool/system includes only instructional strategies that are applicable to teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities • My current evaluation tool/system adequately measures a teacher's effectiveness within the various roles and responsibilities of a teacher of students with low-incidence disabilities • My current evaluation tool/system effectively and fairly uses student growth data as part of the teacher evaluation system for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities Survey Item 10: Please indicate your agreement with the following statements: • My current evaluation system provides adequate opportunities for teachers to be involved in self-assessment/ reflection processes and collaboration with other teachers and administrators about effective teaching practices for students with low-incidence disabilities • My current teacher evaluation system effectively ties the teacher evaluation process to professional development opportunities for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities Survey Item 11: Please indicate your agreement with the following statements: • My current evaluation tool/system adequately provides for the use of multiple sources of data regarding teacher effectiveness • I have received adequate training on how to effectively use my current teacher evaluation tool/system in order to evaluate teachers of students with low incidence disabilities	

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the research design. This study involves descriptive research conducted through the completion of a survey by special education administrators supervising teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities. The survey was developed by the researcher based on the work of Danielson and McGreal (2000) as well as recommendations by the CEC (2012). Data collected was analyzed to determine trends in the levels of perceived effectiveness of evaluation tools/systems

currently being used in Michigan to evaluate teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities, to determine how important administrators view certain components of evaluation when applied to the evaluation of this population of teachers, and to determine how effective respondents view their tools/systems being in the components of evaluation that they rated as being most important. Perception data related to effectiveness was looked at as a whole for all respondents, specifically for respondents reporting the use of the different tools, and specifically for respondents reporting the use of different types of modifications.

Chapter Four: Results

This chapter presents the results of the survey including data regarding the demographic information of the respondents, frequencies of responses to survey questions, and the statistical analysis of the data in order to answer the research questions.

Context

The survey was distributed to 219 special education administrators throughout the state of Michigan. From that population, 40 administrators responded to the survey. Five of the respondents indicated that they do not evaluate teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities, so they were excluded from the rest of the survey. The relatively low response rate may be a result of the nature of the jobs of the intended audience. Email surveys may not have been the most effective way to obtain information from these indviduals who have very demanding and time-intensive jobs.

The respondents have varying levels of experience within their jobs and varying experiences with the teacher evaluation tools that they use. Of the 34 respondents who completed the demographic section of the survey, 35.29% have been a special education administrator for 1-5 years, 26.47% for 6-10 years, 17.65% for 11-15 years, and 20.59% for 16+ years. The majority of respondents (76.47%) have used the tool that they are currently using to evaluate teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities for 2-5 years. Table 1 provides information regarding the number of years that respondents have been using their evaluation tools.

Table 4: Years Using Evaluation Tool

Answer Choices	Responses	
1 year	**11.76%**	4
2-3 years	**35.29%**	12
4-5 years	**41.18%**	14
6+ years	**11.76%**	4
Total		**34**

While the number of teachers that respondents are responsible to evaluate varied, the majority (58.82%) evaluate 9-16 teachers each school year. Twenty-one percent reported evaluating 1-8 teachers, 8.82% evaluate 17-24 teachers, and 11.76% evaluate 25+ teachers. Over 80% of respondents reported that they spend between 4 and 11 hours per teacher on evaluations each year. Table 5 provides detail regarding the amount of time that the respondents spend on teacher evaluation per teacher.

Table 5: Time Spent Per Teacher on Evaluation

Answer Choices	Responses	
1-3 hours/ teacher	**2.94%**	1
4-7 hours/ teacher	**41.18%**	14
8-11 hours/ teacher	**41.18%**	14
12+ hours/ teacher	**14.71%**	5
Total		**34**

Respondents indicated the use of different tools for evaluation. The majority of the respondents (16 out of 34) indicated that they use Danielson. The next most-used tool was a locally-developed tool (8 out of 34 respondents), followed by Marzano (5 out of 34 respondents). The Thoughtful Classroom and 5+D tools were each used by two of the respondents while one respondent reported using a tool from another vendor. Of the 34

people responding to the question, 12 stated that they do not modify their tool, 10 said that the whole district uses a modified version of their tool, and 12 indicated that their tool is modified specifically for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities. Table 6 provides detail regarding tools used and modifications to the given tools.

Table 6: Tools Used and Modifications

Tool	Not modified	Modified for District	Modified for Teachers of Students with Low-Incidence Disabilities	Total
Marzano	1	1	3	5 (14.71%)
Danielson FFT	5	5	6	16(47.06%)
5+ D	1	0	1	2 (5.88%)
Thoughtful Classroom	2	0	0	2 (5.88%)
Tool from Another Vendor	0	1	0	1 (2.94%)
Locally-Developed Tool	3	3	2	8 (23.53%)
Total	12 (35.3%)	10 (29.4%)	12(35.3%)	34

Findings

In order to answer the research questions, frequencies and percentages of responses to the survey questions were obtained and cross tabulations of the data from different questions were done using the predictive analytics software SPSS.

Research Question One

Research question one asks the following: How effective do special education administrators view current evaluation systems being used in Michigan in evaluating teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities? To answer this question, the data from survey items addressing overall effectiveness based on the work of Danielson and McGreal (2000) were looked at to determine trends. Cross tabulations of the data from these survey items by the data from the survey items addressing tool used and

modifications to the tool were done as well to compare responses about effectiveness for given tools and for different types of modifications.

Respondents varied in their responses about the general effectiveness of the tools currently being used to evaluate teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities. For most of the survey items, the largest percentage of the respondents somewhat agreed with the statements about effectiveness. Table 7 shows that while 30.30% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their tools adequately determine the effectiveness of teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities, 21.21% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, leaving 48.48% to somewhat agree. A majority of the respondents agreed to some extent that their current evaluation tool/system adequately provides feedback to teachers about their teaching practices in order to assist them in determining areas for improvement, while only 18% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. The respondents reported the least amount of agreement with the statement about their tool providing a clear picture of effective teaching and the standards by which teachers will be assessed in a way that teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities understand what is expected of them. Thirty-six percent of respondents disagreed with this statement. While those reporting full disagreement with the statements were the minority in each survey item, it is important to note that almost 70% of respondents reported that they have to modify their current evaluation tool/system to make it applicable or effective for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities.

Table 7: Agreement with Statements Involving Overall Effectiveness

	Strongly Agree	**Agree**	**Somewhat Agree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
My current evaluation tool/system adequately determines the effectiveness of teachers of students with low incidence disabilities.	3 9.09%	7 21.21%	16 48.48%	4 12.12%	3 9.09%
I have to modify my current evaluation tool/system to make it applicable and/or effective for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities.	7 21.21%	16 48.48%	5 15.15%	4 12.12%	1 3.03%
My current evaluation tool/system adequately provides feedback to teachers of students with low incidence disabilities about their teaching practices in order to assist them in determining areas for improvement and developing their skills	4 12.12%	10 30.30%	13 39.39%	4 12.12%	2 6.06%
My current evaluation system provides a clear picture of effective teaching and the standards by which teachers will be assessed in a way that teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities understand what is expected of them	3 9.09%	8 24.24%	10 30.30%	9 27.27%	3 9.09%
We have clear processes and procedures for completing teacher evaluations that ensure reliability	2 6.06%	8 24.24%	15 45.45%	8 24.24%	0 0%

One must look further into the data to determine relationships between tools used or modifications applied to the tools and perceived effectiveness. Looking at cross tabulations of the survey items in Table 7 by the tool used, significant trends do not stand out (See Tables A1, A3, A5, and A7). It is difficult to compare data between different tools because the number of respondents is so low for some of the tools, and the number of respondents varies significantly between the tools. However, when looking at a cross tabulation of data on effectiveness by data regarding modifications to the tool, one can see that those who modified their tool specifically for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities were more likely to agree or strongly agree to the statement about the adequacy of the tool in determining the effectiveness of teachers (See Figure 1).

Comparisons of data between the three groups related to modifications made to the tool are able to be done because the groups are comparable in size (12, 10, and 12).

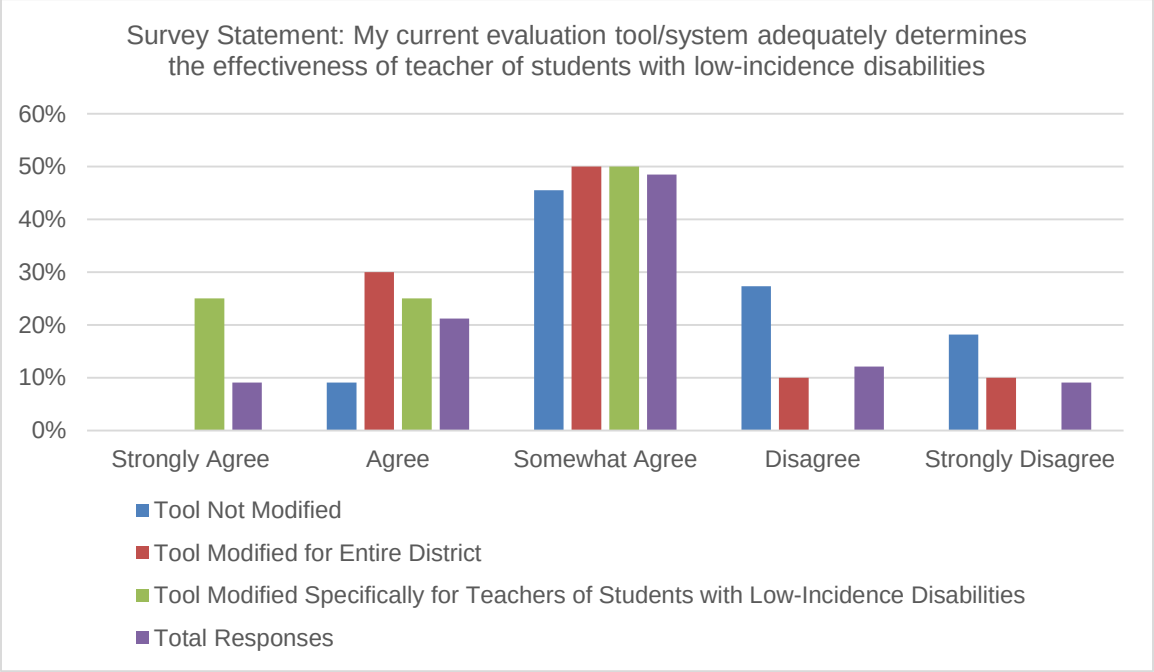


Figure 1: Clustered Bar Chart of Modification of Tool by Agreement with a Statement About Determining Effectiveness of Teachers

This trend continues for the other four statements within this grouping (see Figures 2-4). Not only were respondents who indicated that they use a tool that has been modified specifically for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities more likely to agree or strongly agree to the statements about effectiveness of the tool, they were also less likely to disagree or strongly disagree with the statements. Respondents who indicated that they use a tool that has been modified for the entire district also expressed a higher level of agreement with the statements regarding the effectiveness of their tools than respondents who indicated that they do not use a modified tool.

