A Delphi Study: Teachers’ Perceptions of Benefits, Prerequisites, Facilitators, and Barriers of Peer Observation for Professional Learning in Secondary Public Schools

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A Delphi Study: Teachers’ Perceptions of Benefits, Prerequisites, Facilitators, and Barriers of Peer Observation for Professional Learning in Secondary Public Schools

A Dissertation by

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Irvine, California
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A Delphi Study: Teachers’ Perceptions of Benefits, Prerequisites, Facilitators, and Barriers of Peer Observation for Professional Learning in Secondary Public Schools

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DEDICATION

Sit down before fact as a little child, be prepared to give up every preconceived notion, follow humbly wherever and to whatever abysses nature leads, or you shall learn nothing. I have only begun to learn content and peace of mind since I have resolved at all risks to do this.

—Thomas Henry Huxley, *Life and Letters of Thomas Henry Huxley, Volume 1*

This is dedicated to learners. To those in constant pursuit of information, insights, and answers. To those willing forego their current truth in honor of new perspectives. To those wanting to stretch, extend, and discover. To those relishing in dissonance to experience growth. To those delving into tangential explorations to quench insatiable curiosity. To those creating new knowledge with a collision of ideas. To those allowing beliefs to change, concepts to flourish, and conclusions to be amended. And, especially, to those who inspire others to question, ponder, and think.
ABSTRACT

A Delphi Study: Teachers’ Perceptions of Benefits, Prerequisites, Facilitators, and Barriers of Peer Observation for Professional Learning in Secondary Public Schools

by Melissa R. Bazanos

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study was to explore secondary-school teachers’ perceptions about the instructional and cultural benefits of engaging in peer observations for professional learning in secondary schools. This study also sought to clarify the prerequisites, facilitators, and barriers to implementing peer observations as perceived by secondary-school teachers.

**Methodology:** The Delphi method was utilized in order to gather perceptual data from an expert panel of secondary-school teachers that have engaged in peer observations at various schools in Riverside County, California. For purposes of this policy Delphi study, an electronic questionnaire was distributed in three rounds to assess teachers’ perceptions of the instructional and cultural benefits of conducting peer observations along with the prerequisites, facilitators, and barriers for conducting peer observations in secondary schools.

**Findings:** Analysis of data revealed that teachers perceive various instructional and cultural benefits of engaging in peer observation for professional learning including observing peers’ instructional strategies in authentic learning environments, engaging in self-reflection about teaching, and increasing the team aspect of teaching including collaboration between peers and reducing isolation. Strategies to achieve the identified benefits include time, discussion opportunities, teacher choice, pre-identification of strategies, and teacher training. Perceived prerequisites for peer observations include
clarity of purpose and process, guidelines, communication, and teacher input. Perceived facilitators include time and consistency. Perceived barriers to peer observation include limited time, fear, and judgment by peers.

**Conclusions:** According to the expert panel, in order to achieve the benefits of peer observation, schools must protect time to engage in peer observations, have clarity of purpose and consistency in the process, provide opportunities for teacher input and choice, maintain an environment for adult learning, and provide adequate teacher training prior to participation in peer observations.

**Recommendations:** If a school opts to implement peer observations for professional learning, (1) a planning team should be convened and time devoted to planning the peer-observation process, (2) teachers must have planning input to establish clarity of purpose, a consistent process including norms and procedures, and to determine instructional focus expectations, (3) time should be protected for peer observations, reflections, and discussions resulting from observations.
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Chapter I: Introduction

Introduction

In times of change, learners inherit the earth, while the learned find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists.

–Eric Hoffer

The American educational system is under scrutiny as the world changes from an individualistic, isolated age into a more collaborative, interconnected 21st century era. Thomas Friedman (2005) asserts that the world is flat as businesses and organizations are no longer bound by physical space, but instead able to reach new markets and tap into diverse international talent. Indeed, Tapia (2009) declares the world as we know it is “upside-down” because of the transformation in economic, political, and social settings (p. 21). In order for educators to prepare students to keep pace with the interconnected world, it is vital that they embrace collaboration and reflective dialogue with a goal of “deprivatizing teaching to improve classroom instruction and student learning” (Saunders, Goldenberg, & Gallimore, 2009, p. 1006).

California’s 2010 adoption of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) is a step forward in transforming public education. The CCSS in English language arts specify that “the standards establish what it means to be a literate person in the twenty-first century” (California Department of Education, 2013, p. v). In addition, the CCSS indicate “the development of each student’s literacy skills is a shared responsibility” and further express that inherent to successful implementation is interdisciplinary teacher collaboration “for an integrated model of literacy across the curriculum” (California Department of Education, 2013, p. v).
Contrary to the integrated, collaborative practices touted by the CCSS, currently many schools suffer from the challenge of teachers operating with a “silo mentality”; they do not work in teams but instead are “simply groups of individuals keeping each other informed” (Anderson & Anderson, 2010, p. 77). Harvey and Drolet (2006) describe this as *parallel play* since teachers “do the same thing, not together, but side by side” (p. 16). Schools cannot afford to continue this approach for several reasons. Fiscal constraints may curtail surplus expendable resources and minimize school staffs’ ability to hire external support providers, attend professional development events, and purchase new instructional materials (Saunders et al, 2009). Furthermore, as schools are intended to fulfill an educational purpose, teachers and administrators must stay current in pedagogy to enhance effective instructional techniques. Educators are asked more and more to rely on one another to maximize resources and to grow as professionals.

Schools often face a continuous struggle to transform organizational culture from one of isolation to collaboration. Many teachers, while skilled content experts and highly knowledgeable in their subjects, do not fully embrace the strength of working as cohesive teams. Weekly meetings scheduled for departments and content teams to collaborate may not be sufficient to discuss and develop effective instructional practices. Dufour (2011) describes this challenge at many schools in that teachers “view their classrooms as their personal domains, have little access to the ideas or strategies of their colleagues, and prefer to be left alone rather than engage with their colleagues or principals” (p. 57).

Compounding the collaboration challenge is the pervasive gap in implementation of research-based instructional strategies. Teachers may participate in professional development events; however, instructional strategies learned during training sessions do
not always translate into instructional practice in the classroom. Fullan (2008) expands this notion, explaining: “if people are not learning in the specific context in which the work is being done, they are inevitably learning superficially” (p. 89).

The Professional Learning Community concept is an “ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve” (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2010, p. 51). In order for schools to become Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), schools must overcome the isolated culture of teaching (Dufour, 1998). Teachers can simplify their challenges with planning and preparing for instruction while gaining a greater understanding of implementation of best practices if they are willing to learn from each other. Doyle (2012) contends, “[I]f teachers engage in a collaborative process of discussing key aspects of effective teaching and learning it will serve to integrate teachers into a collective learning organization that works as a unified team instead of individuals working in isolation” (p. 8).

Several schools have expanded the practice of PLC to include peer observation for professional learning. Richard Elmore (2004) indicates “there is almost no opportunity for teachers to engage in continuous and substantial learning about their practice in the setting in which they actually work, observing and being observed by their colleagues in their own classrooms” (p. 127). Engaging in peer observation brings clarity to the wealth of strengths in effective teaching on the campus by providing structured opportunities for teacher learning. Observations enable teachers to experience learning in a variety of classroom settings.
Peer observation, when coupled with team dialogue and planning for implementation of strategies, provides contextualized, differentiated opportunities for teacher learning. Capitalizing on resident implementation experts, the school can alter its educational environment, thereby affording students the opportunity for high-quality instruction in each classroom. A collegial culture of shared practice develops, enabling teachers to become a community of learners.

**Background**

**Public Education**

The field of public education has remained rather stagnant in the last century while the world has changed exponentially. Harvey, Bearley, & Corkrum (2002) describe this phenomenon as “a world of change with spasms of stability” (p. 7). In 1893, the *Committee of Ten*, appointed by the National Education Association, recommended twelve years of education, including elementary and high school; outlined different programs of study such as English, mathematics, civics, and sciences; and held as its guiding principle “that all students should receive the same high-quality liberal arts education” (Mirel, 2006). Over a century has passed, yet many of the recommendations from 1893 remain in place in public schools today.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 was established by the federal government “to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging State academic achievement standards and state academic assessments” (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Reauthorization of ESEA as the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) of 2001 led to increased accountability and enforced implementation of
approved curricula, instructional pacing, and assessments in order for students to achieve Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

With swelling accountability mandates from the state and federal government, schools are trying to balance the shift from the industrial-age, assembly-line instructional model to a more relevant and rigorous system of differentiated learning focusing on critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication. Linda Darling-Hammond (2010) asserts, “The United States must shift course if it is to survive and prosper as a First World nation in the 21st century” (p. 25). This is further detailed as “a system of education that can routinely educate all children well, including schools organized for in-depth student and teacher learning” (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 26).

**School Culture**

Teachers have traditionally retained autonomy over their classroom domains. Almost serving as independent contractors, many have been able to design and deliver their instructional program without much interference or input from others, aside from formal evaluation. Doyle (2012) describes teachers as “free agents within the school environment who see their job responsibility myopically…without consideration of the learning that is going on in classrooms around them” (p. 17).

The challenge with a school culture of teacher isolation and autonomy is that there is often no systematic mechanism for sharing best practices. Saunders, Goldenberg, and Gallimore (2009) affirm that “teachers left working in isolated classrooms with little opportunity for collaboration and learning are unlikely on their own to improve instruction” (p. 1007). Indeed, “closed classroom doors will not help us educate all students to high levels” (City, Elmore, Fiarman, & Teitel, 2009, p. 3).
Successful new models of schooling require “strong teaching faculties who work in organizational structures that create more coherence and a communal orientation, in which staff…work together to create a learning environment” (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 65). This requires teachers to move away from isolation and autonomy toward a more collaborative approach to instructional planning. Fullan (2008) asserts “when teachers within a school collaborate, they begin to think not just about ‘my classroom’ but also about ‘our school’” (p. 49).

**Professional Learning Communities**

In an effort to move from a school culture of isolation to one of teacher collaboration, many schools have adopted the concept of becoming a *Professional Learning Community* (PLC). Dufour and Marzano (2011) explain that “the very structure of a PLC works against the isolation of educators in that it demands professional interaction” (p. 62). The purpose of teacher collaboration is focused on improving instruction and outcomes for student learning (Gallimore & Ermeling, 2010). As schools reculture as PLCs, “educators assume collective responsibility for student outcomes” (Richardson, 2011, p. 29).

Another key factor for the successful operation of a PLC is professional learning. To be specific, PLCs “operate under the assumption that the key to improved learning for students is continuous job-embedded learning for educators” (Dufour, Dufour, Eaker, & Many, 2010, p. 11). Pfeffer and Sutton (2006) agree with the necessity of professional learning because “having a learning culture and the capacity to operate effectively is much more important to organizational success than having the right strategy” (p. 145).
Professional learning is vital and multiplicative because “when people learn from each other, everyone can gain without taking away from others” (Fullan, 2008, p. 128).

**Professional Development**

Barber and Moursesh (2007) note that “the quality of the education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers” (p. 8). Teachers are required to receive degrees and credentials before being charged with a classroom and, as Darling-Hammond (2010) explains, “teachers’ academic background, preparation for teaching, and certification status, as well as their experience, significantly affect their students’ achievement” (p. 43). In teacher-preparation programs, however, “training is too theoretical and not closely enough tied to practice” (Mehta, 2013). In an attempt to ensure continuous learning of content and pedagogy for teachers and staff, school leaders often rely on training opportunities in the form of professional development.

Professional development in education has taken a variety of forms over past decades. Workshops, multiday conferences, on-site consultants, and individual coaching are common in the educational arena. Although professional development is seen as vital to school success, “it has been criticized for its cost, often vaguely determined goals, and for lack of data on resulting teacher and school improvement” (Education Week, 2011). In contrast to other high-performing, industrialized nations such as Japan, in the United States, “professional learning typically takes place in isolated settings, rather than being integrated into teachers’ day-to-day activities or with peers” (Sawchuk, 2009, p. 7).

To transform professional development for educators means “enlarging conceptions of teacher education and development to include both individual- and
setting-focused programs” (Gallimore, Ermeling, Saunders, & Goldenberg, 2009, p. 550).

Dufour, Dufour, and Eaker (2005) explain:

The best professional development occurs in the context of the workplace rather than the workshop as teachers work together to address the issues and challenges that are relevant to them. It is pursued in social settings with opportunities for interaction rather than isolation. It is directly and purposefully designed to help educators accomplish the collective goals of their team and school. (p. 19-20)

**Peer Observation for Professional Learning**

One such method of contextualized professional learning is the practice of peer observation. Peer observation “is the process of colleagues observing others in their teaching, with the overall aim of improving teacher practice” (Hendry & Oliver, 2012, p. 1). Practiced in a variety of formats including Lesson Study, Learning Walks, Instructional Rounds, peer coaching, and micro-teaching, peer observation “makes teaching a public rather than a private act” (Israel, n.d.; City et al, 2009; Bell, 2002).

Tenets of peer observation can be traced to Bandura’s *Social Learning Theory*. Bandura (1977) purports that, through observational learning, people can learn by observing a live model successfully demonstrating a particular behavior. Observers view models, “pay attention to and encode their behavior” and later “imitate the behavior they have observed” (McLeod, 2011). Although originally studied in children, *Social Learning Theory* has been applied to a variety of contexts and learning situations.

Institutes of higher education utilize peer observation as a means to improve the practice of their instructional faculty. Hendry & Oliver (2012) indicate that many universities have “incorporated peer observation as part of a strategic approach to
enhance the quality of their teaching and learning” (p. 1). In a study of Australian university staff engaging in peer-observation cycles, researchers confirmed “the experience of observation strengthens their self-efficacy to apply new strategies to their own teaching” (Hendry & Oliver, 2012, p. 6). Explained in detail, “the observer learns about how to perform the practice by seeing it, rather than by being told about it, and comes to believe that they can also teach in this way and so is motivated to attempt the practice” (Hendry & Oliver, 2012, p. 8).

Research on peer observation in K-12 education settings is far less extensive than in higher education settings. In one such study, an action research study of eight middle-school teachers engaging in peer observations, teachers expressed “peer observations provided meaningful learning” and “they learned more about their content area by observing a peer” (Hirsch, 2011, p. 114). In addition, “peer observations created a collaborative environment with increased relationships” (Hirsch, 2011, p. 118).

Although much research points to the benefits of peer observation for professional learning, challenges and issues are reported in some studies. For example, in a study of higher education staff, researchers concluded that “being observed has been shown to lead to transient feelings of vulnerability for some staff” (Hendry & Oliver, 2012, p. 1). In a study of higher education implementation of peer observation, Bell (2002) reports, in addition to numerous benefits of peer observation, peer observation can be “a time-consuming, threatening, and high-risk activity causing anxiety or fear” (p. 8).

In an era of educational change and to transition to a system of 21st-century learning, public schools are seeking opportunities to expand the expertise of teachers. In addition to traditional professional development opportunities such as conferences and
workshops, schools are exploring options for more contextualized, school-based professional learning. With a nod to the efforts at institutes of higher education, inclusion of peer observation for teachers’ authentic professional learning is a new frontier in cultivating a community of learners in K-12 public education.

**Statement of the Research Problem**

Researchers of school reform and educational change contend that collaborative learning for teaching staff is vital for transforming schools to better prepare students for the 21st century (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Elmore, 2004; Fullan, 2010; Mourshed, Chijioke, & Barber, 2010). Fullan (2008) explains it is imperative for schools to “create mechanisms for purposeful peer interaction with a focus on results” (p. 52). Not only must peers interact, teachers must learn in their working environment since “consistency and innovation can and must go together, and you achieve them through organized learning in context” (Fullan, 2008, p. 79).

Peer observation can provide one such mechanism for teachers to learn in context by observing competent peers. Contrary to a typical professional development workshop model, peer observation allows teachers to learn from peers in authentic classroom contexts. In *Presence*, the authors cite John White from the Institute of HeartMath as saying, “Often people need greater clarity before they can act decisively and with full commitment.” (Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, & Flowers, 2004, p. 135). The intent of peer observations is to bring clarity to the wealth of strengths in effective teaching on the campus by providing structured opportunities for teacher learning in classroom settings.

Although a variety of research has been conducted in university settings about the benefits of peer observation, there is limited research on peer observation for
contextualized professional learning in the public education setting. Studies about alternative professional development efforts do not always include specific investigations about the role of peer observations in public education. This study will contribute to the growing body of research about the instructional and cultural benefits of contextualized peer observation for public school teachers.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study was to investigate secondary-school teachers’ perceptions about conducting peer observations for professional learning in contextualized settings in public schools. In this study, contextualized settings include classrooms of peers that are observed during the peer-observation process.

This study explored instructional benefits of employing peer observation for professional learning as perceived by secondary-school teachers. In addition, the study explored perceived cultural benefits of implementing peer observation in secondary schools. This is related to school culture, which, according to Fullan (2007), can be defined as the guiding beliefs and values evident in the way a school operates. Lastly, this study sought to clarify the prerequisites, facilitators, and barriers to implementing peer observation for professional learning in secondary schools as perceived by secondary-school teachers.

**Research Questions**

The following questions were investigated to address the purpose of the study:

1. What are the instructional benefits of conducting peer observations as part of professional learning as perceived by secondary-school teachers engaging in a peer-observation process?
2. What are the cultural benefits of implementing peer observations as perceived by secondary-school teachers engaging in a peer-observation process?

3. What prerequisites are necessary to successfully implement peer observations for professional learning in secondary schools as perceived by secondary-school teachers engaging in a peer-observation process?

4. What facilitators are necessary to successfully implement peer observations for professional learning in secondary schools as perceived by secondary-school teachers engaging in a peer-observation process?

5. What are the barriers to successfully implementing peer observations for professional learning in secondary schools as perceived by secondary-school teachers engaging in a peer-observation process?

Significance of the Problem

Fullan (2011) emphasizes that schools with “collaborative cultures in which teachers focus on improving their teaching practice and learn from each other” leads to better learning for students (p. 2). Providing regular opportunities for teachers to improve teaching by learning from each other is the objective of peer observation.

Studies in institutes of higher education already point to the benefits of utilizing peer observation for faculty and tutor development. Bell (2002) found peer observation of teaching “succeeds as a training and development activity where it is conceptualized as a mutual learning experience” and “where clear guidelines and procedures exist” (p. 7). In a subsequent study, Bell (2005) confirmed peer observation of teaching provides numerous benefits, including improvements in instructional practice. Additional research of university staff found that both observers and observees participating in peer
observation reported they valued the process of engaging in peer observation (Kohut, Burnap, & Yon, 2007). Hendry and Oliver (2012) reported in a study of university staff that almost all staff thought “engaging in peer observation was beneficial for their teaching because they learned about new teaching strategies by watching their colleague use them successfully” (p. 4). A study of university tutors provided additional evidence of peer observation being “an effective component of faculty-based tutor development program” (Bell & Mladenovic, 2008, p. 749).

With the wealth of research about the benefits of peer observation in university settings, it is logical that utilizing similar methods in public school settings may result in similar perceptions of benefits associated with participating in peer observation for professional learning. Existing research conducted with junior-high school teachers indicates the “provision of objective, nonthreatening peer-observation activities boosts the effectiveness of normal, workshop-based inservice training” (Sparks, 1986, p. 224).

Aside from identifying perceived instructional and cultural benefits from teachers’ perspectives, this study will potentially inform the development of peer-observation practices and protocol suggestions for public school application. Teachers’ identification of the perceived prerequisites, facilitators, and barriers to successful implementation of peer observation will provide critical information to schools and districts seeking to incorporate peer observation as a part of their professional learning opportunities for teachers.

Limited research has been conducted about structuring for and utilizing peer observation as a component of professional learning for secondary-school teachers. This
study is significant because it will contribute to the growing body of research related to peer observation in public schools.

**Definition of Terms**

**Theoretical Definitions**

**Barrier.** “1. A law, rule, problem, etc., that makes something difficult or impossible. 2. Something that makes it difficult for people to understand each other.” (Merriam-Webster, 2014).

**Facilitator.** Something “that makes progress easier” or “makes a process easier” (Vocabulary.com, 2014).

**Peer Observation.** The “process of colleagues observing others in their teaching, with the overall aim of improving teacher practice” (Hendry & Oliver, 2012, p. 1).

**Prerequisite.** “Something that is necessary to an end or to the carrying out of a function” (Merriam-Webster, 2014).

**School Culture.** “Beliefs, perceptions, relationships, attitudes, and written and unwritten rules that shape and influence every aspect of how a school functions” (Great Schools Partnership, 2013).

**Operational Definitions**

**Barrier.** For purposes of this study, a *barrier* is defined as something that impedes progress or implementation of the objective.

**Facilitator.** For purposes of this study, a *facilitator* is defined as something that aids or assists in progress or implementation of the objective.
Peer Observation. For purposes of this study, peer observation is defined as the process of teacher colleagues observing other teacher colleagues during classroom instruction.

Prerequisite. For purposes of this study, a prerequisite is defined as something necessary prior to implementation of an objective or process.

School Culture. For purposes of this study, the term school culture refers to the “beliefs, perceptions, relationships, attitudes, and written and unwritten rules that shape and influence every aspect of how a school functions” (Great Schools Partnership, 2013).

Delimitations

The following are delimitations of this study:

1. The study was delimited to public secondary schools in public school districts.
2. The study was delimited to Riverside County, California.
3. The sample of this study was delimited to sites that participate in a peer observation process meeting the researcher’s criteria.

Organization of the Study

The remainder of this study is organized into four chapters, a bibliography, and appendices. Chapter II provides background and a review of literature about public education, educational change, school culture, Professional Learning Communities, professional development in education, and an exploration of peer observations in the field of education. Chapter III explains the research design and methodology of the study, including the population and sample, instrumentation, and data collection and analysis procedures. Chapter IV presents the results of the data collection and analysis
and a discussion of the findings of this study. Chapter V contains the summary, findings, conclusions, and recommendations for further research.
Chapter II: Review of the Literature

Introduction

A man, though wise, should never be ashamed of learning more, and must unbend his mind.

–Sophocles, Antigone

Chapter II of this study reviews research and professional literature related to public secondary schools, educational change, school culture, professional development, and peer observations for professional learning in the field of education. The review of literature begins with a history of secondary schools followed by a summary of changes in the public education system. School culture is explored, followed by an analysis of the impact of Professional Learning Communities on school culture. A brief history of professional development in education is explained along with an examination of peer observations in the field of education.

Review of the Literature

A Brief History of Public Secondary Education

In 1892, the Committee of Secondary School Studies, known as the Committee of Ten, was appointed by the National Education Association to recommend improvements to education in the United States (Mirel, 2004). Composed of a small, elite group of university faculty and public school leaders, the committee issued a report summarizing their perceived purpose of high school and offered a cohesive structure to a formerly autonomous educational system. The committee recognized that not all students in high school would eventually transition to college; however, their report recommended
courses and assessments oriented toward the college-bound student, which “established college domination over the high school curriculum” (Vandergriff, n.d.).

In response to influence from public school educators based on the subsequent challenges created by the college-oriented expectations in public high schools, the National Education Association established the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education (CRSE) in 1911. Sixteen committees were charged with reporting the performance of the nation’s curriculum and schools. In 1918, CRSE published a report on the cardinal principles of secondary education, which would become the foundation for twentieth century public school education (Schugurensky, 2005). Instead of the myopic college focus, the new focus would “take into account individual differences, goals, attitudes, and abilities” as the “concept of democracy was decided on as the guide of education in America” (Scherer, n.d.). CRSE principles included vocation, civic education, ethical character, and worthy home membership, which were not isolated, discrete subjects but interrelated (Raubinger, Rowe, Piper, & West, 1969).

Due to competing factions impacting the ultimate purpose of the public education system, in the 1920s standardized testing was popularized to essentially sort students for educational program entry and college admission (Ravitch, 1996). In recognition of the educational gaps for certain demographics of the student population, the federal government responded by passing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1965 “to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging State academic achievement standards and state academic assessment” (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).
In response to public outcry about a perceived degeneration of the public education system, and in an effort to offer recommendations for educational reform, the Reagan administration created the National Commission on Excellence in Education in 1981. Its purpose was to examine the quality of education in the United States “to help define the problems afflicting American education and to provide solutions” (Gardner in National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). In 1983, the commission published *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*, concluding that “declines in educational performance are in large part the result of disturbing inadequacies in the way the educational process itself is often conducted” and citing “homogenized, diluted, and diffused” secondary school curricula and “extensive student choice” as contributors to the deterioration of public education (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983).

In 1999, California authorized the Public School Accountability Act (PSAA) to establish an educational accountability system for California public schools. The primary goal of the PSAA was to “help schools improve and to measure the academic achievement of all students” (California Department of Education, 2014). This included the establishment of the Academic Performance Index (API) as well as assistance programs for schools not achieving annual API growth.

Additionally in 1999, California authorized the development of the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) to assess high school students’ competency in English language arts and mathematics, aligned to California’s academic content standards (California Department of Education, 2014). In order to receive a high school
diploma, all students in California public schools must pass the CAHSEE in addition to meeting other graduation requirements.

In 2001, under the George W. Bush administration, ESEA was reauthorized with the purpose “to close the achievement gap with accountability, flexibility, and choice, so that no child is left behind” (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). With an intent to address the educational needs of all children and in an effort to ensure progress for every student, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 led to increased accountability mandates measured by Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets. This required disaggregation of student achievement data to measure progress of significant subpopulations of students and close achievement gaps between subgroups (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

Many of the state and federal educational reforms over the past century, though designed to address perceived weaknesses in the educational system, only achieved the application of mandates and measurements of student progress. In recent years, increased scrutiny of public education in light of the changing economy has warranted a more comprehensive review of educational standards, instructional practices, pedagogical provisions, and a close look at changes in the professional obligation of teachers to educate 21st century youth.

**Educational Change**

The system of public education in the United States has roots in an agrarian society, later influenced by an industrial era, and is now transforming in an informational, technological age. Though accountability mandates from the state and federal governments are still prevalent, schools are trying to balance the shift from prior reforms
focused on an assembly-line instructional model to a more relevant and rigorous educational system. As Dufour and Eaker (1998) express, “the factory model is woefully inadequate for meeting the national education goals of today” (p. 23). Indeed, “time is of the essence if we are to plan educational reforms and other measures that will enable the members of this new youth wave to become productive, assimilated citizens in a competitive global economy” (Frey, 2011).

Shortly after the passage of NCLB, Elmore (2002) succinctly posited: “the pathology of American schools is that they know how to change. What schools do not know how to do is improve” (Elmore, 2002, p. 2). California’s 2010 adoption of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics and the 2013 adoption of the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) is a leap forward in improving the public education system in the 21st century. The CCSS in ELA contain a message from the California State Board of Education President, Michael Kirst, and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Tom Torlakson, concluding with the statement (California Department of Education, 2013, p. v):

The CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy help build creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem solving, collaboration, and communication. They set another bold precedent to improve the academic achievement of California’s students. The standards develop the foundation for creative and purposeful expression in language—fulfilling California’s vision that all students graduate from our public school system as lifelong learners and have the skills and knowledge necessary to be ready to assume their position in our global economy.
Although raising expectations for college and career readiness for students through the adoption of CCSS is a necessary step in the journey to transform public education, “all facets of education need to be explored and evaluated to determine how new initiatives can effectively lead to improved student performance” (Chapman, 2008, p. 5). Schmoker (2007) indicates “even though we already know the best way to improve instruction, we persist in pursuing strategies that have repeatedly failed.”

