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The State of Teacher Evaluations in California K-12 Public Schools during COVID-19

Irene Preciado
Claremont Graduate University

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Approval of the Dissertation Committee

This dissertation has been duly read, reviewed, and critiqued by the Committee listed below, which hereby approves the manuscript of Irene Preciado as fulfilling the scope and quality requirements for meriting the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education, through the Urban Leadership Program.

Dr. Carl A. Cohn, Chair
Claremont Graduate University
Clinical Professor of Education
Professor Emeritus

Dr. Thomas F. Luschei, Committee Member
Claremont Graduate University
Professor of Education

Dr. Frances Marie Gipson, Committee Member
Claremont Graduate University
Clinical Professor of Education
Director, Urban Leadership Program

Abstract

The State of Teacher Evaluations in California K–12 Public Schools During COVID-19

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Irene Preciado

Claremont Graduate University: 2022

Three key aspects were revealed through the literature review of teacher evaluations. First, teacher evaluations have been controversial nationwide and revised from the outset. Second, the COVID-19 pandemic added a layer of complexity. Third, research on the state of teacher evaluations was minimal, particularly for California K–12 public schools. This mixed methods non-experimental case study employed a grounded theory research approach to gain an understanding of teacher evaluations during the COVID-19 pandemic. To conduct the study, human resource administrators in public school districts serving K–12 students across all 58 counties in California were invited to participate in an online survey. A total of 134 respondents representing 36 counties completed the survey, and some participated in a semi-structured interview. The data was analyzed, and a theme emerged, which was confirmed by the semi-structured interviews. This study unearthed a substantive theory: Collaboration overcomes adversity. Collaboration made supposedly impossible situations manageable. The substantive theory and findings are currently limited to education and teacher evaluations. Further exploration is recommended for policy, research, and practice. Some limitations include single-source information and limited participation from urban school districts.

Keywords: COVID-19, pandemic, teacher evaluations, collaboration, California K–12 public schools, memorandum of understanding (MOU), grounded theory research, collaboration overcomes adversity.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The purpose of this mixed methods case study research with a grounded theory approach was conducted to determine the state of teacher evaluations in California K–12 public schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. The literature review confirmed a gap in research on teacher evaluations and a need to gain understanding to guide practice and inform policy. This research focused on the events during and in preparation for the 2020–21 school year. Public school human resource administrators across all 58 counties were invited to voluntarily respond to an anonymous survey.

This chapter provides a general overview of teacher evaluations in the United States along with an overview of the COVID-19 pandemic and how it affected education globally, nationally, and in California. The significance of the study is outlined, and the need for the study as it pertains to teacher evaluations and the pandemic is presented. The next sections present the theoretical framework and the research study questions. The chapter concludes with a summary of the chapter and an introduction to Chapter 2: Literature Review.

1.1 Background

The United States exercises a division of federal and state powers and attributes the primary responsibility of education to the individual states through the Tenth Amendment to the Constitution. Although federal educational policy, regulations, and funding influence and support education in each state, these factors play a minor role overall. Each state is primarily responsible for determining the curriculum, assessments, requirements, and teacher evaluations. In some instances, the states may designate or collaborate with individual counties or local school districts to address education. In California, the teacher evaluation system or tool is neither exemplified

nor prescribed by the state. However, the state requires that teacher evaluations be conducted. To comply with this requirement, each school district through its board establishes a teacher evaluation system or tool and the components of the system in collaboration with their teacher labor unions.

Robinson (2018) asserted the importance of teacher evaluations and introduced her argument with Frederick Butterfield Knight's (1922) quote, which accurately reflects today's status of teacher evaluations as much as it expressed the status of teacher evaluations in the 1920s. Robinson quotes Knight as stating, "As yet… no one knows the exact formula for success in teaching. The complexity of personality and the many-sidedness of teaching have continually baffled useful analysis" (Robinson, 2018, p. 1). Historically, controversies surrounding practices, policy, and research findings have contributed to a multitude of teacher evaluation reforms throughout the nation. Robinson outlined how teacher evaluation tools and systems have changed over time. For instance, from the 1600s to the 1800s, community members conveyed their support or disapproval of teachers. Yet, by the mid- to late 1800s, the public randomization of teacher evaluations shifted to structured control.

A more recent event, the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), reformed teacher evaluations by providing flexibility for individual school districts and specifying an avenue to include student achievement data as part of teacher evaluations accountability. Though abundant research, policy, incentives, and recommendations address effective teacher evaluations (Chung, 2008; Daley, 2020; Darling-Hammond, 2019; Fensterwald, 2020; Frost, 2020; Hemphill & Marianno, 2021; Ma et al., 2020; Nittler & Saenz-Armstrong, 2020; Taylor & Tyler, 2012; Wei et al, 2015; Will, 2020b), both in research and practice, teacher evaluations have been found to be generally ineffective, suggesting only a tenuous links to student achievement and offering insufficient teacher support (Brandt et al., 2007; Donaldson, 2011; Harris et al., 2014; Kauchak et

al., 1985; Kimball & Milanowski, 2009; Robinson, 2018; Strunk et al., 2014; Weisberg et al., 2009; Young et al., 2015).

Trends and controversies surrounding teacher evaluations have stemmed from internal and external factors. However, a pandemic brought changes to those trends, which had been established by previous research, practices, and policies. Nittler and Saenz-Armstrong (2020) recommended school leaders prepare to support teachers during the 2020–21 school year and emphasized the need for teachers to be prepared to address any deficiencies in learning caused by remote instruction and the overall impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, they outlined how leaders need to provide teachers with ongoing "summative feedback … [and] ensuring teachers get timely support" (Nittler & Saenz-Armstrong, 2020, paras. 11–12). Another consideration, they posited, was the requirements to effectively instruct through a distance-learning model were not defined. After surveying teachers in Germany, König et al. (2020) concluded that "the COVID-19 situation requires not only knowledge and skills but also confidence regarding success in online teaching" (p. 611). In May of 2020, Kraft and Simon surveyed 194 teachers in nine Southern, Midwestern, and Eastern states. Their results indicated teachers were stressed for various reasons. When teachers were asked about their predictions for student learning, they projected a substantial learning loss. Teachers reported being concerned about their students' academic performance and their own levels of teaching abilities. With their evaluations during the pandemic, Frost (2020) and Will (2020a) captured teachers' concerns, which ranged from feelings of unfairness, new teaching platforms, lack of teacher training, and their tenures being at risk if evaluations were connected to test scores.

These reported stressors resulted from the new environment created by the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers' accounts of tensions were consistent with the administrators' observations of teacher stress under the dynamic situation. However, principals expressed disagreement on

how to handle teacher evaluations during the COVID-19 pandemic. Frost (2020) reported that some administrators believed in encouraging teachers via the evaluation process while other administrators reported that the level of stress was high and evaluations should not take place.

1.2 Problem Statement

1.2.1 The COVID-19 Pandemic and Education

Once-in-a-lifetime events, such as natural disasters, can change lives across regions, states, or countries, but only once in a century do we experience a worldwide event such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The name COVID-19 is derived from the name of the virus; thus, COVID-19 stands for the **co**rona**vi**rus **d**isease of 20**19.** The "COVID-19 pandemic… was identified in Wuhan, China in December 2019 and has spread around the globe" (Hebebci et al., 2020, p. 267). Yet, many people did not know about it until late January or February of 2020. By March 2020, the virus had spread around the world, and the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a pandemic. The volatility of the virus impacted all aspects of life worldwide.

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in travel bans and an international lockdown and affected everyday life. The restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic meant "people had to learn to organise *[sic]* communication and interaction in a new way" (König et al., 2020, p. 617). The changes due to this novel and communicable virus even extended to children's education. In April 2020, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) reported that a staggering 1.6 billion students had been affected by COVID-19. "This crisis was not only global but arose almost simultaneously in all countries" (Karalis, 2020, p. 126). A worldwide crisis in education was created by the COVID-19 pandemic, and researchers investigated its disruption of education. Global peer-reviewed studies evaluated and reported on the additional barriers created by the pandemic in the field of education. Some researchers

focused their studies on gathering the general views and practices of teachers and students during COVID-19. Other studies investigated in more detail the struggles that stemmed from online teaching and learning and captured the experiences of educators, students, and families. While several reports and studies detailed common difficulties, such as the lack of equipment to effectively engage in distance education and the need for teacher training, most studies reported a collective hope for a better future. These research findings provided a general survey of the common-lived educational experiences of students, teachers, families, and others in the field of education.

1.2.2 *The United States, COVID-19, and Education*

National research reviewed the challenges education faced during the COVID-19 pandemic and offered general recommendations. However, research on the state of teacher evaluations was quite limited. Only a few studies had begun the inquiry and broadly reviewed some school districts and their approaches to addressing teacher evaluations across the United States. In May 2020, Nittler and Saenz-Armstrong published a national study analyzing district policies regarding teacher evaluations during the COVID-19 pandemic. In their research, a few school districts in California were included, since in mid-March 2020, K–12 public school districts across the state halted in-person education. Nittler and Saenz-Armstrong reviewed the contract language in 44 districts across the US, and out of the 44 reviewed districts "only 18 mention teacher evaluation in the context of school closures and distance learning, and only 13 of those 18 have made a concrete decision about it" (Nittler & Saenz-Armstrong, 2020, para. 4). Out of the 13 districts, four were California school districts: Long Beach, Los Angeles, San Diego, and San Francisco. These districts issued summative evaluations if enough information had been collected; otherwise, evaluations were canceled or delayed (Nittler & Saenz-Armstrong, 2020).

From their review of these 44 districts, Nittler and Saenz-Armstrong (2020) discussed the dilemma school districts faced between holding "teacher[s] harmless" and ensuring students learned, and they offered recommendations on how to address teacher evaluations (Nittler & Saenz-Armstrong, 2020, para. 8). They posited that "Now more than ever, teacher evaluations, albeit retooled, could provide the support teachers require and the oversight students need" (Nittler & Saenz-Armstrong, 2020, para. 2). This argument supported the efforts of this study and informed those in the field of education. Nittler and Saenz-Armstrong's research affirmed that teacher evaluations provide five benefits. First, they contended that teacher evaluations can "help principals be able to assess how their teachers are coping with their new workloads" (Nittler & Saenz-Armstrong, 2020, para. 12). The second benefit is the opportunity for teachers and principals to discuss instructional delivery during these unprecedented times. For many teachers, Nittler and Saenz-Armstrong suggested that teaching remotely felt like being in their first year of teaching. These challenges, they argued, supported the need for the third benefit of teacher evaluations, which is support. Their research found the fourth benefit to be the collaboration between teachers and administrators on how assignments are given and measured and how students are supported during distance learning. The fifth benefit of teacher evaluations is that teachers and administrators can review student feedback. Moreover, Nittler and Saenz-Armstrong theorized that concrete decisions made about teacher evaluations and agreements reached through the collaboration between districts and labor unions can support teachers and ensure students are taught as well as possible.

Another investigation by Hemphill and Marianno (2021) documented the actions taken by urban school districts in the US regarding their memoranda of understanding (MOUs), stating "sixteen school districts enacted MOUs covering teacher evaluations" (p. 177). Of particular interest to this research study were the school districts in California "such as Los Angeles, San

Francisco, and Long Beach, [which] suspended all evaluations…" (Hemphill & Marianno, 2021, p. 177). The recommendation from Hemphill and Marianno stressed the importance of teacher evaluations during the COVID-19 pandemic. They advised that "reducing the required number of observations or standards … or suspending measures of student growth (which will likely be confounded with prior and ongoing COVID-19 learning disruptions)" (Hemphill & Marianno, 2021, p. 179). Additionally, Hemphill and Marianno posited that "failure to carefully attend to teacher working conditions as outlined in contract language could exacerbate teacher morale and lead to labor unrest" (Hemphill & Marianno, 2021, p. 170).

1.2.3   California, COVID-19 and Education

The contract language for public school districts in California was bestowed upon each district and each district had to define its policy around teacher evaluations during the pandemic. However, in terms of health and public safety, California K–12 public districts followed guidelines from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, local health departments, and county offices of education. Investigators pleaded for urgent action to be taken. "In the context of this new and challenging situation of digital learning caused by the COVID-19 school lockdown, information must be provided instantly to inform education policy and practice" (Huber & Helm, 2020, p. 238). In California, Governor Newsom frequently updated school officials and the public about the adherence to the requirements for California public schools amidst the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, procedures were routinely changed, or the responsibilities were redirected to individual districts, particularly as they pertained to teacher evaluations.

On April 1, 2020, less than a month after schools had closed, Governor Newsom announced an agreement between labor unions and management. While the agreement was achieved and outlined "direction on implementation and delivery of distance learning, special education, and meals through the end of the school year" (Governor Newsom, April 1, 2020), it

provided insufficient guidance regarding teacher evaluations. Therefore, individual school districts were charged with the burden of teacher evaluations. The labor–management framework, included in Governor Newsom's announcement, gave general guidelines for local educational agencies as they maneuvered the COVID-19 pandemic and outlined basic principles about safety, health, and students' rights to education. However, the intricacy and details were left up to the school leaders to work out with their labor unions. Governor Newsom's framework was consistent with a previous report, which indicated that, in terms of the rights of labor unions, California ranked as an exceptionally permissive state when compared to other states across the nation (Winkler, et al., 2012).