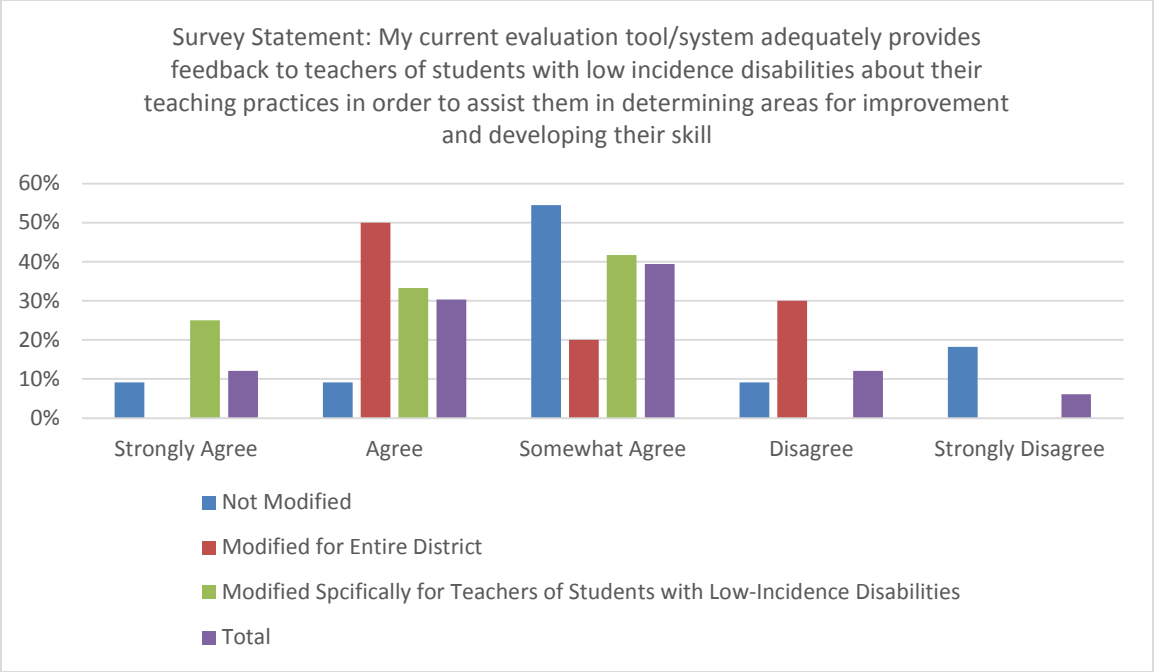


Figure 2: Clustered Bar Chart of Modification of Tool by Agreement with a Statement About Adequate Feedback

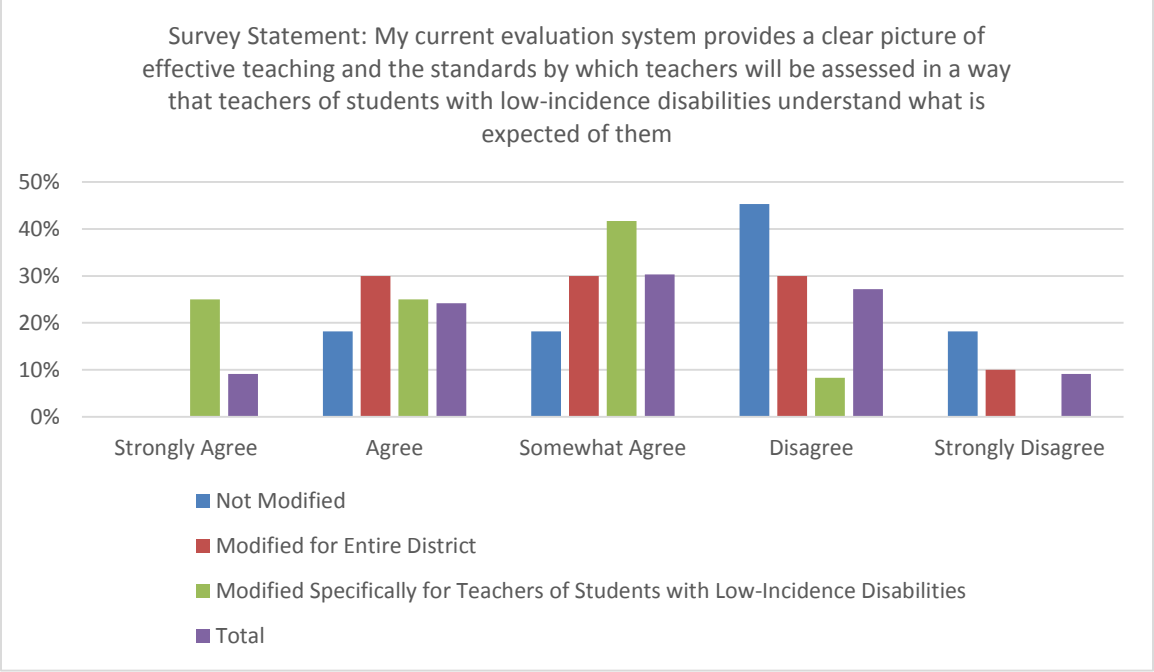


Figure 3: Clustered Bar Chart of Modification of Tool by Agreement with a Statement About Understanding Expectations

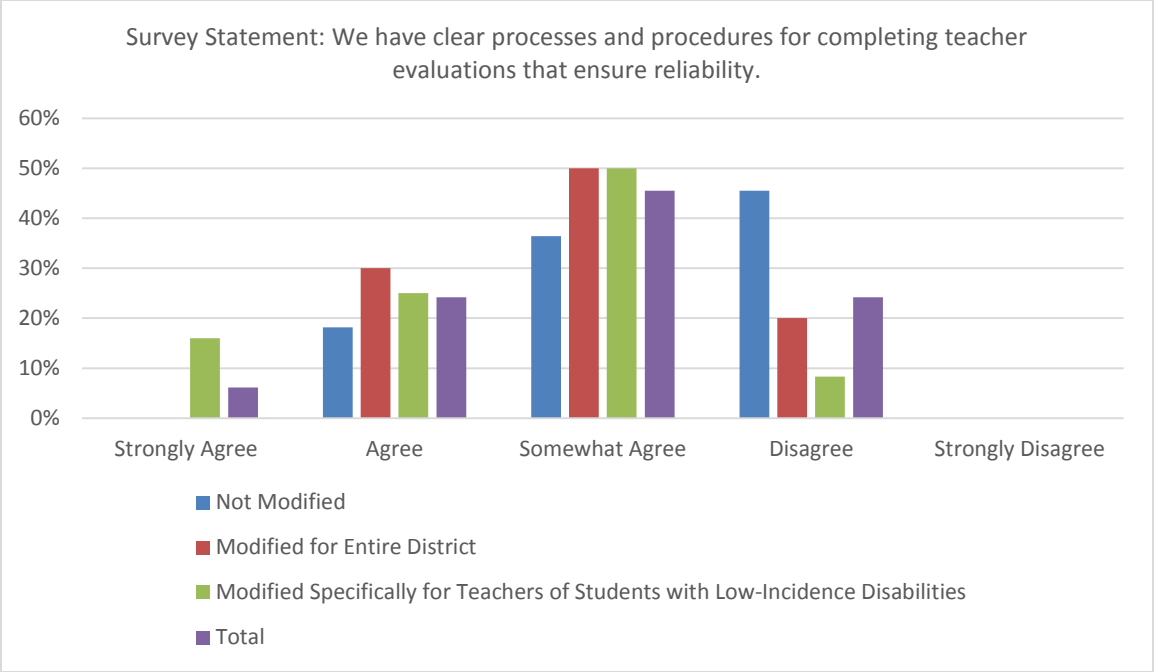


Figure 4: Clustered Bar Chart of Modification of Tool by Agreement with a Statement about Clear Processes and Procedures

The majority of the respondents (69.7%) answered that they agree or strongly agree that they have to modify their evaluation tool to make it applicable and/or effective for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities. Table 8 shows that 80% of respondents using Marzano, 66.6% of respondents using Danielson, and 62.5% of respondents using a locally-developed tool agreed or strongly agreed with the statement about needing to modify their tool. Because the number of respondents varied greatly between the different tools, it is difficult to determine through this data if respondents feel that one tool requires modifications more than another.

Table 8: Cross tabulation of Tool Used and Level of Agreement with a Statement about the Need to Modify

		I have to modify my current evaluation tool/system to make it applicable and/or effective for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities.					Total
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Marzano	Count	1	3	1	0	0	5
	%	20.0%	60.0%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Danielson FFT	Count	5	5	2	2	1	15
	%	33.3%	33.3%	13.3%	13.3%	6.7%	100.0%
5+ D	Count	1	1	0	0	0	2
	%	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Thoughtful Classroom	Count	0	1	0	1	0	2
	%	0.0%	50.0%	00.0%	50.0%	0.0%	100.0%
A Tool from Another Vendor	Count	0	1	0	0	0	1
	%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
A Locally-Developed Tool	Count	0	5	2	1	0	8
	%	0.0%	62.5%	25.0%	12.5%	0.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	7	16	5	4	1	33
	%	21.2%	48.5%	15.2%	12.1%	3.0%	100.0%

Research Question Two

Research question two asks the following: How would special education administrators in Michigan rate the importance of including certain components of teacher evaluation in tools/systems designed to evaluate teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities? To answer this research question, respondents were asked to rate the level of importance of certain components of teacher evaluations in two ways: first by applying a score on a Likert scale of one (not important) to seven (very important) for each component, and then by rank ordering the seven given components of teacher evaluation.

The inclusion of evidence-based practices for teaching students with low-incidence disabilities was scored the highest in the ratings and was ranked as most important in the rank order. It was followed by the inclusion of the roles and responsibilities of special education teachers. The average scores for the rating of

importance are depicted in Table 9. While all the components were viewed as important to a majority of respondents, some of them definitely had stronger support than others.