Educational change cannot be achieved solely through accountability mandates and improved standards. Fullan (2014) explains that “policymakers are trying to do at the back end with accountability what they should have done at the front end with capacity building” (p. 25). Unfortunately, educators “put an enormous amount of energy into changing structures and usually leave instructional practice untouched” (Elmore, 2002, p. 2).

In a study of top-performing nations, the McKinsey report (2007) indicates that “top-performing educational systems are relentless in their focus on improving the quality of instruction in their classrooms” (Barber & Mourshed, p. 27). However, instructional quality cannot be addressed on an individual basis “because improving student achievement in an entire school or district requires collective effort rather than a series of isolated individual efforts” (Dufour & Marzano, 2011, p. 19). Fullan (2010) expresses that “better education is not produced by individual teachers working with one student or one classroom at a time” (p. 71). Instead it is a synergy of progress coproduced by educators.
School Culture

Muhammad (2009) describes school culture as “a delicate web of past personal experience, organizational history, and interaction with the greater society” (p. 14). Although “time spent in collaboration with colleagues is considered essential to success in most professions,” collective educational change efforts are often stymied by a school culture that continues to embrace the individuality and autonomy of a bygone industrial era (Dufour, 2011, p. 58). The pervasive culture of isolation continues to be detrimental to school improvement (Lam, Yim, & Lam, 2005). Teaching has historically been a lonely profession in which “teachers operate their own kingdoms behind the classroom door” (Fullan, 2014, p. 29).

Elmore (2002) notes that most “schools are not organized to support problem solving based on cooperation or collaboration” and, in the field of education, “professionalism equals autonomy” based on one’s ability to demonstrate individual competence (p. 3). As a result, “teachers view their classrooms as their personal domains, have little access to the ideas or strategies of their colleagues, and prefer to be left alone rather than engage with their colleagues” (Dufour, 2011, p. 57).

Teachers can no longer “act as solo practitioners, operating in isolation from their colleagues” (Chapman, 2008, p. 31). In a meta-analysis of 15 years of educational research, Hattie (2012) declares that “schools cannot help all students learn if educators work in isolation”, which requires schools to “create the structures and cultures that foster effective educator collaboration” (p. 62). Research continually supports the necessity of a collaborative and cooperative culture to enhance educational practice (Buchanan & Khamis, 1999). In a review of comprehensive school reform efforts, Waldron and
McLeskey (2010) found “successful school change was dependent on a high level of collaboration among professionals” (p. 59). In addition, in a study of whole-system reform, Fullan (2011) observed that reform required “building collaborative cultures within and across schools” (p. 6).

In a study of successful educational systems from around the world, Barber and Mourshed (2007) noted “these systems create a culture in their schools in which collaborative planning, reflection on instruction, and peer coaching are the norm and constant features of school life” (p. 28). In a subsequent study, Mourshed, Chijioke, and Barber (2010) describe collaborative cultures in detail, indicating “collaborative practice is all about teachers and school leaders working together to develop effective instructional practices, studying what works well in a classroom…with a commitment to improving not only one’s own practice but that of others” (p. 74).

Fullan (2010) explains the phenomenon of collective capacity and fostering collaboration among teachers to build collective capacity in order to achieve “significantly higher performance and real innovation” (p. x). Teachers’ engagement in a collaborative process of discussing significant features of effective teaching “will serve to integrate teachers into a collective learning organization that works as a unified team instead of individuals working in isolation” (Doyle, 2012, p. 8). Evolving from a culture of isolation is critical because although isolation “may protect teachers from inspection and intrusion” it continually “deprives teachers of the opportunities to learn from and with one another” (Lam, Yim, & Yam, 2002, p. 3).
Professional Learning Communities

Dufour and Marzano (2011) explain “the very structure of a Professional Learning Community (PLC) works against the isolation of educators in that it demands professional interaction” (p. 62). Prominent PLC authors share that “the basic structure of the PLC is a group of collaborative teams that share a common purpose” (Dufour and Eaker, 1998, p. 26). City, Elmore, Fiarman, & Teitel (2009) clarify common purpose as coherence, meaning that “the adults agree on what they are trying to accomplish with students and that the adults are consistent from classroom to classroom in their expectations for what students are expected to learn” (p. 8). With teacher teamwork as a foundational component of PLCs, “schools that operate in this manner are characterized as having a student-centered-focus and a collaborative culture” (Dubois, 2011, p. 50).

In a summary of substantive instructional improvement efforts, Schmoker (2004) remarked that the structured work of learning communities offers the “best-known means by which we might achieve truly historic, wide-scale improvements in teaching and learning” (p. 430). In fact, one of the five core propositions of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) is that teachers are “members of learning communities” who must “collaborate with others to improve student learning” (NBPTS, 2014). Working as a learning community requires collegial relationships. Barth (2006) explains that collegiality requires that teachers grow together as a professional learning community (p. 10).

Although a promising effort in educational reform, establishing a PLC at a school is insufficient to create a collaborative culture and to improve school performance. In a study of schools claiming to function as PLCs, Ermeling and Gallimore (2013) noted that
“the majority of learning community time focused on developing common assessments and reviewing assessment results” while few teams “devoted time to identifying and planning classroom instruction” (p. 44). In other words, collaboration was reduced to data analysis without any focus on teaching and learning.

In a detailed explanation of the function of PLCs, Dufour, Dufour, Eaker, and Karhanek (2004) note, “the creation of a PLC does not call for the completion of a series of tasks, but rather for a process of continuous improvement and perpetual renewal” (p. 140). A necessary component of an authentic PLC, as denoted in the name Professional Learning Community, is that of professional learning. Functioning as a PLC requires structured “opportunities for teachers to collaboratively share skills and experience.” (Brinson & Steiner, 2007, p. 3). As in all learning organizations, schools must “address their core goals and tasks with relentless consistency, while at the same time learning continuously how to get better and better at what they are doing” (Fullan, 2011, p. 76).

**Professional Development in Education**

A Professional Learning Community operates under the assumption that “the key to improved learning for students is continuous job-embedded learning for educators” (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2010, p. 11). Learning Forward, known until 2010 as the National Staff Development Council (NSDC), asserts “increasing the effectiveness of professional learning is the leverage point with the greatest potential for strengthening and refining the day-to-day performance of educators” (2014). In an effort to clarify the term *professional development*, Learning Forward (2014) offers a definition:
The term “professional development” means a comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach to improving teachers’ and principals’ effectiveness in raising student achievement.

(A) Professional development fosters collective responsibility for improved student performance and must be comprised of professional learning that:

1. is aligned with rigorous state student academic achievement standards as well as related local educational agency and school improvement goals;
2. is conducted among educators at the school and facilitated by well-prepared school principals and/or school-based professional development coaches, mentors, master teachers, or other teacher leaders;
3. primarily occurs several times per week among established teams of teachers, principals, and other instructional staff members where the teams of educators engage in a continuous cycle of improvement.

The American Federation of Teachers (2014) offers a related explanation of professional development in education:

Professional development is a continuous process of individual and collective examination and improvement of practice. It should empower individual educators and communities of educators to make complex decisions; to identify and solve problems; and to connect theory, practice, and student outcomes. Professional development also should enable teachers to offer students the learning opportunities that will prepare them to meet world-class standards in given content areas and to successfully assume adult responsibilities for citizenship and work.
What both definitions share is the reflection of the need for continuous learning and improvement in order for educators to support students in achieving rigorous standards. This is reinforced by Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, and Orphanos (2009) in their explanation of effective professional development as providing for improvements in teachers’ knowledge and instructional practice resulting in improved student learning. Sparks (2003) summarizes effective professional development as that which “will deepen participant understanding, transform beliefs and assumptions, and create a stream of continuous actions that change habits and affect practice” (Hirsh, 2005, p. 39).

Professional development is essential for schools and students to be successful because providing exceptional education requires teachers to “develop a highly sophisticated set of skills” (Barber & Mourshed, 2007, p. 26). Schools must become “places of learning for teachers if we are to improve classroom instruction and student achievement” (Saunders et al, 2009, p. 1007).

Bournes-Hayes (2010) notes that although professional development is a necessary component of improving the educational system, teachers are often “critical and apprehensive of professional development that is provided for them but conducted by experts” (p. 16). As DuFour and Eaker (1998) explain, for many teachers the term professional development is “synonymous with occasional day-long workshops where they sit passively while an alleged expert exposes them to new ideas or practices” (p. 255). Lam, Yim, and Lam (2002) concur, stating, “[S]taff development for teachers is usually a one-shot deal in the form of course or workshop without on-site continual coaching” (p. 2). Therefore training in new skills does not, in fact, transfer to actual
practice in the classroom. Strucchelli (2009) explains that transfer to classroom practice is limited because many forms of professional development leave the implementation of skills to the individual teacher, often with limited support.

Fullan (2008) expounds upon the professional development problem in explaining “there is far too much going to workshops, taking short courses, and the like, and far too little learning while doing the work” (p.13). Unlike Japan, in United States schools, “professional development programs and courses, even when they are good in themselves, are removed from the setting in which teachers work” (Fullan, 2008, p. 86).

In addition to professional development being decontextualized from the school setting, training opportunities are rarely differentiated for adult learners. Reeves (2009) describes typical teacher professional development in detail: “we may find 500 teachers in a dark auditorium listening to an expert lecture at length about the need for differentiated instruction in precisely the same way to each teacher” (p. 63). Hirsch (2011) agrees: “professional development workshops are not specialized to meet what individual teachers need” (p. 107). Peel (2005) proffers that “despite potentially generic approaches to ‘teaching teaching’ professional growth is very much a personal odyssey, grounded in experiential learning from which personal meaning is derived” (p. 495).

In order for teachers to derive meaning from their professional learning, professional development should “take a variety of forms, including some we have not typically considered” and should also be “job-embedded and site-specific” (AFT, 2014). Chew (2013) concurs that teachers must be provided with authentic learning experiences by learning in the setting in which they teach. Barber & Mourshed (2007) confirm that “despite the evidence and the fact that almost every other profession conducts most of its
training in real-life settings, very little teacher training takes place in the teacher’s own classrooms” (p. 27). Indeed, professional learning should be job-embedded because “the most powerful learning is that which occurs in response to challenges currently being faced by the learner and that allows for immediate application, experimentation and adaptation on the job” (Sparks & Hirsh, 1997, p. 52).

**Peer Observation for Professional Learning in Education**

One method of contextualized professional learning is the practice of peer observation. Peer observation “is the process of colleagues observing others in their teaching, with the overall aim of improving teacher practice” (Hendry & Oliver, 2012, p. 1). Peer observation is one way of identifying the proficiencies and capabilities which practitioners bring to the profession (Buchanan & Khamis, 1999). In addition, peer observation is viewed as a “mechanism through which learning and teaching can be improved” (Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005, p. 213).

Peer observation is reinforced by several learning theories. In explaining his *Social Learning Theory*, Bandura (1977) conjectured that “most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, an on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action” (Bandura, 1977). This type of learning is supported through the peer-observation process in which teachers can learn behaviors by watching models of teaching in action. Observers view models, attend to and *encode* their behavior, and later emulate the behavior they have observed (McLeod, 2011).

A specific component of Social Learning Theory is *vicarious positive reinforcement*. Bandura contends “virtually all learning phenomena resulting from direct
experiences can occur on a vicarious basis through observation of other people’s behavior and its consequences for them” (Bandura, 1971, p. 2). In the field of education, resultant consequences of a teachers’ behavior are demonstrated in students’ responses. If students react in a preferred manner, then teachers observing the instruction are more likely to encode and later replicate the behavior of the teacher resulting in positive consequences. This type of learning can be explained in that “vicarious positive reinforcement is evident when observers display an increase in matching behavior as a function of observing rewarding consequences to a model” (Bandura, 1971, p. 233).

Social Learning Theory was originally studied in children but has since been applied to a variety of contexts and learning situations. A learning theory specific to adult learners is that of andragogy. Knowles (1980) defines andragogy as “the art and science of helping adults learn” (p. 43). Merriam (2001) describes five assumptions as defined by Knowles about an adult learner as someone who:

1. Has an independent self-concept and who can direct his or her own learning
2. Has accumulated a reservoir of life experiences that is a rich resource for learning,
3. Has learning needs closely related to changing social roles,
4. Is problem-centered and interested in immediate application of knowledge,
5. Is motivated to learn by internal rather than external factors. (p. 5)

Based on these assumptions about adult learners, adult learners in any profession must have an opportunity to direct their own learning, draw upon their own experiences, and immediately apply that which they are learning.
Other professions use forms of peer observation for professional, collaborative learning. Medical professionals use the process of rounds to observe practices of peers and develop coordinated plans of care for patients. The Royal College of Physicians and the Royal College of Nursing Ward (2012) explain “rounds offer great opportunities for effective communication, information sharing and joint learning through active participation of all members of the multidisciplinary team.” (p. 1). Johns Hopkins Hospital (2014) describes the process as “amphitheater rounds, not bedside rounds” but clarifies that “the patient and specific clinical problems have always been the focus” (Johns Hopkins University). Peer observations remain a collaborative learning tool for medical professionals to improve their practice in patient care.

Peer observations include tenets of both Social Learning Theory and andragogy with adult learning at the core. In a study of peer observations of novice and experienced secondary-school teachers, Bournes-Hayes (2010) indicated “one of the major findings was that teachers expressed that they could learn from the peer-observation process” (p. 86). Similarly, in a study of 19 junior-high school teachers, Sparks (1986) noted “secondary-school teachers rarely get to see each other in action” and, through the peer-observation process, found that “just watching a colleague teach was a powerful learning experience” (p. 223).

In an era of educational transformation, public school teachers seldom have opportunities to observe other teachers during instruction (Chew, 2013). Teachers in many schools work in virtual isolation with minimal opportunities to view the practices of others (Kachur, Stout, & Edwards, 2013). Elmore (2002) shares that educational improvement begins “when you visit a classroom where somebody is doing the same
thing you are, only much better. That’s when the real conversation about improvement takes place” (p. 4).

Institutes of Higher Education. Many colleges and universities utilize peer observation as a means to improve the practice of their instructional faculty. Hendry & Oliver (2012) indicate many universities have “incorporated peer observation as part of a strategic approach to enhance the quality of their teaching and learning” (p. 1). In summarizing an approach to developing teaching skills in higher education through peer observation and collaborative reflection, Martin and Double (1998) express six aims for peer observation of teaching as follows:

1. to improve and develop an understanding of personal approaches to curriculum delivery;
2. to enhance and extend teaching techniques and styles of presentation through collaboration;
3. to engage in and refine interpersonal skills through the exchange of insights relating to the review of a specific teaching performance;
4. to expand personal skills of evaluation and self-appraisal;
5. to develop and refine curriculum planning skills in collaboration with a colleague; and
6. to identify areas of subject understanding and teaching (p. 162).

Instructional and cultural benefits of peer observation. In a study of peer observation in higher education abroad, Bell & Mladenovic (2008) found “peer observation of teaching offers many benefits such as improvements in teaching practice and the development of confidence to teach and learn more about teaching” (p. 736).
Although the study focused on tutor development, research confirmed “peer observation of teaching provides a forum where teaching practices are shared rather than remaining a private activity” (Bell & Mladenovic, 2008, p. 737).

In an effort to improve teaching quality in his university department, Richardson (2006) opted to conduct peer observations with his colleagues explaining that peer observations offered “a forum for learning through exposure, contemplation, and often imitation” (p. 13). After implementation of peer observations in his department, he offered observations about the process including:

1. Peer observation allows teachers to glean from a wide variety of sources.
2. Peer observation fosters a sense of career-long learning.
3. Peer observation demonstrates to students that learning is an essential part of what professors do.
4. Peer observation promotes a forum to talk about good teaching. (pp. 14 – 17).

Richardson (2006) concluded that, if the preferred result is cultivating instruction, “faculty members who observe their peers on a routine and consistent basis will have greater opportunity to improve their own teaching” (p. 18).

At the University of Technology in Sydney, Pressick-Kilborn and te Riele conducted a mutual, collaborative peer observation process. Pressick-Kilborn and te Riele (2008) noted that “our peer observation process served both to provide new or modified ideas about our practices as teacher educators, as well as to reaffirm and reassure” their practices (p. 73). In addition to learning instructional practices, they also
discovered that peer observations enabled them to “sit amongst the students to gain insight into workshops from their perspective” (Pressick-Kilborn & te Riele, 2008, p. 70). As university faculty, they determined that the peer-observation experience benefited their instructional practice because it “raised our awareness of the magic of teachable moments when students are captured by and assume ownership of their learning in the space that we have created in our classroom” (Pressick-Kilborn & te Riele, 2008, p. 67).

In a review of literature of different models of observation in universities, authors McMahon, Barrett, and O’Neill (2007) define three models described by Gosling (2002) including the Evaluation Model, the Developmental Model, and the Peer Review Model (p. 501). The Peer Review Model was the only true model of peer observation. In interviews of lecturers participating in peer observation at the University College Dublin (UCD) “each of the 22 UCD teachers could point to tangible and documented improvements in teaching that resulted from the observations” (McMahon, Barrett, O’Neill, 2007, p. 510). Similarly, Kohut, Burnap, and Yon (2007) surveyed faculty at the University of North Carolina. Both tenured and untenured faculty reported that participating in peer observation “was not very stressful” and their own teaching “improved as a result of having participated in the process” (Kohut et al, 2007, p. 24).

Hammersley-Fletcher and Orsmand (2005) used semi-structured interviews of lecturers to explore the peer-observation process. Researchers described peer observation, noting: “at its best, the peer observation of teaching is a process that encourages reflection on teaching practice, identifies developmental needs, and fosters debate and dissemination around best practice” (p. 213). Based on interviews about perspectives of peer observations, university lecturers shared that they “benefited from
observations where they picked up tips, techniques and ideas from their colleagues” (p. 220).

**Prerequisites of implementation of peer observation.** Hammersley-Fletcher and Orsmand (2005) provided recommendations for universities venturing to implement peer observation including:

- Effective relationships between peers are crucial for peer observation to become a meaningful process,
- Peer observation needs to be central to higher education institutions’ learning and teaching strategies, and linked into continual professional-development programs (p. 222).

Peel (2005) expressed the importance of clarifying the purpose and intent of peer observations. This is particularly true for educational change and instructional improvement. In the university setting, if programs require staff to use peer observation “without fostering a personal questioning of beliefs, assumptions, habits, and acculturated practices, reform will be difficult to achieve” (Peel, 2005, p. 501).

In a study of peer observation at universities in Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, and Fiji, Bell (2002) noted that conceptualization of and procedures for peer observation are prerequisites. Peer observation of teaching “succeeds as a training and development activity where it is conceptualized as a mutual learning experience” and “where clear guidelines and procedures exist” (Bell, 2002, p. 7)

**Facilitators for implementation of peer observation.** Hammersley-Fletcher and Orsmand (2004) reviewed two peer-observation processes referred to as Peer Observation of Teaching (POT) in the British higher education sector through interviews of lecturers
at the School of Law and the School of Sciences. The schools’ POT systems both required documentation, but differed in their level of training for observers and in their mutuality in observation. Researchers summarized that lecturers in both schools were “generally supportive of the formality of peer observation procedures” (Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmand, 2004, p. 495). Lecturers also indicated “to play the role of observee and observer made a valued contribution to the peer-observation process” (p. 497). Researchers suggest peer observation should be viewed as a prospect for scholarly dialogue and also provides an opportunity to develop particular teaching and learning themes (Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmand, 2004, p. 502).

It is also evidenced that providing choice in participation appears to be a facilitator for implementing peer observations in the university setting. In a study of peer observation of Graduate Diploma in University Teaching and Learning at University College Dublin, participants indicated that they had no control or choice about whether or not to engage in the process of peer-observation (McMahon, Barrett, O’Neill, 2007). Peer observation was a mandatory part of the program, which, according to one participant, “caused some skepticism and also a certain amount of trepidation”; however, as the program progressed, “skepticism largely vanished and fears were greatly reduced” (p. 509).

**Challenges and barriers to implementation of peer observation.** Although much research points to the benefits of peer observation for professional learning in post-secondary education, challenges with peer observation are reported in several studies. Many of the challenges with peer observation stem from the discomfort of being observed while simultaneously considering potential impacts to relationships between
faculty members as a result of peer observation. For example, Richardson (2006) notes “most teachers are uneasy when anyone besides their own students watches them teach” (p. 10). In a similar university study, participants noted that “peer observation is perhaps the most challenging mode of collegial involvement in one another’s teaching” (Pressick-Kilborn & te Riele, 2008, p. 62). Hammersley-Fletcher and Orsmand (2005) indicated that several of the challenges with peer observation at the university level include

- vulnerability felt by those being observed and observing
- potential impact on relationships
- lecturers’ anxieties about giving feedback
- difficulty of giving or receiving criticism (p. 218)

Challenges were also expressed in relation to the structure and formality of peer observation in university settings. In a study of two peer-observation processes in British higher education, Hammersley-Fletcher and Orsmand (2005) determined “formalizing the [peer-observation] process had created a more stressful environment, and imposed structures that curtailed previous freedoms” (p. 496). In addition, since the peer observation was not connected to other professional development for university lecturers, staff criticized the process for limited contributions to school developmental initiatives (p. 499).

**Elementary and Secondary Education.** In many public schools, there is no systematic approach for engaging in peer observations as is evident in many university settings (Hirsch, 2011). Instead, in the K-12 setting, the term *observation* is often equated with performance evaluation conducted by administrators and is minimally conducted by peers for the purposes of professional learning. Research on peer
observation in K-12 public education settings is far less extensive than in higher education settings.

In one such study, an action research study of eight middle-school teachers engaging in peer observations, teachers indicated “peer observations provided meaningful learning” and that “they learned more about their content area by observing a peer” (Hirsch, 2011, p. 114). In addition, peer observations contributed to a collaborative environment and reinforced teacher relationships (Hirsch, 2011, p. 118).

**Instructional and cultural benefits of peer observation.** In a qualitative study of five teachers participating in the peer-observation process, Strucchelli (2009) described “peer observation as a form of professional development” which “provides teachers with the freedom to identify a particular focus of their observation” (p. 18). In the study, teachers engaged in pre-observation meetings, followed by peer observations, and concluded with a post-observation debrief. Results of the study demonstrate that all five teachers reported that they perceived peer observation of teaching to be an effective form of professional learning and “would recommend it to colleagues as a form of professional development” (p. 77). Benefits including enhancing pedagogical knowledge, learning through professional dialogue, promoting skill development, developing inquiry skills, encouraging reflective practice, and promoting collegiality and collaboration (Strucchelli, 2009).

Researchers in Sydney, Australia, in a study of 25 teachers at secondary schools, noted that the peer-observation process “drew teachers closer together through an enhanced sense of empathy” (Buchanan & Khamis, 1999, p. 8). Teachers specifically indicated they valued “the realistic context” in which the peer observations were situated.
(Buchanan & Khamis, 1999, p. 9). The peer-observation process gave teachers a sense of ownership while also empowering them with “a sense of agency, as they become facilitators of change in their colleagues’ and in their own teaching” (Buchanan & Khamis, 1999, p. 10).

In an action research study of elementary-school teachers engaged in peer observations, the researcher discovered that implementing the peer-observation process diminished teachers’ perceptions of feeling isolated (Doyle, 2012). Specifically, “these data suggest a dramatic shift in perceptions among participants in feelings of teacher isolation by engaging teachers in peer-to-peer classroom observations” (Doyle, 2012, p. 96). In addition, the peer-observation process may have improved teachers’ perceptions about their school as a learning organization (Doyle, 2012).

*Instructional Rounds in Education*, based upon the medical rounds approach, is another method of implementing peer observations (City et al., 2009). When describing the Instructional Rounds approach City (2011) indicated “participants in rounds, particularly teachers, emphasize the learning they do as observers” (p. 37). In a study of high-school teachers conducting Instructional Rounds, Chew (2013) noted participants felt “observing other classes provided an opportunity for the participants to watch others who were also master teachers and able to model effective instructional strategies” (p. 75). It was evidenced through participant comments that teachers perceived benefits to the Instructional Rounds process as contributing to their collaboration about instruction practices and professional learning through structured observation and personal reflection (Chew, 2013).
Prerequisites for implementation of peer observation. Similar to studies in the university setting, in a study comparing opinions of novice and veteran secondary-school teachers about the peer-observation process, choice in participation appears to be a prerequisite for implementation of peer observation. Specifically, “teachers felt they should have input in the peer-observation process” before participating (Bournes-Hayes, 2010, p. 87).

Kachur, Stout, and Edwards (2013) compared various approaches for engaging teachers in classroom walkthroughs in elementary and secondary schools. Comparable to peer observations, walkthroughs were defined as “brief, frequent, informal, and focused visits to classrooms by observers for the purposes of gathering data on educational practices” (p. 1). The intent is to build expertise “in all staff members through repeated cycles of high-quality learning” (Kachur, Stout, & Edwards, 2013, p. 27). A prerequisite noted in many approaches is the necessity of collaborative development of a context-specific model including norms and procedures prior to staff engaging in walkthroughs (Kachur et al., 2013).

Facilitators for implementation of peer observation. Kachur, Stout, and Edwards (2013) provide recommendations for schools contemplating engaging teachers in walkthroughs but caution that walkthroughs should “not operate as a stand-alone school improvement effort” but instead be integrated with or aligned to other initiatives (Kachur et al., 2013, p. 102). Instructional Rounds authors confirm “rounds shouldn’t be one-time events” and instead should be conceived as “a cyclical process that ties your whole school improvement plan and your professional development together” (p. 41). (City et al., 2011, p. 41).
**Challenges and barriers to implementation of peer observation.** Similar to studies at the post-secondary level, peer-observation studies at secondary schools also noted several challenges. A study comparing opinions of novice and veteran secondary-school teachers agreed that time was an inhibiting issue for teachers engaged in peer observation (Bournes-Hayes, 2010). Time constraints were also an issue in the *Instructional Rounds* process; participants noted that peer observations should be a voluntary process (Chew, 2013). Feelings of anxiety about the process often persist and as Barth (2006) describes, “perhaps no practice evokes more apprehension among educators than the prospect of one of our peers camping out in the back of our classroom for a few hours and watching us engage in the difficult art of teaching” (p. 11).

**Summary and Implications**

Public education is transforming from a model developed in the 1800s to a system appropriate for the 21st century. In an era of educational change, it is vital that educators seek opportunities to improve their practice and build the collective capacity of their organizations (Fullan, 2010). Abandoning a culture of isolation and embracing collaboration is necessary in that “the relationships among the educators in a school define all relationships within that school’s culture” (Barth, 2006, p. 8).

Schools must also focus on continuous learning in order for educators to successfully navigate the tides of change. Professional development for teachers cannot be relegated to workshops and trainings in single sittings and delivered by outside experts (Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Bournes-Hayes, 2010; Lam et al, 2002; Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Reeves, 2009). As an alternative, peer observations offer an approach to collaborative, collective learning by providing teachers with opportunities to view
instruction in an authentic, job-embedded setting (AFT, 2014; Fullan 2008; Sparks & Hirsh, 1997).