This pervasive permissiveness toward labor unions in California was clearly illustrated as the school districts still struggled to get agreements months into the COVID-19 pandemic. California's governor did suggest any solutions beyond his recommendation that each school district works with its labor union. Cohn (2021) raised concerns, stating, "the governor deserves praise for his recent budget and school reopening proposals, but schools aren't going to reopen anytime soon across the state if the details and agreements on in-person instruction have to be reached through local collective bargaining agreements and memoranda of understanding in more than a 1,000 school districts" (para. 3). Meanwhile, the challenges California public school districts had faced before the pandemic were exacerbated as students fell behind and teachers were afraid to return to in-person teaching, making an MOU between the parties quite difficult.

According to Cohn (2021), the school districts needed Governor Newsom to take a stance. Cohn stated that Governor Newsom "should use his emergency authority during this pandemic to temporarily suspend local collective bargaining, and … he should sit down with the leaders of CTA, [*California Teachers Association*] CFT [*California Federation of Teachers*] and CSEA [*California School Employees Association*] to negotiate a safe statewide reopening of all

public schools for in-person instruction" (Cohn, 2021, para. 9). However, the governor continued his focus on healthcare, vaccinations, and funding. He charged individual districts and teacher labor unions with the task of figuring out the specifics of how to safely reopen schools and the implementation of employee evaluations.

1.3 Significance and Purpose of the Study

1.3.1   COVID-19 and Teacher Evaluations

The COVID-19 pandemic jarred daily life worldwide. The field of education entered unprecedented times with remote teaching and learning as schools were closed down. The significance of this study centers on teacher evaluations, a controversial issue, coupled with a once-in-a-lifetime event, the COVID-19 pandemic. Almost a decade before the COVID-19 pandemic, Papay (2012) echoed Knight's (1922) sentiment and reported on the concerns with teacher evaluations when he stated, "Over the past decade, consensus has been growing among teachers, administrators, and policymakers: teacher evaluation in the United States is broken and needs fixing" (p. 123). If the teacher evaluation system in the United States is broken, questions that need answers have surfaced, such as how do the nation as a whole and individual states handle a broken system during the COVID-19 pandemic? Moreover, because all aspects of life were impacted, the question of how the private sector handled employee evaluations arose, and a comparative investigation ensued. The issues raised in the COVID-19 pandemic workplace allowed employers to evaluate their practices and learn about the sufficiency of remote versus workplace employment, employee well-being, and morale in connection to individual and collective evaluations which are pertinent issues to the sense of overall wellbeing and efficacy.

1.3.2   Employee Evaluations in the Private Sector

As the world faced the same challenges of COVID-19 lockdowns, employees worked remotely. All employers had to revisit how employee evaluations would be handled in the changing world, and the decisions made regarding employee evaluations in the private sector and the business world aided this research. This study offered an opportunity to compare how local educational agencies and school districts handled teacher evaluations since the COVID-19 pandemic affected all employers and employees. A general overview of the literature revealed that in the private and business sectors, gender was a consideration across various businesses as decisions were made about modifying employee evaluations. Mullen (2021) highlighted the fact that employers were using evaluations as "an opportunity to boost morale and ensure workers— managing workloads along with childcare, remote schooling, household duties, financial constraints or possibly illness" (para. 5). Challenges with childcare, remote learning, and household responsibilities mostly affected women.

In a Harvard Business Review article, Mackenzie et al. (2020) identified the struggles women faced because of the pandemic and urged managers to have a responsibility in ensuring that "the bias against women" (in particular, women of color) "doesn't do further damage" (para. 1). Their recommendations included: 1) defining criteria that effectively address the evaluation process, 2) creating alignment among all decision-makers, and 3) monitoring for equity and consistency. These recommendations, which Mackenzie et al. posited, can "advance organizational aims during tumultuous times" (Mackenzie, 2020, para. 15). They noted women are more susceptible to work–family conflict during a crisis because they need to tend to the home and they either increase their absenteeism at work or they leave work to tend to the home full-time in higher numbers than men. They also remarked that during a crisis, such as COVID-19, there is an opportunity to provide some relief by offering options such as family leave, paid

time off, and support, which may reduce the work–family conflict and provide better outcomes for individuals and companies. According to research, the private sector and the business world emphasized and distinguished evaluations once the different conditions created by the COVID-19 pandemic were identified.

In an article in a business journal, Mullen (2021) summarized the managers' responses to their employee evaluations during the pandemic as "more frequent, informal check-ins [which] have become popular instead of formal evaluations" (para. 12). Mullen (2021) presented the results from the 2020 Gartner polls, which indicated that "most organizations are tweaking evaluations rather than canceling them entirely amid the pandemic" (para. 2). During 2020, executives overwhelmingly reported being concerned with evaluations; yet, in 2021, Mullen stated that employers were flexible and empathetic as they evaluated their employees. Mullen (2021) reported that "Hilton has simplified its process, turning formal reviews into three-question evaluations, and focusing on employee effort, not just results" (para. 4).

Another article for a publication focused on the technology industry, Bastone (2020) reported that Google would be suspending its employee evaluations (para. 1). Additionally, Bastone (2020) reported, "Facebook will also do away with its upcoming review cycle and, instead, will give all of its employees an 'exceeds' mark, which could unlock significant bonuses" (para. 6). "Facebook will also give its full-time employees a $1,000 cash bonus to help during the coronavirus crisis—a gesture that was not extended to its hourly contract worker" (Bastone, 2021, para. 12).

1.3.3   *COVID-19 and Teacher Evaluations in the United States*

The decisions made about employee evaluations in the private and business sectors provided reasons for this study to examine how the educational sector handled employee evaluations during the COVID-19 pandemic. A recent investigation conducted by Hemphill and

Marianno (2021) informed those creating educational policies and practices of the response of teachers' unions and collective bargaining units to the challenges of the pandemic. Hemphill and Marianno (2021) "explored changes in 101 urban school districts, [covering all fifty states] finding that only twenty-five school districts formally altered contract language in their spring response to COVID-19 by signing Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with their teachers' unions" (p. 171). Hemphill and Marianno (2021) also reported on the actions taken by urban school districts in the US regarding their MOUs, stating that most school districts "set forth plans for an abbreviated form of evaluation" (p. 177). Moreover, the authors found that "as school district leadership, administrators, teachers, and their labor representatives navigate the reality of COVID-19 schooling, questions regarding … labor agreements on the ability to flexibly address student needs have arisen" (Gerber 2020; Goldstein & Shapiro 2020 in Hemphill & Marianno, 2021, p. 171). The question of labor agreements was raised by other researchers as well.

Another report on how the COVID-19 pandemic had a national impact on education regarding teacher evaluations was conducted by Nittler and Saenz-Armstrong (2020). They analyzed district policies regarding teacher evaluations during the COVID-19 pandemic. As previously introduced, their review of the teachers' labor union and school districts included districts in the United States (44). Of the 44 districts, there were 18 addressed teacher evaluations in their language as it related to "school closures and distance learning, and only 13 of those 18 have made a concrete decision about it." (Nittler & Saenz-Armstrong, 2020, para. 4). Their report also outlined the California public school districts which included Long Beach, Los Angeles, San Diego, and San Francisco as they, too, had issued summative evaluations for teachers about whom enough information had been collected. All other teachers' evaluations were canceled or delayed. Teacher evaluations created an issue that needed to be addressed by the administration and teachers.

Gerber (2020) reported in April 2020 that "less than a quarter of the districts in our sample had formal agreements…," and, at the time of their publication in May 2020, less than half of the districts had agreements in place regarding remote teaching (para.7). The report also indicated that 46 of the 74 of the districts in the study had not addressed the issue of teacher evaluations. As of May 2020, two months after the outbreak of COVID-19, the issue of teacher evaluations had not been addressed by most districts (26 out of 44) according to an article written by Nittler and Saenz-Armstrong (2020) and published by the National Council on Teacher Quality.

1.3.4   COVID-19 and Teacher Evaluations in California

As teaching and learning were abruptly moved to online teaching and remote learning, not only were the working conditions uncertain for teachers, but there was uncertainty as to how teachers would be evaluated during the pandemic. Because public schools moved to remote learning, many teachers were teaching from home. Daley (2020) emphasized the importance of recognizing how the workplace has changed and how the evaluation tools were created for a different environment, proposing that, "It's time we rethink compensation and evaluation structures…" (para. 20). Thus, she outlined a series of recommendations to be considered, which included a focus on more than just output, the consideration of values and soft skills, flexibility, minimal supervision, and timely feedback. Daley (2020) suggested that these recommendations can be critical for public school teachers in the midst of remote learning, isolation, and fear. Underlying questions for this inquiry were: what strategies were put in place to support the evaluation system during the COVID-19 pandemic, and what support was provided by public school districts for their employees?

Hemphill and Marianno (2021), as previously stated, studied 101 school districts across the US, reviewing the teacher evaluation demands during the COVID-19 pandemic. Included in

their analysis were six major California public school districts: Oakland, Los Angeles, Long Beach, Sacramento City, San Diego, and San Francisco. Through this study, Hemphill and Marianno (2021) sought to "understand the wide scope of actions districts were taking to accommodate the new demands of distance learning" (p. 3), which was implemented during the pandemic. They reported a myriad of issues, and their recommendation stressed the need for communication, transparency, and collaboration between labor unions and school districts. California K–12 public school districts had previously struggled with negotiations with their local labor unions, and the pandemic introduced an additional layer of challenges. In an article published in EdSource, Fensterwald (2020) described the complexity of the situations for teachers and school districts thus, "There has been no other experience I have had where the line between what is negotiable has been as terribly blurred, said Gregory Dannis, president of San Francisco law firm Dannis Woliver Kelley, who represents more than a dozen Bay Area school districts" (para. 12). Despite the complexity, the question school districts had to entertain was what to do about teacher evaluations and how to handle them in the middle of the chaos created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Because teacher evaluations inherently address the level of teacher support, student learning, and overall accountability for teaching and learning, research into the state of teacher evaluations during the COVID-19 pandemic became imperative. In California K–12 public schools, the effects of the pandemic challenged the existing educational system and placed teachers at the center; therefore, this study aims to shed much-needed light on the state of the teacher evaluation process in California K–12 public schools during this time. Investigating the educational practices in California will support further research into teacher evaluations, teacher support, student learning, and school district accountability during a crisis. The opportunity to understand how K–12 public schools in California navigated distance, hybrid, and in-person

learning with labor unions during the pandemic can provide data about the constructs of decision-making that went into teacher evaluations, their modifications or suspensions, and how these decisions were communicated to all stakeholders. The findings aim to guide future practices and policies. Whitlock (2021) recommended administrators avoid the contemplation of relaxing teacher evaluation. Instead, he advised that "during the pandemic, teachers deserve attention and candid feedback to grow and be successful" (Whitlock, 2021, para. 5).

Teacher evaluations matter because they affect teachers both individually and collectively. Teacher evaluations also directly impact student learning and the educational system. Studies have identified teachers as "the most important influence on student learning: (Aaronson et al., 2007; Jensen, 2010; Goe, 2007; Leithwood et al., 2004)(In Young et al., 2015). Those with the most influence on student achievement are teachers and those in leadership roles. At a national level, 93% of principals reported "having a major influence on decisions concerning evaluation of teachers" (Bagley, 2019, para. 10). In their summary of empirical studies and literature review, Leithwood et al. (2004) indicated that, although many factors affected what students learned in schools, the evidence determined their conclusion that "leadership is second in strength only to classroom instruction" (p. 70). An investment in teacher evaluations equates to an investment in student education (Darling-Hammond, 2019; de Koning, 2014; Jensen, 2010; Sato et al., 2008; Wexler, 2021). Thus, investing in students through an investigation into teacher evaluations during a crisis, such as that of the magnitude of the COVID-19 pandemic, was significant. Yet, despite the importance of teacher evaluations on student achievement and teacher success, limited research had been conducted into the state of teacher evaluations in California's K–12 public schools during the pandemic.

The reports and studies suggested a need to understand ways in which teachers were supported during the COVID-19 pandemic. What role do teacher evaluations play in any crisis,

especially during a pandemic? At the time of the inquiry of this investigation, research into the state of teacher evaluations in California K–12 public schools during the COVID-19 pandemic minimally existed. The need to understand, qualify, and document the state of teacher evaluations in California K–12 public schools was critical as research has extensively documented the many challenges of teacher evaluations before the problems brought on by the pandemic. Because education was greatly impacted, this investigation urgently explored the state of the teacher evaluation process to identify how teacher evaluations were handled during the 2020-21 school year.

The goal of this mixed methods case study was to determine the state of the teacher evaluations in California K–12 public schools and unearth any persistent trends in teacher evaluations that may have supported or hindered the process during this unprecedented situation. Hemphill and Marianno (2021) stated, "A dynamic response to COVID-19 during the fall will likely require that unions and school district leaders revisit agreements early and often so they can flexibly adjust contracts and labor expectations to the ever-changing circumstances concomitant to the COVID-19 pandemic" (pp. 10–11). Thus, the focus of this research on how teacher evaluations were conducted during the 2020-21 school year was fundamental to capture ever-changing circumstances presented by the pandemic. Because the COVID-19 pandemic was in its infancy at the beginning of this research, a gap in studies existed that gauged the state of teacher evaluations, particularly in California. The urgency to test the ground's fertility to germinate new perspectives into teacher evaluations stemmed from the need to determine how public school districts and teachers in California handled teacher evaluations during the pandemic. Much research validated the controversy across the nation as Papay (2012) stated, "Over the past decade, consensus has been growing among teachers, administrators, and policymakers: teacher evaluation in the United States is broken and needs fixing" (p. 123). Not

only have teacher evaluations been riddled with controversy, but the COVID-19 pandemic presented a chaotic and challenging environment to be studied. Thus, this study aimed to fill the gap in research and assist in understanding how the pandemic, a novel event, and teacher evaluations, a controversial issue, coexisted during the 2020-21 school year.