Table 9: Average Score for Ratings of Importance of Components of Teacher Evaluation

Component of Evaluation	**Average Score on Likert Scale Rating Importance of Inclusion: 1(Not Important) to 7(Very Important)**
Evidence-based practices for teaching students with low-incidence disabilities (systematic instruction, explicit instruction, universal supports, assistive technology, etc.)	6.6
The roles and responsibilities if special education teachers (development of IEP's, collaborating with other special education professionals, handling behaviors, etc.)	6.33
Training of evaluators	5.94
Multiple sources of data regarding teacher effectiveness	5.93
Plans for professional growth and development tied to the evaluation process	5.48
Opportunities for professional learning embedded within the evaluation process	5.45
Student growth data	5.36

Table 10 shows the frequencies of choices made by the respondents for each component of evaluation listed within the survey item. By looking at this table, it is apparent that some of the components received more responses in the lower numbers (depicting less importance) than others. Specifically, student growth data had the lowest scores for importance, followed by opportunities for professional learning embedded within the evaluation process.

Table 10: Ratings of the Importance of Inclusion of Given Components of Teacher Evaluation

Component of Evaluation	1 Not Important	2	3	4	5	6	7 Very Important
Evidence-based practices for teaching students with disabilities (systematic instruction, explicit instruction, universal supports, assistive tech, etc.)	1 3.03%	0 0%	0 0%	1 3.03%	1 3.03%	7 21.21%	23 69.70%
The roles and responsibilities of special education teachers (development of IEP's, collaborating with other special education professionals, handling behaviors, etc.)	1 3.03%	0 0%	0 0%	1 3.03%	2 6.06%	9 27.27%	20 60.61%
Student growth data	2 6.06%	1 3.03%	3 9.09%	2 6.06%	5 15.15%	9 27.27%	11 33.33%
Multiple sources of data regarding teacher effectiveness	1 3.03%	1 3.03%	1 3.03%	2 6.06%	2 6.06%	10 30.30%	16 48.48%
Opportunities for professional learning embedded within the evaluation process	2 6.06%	0 0%	3 9.09%	4 12.12%	4 12.12%	7 21.21%	13 39.39%
Plans for professional growth and development tied to the evaluation process	1 3.03%	1 3.03%	2 6.06%	4 12.12%	5 15.15%	9 27.27%	11 33.33%
Training of evaluators	1 3.03%	1 3.03%	0 0%	2 6.06%	5 15.15%	8 24.24%	16 48.48%

While the responses for both the survey item asking respondents to rate the importance of given components of teacher evaluations (survey item 7) and the one asking the respondents to rank order the same components (survey item 8) rated the same two components the highest, they differed on their ranking of the next five components. As stated earlier, the responses to both survey items rated the inclusion of evidence-based practices for teaching students with low-incidence disabilities as most important and the inclusion of the roles and responsibilities of special education teachers as second most

important. Including multiple sources of data on teacher effectiveness was also rated high in both survey items (third in the question asking respondents to rank order and fourth in the question asking respondents to rate the importance).

Where the responses on the two survey items differed most was in the rating of the importance of the inclusion of growth data. While the survey item asking the respondent to rate the importance of the given component of evaluation rated the inclusion of student growth data lowest among the given components, the survey item asking respondents to rank order the components of evaluation ranked student growth data as fourth.

Another big difference between the responses for survey items 7 and 8 was in the rating of the importance of training evaluators. The survey item that had respondents rate the importance of evaluation components (survey item 7) rated training of evaluators as the third most important component within the group of components. However, when asked to rank order the components of evaluation, respondents ranked training of evaluators as last overall among the seven components listed. Table 11 includes data obtained from the survey item that asked respondents to rank order the components of evaluation.

Table 11: Rank Order of Importance of Components of Teacher Evaluation

Component of Evaluation	1 Most Impor-tant	2	3	4	5	6	7 Least Impor-tant	Total # of re-sponses	Avg. Rank Score
Evidence-based practices for teaching students with low-incidence disabilities	17 54.8%	6 29%	3 9.7%	2 6.5%	0 0%	1 3.2%	2 6.5%	31	2.13
The roles and responsibilities of special education teachers	3 9.7%	9 29%	4 12.9%	5 16.1%	3 9.7%	3 9.7%	4 12.9%	31	3.68
Student growth data	3 9.4%	4 12.5%	5 15.6%	7 21.9%	4 12.5%	5 15.6%	4 12.5%	32	4.13
Multiple sources of data on teacher effectiveness	2 6.5%	5 16.1%	7 22.6%	4 12.9%	7 22.6%	5 16.1%	1 3.2%	31	3.9
Opportunities for professional learning embedded within the evaluation process	2 6.3%	3 9.4%	3 9.4%	9 28.1%	6 18.8%	7 21.9%	2 6.3%	32	4.34
Plans for professional growth and development tied to the evaluation process	3 9.4%	4 12.5%	7 21.9%	1 3.1%	6 18.8%	6 18.8%	5 15.6%	32	4.28
Training of evaluators	3 9.4%	2 6.3%	3 9.4%	4 12.5%	5 15.6%	3 9.4%	12 37.5%	32	4.97

Table 12 provides a comparison of the rankings of the importance of evaluation components based on responses from survey items 7 and 8.

Table 12: Overall Rankings of Components of Evaluation Based on Data from Survey Items 7 and 8

Component of Evaluation	Overall Ranking of Importance Based on Responses for Survey Item 7	Overall Ranking of Importance Based on Responses for Survey Item 8
Evidence-based practices for teaching students with low-incidence disabilities	1	1
The roles and responsibilities of special education teachers	2	2
Student growth data	7	4
Multiple sources of data on teacher effectiveness	4	3
Opportunities for professional learning embedded within the evaluation process	6	6
Plans for professional growth and development tied to the evaluation process	5	5
Training of evaluators	3	7

Research Question Three

The third research question asks the following: Do current teacher evaluation tools/processes being used in Michigan effectively address what special education administrators think is important to include in evaluations for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities? To answer this question, frequencies and percentages were found for the survey items that asked respondents to rate their agreement with statements that discussed the effectiveness of their evaluation tool related to certain components of evaluation. These components of evaluation were the same as or similar to the components included in the survey items in which respondents had to rate the importance of the components in order to answer the second research question (survey items 7 and 8). Table 13 shows the frequencies and percentages for each of the responses for the given components of evaluation.

Table 13: Agreement with Statements Regarding Components of Evaluation

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My current evaluation tool/system adequately includes evidence-based practices for teaching students with low incidence disabilities (systematic instruction, universal supports, assistive technology, etc.)	4 12.12%	9 27.27%	13 39.39%	4 12.12%	3 9.09%
My current evaluation tool/system includes only instructional strategies that are applicable to teachers of students with low incidence disabilities.	1 3.03%	3 9.09%	4 12.12%	11 33.33%	14 42.42%
My current evaluation tool/system adequately measures a teacher's effectiveness within the various roles and responsibilities of a teacher of students with low incidence disabilities (development of IEPs, collaborating with other special education professionals, handling behaviors, etc.)	6 18.18%	2 6.06%	15 45.45%	6 18.18%	4 12.12%
My current evaluation tool/system effectively and fairly uses student growth data as part of the teacher evaluation system for teachers of students with low incidence disabilities	4 12.12%	6 18.18%	10 30.30%	6 18.18%	4 21.21%
My current evaluation system provides adequate opportunities for teachers to be involved in self-assessment/reflection processes and collaboration with other teachers and administrators about effective teaching practices for students with low-incidence disabilities	3 9.09%	12 36.36%	14 42.42%	4 12.12%	0 0.0%
My current teacher evaluation system effectively ties the teacher evaluation process to professional development opportunities for teachers of students with low incidence disabilities	2 6.06%	9 27.27%	10 30.30%	10 30.30%	2 6.06%
My current evaluation tool/system adequately provides for the use of multiple sources of data regarding teacher effectiveness	4 12.12%	13 39.39%	9 27.27%	5 15.15%	2 6.06%
I have received adequate training on how to effectively use my current teacher evaluation tool/system in order to evaluate teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities	3 9.09%	8 24.24%	6 18.18%	12 36.36%	4 12.12%

These data show that while 39.39% of respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement that their tool adequately includes evidence-based practices for teaching

students with low incidence disabilities, 39.39% only somewhat agree with this statement, and 21.21% disagree or strongly disagree with this statement. We know from the data for research question two that the respondents clearly rated the inclusion of evidence-based practices as the most important component of evaluation, yet the data from Table 12 shows that several respondents did not feel that the tools being used adequately included this component. Furthermore, a majority of respondents (75.75%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with a statement saying that their tool includes only instructional strategies that are applicable to teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities. This implies that many of the respondents feel that their tools contain instructional strategies that do not pertain to teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities. When looking at a cross tabulation of the data from the survey item related to evidence-based practices and the specific tool used, there were no significant differences noted (See Table A9). However, respondents who said that they used a tool modified specifically for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities were more likely to agree or strongly agree with both the statement about the inclusion of evidence-based practices and the statement about the inclusion of only applicable instructional strategies (See Figures 5 and 6). No respondents who indicated that they used a tool modified specifically for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement about the inclusion of evidence-based practices. This data suggests that modifications being made to evaluation tools involve the inclusion of evidence-based practices for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities.

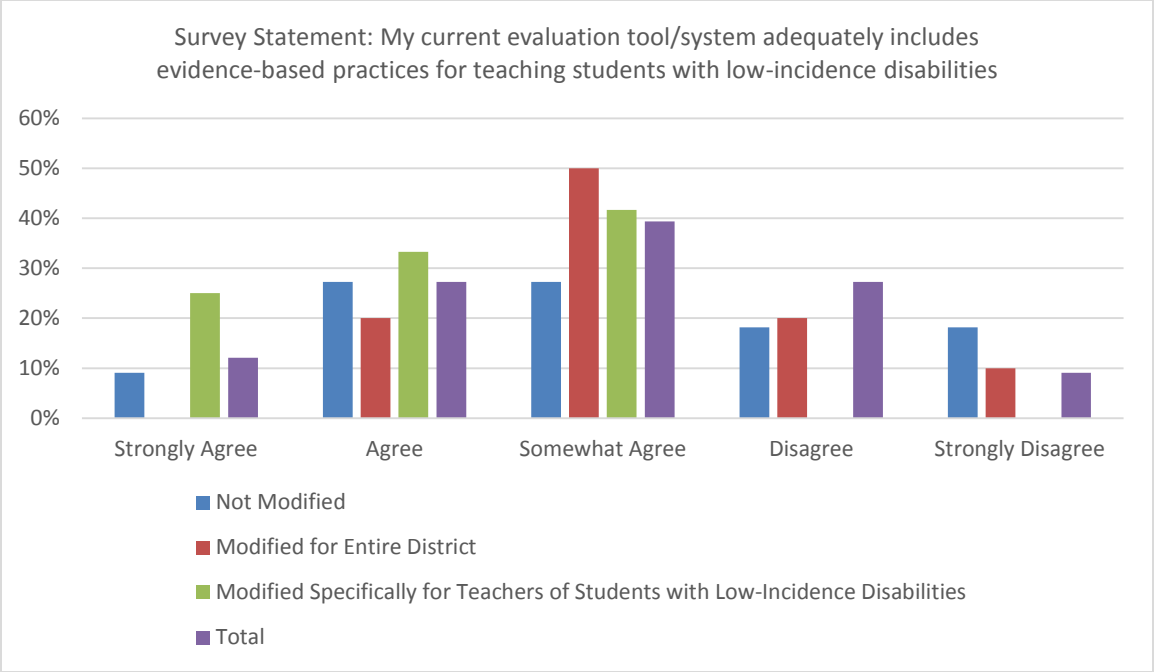


Figure 5: Clustered Bar Chart of Modification of Tool by Agreement with a Statement About the Inclusion of Evidence-Based Practices