Studied extensively in higher education settings, peer observations have been utilized extensively for development of tutors, lecturers, and university faculty (Bell, 2002; Bell, 2005, Bell & Mladenovic, 2008; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005; Hendry & Oliver, 2012; Kohut et al., 2007; McMahon, Barrett, O’Neill, 2007; Peel, 2005; Pressick-Kilborn & te Riele, 2008; Richardson, 2006). Peer observations are not as widely implemented in secondary-school settings, however, and limited research provides information about the instructional and cultural benefits of peer observation as perceived by teachers.

The literature review in this chapter described research related to public education, educational change, school culture, professional learning communities, professional development of teachers, and peer observation for professional learning. Chapter III outlines the research methodology that will be utilized during the study. Chapter IV presents the results of the data collection and analysis and a discussion of the findings of this study. Chapter V contains the summary, findings, conclusions, and recommendations for further research.
Chapter III: Methodology

Overview

This chapter includes a description of the methodology and procedures to conduct this study. The purpose of the study is stated, followed by research questions and details about the research design. The methodology is described, including the population and sample, instruments, and field test to validate instruments. Information about the data-collection process, explanation of the data analysis, and limitations of the study are also described.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to investigate secondary-school teachers’ perceptions about conducting peer observations for professional learning in contextualized settings in public schools. In this study, contextualized settings include classrooms of peers that are observed during the peer-observation process.

This study explored instructional benefits of employing peer observation for professional learning as perceived by secondary-school teachers. In addition, the study explored perceived cultural benefits of implementing peer observation in secondary schools. This is related to school culture, which, according to Fullan (2007) can be defined as the guiding beliefs and values evident in the way a school operates. Lastly, this study sought to clarify the prerequisites, facilitators, and barriers to implementing peer observation for professional learning in secondary schools as perceived by secondary-school teachers.
Research Questions

The following questions were investigated to address the purpose of the study:

1. What are the instructional benefits of conducting peer observations as part of professional learning as perceived by secondary-school teachers engaging in a peer-observation process?

2. What are the cultural benefits of implementing peer observations as perceived by secondary-school teachers engaging in a peer-observation process?

3. What prerequisites are necessary to successfully implement peer observations for professional learning in secondary schools as perceived by secondary-school teachers engaging in a peer-observation process?

4. What facilitators are necessary to successfully implement peer observations for professional learning in secondary schools as perceived by secondary-school teachers engaging in a peer-observation process?

5. What are the barriers to successfully implementing peer observations for professional learning in secondary schools as perceived by secondary-school teachers engaging in a peer-observation process?

Research Design

This study used descriptive research, which “provides a summary of an existing phenomenon” and “assesses the nature of existing conditions” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 22). Descriptive research is a non-experimental design in which there is no intervention or treatment as researchers attempt to describe participants or phenomena as they exist naturally (Patten, 2012). This type of research “describes achievement,
attitudes, behaviors, and other traits of a group of subjects” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 217).

Qualitative and quantitative research were employed through the Delphi method. In the Delphi method, “qualitative and/or quantitative questions can be asked of the ‘experts’ and the information is then analyzed and fed back to each person, via further questions” (Neill, 2007). In a study of the use of Delphi technique to determine local planning agency power, Ali (2005) shares “the findings of this research demonstrate the effectiveness of the Delphi technique as a qualitative method seeking to clarify ill-defined topics” (p. 730). In a review of graduate research employing the Delphi method, Skulmoski, Hartman, and Krahn (2007) describe “most studies began with qualitative followed by quantitative analysis of subsequent round Likert-style questions” (p. 9).

**Methodology**

The Delphi method was utilized in order to gather perceptual data from an expert panel of secondary-school teachers that have engaged in peer observations at various school sites and are deemed highly knowledgeable experts by their site principals. The Delphi technique is a widely used method for “achieving convergence of opinion concerning real-world knowledge solicited from experts within certain topic areas” (Hsu & Sandford, 2007, p. 1). Skulmoski et al. (2007) further define the method as “an iterative process to collect and distill the anonymous judgments of experts using a series of data collection and analysis techniques interspersed with feedback” (p. 1). The Delphi technique, by definition, is “a group process involving an interaction between the researcher and a group of identified experts on a specified topic, usually through a series of questionnaires” (Yousuf, 2007, p. 1).
More specifically, a policy Delphi method was appropriate for this study because it is a systematic approach to obtaining informed opinions on a particular topic and “can be used to develop consensus either for or against policy issues” (Rayens & Hahn, 2000, p. 308). Linstone and Turoff (1975) indicate the “Delphi may be characterized as a method for structuring a group communication process, so that the process is effective in allowing a group of individuals, as a whole, to deal with complex problems” (p. 3).

The Delphi method was developed by the RAND Corporation in the 1950s to forecast the impact of technology on warfare. RAND (2014) describes the method entailing

a group of experts who anonymously reply to questionnaires and subsequently receive feedback in the form of a statistical representation of the “group response,” after which the process repeats itself. The goal is to reduce the range of responses and arrive at something closer to expert consensus.

Hsu and Sanford (2007) indicate that one of the advantages of the Delphi process is the anonymity of participants, “which can reduce the effects of dominant individuals which is often a concern when using group-based processes” (p. 2).

For purposes of this study, an electronic questionnaire was used to assess secondary-school teachers’ perceptions about peer observation. The questionnaire was distributed in three rounds as the Delphi method is typically conducted across a sequence of questionnaires (Iqbal & Pipon-Young, 2009). Ali (2005) describes the process as “a series of questionnaire rounds used to obtain iterative responses to an issue of inquiry” (p. 720).
Questions were designed to assess teachers’ perceptions about the instructional benefits of engaging in peer observations, the cultural benefits of engaging in peer observations, and the prerequisites, facilitators, and barriers to successfully implementing peer observation for professional learning in secondary schools. The initial round of questions allowed open-ended responses as it was optimal to employ a qualitative design to explore the range of participants’ thinking (Iqbal & Pipon-Young, 2009, p. 599).

Results of participant responses to round-one questions were analyzed and became the basis for round-two questions (Skulmoski et al., 2007). The process continued as participants responded to round-two questions. These responses, in turn, became the basis for the third and final round of questions.

**Population & Sample**

The population for this study included secondary-school teachers in Riverside County, California. At the time of the study, there were 23 school districts in Riverside County along with schools operated by the Riverside County Office of Education. The county’s districts serve over 416,000 students (Riverside County Office of Education, 2013). This includes approximately 80 middle schools and 60 comprehensive high schools (see Table 1).
Table 1

*Public Schools in Riverside County*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School sites</th>
<th>Enrollment Total</th>
<th>Elementary</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Alternative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alvord Unified</td>
<td>19,765</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banning Unified</td>
<td>4,564</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beaumont Unified</td>
<td>8,514</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coachella Valley Unified</td>
<td>18,407</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corona-Norco Unified</td>
<td>53,478</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desert Center Unified</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desert Sands Unified</td>
<td>29,172</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hemet Unified</td>
<td>21,554</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jurupa Unified</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Elsinore Unified</td>
<td>21,554</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Menifee Union</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moreno Valley Unified</td>
<td>35,046</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murrieta Valley Unified</td>
<td>23,046</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nuvie Union</td>
<td>2,174</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Palm Springs Unified</td>
<td>22,901</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palo Verde Unified</td>
<td>3,567</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perris Elementary</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>Perris Union High</td>
<td>10,559</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Riverside County Office of Education</td>
<td>3,388</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverside Unified</td>
<td>42,388</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romoland</td>
<td>3,216</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Jacinto Unified</td>
<td>9,097</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temecula Valley Unified</td>
<td>28,752</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Val Verde Unified</td>
<td>19,617</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>415,926</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Totals do not include preschools, adult education, alternative, or charter schools outside of listed districts.
When selecting participants in a Delphi study, Hsu and Sandford (2007) suggest, “[C]hoosing the appropriate subjects is the most important step in the entire process because it directly relates to the quality of results generated” (p. 3). Therefore, to select the sample of teachers for participation in this study, of the secondary schools including middle schools and high schools in Riverside County, schools were deliberately selected based on their engagement in a peer-observation process at their school sites. According to Patton (2002), “purposeful sampling focuses on selecting information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study” (p. 230).

Criterion sampling of secondary schools was conducted because all cases must “meet some predetermined criterion of importance” (Patton, 2002, p. 238). For purposes of this study, sites were only selected for participation in the study if teachers at the school had, indeed, engaged in a peer-observation process as confirmed by a school district designee and the site principal. Peer-observation criteria for this study include components described by Kachur, Stout, and Edwards (2013):

- Teacher participation in peer observation
- Protocol and structure for peer observation, including frequency of classroom observations and duration of classroom observations
- Data-gathering or note-taking process for participants (p. 31).

Thirteen schools were identified through criterion sampling and a sample of 25 teachers participated as expert panel members in the Delphi study. This was consistent with policy Delphi research in that a “typical policy Delphi sample size may range from 10 to 30 participants” (Rayens & Hahn, 2000, p. 309).
Instrumentation

A series of questions were developed in order to address all variables included in the research questions. Questions were sent to panel members via email in three rounds. The first round of questions contained open-ended, free-response questions in which a text box was provided for panel members’ responses.

Round 1

1. What instructional benefits are derived from peer observations in secondary schools?
2. What cultural benefits are derived from peer observations in secondary schools?
3. What prerequisites are necessary for the successful implementation of peer observations in secondary schools?
4. What are the facilitators of successful implementation of peer observation in secondary schools?
5. What factors are barriers to the successful implementation of peer observations in secondary schools?

Aggregation of responses to round-one questions occurred after responses were received from the expert panel of teacher participants. From the responses provided via electronic survey, a list of expert panel responses associated with each question was generated. Aggregated responses to round-one questions accompanied round-two questions. Round-two questions asked participants to rate the degree of importance of each factor identified in round one using a Likert scale. Skulmoski et al. (2007) indicates
“ranking and rating the output of the first round is common” in round-two questionnaires (p. 4).

Round 2

1. To what degree are the instructional benefits derived from peer observations as identified in Round 1 Research Question (RQ) 1 important?

2. To what degree are the cultural benefits derived from peer observations as identified in Round 1 RQ2 important?

3. To what degree are the prerequisites for successful implementation of peer observations as identified in Round 1 RQ3 important?

4. To what degree are the facilitators of successful implementation of peer observations as identified in Round 1 RQ4 important?

5. To what degree are the barriers to successful implementation of peer observations as identified in Round 1 RQ5 important to mitigate?

Aggregation of responses to round-two questions occurred after responses were received from the expert panel of teacher participants. Likert scale responses provided via electronic survey were analyzed using mean, mode, mode frequency, and median. The researcher identified the top three responses for each research question as rated by the expert panel.

The top three identified responses to round-two questions accompanied round-three questions. Round-three questions asked participants to determine, via open-ended response, the strategies or actions a school can implement to support the top three most important responses as identified by panel member ratings in round two.
Round 3

1. What strategies or actions can be taken by a school to best support the most important instructional benefits of peer observation identified in Round 2, RQ1?

2. What strategies or actions can be taken by a school to best support the most important cultural benefits of peer observation identified in Round 2 RQ2?

3. What strategies or actions can be taken by a school to best support the most important prerequisites for peer observation identified in Round 2 RQ3?

4. What strategies or actions can be taken by a school to best support the most important facilitators for peer observation that were identified in Round 2 RQ4?

5. What strategies or actions can be taken by a school to best support mitigating the barriers of peer observation that were identified in Round 2 RQ5?

Responses to round three were analyzed for emerging themes. Themes were determined based on commonality of responses from panel members and frequency of responses by panel members.

**Instrument Field Tests/Validity**

Prior to conducting the study, a panel of three educational consultants was convened to participate in a field test of the Delphi study. Participants were asked to respond to each round of the Delphi questions to determine reliability of questions. Feedback was gathered from participants regarding language and structure of questions. Questions were revised as necessary based on feedback from the field test panel. Field
test members were also asked to review responses and themes identified by the researcher after each round of the Delphi study to validate the researcher’s identified themes.

**Data Collection**

Superintendents within Riverside County were contacted during a Superintendents’ meeting at the Riverside County Office of Education. The researcher presented an abstract of the research proposal and explained the background and purpose of the study (see Appendix A). In addition to the presenting a copy of the research study abstract, the researcher verbally explained the purpose of the research study and requested permission for teacher participation in the study. Ten school-district superintendents granted permission and immediately signed and returned a copy of the abstract with their signature and the name of a district designee to serve as the contact person for purposes of the study.

After permission was granted from district superintendents, the district designee was contacted by email in the ten districts granting permission for research. Follow-up phone calls were made to district contacts that did not respond to the email. District contacts in two districts indicated that they did not conduct peer observations at secondary sites. Two other districts required completion and submission of a formal request to conduct research. Formal requests were submitted as requested.

Permission was granted by district designees and/or district approval committees in 7 of 23 school districts in Riverside County. The researcher inquired about peer-observation implementation at secondary sites to determine if there were any particular sites that would be potential candidates for participation in the study. District designees
recommended 18 secondary school sites. The researcher requested and was provided site principals’ contact information at identified school sites.

Site principals at the 18 identified secondary schools were contacted by email to confirm that their school sites had engaged in peer observation during the previous or current school year based upon the established criteria and definition of peer observation (see Appendix B). Principals were asked to identify two to four potential teacher candidates to serve as a member of the expert panel. Principals were also asked for permission for identified teachers’ participation in the policy Delphi study.

Of the 18 secondary sites recommended for participation, site administrators at 15 secondary-school sites in Riverside County responded to the email request for participation in the research study. Principals provided contact information for 37 teachers to serve as expert panel members.

Upon Brandman University Institutional Review Board (BUIRB) approval, a letter of invitation for participation, participant’s bill of rights, and request for informed consent was emailed to 37 teachers at 15 secondary schools (see Appendices C, D, and E). Information regarding confidentiality and use of responses was included in the informed consent (see Appendix E). Confidentiality was maintained throughout the study and participants were not identified by name, school site, or school district during administration of electronic questionnaire or in reporting of findings.

Of the 37 teachers contacted, 25 teachers responded and provided informed consent. Once informed consent was received by the researcher, the 25 panel members received an electronic link to participate in round one of the study. The electronic link to round one of the Delphi included an introduction to the round-one questionnaire,
instructions to complete the questionnaire, a deadline for questionnaire completion, terms and definitions, and contact information (see Appendix F). Similar information was also included for electronic questionnaires for rounds two and three (see Appendices G and H).

**Data Analysis**

Results of questionnaires were analyzed after each round of the Delphi study. Responses to round-one questions were qualitatively coded and compiled, then became the basis upon which participants responded to round two (Skulmoski et al., 2007). Likert-scale responses to round two were analyzed according to mean, mode, mode frequency and median from all expert panel responses. The top three factors for each question were identified as the factors of highest importance according to panel members’ Likert ratings. The factors of highest importance determined from round-two questions accompanied round-three questions via electronic questionnaire. Responses to round-three questions were qualitatively coded. A data-analysis matrix was used for each research question to identify patterns and themes. In an inductive manner, themes emerged based on qualitative data analysis (Saldaña, 2009).

**Limitations**

It is important to note that this study did not intend to investigate a correlation between student achievement and teacher participation in peer observations. The following are additional limitations of this study:

1. The study occurred in secondary schools in districts in one county in California. The population may not be representative of all counties in California.
2. The sample was limited to sites that participated in a peer-observation process meeting the researcher’s criteria. Based on the limited sample, results may not be sufficient to generalize to a larger population.

3. The study relies on voluntary participation by teachers. This may impact results for several reasons. It is possible that respondents and participants may be motivated to respond “for reasons that will skew the results” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 142).

4. This study was limited by the accuracy of the responses about perceptions. Perceptions may be skewed by experiences and other factors that are not accounted for in the survey questions, observations, focus-group questions or interview questions.

5. This study relied on a survey instrument that did not have reliability measures over a variety of settings and contexts. Without calibration, reliability of the survey instrument may be a limitation.

**Summary**

Chapter III included a review of the purpose of the study and research questions. The methodology to conduct this study was presented, including the population and sample, instruments, and field test to validate instruments. Information about the data-collection process, explanation of the data analysis, and the limitations of the study were also described.

Chapter IV presents the results of the data collection and analysis and a discussion of the findings of this study. Chapter V contains the summary, findings, conclusions, and recommendations for further research.
Chapter IV: Research, Data Collection and Findings

Introduction

Chapter I of this study provided background about public education and an introduction to the research study. Chapter II presented a review of literature about public education, educational change, school culture, Professional Learning Communities, professional development in education, and an exploration of peer observations in the field of education. Chapter III explained the research design and methodology of the study including the population and sample, instrumentation, data collection and analysis procedures.

Included in this chapter is a brief summary of the research study followed by the presentation of data gathered and analyzed during the research process. The purpose of the study is stated followed by research questions. The methodology is described including the population and sample. Data is presented aligned to each research question through each round of the Delphi study. Chapter IV concludes with a summary of findings.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to investigate secondary-school teachers’ perceptions about conducting peer observations for professional learning in contextualized settings in public schools. In this study, contextualized settings include classrooms of peers that are observed during the peer-observation process.

This study explored the instructional benefits of employing peer observation for professional learning as perceived by secondary-school teachers. In addition, the study explored perceived cultural benefits of implementing peer observation in secondary
This is related to school culture which, according to Fullan (2007) can be defined as the guiding beliefs and values evident in the way a school operates. Lastly, this study sought to clarify the prerequisites, facilitators, and barriers to implementing peer observation for professional learning in secondary schools as perceived by secondary-school teachers.

**Research Questions**

The following questions were investigated to address the purpose of the study:

1. What are the instructional benefits of conducting peer observations as part of professional learning as perceived by secondary-school teachers engaging in a peer-observation process?

2. What are the cultural benefits of implementing peer observations as perceived by secondary-school teachers engaging in a peer-observation process?

3. What prerequisites are necessary to successfully implement peer observations for professional learning in secondary schools as perceived by secondary-school teachers engaging in a peer-observation process?

4. What facilitators are necessary to successfully implement peer observations for professional learning in secondary schools as perceived by secondary-school teachers engaging in a peer-observation process?

5. What are the barriers to successfully implementing peer observations for professional learning in secondary schools as perceived by secondary-school teachers engaging in a peer-observation process?
Methodology

The Delphi method was utilized in order to gather perceptual data from an expert panel of secondary-school teachers that have engaged in peer observations at various school sites and are deemed highly knowledgeable experts by their site principals. For purposes of this study, an electronic questionnaire was used to assess secondary-school teachers’ perceptions about peer observation. The questionnaire was distributed in three rounds as the Delphi method is typically conducted across a sequence of questionnaires (Iqbal & Pipon-Young, 2009). Results of participant responses to round-one questions were analyzed and became the basis for round-two questions (Skulmoski et al., 2007). The process continued as participants responded to round-two questions. Round-two responses became the basis for the third and final round of questions.

Population and Sample

The population for this study included secondary-school teachers in Riverside County, California. There are currently 23 school districts in Riverside County along with schools operated by the Riverside County Office of Education. Of the 23 school districts, Superintendents from ten districts granted permission to conduct research within their district and indicated a district contact person on a signed permission form (see Appendix A). Of the ten districts granting permission, seven district contact persons provided contact information for site administrators at secondary sites at which teachers engage in peer observation. Site administrators at 15 secondary school sites in Riverside County provided contact information for 37 teachers deemed highly knowledgeable experts in peer observation.
A letter of invitation for participation, participant’s bill of rights, and request for informed consent was emailed to 37 teachers at 15 secondary schools (see Appendices D and E). Of the 37 teachers contacted, 25 teachers responded and provided informed consent. All 25 teachers were included as expert panel members for the purposes of this Delphi study and received the electronic questionnaires for all three rounds of the study. Of the 25 panel members, 17 (68 percent) responded to the electronic questionnaire for round one of the Delphi study. Of the 17 respondents in round one, 8 specified that they were middle-school teachers while 9 were high-school teachers. Of the 25 panel members, 18 (72 percent) responded to the electronic survey for round two of the study. For the final round of the study, 20 of 25 panel members (80 percent) responded to the electronic questionnaire.

**Presentation of the Data**

Data is presented for each research question consecutively beginning with research question one. Each of the three rounds of the Delphi study is reported consecutively for each research question.

**Research Question One**

What are the instructional benefits of conducting peer observations as part of professional learning as perceived by secondary-school teachers engaging in a peer-observation process?

**Round One.** In round one, participants were asked to respond via electronic survey to the open-ended question, *what instructional benefits are derived from conducting peer observations in secondary schools?* Peer observation was defined as the “process of colleagues observing others in their teaching, with the overall aim of
improving teacher practice” (Hendry & Oliver, 2012, p. 1). Instructions accompanying the survey requested that respondents keep responses brief but sufficiently explanatory (see Appendix F).

The round-one questionnaire was emailed to 25 teachers providing informed consent. Seventeen expert panel members responded. The researcher reviewed, sorted, and categorized panel members’ responses. Similar responses were combined as were specific components of larger themes. For example, if a particular instructional strategy or program such as Power Teaching or Direct Interactive Instruction was indicated by a respondent as an instructional benefit derived from peer observations, the response was included within the larger theme of instructional strategies.

The researcher generated a list of 23 unique perceived instructional benefits based on the 17 panel members’ responses. The list was presented to several of the field-test educational experts to seek input and additional analysis of key themes. Based on the input of educational experts, three of the responses were included as components of other responses to decrease the length of the list and eliminate redundancies. The list of 23 responses was reduced to 20 responses outlined in Table 2.
Table 2

*Perceived Instructional Benefits Derived from Peer Observations in Secondary Schools as Reported by an Expert Panel of Secondary-School Teachers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Benefit</th>
<th>Frequency of Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow observers to view how other teachers utilize instructional strategies during instruction with actual students.</td>
<td>9 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow observers to view how other teachers present lessons and instructional material.</td>
<td>6 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow observers to view a variety of classroom-management techniques and strategies.</td>
<td>6 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow observers to view a variety of classroom learning environments (student seating arrangements; posted tools/resources).</td>
<td>6 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow observers to view strategies/structures for student collaboration and interaction.</td>
<td>5 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow observers to view examples of differentiation in other classrooms.</td>
<td>4 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow observers to view students’ learning in different classroom settings/content areas.</td>
<td>4 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow observers to view student engagement opportunities and techniques.</td>
<td>3 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow observers to view classroom norms and procedures.</td>
<td>3 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations lead to teachers’ reflection on their own instructional practices.</td>
<td>3 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow observers to view how other teachers interact with a variety of students.</td>
<td>2 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow observers to view the pacing of a lesson to determine time for students’ task completion.</td>
<td>2 of 17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Continued)
Table 2 (continued)

*Perceived Instructional Benefits Derived from Peer Observations in Secondary Schools as Reported by an Expert Panel of Secondary-School Teachers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Benefit</th>
<th>Frequency of Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations can improve teaching by allowing teachers to observe “better teachers.”</td>
<td>2 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations provide topics for conversations about instructional methods and strategies.</td>
<td>2 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow observers to see what solutions other teachers have devised for common problems.</td>
<td>1 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow observers to experience a lesson from a student’s perspective.</td>
<td>1 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow observers to view examples of technology in use by teachers and students.</td>
<td>1 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow observers to view how teachers provide feedback to students.</td>
<td>1 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations ensure consistency of strategies as implementation spreads school-wide.</td>
<td>1 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations motivate teachers to “step up their game” on a more consistent basis.</td>
<td>1 of 17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis of round one. All 17 panel members responding to the round-one questionnaire listed or described more than one perceived instructional benefit in response to research question one. The most frequent response regarding instructional benefits of peer observations, indicated by nine of 17 panel members, is *observers are able to view how other teachers utilize instructional strategies during instruction.*

Several commented on seeing the strategies in an *authentic classroom context* or viewing strategies *in action with actual students.* Although participant responses were often specific to a particular instructional strategy, these responses were combined into one instructional benefit: *peer observations allow observers to view how other teachers utilize instructional strategies during instruction with actual students.*

Six of 17 panelists also indicated in their responses to round one that peer observations *allow observers to view how other teachers present lessons and instructional material, a variety of classroom management techniques and strategies, and a variety of classroom learning environments.* Five of 17 panel members included in their response that peer observations *allow observers to view strategies and structures for student collaboration and interaction.* Four of 17 panelists described instructional benefits of peer observation as *allowing observers to view examples of differentiation in other classrooms and to view students' learning in different classroom settings/content areas.* Three of 17 panel members included instructional benefits such as peer observations *allow observers to view student engagement opportunities and techniques or classroom norms and procedures* and peer observations *lead to teachers' reflection on their own instructional practices.*
Perceived instructional benefits of peer observation indicated by 2 of 17 panelists included viewing how other teachers interact with a variety of students and viewing the pacing of a lesson to determine time for students’ task completion. Two panel members also indicated peer observations can improve teaching by allowing teachers to observe better teachers and peer observations provide topics for conversations about instructional methods and strategies.

Several perceived instructional benefits of peer observation were unique to individual panel members’ responses. Only one panel member included in his/her response that peer observations allow observers to see what solutions other teachers have devised for common problems, to experience a lesson from a student’s perspective, to view examples of technology in use by teachers and students, to view how teachers provide feedback to students, peer observations ensure consistency of strategies as implementation spreads school-wide, and peer observations motivate teachers to “step up their game” on a more consistent basis.

The most frequent theme that arose from round one with the most responses from panel members was the opportunity to see instructional strategies during peer observations. This included how other teachers utilize strategies, how teachers present lessons and material, strategies for student interaction and collaboration, and examples of differentiation. Another overarching theme included in many responses was that of learning environment. This encompassed responses such as viewing a variety of classroom learning environments, classroom norms and procedures, student learning in different settings and content areas, classroom management strategies, and student engagement opportunities and techniques. The final theme was that of teacher reflection.
Panel members’ responses to round one became the basis for round two of the Delphi study. The 20 unduplicated round-one responses to research question one were entered into an electronic survey using Google Form for round two.

**Round Two.** In round two, participants were asked to determine the degree of importance of the 20 perceived instructional benefits derived from peer observation as identified in round one by panel members’ responses. In the electronic survey instructions for round two, participants were informed that responses from round one were distilled, categorized, and consolidated based on common responses from participants from various secondary schools throughout Riverside County (see Appendix G).