1.4 Theoretical Framework and Process of the Study

This mixed methods non-experimental case study utilized a grounded research theory approach developed by the sociologists Glaser and Strauss (1967) (Strauss & Corbin, 1994; Heath & Cowley, 2004). Grounded theory is defined as "a respected qualitative way of moving from individual knowledge to collective knowledge" (Stake, 2010, p. 17). To accomplish the transition from individual to collective knowledge, the researcher follows the fundamental outlined components of a grounded research theory study by Sbaraini et al. (2011). The seven fundamental components, which are outlined in Chapter 3: Methodology, provided the roadmap to conduct this research.

Due to the novelty of the virus and the gap in the research, grounded theory fit the study's needs. To gain an understanding of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on teacher evaluations, it was essential to use grounded theory as it framed the process of capturing qualitative data and quantitative data to discover a theory from the data collection for analysis and comparison. Though Glaser and Strauss are considered the founders of grounded theory research, there are differences in how a literature review is conducted. For Glaser, the literature review supports the researcher's emergent theory after it has been hypothesized. For Strauss, the literature review sheds light on the possibilities to be discovered during the research. For practical reasons, this study's research was initiated from the perspective of Strauss, as this research has "both specific understandings from past experience and literature" (Heath & Cowley, 2004, p.

143) regarding teacher evaluations in California K–12 public schools. Moreover, because the focus of this investigation was centered on the social construct and interactions during teacher evaluations, the grounded theory approach to research aligned with the purpose of this study. Sbaraini et al. (2011) stated, "Grounded theory studies are generally focused on social processes or actions: they ask about what happens and how people interact" (p. 2). Grounded theory research provided the platform for discovery as a novel situation afforded the opportunity to develop a new understanding of a challenging topic, teacher evaluations in California K–12 public schools, through analysis and coding of research findings.

This study also sought to examine case data in context or phenomenon. A close examination of similarities and dissimilarities in the cases focused on patterns or themes to determine general findings or uniqueness in the cases to be studied. The goal proposed that the data solicited and collected from volunteer district human resource administrators in California K–12 public school districts would shed light on the state of teacher evaluations during the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey, which the human resource administrators took along with all other pertinent protocols, was structured. The protocols followed a schedule, and all documents were submitted and reviewed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Claremont Graduate University prior to the Qualtrics surveys being sent out. Detailed information is presented in Chapter 3: Methodology.

1.5 Research Study Questions

The guiding research questions for this mixed methods study were: 1) What was the state of teacher evaluations in California K–12 public schools during the 2020–21 school year? 2) How were teacher evaluations measured and used to support teacher performance during the

COVID-19 pandemic? 3) What role did communication, collaboration, and transparency play in the discussions about teacher evaluations during the COVID-19 pandemic?

1.6 Summary

This chapter introduced the study by presenting the need to conduct this mixed methods non-experimental case research study into the state of teacher evaluations in California K–12 public school districts. The background section outlined research and relevant information on education in the United States (specifically California) and on teacher evaluations. The context for the study was presented and outlined in reference to the state and the COVID-19 pandemic. This chapter presented the problem statement and the significance of this study, arguing for a need to fill in the research gap, gain an understanding of the effects of the pandemic on teacher evaluations, and unearth a substantive theory. Lastly, the research questions were presented. The following chapter will present research from broad and focused perspectives about: a) teacher evaluations; b) an overview of two decades of teacher evaluations in California, including the development of the standards for the teaching profession and federal and state influences on teacher evaluations; c) the COVID-19 pandemic and education, including an overview of qualitative studies worldwide; d) teacher evaluations during the pandemic and a brief review of female teachers with a focus on California; e) research on grounded theory; and f) a summary of the chapter and an introduction to the following chapter.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The literature review was conducted through a search that primarily utilized key databases for education research, such as the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) and Elton B. Stephens Company (EBSCO). An ancillary inquiry was conducted on other databases to gather research on the COVID-19 pandemic and its global impact on education. The research includes an analysis of peer-reviewed articles, books, and dissertations that focused on teacher evaluations; research on the COVID-19 pandemic; and teacher evaluations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

To provide a contextual and chronological background, this chapter synthesizes introductory information; seminal and current work on teacher evaluations across the nation and in California over the last two decades, including the development of the standards for the teaching profession and how teacher evaluations were influenced by changes at the federal and state levels. Insight into practices and findings as they pertain to teacher evaluations are explored. Current research on education during the first few months of the COVID-19 pandemic is included to further contextualize the study. The review of the literature concludes with an outline of current research findings on the global, national, and state challenges and possibilities brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Research and publications were contrasted with global, national, and the State of California's research findings and provided a structured foundation. Additionally, research is included on state teacher evaluations during the pandemic with a brief overview of historical gender-based demographic shifts. This chapter concludes with a comprehensive review of grounded theory research (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), which served as

the theoretical framework for this study. Lastly, the chapter includes a summary and an introduction to the next chapter, Chapter 3: Methodology.

2.2 Teacher Evaluations

"Teacher evaluation is a necessary component of a successful school system" (Robinson, 2018, para 50). Because they are critical components of quality education, teacher evaluations have undergone revisions, and differing opinions about them have arisen over time. Historically, the trajectory of teacher evaluations has steadily shifted. Robinson (2018) identified teacher evaluations closely tied to public education in the United States from its inception. She described "early accountability systems were comprised of no more than simple inspections" and the inspections merely focused on teachers meeting their expectations (para 17). The community were primarily responsible for overseeing the schools and as the overseer changed so did the expectations. She indicated "in the mid- to late 19th century, leaders began to pay more attention to teacher training and helping teachers improve their practice" (para 17).

Originally, the aim of teacher evaluations shifted from teacher training and improvement to support a more efficient preparation for teachers and their instruction. As the country expanded and a need to prepare the youth for the workforce was imminent, the emphasis of teacher evaluations turned toward the preparation of students for the workforce, creating a larger focus on students being prepared for the demands presented by society. Thus, more focus was targeted on teacher support through observations and feedback. Teacher evaluations in the 1960s were conducted through a critical lens, measuring teacher efficiency by student achievements. By the 1970s, a more methodical effort toward teacher supervision model had ensued giving teachers multiple opportunities for observation and feedback. At the turn of the 21st century, the purpose

of teacher evaluations shifted its focus from the clinical model of the 1970s to a concentration on the evaluator's feedback, student achievement data, and parent and student feedback.

Robinson (2018) posted a quote from Knight's 1922 dissertation presented at Teachers College, Columbia University. Knight stated, "As yet … no one knows the exact formula for success in teaching. The complexity of personality and the many-sidedness of teaching have continually baffled useful analysis" (Robinson, 2018, para 1). One hundred years later, this quotation remains true. Researchers, policymakers, and practitioners have offered many recommendations on what constitutes effective teacher evaluations. Research findings and improvements in teaching methods support the practice of teacher evaluations; however, evidence also points to the contrary, showing inconsistent links between teacher evaluations and student achievement.

The struggle to effectively carry out teacher evaluations was reviewed by Robinson (2018). She asserted that teacher evaluations are important for teacher quality, educational equity, and accountability. Studies have found positive links between teacher evaluations and student achievement. In a study of three districts that utilized a standards-based evaluation system, researchers found a significant correlation between teachers' ratings and their students' gains on standardized tests. Additionally, the evidence demonstrated an improvement in a teacher's practice when frequent feedback was given according to the determined standards (Chung, 2008; Wei et al., 2015). Similarly, Taylor and Tyler (2012) reported veteran teachers in Cincinnati noticed an improvement in their abilities when they engaged in the now nationally recognized Cincinnati Public Schools' Teacher Evaluation System (TES). Teachers also reported an increase in students' math scores, particularly during the year they were evaluated. During post-evaluation years, teachers reported being even more effective (Taylor & Tyler, 2012, p. 78).

Harris et al. (2014) posited the methodology and the quality of the evaluation standards used during evaluation periods were the main factors in determining who received rewards and which rewards were given. Moreover, they asserted that the quality of the experiences by teachers and students was also shaped by the evaluation methodology (Harris et al., 2014, pp. 73–74). Through their research findings, Harris et al. (2014) revealed that teacher evaluations remained challenging and their implementation inconsistent.

Young et al. (2015) exposed two fundamental components of teacher evaluations that lacked clarity. They indicated that "1) the process in which principals engage to evaluate teachers (Mathers et al., 2008), and 2) how teacher evaluation improves teacher performance (Taylor & Tyler, 2012a) tend to be ambiguous and/or inconsistent" (Young et al., 2015, p. 158). In 1922, Knight advised, "So far neither the analysis method nor the correlation method has done very well in practice on the practical job" (p. 8). The levels of dissatisfaction and controversies surrounding teacher evaluations remain true to date throughout the country. While some studies and projects, such as Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) sponsored by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, provided a model for teacher quality, much variance still exists, even within the MET project (Rothstein & Mathis, 2021).

Research studies have found that teacher evaluation methods can be inconsistent, and Strunk et al. (2014) found discrepancies between a teacher's performance and their observation scores. They attributed the discrepancies to any of three possibilities: 1) the evaluators were perhaps too lenient when they evaluated the teachers (similar findings were reported by Sartain, Stoelinga, & Brown, 2011; Taylor & Tyler, 2012); 2) the training received by the evaluators did not build capacity, and they could not reliably score average and below average or "inadequate" teaching practice; and 3) the rubric itself was too limited to differentiate between instructional practices that are "at the low end of the effectiveness spectrum" (Strunk et al., 2014, p. 25).

Kimball and Milanowski (2009) postulated that teacher evaluation scores lacked a strong correlation to student achievement despite policymakers and designers producing rubrics and teacher training. Similar inconsistencies were reported by Strunk et al. (2014), Brandt et al. (2007), Donaldson (2011), Kauchak et al. (1985), and Weisberg et al. (2009). Individual and collective research identified problems with current teacher evaluation systems. These issues stemmed from challenges with compliance and a focus on inconsequential factors. Kimball and Milanowski (2009) also stated the results were not informative nor did they support teacher development. Moreover, the evaluations did not help administrators make employment decisions. Robinson (2018) argued, "However, evaluating teachers and teaching is an imperfect proposition at best, and one we've been struggling with for well over two centuries" (para. 1).

The description of teacher evaluations as imperfect is also reflected on the California Department of Education's website. The following quote concretely outlines its view of teacher evaluations: "Educator evaluation alone is an ineffective approach to significantly improving the quality of all teachers and leaders" (California Department of Education, 2020). The state does not require a specific teacher evaluation system, nor does it have a model for districts to consult. However, California requires that teachers be evaluated under the Stull Act (1971). Furthermore, in 2009, the "State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (SFSF) program requires that states collect data from all local education agencies about their practices for evaluating teachers and principals" (White et al., 2012, p. i). In response to these requirements, the California Department of Education designed and administered the California Teacher and Principal Evaluation Survey, the state's first comprehensive data collection effort focused on teacher and principal evaluations. More than 99% (1,482) of the state's 1,490 local education agencies returned the survey during the summer of 2010. The goal was to establish an evaluation system across the state for certified teachers and administrators, wherein a rating of satisfactory or unsatisfactory was recorded as

reported by Price, 1973, p. 66. Individual school districts with their collective bargaining units were to determine the teacher evaluation system they would adopt. After the introduction of the 2009 Race to the Top competition for federal funding, Lovison and Taylor (2018) reported California was among several states seeking to improve its teacher evaluation systems.

2.3 Two Decades of California Teacher Evaluations

2.3.1 *Federal and State Influences on Teacher Evaluations*

When the Race to the Top initiative was unveiled in 2009, it asked states to compete for the award. Many states began reviewing their current systems and pursuing the funding. For a state to compete for the grant, it had to show there was a plan in place or in progress that fit into the categories defined by the grant requirements. The categories consisted of raising student scores to determine teacher and principal effectiveness; therefore, principals and teachers were being held responsible for student performance. California attempted to relate student performance to teacher accountability, and Howell (2015) reported how the government enacted educational reform policies to ensure the state's chances of receiving the award. These reforms included the allowance of charter schools and merit pay for teachers along with the use of longitudinal student data in teacher evaluations. However, California's efforts proved unsuccessful: despite these reforms, the state was never awarded any funding from the Race to the Top grant in any of the three phases. Yet, according to Howell (2015), California retained all the policies it had adopted in these efforts.

When researchers, government, and policymakers attempted to restructure the teacher evaluation system, they focused on increasing teacher accountability and raising student scores. Marzano et al. (2011) discussed effective supervision and identified student achievement as the greatest definer of teacher performance. Thus, teacher evaluations and student achievement were

linked. As public school districts aimed to strengthen their teacher evaluations by connecting student scores to their evaluations, local repercussions led to tragedy. With a focus on accountability, teacher employment was in peril, and at least one life was lost. Even though the Los Angeles school district opposed the publication of its teacher's ratings, the report was published nationwide. Teachers suffered when the individual teacher ratings were published in the local newspapers. In 2010, a Los Angeles teacher committed suicide because his rating was published in the local paper as "less effective than average." The Los Angeles Times featured the story of his suicide, and, subsequently, the New York Times also published an article Lovett (2010) to relate the hurt that the value-added system had caused. The tragedy resounded across the nation, especially with those in the field of education.