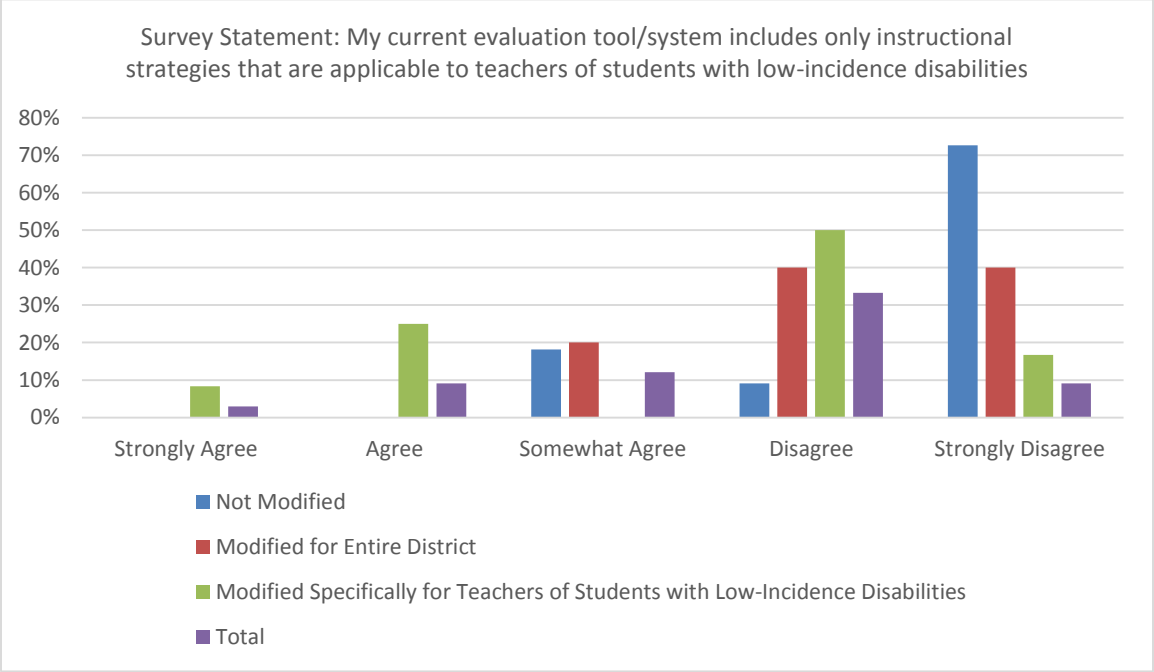


Figure 6: Clustered Bar Chart of Modification of Tool and Agreement with a Statement About Applicable Instructional Strategies

The evaluation component that scored the second highest in importance was measuring a teacher's effectiveness within the various roles and responsibilities of a teacher of students with low-incidence disabilities. Respondents had mixed answers regarding their agreement with the statement on the effectiveness of their tool with this component. While 24.24% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, 30.30% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. When looking at this data specifically for those who indicated that they use Danielson's Framework for Teaching tool, only 26.7% agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, while 46.7% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement (see Table A13). When looking at respondents using tools with different modifications, answers varied in the same pattern as with other statements about effectiveness (see Figure 7). Respondents were much more likely to strongly agree and less likely to disagree if they used a tool that was modified specifically for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities.

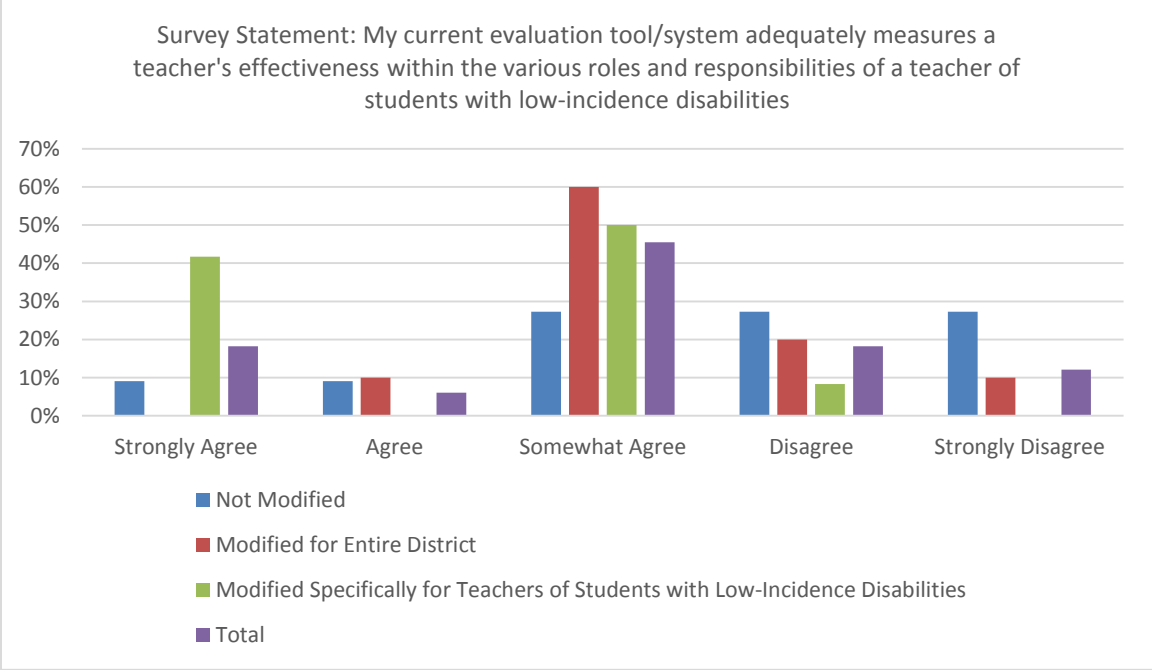


Figure 7: Clustered Bar Chart of Modification of Tool by Agreement with a Statement About Roles and Responsibilities

The third most important component according to the survey item where respondents rate the importance of given evaluation components was training of evaluators. A third of respondents said that they agreed or strongly agreed with a statement saying that they have received adequate training on how to effectively use their current teacher evaluation tool/system to evaluate teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities. However, 48.5% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. A cross tabulation of the data for this component by data from the survey item on tool modifications shows that 72.8% of those who said they use a tool that is not modified disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement about adequate training (see Figure 8). This is more than those who used a tool modified for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities (33% disagreed and 0% strongly disagreed). Half of those who use a tool modified for the entire district agreed with the statement regarding training. The results of this survey item suggest that those using a modified version of their tool were more likely to be satisfied with the training they received for use of the tool with teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities.

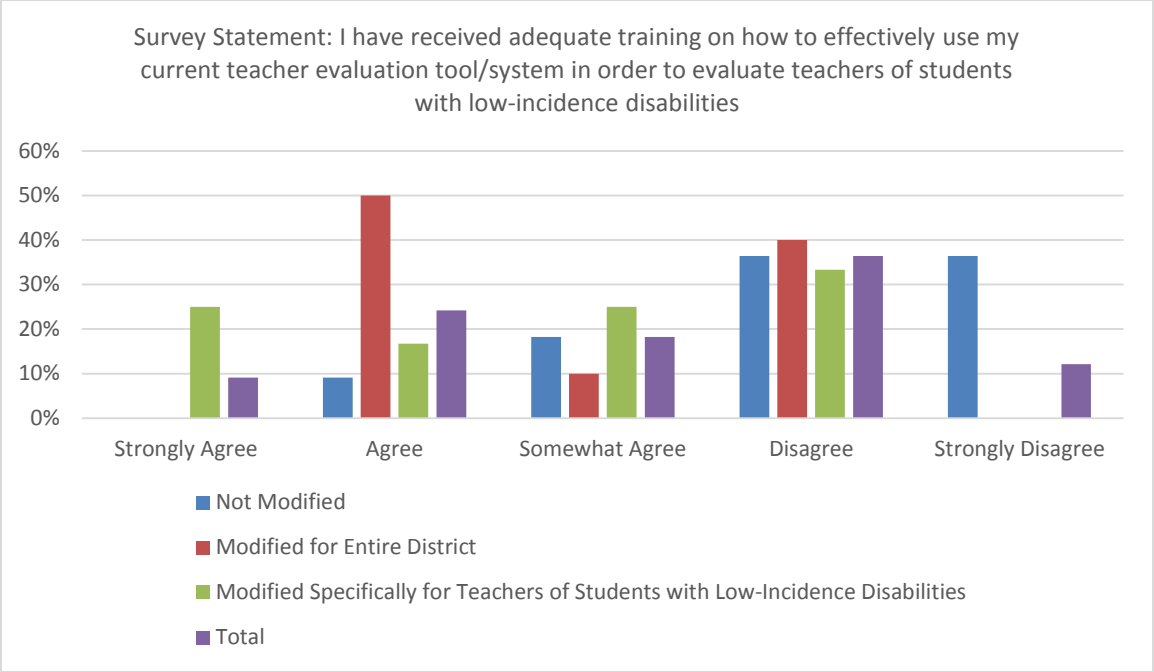


Figure 8: Clustered Bar Chart of Modification of Tool by Agreement with a Statement About Evaluator Training

A majority of respondents agreed that their evaluation tools adequately provide for the use of multiple sources of data regarding teacher effectiveness, the component of evaluation that respondents rank ordered third on the survey. For this component, 51.5% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, whereas only 21.3% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement (see Table 12). There were no significant differences in responses to this statement for respondents using tools with different modifications (see Table A22).

Respondents had varied responses regarding student growth portions of teacher evaluations, the component of evaluation that was ranked fourth on the survey item that had respondents rank order the importance of evaluation components. Thirty percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their tool effectively and fairly uses student growth data as part of the evaluation system for teachers of students with low-incidence

disabilities, and 39.4% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. As with other components, respondents who said that they use a tool modified specifically for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities were more likely to agree or strongly agree to this statement (50%) versus those who use an unmodified tool (18.2%) or a tool modified for the entire district (20%). This data is found in Figure 9 and Table A16.