The 25 panel members received the round two survey via email and were instructed to read all items in each section and consider degree of importance before rating. A five-point Likert scale was utilized for rating degree of importance. A rating of *one* signified that the item was *not important*, a rating of *three* indicated the item was *somewhat important* while a rating of *five* denoted the item as *very important*. Participants were informed in the survey instructions that their ratings in round two would be aggregated with responses of other panel members to determine the most important instructional benefits of peer observation in secondary schools. Of 25 panel members, 18 responded to round two. Panel members’ mean ratings of degree of importance of each the perceived instructional benefits identified in round one are summarized in Table 3 along with the mode, mode frequency, and median for responses in round two.
Table 3

*Ranking Based on Mean Degree of Importance of Perceived Instructional Benefits Derived from Peer Observations in Secondary Schools*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Benefit Identified in Round 1</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Mode Frequency</th>
<th>Median</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow observers to view how other teachers utilize instructional strategies during instruction with actual students.</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations lead to teachers’ reflection on their own instructional practices.</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow observers to view strategies/structures for student collaboration and interaction.</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow observers to see what solutions other teachers have devised for common problems.</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow observers to view student engagement opportunities and techniques.</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow observers to view examples of differentiation in other classrooms.</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations provide topics for conversations about instructional methods and strategies.</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow observers to view how other teachers interact with a variety of students.</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow observers to view how other teachers present lessons and instructional material.</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
Table 3 (continued)

*Ranking Based on Mean Degree of Importance of Perceived Instructional Benefits Derived from Peer Observations in Secondary Schools*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Benefit Identified in Round 1</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Mode Frequency</th>
<th>Median</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow observers to view a variety of classroom management techniques and strategies.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow observers to experience a lesson from a student’s perspective.</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow observers to view students’ learning in different classroom settings/content areas.</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow observers to view how teachers provide feedback to students.</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow observers to view examples of technology in use by teachers and students.</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations motivate teachers to “step up their game” on a more consistent basis.</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations ensure consistency of strategies as implementation spreads schoolwide.</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations can improve teaching by allowing teachers to observe “better teachers.”</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow observers to view a variety of classroom learning environments.</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow observers to view the pacing of a lesson.</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow observers to view classroom norms and procedures.</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Analysis of round two.** Panel members rated the degree of importance of each of the 20 perceived instructional benefits of peer observation identified by respondents in round one. Panel members rated the degree of importance on a five point Likert scale ranging from *one, not as important,* to *five, very important.* Mean ratings were calculated for each of the 20 instructional benefits of peer observation. Mean ratings ranged from 3.17 to 4.83. In order to develop the round-three questionnaire, the top three perceived instructional benefits were determined using the mean, mode, mode frequency, and median based on the percentage of participants rating the item as a five, *very important,* on the Likert scale.

The instructional benefit with the highest mean rating of 4.83 out of a five-point Likert scale was *peer observations allow observers to view how other teachers utilize instructional strategies during instruction with actual students.* Of the 18 panel members, 15 (83.3 percent) rated this instructional benefit as a five on the Likert scale, indicating it is a *very important* instructional benefit of peer observation. The remaining 3 of 18 panel members rated this item as a *four* on the Likert scale, indicating that it is an *important* instructional benefit of peer observation. This finding is congruent with the round-one responses in which the most frequent perceived instructional benefit listed by participants related to the opportunity that peer observations provide for observers to view how other teachers utilize instructional strategies during instruction.

The second-highest mean rating was 4.67 for the instructional benefit *peer observations lead to teachers’ reflection on their own instructional practices.* This perceived instructional benefit received a rating of a five, *very important,* from 12 of 18 panel members (66.7 percent). The remaining six respondents (33.3 percent) rated this
instructional benefit as a four, important. In round one of the study, only three panel members included a mention of teacher reflection on instructional practice as an instructional benefit of peer observation. However, based on the high mean Likert scale ratings in round two, it was evident that panel members perceived teacher reflection on instructional practice as an important instructional benefit of peer observation.

The third-highest mean rating was 4.5 for two of the instructional benefits: Peer observations allow observers to view strategies and structures for student collaboration and interaction and peer observations allow observers to see what solutions other teachers have devised for common problems. The instructional benefit peer observations allow observers to view strategies and structures for student collaboration and interaction was mentioned by five of 17 panel members in round one while the instructional benefit peer observations allow observers to see what solutions other teachers have devised for common problems was mentioned by only one respondent in round one. An analysis of the mode revealed that 11 out of 18 (61 percent) rated peer observations allow observers to view strategies/structures for student collaboration and interaction as a five, very important, on the Likert scale. The other instructional benefit with a mean rating of 4.5, peer observations allow observers to see what solutions other teachers have devised for common problems, also had a median and mode of five however only 10 of 18 (55.6 percent) of respondents rated this instructional benefit as a five.

Based on the analysis of the mean, mode, mode frequency, and median, the top three perceived instructional benefits of peer observations include (1) peer observations allow observers to view how other teachers utilize instructional strategies during
instruction with actual students, (2) peer observations lead to teachers’ reflection on their own instructional practices and (3) peer observations allow observers to view strategies/structures for student collaboration and interaction. The three perceived instructional benefits with the highest mean ratings became the basis for survey round three.

**Round Three.** In round three, the final round of the study, panel members were asked to identify the strategies or actions a school can implement to best support realizing the most important perceived instructional benefits of peer observation identified in round two (see Appendix H). The electronic survey was emailed to the original 25 panel members providing informed consent. Twenty of 25 panel members (80 percent) responded to survey round three.

In the electronic survey instructions for round three, panel members were reminded that in round two, they were asked to rate the degree of importance of the instructional benefits previously identified by panel members in round one. Panel members’ ratings in round two were analyzed using the mean, mode, mode frequency, and median to determine the top three most important perceived instructional benefits. The top three instructional benefits were provided to participants in round three accompanied by a text box in which panel members were asked to type the strategies or actions a school can implement to best support realizing the most important instructional benefits of peer observation identified in round two. Panel members’ responses are included in Table 4 along with frequencies of responses.
### Table 4

**Strategies or Actions a School Can Implement to Realize the Top Three Instructional Benefits Derived from Peer Observations in Secondary Schools**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Benefit 1: Peer observations allow observers to view how other teachers utilize instructional strategies during instruction with actual students.</th>
<th>Frequency of Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify instructional strategies in advance of peer observations; preselect strategies to be observed during peer observation; determine a strategy or instructional theme of the observation prior to conducting peer observations.</td>
<td>8 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide time to debrief and discuss strategies observed during peer observations.</td>
<td>3 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow participating teachers to have choice in the peer-observation process (whom to observe, when to observe, length of time of observations).</td>
<td>3 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide release time to allow teachers to participate in peer observations; allocate funding for substitutes or prep coverage.</td>
<td>3 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure all teachers are trained in instructional strategies before engaging in peer observations.</td>
<td>2 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase staff participation in peer observations (encourage/require).</td>
<td>2 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have administrators support, encourage, facilitate but not dominate the process.</td>
<td>2 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify <em>expert teachers</em> or <em>best practice teachers</em> to observe during peer observations.</td>
<td>2 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide questions or discussion points prior to observation to raise awareness during observations.</td>
<td>1 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide advanced notice about peer observations.</td>
<td>1 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlight innovative practices and reward risk-taking.</td>
<td>1 of 20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Continued)
### Table 4 (continued)

*Strategies or Actions a School Can Implement to Realize the Top Three Instructional Benefits Derived from Peer Observations in Secondary Schools*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Benefit 2: Peer observations lead to teachers’ reflection on their own instructional practices.</th>
<th>Frequency of response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Debrief and discuss ideas gained during peer observations immediately after peer observations occur.</td>
<td>10 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debrief and discuss ideas gained during peer observations during team, department, or PLC meetings.</td>
<td>5 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide time to analyze observation and reflect on ideas gained during peer observations.</td>
<td>5 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compose quick writes or journal reflections about peer observations; compare and contrast to own practices.</td>
<td>3 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commit to implementing a strategy learned during peer observations; schedule time for a follow-up discussion.</td>
<td>2 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use a note-taking tool or organizer to facilitate reflection after peer observations.</td>
<td>2 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assign coaches to work with teachers to plan how to implement strategies learned during peer observations.</td>
<td>1 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow teachers the flexibility to implement new ideas.</td>
<td>1 of 20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Benefit 3: Peer observations allow observers to view strategies/structures for student collaboration and interaction.</th>
<th>Frequency of response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indicate to staff that student collaboration and interaction is the focus or theme for peer observations.</td>
<td>8 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow observers to discuss strategies and structures for student collaboration and interaction with the teachers they observe.</td>
<td>7 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide ample professional development and teacher training in strategies for student collaboration and interaction.</td>
<td>6 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During team lesson planning or PLC meetings, require teams to discuss inclusion of strategies/structures for student collaboration and interaction.</td>
<td>3 of 20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis of round three. Of 25 panel members, 20 responded to survey round three. The researcher reviewed the responses, coded, sorted, and categorized panel members’ responses. Similar responses were grouped according to emerging themes. The list of themes aligned to each instructional benefit was presented to a member of the field-test team to seek input and additional analysis of key themes. Based on the input of the field-test member, three unique responses aligned to instructional benefit number one were combined into one theme. This included combining allow teachers to choose whom to observe, allow teachers to choose when to observe, allow teachers to choose the length of time of peer observations into one theme: allow participating teachers choice in the peer-observation process.

Instructional benefit number one. According to panelists responding to round three, there are numerous actions a school can implement in order to realize the highest rated instructional benefit of peer observations identified in round two: Peer observations allow observers to view how other teachers utilize instructional strategies during instruction with actual students. The most frequent response, provided by 8 of 20 panel members, was that schools should identify instructional strategies in advance of peer observations. They could preselect strategies to be observed during peer observation as a strategy focus or instructional theme of the observation prior to conducting peer observations.

Three panel members indicated that schools should provide time to debrief and discuss strategies observed during peer observations as well as provide release time to allow teachers to participate in peer observations. This would require allocation of funding for substitutes or preparation period coverage. Three panel members also
indicated that teachers should be afforded choices in the peer-observation process; choice of whom to observe, when to observe, and the length of time of the observation.

Two panelists specified that schools must ensure all teachers are trained in instructional strategies before engaging in peer observations as well as increase staff participation in peer observations by encouraging or requiring participation. Two panelists also indicated that administrators should support and encourage the peer-observation process but not lead or dominate the process. In addition, two panelists recommended that schools identify expert or best practice teachers to observe during peer observations.

Additional actions or strategies to realize the instructional benefit of allowing observers to view how other teachers utilize instructional strategies during instruction with actual students were each identified by one panelist. These actions included provide questions or discussion points prior to observation to raise awareness during observations, provide advanced notice about peer observations, and highlight innovative practices and reward risk-taking.

Instructional benefit number two. According to panelists responding to round three, there are numerous actions a school can implement in order to realize the second-highest-rated instructional benefit of peer observations identified in round two: Peer observations lead to teachers’ reflection on their own instructional practices. The most frequent response provided by 10 of 20 panel members was that schools should debrief and discuss ideas gained during peer observations immediately after peer observations occur. Five panelists suggested that discussions about peer observations continue during team, department, or PLC meetings.
Five panelists suggested that schools provide time to analyze observations and reflect on ideas gained during peer observations. Three of 20 panelists indicated that quick writes or journaling could facilitate teachers’ reflection about their instructional practices. Two panelists commented that teachers should commit to implementing a strategy learned during the peer-observation process and have a follow-up discussion with their team or with the teacher they observed. Two panelists also indicated that, during peer observations, observers should utilize a note-taking tool or organizer to facilitate reflection after peer observations. Additional suggestions, each posed by one panel member, include assigning coaches to work with teachers to plan how to implement strategies learned during peer observations and allowing teachers the flexibility to implement new ideas.

Instructional benefit number three. According to panelists responding to round three, there are several actions a school should implement in order to realize the third-highest-rated instructional benefit of peer observations identified in round two: Peer observations allow observers to view strategies/structures for student collaboration and interaction. The most frequent response, provided by 8 of 20 panel members, was that schools should indicate to staff that student collaboration and interaction is the focus or theme for peer observations. The respondent explained that observers are more likely to view a variety of examples of student collaboration and interaction if all teachers are aware that student collaboration and interaction are the focus of the observations.

Of the 20 panelists, 7 suggest that schools allow observers to discuss strategies and structures for student collaboration and interaction with the teachers they observe. Panel members indicated the benefit of discussing strategies with the observed teacher to
gain insight into how students were grouped, how conversations were structured, and how students were trained in engage in collaborative opportunities. One panel member also suggested that teachers observing the class should circulate around the classroom during peer observations to listen to the students’ conversations. Then the observer would have examples of students’ interactive dialogue to discuss with the observed teacher.

Six panelists indicated that schools must provide ample professional development and teacher training in strategies for student collaboration and interaction. Several panel members explained that teachers cannot be expected to implement strategies for which there has been insufficient training. In addition, several participants also suggested training in classroom management to accompany training in student collaboration and interaction. Three of 20 panel members recommended that, during team lesson planning or PLC meetings, teams should be required to discuss inclusion of strategies/structures for student collaboration and interaction.

**Emerging Themes of Research Question One.** Several overarching themes arose out of panel members’ responses to round three regarding strategies or actions a school can implement to realize all three instructional benefits included in the round-three questionnaire; (1) peer observations allow observers to view how other teachers utilize instructional strategies during instruction with actual students, (2) peer observations lead to teachers’ reflection on their own instructional practices and (3) peer observations allow observers to view strategies/structures for student collaboration and interaction. Discussion was indicated by panel members as a required strategy or action in order for a school to achieve all three instructional benefits. Discussion suggestions included
structured debriefing immediately after observations, discussions about observations during department and team meetings, and discussions about specified instructional strategies such as student interaction and collaboration. Time was also indicated as a necessity; time to engage in peer observations and time to analyze and reflect upon practice. Identification of specific instructional strategies in advance was also recommended by panel members in order to achieve instructional benefits. Professional development for teachers in instructional strategies was also noted as a strategy or action to realize instructional benefits of peer observations.

Research Question Two

What are the cultural benefits of implementing peer observations as perceived by secondary-school teachers engaging in a peer-observation process?

Round One. In round one, participants were asked to respond via electronic survey to the open-ended question: What cultural benefits are derived from peer observations in secondary schools? The term cultural was defined in the survey instructions as relating to school culture, defined as the “beliefs, perceptions, relationships, attitudes, and written and unwritten rules that shape and influence every aspect of how a school functions” (Great Schools Partnership, 2013). Instructions accompanying the survey requested that respondents keep responses brief but sufficiently explanatory (see Appendix F).

The round-one questionnaire was emailed to 25 teachers providing informed consent. Seventeen expert panel members responded. The researcher reviewed, sorted, and categorized panel members’ responses. Similar responses were combined as were specific components of larger themes. The researcher generated a list of 17 unique
responses based on the 17 panel members’ responses. The list was presented to several of the field-test educational experts to seek input and additional analysis of key themes. Based on the input of educational experts, two of the responses were included as components of other responses to decrease the length of the list of responses. The 17 responses were reduced to a list of 15 responses displayed in Table 5 along with frequencies of panel members’ responses.
Table 5

*Perceived Cultural Benefits Derived from Peer Observations in Secondary Schools as Reported by an Expert Panel of Secondary-School Teachers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Benefit</th>
<th>Frequency of Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer observation leads to teachers understanding that they are not alone, not isolated.</td>
<td>4 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations “bring us closer together” so we can see what we share in common: similar struggles and successes.</td>
<td>3 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations leads to the perception that teachers are part of a team; camaraderie increases.</td>
<td>3 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow teachers to value and appreciate each other’s work.</td>
<td>3 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations create a sense of community.</td>
<td>2 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow teachers to see their students in other classrooms and encourage collaboration with those teachers.</td>
<td>2 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow teachers to learn each other’s strengths.</td>
<td>2 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow teachers to understand that everyone is a learner and improve their practice.</td>
<td>2 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations encourage more communication and collaboration between staff members.</td>
<td>2 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow students to see how teachers interact.</td>
<td>1 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow ideas to germinate across a campus instead of being trapped in one classroom.</td>
<td>1 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow teachers to become aware of the realistic view of the school.</td>
<td>1 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations create more transparency in how teachers teach.</td>
<td>1 of 17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
Table 5 (continued)

*Cultural Benefits Derived from Peer Observations in Secondary Schools as Reported by an Expert Panel of Secondary-School Teachers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Benefit</th>
<th>Frequency of Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow teachers to view how teachers in other departments teach.</td>
<td>1 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow teachers to see how others create the school culture setting for their students.</td>
<td>1 of 17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Analysis of round one.** Fifteen of 17 panel members responding to the round-one questionnaire listed or described more than one cultural benefit in their response to research question two. There were several commonalities in responses between participants; however many responses were unique to individual panel members. The most frequent response regarding cultural benefits of peer observations, indicated by four of 17 panel members, is that peer observation leads to teachers understanding that they are not alone. Three of the four responses included a specific comment about the reduction of isolation in teaching through the peer-observation process.

Three of 17 panelists indicated in their responses to round one that peer observations provide the cultural benefit of bringing teachers closer together so they can see what they share in common, which includes similar struggles and successes. Three of 17 panelists also noted the cultural benefits of leading to the perception that teachers are part of a team; camaraderie increases and allowing teachers to value and appreciate each other’s work.

Two of 17 panel members noted the cultural benefits of peer observations as creating a sense of community, allowing teachers to see their students in other classrooms and encourage collaboration with those teachers, allowing teachers to learn each other’s strengths, allowing teachers to understand that everyone is a learner and improve their practice, and encouraging more communication and collaboration between staff members.

Six cultural benefits of peer observation reported by panel members were unique to individual panel members. These included the responses that peer observations provide the cultural benefit of allowing students to see how teachers interact, allowing
ideas to germinate across a campus instead of being trapped in one classroom, allowing teachers to become aware of the realistic view of the school, creating more transparency in how teachers teach, allowing teachers to view how teachers in other departments teach, and allowing teachers to see how others create the school culture setting for their students.

Overarching themes of round-one responses related to cultural benefits of peer observation, centered around the team aspect of teaching along with the potential increase in collaboration between teachers. Panel members’ responses to round one became the basis for round two of the Delphi study. The fifteen unduplicated round-one responses to research question two were entered into an electronic survey using Google forms for round two.

**Round Two.** In round two, participants were asked to determine the degree of importance of the 15 cultural benefits derived from peer observation as identified in round one by expert panel members’ responses (see Appendix G). In the electronic survey instructions for round two, participants were informed that responses from round one were distilled, categorized, and consolidated based on common responses from participants from various secondary schools throughout Riverside County.

The 25 panel members received the round-two survey via email and were instructed to read all items in each section and consider the degree of importance before rating. A five-point Likert scale was utilized for rating the degree of importance. A rating of one signified that the item was not as important and a rating of three indicated the item was somewhat important, while a rating of five denoted that the item was very important. Participants were informed in the survey instructions that their ratings in
round two would be aggregated with responses of other panel members to determine the most important instructional benefits of peer observation in secondary schools. Eighteen of 25 panel members responded to round two. Panel members’ mean ratings of degree of importance of each the cultural benefits identified in round one are summarized in Table 3 along with the mode, mode frequency, and median for responses in round two.
Table 6

*Ranking Based on Mean Degree of Importance of Cultural Benefits Derived from Peer Observations in Secondary Schools*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Benefit Identified in Round 1</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Mode Frequency</th>
<th>Median</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow teachers to understand that everyone is a learner and improving their practice.</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations encourage more communication and collaboration between staff members.</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow teachers to see how others create the school culture setting for their students.</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow teachers to see their students in other classrooms and encourage collaboration with those teachers.</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow teachers to view how teachers in other departments teach.</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>72.2%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow idea to germinate across a campus instead of being trapped in one classroom.</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations leads to the perception that teachers are part of a team; camaraderie increases.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow teachers to learn each other’s strengths.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow teachers to value and appreciate each other’s work.</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations create more transparency in how teachers teach.</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
Table 6 (continued)

*Ranking Based on Mean Degree of Importance of Cultural Benefits Derived from Peer Observations in Secondary Schools*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Benefit Identified in Round 1</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Mode Frequency</th>
<th>Median</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer observation leads to teachers understanding that they are not alone, not isolated.</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations create a sense of community.</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations “bring us closer together” so we can see what we share in common: similar struggles and successes.</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>61.1%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow teachers to become aware of the realistic view of the school.</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer observations allow students to see how teachers interact.</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis of round two. Panel members rated the degree of importance of each of the 15 perceived cultural benefits of peer observation identified by respondents in round one. Panel members rated the degree of importance on a five-point Likert scale ranging from one, not as important, to five, very important. Mean ratings were calculated for each of the 15 perceived cultural benefits of peer observation. Mean ratings ranged from 2.56 to 4.33. In order to develop the round-three questionnaire, the top three cultural benefits were determined using the mean, mode, and mode frequency.

The two perceived cultural benefits with the highest mean rating of 4.33 were peer observations allow teachers to understand that everyone is a learner and improve their practice and peer observations encourage more communication and collaboration between staff members. The cultural benefit peer observations allow teachers to understand that everyone is a learner and improve their practice had a mode of five while the perceived cultural benefit of peer observations encourage more communication and collaboration between staff members had a mode of four. In round one, both of these perceived benefits had a frequency of two responses. Based on the high Likert-scale ratings in round two, it was evident that panel members perceived the cultural benefits of allowing teachers to understand that everyone is a learner and improve their practice and encouraging more communication and collaboration between staff members as a very important cultural benefit of peer observation.

The third-highest mean rating was 4.17 for two of the cultural benefits: Peer observations allow teachers to see how others create the school culture setting for their students and peer observations allow teachers to see their students in other classrooms and encourage collaboration with those teachers. An analysis of the mode revealed that
both cultural benefits had a mode of four. The cultural benefit _peer observations allow teachers to see how others create the school culture setting for their students_ had mode frequency of eight out of 18 panel members (44.4 percent) with seven panelists (38.9 percent) assigning a rating of five, _very important_, on the Likert scale. The other cultural benefit with a mean rating of 4.17, _peer observations allow teachers to see their students in other classrooms and encourage collaboration with those teachers_, also had a mode of _four_; however, only 7 of 18 (38.9 percent) of respondents rated this cultural benefit as a _four_ while 7 panelists (38.9 percent) assigned a rating of five.

Based on the analysis of the mean, mode, and mode frequency, the top three perceived cultural benefits for peer observations include (1) _peer observations allow teachers to understand that everyone is a learner and improve their practice_, (2) _peer observations encourage more communication and collaboration between staff members_, and (3) _peer observations allow teachers to see how others create the school culture setting for their students_. The perceived cultural benefits with the highest mean rating became the basis for survey round three.

**Round Three.** In round three, the final round of the study, panel members were asked to identify the strategies or actions a school can implement to best support realizing the most important perceived cultural benefits of peer observation identified in round two (see Appendix H). The electronic survey was emailed to the original 25 panel members providing informed consent. Twenty of 25 panel members (80 percent) responded to survey round three.

In the electronic survey instructions for round three, panel members were reminded that in round two, they were asked to rate the degree of importance of the
cultural benefits previously identified by panel members in round one. Panel members’ ratings in round two were analyzed using the mean, mode, and mode frequency to determine the top three most important cultural benefits. The top three cultural benefits were provided to participants in round three accompanied by a text box in which panel members were asked to type the strategies or actions a school can implement to best support realizing the most important cultural benefits of peer observation identified in round two. Panel members’ responses are included in Table 7 along with frequencies of responses.
Table 7

*Strategies or Actions a School Can Implement to Realize the Top Three Perceived Cultural Benefits Derived from Peer Observations in Secondary Schools*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Benefit 1: Peer observations allow teachers to understand that everyone is a learner and improving their practice.</th>
<th>Frequency of Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Create a risk-taking atmosphere; allow teachers the freedom to try new strategies.</td>
<td>6 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protect time to discuss lessons (what worked; what didn’t work; improvement made to instruction; struggles; strengths).</td>
<td>6 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers trying new strategies should be recognized, encouraged, and commended.</td>
<td>4 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional-development opportunities for teachers to learn new strategies (training, book club, required reading of current research and articles).</td>
<td>4 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observe at different times to see teachers’ growth.</td>
<td>2 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrator support (emphasize informal learning through peer observation; commend risk-taking).</td>
<td>2 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust.</td>
<td>1 of 20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Benefit 2: Peer observations encourage more communication and collaboration between staff members.</th>
<th>Frequency of response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allow time for communication and collaboration (release time, PLC time, staff meetings, scheduled staff events).</td>
<td>9 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure a method for communication and collaboration (meetings to discuss peer observations, structured discussion prompts, emails, Google Docs, common preparation period).</td>
<td>9 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a positive, safe, non-judgmental environment for communication and collaboration.</td>
<td>6 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversify observations (observe teachers in other departments or school sites to encourage more communication and collaboration).</td>
<td>3 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose common instructional strategies to create common discussion topics.</td>
<td>2 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators should not lead conversations; facilitate or “hands off”.</td>
<td>2 of 20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7 (continued)

*Strategies or Actions a School Can Implement to Realize the Top Three Perceived Cultural Benefits Derived from Peer Observations in Secondary Schools*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Benefit 3: Peer observations allow teachers to see how others create the school culture setting for their students.</th>
<th>Frequency of response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>During observations, teachers can document teachers’ strategies for classroom culture, room environment, classroom management.</td>
<td>8 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss culture and strategies to support school culture.</td>
<td>4 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow time (to reflect on culture; to discuss culture; to conduct observations).</td>
<td>4 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permit longer observation so teachers can include cultural aspects during observations.</td>
<td>2 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey staff about perceptions of school culture; use results to guide observations.</td>
<td>2 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schedule observations in advance.</td>
<td>2 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut barriers of competition.</td>
<td>1 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasize consistency between classrooms as a priority of school culture.</td>
<td>1 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schedule professional development based on need.</td>
<td>1 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview observed teacher after peer observation.</td>
<td>1 of 20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Analysis of round three.** Twenty of 25 panel members responded to survey round three. The researcher reviewed the responses, coded, sorted, and categorized panel members’ responses. Similar responses were grouped according to emerging themes. The list of themes aligned to each perceived cultural benefit was presented to a member of the field-test team to seek input and additional analysis of key themes. Based on the input of the field-test member, two unique responses aligned to cultural benefit number one were combined into one theme. This included combining risk-taking and freedom to try new strategies into one common theme about the instructional atmosphere.

**Cultural benefit number one.** According to panelists responding to round three, there are numerous actions a school can implement in order to realize the highest rated cultural benefit of peer observations identified in round two: *Peer observations allow teachers to understand that everyone is a learner and improve their practice.* The two most frequent responses provided by six of 20 panel members included that schools should *create a risk-taking atmosphere and allow teachers the freedom to try new strategies* while schools should also *protect time to discuss lessons.* Teachers could discuss what worked and what did not work during the observed lesson, what improvements could be made to instruction, and the struggles and strengths of each observed lesson.

Four panel members indicated that *teachers trying new strategies should be recognized, encouraged, and commended.* Four panel members also indicated that schools could provide *professional development opportunities for teachers to learn new strategies.* This might include *training, book clubs,* and *required reading of current research and articles.*
Two of 20 panelists specified that teachers could conduct observations at *different times to see teachers’ growth*. Two of 20 panel members also mentioned the role of the administrator in the cultural benefit of peer observation. Participants responded that *administrator support* is necessary and administrators must *emphasize the informal nature of peer observation and commend risk-taking*.

An additional action or strategy to realize the cultural benefit of *allowing teachers to understand that everyone is a learner and improving their practice* was identified by one panelist. *Trust* is a vital component of collaborative learning, which means teachers must remain *professional* and *confidential* in discussions relating to peer observations.