In 2015, with the passage of Every Student Succeeds Act, ESSA, teacher evaluations across the nation were once again brought to the forefront. ESSA replaced the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, and the universal accountability of all states, which was established by NCLB, changed to the flexibility established by ESSA, which allowed each state to develop its own accountability system. ESSA allowed local entities to incorporate student achievement data as part of teacher evaluations (Paufler & Clark, 2019). However, this was not a mandate, and states could opt in or out of requiring the inclusion of student achievement data as part of their teacher evaluation process. This flexibility created opportunities and challenges across states and within states.

In California on June 3, 2015, Assembly Bill 575 was presented by assembly member O'Donnell and gave way toward establishing a new and stronger statewide teacher evaluation system. AB 575 sought to create a process in which student performance would be linked to teacher performance. This bill updated California's teacher evaluation system that was introduced in 1971 by the Stull Act, which had implemented a consistent statewide teacher evaluation

system and became part of the Education Code under Article 5.5. California Legislature expressed in the Stull Act that its "intent was to establish a uniform system of evaluation and assessment of the performance of certificated personnel within each school district of the State" (Price, 1973, p. 66). This intent established the expectation for an evaluation system for teachers and administrators, required a satisfactory/unsatisfactory evaluation system, and mandated that teacher evaluations include student progress toward state standards. However, this latter requirement has gone unmet (Lovison & Taylor, 2018).

AB 575 not only aimed to modernize the old teacher evaluation system, but it sought to encourage the momentum gained by the ESSA and focus on teacher effectiveness and student performance. The proponents of AB 575 longed for different results and expected that the previously ignored mandate to link student performance to teacher evaluations could now take hold. Even though the bill passed, most California school districts have remained unable to negotiate linking student performance to teacher evaluations in their bargaining agreements. By July 1, 2018, AB 575 required California school boards to collaborate with teacher unions when adopting their teacher evaluation tools. Ross and Walsh (2019) published a review on the state of teacher and principal evaluations across the United States. In this report, California had lacked any activity in their state educator evaluation policies from 2015–2019. Thus, the efforts put forth by AB575 had a very slim chance of taken effect in California.

2.3.2   *California Standards for the Teaching Profession*

In the last 20 years, teacher evaluations in California have been influenced by the implementation of Senate Bill 2042. In their remarks regarding SB 2042, Hafner and Maxie (2006) noted, "In addition to factors of student diversity, student achievement, and quality teaching, the reform of teacher preparation is further motivated by the need to bring a systemic approach to the process of teacher preparation" (p. 85). California was proactive and inclusive in

its development of a systematic approach to teacher evaluations. "In January 1997, after four years of development and study, the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing voted unanimously to adopt the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP)" (Whittaker et al., 2001, p. 85). The adoption of the CSTP stemmed from a call to reform teacher evaluations nationally. Whittaker et al. (2001) stressed the importance of creating a system of accountability for teachers, not only because it permeated national, state, and local decisions, but because policymakers, they stressed, ought to mirror the same accountability for themselves and give all students a greater opportunity to benefit from quality education.

In California, the CSTP were primarily developed to support and include the experiences of teachers who had "designed, operated and evaluated Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) programs since 1992… [totaling] more than 30 local programs" (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing & California State Dept. of Education, 1997, p. 5). The development of the CSTP and framework extended from the original intent of supporting new teachers to its predicted expansion as a professional development tool, offering flexibility and a standards-based format. The process was inclusive, and "the development of the framework was informed by state task force members including teacher educators, staff developers, researchers, school principals, as well as external "field reviewers" (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing & California State Dept. of Education, 1997, p. 5).

In the spring of 1997, the draft framework was officially adopted as the new "California Standards for the Teaching Profession to guide teacher preparation and credentialing" (Jonson & Jones, 1998, p. 503). Whittaker et al. (2001) reported that the belief and expectation was for the framework to be used for new teacher training, commonly referred to as BTSA, and its function would eventually extend throughout the teaching profession, including the professional development spectrum and teacher evaluations. Whittaker et al. (2001) ascertained that "this

forecast has since proved accurate" (p. 91). At the center of the development of the CSTP rested one aim: "to facilitate the induction of beginning teachers and utilize these standards to support them into their professional roles and responsibilities" (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing & California State Department of Education, 1997, p. 1). The commission discussed its objectives and how it should reflect the goals that would be achieved by the teacher. "The group agreed their task was to set high expectations to drive support for all beginning teachers in the context of ongoing professional development" (Whittaker et al., 2001, p. 90).

The format of the CSTP went through several revisions until it was finalized in its current format, which includes six interrelated categories of teaching practice to support teachers through their educational careers. The six categories were purposely neither numbered nor sequenced; instead, they were listed with the first five emphasizing students:

1) Engaging and Supporting All Students in Learning;

2) Creating and Maintaining Effective Environments for Student Learning;

3) Understanding and Organizing Subject Matter for Student Learning;

4) Planning Instruction and Designing Learning Experiences for All Students; and

5) Assessing Student Learning

The sixth standard focuses on professional growth and is titled "Developing as a Professional Educator." "Together, the six standards represent a developmental, holistic view of teaching and are intended to meet the needs of diverse teachers and students in California" (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing & California State Department of Education, 1997, p. 1). However, "the CSTP does not specify how data should be collected and presented on each domain and its framework… In its current form, the CSTP model does not clearly utilize student learning and growth as a measure of… overall performance" (Jonson & Jones, 1998, p. 509).

Much consideration, time, and effort were invested in the development of the CSTP; thus, "…the CSTP serve as the foundation for most major reform initiatives in teacher preparation and professional development" (Whittaker et al., 2001, p. 100). Even though new evaluation tools were developed in the late 1990s through the early 2000s, the CSTP continued to serve as a model and rubric because they reflected a holistic perspective of teaching. New challenges to teaching occurred during an unprecedented crisis, and how teacher evaluations should be handled came into question.

2.4 The COVID-19 Pandemic and Education

After COVID-19 was identified in Wuhan, China, in late 2019, it was only a matter of weeks before it spread around the globe. In March 2020, the World Health Organization, WHO made the official declaration that it was a pandemic. The volatility of the virus impacted all aspects of life worldwide. COVID-19 is transmitted to an individual upon inhalation of microscopic droplets containing the virus or when the droplets come in contact with the face, particularly the eyes, nose, or mouth (Hebebci et al., 2020, p. 267). The volatility of the virus, the high risk of transmission, and the risk of asymptomatic carriers have been documented in worldwide reports and studies. For example, in June 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published a study in the journal *Emerging Infectious Diseases* that revealed there was "a sharply increasing proportion of infected children (from 2% before January 24 to 13% for January 25–February 5; p<0.001), implying that increased exposure for children and intrafamily transmission might contribute substantially to the epidemic" (Liu et al., 2020, p. 1320). Additionally, in a peer-reviewed study published in the fall of 2020, Hebebci et al. (2020) reported that the rapid spread "caused many countries to suspend their educational activities at school" (p. 267).

In April 2020, UNESCO announced over one and a half billion students had been affected by COVID-19, and Karalis (2020) aptly reported the virus was spreading so quickly that the pandemic was developing almost everywhere at once. Additionally, several reports and studies detailed common difficulties, and most reported hope for a better future. Various researchers confirmed challenges with inaccessibility, collaboration, communication, and connectivity, which was due to limited or non-existent resources to connect online (Assunção Flores & Gago, 2020; Babić et al., 2020; Fauzi & Khusuma, 2020; Hebebci et al., 2020; Hemphill & Marianno, 2021; Herring et al., 2020; Rouadi & FaysalAnouti, 2020). The lack of infrastructure contributed to teachers and students rating and reporting their experience and activities with online learning as unsatisfactory. The notion that "distance education will be used more effectively in the future along with necessary improvement and in-service training" was reported by several researchers (Assunção Flores & Gago, 2020; Babić et al., 2020; Basilaia & Kvavadze, 2020; Hebebci et al., 2020; Hemphill & Marianno, 2021). An important distinction was worth noting—Hebebci et al. (2020) differentiated between distance learning and distance learning during a pandemic. "It can be argued that a different perspective such as 'distance education during pandemic periods' has been added to the studies conducted for distance education with COVID-19" (Hebebci et al., 2020, p. 268). Teaching online by choice and teaching online without a choice can produce different outcomes. Another consideration was the lack of preparation since the pandemic required a quick pivot toward distance learning. The research outlined the benefits of distance learning yet juxtaposed them with the challenges presented during distance learning. Huber and Helm (2020) argued, "In the context of this new and challenging situation of digital learning caused by the COVID-19 school lockdown, information must be provided instantly to inform education policy and practice" (p. 238).

Karalis (2020) expressed that "the impetus of … [this] report stemmed from the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in education systems and educational/training organizations worldwide, which … resulted in the disruption of educational function" (p. 125). "…The COVID-19 pandemic lockdown affected almost all aspects of society and everyday life" (König et al., 2020, p. 617). In particular, "the COVID-19 crisis … led to an education crisis (Education International 2020) for which no one was prepared" (Assunção Flores & Gago, 2020, p. 1). Since COVID-19 struck, worldwide peer-reviewed studies have investigated teaching and learning during the pandemic.

Assunção Flores and Gago (2020) reviewed institutional and pedagogical responses to the closure of schools in Portugal. Their description and analysis indicated that "the articulation between theory and practice is a process that requires time and experience in real contexts as well as reflection" (Assunção Flores & Gago, 2020, p. 8). Moreover, they proposed that "the challenges revolve around the justification of pedagogical decisions including also the justification for parents when pedagogical decisions were made" (Assunção Flores & Gago, 2020, p. 8). A critical challenge for teachers during the pandemic was "the cycle of observation–planning–evaluation" (Assunção Flores & Gago, 2020, p. 8). Assunção Flores and Gago also noted additional concerns, including the "tension between managerial and organisational [*sic*] professionalism versus democratic and occupational professionalism (Evetts 2009; Sachs 2016)" (p. 8). They concluded with an urgent plea for an immediate response to the situation; otherwise, it would possibly lead to "a compliance logic with external rules and regulations [*which*] may reinforce more instrumental and narrow views of teaching (Assunção Flores & Gago, 2020, p. 8). Another concern raised in their study was the possible perception of "teachers as mere doers or implementers who actually do 'what works' rather than activists [*sic*] and committed professionals whose practice and pedagogical actions are research-informed (La Velle and

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Assunção Flores 2018)" (Assunção Flores & Gago, 2020, p. 8). The research studies addressed a variety of similar yet contrasting worldwide experiences (Babić et al., 2020; Hebebci et al., 2020; Ma et al., 2020).

2.5 Studies Worldwide

As the world responded to the pandemic, researchers studied and took a critical look at the challenges presented by COVID-19 across the world and how these challenges were met. This research explored not only how other countries handled the education of their children during the pandemic but, out of necessity, also delved into the international research regarding the pandemic's effect on education due to limited research in the United States and, more specifically, in California.

2.5.1 *Germany, Austria, and Switzerland*

A critical resource in any organization and of particular importance in education has always been human resources. An article published in the *European Journal of Teacher Education* by König et al. (2020) detailed the results of their survey of early career teachers and their responses to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown in Germany. Their analysis covered the extent to which teachers maintained social contact with their students and "mastered core teaching challenges and other relevant factors" (König et al., 2020, p. 608). As they set the background for their study, they explained "…in Germany – as in other European countries, such as France or Italy – many schools lag behind … [*the*] expected information and communication technologies (ICT) transformation progress (Fraillon et al., 2019; Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung, 2020; GEW (Gewerkschaft Erziehung & Wissenschaft, 2020)" (König et al., 2020, p. 609). They focused their survey on early career teachers (those with approximately two years of teaching experience) in a range of percentages from 8% to 29% with 27% of

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teachers in primary, 12% in lower secondary, 29% in comprehensive, 24% in upper secondary, and 8% in special needs schools.

König et al. (2020) speculated that early career teachers "should be able to quickly adapt to the online teaching challenges posed by the current situation" (p. 609). Their research study included 89 "early career teachers in the greater Cologne area" with participants' ages averaging 32 years old and 69% of them were female. The results confirmed their hypothesis as "90% of teachers managed to communicate with students and parents" (König et al., 2020, p. 615). Surprisingly, though, "only 20% of the teachers reported having provided online lessons at least once a week, whereas nearly 70% did not use digital instruments to provide online lessons at all" (König et al., 2020, p. 615). They further stated, "Contrary to our expectations, early career teachers' status as belonging to the generation of 'digital natives' (Prensky, 2001) does not guarantee that they have developed sophisticated digital skills in general" (König et al., 2020, p. 618). The results from a survey of early career teachers categorized as 'digital natives' during mid-2020s in Germany revealed that "the COVID-19 situation requires not only knowledge and skills but also confidence regarding success in online teaching" (König et al., 2020, p. 611), because, even as new teachers, they did not report full engagement in online teaching. However, teachers reported using technology to engage families and keep them informed. Lastly, they expressed that "preparing teachers for the digitalisation [*sic*] in schools can be regarded as a chance that teacher education should not miss" (König et al., 2020, p. 619).