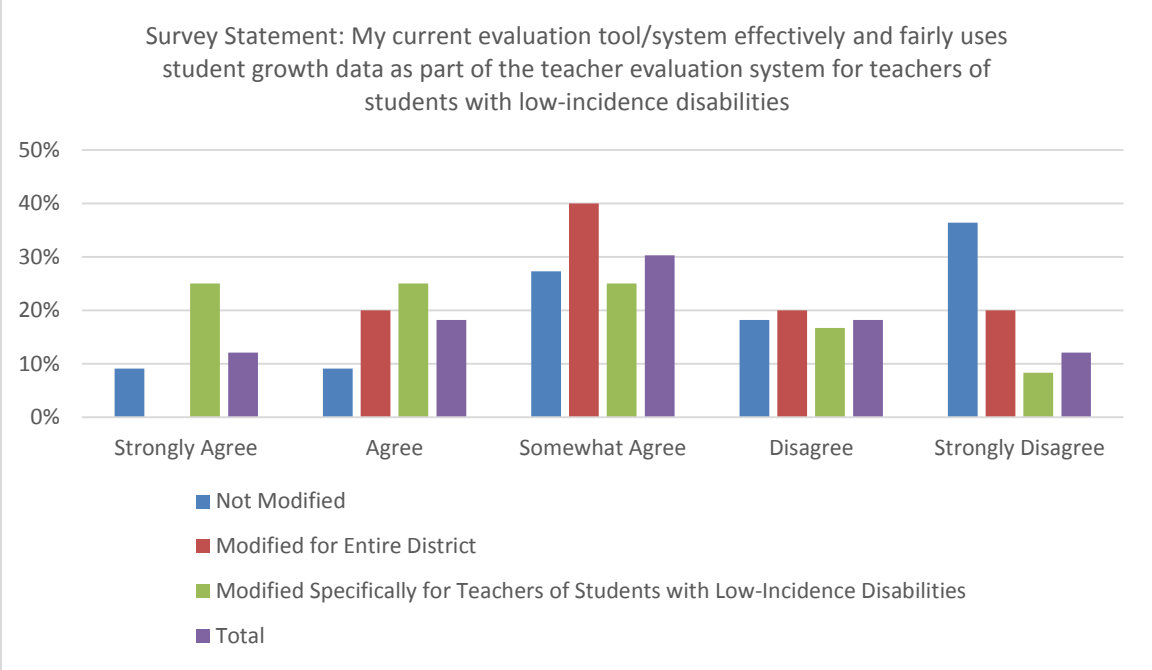


Figure 9: Clustered Bar Chart of Modification of Tool by Agreement with a Statement About the Student Growth Data

Respondents also had varied responses regarding their evaluation being tied to professional development. A third of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement saying that their current teacher evaluation system effectively ties the teacher evaluation process to professional development opportunities for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities, whereas 36.36% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. There were no significant differences between respondents using tools with different modifications for this component of evaluation (see Table A20).

Respondents looked more favorably on their evaluation system's effectiveness in embedding professional learning experiences throughout the evaluation process. Forty-five percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with a statement saying that their evaluation system provides adequate opportunities for teachers to be involved in self-assessment/reflection processes and collaboration with other teachers and administrators about effective teaching practices for students with low-incidence disabilities. Another 42.42% somewhat agreed with this statement, leaving only 12.12% to disagree. There were no significant differences in responses to this statement for respondents using tools with different modifications (see Table A18).

Comments from Respondents

The last question on the survey allowed respondents to add their comments regarding the evaluation of teachers with low-incidence disabilities. The comments mirror some of the discontent depicted through the results of the survey and illustrate the frustrations that the administrators have with the current tools being used. Verbatim comments made by the seven survey responders who elected to provide comment can be found in Table 14.

Table 14: Respondents' Comments from Survey

Comment
I think it is important that we continue to monitor student growth and have high expectations, including academic, for our students with low-incidence disabilities. However, I believe we also need to be aware of the challenges some of these teachers experience in their classrooms and be realistic about expectations of teachers. Teachers should not be penalized when students don't make growth expected, especially when factors outside the teacher's control impact achievement.
We are required to adhere to the Danielson FFT rubrics when evaluating our teachers of low incidence populations but it is a stretch to make each component relate to their responsibilities as special education teachers. Catch words in the wording such as "all students, thorough understanding, complete awareness, . . ." do not apply to their students or classroom situations
Thank you for looking into this! I just want to say that while good teaching is good teaching, I do feel that there needs to be consideration for teacher of low-incidence populations . . . there are skills used that are not always accounted for in the evaluation like personal care, etc.
Collaboration with staff is not adequately measured by any of the tools I've seen, yet I feel it is an essential component.
5D evaluation is focused on core content curriculum and does not lend well to the evaluation of staff that work with populations that demonstrate limited measureable progress in the general curriculum.
We need a different tool to evaluate teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities.
We have specifically designed an evaluation tool that is used for teachers of low incidence programs. It is a two part system where the first portion is based on the Danielson model for teachers while the second portion is based on effective instruction, data collection, individualized programming, differentiated instruction with whole group settings, and the revised model of educational benefit for each student.

Summary

The administrators who participated in this study have varied opinions regarding the effectiveness of their current teacher evaluation tools and processes. However, a large majority of respondents said that they have had to modify their current tool to make it applicable and/or effective for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities. Also, for a majority of the components of evaluation of interest in this study, the perceived effectiveness of the tool was higher if the respondent was using a tool specifically modified for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities.

Evidence-based practices for teaching students with low-incidence disabilities was the number one most important component of evaluation identified by respondents in this study. While this was rated high in importance, 21% of respondents did not think that their tool adequately included evidence-based practices for this population of students, and another 39.39% only somewhat agreed that their tool adequately included evidence-based practices. Additionally, a large majority of respondents (75.75%) disagreed with a statement that their tool/system included only instructional strategies that are applicable to teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities, suggesting that many tools contain instructional strategies that are not applicable to this group of students.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Summary of the Study

This study was designed to obtain perception data pertaining to Michigan special education administrators' views about teacher evaluation and the effectiveness of current tools and practices being used for the evaluation of teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities. The research questions specifically address how respondents perceive the effectiveness of their evaluation tools in a number of areas, how they rate the importance of the inclusion of specific components of evaluation within tools/processes specifically for the evaluation of teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities, and how well the respondents feel their tools/processes perform in the components that they rated as most important. This is an important topic currently because of the work being done at the state level in defining common state-wide practices in teacher evaluation.

The perception data were collected through a survey administered electronically to administrators who supervise programs for students with low-incidence disabilities in Michigan. Forty administrators attempted the survey, with 33 completing all questions on the survey. Survey items were based on the theoretical work on effective teacher evaluation done by Danielson and McGreal (2000) as well as recommendations on the evaluation of special education teachers made by the Council for Exceptional Children (2013). Data was analyzed and reported using frequencies and percentages. Cross tabulations were done with data from different survey items in order to compare frequencies of answers from respondents using different tools or using tools with different modifications.

The results of the survey depicted varied perceptions of the effectiveness of evaluation tools by special education administrators in Michigan. However, cross tabulations showed that respondents who used tools that were modified specifically for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities reported higher levels of agreement with statements regarding the effectiveness of their tools. Also, 70% of respondents reported that they have had to modify their tool/system to make it applicable or effective for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities.

Overall, respondents had mixed reviews on how well their tools addressed the components of evaluation that were rated most important through this survey. The component of evaluation rated most important by the respondents was the inclusion of evidence-based practices for use with students with low-incidence disabilities. Thirty-nine percent of respondents agreed that their tools/systems adequately included evidence-based practices for this population of students; however, 76% of respondents indicated that their tools/systems contain instructional strategies that are not applicable to teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities. Only 24% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their tools/systems were effective in the component rated second most-important by respondents, the measurement of teacher effectiveness within the various roles and responsibilities of a teacher of students with low-incidence disabilities. For the inclusion of evidence-based practices and the measurement of effectiveness within the various roles and responsibilities of teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities, the perceived effectiveness was higher for respondents using tools specifically modified for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities.

Conclusions

Several conclusions can be drawn from this study. For one, it is clear from the data that the administrators who completed the survey who are conducting evaluations of teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities are experiencing differing levels of satisfaction with the effectiveness of the evaluation tools/systems they are currently using. However, it is also apparent that those who reported using a tool that has been modified specifically for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities generally view their tool as being more effective for this group of teachers. Satisfaction with the effectiveness of tools is lower when the tool has not been modified for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities. With that being said, some respondents did report high levels of satisfaction with the effectiveness of their tools within several different components of evaluation. This suggests that there are programs in Michigan that are using evaluation tools (however modified) with perceived effectiveness for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities that those who are making policies about teacher evaluations and those who are trying to develop systems that will work for this group of teachers could learn from.

The inclusion of evidence-based practices for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities and the measurement of effectiveness within the various roles and responsibilities of teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities are both valued as essential components of teacher evaluation by the CEC (2012) and rated most important by the respondents of this survey. These are components of evaluation that are highly-specific to the given population of teachers and less likely to be included within teacher evaluation tools/systems that have been designed based on research within general

education. The results of this study illustrate that special education administrators were more likely to view their evaluation tools as being effective in areas that are more specific to teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities if their tools were modified for these teachers. Furthermore, a large majority (70%) of respondents reported that they have to modify their tool to make it applicable or effective for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities. Thus, a conclusion of this study is that the current tools being used today in Michigan must be modified to be effective in evaluating teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities.

Another conclusion that can be made is that administrators are generally not receiving adequate training on the use of their evaluation tools to evaluate teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities. Almost half of respondents expressed that they did not feel they received adequate training. The amount expressing dissatisfaction with training increased if they were not using a modified tool. The results suggest that administrators using tools that have been modified for the entire district or tools that have been modified specifically for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities feel that they are better trained to use these tools with teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities.

Discussion

Connection of Results to Theoretical Framework

Danielson and McGreal (2000) argue that the two main purposes of teacher evaluation are teacher quality assurance and professional growth. To achieve these purposes, they say that an evaluation system must have a clear definition of effective teaching that is research-based, locally-validated, and understood by all involved.

Clear definition of effective teaching. The results of this study suggest that our current evaluation tools/systems do not consistently meet these requirements for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities. Thirty-six percent of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with a statement about their evaluation system providing a clear picture of effective teaching and the standards by which teachers will be assessed so that teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities understand what is expected of them. The number of respondents disagreeing with the statement increased significantly if the respondent uses a tool that has not been modified (63.7%).