*Cultural benefit number two*. According to panelists responding to round three, there are numerous actions a school should implement in order to realize the second-highest-rated cultural benefit of peer observations identified in round two: *Peer observations encourage more communication and collaboration between staff members*. The two most frequent responses provided by nine panel members were that schools should *allow time for communication and collaboration and structure a method for communication and collaboration*. Time could be protected during staff meetings, department meetings, PLC meetings, or the school could provide release time or schedule events for collaboration. Methods for communication and collaboration mentioned by panelists included structured meetings for discussions about peer observations, structured discussion prompts, emails, creating a Google Doc to record information about peer observations, or creating common preparation periods on the master schedule to facilitate greater communication and collaboration.
Six of 20 panelists suggest that schools *create a positive, safe, non-judgmental environment* for communication and collaboration. Three panelists indicate that schools must *diversify observations*. Teachers could observe teachers in other departments or school sites to encourage more communication and collaboration. Two panelists commented that teachers should *choose common instructional strategies to create common discussion topics* to increase communication and collaboration. Two panelists also indicated that administrators should take a hands-off approach to peer observations in which they do not lead conversations but serve only to facilitate.

**Cultural benefit number three.** According to panelists responding to round three, there are several actions a school should implement in order to realize the third-highest-rated instructional benefit of peer observations identified in round two: *Peer observations allow teachers to see how others create the school culture setting for their students.* The most frequent response provided by eight of 20 panel members was that during observations, *teachers can document teachers’ strategies for classroom culture, room environment, and classroom management.*

Four panelists suggested that teachers *discuss culture and strategies to support school culture* and that schools *provide the time necessary for teachers to reflect on culture, discuss culture, and to conduct peer observations.* Two of 20 panelists indicated that schools must *permit longer observation so teachers can include cultural aspects during observations* as well as *survey staff about perceptions of school culture* then *use results to guide observations.*

Additional strategies and actions a school could implement to realize the cultural benefit of *allowing teachers to see how others create the school culture setting for their*
students reported by panel members include reducing or removing barriers of competition between teachers, emphasizing consistency between classrooms as a priority of school culture, scheduling professional development based on need, and interviewing the observed teacher after peer observation.

Emerging Themes of Research Question Two. Several overarching themes arose out of panel members’ responses to round three regarding strategies or actions a school can implement to realize the top three cultural benefits derived from peer observations in secondary schools that were included in the round-three questionnaire: (1) peer observations allow teachers to understand that everyone is a learner and improve their practice, (2) peer observations encourage more communication and collaboration between staff members, and (3) peer observations allow teachers to see how others create the school culture setting for their students. Time was indicated by panel members as a required strategy or action in order for a school to achieve all three cultural benefits. This included time for discussions about lessons after peer observations, time for discussions about school culture, time for communication and collaboration with peers, and time for teacher reflection. A safe environment permissive of risk-taking was also indicated as necessary for achieving the cultural benefits of peer observation. Professional development for teachers was also noted as a strategy or action to realize cultural benefits of peer observations.

Research Question Three

What prerequisites are necessary to successfully implement peer observations for professional learning in secondary schools as perceived by secondary-school teachers engaging in a peer-observation process?
Round One. In round one, participants were asked to respond via electronic survey to the open-ended question, *what prerequisites are necessary for the successful implementation of peer observation in secondary schools?* The term *prerequisite* was defined in the survey instructions as something necessary prior to implementation of an objective or process (Merriam-Webster, 2014). Instructions accompanying the survey requested that respondents keep responses brief but sufficiently explanatory (see Appendix F).

The round-one questionnaire was emailed to 25 teachers providing informed consent. Seventeen expert panel members responded. The researcher reviewed, sorted, and categorized panel members’ responses. Similar responses were combined as were specific components of larger themes. The researcher generated a list of 14 unique responses based on the 17 panel members’ responses. The list was presented to several of the field-test educational experts to seek input and additional analysis of key themes. Educational experts did not suggest any revisions to the list of responses. The 14 responses are displayed in Table 8 along with frequencies of panel members’ responses.
Table 8
Perceived Prerequisites Necessary for Successful Implementation of Peer Observations in Secondary Schools as Reported by an Expert Panel of Secondary-School Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prerequisite</th>
<th>Frequency of Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guidelines or rubric of instructional expectations (“look forwards”) to guide peer observations.</td>
<td>4 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear and consistent communication about the non-evaluative nature of peer observations.</td>
<td>4 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear objectives (purpose) for conducting peer observations.</td>
<td>4 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Buy in” from staff about peer observation purpose/process.</td>
<td>3 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion prior to conducting peer observations to review norms and procedures.</td>
<td>3 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust.</td>
<td>2 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A schedule of classrooms to be observed (“no surprise visits”).</td>
<td>2 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Format for providing specific, meaningful feedback after peer observations.</td>
<td>2 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff willingness to participate in peer observations.</td>
<td>2 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance of confidentiality.</td>
<td>1 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreed-upon norms and procedures for peer observations.</td>
<td>1 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determining a focus area prior to peer observations.</td>
<td>1 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative support of the peer-observation process.</td>
<td>1 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External facilitator (non-staff member) to mediate conversations during and after peer observations.</td>
<td>1 of 17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis of round one. Fifteen of 17 panel members responding to the round-one questionnaire listed or described more than one perceived prerequisite in their response to research question three. There were commonalities in responses between participants but many responses were unique to individual panel members. The most frequent responses regarding perceived prerequisites necessary for successful implementation of peer observations indicated by four of 17 panel members included guidelines or rubric of instructional expectations (“look fors”) to guide peer observations, clear and consistent communication about the non-evaluative nature of peer observations, and providing clear objectives and defining the purpose for conducting peer observations.

Three of 17 panelists indicated in their responses to round one that prerequisites necessary for successful implementation of peer observations include “buy in” from staff about peer observation purpose/process and discussion prior to conducting peer observations to review norms and procedures.

Two of 17 panel members noted the prerequisites necessary for successful implementation of peer observations are trust, development of a schedule of classrooms to be observed with no surprise visits, a specific format for providing specific, meaningful feedback after peer observations, and staff willingness to participate in peer observations.

Five prerequisites necessary for successful implementation of peer observation reported by panel members were unique to individual panel members. These included maintenance of confidentiality, development of agreed-upon norms and procedures for peer observations, determining a focus area prior to peer observations, administrative
support of the peer-observation process, and hiring an external facilitator who is a non-staff member to mediate conversations during and after peer observations.

Panel members’ responses to round one became the basis for round two of the Delphi study. The 14 unduplicated round-one responses to research question three were entered into an electronic survey using Google forms for round two.

**Round Two.** In round two, participants were asked to determine the degree of importance of the 14 perceived prerequisites necessary for successful implementation of peer observations as identified in round one by expert panel members’ responses (see Appendix G). In the electronic survey instructions for round two, participants were informed that responses from round one were distilled, categorized, and consolidated based on common responses from participants from various secondary schools throughout Riverside County.

The 25 panel members received the round-two survey via email and were instructed to read all items in each section and consider the degree of importance before rating. A five-point Likert scale was utilized for rating the degree of importance. A rating of one signified that the item was not as important, a rating of three indicated the item was somewhat important while a rating of five denoted the item was very important. Participants were informed in the survey instructions that their ratings in round two would be aggregated with responses of other panel members to determine the most important instructional benefits of peer observation in secondary schools. Eighteen of 25 panel members responded to round two. Panel members’ mean ratings of degree of importance of each the prerequisites identified in round one are summarized in table 9 along with the mode, mode frequency, and median for responses in round two.
Table 9

*Ranking Based on Mean Degree of Importance of Prerequisites Necessary for Successful Implementation of Peer Observations in Secondary Schools*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prerequisite Identified in Round 1</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Mode Frequency</th>
<th>Median</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trust.</td>
<td>4.78</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>77.8%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear objectives and purpose for conducting peer observations.</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>72.2%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Buy in” from staff about peer observation purpose/process.</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff willingness to participate in peer observations.</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>61.1%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Format for providing specific, meaningful feedback after peer observations.</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear and consistent communication about the non-evaluative nature of peer observations.</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreed-upon norms and procedures for peer observations.</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative support of the peer-observation process.</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determining an area of focus prior to peer observations.</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidelines or rubric of instructional expectations (“look fors”) to guide peer observations.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion prior to conducting peer observations to review norms and procedures.</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance of confidentiality.</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
Table 9 (continued)

*Ranking Based on Mean Degree of Importance of Prerequisites Necessary for Successful Implementation of Peer Observations in Secondary Schools*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prerequisite Identified in Round 1</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Mode Frequency</th>
<th>Median</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A schedule of classrooms to be observed (no surprise visits).</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External facilitator to mediate conversations during and after peer observations.</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis of round two. Panel members rated the degree of importance of each of the 14 perceived prerequisites of successfully implementing peer observation identified by respondents in round one. Panel members rated the degree of importance on a five-point Likert scale ranging from one, not as important, to five, very important. Mean ratings were calculated for each of the 14 perceived prerequisites of implementing peer observations. Mean ratings ranged from 3.22 to 4.78. In order to develop the round-three questionnaire, the top three prerequisites were determined using the mean, mode, and mode frequency.

The perceived prerequisite with the highest mean rating of 4.78 was trust. In round one, this prerequisite was mentioned by only two panel members. Based on the high Likert-scale ratings in round two, it was evident that panel members perceived the prerequisite of trust as a very important prerequisite to successfully implement peer observations.

The second-highest mean rating was 4.67 for prerequisite: Clear objectives and purpose for conducting peer observation. In round one, this prerequisite was mentioned by four panel members. Based on the high Likert-scale ratings in round two, it was evident that panel members perceived the prerequisite of clear objectives and purpose for conducting peer observation as a very important prerequisite to successfully implement peer observations.

The third-highest mean rating was 4.56 for two of the perceived prerequisites: “Buy in” from staff about peer observation purpose/process and staff willingness to participate in peer observations. Although the prerequisites appear similar, the researcher determined that they differed in actionable attitude about the process. Staff
members may understand peer observations and “buy in” to the process without having a willingness to participate. Therefore these items were determined to be two distinct prerequisites.

An analysis of the mode revealed that both cultural benefits had a mode of five. The prerequisite “buy in” from staff about peer observation purpose and process had mode frequency of 12 out of 18 panel members (66.7 percent) The other prerequisite with a mean rating of 4.56, staff willingness to participate in peer observations, also had a mode of five however only 11 of 18 (61.1 percent) of respondents rated this instructional benefit as a five.

In addition, and as will be described in greater detail in analysis of findings for research question four, staff willingness to participate in peer observations was also noted as a facilitator of successfully implementing peer observations. In order to avoid redundancies in the round-three questionnaire, it was determined that “buy in” from staff about peer observation purpose and process would be included in the survey as a prerequisite while staff willingness to participate in peer observations would be included in the round three survey as a facilitator.

Based on the analysis of the mean, mode, and mode frequency, the top three perceived prerequisites necessary for the successful implementation of peer observations in secondary schools were (1) trust, (2) clear objectives and purpose for conducting peer observation, and (3) “buy in” from staff about peer observation purpose and process. The perceived prerequisites with the highest mean rating became the basis for survey round three.
**Round Three.** In round three, the final round of the study, panel members were asked to identify strategies or actions that can be taken by a school to best support the most important prerequisites necessary for successful implementation of peer observations that were identified in round two (see Appendix H). The electronic survey was emailed to the original 25 panel members providing informed consent. Twenty of 25 panel members (80 percent) responded to survey round three.

In the electronic survey instructions for round three, panel members were reminded that in round two, they were asked to rate the degree of importance of the prerequisites previously identified by panel members in round one. Panel members’ ratings in round two were analyzed using the mean, mode, mode frequency, and median to determine the top three most important prerequisites. The top three prerequisites were provided to participants in round three accompanied by a text box in which panel members were asked to type the strategies or actions a school can implement to best support the most important prerequisites of peer observation identified in round two. Panel members’ responses are included in Table 10 along with frequencies of responses.
Table 10

*Strategies or Actions a School Can Implement to Support the Top Three Prerequisites for Successfully Implementing Peer Observations in Secondary Schools*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prerequisite 1: Trust.</th>
<th>Frequency of Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emphasize that peer observations are not evaluative, non-punitive, and informal (not part of the formal evaluation process).</td>
<td>6 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain confidentiality.</td>
<td>4 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarify purpose, process, boundaries; apply consistently for each peer observation.</td>
<td>4 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build trust and relationships through activities before engaging in peer observations.</td>
<td>4 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure teacher input into norms, process, and choice of observers/observed.</td>
<td>4 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow teachers to voluntarily participate.</td>
<td>3 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start small (small number of participants; small number of observations).</td>
<td>3 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow time for trust to grow; trust is earned over time.</td>
<td>2 of 20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prerequisite 2: Clear objectives and purpose for conducting peer observation.</th>
<th>Frequency of response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allow teachers to have input into developing purpose and process (teachers should be able to ask questions and discuss before participation).</td>
<td>6 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a common protocol, tool, or template to use for every observation.</td>
<td>6 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educate all staff about the process before conducting peer observations (include a video or demonstration, allow teachers from other sites to share their experience).</td>
<td>4 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set guidelines, expectations, and goals prior to conducting peer observations.</td>
<td>4 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide routine updates about the peer-observation process (at staff meetings, before each observation).</td>
<td>3 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain focus from year to year, observation to observation.</td>
<td>2 of 20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Table 10 (continued)**

*Strategies or Actions a School Can Implement to Support the Top Three Prerequisites for Successfully Implementing Peer Observations in Secondary Schools*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prerequisite 3: “Buy in” from staff about peer observation purpose and process</th>
<th>Frequency of response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers must have input into peer observation (structure, objectives, process, procedures).</td>
<td>6 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasize peer observations are non-evaluative, non-threatening.</td>
<td>6 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish clarity (guidelines, rationale); maintain consistency throughout process.</td>
<td>4 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Begin peer observations with volunteers.</td>
<td>3 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow teachers to share peer observation experiences at meetings.</td>
<td>3 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read research about the benefits of peer observations.</td>
<td>3 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrate successes of peer observation.</td>
<td>1 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow teachers to participate in peer observations within their collaborative team.</td>
<td>1 of 20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Analysis of round three.** Twenty of 25 panel members responded to survey round three. The researcher reviewed the responses and coded, sorted, and categorized them. Similar responses were grouped according to emerging themes. The list of themes aligned to each of the top three perceived prerequisites was presented to a member of the field test team to seek input and additional analysis of key themes. The field test member commented on the similarities between responses to prerequisites one, two, and three, but did not suggest any changes to the themes.

**Prerequisite number one.** According to panelists responding to round three, there are numerous actions a school can implement in order to realize the highest-rated prerequisite necessary for the successful implementation of peer observation in secondary schools identified in round two: *Trust*. The most frequent response provided by six of 20 panel members was that schools should *emphasize that peer observations are not evaluative, non-punitive, and informal*. Teachers must understand that peer observations are not part of the formal evaluation process.

Four of 20 panel members indicated that, to establish trust, schools should *maintain confidentiality* during the peer-observation process as well as *clarify the purpose, process, and boundaries of the peer-observation process*. The purpose, process, and boundaries must be *applied consistently for each peer observation*. Four of 20 panel members also suggested that schools must *build trust and relationships through activities before engaging in peer observations* while also ensuring that teachers have *input into norms, process, and choice of observers and observed* related to peer observations.

For a school to achieve the prerequisite of *trust*, three of 20 panelists specified that schools must *allow teachers to voluntarily participate* in peer observations. Three
Panelists also suggested that schools start small in implementing peer observations. This could include a small number of participating teachers or a small number of observations per session. Two of 20 panelists indicated that schools simply need to allow time for trust to grow since trust is earned over time.

**Prerequisite number two.** According to panelists responding to round three, there are numerous actions a school should implement in order to realize the second-highest rated prerequisite necessary for successful implementation of peer observations identified in round two: Clear objectives and purpose for conducting peer observation. The most frequent responses, each provided by six of 20 panel members, indicated schools should allow teachers to have input into developing purpose and process as well as create a common protocol, tool, or template to use for every observation. Teacher input could be achieved through teacher participation in the development of the process or, as another panel member suggested, allow teachers to ask questions and discuss before participation in peer observations.

Four of 20 panelists suggested that schools must educate all staff about the process before conducting peer observations, which could include a video or demonstration of peer observations or allowing teachers from other sites to share their peer-observation experience. Four of 20 panelists also indicated that schools must set guidelines, expectations, and goals prior to conducting peer observations. Three panel members recommended that schools provide routine updates about the peer-observation process at staff meetings or before each observation. Two panelists indicated that schools should maintain focus from year to year and from observation to observation in order to achieve the prerequisite of clear objectives and purpose for conducting peer observation.
Prerequisite number three. According to panelists responding to round three, there are several actions a school should implement in order to realize the third-highest-rated prerequisite necessary to successfully implement peer observations identified in round two: “Buy in” from staff about peer observation purpose and process. The most frequent responses provided by six of 20 panel members were that teachers must have input into peer observation and schools must emphasize peer observations are non-evaluative and non-threatening.

Four panel members suggested that schools establish clarity including guidelines and rationale to assist with maintaining consistency throughout the peer-observation process. Three panel members recommended that schools begin peer observations with volunteers and that schools should allow teachers to share peer observation experiences at meetings. Additionally, three panelists suggested that teachers read research about the benefits of peer observations prior to engaging in peer observation to increase staff “buy-in.” Two additional recommendations from individual panel members included celebrating successes of peer observation and allowing teachers to participate in peer observations within their collaborative team.

Emerging Themes of Research Question Three. Several overarching themes arose out of panel members’ responses to round three regarding strategies or actions a school can implement to support the top three prerequisites necessary for successful implementation of peer observations in secondary schools included in the round-three questionnaire: (1) trust, (2) clear objectives and purpose for conducting peer observation, and (3) “buy in” from staff about peer observation purpose and process. Clarity was indicated by panel members as a required strategy or action to support the
necessary prerequisites. This included clarity of purpose, expectations, processes, procedures, and guidelines for peer observations. Teacher input was also noted as necessary to support all necessary prerequisites. This included teacher input into the peer-observation process, structure, objectives, norms, protocols, and procedures. Confidentiality and trust were also noted as necessary to support required prerequisites. In addition, schools must emphasize the non-evaluative nature of peer observations in order to support the prerequisites necessary to successfully implement peer observations in secondary schools.

**Research Question Four**

What facilitators are necessary to successfully implement peer observations for professional learning in secondary schools as perceived by secondary-school teachers engaging in a peer-observation process?

**Round One.** In round one, participants were asked to respond via electronic survey to the open-ended question, *what are the facilitators of successful implementation of peer observation in secondary schools?* The term *facilitator* was defined in the survey instructions as something that aids or assists in progress or implementation of the objective (Merriam-Webster, 2014). Instructions accompanying the survey requested that respondents keep responses brief but sufficiently explanatory (see Appendix F).

The round-one questionnaire was emailed to 25 teachers providing informed consent. Seventeen expert panel members responded. The researcher reviewed, sorted, and categorized panel members’ responses. Similar responses were combined as were specific components of larger themes. The researcher generated a list of 13 unique
responses based on the 17 panel members’ responses. Thirteen unduplicated responses are displayed in Table 11 along with frequencies of panel members’ responses.

The list was presented to several of the educational experts who participated in the survey instrument field test to seek input and additional analysis of key themes. Field-test educational experts suggested the combination of several responses. In two instances, the researcher disagreed with the educational experts about combining topics. In one instance, the field-test educational experts suggested that responses *time must be allocated and protected for peer observations and time is necessary for teachers to incorporate what they observed into their own teaching* should be combined into one category relating to time allotted for peer observations. The researcher determined that *time to participate in peer observations* was a distinct and separate facilitator from *time necessary to prepare instructional materials after participating in peer observations*. These responses were maintained as distinct and separate.

In another instance, field-test educational experts suggested that the responses *pre- and post-observation collaboration between observers and observed and discussions between observers and observed to learn details about the lesson* should be combined. The researcher determined that these would not be combined and would remain distinct responses. This was due to the determination that *pre- and post-observation collaboration* was different from *discussions between observers and observed*.
Table 11


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilitator</th>
<th>Frequency of Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrator support; encourage but do not force participation.</td>
<td>4 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time must be allocated and protected for peer observations.</td>
<td>3 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time is necessary for teachers to incorporate what they observed into their own teaching.</td>
<td>3 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-designed feedback process (and forms) to encourage teachers to reflect on practice.</td>
<td>3 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistent adherence to purpose, norms, and procedures for peer observation.</td>
<td>3 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff willingness to participate in peer observations.</td>
<td>3 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication about the purpose and benefits of peer observation should be frequent to promote a cohesive, positive process.</td>
<td>2 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team discussion before, during, and after peer observations to prepare for and debrief the process.</td>
<td>2 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limit observation group to a small number of teachers (minimizes impact to classroom; group can blend into classroom).</td>
<td>1 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on positive aspects of instruction during observations.</td>
<td>1 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre- and post-observation collaboration between observers and observed.</td>
<td>1 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions between observers and observed to learn details about the lesson.</td>
<td>1 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An opportunity to discuss strengths and challenges about lessons after observations.</td>
<td>1 of 17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis of round one. Ten of 17 panel members responding to the round-one questionnaire listed or described more than one perceived facilitator in their response to research question four. There were commonalities in responses between participants. The most frequent responses regarding perceived facilitators necessary for successful implementation of peer observations, indicated by four of 17 panel members, included administrator support in which the site administrator will encourage but not force participation.

Three of 17 panelists indicated in their responses to round one that the facilitators necessary for successful implementation of peer observations include time allocated and protected for peer observations, time necessary for teachers to incorporate what they observed into their own teaching, a well-designed feedback process and forms to encourage teachers to reflect on practice, consistent adherence to purpose, norms, and procedures for peer observation and staff willingness to participate in peer observations.

Two of 17 panel members noted the facilitators necessary for successful implementation of peer observations are communication about the purpose and benefits of peer observation should be frequent to promote a cohesive, positive process and team discussion before, during, and after peer observations to prepare for and debrief the process.

Five facilitators necessary for successful implementation of peer observation reported by panel members were unique to individual panel members. These included limiting observation group to a small number of teachers to minimize impact on classroom, remaining focused on positive aspects of instruction during observations, permitting pre- and post-observation collaboration between observers and observed,
scheduling *discussions between observers and observed to learn details about the lesson*, and providing an *opportunity to discuss strengths and challenges about lessons after observations*. Panel members’ responses to round one became the basis for round two of the Delphi study. The 13 unduplicated round-one responses to research question four were entered into an electronic survey using Google forms for round two.

**Round Two.** In round two, participants were asked to determine the degree of importance of the 13 perceived facilitators necessary for successful implementation of peer observations as identified in round one by expert panel members’ responses. In the electronic survey instructions for round two, participants were informed that responses from round one were distilled, categorized, and consolidated based on common responses from participants from various secondary schools throughout Riverside County (see Appendix G).

The 25 panel members received the round-two survey via email and were instructed to read all items in each section and consider the degree of importance before rating. A five-point Likert scale was utilized for rating the degree of importance. A rating of *one* signified that the item was *not as important*, a rating of *three* indicated the item was *somewhat important* while a rating of *five* denoted the item was *very important*.

Participants were informed in the survey instructions that their ratings in round two would be aggregated with responses of other panel members to determine the most important instructional benefits of peer observation in secondary schools. Eighteen of 25 panel members responded to round two. Panel members’ mean ratings of degree of importance of each the prerequisites identified in round one are summarized in Table 12 along with the mode, mode frequency, and median for responses in round two.
Table 12

*Ranking Based on Mean Degree of Importance of Facilitators Necessary for Successful Implementation of Peer Observations in Secondary Schools*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilitator Identified in Round 1</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Mode Frequency</th>
<th>Median</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff willingness to participate in peer observations.</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistent adherence to purpose, norms, and procedures for peer observation.</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team discussion before, during, and after peer observations to prepare for and debrief the process.</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limit observation group to a small number of teachers (minimizes impact on classroom; group can blend into classroom).</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time is necessary for teachers to incorporate what they observed into their own teaching.</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-designed feedback process (and forms) to encourage teachers to reflect on practice.</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre- and post-observation collaboration between observers and observed.</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on positive aspects of instruction during observations.</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators that encourage but do not force participation.</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication about the purpose and benefits of peer observation should be frequent to promote a cohesive, positive process.</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>61.1%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
Table 12 (continued)

*Ranking Based on Mean Degree of Importance of Facilitators Necessary for Successful Implementation of Peer Observations in Secondary Schools*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilitator Identified in Round 1</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Mode Frequency</th>
<th>Median</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time must be allocated and protected for peer observations.</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An opportunity to discuss strengths and challenges about lessons after observations.</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions between observers and observed to learn details about the lesson.</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis of round two. Panel members rated the degree of importance of each of the 13 perceived facilitators necessary to successfully implement peer observation identified by respondents in round one. Panel members rated the degree of importance on a five-point Likert scale ranging from one, not as important, to five, very important. Mean ratings were calculated for each of the 13 perceived facilitators necessary to implement peer observations. Mean ratings ranged from 3.67 to 4.56. In order to develop the round-three questionnaire, the top three facilitators were determined using the mean, mode, and mode frequency.

The two perceived facilitators with the highest mean rating of 4.56 included staff willingness to participate in peer observations and consistent adherence to purpose, norms, and procedures for peer observation. In survey round one, these facilitators were mentioned by three panel members. Based on the high Likert-scale ratings in round two, it was evident that panel members perceived the facilitator of staff willingness to participate in peer observations as important facilitators to successfully implement peer observations.

The next highest mean rating was 4.39 for the perceived facilitator: Team discussion before, during, and after peer observations to prepare for and debrief the process. In round one, this facilitator was mentioned by two panel members. Based on the high Likert scale ratings in round two, it was evident that panel members perceived this facilitator as important to successfully implement peer observations.

Based on the analysis of the mean, mode, and mode frequency, the top three perceived facilitators necessary for the successful implementation of peer observations in secondary schools were (1) staff willingness to participate in peer observations, (2)
consistent adherence to purpose, norms, and procedures for peer observation, and (3) team discussion before, during, and after peer observations to prepare for and debrief the process. The perceived facilitators with the highest mean ratings became the basis for survey round three.

**Round Three.** In round three, the final round of the study, panel members were asked to identify strategies or actions that can be taken by a school to best support the most important facilitators necessary for successful implementation of peer observations that were identified in round two (see Appendix H). The electronic survey was emailed to the original 25 panel members providing informed consent. Twenty of 25 panel members (80 percent) responded to survey round three.