Huber and Helm (2020) also reflected on "issues of assessment, evaluation and accountability in times of crisis" (p. 237). They created a survey which they called a "School Barometer" and the survey was administered in "in Germany, Austria and Switzerland during the early weeks of the school lockdown to assess and evaluate the … situation caused by COVID-19" (Huber & Helm, 2020, p. 237). This same survey was utilized on an international scale after

translation by other countries. Huber and Helm (2020) presented their survey, data analysis, results, implications, challenges, and limitations after outlining that "In Germany, Austria and Switzerland, 7,116 persons participated in the German language version: 2,222 parents, 2,152 students, 1,949 school staff, 655 school leaders, 58 school authorit[*sic*] and 80 members of the school support system" (p. 237). The authors included reports about teachers' experiences with technology. They published the analysis of the data with descriptive results and implications from the Barometer survey. They included staff ratings of teachers' digital competencies and revealed that "self-ratings of teachers' competencies were linked to technical resources at the schools" along with feedback and individual coaching (p. 253). These results supported the research on the importance of feedback. They stated, "feedback on learning assignments and individual learning support is considered a central feature of instructional quality (Hattie 2009; Kunter et al., 2013)" (Huber & Helm, 2020, p. 253). Furthermore, they added, "teacher collaboration is regarded as a dimension of school quality and as [*sic*] vital for teacher and school development (Huber and Ahlgrimm 2012)" (Huber & Helm, 2020, p. 253).

2.5.2 Turkey

Hebebci et al. (2020) investigated teacher and student views on distance education practices during the COVID-19 pandemic in Turkey. The participants in their qualitative study included a total of 36 respondents: 16 teachers and 20 students who responded to eight open-ended questions in structured online interviews. The results of the study concluded that students were not satisfied with distance education. Hebebci et al., (2020) indicated that many studies revealed similar results (Akgün et al., 2013; Gillies, 2008; Hannay & Newvine, 2006) (p. 278). Higher education studies at the University and Research Laboratory Assessments in Turkey also reported similar results (Hebebci et al., 2020, p. 278). The reasons for the dissatisfaction expressed by students, Hebebci et al. reported, were due to their "not understanding the subject,

finding the teacher inadequate, inadequate time, and lack of infrastructure" (Hebebci et al., 2020, p. 278). Furthermore, Hebebci et al. (2020) reported positive results. Teachers "emphasize different advantages such as distance education being planned and programmed and ensuring equality of opportunity" (Hebebci et al., 2020, p. 278). Whether the experiences captured were positive or negative overall, one consistent finding was the lack of infrastructure.

Li et al. (2014) described distance education as an important tool to ensure equal educational opportunities in less developed regions as distance education provides families with opportunities to attend school remotely. However, Lau et al. (2021) stated that the successful implementation of distance education requires infrastructure and equipment, which were challenges for individuals with low socioeconomic status as families with resources were able to provide their children with access to resources.

2.5.3 *Indonesia*

In Indonesia, Aliyyah et al. (2020) from the University of Jawa Barat studied the perceptions of primary school teachers regarding online learning during the pandemic. "Changes in learning systems force schools to implement distance education or online learning, e-learning, distance education, correspondence education, external studies, flexible learning, and massive open online courses (MOOCs)" (Aliyyah et al., 2020, p. 91). They conducted case study research via online surveys and semi-structured interviews. The participants included 67 elementary school teachers "in [five] provinces, namely, Jakarta, West Java, East Java, Central Java, and West Kalimantan, Indonesia" (Aliyyah et al., 2020, p. 93). The general findings revealed the importance of support and collaboration among various entities such as the government, schools, teachers, parents, and the community. Moreover, the findings emphasized the importance of "the readiness of technology in line with the national humanist curriculum" (Aliyyah et al., 2020, p. 90). The overall findings also suggested five factors to be considered for successful

implementation: 1) "the national curriculum" needs to change and be flexible; 2) technology readiness with easier and broader internet access is needed; 3) accelerated teacher training must be a priority; 4) "open education resources" need to be provided; and 5) "collaboration among teachers, parents, schools should be boosted to improve the process and morale (Borup et al., 2019; Lai, 2017)" (Aliyyah et al., 2020, p. 104).

2.5.4 *Vietnam*

In Vietnam, a study captured the need for infrastructure along with student needs during the pandemic and access to learning. Investigating the ways students studied at home during the pandemic in Vietnam was the focus of research conducted by Tran et al. (2020). Original survey data from over 400 students in Hanoi, Vietnam, in grades 6–12 displayed "the different learning habits of students with different socioeconomic statuses [*sic*] and occupational aspirations during the disease's outbreak" (Tran et al., 2020, p. 1). A published compilation of a dataset by Vu et al. (2020) captured the perspectives of teachers in Vietnam and their perceived support during the pandemic. The dataset included three components: a) teacher satisfaction and online effectiveness in a chaotic context created by the pandemic; b) differences in teachers' incomes before and during the pandemic; and c) teacher perceptions and satisfaction during the pandemic. Contextualizing the problem, the authors explained, "As an emerging country, Vietnam is dealing with multiple well-known and unknown struggles to pursue sustainable education. Thus, the discoveries of this work have several implications in both the short-term and long-term" (Vu et al., 2020, p. 12).

As the self-efficacy of students among different social strata was studied, the results revealed income had a positive impact on students whose families earned "above-average income" (Tran et al., 2020, p. 11). The results showed "significant differences in students' learning routines from different school types, grades, and career orientations … notable

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differences in learning habits among students with varying learning capabilities, motivation, and self-regulation" (Tran et al., 2020, p. 11). Lau et al. (2021) concluded the successful implementation of distance education highlighted the discrepancies between socioeconomic strata, making it more challenging for individuals in the low socioeconomic stratum. The most important problem discovered by Hebebci et al. (2020) was that teachers' dissatisfaction with distance learning was due to "the lack of interaction" (p. 278).

2.5.5   Croatia

Babić et al. (2020) reported that "almost all countries have changed their strategies and policies as far as in-person classes…" (p. 849). They investigated predictive factors that could determine the intentionality of the use of e-learning technologies by secondary teachers in Croatia. The participants in the study included 119 women and 19 men, and "most teachers were under 40 years of age" (Babić et al., 2020, p. 849). Teachers' participation via an online questionnaire in April and May was voluntary and anonymous. The results reported by Babić et al. revealed two key findings: 1) e-learning competence is "dependent on the technical and pedagogical support" [*, and*] 2) less anxiety was shown by teachers "who have understood the educational values of e-learning during the COVID-19 pandemic [*and*] have shown greater intention to use e-learning in the future…" (Babić, 2020, p. 853).

2.5.6   India

A study conducted in India by Lall and Singh (2020) reported a consistently positive experience with distance learning for students and teachers. Students' reports were negative only due to the lack of co-curricular activities and for teachers, the only negative experience was due to the lack of feedback and coaching. Lall and Singh's (2020) observational, descriptive study was conducted with 200 randomly selected college students (128 males and 72 females) in India. The students responded to an online questionnaire. Unlike the results reported globally for

elementary and secondary school students, 74% of the surveyed college students "liked studying

through online classes" (Lall & Singh, 2020, p. 52).

2.5.7   *Somalia*

The research conducted by Herring et al. (2020) "explored the educational and broader

social impacts of COVID-19 control measures and efforts to compensate for those measures"

through online teaching in Somalia (p. 200). They conducted 131 interviews with a wide range of

participants including "forty government educational officials, educators" and the public, some of

whom did not have any educational experience (Herring et al., 2020, p. 200). The qualitative

descriptive research included phone interviews and remote focus group discussions. The selected

participants in the group discussions supplemented "with [*a*] desk-based review of academic and

grey [*sic*] literature as the basis of inductive thematic analysis" (Herring et al., 2020, p. 202). The

participants included representatives from urban, rural, and "nomadic pastoralist" populations in

percentages reflective of the general population. The interviews were conducted via telephone to

be inclusive of illiterate participants. Participants could also select a language of their preference,

either Arabic or Somali Maay dialect as well as English.

The research context provided by Herring et al. (2020) contributed toward greater

diversity due to its unique setting. The researchers compared the impact of the COVID-19

pandemic on education with the "past period of civil war and state collapse" (Herring et al., 2020,

p. 200). They reported that "nearly all participants agreed that education had been harmed

severely by COVID-19 control measures and by education provision[*s*] to compensate for

educational institution closures" (Herring et al., 2020, p. 200). One of the control measures

included "government authorities in Mogadishu … and Hargeisa … [*who*] imposed widespread

closures of educational institutions in March 2020" (Herring et al., 2020, p. 201). Additional

education measures introduced by authorities and others had a negative impact, though they

aimed to compensate for the school closures. The study findings revealed a long, yet important list of negative effects, such as:

> *Extensive-harm to students' education and progress; the collapse of the incomes of education institutions which may never reopen; the loss of livelihoods (especially of low income workers in the sector or providing goods and services to it); a shift to online provision which is inaccessible to the vast majority of the population; lessons on TV and radio which are still beyond the means of many; rural areas and technical education being left even further behind as provision prioritises [sic] urban populations and HE; and the increased vulnerability of girls to violence, abuse and use for domestic labour [sic] to a degree that prevents home study* (Herring et al., 2020, p. 219).

Herring et al. (2020) highlighted and contextualized their findings on the educational impacts of the pandemic in Somalia. First, as in other countries, they reported that inequality has been exacerbated by the pandemic, and the many forms of inequality were exposed. They seemed hopeful that this awareness brought on by the pandemic would lead to action. Second, they reported, "…the issue is as much [*one of*] overcoming the absence of an education system in Somalia/Somaliland as it is one of transforming the education system… [*, and*] the scale of resources … is many times that which is currently available" (Herring et al., 2020, p. 219-220).

2.5.8   *China*

Ma et al. (2020) chronicled online education methods in China during the COVID-19 pandemic. They recommended that: 1) online teachers' voices "should be clear and infectious," 2) students should be provided "with rich materials for self-study," 3) "intelligent teaching tools" to diversify the forms of interaction between teachers and students need to be considered; 4) content should be explained in depth, modified to meet student needs, and used to motivate

students; and 5) clear learning tasks and requirements should be established, while teaching

evaluation must be "multiple [*sic*] dimensional combining qualitative and quantitative evaluation

to increase the proportion of process evaluation" (Ma et al., 2020, p. 571). Similarly, other

studies have captured the views and practices of teachers and students during COVID-19

(Aliyyah et al., 2020; Assunção Flores & Gago, 2020; Babić et al., 2020; Hebebci et al., 2020;

Herring et al., 2020; König et al., 2020; Lall & Singh, 2020; Tran et al., 2020; Vu et al., 2020).

2.6 Teacher Evaluations During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Because this novel virus and pandemic so dramatically altered the state of education,

researchers engaged in investigating the effects of the crises and the disruption of education for

over a billion children worldwide. The research findings provided a broader view of common-

lived educational experiences for students, teachers, families, and those in the field of education.

The pandemic provided a myriad of teaching environments, including virtual or distance

learning, in-person learning with adaptations, and/or hybrid education. The dramatic changes in

the ways teaching and learning were taking place required administrators and teacher labor

unions to give special consideration to teacher evaluations during this time.

Hemphill and Marianno (2021) investigated and documented the actions taken by urban

school districts in the United States regarding their Memorandum of Understanding, MOUs,

stating, "sixteen school districts enacted MOUs covering teacher evaluations" (p. 177). Of

particular interest, the school districts in California, "such as Los Angeles, San Francisco, and

Long Beach, suspended all evaluations…" (Hemphill & Marianno, 2021, p. 177). Hemphill and

Marianno also addressed the importance of teacher evaluations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

They advised that "reducing the required number of observations or standards … or suspending

measures of student growth [will likely be confounded with prior and ongoing COVID-19

learning disruptions]" (Hemphill & Marianno, 2021, p. 179). Moreover, they suggested that "failure to carefully attend to teacher working conditions as outlined in contract language could exacerbate teacher morale and lead to labor unrest" (Hemphill & Marianno, 2021, p. 170).

2.7 Female Teachers

Wong (2019) reported that males used to dominate the teaching profession in the United States, but their dominance in the profession shifted as teaching became a public service. He also described how female teachers have comprised the majority of teachers in elementary education since the 1880s. However, teachers in secondary education, particularly high school teachers, were predominantly male until the late 1970s.

The field of education continues to grow with most of the teaching staff being female. In *Education Week*, Will (2020) indicated an increase of half a million more teachers in the nation. He stated that in 2000 there were three million teachers, but 2020 records show "4.5 million full- and part-time public school teachers, including 1.8 million elementary school teachers and 1.8 million secondary school teachers. Overall, the number of public school teachers in 2017–18 was 18 percent higher than in 1999–2000 (3.0 million)" (Will, 2020, p. 14). Nationally, 76% of the teaching population were female during the 2017–2018 school year, and out of the 76% of female teachers, 89% were teaching at elementary schools and 64% at secondary schools. In contrast to the 2017–2018 teacher statistics, the makeup of school principals at a national level to was reported as 78% White and 54% female (67% were elementary school principals and 33% secondary school principals (Taie, & Goldring, 2020).

Because the majority of teachers are females, the changes in teaching and learning greatly affected the working conditions for teachers. The radical and swift changes brought on by the pandemic in education affected teachers who were parents as they were working from home and

their children were learning at home. As school closures happened, more pressure was added particularly to teachers who were also primary care givers. Studies on primary care givers who were also teachers was not found.