To provide a clear picture of effective teaching, the evaluation tool/system must contain evidence-based practices for teaching students with low-incidence disabilities. If the evaluation tool being used does not contain these evidence-based practices, then teachers will be less likely to understand what is expected of them, they will have less ability to use feedback from the evaluation process to guide their professional development, and they will have to rely on the knowledge-base of the evaluator to provide feedback on evidence-based instructional practices that are not explicitly found within the evaluation tool/system. Thirty-nine percent of respondents only somewhat agreed that their evaluation tool/system adequately includes evidence-based practices for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities, while 21% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. Even more significant, a large majority of respondents expressed that their evaluation tools contain instructional strategies that are not applicable to teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities. The inclusion of nonapplicable instructional strategies and practices only adds to the difficulty of understanding expectations and leads to frustration on the part of teachers and evaluators.

Techniques and procedures. In order to meet the goals of quality assurance and professional learning, Danielson and McGreal (2000) also state that an evaluation system must have clear techniques and procedures that are fair and that maximize professional learning. Twenty-four percent of respondents disagreed with the statement about having clear processes and procedures for completing teacher evaluations that ensure reliability. The number of respondents disagreeing went up to 45.5% for respondents that use a tool that is not modified. Additionally, 45.5% of total respondents only somewhat agreed that their tool/system has clear processes and procedures. This data suggests that there are many administrators and teachers in Michigan who are participating in evaluation systems without clear processes and procedures leading to fair and reliable evaluations. In addition, 30% of respondents only somewhat agreed and 39% disagreed or strongly disagreed that their evaluation systems effectively and fairly use student growth data as part of the teacher evaluation system for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities. This data suggests that there is work to be done to make processes and procedures for evaluation, and specifically for the use of student growth data within evaluations, fair and effective for all involved.

Respondents expressed higher perceived effectiveness of their tools/systems with procedures related to teacher self-reflection. Many in this study agreed that their current evaluation tools/systems provide adequate feedback to teachers about their teaching practices in order to assist them in determining areas for improvement (42% either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and 39% somewhat agreed). Many also agreed that their current systems provide adequate opportunities for teachers to be involved in self-assessment processes and collaboration with other teachers and administrators about

effective teaching practices for students with low-incidence disabilities (45% agreed or strongly agreed and 42% somewhat agreed with this statement). The responses varied more for the statement about the evaluation tool/system effectively tying the teacher evaluation process to professional development opportunities. Thirty-three percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, while 36% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. It appears that while our current evaluation tools/systems are often providing adequate opportunities for self-reflection and collaboration with others, improved connection of evaluations to professional development opportunities is needed.

Modifications to Evaluation Tools

The results from this study provide important insights as the state of Michigan moves toward a more uniform system of teacher evaluation. The trend is toward the adoption of common evaluation tools and practices (MCEE, 2013). The results from this study suggest that it is important that schools be able to modify the tools recommended by the state to make them applicable and effective for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities, or that they be provided with tools that more specifically address what is important to include in the evaluation of teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities. The challenge will be in ensuring equality of effectiveness if schools are left to do the work of modifying tools themselves. The National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, in a study conducted that involved surveying special education administrators throughout the country, warns of the problems that can occur when individuals are left to modify evaluation tools to meet the needs of special education teachers (Holdheide, et al., 2010). The authors of the study point out that the effectiveness of modifications done in this matter depends on the knowledge of the

evaluator. They recommend a more systematic approach to the development of effective evaluations of special education teachers. The four evaluation tools recommended by the state of Michigan are based on years of research defining effective teaching in general education settings. The push for a more effective teacher evaluation system in Michigan is rooted in a desire to positively affect student growth and achievement. Students with low-incidence disabilities deserve effective teachers just as any other students do. On the same hand, teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities deserve to be evaluated with a tool/system that will provide them with a framework for effective teaching within their given roles and with their unique population of students so they may learn and develop their skills through the process of evaluation. If an alternative to the tools currently being used that do not adequately address important components of evaluation for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities is not provided, then the ability to modify mandated tools should be permitted.

Evaluator Training

While almost half of the respondents expressed that they had not received adequate training on how to use their tool to evaluate teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities, this percentage increased for respondents who use a tool that was not modified (73%). Respondents who use a tool modified in some way expressed higher satisfaction with the training they have received. This leads one to contemplate whether there is something about going through the process of modifying an evaluation tool that helps build understanding, buy-in, and preparedness to use the tool. By having to examine the tool and make changes to it to meet needs (either of the district as a whole or of specific groups of teachers such as teachers of students with low-incidence

disabilities), do administrators and others involved in the process learn more about the tool and how it applies to their work and their teachers? Perhaps the professional dialogue that accompanies the process of modifying an evaluation tool leads to a better understanding of effective teaching and how it applies to this specific group of teachers. Or, maybe the modifications being made lead to a more applicable and effective tool for use with teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities; thereby making any training related to the modified tool more relevant and effective for administrators evaluating this group of teachers.

Investment

Because research has shown that teacher effectiveness is the most influential factor on student achievement (Rivkin, et al., 2005), it makes sense that schools would invest greatly in strategies to improve teacher effectiveness. Teacher evaluation systems are meant to do just that. This study supports the notion that schools are investing a lot of time into the evaluation of teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities. Twenty out of 34 respondents indicated that they evaluate 9-16 teachers a year. Fourteen out of 34 respondents stated that they spend 8-11 hours per teacher working on evaluations. If an administrator spent ten hours per teacher and evaluated 15 teachers, she would spend 150 hours on teacher evaluations for the year. That is a lot of time to spend on evaluation systems that many respondents believe to be ineffective or only somewhat effective. On the other hand, for those using evaluation tools/systems that are highly effective in helping teachers to grow in their practice, the benefits to teachers and students may be quite worth the time put into the process. Because such time-intensive practices are

being mandated by the state, it behooves all those involved to maximize the benefits of the investment by ensuring that the system is effective for all teachers involved.

Recommendations

Special education administrators and teachers must be included in the discussion about teacher evaluation and the decisions being made regarding new teacher evaluation laws and systems. Those who make decisions at the state level need to bring experts in teaching students with low-incidence disabilities to the table when discussing policies about teacher evaluation. They need to strive to find or develop a system that will help guide administrators and teachers working with students with low-incidence disabilities in their efforts to continuously strive for more effective teaching practices and student growth. To do less would be a disservice to the teachers and the students they serve. Finally, they must understand that modifications to current tools will need to be made in order to make them effective for this unique population of teachers.

Further research is recommended on the topic of evaluation of teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities. This study had relatively few participants. To get a broader view of the perceived effectiveness of evaluation tools/systems in Michigan, more voices need to be heard. More research needs to be done to determine how schools and/or individual evaluators are modifying evaluation tools/systems in order to be effective for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities. Questions that were not answered within this study would also add to the discussion about teacher evaluation. For example, research addressing the relationships between evaluator training and perceived effectiveness or between the length of use of a tool and its perceived effectiveness would add to the discussion about effective evaluation practices.

In addition, as the new law regarding the inclusion of student growth data into teacher evaluations is implemented, more research on the impact of this law on the evaluation of teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities will be necessary to guide schools in the fair and effective use of student growth data in the evaluation of this group of teachers.

An important recommendation coming from this study is that schools find a way to learn from one another as they try to navigate through this process of changing teacher evaluation systems. There are administrators from programs or schools in Michigan that have reported high levels of satisfaction with the effectiveness of their tools. It would be beneficial for schools or programs who are struggling to find ways to make their evaluations relevant and meaningful for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities to learn from the processes that other schools have gone through and the products that they have developed that are working for their teachers and administrators. To do this, we need to find a way to communicate about this important topic and share ideas.

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Appendix A: Tables

Table A1: Cross tabulation of Tool Used by Level of Agreement with a Statement About Determining the Effectiveness of Teachers

		My current evaluation tool/system adequately determines the effectiveness of teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities					Total
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Marzano	Count	1	0	4	0	0	5
	%	20.0%	0.0%	80.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Danielson FFT	Count	2	4	5	2	2	15
	%	13.3%	26.7%	33.3%	13.3%	13.3%	100.0%
5+ D	Count	0	0	1	1	0	2
	%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Thoughtful Classroom	Count	0	0	1	1	0	2
	%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	100.0%
A Tool from Another Vendor	Count	0	0	01	0	0	1
	%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
A Locally-Developed Tool	Count	0	3	4	0	1	8
	%	0.0%	37.5%	50.0%	0.0%	12.5%	100.0%
Total	Count	3	7	16	4	3	33
	%	9.1%	21.2%	48.5%	12.1%	9.1%	100.0%

Table A2: Cross tabulation of Modification to Tool by Level of Agreement with a Statement About Determining the Effectiveness of Teachers

		My current evaluation tool/system adequately determines the effectiveness of teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities					Total
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Not Modified	Count	0	1	5	3	2	11
	%	0%	9.1%	45.5%	27.3%	18.2%	100.0%
Modified for Entire District	Count	0	3	5	1	1	10
	%	0.0%	30.0%	50.0%	10.0%	10.0%	100.0%
Modified specifically for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities	Count	3	3	6	0	0	12
	%	25.0%	25.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	3	7	16	4	3	33
	%	9.1%	21.2%	48.5%	12.1%	9.1%	100%

Table A3: Cross tabulation of Tool Used by Level of Agreement with Statement About Adequate Feedback

		My current evaluation tool/system adequately provides feedback to teachers of students with low incidence disabilities about their teaching practices in order to assist them in determining areas for improvement and developing their skills					Total
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Marzano	Count	1	0	4	0	0	5
	%	20.0%	0.0%	80.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Danielson FFT	Count	3	5	3	3	1	15
	%	20.0%	33.3%	20.0%	20.0%	6.7%	100.0%
5+ D	Count	0	1	0	1	0	2
	%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Thoughtful Classroom	Count	0	0	2	0	0	2
	%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
A Tool from Another Vendor	Count	0	1	0	0	0	1
	%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
A Locally-Developed Tool	Count	0	3	4	0	1	8
	%	0.0%	37.5%	50.0%	0.0%	12.5%	100.0%
Total	Count	4	10	13	4	2	33
	%	12.1%	30.3%	39.4%	12.1%	6.1%	100.0%

Table A4: Cross tabulation of Modification to Tool by Agreement with Statement About Adequate Feedback