In the electronic survey instructions for round three, panel members were reminded that in round two, they were asked to rate the degree of importance of the facilitators previously identified by panel members in round one. Panel members’ ratings in round two were analyzed using the mean, mode, and mode frequency to determine the top three most important prerequisites. The top three facilitators were provided to participants in round three accompanied by a text box in which panel members were asked to type the strategies or actions a school can implement to best support the most important facilitators necessary for peer observation identified in round two. Panel members’ responses are included in Table 13 along with frequencies of responses.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilitator 1: Staff willingness to participate in peer observations.</th>
<th>Frequency of Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Start with volunteers; give teachers choice.</td>
<td>7 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share the benefits and value of peer observations.</td>
<td>6 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasize learning; not evaluation.</td>
<td>3 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide time for participation.</td>
<td>3 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start small (only a few teachers).</td>
<td>2 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide incentives and/or recognition for participation.</td>
<td>2 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators should recruit participants.</td>
<td>1 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build trust and relationships.</td>
<td>1 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide training in the process.</td>
<td>1 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assign teachers to participate (do not allow teachers to opt out).</td>
<td>1 of 20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilitator 2: Consistent adherence to purpose, norms, and procedures for peer observation.</th>
<th>Frequency of response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Set a purpose, procedure, process, protocol in advance of any peer observations; put in writing; review with staff.</td>
<td>9 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review purpose, norms, and procedures before each peer observation.</td>
<td>6 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a facilitator during each peer observation to maintain adherence to purpose, norms, and procedures.</td>
<td>5 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide teacher training prior to peer observations.</td>
<td>1 of 20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
Table 13 (continued)

*Strategies or Actions a School Can Implement to Support the Top Three Facilitators for Successfully Implementing Peer Observations in Secondary Schools*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilitator 3: Team discussion before, during, and after peer observations to prepare for and debrief the process.</th>
<th>Frequency of response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide time for discussions before, during, and after peer observations.</td>
<td>8 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create an agenda or schedule for each round of peer observations including discussions.</td>
<td>8 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Train a facilitator to guide discussions before, during, and after peer observations.</td>
<td>6 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide advance notice of peer observations so teachers allot ample time.</td>
<td>3 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress openness and honesty during discussions.</td>
<td>3 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage all teachers to participate to include more team members.</td>
<td>1 of 20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis of round three. Twenty of 25 panel members responded to survey round three. The researcher reviewed the responses, coded, sorted, and categorized panel members’ responses. Similar responses were grouped according to emerging themes. The list of themes aligned to each perceived facilitator was presented to a member of the field test team to seek input and additional analysis of key themes. Based on the input of the field test member,

Facilitator number one. According to panelists responding to round three, there are numerous actions a school can implement in order to realize the highest rated facilitator necessary for successful implementation of peer observations identified in round two: *Staff willingness to participate in peer observations*. The most frequent response, provided by seven of 20 panel members, was that schools should *start with volunteers and give teachers choice in the peer-observation process*. Six panel members suggesting that the *benefits and value of peer observation* should be emphasized by administrators and teacher participants.

Three of 20 panel members indicated that schools should *emphasize that peer observations are for teacher learning, not evaluation* as well as *provide release time to allow teachers to participate in peer observations*. Two of 20 panelists recommended that schools should *start small* and only include a few teachers at the beginning of the process. In addition, two participants suggested that schools should *provide incentives and/or recognition* for participation in peer observations.

Additional actions or strategies to realize the facilitator of *staff willingness to participate in peer observations* were each identified by one panelist. These actions included *administrators should recruit participants*, the staff must *build trust and*
relationships before conducting peer observations, and provide training in the process.

One panelist also suggested that teachers should be assigned to participate in the process so no one can opt out of participation in peer observations.

Facilitator number two. According to panelists responding to round three, there are numerous actions a school can implement in order to realize the second-highest-rated facilitator necessary for successful implementation of peer observations identified in round two: Consistent adherence to purpose, norms, and procedures for peer observation. The most frequent response provided by nine of 20 panel members was that schools should set a purpose, procedure, process, protocol, and norms in advance of any peer observations. The process, purpose, and protocol should be put in writing and shared with the entire staff.

Six panel members recommended that the purpose, norms, and procedures for peer observation should be reviewed with staff before each round of peer observations. One panel member suggested that schools provide teacher training in peer observations prior to conducting peer observations.

Facilitator number three. According to panelists responding to round three, there are several actions a school should implement in order to realize the third highest rated facilitator necessary to successfully implement peer observations as identified in round two: Team discussion before, during, and after peer observations to prepare for and debrief the process. The most frequent responses, each provided by eight of 20 panel members, were that schools should provide time for discussions before, during, and after peer observations and create an agenda or schedule for each round of peer observations including discussions.
Six of 20 panelists suggested that schools *train a facilitator to guide discussions before, during, and after peer observations*. Three panel members recommended that schools should *provide advance notice of peer observations so teachers allot ample time* as well as *stress openness and honesty during discussions*. One panel member also proposed *encouraging all teachers to participate to include more team members* in the peer-observation process.

**Emerging Themes of Research Question Four.** Several overarching themes arose out of panel members’ responses to round three regarding strategies or actions a school can implement to support the top three facilitators of successful implementation of peer observations in secondary schools included in the round-three questionnaire: (1) *staff willingness to participate in peer observations*, (2) *consistent adherence to purpose, norms, and procedures for peer observation*, and (3) *team discussion before, during, and after peer observations to prepare for and debrief the process*. *Choice* was indicated by many respondents in order to increase staff willingness to participate. Panel members suggested giving teachers *choice* to participate or *choice* in whom they observe. *Consistency* was indicated by panel members as a required strategy or action to support the facilitators noted as most important for successful implementation of peer observations. This included consistent processes, norms, procedures, agendas, and schedules for peer observations along with consistent adherence to norms and procedures. In addition, schools must consider training a *facilitator* to guide the peer-observation process and ensure consistency. *Time* was also noted as a necessary facilitator of peer observations. This included time for participation and time for discussion.
Research Question Five

What are the barriers to successfully implementing peer observations for professional learning in secondary schools as perceived by secondary-school teachers engaging in a peer-observation process?

Round One. In round one, participants were asked to respond via electronic survey to the open-ended question, *what factors are barriers to the successful implementation of peer observation in secondary schools?* The term *barrier* was defined in the survey instructions as something that impedes progress or implementation of the objective (Merriam-Webster, 2014). Instructions accompanying the survey requested that respondents keep responses brief but sufficiently explanatory (see Appendix F).

The round-one questionnaire was emailed to 25 teachers providing informed consent. Seventeen expert-panel members responded. The researcher reviewed, sorted, and categorized panel members’ responses. Similar responses were combined as were specific components of larger themes. The researcher generated a list of 15 unique responses based on the 17 panel members’ responses. Unduplicated responses are displayed in Table 14 along with frequencies of panel members’ responses.

The list was presented to several of the educational experts who participated in the survey instrument field test to seek input and additional analysis of key themes. Field test educational experts suggested the combination of two responses; *fear (fear of being observed, fear of repercussions, fear of personal failure, fear of change) and perception of being judged by others.* The researcher disagreed with the educational experts about combining these responses. The researcher determined that *fear* was a distinct and
separate barrier from perceptions about being judged. These responses were maintained as distinct and separate.
Table 14

*Perceived Barriers to Successful Implementation of Peer Observations in Secondary Schools as Reported by an Expert Panel of Secondary-school teachers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barrier</th>
<th>Frequency of Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limited time (insufficient time during “prep” period; insufficient time to collaborate about strategies before, during, or after observations).</td>
<td>6 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of being judged by others/peers.</td>
<td>3 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear (fear of being observed; fear of repercussions; fear of personal failure; fear of change).</td>
<td>2 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding for substitute teachers for teacher release time to conduct observations.</td>
<td>2 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of staff participation.</td>
<td>2 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolation (teachers are not accustomed to allowing peers in their classrooms; “many teachers seem to prefer to work independently”).</td>
<td>2 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited snapshot of instruction (often “only a snippet of the lesson is observed”).</td>
<td>1 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers assign an independent, silent student task while being observed, which limits the benefits for the observers.</td>
<td>1 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers do not want to be out of their own classroom and leave instruction to a substitute teacher.</td>
<td>1 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students get nervous when other teachers are observing and may not perform to their potential.</td>
<td>1 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betrayed trust.</td>
<td>1 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of respect between staff members.</td>
<td>1 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers create lessons for benefit of the observers (inauthentic lessons).</td>
<td>1 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overly positive or overly negative feedback.</td>
<td>1 of 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations are too frequent.</td>
<td>1 of 17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis of round one. Eleven of 17 panel members responding to the round-one questionnaire listed or described more than one perceived barrier in their response to research question five. There were commonalities in responses between participants but most responses were unique to individual panel members. The most frequent responses regarding perceived barriers of successful implementation of peer observations indicated by six of 17 panel members was limited time including insufficient time during teachers’ “prep” period and insufficient time to collaborate about strategies before, during, or after observations.

Three of 17 panelists indicated in their responses to round one that a barrier to successful implementation of peer observations is teachers’ perception of being judged by others including peers. Two of 17 panel members noted that a barrier to successful implementation of peer observations is fear, including fear of being observed, fear of repercussions, fear of personal failure, and fear of change. Two panel members also describe the barriers of lack of funding for substitute teachers for teacher release time to conduct observations, lack of staff participation, and teacher isolation since teachers are not accustomed to allowing peers in their classrooms. One respondent stated: “many teachers seem to prefer to work independently.”

Nine barriers to successful implementation of peer observation reported by panel members were unique to individual panel members. One panelist mentioned that often observers have only a limited snapshot of instruction since often “only a snippet of the lesson is observed.” Observed teachers might also assign an independent, silent student task while being observed, which limits the benefit for the observers. Another barrier mentioned by a panelist is that teachers do not want to be out of their own classrooms
and leave instruction to a substitute teacher. In addition, a panelist stated the barrier that students get nervous when other teachers are observing and may not perform to their potential. Additional perceived barriers include betrayed trust, lack of respect between staff members, observed teachers creating inauthentic lessons for benefit of the observers, overly positive or overly negative feedback for observed teachers, and observations are too frequent.

Panel members’ responses to round one became the basis for round two of the Delphi study. The 15 unduplicated round-one responses to research question five were entered into an electronic survey using Google forms for round two.

**Round Two.** In round two, participants were asked to determine the degree of importance of the 15 perceived barriers that must be overcome in order to successfully implement peer observations as identified in round one by expert panel members’ responses. In the electronic survey instructions for round two, participants were informed that responses from round one were distilled, categorized, and consolidated based on common responses from participants from various secondary schools throughout Riverside County (see Appendix G).

The 25 panel members received the round-two survey via email and were instructed to read all items in each section and consider the degree of importance before rating. A five-point Likert scale was utilized for rating the degree of importance. A rating of one signified that the item was not as important, a rating of three indicated the item was somewhat important and a rating of five denoted the item was very important.

Participants were informed in the survey instructions that their ratings in round two would be aggregated with responses of other panel members to determine the most
important instructional benefits of peer observation in secondary schools. Eighteen of 25 panel members responded to round two. Panel members’ mean ratings of degree of importance of each the barriers identified in round one are summarized in Table 15 along with the mode, mode frequency, and median for responses in round two.
Table 15

Ranking Based on Mean Degree of Importance of Barriers Necessary to Mitigate for Successful Implementation of Peer Observations in Secondary Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barrier Identified in Round 1</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Mode Frequency</th>
<th>Median</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fear (fear of being observed, fear of repercussions, fear of personal failure, fear of change).</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of being judged by others.</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of respect between staff members.</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of staff participation.</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betrayed trust.</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding for substitute teachers for teacher release time to conduct observations.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited time (insufficient time during “prep” period; insufficient time to collaborate about strategies).</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overly positive or overly negative feedback.</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolation (teachers are not accustomed to allowing peers in their classrooms).</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited snapshot of instruction (often only a “snippet” of instruction is observed).</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers assign students an independent task during observations, which limits the benefits for the observer.</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers do not want to be out of their own classroom to observe peers while leaving instruction to a substitute teacher.</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
Table 15 (continued)

*Ranking Based on Mean Degree of Importance of Barriers Necessary to Mitigate for Successful Implementation of Peer Observations in Secondary Schools*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barrier Identified in Round 1</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Mode Frequency</th>
<th>Median</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observations are too frequent.</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers create lessons for benefit of the observer (lesson is not authentic).</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students get nervous when other teachers are observing and may not perform to their potential.</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis of round two. Panel members rated the degree of importance of each of the 15 perceived barriers of successful implementation of peer observations identified by respondents in round one. Panel members rated the degree of importance on a five-point Likert scale ranging from one, not as important, to five, very important. Mean ratings were calculated for each of the 15 perceived barriers of peer observations. Mean ratings ranged from 2.61 to 4.28. In order to develop the round-three questionnaire, the top three barriers were determined using the mean, mode, and mode frequency.

The two perceived barriers with the highest mean rating of 4.28 included fear (fear of being observed, fear of repercussions, fear of personal failure, fear of change) and perception of being judged by others. In survey round one, perception of being judged by others was mentioned by three panel members while the barrier fear was mentioned by two panel members. Based on the high Likert-scale ratings in round two, it was evident that panel members perceived the barriers of fear and perception of being judged by others as important barriers to mitigate to successfully implement peer observations.

The next highest mean rating was 4.22 for the perceived barrier: Lack of respect between staff members. In round one, this barrier was mentioned by only one panel member. Based on the high Likert-scale ratings in round two, it was evident that panel members perceived this barrier as important to mitigate in order to successfully implement peer observations.

Based on the analysis of the mean, mode, and mode frequency, the top three perceived barriers of successful implementation of peer observations in secondary schools were (1) fear, (2) perception of being judged by others, and (3) lack of respect.
between staff members. The perceived barriers with the highest mean ratings became the basis for survey round three.

**Round Three.** In round three, the final round of the study, panel members were asked to identify strategies or actions that can be taken by a school to best support mitigating the most important barriers of peer observation that were identified in round two (see Appendix H). The electronic survey was emailed to the original 25 panel members providing informed consent. Twenty of 25 panel members (80 percent) responded to survey round three.

In the electronic survey instructions for round three, panel members were reminded that in round two, they were asked to rate the degree of importance of the barrier previously identified by panel members in round one. Panel members’ ratings in round two were analyzed using the mean, mode, and mode frequency to determine the top three most important barriers. The top three barriers were provided to participants in round three, accompanied by a text box. Panel members’ ratings in round two were analyzed using the mean, mode, mode frequency to determine the top three most important barriers which panel members were asked to type the strategies or actions a school can implement to best support mitigating the most important barriers of peer observation that were identified in round two. Panel members’ responses are included in Table 16 along with frequencies of responses.
Table 16

*Strategies or Actions a School Can Implement to Mitigate the Top Three Barriers to the Successful Implementation of Peer Observations in Secondary Schools*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barrier 1: Fear (fear of being observed, fear of repercussions, fear of personal failure, fear of change).</th>
<th>Frequency of Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allow participation to be voluntary.</td>
<td>5 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build trust and relationships prior to conducting peer observations.</td>
<td>3 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remind teachers of the informal nature of peer observations; not evaluative.</td>
<td>3 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasize that failure is an opportunity for learning and growth.</td>
<td>3 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators must support and communicate about the process but not overtake the process.</td>
<td>3 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adhere to predetermined structure, norms, purpose for peer observations.</td>
<td>2 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct frequent peer observations so staff becomes accustomed to the process.</td>
<td>2 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide positive feedback to participating teachers.</td>
<td>2 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on students, not teachers, during peer observations.</td>
<td>1 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share research about benefits of peer observations.</td>
<td>1 of 20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barrier 2: Perception of being judged by others.</th>
<th>Frequency of response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus on students, not teacher, during peer observations.</td>
<td>3 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain anonymity and confidentiality.</td>
<td>3 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide positive feedback (not negative or critical).</td>
<td>3 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build and promote trust.</td>
<td>3 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remind staff that peer observations are not evaluative; purpose is learning.</td>
<td>3 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adhere to norms during debriefing discussion.</td>
<td>3 of 20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
### Table 16 (continued)

*Strategies or Actions a School Can Implement to Mitigate the Top Three Barriers to the Successful Implementation of Peer Observations in Secondary Schools*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barrier 2: Perception of being judged by others.</th>
<th>Frequency of response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survey staff; determine mindset of staff prior to conducting peer observations.</td>
<td>2 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide adequate training so teachers feel effective before being observed by peers.</td>
<td>1 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adhere to structure and procedures during peer observation process.</td>
<td>1 of 20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barrier 3: Lack of respect between staff members.</th>
<th>Frequency of response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Address culture and the roots of disrespect before engaging in peer observations.</td>
<td>4 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adhere to norms and be vigilant about others’ adherence to norms during peer observations.</td>
<td>3 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take action if there is an overt sign of disrespect between staff.</td>
<td>2 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remind staff about positive nature and intent of peer-observation process.</td>
<td>2 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss attitudes about peers and expectations of professional behavior during staff meeting.</td>
<td>2 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing can be done through the peer-observation process about lack of respect between staff members.</td>
<td>2 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build relationships between staff members.</td>
<td>1 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead teachers act as models.</td>
<td>1 of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No suggestions or responded “I don’t know”</td>
<td>4 of 20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis of round three. Twenty of 25 panel members responded to survey round three. The researcher reviewed the responses, coded, sorted, and categorized panel members’ responses. Similar responses were grouped according to emerging themes. The list of themes aligned to each perceived barrier was presented to a member of the field-test team to seek input and additional analysis of key themes. The field-test member agreed with the researcher’s themes derived from panel members’ responses.

Barrier number one. According to panelists responding to round three, there are numerous actions a school can implement in order to mitigate the highest-rated barrier to successful implementation of peer observations identified in round two: Fear, including fear of being observed, fear of repercussions, fear of personal failure, and fear of change. The most frequent response, provided by 5 of 20 panel members, was that schools should allow participation to be voluntary in the peer-observation process. Three panelists suggested that schools focus on building trust and relationships prior to conducting peer observations. Three of 20 panelists also suggested that schools consistently remind teachers of the informal nature of peer observations, emphasize that failure is an opportunity for learning and growth, and that administrators must support and communicate about the process but not overtake the process of peer observations.

Two of 20 panelists specified that schools must adhere to predetermined structure, norms, purpose for peer observations. Two of 20 panelists suggested that schools conduct frequent peer observations so staff becomes accustomed to the process as well as provide positive feedback to participating teachers. Additional actions or strategies to mitigate the barrier of fear were each identified by one panelist. These actions included focus on students, not teachers, during peer observations and share
research about benefits of peer observations prior to having staff engage in the peer-observation process.

*Barrier number two.* According to panelists responding to round three, there are numerous actions a school can implement in order to mitigate the second-highest-rated barrier to successful implementation of peer observations identified in round two:

*Perception of being judged by others.* Several responses and suggestions were provided by 3 of 20 panel members. These recommendations to mitigate the barrier of the perception of being judged by others included *focus on students, not teachers, during peer observations; maintain anonymity and confidentiality; provide positive feedback, not negative or critical; build and promote trust; remind staff that peer observations are not evaluative and that the purpose is learning, and adhere to norms during debriefing discussion.*

Two panelists commented that the school should *survey staff members* with the purpose of *determining the mindset of staff prior to conducting peer observations* and have a follow-up discussion with the staff regarding their perceptions. Additional suggestions each posed by one panel member include *provide adequate training so teachers feel effective before being observed by peers and adhere to structure and procedures during peer-observation process.*

*Barrier number three.* According to panelists responding to round three, there are several actions a school should implement in order to mitigate the third-highest-rated barrier of successful implementation of peer observations as identified in round two: *Lack of respect between staff members.* Four of 20 panelists indicated that they did not have a
recommendation for actions to mitigate the barrier of lack of respect between staff members.

The most frequent response, provided by 4 of 20 panel members, was that schools should address culture and the root of disrespect before engaging in peer observations. Panel members explained that respect between staff members was outside of the purpose of peer observations and should be addressed alternatively. Three of 20 panelists indicated that schools must adhere to norms and be vigilant about others’ adherence to norms during peer observations. Two of 20 panel members recommended that facilitators of peer observation should take action if there is an overt sign of disrespect between staff during the peer-observation process. Two of 20 panel members also suggested that administrators remind staff about the positive nature and intent of the peer-observation process, and allow staff to discuss attitudes about peers and expectations of professional behavior during staff meetings. Additionally, two panelists commented that nothing can be done through the peer-observation process about lack of respect between staff members. One panel member suggested that staff build relationships prior to conducting peer observations and that lead teachers can act as models of respectful behavior during the peer-observation process.

Emerging Themes of Research Question Five. Several overarching themes arose out of panel members’ responses to round three regarding strategies or actions a school can implement to mitigate the top three barriers of successful implementation of peer observations in secondary schools included in the round-three questionnaire: (1) fear, (2) perception of being judged by others, and (3) lack of respect between staff members. Trust was indicated by panel members as a required strategy or action to
mitigate barriers of peer observation. *Norms* and *structure* were also noted as a necessary
to mitigate barriers of peer observations. This included development of norms, adherence
to norms and predetermined structure, and vigilance for norms violations. Emphasis on
the *positive, non-evaluative, learning* aspects of peer observation were also noted as
necessary strategies or actions to mitigate barriers to peer observations.

**Additional Comments**

Panel members were asked to respond to two additional questions requesting the
type of peer observations in which they have engaged and any additional comments about
peer observation that were not included in the five research questions. Based on
participants’ responses, nine teachers participated in *Learning Walks*, six participated in
*Instructional Rounds*, four participated in *Action Walks*, two participated in *Classroom
Walk-Throughs*, one participated in peer observations prior to *Peer Evaluation
Conferences*, and one participated in peer observations through the *Beginning Teacher
Support and Assessment* (BTSA) process.

Additional comments about peer observations submitted by participants included:

*I think they are wonderful and should be done on a regular basis. First-year
teachers to veteran teachers should participate and it is even more interesting
when they observe each other.*

*Probably the hardest survey. I really appreciate that it made me think about how
to best facilitate change.*

*Peer observations have been a huge part of my professional journey in becoming
a better educator. I have appreciated the opportunity to both be on a visiting
team and be a teacher that was observed. At the end of the day, I recognized that ALL benefited from this process.

I was apprehensive at first during our peer observations even as an observer. I almost felt guilty for watching my colleagues. I was and still am anxious when I am observed. Nonetheless I truly learned a great deal from watching my peers and my own students in a third-person perspective, allowing me to see and thus change things I never would have otherwise.

Summary

Chapter IV reviewed the purpose of the study, the five research questions investigated in the study, the methodology, the population and sample, and the presentation of data aligned to each of the five research questions. The data was presented through three rounds of the policy Delphi study.

In round one of the Delphi study, participants were asked to identify the instructional and cultural benefits of peer observation, the prerequisites and facilitators necessary to successfully implement peer observations in secondary schools, and finally the barriers to successful implementation of peer observations in secondary schools. Seventeen of 25 members of the expert-teacher panel responded to round one and identified 20 unique instructional benefits, 15 unique cultural benefits, 14 unique prerequisites, 13 unique facilitators, and 15 unique barriers to peer observation in secondary schools.

The unique responses to each question became the basis for round two of the Delphi study. In round two, participants were asked to determine the degree of importance of the instructional and cultural benefits, prerequisites, facilitators, and
barriers to peer observation as identified in round one by expert panel members’ responses.

Eighteen of 25 panel members responded to round two. Panel members’ ratings in round two were analyzed using the mean, mode, mode frequency, and median to determine the top three most important instructional and cultural benefits, prerequisites, facilitators, and barriers of peer observation in secondary schools. The top three items in each category became the basis for round three of the Delphi study.

In round three, panel members were asked to identify the strategies or actions a school can implement to best support realizing the top three most important perceived instructional and cultural benefits of peer observation identified in round two. Panel members were also asked to identify strategies or actions that can be taken by a school to best support the top three most important prerequisites and facilitators necessary for successful implementation of peer observation as identified in round two. Finally panel members were asked to identify strategies or actions that can be taken by a school to best support mitigating the top three barriers to peer observation that were identified in round two.

Twenty of 25 panel members responded to survey round three. The researcher reviewed the responses, coded, sorted, and categorized panel members’ responses. Similar responses were grouped according to emerging themes and presented in tables aligned to each of the five research questions.

Chapter V presents conclusions, implications, and recommendations for future research.
Chapter V: Summary, Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

Summary

Learning is not attained by chance. It must be fought for with ardor and attended to with diligence.

—Abigail Adams, Letter to John Quincy Adams, May 8, 1780

This study examined secondary-school teachers’ perceptions about the benefits of conducting peer observations for professional learning in secondary schools. This study also sought to clarify teachers’ perceptions about the prerequisites and facilitators necessary to implement peer observations in secondary schools. Lastly, the study intended to determine teachers’ perceptions of what barriers need to be mitigated in order to successfully implement peer observations in secondary schools.

Chapter I of this study provided background about public education and an introduction to the research study. Chapter II presented a review of literature about public education, educational change, school culture, Professional Learning Communities, professional development in education, and an exploration of peer observations in the field of education. Chapter III explained the research design and methodology of the study, including the population and sample, instrumentation, data collection and analysis procedures. Chapter IV provided a brief description of the research design, the population and sample, and the data-collection procedures. Data was presented aligned to each research question through each round of the Delphi study. Chapter IV concluded with a summary of findings.

Chapter V presents an overview of the study, including the purpose, research questions, and methodology. A summary of major findings and unexpected findings are
described. Conclusions are presented followed by a scenario describing implications for action, recommendations for further research, and concluding remarks and reflections.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study was to investigate secondary-school teachers’ perceptions about conducting peer observations for professional learning in contextualized settings in public schools. In this study, contextualized settings included classrooms of peers that are observed during the peer-observation process.

This study explored the instructional benefits of employing peer observation for professional learning as perceived by secondary-school teachers. In addition, the study explored perceived cultural benefits of implementing peer observation in secondary schools. This is related to school culture, which, according to Fullan (2007) can be defined as the guiding beliefs and values evident in the way a school operates. Lastly, this study sought to clarify the prerequisites, facilitators, and barriers to implementing peer observation for professional learning in secondary schools as perceived by secondary-school teachers.

**Research Questions**

The following questions were investigated to address the purpose of the study:

1. What are the instructional benefits of conducting peer observations as part of professional learning as perceived by secondary-school teachers engaging in a peer-observation process?

2. What are the cultural benefits of implementing peer observations as perceived by secondary-school teachers engaging in a peer-observation process?
3. What prerequisites are necessary to successfully implement peer observations for professional learning in secondary schools as perceived by secondary-school teachers engaging in a peer-observation process?

4. What facilitators are necessary to successfully implement peer observations for professional learning in secondary schools as perceived by secondary-school teachers engaging in a peer-observation process?

5. What are the barriers to successfully implementing peer observations for professional learning in secondary schools as perceived by secondary-school teachers engaging in a peer-observation process?

Methodology

A policy Delphi method was utilized in order to gather perceptual data from an expert panel of 25 secondary-school teachers that have engaged in peer observations at various school sites and were deemed as highly knowledgeable experts by their site principals. For purposes of this study, an electronic questionnaire was used to assess secondary-school teachers’ perceptions about peer observation. The questionnaire was distributed in three rounds.

Seventeen of 25 panel members (68 percent) responded to the electronic questionnaire for round one of the Delphi study. Results of participant responses to round-one questions were analyzed and became the basis for round-two questions. Eighteen of 25 panel members (72 percent) responded to the electronic questionnaire for round two of the study. Round-two responses became the basis for the third and final round of questions. For the final round of the study, 20 of 25 panel members (80 percent) responded to the electronic questionnaire.
Major Findings

There are findings related to each of the five research questions contained in this study. Major findings related to emerging themes of each round of the Delphi study are presented sequentially aligned to each of the five research questions.

Research Question One

What are the instructional benefits of conducting peer observations as part of professional learning as perceived by secondary-school teachers engaging in a peer-observation process?

Round One. Panel members were asked via electronic questionnaire to answer the question *what instructional benefits are derived from conducting peer observations in secondary schools?* The most frequent theme that arose from round one was that peer observations afford observers the opportunity to *view instructional strategies* in operation with students. This included how other teachers utilize strategies, how teachers present lessons and material, strategies for student interaction and collaboration, and examples of differentiation. Another predominant theme included in many responses was that of *learning environment.* This encompassed responses such as viewing a variety of classroom learning environments, classroom norms and procedures, students learning in different settings and content areas, classroom-management strategies, and student engagement opportunities and techniques. The final theme was that of *teacher reflection,* based on comparing one’s own practices to those learned while observing other teachers’ practices.