2.8 California

During the spring of 2020, California had the most K–12 public schools closed to in-person learning, and most of the school districts held students and teachers harmless; therefore, grades and assessments were not calculated unless it was beneficial to the student. California legislators and Governor Gavin Newsom acted quickly at the beginning of the pandemic and even into the second semester of the 2020–21 school year, waiving new teacher assessments and requirements. As of late April 2021, a year after the start of the pandemic, "the commission approved the waiver that allows teacher candidates to begin teaching if they had not completed all credential requirements due to the pandemic" (Lambert, 2021). In response to the crisis of a teacher shortage amidst the pandemic, "the credentialing commission, state legislators and Governor Gavin Newsom suspended or waived requirements such as giving teachers credit for courses taken in lieu of tests" (Lambert, 2021). However, experienced teachers were not granted waivers.

During the fall of 2020, the start of a new school year, while all students returned to traditional grading, not all school districts had announced the status of their teacher evaluations. Information was lacking as to whether teachers would be evaluated during the 2020–21 school year, and details as to how evaluations would be conducted were not always available. Hemphill and Marianno (2020), through the synthesis of two articles by Gerber (2020) and another article by Goldstein and Shapiro (2020), illustrated the situation. "As school district leadership, administrators, teachers, and their labor representatives navigate the reality of COVID-19

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schooling, questions regarding the impact of labor agreements on the ability to flexibly address student needs have arisen" (p. 171). Hemphill and Marianno (2021) argued, "…the lessons learned in spring contract negotiations have implications for the design and implementation of fall schooling plans, and that how fall schooling plays out will shape teacher morale and labor relations beyond the 2020–21 school year" (p. 170).

Education was greatly impacted by the pandemic, and urgency existed, as expressed by Karalis (2020). This urgency, however, was not new. Marzano et al. (2011) argued that the evaluation of teachers has been a central characteristic almost since schooling began in the United States (Marzano et al., 2011; Robinson, 2018). Marianno and Strunk (2018) argued that negotiations between labor unions and school districts that focus on small improvements did not impact student learning yet could positively affect the teacher's sense of well-being. As late as 2010, privacy concerns were raised over teacher evaluations being public information, as highlighted by the Vergara case (Robinson, 2018). In an article published by EdSource on the ruling on the Vergara case, Cohn (2014) offered support for teachers and education leaders. The Vergara case argued against tenure because it led to the retention of teachers who were labeled by the lawsuit as "grossly-ineffective teachers" and argued they disproportionately impacted poor and minority children, denying them their right to quality education. Cohn (2014) stated, "an effective leader … goes to work every day trying to figure out how best to motivate, inspire, and develop the adults who work with kids" (para. 8).

Moreover, Cohn (2014) argued against looking at student data as the only source of teacher accountability and instead posited that "enlisting, engaging and collaborating with classroom teachers are the only ways to genuinely move the needle on student achievement" (Cohn, 2014, para. 9). During the educational challenges brought by the pandemic, an article published by Whitlock (2021) advised administrators to consider engaging in meaningful

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evaluations. She recommended that administrators support and give feedback to teachers regarding their creativity and concentrate on the high technical skills requirements, focusing on quality and flexibility. Supporting teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic can positively influence students' learning as they face these unprecedented challenges (Whitlock, 2021). This investigation to capture how teacher evaluations took place during the pandemic had to be conducted using a framework the provided the answers to how this unprecedented situation was handled how teachers and administrators interacted to handle teacher evaluations.

2.9 Research Grounded Theory

Sbaraini et al. (2011) stated, "grounded theory studies are generally focused on social processes or actions: they ask about what happens and how people interact" (p. 2). Orlikowski (1993) utilized a grounded theory research approach to study "the organizations' experiences in terms of processes of incremental or radical organizational change" (p. ii). Heath and Cowley (2004) artfully described the roots of grounded research theory. "Grounded theory's roots lie in symbolic interactionism, which itself stems from pragmatist ideas of James, Dewey, Cooley and Mead (Hammersley, 1989), most notably the concept of the looking glass self (Cooley, 1922)" (Heath & Cowley, 2004, p. 142). The interplay between humans and the environment and the environment and humankind serve as a mirror where individuals who are "self aware, [*sic*] able to see themselves from the perspective of others and therefore adapt their behaviour [*sic*] according to the situation (Mead, 1934)" (Heath & Cowley, 2004, p. 142). This process results in "social interactions [which] create meaning and shaping of society via shared meaning predominate over the effect of society on individuals" (Heath & Cowley, 2004, p. 142). Moreover, the researcher can document either the change as it happens or once it has happened

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within the context of a social group and can gain an understanding of how the change took place (Morse et al., 2016).

Grounded theory served as the platform for discovery because a novel situation encouraged a new understanding of a challenging topic, teacher evaluations in California K–12 public schools. Glaser and Strauss are notably known as the founders of grounded theory. Some distinctions between Glaser and Strauss centered on the role the researcher plays during the study, and Heath and Cowley (2004) outlined a detailed the comparison between them. Glaser and Strauss recognized investigators entered the field with their individual experiences and ideas, but their perspectives diverged greatly about the role literature plays in the study (Heath & Cowley, 2004, p. 143). Heath and Cowley (2004) argued that "discovery" played a central role for both researchers and agreed on the premise that the researcher "enters the field open to realising [*sic*] new meaning and, via cycles of data gathering and analysis, progressively focuses on a core problem around which other factors will be integrated" (p. 143).

The subtle differences between Glaser and Strauss are outlined by Heath and Cowley (2004). Heath and Cowley (2004) presented that Glaser (1978) emphasized that prior understandings rest on generalities and wide reading "to alert or sensitise [*sic*] one to a wide range of possibilities; learning not to know is crucial to maintaining sensitivity to data. More focused reading only occurs when emergent theory is sufficiently developed to allow the literature to be used as additional data (Hickey, 1997)" (p. 143). Heath and Cowley also explained that, for Strauss (1987), both experience and literature review can influence the researcher's understanding and can aid in the development of hypotheses. They stressed that caution should be exercised while researching. Therefore, although the research question begins the journey, it should not cause the researcher to simply find an answer to the question. Instead, the journey should lead the researcher so that the theory can naturally emerge from the research.

"Stern (1994) claimed that the differences between the two researchers had always been apparent, but it was not until Strauss published detailed guidance to the grounded theory process (Strauss, 1987; Strauss and Corbin, 1994) that the divergence was more widely recognised [*sic*]" (Heath & Cowley, 2004, p.142).

2.10   Summary

Teacher evaluations are complex human interactions with multiple layers. The literature review included in this chapter provided a general overview of teacher evaluations in the United States, focused on teacher evaluations over the past two decades in California K–12 public schools, and provided context on the controversies surrounding teacher evaluations. The literature about the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on education provided an in-depth perspective into its global impact, an outline of current research findings, and its positive and negative effects across the world, the nation, and in California. A brief historical perspective was included to discuss the over representation of women in education, particularly in teaching.

The available research revealed a limited number of studies focused on the status of teacher evaluations in California K–12 public schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. The review also presented an overview of research grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) that served as the theoretical framework for this study. The conceptual framework provided the background and structure, and it contextualized the study on the state of teacher evaluations during the COVID-19 pandemic. The following chapter, Chapter 3: Methodology, outlines the steps taken during the process and the procedures followed to gather data and discusses the coding of the data, reviews the semi-structured interview, presents limitations and delimitations, and summarizes these findings.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the methodology for this mixed methods case study approach. Using grounded theory, this study sought to understand the state of teacher evaluations during the COVID-19 pandemic from a constructivist perspective. The collection of the data for the study was to be gathered from volunteer human resource administrators from K–12 public schools across all 58 counties in California. This chapter details the specific procedures carried throughout the study, including but not limited to outlining the process of developing the survey, submission to the Institutional Review Board IRB at the university, describing the survey and the participants, how the participants were selected, and how the data was collected, coded, analyzed, and thematically structured. The graphic depicting the process is presented in **Figure 1**

Grounded Theory Methodology.

Figure 1

Grounded Theory Methodology
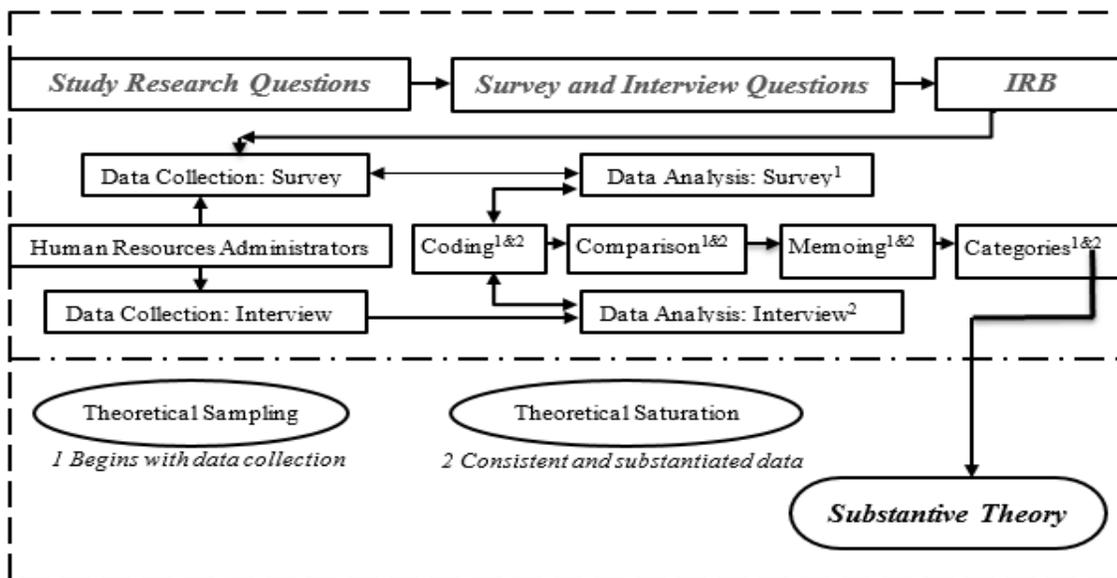
3.2 Process and Procedures

This case study was conducted through a collection and examination of data in context or phenomenon. According to Stake (2010), in multiple-case research, single cases are meaningful in relation to the other cases cited, and the cases used are similar in some ways. Thus, the cases become "members of a group or examples of a phenomenon" (Stake, 2010, p. 6). This process led to an examination of the similarities and dissimilarities of the cases. Therefore, the study identified patterns and uniqueness along with particulars and generalizations in the cases. To explain a phenomenon, the study relied on the accounts, experiences, and perceptions of the participants in a given situation, namely the COVID-19 pandemic (Stake, 2010). The fundamental components of a grounded research theory study as outlined by Sbaraini et al. (2011) provided the guidelines for the study. The seven components, which gave an immediate, open, and organized approach, consist of: 1) openness; 2) immediate analysis; 3) coding and comparing; 4) memo writing (also known as memoing or diagraming); 5) theoretical sampling; and 6) theoretical saturation, all of which led to 7) the production of a substantive theory.

According to Creswell (2011), the selected cases in the study can be students, school staff, or people who are members of a school community. This study was conducted from data collected from a random convenience sample of volunteer California K–12 public school district human resource administrators. A three-step process was followed to initiate the study. First, the researcher designed a Qualtrics Survey, which is included in the Appendix. The second step was to establish validity through a process outlined by Potter and Levine-Donnerstein (1999). A coding scheme was developed first; then, it was used to assess "the decisions made by coders against some standard. If the codes match the standard for correct decision-making, then the coding is regarded as producing valid data" (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999, p. 266). Six volunteers received the survey information independent of each other. Each volunteer provided

their responses and when all the results were consistent, the researcher continued with the process. The third and final step in phase one was to establish reliability through reproducibility tests. To establish reliability, Potter and Levine-Donnerstein (1999) advised, "reproducibility is the strongest procedure, because there is not much value in having experts set a standard" (p. 271). Reproducibility was established by conducting a "test-test procedure" (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999, p. 271). Each volunteer analyzed the same content once, and each participant's coding provided the same results. Potter and Levine-Donnerstein (1999) stated, "If all the coders make the same judgments (i.e., produce the same coding patterns), then the data are regarded as reliable" (p. 271). Once validity and reliability tests were satisfied, the first stage of data collection was carried out.

The process was open, and memo writing and diagramming were used throughout the study. Data collection, analysis, and coding were completed upon receipt of the surveys, and interviews followed. The interview process aided in answering questions from the data analysis and established or disproved relationships, filled in any gaps in the existing dataset, and yielded categories. By careful selection of the participants for follow-up interviews and modifying the questions asked in data collection, the study sought to build an emerging substantive theory. Through the surveys and interviews, the level of support teachers and administrators received to engage in the teacher evaluation process was investigated.

The study was conducted via a multi-step process to develop a substantive theory. Specifically, it was conducted in three phases, with each phase providing opportunities for inductive reasoning, a process of grounded theory. First, the lived experiences of the participants were recorded, and abstract concepts were identified through the collection and coding of the data. Second, thematic or pattern interpretation as it related to the literature and the shared lived experiences was examined. From these themes and/or patterns, the third step was to conduct

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follow-up semi-structured interviews with volunteer participants to obtain more data to include or exclude tangible themes and/or patterns. "By carefully selecting participants and by modifying the questions asked in data collection, the researchers fill gaps, clarify uncertainties, test their interpretations, and build their emerging theory" (Sbaraini et al., 2011, p. 3). Throughout the research, the researcher was cognizant of her own experience in education to maintain an objective perspective during the collection, evaluation, and analysis of the data.