		My current evaluation tool/system adequately provides feedback to teachers of students with low incidence disabilities about their teaching practices in order to assist them in determining areas for improvement and developing their skills.					Total
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Not Modified	Count	1	1	6	1	2	11
	%	9.1%	9.1%	54.5%	9.1%	18.2%	100.0%
Modified for Entire District	Count	0	5	2	3	0	10
	%	0.0%	50.0%	20.0%	30.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Modified specifically for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities	Count	3	4	5	0	0	12
	%	25.0%	33.3%	41.7%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	4	10	13	4	2	33
	%	12.1%	30.3%	39.4%	12.1%	6.1%	100.0%

Table A5: Cross tabulation of Tool Used by Agreement With Statement About Understanding of Expectations

		My current evaluation system provides a clear picture of effective teaching and the standards by which teachers will be assessed in a way that teachers of students with low incidence disabilities understand what is expected of them					Total
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Marzano	Count	1	0	2	2	0	5
	%	20.0%	0.0%	40.0%	40.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Danielson FFT	Count	2	5	2	4	2	15
	%	13.3%	33.3%	13.3%	26.7%	13.3%	100.0%
5+ D	Count	0	0	1	1	0	2
	%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Thoughtful Classroom	Count	0	0	1	1	0	2
	%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	100.0%
A Tool from Another Vendor	Count	0	0	0	1	0	1
	%	0.0%	00.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
A Locally-Developed Tool	Count	0	3	4	0	1	8
	%	0.0%	37.5%	50.0%	0.0%	12.5%	100.0%
Total	Count	3	8	10	9	3	33
	%	9.1%	24.2%	30.3%	27.3%	9.1%	100.0%

Table A6: Cross Tabulation of Modification to Tool by Agreement With Statement About Understanding of Expectations

		My current evaluation system provides a clear picture of effective teaching and the standards by which teachers will be assessed in a way that teachers of students with low incidence disabilities understand what is expected of them					Total
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Not Modified	Count	0	2	2	5	2	11
	%	0%	18.2%	18.2%	45.5%	18.2%	100%
Modified for Entire District	Count	0	3	3	3	1	10
	%	0%	30%	30%	30%	10%	100%
Modified specifically for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities	Count	3	3	5	1	0	12
	%	25%	25%	41.7%	8.3%	0%	100%
Total	Count	3	8	10	9	3	33
	%	9.1%	24.2%	30.3%	27.3%	9.1%	100%

Table A7: Cross Tabulation of Tool Used by Agreement with Statement About Clear Processes and Procedures

		We have clear processes and procedures for completing teacher evaluations that ensure reliability.					
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Marzano	Count	1	0		0	0	5
	%	20.0%	0.0%	80.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Danielson FFT	Count	3	5	3	3	1	15
	%	20.0%	33.3%	20.0%	20.0%	6.7%	100.0%
5+ D	Count	0	1	0	1	0	2
	%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Thoughtful Classroom	Count	0	0	2	0	0	2
	%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
A Tool from Another Vendor	Count	0	1	0	0	0	1
	%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
A Locally-Developed Tool	Count	0	3	4	0	1	8
	%	0.0%	37.5%	50.0%	0.0%	12.5%	100.0%
Total	Count	4	10	13	4	2	33
	%	12.1%	30.3%	39.4%	12.1%	6.1%	100.0%

Table A8: Cross Tabulation of Modifications to Tool by Agreement with Statement About Clear Processes and Procedures

		We have clear processes and procedures for completing teacher evaluations that ensure reliability.					
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Not Modified	Count	0	2	4	5	0	11
	%	0%	18.2%	36.4%	45.5%	0%	100%
Modified for Entire District	Count	0	3	5	2	0	10
	%	0%	30%	50%	20%	0%	100%
Modified specifically for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities	Count	2	3	6	1	0	12
	%	16.7%	25%	50%	8.3%	0%	100%
Total	Count	2	8	15	8	0	33
	%	6.1%	24.2%	45.5%	24.2%	0%	100%

Table A9: Cross Tabulation of Tool Used by Agreement with Statement About Evidence-Based Practices

		My current evaluation tool/system adequately includes evidence-based practices for teaching students with low incidence disabilities (systematic instruction, universal supports, assistive technology, etc.)					Total
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Marzano	Count	1	1	3	0	0	5
	%	20.0%	20.0%	60.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Danielson FFT	Count	3	4	4	2	2	15
	%	20.0%	26.7%	26.7%	13.3%	13.3%	100.0%
5+ D	Count	0	0	1	1	0	2
	%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Thoughtful Classroom	Count	0	1	1	0	0	2
	%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
A tool from another vendor	Count	0	1	0	0	0	1
	%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
A locally-developed tool	Count	0	2	4	1	1	8
	%	0.0%	25.0%	50.0%	12.5%	12.5%	100.0%
Total	Count	4	9	13	4	3	33
	%	12.1%	27.3%	39.4%	12.1%	9.1%	100.0%

Table A10: Cross Tabulation of Modifications to Tool by Agreement with Statement About Evidence-Based Practices

		My current evaluation tool/system adequately includes evidence-based practices for teaching students with low incidence disabilities (systematic instruction, universal supports, assistive technology, etc.)					Total
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewh at Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Not Modified	Count	1	3	3	2	2	11
	%	9.1%	27.3%	27.3%	18.2%	18.2%	100.0%
Modified for Entire District	Count	0	2	5	2	1	10
	%	0.0%	20.0%	50.0%	20.0%	10.0%	100.0%
Modified specifically for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities	Count	3	4	5	0	0	12
	%	25.0%	33.3%	41.7%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Total	Count		9	13	4	3	33
	%	12.1%	27.3%	39.4%	12.1%	9.1%	100.0%

Table A11: Cross Tabulation of Tool Used by Agreement with Statement About Applicable Instructional Strategies

		My current evaluation tool/system includes only instructional strategies that are applicable to teachers of students with low incidence disabilities.					Total
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Marzano	Count	1	0	0	1	3	5
	%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	60.0%	100.0%
Danielson FFT	Count	0	3	2	4	6	15
	%	0.0%	20.0%	13.3%	26.7%	40.0%	100.0%
5+ D	Count	0	0	0	0	2	2
	%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Thoughtful Classroom	Count	0	0	0	1	1	2
	%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
A tool from another vendor	Count	0	0	0	1	0	1
	%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
A locally-developed tool	Count	0	0	2	4	2	8
	%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	50.0%	25.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	1	3	4	11	14	33
	%	3.0%	9.1%	12.1%	33.3%	42.4%	100.0%

Table A12: Cross Tabulation of Modifications to Tool by Agreement with Statement About Applicable Instructional Strategies

		My current evaluation tool/system includes only instructional strategies that are applicable to teachers of students with low incidence disabilities.					Total
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Not Modified	Count	0	0	2	1	8	11
	%	0.0%	0.0%	18.2%	9.1%	72.7%	100.0%
Modified for Entire District	Count	0	0	2	4	4	10
	%	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	40.0%	40.0%	100.0%
Modified specifically for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities	Count	1	3	0	6	2	12
	%	8.3%	25.0%	0.0%	50.0%	16.7%	100.0%
Total	Count	1	3	4	11	14	33
	%	3.0%	9.1%	12.1%	33.3%	42.4%	100.0%

Table A13: Cross Tabulation of Tool Used by Agreement with Statement About the Various Roles and Responsibilities of Teachers

		My current evaluation tool/system adequately measures a teacher's effectiveness within the various roles and responsibilities of a teacher of students with low incidence disabilities (development of IEPs, collaborating with other special education professionals)					Total
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Marzano	Count	1	0	3	0	1	5
	%	20.0%	0.0%	60.0%	0.0%	20.0%	100.0%
Danielson FFT	Count	3	1	4	4	3	15
	%	20.0%	6.7%	26.7%	26.7%	20.0%	100.0%
5+ D	Count	0	0	1	1	0	2
	%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Thoughtful Classroom	Count	0	0	2	0	0	2
	%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
A tool from another vendor	Count	0	0	1	0	0	1
	%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
A locally-developed tool	Count	2	1	4	1	0	8
	%	25.0%	12.5%	50.0%	12.5%	0.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	6	2	15	6	4	33
	%	18.2%	6.1%	45.5%	18.2%	12.1%	100.0%

A14: Cross Tabulations of Modifications to Tool by Agreement with Statement About the Roles and responsibilities of Teachers

		My current evaluation tool/system adequately measures a teacher's effectiveness within the various roles and responsibilities of a teacher of students with low incidence disabilities (development of IEPs, collaborating with other special education professionals)					Total
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Not Modified	Count	1	1	3	3	3	11
	%	9.1%	9.1%	27.3%	27.3%	27.3%	100.0%
Modified for Entire District	Count	0	1	6	2	1	10
	%	0.0%	10.0%	60.0%	20.0%	10.0%	100.0%
Modified specifically for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities	Count	5	0	6	1	0	12
	%	41.7%	0.0%	50.0%	8.3%	0.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	6	2	15	6	4	33
	%	18.2%	6.1%	45.5%	18.2%	12.1%	100.0%

A15: Cross Tabulation of Tool Used by Agreement with Statement About Student Growth

		My current evaluation tool/system effectively and fairly uses student growth data as part of the teacher evaluation system for teachers of students with low incidence disabilities					Total
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Marzano	Count	1	0	1	3	0	5
	%	20.0%	0.0%	20.0%	60.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Danielson FFT	Count	2	3	3	3	4	15
	%	13.3%	20.0%	20.0%	20.0%	26.7%	100.0%
5+ D	Count	0	0	1	0	1	2
	%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	50.0%	100.0%
Thoughtful Classroom	Count	0	0	1	0	1	2
	%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	50.0%	100.0%
A tool from another vendor	Count	0	1	0	0	0	1
	%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
A locally-developed tool	Count	1	2	4	0	1	8
	%	12.5%	25.0%	50.0%	0.0%	12.5%	100.0%
Total	Count	4	6	10	6	7	33
	%	12.1%	18.2%	30.3%	18.2%	21.2%	100.0%

A16: Cross Tabulation of Modifications to Tool by Agreement with Statement About Student Growth

		My current evaluation tool/system effectively and fairly uses student growth data as part of the teacher evaluation system for teachers of students with low incidence disabilities					Total
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Not Modified	Count	1	1	3	2	4	11
	%	9.1%	9.1%	27.3%	18.2%	36.4%	100.0%
Modified for Entire District	Count	0	2	4	2	2	10
	%	0.0%	20.0%	40.0%	20.0%	20.0%	100.0%
Modified specifically for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities	Count	3	3	3	2	1	12
	%	25.0%	25.0%	25.0%	16.7%	8.3%	100.0%
Total	Count	4	6	10	6	7	33
	%	12.1%	18.2%	30.3%	18.2%	21.2%	100.0%