Round Two. In round two, panel members rated the degree of importance of the perceived instructional benefits indicated by panel members in round one using a five-
point Likert scale. Based on the analysis of the mean, mode, mode frequency, and median, the top three perceived instructional benefits of peer observations included (1) peer observations allow observers to view how other teachers utilize instructional strategies during instruction with actual students, (2) peer observations lead to teachers’ reflection on their own instructional practices and (3) peer observations allow observers to view strategies/structures for student collaboration and interaction. The three perceived instructional benefits with the highest mean rating became the basis for the round-three questionnaire.

**Round Three.** Several themes arose out of panel members’ responses to the round-three questionnaire regarding strategies or actions a school can implement to realize the top three most important instructional benefits identified in round two. The strategies or actions suggested most frequently by panel members related to the themes of discussion, time, choice, identification of strategies, and teacher training. Discussion suggestions included requiring a structured debriefing sessions immediately after peer observations, encouraging discussions about observations during department and team meetings, and facilitating discussions during staff meetings about specific instructional strategies such as student interaction and collaboration. Time was also recommended as a strategy. This included teacher release time to engage in peer observations, time to discuss and debrief after peer observations, and time to analyze and reflect upon practice. Teacher choice was noted as a recommendation by several panel members including choice of whom to observe, when to conduct observations, and selecting the length of time for observations. Identification of strategies was also recommended by panel members in order to achieve instructional benefits. This was suggested in order for
teachers to know in advance what strategies would be observed during peer observations. Specific teacher training opportunities in instructional strategies was also noted as an action necessary to realize instructional benefits of peer observations.

**Research Question Two**

What are the cultural benefits of implementing peer observations as perceived by secondary-school teachers engaging in a peer-observation process?

**Round One.** In round one, participants were asked to respond via electronic survey to the open-ended question, *what cultural benefits are derived from peer observations in secondary schools?* Primary themes of round-one responses related to cultural benefits of peer observation centered on the team aspect of teaching along with the potential increase in collaboration between teachers. The most frequent response regarding cultural benefits of peer observation was that peer observation leads to teachers understanding that they are not alone. Responses included specific comments about the reduction of isolation in teaching through the peer-observation process.

**Round Two.** In round two, participants were asked to determine the degree of importance of the cultural benefits derived from peer observation as identified in round one by expert panel members’ responses. Based on the analysis of the mean, mode, and mode frequency in round two, the top three perceived cultural benefits for peer observations included (1) *peer observations allow teachers to understand that everyone is a learner and improve their practice*, (2) *peer observations encourage more communication and collaboration between staff members*, and (3) *peer observations allow teachers to see how others create the school culture setting for their students*. The
top three perceived cultural benefits with the highest mean rating became the basis for survey round three.

**Round Three.** Several overarching themes arose out of panel members’ responses to the round-three questionnaire regarding strategies or actions a school can implement to realize the top three cultural benefits derived from peer observations in secondary schools. The strategies or actions suggested most frequently by panel members related to the themes of *time, environment,* and *teacher training.* *Time* was indicated by panel members as a required strategy or action in order for a school to achieve all three cultural benefits. This included *time* for discussions about lessons after peer observations, *time* for discussions about school culture, *time* for communication and collaboration with peers, *time* for teacher reflection, and *time* for longer peer observations to enable teachers to observe aspects of classroom culture. A safe and encouraging professional learning *environment* permissive of *risk-taking* and conducive to teacher *collaboration* was also indicated as a necessity for achieving cultural benefits of peer observation. *Training* for teachers to learn and practice new instructional strategies was noted as a strategy or action to realize cultural benefits of peer observations.

**Research Question Three**

What prerequisites are necessary to successfully implement peer observations for professional learning in secondary schools as perceived by secondary-school teachers engaging in a peer-observation process?

**Round One.** In round one, participants were asked to respond via electronic questionnaire to the open-ended question, *what prerequisites are necessary for the successful implementation of peer observation in secondary schools?* The most frequent
responses regarding perceived prerequisites necessary for successful implementation of peer observations included guidelines or rubric of instructional expectations to guide peer observations, clear and consistent communication about the non-evaluative nature of peer observations, and providing clear objectives and defining the purpose for conducting peer observations.

**Round Two.** In round two, participants were asked to determine the degree of importance of the perceived prerequisites necessary for successful implementation of peer observations as identified in round one by expert panel members’ responses. Based on the analysis of the mean, mode, and mode frequency, the top three perceived prerequisites necessary for the successful implementation of peer observations in secondary schools were (1) trust, (2) clear objectives and purpose for conducting peer observation, and (3) “buy in” from staff about peer observation purpose and process. The perceived prerequisites with the highest mean rating became the basis for survey round three.

**Round Three.** Several predominant themes arose out of panel members’ responses to round three regarding strategies or actions a school can implement to support the top three prerequisites necessary for successful implementation of peer observations in secondary schools included in the round-three questionnaire. The strategies or actions most frequently noted by panel members related to the themes of clarity, trust, and teacher input. Clarity was indicated by panel members as a required strategy or action to support the necessary prerequisites. This included clarity of purpose, expectations, processes, procedures, and guidelines for peer observations. Clarity and consistency in communication about the peer-observation process and the non-evaluative
nature of the peer observations was also reiterated in panel members’ responses. Teacher input was also noted as necessary to support prerequisites for peer observation. This included teacher input into the peer-observation process, structure, objectives, norms, protocols, and procedures. Confidentiality and trust were also noted as necessary to support required prerequisites for successfully implementing peer observations in secondary schools.

**Research Question Four**

What facilitators are necessary to successfully implement peer observations for professional learning in secondary schools as perceived by secondary-school teachers engaging in a peer-observation process?

**Round One.** In round one, participants were asked to respond via electronic survey to the open-ended question, *what are the facilitators of successful implementation of peer observation in secondary schools?* The most frequent response regarding perceived facilitators necessary for successful implementation of peer observations related to administrator support. Time and consistency were also indicated as necessary facilitators. Time included *time allocated and protected for peer observations* and *time necessary for teachers to incorporate what they observed into their own teaching*. Consistency was considered a facilitator relating to *consistent adherence to purpose, norms and procedures* including the *feedback process and forms*.

**Round Two.** In round two, participants were asked to determine the degree of importance of the perceived facilitators necessary for successful implementation of peer observations as identified in round one by expert panel members’ responses. Based on the analysis of the mean, mode, and mode frequency, the top three perceived facilitators
necessary for the successful implementation of peer observations in secondary schools were (1) staff willingness to participate in peer observations, (2) consistent adherence to purpose, norms, and procedures for peer observation, and (3) team discussion before, during, and after peer observations to prepare for and debrief the process. The perceived facilitators with the highest mean ratings became the basis for survey round three.

**Round Three.** Several themes arose out of panel members’ responses to the round-three questionnaire regarding strategies or actions a school can implement to support the top three facilitators of successful implementation of peer observations in secondary schools. The strategies or actions most frequently noted by panel members related to the themes of *choice, consistency, and time*. To increase staff willingness to participate, many responses suggested giving teachers *choice* to participate. *Consistency* was indicated by panel members as a required strategy or action to support implementation of peer observations. This included consistent processes, norms, procedures, agendas, and schedules for peer observations along with consistent adherence to norms and procedures. In addition, schools must consider training a *facilitator* to guide the peer-observation process and ensure consistency. *Time* was also noted as a necessary facilitator of peer observations. This included *time* for participation, *time* for preparation in advance, and *time* for discussion.

**Research Question Five**

What are the barriers to successfully implementing peer observations for professional learning in secondary schools as perceived by secondary-school teachers engaging in a peer-observation process?
Round One. In round one, participants were asked to respond via electronic survey to the open-ended question, *what factors are barriers to the successful implementation of peer observation in secondary schools?* The most frequent response regarding perceived barriers to successful implementation of peer observations was *limited time* for peer observations during teachers’ “prep” period and *insufficient time to collaborate about strategies before, during, or after observations*. Additional barriers indicated in round one included *teachers’ perception of being judged by others* and *fear* such as *fear of being observed*, *fear of repercussions*, *fear of personal failure*, and *fear of change*.

Round Two. In round two, participants were asked to determine the degree of importance of the perceived barriers necessary to mitigate in order to successfully implement peer observations as identified in round one by expert panel members’ responses. Based on the analysis of the mean, mode, and mode frequency, the top three perceived barriers to successful implementation of peer observations in secondary schools were (1) *fear*, (2) *perception of being judged by others*, and (3) *lack of respect between staff members*. The perceived barriers with the highest mean ratings became the basis for survey round three.

Round Three. Several overarching themes arose out of panel members’ responses to the round-three questionnaire regarding strategies or actions a school can implement to mitigate the top three barriers to successful implementation of peer observations in secondary schools. The strategies or actions most frequently noted by panel members related to the themes of *trust, structure,* and *learning* in a non-evaluative process. *Trust* and *building relationships* were indicated by panel members as required
strategies to mitigate many of the barriers of implementing peer observations. *Trust* was previously noted as a prerequisite for peer observations in response to research question three.

*Norms* and *structure* were also noted as necessary to mitigate barriers of peer observations. This included development of norms, adherence to norms and predetermined structure, and vigilance for norms violations. *Structure* and *consistency* were also indicated as prerequisites for peer observations in response to research question three and as facilitators for peer observation in response to research question four.

Emphasis on the *positive, non-evaluative, learning* aspects of peer observation were also noted as necessary strategies or actions to mitigate barriers of the peer observations. The *learning* and *reflective* aspects of peer observation also emerged as themes in response to research questions one and two regarding instructional and cultural benefits of peer observation. The *non-evaluative* nature of peer observation was indicated in responses to research questions three and four about the necessary prerequisites and facilitators of peer observation in secondary schools.

**Unexpected Findings**

Many of the panel members’ responses to round-three questions regarding strategies or actions a school can implement to realize the instructional and cultural benefits, support prerequisites and facilitators, and mitigate barriers to peer observations related to technical processes that can be developed by the staff. This included establishing clarity of purpose, determining procedures, allocating time, and training teachers. A somewhat unexpected finding was the strong emphasis on meeting or overcoming the emotional needs of teachers in order to engage in peer observations.
Emotional aspects of peer observation were anticipated in participant responses based on literature indicating that fear and apprehension relating to peer observations are common in the teaching profession (Barth, 2006; Bell, 2002). However, fear emerged as one of the most prominent barriers as perceived by panel members. Building relationships and trust, creating a culture permissive of risk, and reinforcing the non-evaluative aspect of peer observation were mentioned or emphasized in responses to all five research questions.

The polarity in responses regarding staff participation and predetermined peer-observation structures was also unexpected. The majority of panel members responding with comments about staff participation indicated the suggestion that peer observations should be voluntary. However, a minority of participants recommended that peer observations be a mandatory activity for all teachers in order to ensure that all teachers experience the benefits of peer observations while also highlighting the team aspect of a learning culture. The majority of participants also suggested that structures and procedures for peer observation should be predetermined while a minority indicated the need for teacher autonomy in determining how to engage in peer observations: whom to observe, how long to observe, and expectations for observations.

**Conclusions**

This study was designed to determine secondary-school teachers’ perceptions about the instructional and cultural benefits of conducting peer observations for professional learning in secondary schools. This study also sought to clarify teachers’ perceptions about the prerequisites and facilitators necessary to implement peer observations in secondary schools. Lastly, the study intended to determine teachers’
perceptions of the barriers necessary to mitigate in order to implement peer observations in secondary schools. The following conclusions can be drawn from this study.

1. Provision of adequate *time* is a critical factor in the successful implementation of peer observations in secondary schools. *Time* is necessary to achieve instructional and cultural benefits of peer observation, serves as a prerequisite and facilitator for peer observations, and can be a barrier to peer observations. *Time* must be devoted to developing procedures and processes for peer observation prior to beginning the peer-observation process. *Time* must also be protected for staff participation in peer observations, for teacher preparation prior to engaging in peer observations, for teacher reflection after engaging in peer observations, for staff debrief discussions after peer observations, for team collaboration about the resultant learning from peer observations, and for teachers’ preparation of materials necessary to implement strategies learned during peer observations.

2. *Clarity* is necessary for successful implementation of peer observations for professional learning in secondary schools. This includes *clarity* of purpose, procedures, agendas, protocols, norms, and instructional expectations. For example, identification of instructional expectations such as *strategies for student interaction and collaboration*, as noted in the instructional benefits of peer observation, can be clearly defined and identified prior to peer observations in an effort to focus the observations.

3. *Consistency* is also necessary for successful implementation of peer observations. Consistency in time allocation, application of procedures,
adherence to norms, and communication of goals, purpose, and outcomes is vital. As suggested by a panel member, a trained facilitator can aid in maintaining consistency through the peer-observation process.

4. *Teacher input* and *choice* is also vital to the success of implementing peer observations for professional learning in secondary schools. Panel members expressed the need for teachers to be involved in the establishment of norms, processes, procedures, protocols, or any other aspect of developing and planning peer observations. This will facilitate the establishment of a clear purpose and goals for peer observation, open lines of communication, and enhance trust and relationships that are prerequisites for peer observation. According to panel members’ responses, in order to enhance teachers’ willingness to participate in peer observations, teachers can provide input into the strategies to be observed during peer observations and should be afforded choice in whom and when to observe.

5. An *environment for adult learning* is crucial to achieve benefits associated with peer observations. This includes building trust, respect, and relationships between staff members in order to mitigate potential fears created by being observed by peers. Implementation also requires accentuating the non-evaluative nature of peer observations while simultaneously emphasizing and facilitating reflection on practices, appreciation of peers, and learning of strategies. Developing an atmosphere conducive to risk-taking and experimentation with new strategies is also vital for staff to achieve the
instructional and cultural benefits of engaging in peer observations for professional learning.

6. *Teacher training* in effective practices is also necessary to achieve instructional and cultural benefits associated with peer observations. Teachers must be trained in expected instructional practices in order to effectively implement said practices. Fear of being observed may be mitigated if teachers feel confident in their instructional capacity based on appropriate and adequate training prior to engaging in peer observations. Teacher training was also suggested in relation to strategies to develop school culture, to build trust, and to effectively engage in peer observations.

**Recommendations for Action**

In lieu of presenting a list of recommended actions, a scenario is described in which a fictitious school in an era of educational change has implemented actions recommended by the expert panel members to successfully implement peer observations for professional learning in secondary schools as described in the findings and conclusions.

The staff at Semper Ad Meliora High School (SAMHS) is embarking on a collaborative journey into building collective capacity in their instructional staff during the transition to Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in a 21st century learning era (California Department of Education, 2013; Fullan, 2010). Professional-development efforts during the past two years have provided teachers with strategies to engage learners with complex texts through close reading, text-dependent questions, student interaction, and writing across content areas while also highlighting the importance of
communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity (California Department of Education, 2013; Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2011). Although vital and necessary to prepare teachers to support learners in a new educational era, the training has been insufficient to markedly transform instructional practice across the SAMHS campus (Fullan, 2008; Sawchuk, 2009).

In the spring of the second year of transition, the school leadership team reflects upon the state of SAMHS’s shift to CCSS and 21st century teaching and learning. Although the school district and SAMHS staff have invested time and resources in staff training, there remains an implementation gap in teachers’ utilization of effective instructional practices (Dufour, Eaker, Dufour, 2005; Education Week, 2011; Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005). Many teachers have embraced the educational evolution and are integrating new practices with other research-based strategies into a seamless array of interactive learning opportunities. However, there remains a bevy of reluctant, often recalcitrant, teachers hesitant to attempt new strategies, fearing that relinquishing comfortable, familiar, and habitual instructional approaches will result in classroom chaos (Senge et al., 2004)

Common practice at SAMHS dictates that departments meet regularly to discuss strategies and practices in an attempt to function as a Professional Learning Community (Dufour, Dufour, Eaker, & Karhanek, 2004; Ermeling & Gallimore, 2013). However, once the bell rings, teachers retreat to individual classroom domains during instruction, isolated from each other, shielded from intrusion by peers (Barber & Mourshead, 2007; Bell & Mladenovic, 2008; Chapman, 2008; City et al, 2009; Doyle, 2012; Dufour, 2011; Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Dufour & Marzano, 2011; Elmore, 2004; Hattie, 2012; Lam,
Yim, & Lam, 2002; Saunders, Goldenberg, & Gallimore, 2009). Instructional coaches have attempted to provide support to the staff through training, instructional planning, individual feedback, and demonstration lessons. Although the coaching services have resulted in improvements in individual classrooms, these singular efforts have yet to produce widespread impact on school-wide transformation (Fullan, 2010; Fullan, 2011).

Department chairs recently shared at a meeting with administrators that, in response to learning a multitude of new practices and strategies, their teams have repeatedly expressed the need to “see what it looks like.” Teachers are challenged with implementation of strategies, not because they are entirely unwilling but because they are not certain how the strategies appear in action with actual students (Barber & Mourshed, 2007). Although they have watched instructional video clips during department and staff meetings, teachers can be overheard making remarks such as “Well, of course that strategy works when you only have 20 students,” or “I’m sure they trained the students to do that for the camera,” and most often, “Yeah, well, that wouldn’t work at our school.”

Based on conversations with staff about the need for continuous professional learning in an era of educational change, the staff determined that, in order to afford teachers the opportunity to “see what it looks like,” they will explore the possibility of engaging in peer observations for professional learning to improve teacher practice (Center for Teaching Quality, 2014; Hendry & Oliver, 2012; Martin & Double, 1998; Sparks, 1986). Expanding the practices of resident implementation experts will enable the school to cultivate a community of adult learners while building professional capital in SAMHS instructional staff (Fullan, 2014). Instead of isolated pockets of educational
excellence, students will have equal access to quality learning in every classroom as SAMHS becomes “a collage of bests” (Hammond, 1998, p. 46).

Initial discussions about the potential implementation of peer observations are broached at every organizational level in an effort to establish clarity of purpose. Department chairs speak to teacher teams, teachers and administrators jointly consult with teachers’ association representatives, site liaisons and administrators share the potential venture with district administration, and information about peer observations is shared with parent committees in an effort to inform parents about the proposed process while prefacing the potential funding investment. Stakeholders are informed that the peer-observation process will be customized based on the needs of the site and that teams will have input into the development of agendas, protocols, norms and other procedures necessary for successful implementation (Bournes-Hayes, 2010).

After stakeholder groups are apprised of SAMHS’s direction, a peer-observation planning team comprised of administrators, department leads, and other staff representatives is convened in order to begin planning the process (Ackerman-Anderson & Anderson, 2010). Discussions begin with determining a clear purpose by responding to the question why are we conducting peer observations? (Sinek, 2009). Intended outcomes of participation in peer observation are established by synthesizing contributions from planning team members. In addition, the planning team discusses 21st century teaching and learning practices in which all staff have been trained in order to determine potential instructional focus areas for peer observations.

During the final month of the school year, the initial peer-observation planning efforts are communicated to teachers at a staff meeting. The purpose and outcomes of
peer observations are shared along with possible instructional focus areas that will guide peer observations in the future school year. These focus areas are considered to be 21st century teaching and learning expectations for all classrooms based on school-wide staff development and training.

At the meeting, staff members also engage in a frank conversation about overcoming potential barriers such as fear, apprehension, or lack of respect among team members (Barth, 2006; Bell, 2002; Richardson, 2006; Robinson, 2010). Administrators reinforce the non-evaluative nature of the peer-observation process and emphasize the reflective, appreciative aspects of the process (Finn, Chiappa, Puig, & Hunt, 2011; Hammond, 1998; Jayaram, Moffit, & Scott, 2012).

After the final staff meeting, department chairs continue the peer observation conversations with their department teams at the final department meetings of the school year. Chairs request input from teachers regarding procedures, protocols, and norms for peer observation in order to begin establishing the structure for peer observations (Bell, 2002). Procedures, protocols, and norms are intended to address several of the fears and concerns raised by staff during the staff meeting. The 21st century teaching and learning expectations are discussed again to narrow down focus areas for peer observations. Lastly, calendars are reviewed to determine the best time to conduct peer observations during the upcoming school year.

At the final school site council (SSC) meeting of the year, teacher representatives share the developments in the peer observation planning process. SSC members engage with teachers in conversations about the benefits and challenges of the process. Teachers and administrators explain that benefits can only be achieved if all teachers are afforded
the opportunity to participate, which requires substitute teachers throughout the school year. SSC approves funding for substitute teachers and requests periodic updates about the peer-observation process.

During a summer SAMHS leadership meeting, the peer observation planning team assembles to compare results of department suggestions for procedures, protocols, norms, and instructional expectations for peer observations. Administrators provide sample documents and protocols from other schools that have engaged in a peer observation process. The planning team drafts an outline of the peer-observation process including procedures, protocols, and norms. The list of instructional expectations is finalized based on input from teams.

Time is also spent developing an agenda to guide each peer-observation day. Understanding that time is a prerequisite for peer observations, the agenda includes time for observers to review the norms and procedures prior to conducting observations (Bournes-Hayes, 2010). Time is also included on the agenda for debriefing discussions after peer observations. The final period of each peer-observation day will be devoted to teachers’ preparation of materials necessary to implement strategies learned during the peer-observation process. The team agrees that time will be set aside on staff meeting agendas to allow participating teachers to share a summary of their peer-observation session along with brief anecdotes about their peer-observation experience. Department meeting agendas will also specify time for teachers to share what they learned during peer observations. In addition to protecting time on various agendas, the school calendar is reviewed and dates are protected during the school year to conduct peer observations beginning in the fall and concluding in the spring.
School reconvenes in mid-August. A few weeks into the school year, the peer-observation planning team shares initial drafts of the peer-observation agenda, procedures, protocols, and norms with SAMHS teachers at a staff meeting. A summarized list of the 21st century teaching and learning instructional expectations is shared with staff to assuage fears about what peer visitors will be observing during peer observations. Administrators continue to reinforce the non-evaluative nature of the peer-observation process and emphasize the reflective, appreciative aspects of the process.

A survey is distributed asking teachers to specify if they are willing to participate as observers or to be observed during the initial rounds of peer observation. Administrators communicate to teachers that if they are still apprehensive about participating, if at any time during the year they determine they would like to participate, they can inform a member of the peer observation planning team so their names can be added to the participant list. Initial survey results show that not all teachers are immediately willing to participate. Over 50 percent of teachers indicate that they are willing to be observed while over 65 percent specify that they would like to observe others. Several teachers wrote comments on their surveys that they will reconsider willingness to participate after the initial rounds are conducted.

At department meetings in early September, department chairs seek feedback on the agenda, procedures, protocols, and norms for peer observations. Chairs are also asked to determine candidates to serve as peer-observation facilitators. Facilitators meet with the peer observation planning team to discuss all facets of the peer-observation process. Facilitators also receive training from an external consultant well-versed in the
peer-observation process. The consultant agrees to assist during initial peer observations to model the facilitation process.

At the end of September, the peer-observation planning team reconvenes to finalize the agenda, procedures, protocols, and norms based on staff input. The 21st century teaching and learning instructional expectations are also finalized. Based on teachers’ responses to the staff survey indicating willingness to participate in peer observations, the first three peer-observation dates are scheduled. All documents, including the agenda, procedures, protocols, norms, instructional expectations, and schedules, are transmitted to staff electronically.

In October, the first peer-observation day takes place. The administrator establishes a meeting room and the consultant, designated facilitator, and all teachers participating as observers meet during the first period of the school day. The team reviews the agenda, procedures, protocols, norms, and instructional expectations. In addition, teachers share any areas of growth that they are seeking to explore. For example, one teacher shares that she would like to gain an understanding of how to better integrate instructional technology into her teaching. Another participant shares that he would like to determine a variety of strategies to engage students in collaborative conversations using academic language. Since these strategies fall within the 21st century teaching and learning expectations, they are noted by the consultant and facilitator as follow-up talking points to be addressed during the debrief session.

During periods two, three, and four, the facilitator leads the team of teacher observers through peer observations according to the predetermined schedule. Based on the norms, the team remains in classrooms for seven minutes, then has a short debrief
discussion after exiting each classroom. Teachers are able to take notes about instructional practices while inside the classroom but have agreed not to speak with each other. The facilitator uses a list of guiding questions to probe participants to reflect on practices while simultaneously remaining non-evaluative in their conversations.

During fifth period, the team reconvenes in the meeting room to debrief the entire process. They are able to take time to reflect upon the instructional expectations and share new ideas gained during observations. A team summary is compiled to share at the next staff meeting about insights gained during peer observation. Team members are also asked to summarize what they will share at their next department meetings. The session concludes with a discussion about individual commitments to enhance instructional practices. Teachers indicate what materials or resources are necessary to implement their individual commitments. Teachers are also asked if they need any additional support and training, which can be scheduled for a future date.

During sixth period, teachers are dismissed to prepare items necessary to implement their individual instructional commitments. The consultant and facilitator meet with the principal to share the compilation of team insights that will be shared at the staff meeting, the key points that will be shared at department meetings, and any requests for additional support and training indicated by participating teachers. The facilitator also shares that one of the observing teachers requested to meet with one of the observed teachers to learn more about her strategies for using educational technology. The principal notes the request and emails the observed teacher to determine her willingness to meet with the observer and a possible date to schedule a meeting based on the observing teachers’ request.
At the subsequent SAMHS staff meeting, participating teachers share learning and insight gained during their peer observation process (Hirsch, 2011; Kohut et al., 2007). Participating observers collectively express their gratitude for being able to observe the expertise of their colleagues in action (Buchanan & Khamis, 1999). Teachers that were observed during the initial round of peer observations voluntarily share their feelings about the fear and challenge of being observed. They also share that they did not receive any criticisms or evaluations based on the peer observations. The principal reminds teachers about the upcoming rounds of peer observation based on the schedule that was distributed and the calendar of dates.

Peer observations continue at the site for several months, facilitated by trained personnel, adhering to the established agenda, procedures, protocols, norms, and instructional expectations, and following predetermined schedules. Additional teachers are continually added to the peer observation schedule as several initially reluctant teachers agree to participate as the year progresses. The SSC and district office personnel receive periodic updates about the peer-observation process. The peer-observation planning team reconvenes in December to revisit the agenda, procedures, protocols, norms, and instructional expectations to determine if any modifications are necessary and update accordingly (Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmand, 2004).

At a staff meeting in the spring, the SAMHS staff discusses initial outcomes and instructional benefits of engaging in peer observation for professional learning (Bell, 2005). Teachers note the benefit of finally being able to see CCSS and 21st century learning strategies implemented in authentic classroom settings with familiar students. Teachers also expressed the benefit of viewing a variety of learning environments and
how strategies are implemented across various settings and departments. The reflective nature of the process is highlighted (Barber & Mourshed, 2007). Teachers describe that “observing a peer teach create[s] a self-comparison thereby leading to reflection” (Finn, Chiapa, Puig, & Hunt, 2011, p. 152).

SAMHS teachers also discuss the cultural benefits of engaging in peer observations. Teachers share that they feel increased camaraderie with their teammates and now realize that they are all learners improving in their instructional practices in a new educational era (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Doyle 2012; Saunders, Goldenberg, & Gallimore, 2009). Peer observations have stimulated more communication and collaboration with colleagues in an effort to learn methods to implement observed practices. Trust and relationships are cultivated through the process as teachers are willing to open their doors and share their strengths to benefit all SAMHS students (Richardson, 2011).