The survey participants were volunteer human resource administrators from across all 58 state counties, which are comprised of 949 California K–12 public school districts. The administrators were asked to participate in the study voluntarily via email. An online survey tool, Qualtrics provided by the university to students, allowed me to build and distribute the surveys, collect and analyze the data. The Qualtrics online survey was sent to every human resource administrator in California K–12 public school districts. The website addresses were gathered from a listserv provided by the state, on which each district, website address, superintendent's email address, name, and phone number were listed. Their email addresses were gathered through a detailed and meticulous process of searching in each school district's website to identify the administrator in charge of human resources or personnel.

The Qualtrics survey email invitation included an explanation of the purpose of the study and assurances of anonymity and confidentiality. A statement that clarified that participation was voluntary and non-paid was included. The participants had three options from which to choose. After reviewing the materials, they could opt to participate, request additional information, or not to participate. If they chose not to participate, they were asked to provide their email address so they would not receive a reminder email to complete the survey. Only a handful of participants selected this option. There were a handful of participants who opted to request more information. They reached out to the researcher, who received and replied to their inquiries and follow-up

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questions about the survey or the study in general. After the researcher replied to these requests, the participants completed the survey. The participants also had an opportunity to exit the survey if they had not been responsible for teacher evaluations at that district during the 2020–21 school year or if they had been at an out-of-state school district. Regular reminders were sent to participants who had not completed the survey for the duration of time it remained open.

A raffle for online gift cards was offered as an incentive and appreciation for participation in the survey. Participants also had an option of whether to participate in the raffle. Less than 50% of the participants opted to participate in the raffle. After the participants received the email invitation and completed the survey, they received the following email, which served as a receipt and copy of their submission:

> *This email is to thank you and to serve as a receipt of your submission of the survey. If you chose to participate in the raffle, a separate email will follow. If you are selected to participate in the semi-structured interview, you will be invited via email.*

Sixty-eight participants chose to participate in the raffle. Out of the 68 participants, 10 participants each won a $100 Amazon gift certificate. The 10 winners each received an additional email to confirm that their email address was still correct. Then, another email that contained an appreciation for their participation and a redemption code was sent to each winner.

The questions in the online Qualtrics survey allowed the opportunity for participants to relate the status of teacher evaluations in their school district. The questions looked for evidence of teacher involvement or representation, whether union agreements or MOUs were implemented for the 2020–21 school year, and whether any modifications were requested. Additional survey questions were used to determine whether teachers and administrators were notified of any changes to the evaluation process for the 2020–21 school year. Structurally, the questions were

multiple-choice or short-answer format. The literature review guided the organization of the

questions in the survey. There were three groups of questions: 1) classification questions, which

facilitated the organization of the respondents and their representative school districts; 2)

behavioral questions about the participants and their experiences and inquiries about teachers and

administrators; and 3) attitudinal questions about the participants' experiences with teacher

evaluations. The survey data collection was scheduled to be open for a period of two weeks;

however, it was extended for an additional two weeks to seek further participation. Reminders

were sent to non-respondents, and thank-you notes were sent as completed surveys were

received.

3.3 Coding of Data

The data collected was analyzed and coded quantitatively and qualitatively to find themes

and patterns. To facilitate collection and tabulation, the coding was set up in the Qualtrics survey

tool. The parameters for each question were set as open, range, binary, binary +, short answer, or

multiple choice. To assist with their participation and provide uniformity in the responses,

participants were given the choice of either a short answer or predetermined choices for binary,

binary **+,** and multiple choice. The questions were defined by their type, which included: 1) open

answer (short and long answer); 2) multiple choice; 3) binary; 4) multiple choice with short

answer option (this option allowed the participant to expand on their response or add "other" if

the choices provided did not meet their desired response); and 5) mark all that apply. Lastly, the

coding ranged in value from "no value" or a value of 0–5. For example, for multiple-choice

questions, the choices were: completely satisfied = 1; satisfied = 2; dissatisfied = 3; completely

dissatisfied = 4; and neither satisfied nor dissatisfied = 0. The values were coded to determine

low totals as positive and high totals as negative. When the data was collected, the coding and

memoing aided in the verification or refinement of the responses as the aggregate was compared and either confirmed or disproved themes, patterns, or categories. Memo writing served the purpose of refocusing on first impressions. For example, the first data collection appeared to lead toward combative negotiations, but, as more data was collected, the responses that appeared to be mostly combative switched toward a more collaborative model. In addition, the memos from the interviews revealed not only saturation and consistency in the categories but gave further specific examples.

3.4 Semi-structured Interviews

Once the data was analyzed and after themes and patterns or categories had been found, a select number of human resource administrators in California K–12 public school districts were invited to participate in an online semi-structured interview. The interview was scheduled to last for 30 to 45 minutes. The follow-up interview served to confirm or dispel the themes and/or patterns, and transcripts were created from the semi-structured interviews. Even though only a few participants were included, the responses had been consistent throughout the online surveys. Nevertheless, the interviews were conducted to clarify a few points and to reinforce the prevalent themes established by the surveys that had been collected. Primarily, the surveys and interviews were centered on the state of the teacher evaluation process and how distance learning and remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic affected the way teachers were evaluated during the 2020–21 school year.

3.5 Limitations

The limitations of this study included the sample size, as data collection relied on the voluntary participation of human resource administrators in California K–12 public schools in all

58 counties, which totaled 949 school districts. In a pilot study across California K–12 public

school districts in all 58 counties, 76 responses were received, but the surveys were sent during

the summertime and only to superintendents. Therefore, the researcher anticipated about the same

number of responses or a 10% increase, which was estimated to be about 80 responses that would

be received. Also, the pilot survey was shorter. The study survey was longer, and volunteer

participants needed to take and submit the survey; therefore, the number of respondents was

expected to be lower than the number of surveys sent. The limitations were dependent on the

participants' interests and their availability to participate. An additional limitation presented was

when participants were asked to volunteer for an online semi-structured interview, as not

everyone might be available or willing to be interviewed. The ability to collect a large sample or

a varied sampling of participants from urban, suburban, and rural areas was determined by the

volunteers.

Lastly, the survey was sent to districts from urban, suburban, rural, and mixed (districts

serving more than one setting), and the data collection was limited and dependent on the

administrators who took the survey, which yielded a small sample for some of these settings or

may have been disproportionately overrepresented by one or more groups. Moreover, after the

coding and themes or patterns were identified, only a select group of participants was selected to

complete a semi-structured online interview, and the research process was further limited by the

availability of these participants.

Due to the novel nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, seminal research on California K–12

public schools in general and regarding teacher evaluations, in particular, was negligible. A

practical limitation of this study included the short turn-around time and the current state of

affairs rather than a longitudinal study that might reveal further analysis of actions taken during

the COVID-19 pandemic. A personal bias from the researcher may also be considered a

limitation as the researcher has extensive experience as a teacher, evaluator, a Beginning

Teachers and Support Providers (BTSA) administrator, and a public school employee for over 30

years. Because grounded theory was applied as the research methodology, the data collection,

coding, analysis, and delineation of themes and patterns or categories that were found were

largely dependent on the quantity and quality of the data collected.

3.6 Delimitations

The sampling collected was a random sample. The survey asked human resource

administrators about demographic information from their school districts, such as the number of

teachers, grade span, and their job title, and whether or not they held the same position the

previous year at this or another California K–12 public school district. The questionnaire asked

human resource administrators whether the evaluation was suspended, modified, or continued

during the 2020–21 school year during the COVID-19 pandemic, and it inquired as to the process

of decision-making.

3.7 Summary

Following the fundamental components of a grounded theory study outlined by Sbaraini

et al. (2011), the process was open, and memo writing and diagramming were used. Data

collection was followed by analysis. Coding was created so the online survey could automatically

tabulate the initial results as the surveys were filled out. Semi-structured interviews followed

upon the establishment of themes and patterns or categories. The interview process sought to

answer questions from the data analysis, establish or disprove relationships, and/or fill in any

gaps in the dataset. Also, the interview process sought to investigate the level of support provided

to teachers and administrators once the decisions regarding the teacher evaluation process were

finalized. The Human Resource Administrator Questionnaire is included in the Appendix.

Through a careful selection of the participants for the follow-up semi-structured interviews, the

questions were modified and asked to continue the data collection, Thus, the researcher sought to

achieve theoretical saturation and find an emerging substantive theory. The following chapter,

Chapter 4: Data Results, will present the findings from the research study. The data results will

be presented in three distinct data question groupings: classification, behavioral, and attitudinal

data analysis.

Chapter 4: Data Results

4.1 Introduction

The research study sought to understand how teacher evaluations were handled in California K–12 public schools during the 2020–21 school year during the COVID-19 pandemic. This chapter introduces the findings from the data collection from a detailed structural perspective, emphasizing the thoroughness of the questionnaire and the respondents' consideration in answering each question. The data is presented chronologically as it appeared on the online survey. The data from the semi-structured interviews is iteratively presented at times, supporting and/or dispelling the themes established by the online survey. Additionally, the accounts from the interviews add descriptive details to the data collected from the online surveys. An overview and highlight of the findings introduce the chapter and the in-depth information that follows. The findings are presented in two sections. The first section details the survey data. The second section is further divided into three subsections following the same format as the survey. As previously stated, some of the results from the semi-structured interviews are interwoven as applicable in each section.

Three different subsections of the online survey supported the understanding of the individual and collective set of responses. The demographic information collected in the first subsection gives an insight into the structure of the population surveyed, including each participant and the school district, without identifying any individual participant or school district. In the second subsection, the corresponding details of the collective behavioral information were gathered to understand the behaviors of each individual and the actions of each school district. In the third subsection, the attitudinal data was gathered to complete the picture of the participants' beliefs, and the findings are described. The three subsections present the

highlights and the least frequent responses from each area and sub-area. The second section

presents an overview of the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews and the detailed

accounts that supported or dispelled themes identified from the survey data.

In recognition of their busy schedules and appreciation of their time, each participant was

offered the opportunity to be entered in a raffle for 10 $100 Amazon gift cards. The results of the

raffle are included in Table 12 in the Appendix. This chapter concludes with a summary and

introduces Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations.

4.2 Online Survey Findings

California is divided into 58 counties with each having a varying number of school

districts. Even though school administrators are typically very busy with day-to-day demands,

which increased significantly during the pandemic, the collected survey results represented 62%

(36 out of 58) of the counties in California (See Figure 2 in the Appendix). The respondents were

very thorough when completing the multiple-choice questions and were very detailed in the open-

ended sections. This first section of the data findings briefly outlines and highlights the

respondent's top responses in three subsections: classification, behavioral, and attitudinal. To

understand the demographic representation of the responses received, the highlights of the

classification questions reveal that the majority (43% or 52 responses) were received from rural

school districts, and 30% (36 responses) were received from suburban school districts for a

combined 73% (88 responses) received from rural and suburban school districts. The total

number of participants was 134. The number of participants who identified themselves by gender

was fairly equal (57 identified as male, 59 identified as female, and zero participants selected

non-binary/third gender or preferred not to say). However, the respondents were given the option

to skip this question; therefore, the total number of responses does not total the number of

participants. Another important characteristic in the collected demographic data is the makeup of the grade levels served by the participating school districts. The largest group of participants represented in the survey data collection was comprised of school districts serving students in grades K–8th with 29% (39 participants). Most school districts (55% or 74 responses) had a student population of 101–9,000 students. Most school districts employed more women than men, with 67% responding that women made up 51%–89% of their full-time teachers with a classroom roster.

As expected, both as a matter of practice and from the request of Governor Newsom, the responses to the behavioral questions revealed that most participants (91%) indicated they participated in labor negotiations during the 2020–21 school year. Most school districts (88% or 100 districts) reported they had a collective bargaining agreement signed and approved by the board for the 2020–21 school year. From this group, 68 confirmed the agreement addressed teacher evaluations. Most respondents (73%) reported they participated in making decisions about the teacher evaluation process. Also, most participants (77%) indicated teachers participated in teacher evaluation negotiations, while only 57% of the participants indicated administrators were part of the team. The majority of the participants (63%) responded that teacher evaluations were interrupted for the 2020–21 school year, with the most common interruption (39%) being the lack of evaluations of permanent teachers.

Participants were asked to relate how these interruptions and/or changes were communicated. The responses indicated that most communications were through email and in meetings, with email as the most prevalent way of communication with teachers and meetings for communication with administrators. Lastly, when asked when teachers and administrators were informed about teacher evaluations for the 2020–21 school year, 78% of respondents indicated

teachers and administrators were informed either before the start or at the beginning of the 2020–21 school year.

Each participant was asked to express their opinion, and the survey captured their individual and collective disposition retrospectively. The attitudinal responses revealed 57% of the participants prefer returning to the evaluation system that was in place before the COVID-19 pandemic when presented with multiple options. Most of the participants (73%) reported being either completely satisfied or satisfied with the 2020–21 MOU. The majority of the participants (73%) reported that the process and development of the MOU were collaborative. The following sections provide more specific details of the findings.