A17: Cross Tabulation of Tool Used by Agreement with Statement About Self-Assessment and Collaboration

		My current evaluation system provides adequate opportunities for teachers to be involved in self-assessment/reflection processes and collaboration with other teachers and administrators about effective teaching practices for students with low incidence disabilities					Total
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Marzano	Count	1	0	3	1	0	5
	%	20.0%	0.0%	60.0%	20.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Danielson FFT	Count	2	6	4	3	0	15
	%	13.3%	40.0%	26.7%	20.0%	0.0%	100.0%
5+ D	Count	0	1	1	0	0	2
	%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Thoughtful Classroom	Count	0	1	1	0	0	2
	%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
A tool from another vendor	Count	0	1	0	0	0	1
	%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
A locally-developed tool	Count	0	3	5	0	0	8
	%	0.0%	37.5%	62.5%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	3	12	14	4	0	33
	%	9.1%	36.4%	42.4%	12.1%	0.0%	100.0%

A18: Cross Tabulation of Modifications to Tool by Agreement with Statement About Self-Assessment and Collaboration

		My current evaluation system provides adequate opportunities for teachers to be involved in self-assessment/reflection processes and collaboration with other teachers and administrators about effective teaching practices for students with low incidence disabilities					Total
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Not Modified	Count	0	4	6	1	0	11
	%	0.0%	36.4%	54.5%	9.1%	0.0	100.0%
Modified for Entire District	Count	0	6	2	2	0	10
	%	0.0%	60.0%	20.0%	20.0%	0.0$	100.0%
Modified specifically for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities	Count	3	2	6	1	0	12
	%	25.0%	16.7%	50.0%	8.3%	0.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	3	12	14	4	0	33
	%	9.1%	36.4%	42.4%	12.1%	0.0%	100.0%

A19: Cross Tabulation of Tool Used by Agreement with Statement About Professional Development

		My current teacher evaluation system effectively ties the teacher evaluation process to professional development opportunities for teachers of students with low incidence disabilities					Total
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Marzano	Count	1	0	2	2	0	5
	%	20.0%	0.0%	40.0%	40.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Danielson FFT	Count	0	3	4	6	2	15
	%	0.0%	20.0%	26.7%	40.0%	13.3%	100.0%
5+ D	Count	0	1	1	0	0	2
	%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Thoughtful Classroom	Count	0	1	0	1	0	2
	%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	100.0%
A tool from another vendor	Count	0	0	0	1	0	1
	%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
A locally-developed tool	Count	1	4	3	0	0	8
	%	12.5%	50.0%	37.5%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	2	9	10	10	2	33
	%	6.1%	27.3%	30.3%	30.3%	6.1%	100.0%

A20: Cross Tabulation of Modifications to Tool by Agreement with Statement About Professional Development

		My current teacher evaluation system effectively ties the teacher evaluation process to professional development opportunities for teachers of students with low incidence disabilities					Total
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Not Modified	Count	1	2	3	4	1	11
	%	9.1%	18.2%	27.3%	36.4%	9.1%	100.0%
Modified for Entire District	Count	0	3	3	3	1	10
	%	0.0%	30.0%	30.0%	30.0%	10.0%	100.0%
Modified specifically for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities	Count	1	4	4	3	0	12
	%	8.3%	33.3%	33.3%	25.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	2	9	10	10	2	33
	%	6.1%	27.3%	30.3%	30.3%	6.1%	100.0%

A21: Cross Tabulation of Tool Used by Agreement with Statement About the Use of Multiple Sources of Data

		My current evaluation tool/system adequately provides for the use of multiple sources of data regarding teacher effectiveness					Total
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Marzano	Count	1	0	3	1	0	5
	%	20.0%	0.0%	60.0%	20.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Danielson FFT	Count	3	5	4	3	0	15
	%	20.0%	33.3%	26.7%	20.0%	0.0%	100.0%
5+ D	Count	0	1	0	1	0	2
	%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Thoughtful Classroom	Count	0	1	0	0	1	2
	%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	100.0%
A tool from another vendor	Count	0	1	0	0	0	1
	%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
A locally-developed tool	Count	0	5	2	0	1	8
	%	0.0%	62.5%	25.0%	0.0%	12.5%	100.0%
Total	Count	4	13	9	5	2	33
	%	12.1%	39.4%	27.3%	15.2%	6.1%	100.0%

A22: Cross Tabulation of Modification to Tool by Agreement with Statement About the Use of Multiple Sources of Data

		My current evaluation tool/system adequately provides for the use of multiple sources of data regarding teacher effectiveness					Total
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Not Modified	Count	1	4	3	1	2	11
	%	9.1%	36.4%	27.3%	9.1%	18.2%	100.0%
Modified for Entire District	Count	0	5	3	2	0	10
	%	0.0%	50.0%	30.0%	20.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Modified specifically for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities	Count	3	4	3	2	0	12
	%	25.0%	33.3%	25.0%	16.7%	0.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	4	13	9	5	2	33
	%	12.1%	39.4%	27.3%	15.2%	6.1%	100.0%

A23: Cross Tabulation of Tool Used by Agreement with Statement About Training

		I have received adequate training on how to effectively use my current teacher evaluation tool/system in order to evaluate teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities					Total
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Marzano	Count	1	1	0	3	0	5
	%	20.0%	20.0%	0.0%	60.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Danielson FFT	Count	2	2	4	6	1	15
	%	13.3%	13.3%	26.7%	40.0%	6.7%	100.0%
5+ D	Count	0	0	1	1	0	2
	%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Thoughtful Classroom	Count	0	0	0	0	2	2
	%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
A tool from another vendor	Count	0	1	0	0	0	1
	%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
A locally-developed tool	Count	0	4	1	2	1	8
	%	0.0%	50.0%	12.5%	25.0%	12.5%	100.0%
Total	Count	3	8	6	12	4	33
	%	9.1%	24.2%	18.2%	36.4%	12.1%	100.0%

A24: Cross Tabulation of Modifications to Tool by Agreement with Statement About Training

		I have received adequate training on how to effectively use my current teacher evaluation tool/system in order to evaluate teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities					Total
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Not Modified	Count	0	1	2	4	4	11
	%	0.0%	9.1%	18.2%	36.4%	36.4%	100.0%
Modified for Entire District	Count	0	5	1	4	0	10
	%	0.0%	50.0%	10.0%	40.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Modified specifically for teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities	Count	3	2	3	4	0	12
	%	25.0%	16.7%	25.0%	33.3%	0.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	3	8	6	12	4	33
	%	9.1%	24.2%	18.2%	36.4%	12.1%	100.0%

Appendix B: Letter of Approval of Thesis Committee Membership



August 19, 2014

Dear Marty Guiney,

This letter is to notify you that the Office of Graduate Studies has granted approval of your Thesis Committee Membership. This committee will oversee your master's thesis, "The Effectiveness of Teacher Evaluation Tools and Procedures Used with Teachers of Students With Low-Incidence Disabilities in Michigan," in partial fulfillment of your Master of Education in Educational Leadership degree program in the College of Education. You will find the university policies and procedures for completion of your thesis on our web site: www.gvsu.edu/gs/thesis. All of the required forms can be downloaded from our web site.

When your thesis defense is complete and all final revisions have been approved by your committee members and chair, please gather the signatures of all members of your thesis committee and academic college dean on the Thesis Approval Form and submit the form with an electronic copy of your thesis to the Office of Graduate Studies for final review and signature by the Dean of Graduate Studies. Please adhere to all deadlines to ensure that your Master of Education degree is awarded in the semester in which you intend to graduate.

If you have any further questions or concerns regarding dissertation polices and/or procedures, please contact our office at gradstudies@gvsu.edu or 616-331-7105. We wish you the best in your work and look forward to reviewing your completed dissertation when submitted for approval.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey A. Potteiger, PhD, FACSM
Dean of Graduate Studies

Appendix C: Letter from the GVSU Human Research Review Committee



DATE: January 8, 2015

TO: MartyAnn Guiney
FROM: Grand Valley State University Human Research Review Committee
STUDY TITLE: [681387-1] Evaluation of Teachers of Students With Low-Incidence Disabilities
REFERENCE #: 15-083-H
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: EXEMPT
EFFECTIVE DATE: January 8, 2015
REVIEW TYPE: Exempt Review

Thank you for your submission of materials for your planned research study. It has been determined that this project: *IS COVERED* human subjects research* according to current federal regulations and MEETS eligibility for exempt determination under category 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2). You stated that *The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the perceptions of special education administrators related to the effectiveness of teacher evaluation tools and processes currently being used in Michigan to evaluate teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities. ... Participants will include administrators of special education who supervise programs for students with low-incidence disabilities. Emails of administrators will be obtained from ISD websites. Participants will be provided a survey through email to complete and return electronically. The survey asks questions about participants' views of the effectiveness of the evaluation systems they are currently using and about what participants think is important to include in evaluation tools/systems for this given population of teachers.*

Exempt protocols do not require formal approval, renewal or closure by the HRRC. Any revision to exempt research that alters the risk/benefit ratio or affects eligibility for exempt review must be submitted to the HRRC using the *Change in Approved Protocol* form before changes are implemented.

Any research-related problem or event resulting in a fatality or hospitalization requires immediate notification to the Human Research Review Committee Chair, Dr. Paul J. Reitemeier, 616-331-3417 **AND** Human Research Protections Administrator, Mr. Jon Jellema, in the Office of the Provost, 616-331-2400. See *HRRC policy 1020, Unanticipated problems and adverse events.*

Exempt research studies are eligible for audits.

If you have any questions, please contact the Research Protections Program, Monday through Thursday, at (616) 331-3197 or rpp@gvsu.edu. The office observes all university holidays, and does not process applications during exam week or between academic terms. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with our office.

*Research is a systematic investigation, including research development, testing and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge (45 CFR 46.102 (d)).

Appendix D: Announcement for Proposal Defense

Marty Ann Guiney

Student Name

October 27, 2014
8:00 am

Date and Time

DEV 488C

Location

Evaluation of Teachers of Students
With Low Incidence Disabilities

Committee members include:

Dr. Cynthia Smith

Dr. Sherie Williams

Dr. Michael Stearns

Appendix E: Announcement of Thesis Defense

Thesis Defense Announcement Form

Marty Ann Guiney

_____

Student Name

April 9, 2015 3:00 pm

_____

Date and Time

DEV 488C

_____

Location

Evaluation of Teachers of Students With Low-Incidence Disabilities

Committee members include:

Dr. Cynthia Smith

Dr. Sherie Williams

Dr. Patricia Oldt (for Dr. Michael Stearns)