SAMHS staff members agree that peer observations will continue in the upcoming school year. The benefits of linking professional development to instructional practice in a cyclical approach is appreciated by teachers and administrators and are noted as a vital component of professional learning in an era of educational change (City, 2011; Dufour, Dufour, Eaker, & Many, 2010; Richardson, 2006).

**Recommendations for Further Research**

The findings from this study suggest several possible recommendations for future research.
1. Are there differences in instructional and cultural benefits, prerequisites facilitators and barriers for successful implementation of peer observations at elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools?

2. Is it possible to investigate peer observations through a quasi-experimental design with an experimental group and control group at same site in which one group participates in peer observations while the other does not to determine instructional and cultural benefits of peer observation for professional learning?

3. Is there a correlation between peer observation and student achievement?

4. What type of feedback generated through peer observations is most effective for teacher improvement based on peer observations?

5. What are the implications for teachers’ peer evaluation if peer observations are used as a component of peer evaluation? Will utilization of peer observations for teacher evaluation purposes challenge the use of peer observations for professional learning?

6. Do students perceive a positive impact on instruction and school culture based on teachers’ implementation of peer observation?

7. Do peer observations lead to an increase in implementation of effective practices as measured by administrators’ observations of instruction?

**Concluding Remarks and Reflections**

In *Presence*, we learn that “most change initiatives that end up going nowhere don’t fail because they lack grand vision and noble intentions. They fail because people can’t see the reality they face” (Senge et al., 2004, p. 29). Peer observations provide
teachers with the opportunity to not only see the reality they face, but to learn from peers in authentic settings. Although teachers have countless opportunities to participate in professional development, teachers rarely get the chance to observe effective instructional strategies in classrooms of peers. Peer observations afford a unique opportunity for teachers to “see it, know what it feels like, and move to a collective, collaborative view of where [they] are going” (Hammond, 1998, p. 46).

**Educational Change**

Transformation within public schools can be an arduous and challenging task. In order for educators to adequately prepare students for the 21st century world that awaits them, we cannot keep doing the same things while expecting different results. With the advent of Common Core State Standards and a renewed emphasis on college and career readiness for all students, it is imperative that teachers understand the need for change and their role and contribution to educational transformation. We must build a bridge between past practice and desired future outcomes.

I am blessed. My job allows me to see the process of learning almost every day. Visiting schools and districts across Riverside County, California, there are moments of educational excellence; when I walk into a classroom and it just feels right. The dynamism is palpable. The students are engaged. The teacher is engaged. It is a symbiotic relationship where students and teachers need each other to create learning. Students willingly attempt perplexing tasks with fervor and without argument (Meyer, 2013). The teacher provides just enough motivation and challenge for students to reach the next rung of the learning ladder and pull themselves up into new insights.
As I experience these moments of amazement and awe in the classroom of an extraordinary educator, I ponder the thought, “Why am I so lucky?” Why are teachers not afforded frequent opportunities to experience these moments of exemplary instruction and high levels of student engagement and learning? This study provides findings and guidance to support schools as they create structures and strategies for teachers to learn from each other and regularly view how peers have implemented strategies for the benefit of all learners in an era of educational change.
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APPENDICES
Appendix A

Abstract for Superintendents’ Meeting

Dissertation Title
A Delphi Study: Teachers’ perceptions of benefits, prerequisites, facilitators, and barriers of peer observation for professional learning in secondary public schools

Purpose Statement
The purpose of this study is to investigate secondary-school teachers’ perceptions about conducting peer observations for professional learning in contextualized classroom settings in public schools. This study will explore instructional benefits of employing peer observations for professional learning as perceived by secondary-school teachers. In addition, the study will explore perceived cultural benefits of implementing peer observations in secondary schools. Lastly, this study seeks to clarify the prerequisites, facilitators, and barriers to implementing peer observations for professional learning in secondary schools as perceived by secondary-school teachers.

Methodology
The Delphi method will be utilized in order to gather perceptual data from an expert panel of secondary-school teachers that have engaged in peer observations at various school sites in Riverside County, California and are deemed as highly knowledgeable by their site principals. For purposes of this Delphi study, an electronic questionnaire will be distributed in three rounds.

- **Round 1:** Teacher participants will be asked to determine, via open-ended response questions, the perceived instructional and cultural benefits of engaging in peer observations as well as the prerequisites, facilitators, and barriers to successfully implementing peer observations for professional learning in secondary schools. Results of participant responses to round-one questions will be aggregated to become the basis for round-two questions.
- **Round 2:** Teacher participants will be asked to rate the degree of importance of each factor identified in round one using a Likert scale. The factors of highest importance determined from round-two questions will accompany round-three questions.
- **Round 3:** Teacher participants will be asked to determine via open-ended response, the strategies or actions necessary to implement the factors identified as most important in round two.

Request of Superintendent

I am requesting your permission to conduct research in your district. I am requesting a designated contact person in your district in order to secure participants. With your permission, I will contact the designee to determine which secondary school sites have engaged in a structured peer observation process. Site principals will then be contacted to request a recommendation for teacher(s) to serve on the expert panel.

Approved ___________________ Date _______ District __________________

Designated Contact Person ___________________ Position __________________
Appendix B

Email Request to Secondary School Principals

Mr./Ms./Mrs./Dr.__________,

I received permission from your district Superintendent, __________, to conduct research in __________ School District. ________ (District Designee Name, Title) provided approval and contact information for secondary school principals at sites that have engaged in peer observations.

I am a doctoral candidate in the field of Organizational Leadership in the School of Education at Brandman University and am employed at the Riverside County Office of Education (RCOE). I am conducting a study of secondary-school teachers’ perceptions of the benefits, prerequisites, facilitators, and barriers to implementing peer observation for professional learning in secondary public schools in Riverside County. Additional information is on the attached Principal Request.

At this time I am requesting names, contact email, and permission to contact 2-4 teachers from your site that have engaged in structured peer observation (Instructional Rounds, Learning Walks, Action Walks, etc.) that you deem as highly knowledgeable experts in the peer-observation process. I would like to gather teachers’ contact information by **Friday, May 9, 2014** in order to begin survey administration prior to the conclusion of the school year.

Teachers agreeing to participate will be asked to respond to an electronic questionnaire administered in three rounds during the months of **May and June 2014** and will receive a **$10 gift card**. Be assured that participation will be voluntary and **confidential**. Teacher, school, and district names will not be reported in the findings. Teachers will be asked to provide informed consent for participation via email prior to responding to the electronic survey.

I would be happy to answer any questions. I am available by cell phone at __________. Your teachers’ participation would be greatly valued. Thank you for your time.

*Melissa Bazanos*
Principal Request

Dissertation Title
A Delphi Study: Teachers’ perceptions of benefits, prerequisites, facilitators, and barriers of peer observation for professional learning in secondary public schools.

Purpose Statement
The purpose of this study is to investigate secondary-school teachers’ perceptions about conducting peer observations for professional learning in contextualized classroom settings in public schools. This study will explore instructional benefits of employing peer observations for professional learning as perceived by secondary-school teachers. In addition, the study will explore perceived cultural benefits of implementing peer observations in secondary schools. Lastly, this study seeks to clarify the prerequisites, facilitators, and barriers to implementing peer observations for professional learning in secondary schools as perceived by secondary-school teachers.

Methodology
The Delphi method will be utilized in order to gather perceptual data from an expert panel of secondary-school teachers that have engaged in peer observations at various school sites in Riverside County and are deemed as highly knowledgeable by their site principals. For purposes of this Delphi study, an electronic questionnaire will be distributed in three rounds. Each round will be open for 7 – 10 days. Each survey will take approximately 10 – 15 minutes to complete. Teachers will receive a $10 gift card for their participation in all three rounds.

- **Round 1:** Teacher participants will be asked to specify via open-ended response the perceived instructional and cultural benefits of engaging in peer observations as well as the prerequisites, facilitators, and barriers to successfully implementing peer observations for professional learning in secondary schools. Results of participant responses to round-one questions will be aggregated to become the basis for round-two questions.

- **Round 2:** Teacher participants will be asked to rate the degree of importance of each factor identified in round one using a Likert scale. The factors of highest importance determined from round-two questions will accompany round-three questions.

- **Round 3:** Teacher participants will be asked to determine via open-ended response, the strategies or actions necessary to implement the factors identified as most important in round two.

Request of Principal
I am requesting names of two to four teachers at your site to participate in the electronic survey. With your permission and contact information, I will contact the teachers via email. I am requesting that you notify the teachers that they are being recommended for participation and to expect an email in May 2014.
Appendix C

Brandman University Institutional Review Board Approval

[Image of the Brandman University Institutional Review Board approval form]

Name of Investigator/Researcher: Melissa R. Bazanos

- [ ] Returned without review. Insufficient detail to adequately assess risks, protections and benefits.
- [x] Approved/Certified as Exempt form IRB Review.
- [ ] Approved as submitted.
- [ ] Approved, contingent on minor revisions (see attached)
- [ ] Requires significant modifications of the protocol before approval. Research must resubmit with modifications (see attached)
- [ ] Researcher must contact IRB member and discuss revisions to research proposal and protocol.

Level of Risk: [ ] No Risk [x] Minimal Risk [ ] More than Minimal Risk

IRB Comments:

[Blank space for comments]

IRB Contact

Name: Dr. Keith Larick

Telephone: [Redacted] Email: [Redacted]

IRB Certification Number: [Blank] Date: 5/12/2014

Revised IRB Application

Name: [Blank]

Telephone: [Blank] Email: [Blank] Date: [Blank]

Brandman University IRB Rev, 3.20.14 Adopted November 2013
Appendix D

Letter of Invitation to Research Subjects

I am a doctoral candidate in the field of Organizational Leadership in the School of Education at Brandman University. I am conducting a study of secondary-school teachers’ perceptions of the benefits, prerequisites, facilitators, and barriers to implementing peer observation for professional learning in secondary public schools. Your principal provided your contact information and indicated that your site has participated in some form of peer observation (Instructional Rounds, Learning Walks, Action Walks, etc.)

I am asking for your assistance in the study by requesting that you respond to a series of three electronic questionnaires as part of a Delphi study. The questionnaires will be administered in three rounds. Each round will take approximately 15 – 20 minutes to complete. Rounds will be administered in 7 - 10 day increments beginning on Monday, May 12, 2014. You will have the opportunity to respond to each round at your convenience within the time period designated for each round.

If you agree to participate in the electronic questionnaire, be assured that it will be completely confidential. Your name will not be attached to your electronic survey response. All information will remain in electronic files accessible only to the researchers. No employer will have access to the electronic questionnaire information. You will be free to withdraw from the study at any time. Further, you may be assured that the researcher is not affiliated with your employing agency.

Please review the attached Informed Consent and Research Participant’s Bill of Rights. If you agree to participate, please respond to this email indicating that you have read the attachments and agree to participate. (You do not need to print and sign the forms. Your email response will suffice as your informed consent.). When I receive your response, I will send the first questionnaire.

I am available by phone at [REDACTED] to answer any questions you may have. Your participation would be greatly valued.

Sincerely,

Melissa Bazanos
Appendix E

Informed Consent Form

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

A Delphi Study: Teachers’ perceptions of benefits, prerequisites, facilitators, and barriers of peer observation for professional learning in secondary public schools.

BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY
16355 LAGUNA CANYON ROAD
IRVINE, CA 92618

RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR: Melissa R. Bazanos

PURPOSE OF STUDY: The purpose of this study is to investigate secondary-school teachers’ perceptions about conducting peer observations for professional learning in public schools. This study will explore instructional benefits of employing peer observations for professional learning as perceived by secondary-school teachers. In addition, the study will explore perceived cultural benefits of implementing peer observation in secondary schools. Lastly, this study seeks to clarify the prerequisites, facilitators, and barriers to implementing peer observation for professional learning in secondary schools as perceived by secondary-school teachers.

PROCEDURES: In participating in this study I agree to respond to a series of three electronic survey questionnaires administered in 7 - 10 day increments over a period of no more than 30 days as part of a policy Delphi study. Each survey will take approximately 15 - 20 minutes to complete.

   a) Round one of the electronic questionnaire will require participants to type responses to five open-ended questions.

   b) Round two of the electronic questionnaire will require participants to rate the level of importance of items related to responses to round-one questions on a predetermined Likert scale.

   c) Round three of the electronic questionnaire will require participants to type responses to open-ended questions related to ratings generated during round 2.

I understand that:

   a) There are minimal foreseeable risks involved in this research study. The identity of all participants will be anonymous throughout the duration of the study though email addresses of participants will be required for electronic survey participation.

   b) The benefits of this study to me include a $10 gift card for participation in the study. The possible benefits of this study to the field of education include contributing to the growing body of research related to peer observation in public
schools and potentially informing the development of peer observation practices and protocol suggestions for public school application.

c) Any questions I have concerning my participation in this study will be answered by Melissa R. Bazanos, M.A., at [redacted].

d) I understand that I may refuse to participate or may withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences. Also, the Investigator may stop the study at any time.

e) I also understand that no information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent and that all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. If the study design or the use of the data is to be changed, I will be so informed and my consent re-obtained. I understand that if I have any questions, comments or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may write or call the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, and 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form and the “Research Participant’s Bill of Rights.”

CONSENT: I have read the above and understand it and hereby consent to the procedure(s) set forth.

____________________________________
Printed Name of Participant

____________________________________
Signature of Participant Date

____________________________________
Signature of Principal Investigator Date

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Appendix F

Delphi Study Round-one questionnaire

Sent to participants electronically via Google Forms:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1CwTNEGi6nQW2InDHSyoJTDy59V8PBE1n96qAsQYhRWE/viewform

Instructions: Please respond to the following questions related to your perceptions of the benefits, prerequisites, facilitators, and barriers of peer observation for professional learning in secondary public schools. Terms and variables are defined for each question. Please keep responses brief but sufficiently explanatory.

1. **What instructional benefits are derived from peer observation in secondary schools?**
   Peer observation is the “process of colleagues observing others in their teaching, with the overall aim of improving teacher practice” (Hendry & Oliver, 2012, p. 1).

2. **What cultural benefits are derived from peer observation in secondary schools?** “Cultural” relates to school culture defined as the “beliefs, perceptions, relationships, attitudes, and written and unwritten rules that shape and influence every aspect of how a school functions” (Great Schools Partnership, 2013).

3. **What prerequisites are necessary for the successful implementation of peer observation in secondary schools?**
   A prerequisite is defined as something necessary prior to implementation of an objective or process (Merriam-Webster, 2014).

4. **What are the facilitators of successful implementation of peer observation in secondary schools?**
   A facilitator is defined as something that aids or assists in progress or implementation of the objective (Merriam-Webster, 2014).

5. **What factors are barriers to the successful implementation of peer observation in secondary schools?**
   A barrier is defined as something that impedes progress or implementation of the objective (Merriam-Webster, 2014).
Appendix G

Delphi Study Round-two questionnaire

Sent to participants electronically via Google Forms: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/11Bo8EVC5ap0Sj162E6-F6TxZvdAVqI-Mq4LK3LeOwZoM/viewform?usp=send_form

Instructions: This round of the Delphi study includes aggregated responses from Round 1. Responses were distilled, categorized, and consolidated based on common responses from participants from various secondary schools throughout Riverside County.

Round 2 asks participants to determine the degree of importance of the items identified in Round 1. Please read ALL ITEMS in each section and consider the degree of importance before rating. A summary of the items is attached to the email if you would prefer to read a list of factors prior to completing Round 2. Although ALL items may appear to be “very important” to the peer-observation process, it is up to participants to rate the perceived degree of importance in relation to other items. Participants’ ratings in Round 2 will be aggregated to determine THE MOST IMPORTANT benefits, prerequisites, facilitators, and barriers for peer observation in secondary schools.

Round 2 contains FIVE sections. Each section relates to a question from survey Round 1.

Section 1: Instructional Benefits of Peer Observation (20 benefits identified in round 1)
Section 2: Cultural Benefits of Peer Observation (15 benefits identified in round 1)
Section 3: Prerequisites to implement Peer Observations (14 prerequisites identified in round 1)
Section 4: Facilitators of implementing Peer Observations (13 facilitators identified in round 1)
Section 5: Barriers to implementation of Peer Observations (15 barriers identified in round 1)

1. To what degree are the instructional benefits derived from peer observation as identified in Round 1 question 1 important? Mark the degree of importance for each benefit:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional benefits identified in Round 1 question 1</th>
<th>Degree of importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Peer observations allow observers to see what solutions other teachers have devised for common problems.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Peer observations allow observers to view how other teachers interact with a variety of students.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Peer observations allow observers to view how other teachers present lessons/material.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Peer observations allow observers to view how other teachers utilize instructional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional benefits identified in Round 1 question 1</td>
<td>Degree of importance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strategies during instruction and see strategies “in action with actual students” (checking for understanding; Direct Interactive Instruction, etc.)</td>
<td>Not important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Peer observations allow observers to view examples of differentiation in other classrooms.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Peer observations allow observers to view student engagement opportunities and techniques.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Peer observations allow observers to view strategies/structures for student collaboration and interaction.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Peer observations allow observers to view a variety of classroom learning environments (student seating arrangements; posted tools/resources).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Peer observations allow observers to view a variety of classroom management techniques and strategies.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Peer observations allow observers to experience a lesson from a student’s perspective.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Peer observations allow observers to view students’ learning in different classroom settings/content areas.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Peer observations allow observers to view classroom norms and procedures.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Peer observations allow observers to view the pacing of a lesson to determine time for students’ task completion.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Peer observations allow observers to view examples of technology in use by teachers and students.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Peer observations allow observers to view how teachers provide feedback to students.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Peer observations can improve teaching by allowing teachers to observe “better teachers.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Peer observations ensure consistency of strategies as</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Instructional benefits identified in Round 1 question 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional benefits</th>
<th>Degree of importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>implementation spreads school-wide.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Peer observations provide topics for conversations about instructional methods and strategies.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Peer observations motivate teachers to “step up their game” on a more consistent basis.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Peer observations lead to teachers’ reflection on their own instructional practice.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Cultural benefits identified in Round 1 question 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural benefits</th>
<th>Degree of importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Peer observations “bring us closer together” so we can see what we share in common; similar struggles and successes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Peer observations leads to the perception that teachers are part of a team; camaraderie increases.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Peer observation leads to teachers understanding that they are not alone, not isolated.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Peer observations allow teachers to value and appreciate each other’s work.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Peer observations create a sense of community.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Peer observations allow teachers to see their students in other classrooms and encourage collaboration with those teachers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Peer observations allow ideas to “germinate across a campus” instead of being trapped in one classroom.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Peer observations allow students to see how teachers interact.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Peer observations allow teachers to become aware of the realistic view of the school.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Peer observations create more transparency in how teachers teach.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. To what degree are the cultural benefits derived from peer observation as identified in Round 1 question 2 important? Mark the degree of importance for each benefit:
### Cultural benefits identified in Round 1 question 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Degree of importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11. Peer observations encourage more communication and collaboration between staff members.</td>
<td>Not important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Peer observations allow teachers to learn each other’s strengths.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Peer observation allow teachers to understand that everyone is a learner and improving their practice.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Peer observations allow teachers to view how teachers in other departments teach.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Peer observations allow teachers to see how others create the school culture setting for their students.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### To what degree are the prerequisites for successful implementation of peer observation as identified in Round 1 question 3 important? Mark the degree of importance for each identified prerequisite:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prerequisites identified in Round 1 question 3</th>
<th>Degree of importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Trust.</td>
<td>Not at all important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Staff willingness to participate in peer observations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. “Buy in” from staff about peer observation purpose/process.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Clear objectives (purpose) for conducting peer observations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Agreed upon norms and procedures for peer observations.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. A schedule of classrooms to be observed (“no surprise visits”).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Clear and consistent communication about the non-evaluative nature of peer observations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Guidelines or rubric of instructional expectations (“look fors”) to guide peer observations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Format for providing specific, meaningful feedback after peer observations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Prerequisites identified in Round 1 question 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilitators identified in Round 1 question 3</th>
<th>Not at all important</th>
<th>Minimally important</th>
<th>Somewhat important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Very important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11. Determining a focus area prior to peer observations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Administrative support of the peer-observation process.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. External facilitator (non-staff member) to mediate conversations during and after peer observations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Discussion prior to conducting peer observations to review norms and procedures.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. To what degree are the facilitators of successful implementation of peer observation as identified in Round 1 question 4 important? Mark the degree of importance for each identified facilitator:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilitators identified in Round 1 question 4</th>
<th>Not at all important</th>
<th>Minimally important</th>
<th>Somewhat important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Very important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Limit observation group to a small number of teachers (minimizes impact to classroom; group can blend into classroom).</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Time must be allocated and protected for peer observations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Communication about the purpose and benefits of peer observation should be frequent to promote a cohesive, positive process.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Well-designed feedback process (and forms) to encourage teachers to reflect on practice.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Team discussion before, during, and after peer observations to prepare for and debrief the process.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Pre- and post-observation collaboration between observers and observed.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Consistent adherence to purpose, norms, and procedures for peer observation.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Staff willingness to participate in peer observations.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Focus on positive aspects of instruction during observations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Time is necessary for teachers to incorporate what they observed into their own teaching.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Facilitators identified in Round 1 question 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all important</th>
<th>Minimally important</th>
<th>Somewhat important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Very important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

11. Discussions between observers and observed to learn details about the lesson.

12. An opportunity to discuss strengths and challenges about lessons after observations.

13. Administrators that encourage but do not force participation.

### Barriers identified in Round 1 question 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all important</th>
<th>Minimally important</th>
<th>Somewhat important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Very important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

5. To what degree are the barriers to successful implementation of peer observation as identified in Round 1 question 5 important to mitigate? Mark the degree of importance to mitigate each identified barrier:

1. Limited time (insufficient time during “prep” period; insufficient time to collaborate about strategies before, during, or after observations).

2. Fear (fear of being observed; fear of repercussions; fear of personal failure; fear of change).

3. Isolation (teachers are not accustomed to allowing peer in their classrooms; “many teachers seem to prefer to work independently”).

4. Perception of being judged by others/peers.

5. Limited snapshot of instruction (often “only a snippet of the lesson is observed”).

6. Teachers assign an independent, silent student task while being observed which limits the benefits for the observers.

7. Funding for substitute teachers for teacher release time to conduct observations.

8. Teachers do not want to be out of their own classroom and leave instruction to a substitute teacher (“I need to feel comfortable at the...”)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers identified in Round 1 question 5</th>
<th>Degree of importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>guest/substitute teacher in my classroom is capable”).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Lack of staff participation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Students get nervous when other teachers are observing and may not perform to their potential.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Lack of respect between staff members.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Teachers create a lesson for the benefit of the observers (“we lose the daily routines and realistic student engagement.”).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Overly positive or overly negative feedback.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Observations are too frequent.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix H

Delphi Study Round-three questionnaire

Sent to participants electronically via Google Forms:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1wVM0Gd02YKShJTLcU5NnxJ3zrnPdVqr1d5wF5X91XrUE/viewform?usp=send_form

Instructions: In Round 2, participants were asked to rate the degree of importance of the benefits, prerequisites, facilitators, and barriers of peer observation that were previously identified in Round 1. Participants’ ratings in Round 2 were analyzed to determine THE MOST IMPORTANT benefits, prerequisites, facilitators, and barriers for peer observation in secondary schools.

In Round 3, the final round of this study, participants are asked to identify the strategies or actions that a school can implement to best support realizing the most important benefits, prerequisites, and facilitators for peer observation identified in Round 2. Participants are also asked to identify the strategies or actions that a school can implement to best support mitigating the barriers to peer observation identified in Round 2.

Round 3 contains FIVE sections. Each section relates to a section from survey Round 2.

Section 1: Instructional Benefits of Peer Observation rated as most important in Round 2.
Section 2: Cultural Benefits of Peer Observation rated as most important in Round 2.
Section 3: Prerequisites to implement Peer Observations rated as most important in Round 2.
Section 4: Facilitators of implementing Peer Observations rated as most important in Round 2.
Section 5: Barriers to implementation of Peer Observations rated as most important to mitigate in Round 2.

Section 1: Instructional Benefits of Peer Observation. In this section, participants are asked to identify strategies or actions that can be taken by a school to best support the most important instructional benefits of peer observation that were identified in Round 2, Section 1. The three instructional benefits rated as most important by participants in Round 2 are included below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most important instructional benefits identified in round 2:</th>
<th>What strategies or actions can a school implement to best support realizing this instructional benefit?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Instructional Benefit: Peer observations allow observers to view how other teachers utilize instructional strategies during instruction and see strategies with actual students.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Instructional Benefit: Peer observations lead to teachers’ reflection on their own instructional practice.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Instructional Benefit: Peer observations allow observers to view strategies/structures for student collaboration and interaction.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section 2: Cultural Benefits of Peer Observation. In this section, participants are asked to identify strategies or actions that can be taken by a school to best support the most important cultural benefits of peer observation that were identified in Round 2, Section 2. The three cultural benefits rated as most important by participants in Round 2 are included below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most important cultural benefits identified in round 2:</th>
<th>What strategies or actions can a school implement to best support realizing this cultural benefit?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Cultural Benefit: Peer observations encourage more communication and collaboration between staff members.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Cultural Benefit: Peer observation allow teachers to understand that everyone is a learner and improving their practice.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Cultural Benefit: Peer observations allow teachers to see how others create the school culture setting for students in classrooms.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section 3: Prerequisites for implementing Peer Observations. In this section, participants are asked to identify strategies or actions that can be taken by a school to best support the most important prerequisites for peer observation that were identified in Round 2, Section 3. The three prerequisites rated as most important by participants in Round 2 are included below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most important prerequisites identified in round 2:</th>
<th>What strategies or actions can a school implement to best support this prerequisite?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Prerequisite: Trust.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Prerequisite: Clear objectives and purpose for conducting peer observations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Prerequisite: “Buy in” from staff about peer observation purpose/process.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section 4: Facilitators of implementing Peer Observations. In this section, participants are asked to identify strategies or actions that can be taken by a school to best support the most important facilitators for peer observation that were identified in Round 2, Section 4. The three facilitators rated as most important by participants in Round 2 are included below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most important facilitators identified in round 2:</th>
<th>What strategies or actions can a school implement to best support this facilitator?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Facilitator: Consistent adherence to purpose, norms, and procedures for peer observation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Facilitator: Team discussion before, during, and after peer observations to debrief the process.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Facilitator: Staff willingness to participate in peer observations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section 5: Barriers to implementation of Peer Observations. In this section, participants are asked to identify strategies or actions that can be taken by a school to best support mitigating the barriers of peer observation that were identified in Round 2, Section 5. The three barriers rated as most important to mitigate by participants in Round 2 are included below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most important barriers to mitigate as identified in round 2:</th>
<th>What strategies or actions can a school implement to best support mitigating this barrier?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Barrier: Fear (fear of being observed; fear of repercussions; fear of personal failure; fear of change).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Barrier: Perception of being judged by others/peers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Barrier: Lack of respect between staff members.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional Comments. Please include any additional comments about any aspect of peer observations for professional learning in secondary schools that you would like to share.