4.2.1 *Classification Questions Response Analysis*

A summary of the statistical characteristics describing the population and dataset is presented in this chapter. From the 940 email invitations that were sent across the state of California, 191 responses (20%) were received. Of the 191 responses, 134 (70%) participated in the survey, and 57 (30%) did not participate (see Table 1). From the 940 email invitations, seven automatic responses were received that indicated the addressee was on leave from work, and five email addresses were returned as invalid as valid email addresses could not be attained. Twenty-nine administrators did not participate, indicating through email they were new to their administrative position and did not have any knowledge of the teacher evaluation process for the 2020–21 school year. Sixteen percent (150 participants) responded to the survey, but only 134 participated. Of the 150 participants, 16 (11%) opted not to participate and exited the survey, and three participants requested more information via email and participated upon receiving the answers to their questions. For the semi-structured interview, five participants were invited to participate, and four participated.

Table 1

Total Participation and Percentages of Initial Study Invitation and Follow-up

Invitation to participate			Percentage	Invitation follow-up		
				N	n	Percentage
Online survey	940	191	20			
				150	134	70
Online interview				5	4	80

The collected survey responses represented a majority of the counties in California, with the participants responding from over two-thirds (36 counties or 62%) of the 58 counties in the state (see Appendix: **Figure 2**

Participants Representing 36 Counties). The respondents represented a variety of California K–12 public school districts. The total number of responses received was 120, with respondents identifying the school district as 1) urban; 2) suburban; 3) rural; 4) mixed (i.e., more than one); or 5) other (see Table 2). Participants could write a short response; however, participants did not submit any written responses. Most of the received responses represented rural California public school districts with 52 responses (43.33%). Suburban school districts comprised the second largest group with 36 responses (30%). The urban school districts had the third lowest group of responses with 19 (15.83%) of the responses.

Table 2

School District Setting Total Responses and Percentages

District	N	Percentage
Urban	19	16
Suburban	36	30
Rural	52	43
Mixed	13	11
Other	0	0
Total	120	100

The self-described demographic data regarding the participants' job titles varied. Participants held various job titles while overseeing the human resources/personnel departments in California K–12 public school districts. Most respondents held the title of assistant or associate superintendent (49 or 40.50%). The second largest group of respondents (34 or 28.10%) reported they held the title of superintendent, three of whom noted in the text entry that they were serving as both superintendent and principal. Three of the school districts where the respondents were serving in superintendent/principal roles were small rural school districts with lower student populations, higher demands, and fewer resources. While only three added additional text, it can be surmised that there were more than three districts in which the superintendent also served as the principal of the school. This assumption was derived from the fact that many rural districts (52) participated in the survey. While there were variations on the title of those overseeing human resources, the title of director was the third most common title, with 22 (18.18%) of the participants reporting they held the title of director. An exception worth noting was a principal/teacher who reported overseeing human resources/personnel for their school district serving under 100 students in grades TK–8.

When asked if they had been in the same position at the current school district or another school district in California K–12 public schools, the majority (104 or 85.95%) responded in the affirmative. Six (4.96%) responded that they were not overseeing human resources/personnel during the 2020–21 school year, and, therefore, they did not continue to take the survey. These six participants were only included as respondents since they responded to the survey but were not included as participants as they did not have the knowledge required to answer the survey. The option to opt-out was deliberate in the survey design. This design ensured the responses received were from an individual's direct accounts of the events during the 2020–21 school year.

Two participants (1.65%) responded they worked in a similar position in a California K–12 public school district; therefore, they continued to take the survey, and their previous district was identified by name and included in the total.

The number of participants who self-identified their gender as male was 57 and as female was 59, with zero respondents selecting either non-binary/third gender or "prefer not to say." Even though this was not a required response, only four participants did not answer this question. The received responses represented school districts serving a wide range of grade levels. However, the question was formatted in a way that allowed participants to select more than one choice. Thus, the total number of the multiple choices selected did not accurately represent the total number of school districts. The researcher had to rely on the data from the original list and cross-reference them to determine the number of school districts per composition (i.e., K–5. K–8, 9–12, or K–12). The results revealed that California public schools serving students from K–8 was the largest group, with 39 responses. The second largest group, with 38 responses, served grades K–12, and the third largest group, with 22 participants, represented school districts serving students in grades 9–12.

To determine the total student population (the total student enrollment) in each of the school districts represented, a range of student population options was provided. The responses offered participants multiple options, ranging from under 100 to over 35,000 students. The participants could select only one of the options. This question was optional, and participants could have skipped the question. Thus, the total number of responses varies from other totals. From the total number of responses, most participants reported (46 or 40.71%) enrollment of 1,500–9,000 students as of the October 2021 data (see Table 3).

Table 3

Total Student Population Responses and Percentages

Student population	N	Percentage
Under 100	5	4
101-1,500	28	25
1,501-9,000	46	41
9,001-15,000	17	15
15,001-35,000	17	15

To determine how many teachers, the participating districts employed, respondents were asked to select a number range of teachers employed either full- or part-time who also had a classroom roster. The top response was 101–500 teachers, with 47 (41.59%) participants reporting this range of teachers who were employed full-time or part-time with a class roster in their school district. The second-highest response was from 35 (30.97%) of the participants reporting under 100 teachers employed full-time or part-time with a class roster in their school district, and the third-highest number of responses was from 31 (27.43%) of respondents indicating 501–1,500 employees.

Another important consideration for this study was the representation of gender in the field of education, particularly the gender of teachers as reported by teachers when they were employed. The next two questions of the data collection inquired about the approximate percentage range of full-time or part-time teachers with a classroom roster who were female or male (see Table 4). When asked about the approximate percentage range of teachers who identified as female, the majority of respondents (41 or 36.61%) reported that 51–70% of the full-time or part-time teachers with a classroom roster were female. The second largest number of respondents (34 or 30.36%) reported that 71–89% of their teachers were female. The third largest

group of respondents (23 or 20.54%) indicated they did not know or were not sure what

percentage range of their full-time or part-time teachers were female. When the participants were

asked about the approximate percentage range of the teachers who identified as male, the inverse

was true. The highest number of respondents (43 or 38.39%) reported the approximate percentage

range of full-time or part-time teachers who identified as male was 25–50%. The second largest

number of respondents (42 or 37.50%) reported that 0–24% of their teachers were male. The third

largest number of respondents (23 or 20.54%) of the participants selected that they were either

unsure or that they did not know the response, which was consistent with the responses about the

percentage range of teachers who identified themselves as female, thus, substantiating the results.

Table 4

T*otal Responses: Percentage Ranges by Female or Male Teachers*

N Female	Percentage	Range of percentage	N Male	Percentage
0	0	0–24%	42	38
2	2	25–50%	43	38
41	37	51–70%	3	3
34	30	71–89%	0	0
12	11	89%	1	1
23	21	Do not know/Not sure	23	21
112	100	Total	112	100

4.2.2   Behavioral Information Response Analysis

To gain a deeper understanding and characterize the actions taken by the participants and

their districts, the questionnaire section on behavior was introduced, which captured the actions

and behaviors of the participants regarding the teacher evaluation decision-making process during

the 2020–21 school year. This section outlines the responses from and about the participants and

how they, as human resource administrators, managed and maneuvered through the uncertainties

and challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. This section also outlines the behaviors of teachers and administrators in subsections.

To characterize the people involved in making decisions about teacher evaluations, the survey inquired whether the respondents had participated in the 2020–21 school year negotiations regarding teacher evaluations. Most of the respondents (102 or 91.07%) in this survey reported they had participated in certificated labor union negotiations during or in preparation for the 2020–21 school year. Ten respondents (8.93%) indicated that they had not participated. When questioned if their school district had a collective bargaining agreement or MOU signed and board-approved, most participants (100 or 88.50%) answered "yes." Only six (3.54%) of the participants responded "no" to this question, and seven (6.19%) of the participants indicated that it was not applicable. During the semi-structured interviews, it was confirmed that, when the response was "not applicable," it was because their school district did not require an MOU: "P1 – [*during the*] 20–21 school year … part of our COVID memorandum of agreement with our teachers, that is our certificated and our classified employees, is that there would be no evaluations for that school year."

Of the 100 respondents who indicated an agreement was signed and approved, 68 affirmed it addressed teacher evaluations during the 2020–21 school year. Forty respondents indicated this question was not applicable, and five answered "maybe." From the semi-structured interviews, the interviewees indicated they had not created an MOU dealing with teacher evaluations because teacher evaluations were suspended for the 2020–21 school year. The majority of the participants (81 or 73.64%) reported that they had participated in the decision-making process for teacher evaluations during the 2020–21 school year in the school district, while the minority of participants (29 or 26.36%) said they did not participate.

Because California expected school districts to collaborate with their labor units, the survey included a set of questions to determine the level of involvement from the teachers and administrators in the decision-making process regarding teacher evaluations for the 2020–21 school year. When asked if teachers participated in the negotiations about teacher evaluations, most participants (83 or 77%) reported teachers were part of the team (see Table 5). The second largest number of responses (23 or 21%) from the participants indicated that teachers did not participate, and 2 (2%) responded they did not know. Though the last number was surprising, as all the participants indicated that they had been at the school district during the 2020–21 school year and oversaw teacher evaluations, the reasons the teachers did not participate were neither shared nor uncovered.

Table 5

Teacher Participation and Percentage in Teacher Evaluation Decision-Making

Teacher participation	N	Percentage
Yes	83	77
No	23	21
Do not know	2	2
Total	108	100

The participants were asked the same set of questions about involvement in the decision-making process regarding teacher evaluations for the 2020–21 school year but with a focus on school site administrators. When asked if administrator representatives participated in negotiations regarding teacher evaluations, most respondents (61 or 57.55%) answered "yes," and 45 (42.45%) responded "no" (see Table 6). While conducting the semi-structured interviews, participants confirmed that some school districts did not negotiate teacher evaluations for several reasons, such as teacher evaluations were not conducted at all or that the decisions were made

outside of a formal agreement. Thus, upon their response to the survey questions, they indicated they had not participated. One of the participants in the interview, P1, stated they had an agreement, and "part of their COVID-19 agreement for the 20–21 school year" was that "teachers, … certificated and our classified employees" would not be evaluated "for that school year…" Additionally, they agreed on suspending their evaluations because their "evaluation system was brand new to [*them and they were*] in [*the*] school implementation phase in the 19–20 school year [*when*] the pandemic hit in March of 2020."

The total number of responses and the percentage of each response to the questions regarding administrators who participated in the teacher evaluation negotiations for the 2020–21 school year are depicted in Table 6.

Table 6

Administrator Participation and Percentage in Teacher Evaluation Decision-Making

Administrator participation	N	Percentage
Yes	61	58
No	45	42
Do not know	1	1
Total	106	100

When asked if teacher evaluations were interrupted during the 2020–21 school year, the majority of the responses were affirmative, with 71 (63.39%) indicating "yes" and 41 (36.61%) indicating they had not been interrupted. When asked about the status of the teacher evaluations during the 2020–21 school year and when given an array of responses, the majority of responses indicated that there were modifications to teacher evaluations. The most common response, with 51 respondents (39.53%) reporting, was that teacher evaluations were conducted only for year-one and/or year-two teachers for the 2020–21 school year. The second most common response,

with 39 (30.23%) of the respondents reporting, indicated that teacher evaluations were modified for the 2020–21 school year. The third largest number of responses was 25 (19.38%) from participants who indicated that teacher evaluations were suspended for the 2020–21 school year. Each of the choices provided participants with an opportunity to add text to their responses.

The individual responses in text from this section provided an insight into the essence of teacher and administration collaboration. In response to the suspension of teacher evaluations for the 2020–21 school year, only three participants entered further explanations about the suspension. The range of answers concurred that the suspension of teacher evaluations followed established agreements with the labor units: "Teacher evaluations were suspended from March through June 2021. Those evaluations completed prior to March were considered valid evaluations." Additional comments supported the practice: "Tenured teachers are evaluated every other year and those due in the 20–21 cycle were allowed to defer to the 21–22 year." The answers provided were supported during the semi-structured interviews. P1 exemplified the struggles and the commitment to collaborate with their union leaders to make a final decision on evaluations. The school district took into consideration the pressures brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. For this district, internal shifts were considered as well. P1 was very clear that for their district "the pressure for the teachers, certificated employees to have to add evaluations on top of everything else they were doing, adapting to hybrid model" was not a priority for them. P1 stated, "We wanted them to spend their time focusing on their students and their instructional strategies and activities."

For the respondents who indicated teacher evaluations were modified, the responses varied from pushing back the timeline to the most consistent response of only evaluating teachers who were year-one or year-two teachers as well as certificated staff whose previous evaluation reflected an "unsatisfactory" or "needs improvement" status. P2 indicated that they "did still

evaluate teachers … temporary … and also probationary employees who were gearing toward tenure – the employees who we waived the evaluations for were basically any other permanent staff member who did not have any unsatisfactory evaluations during the last … four years." P3 indicated that they also conducted "teacher evaluations on all temp and probationary employees. But for permanent employees, …but [not] until after our October break." P3 highlighted that they "have a non-traditional calendar so [*they*] have a two-week break at the beginning of October." P3 further stated that "as October came, … it was clear that it did not look like in-person in sight for a while. We were still trying to negotiate hybrid and those kind of things." Because the pandemic had not shifted, P3 stated, "At that point, we decided to forgo evaluations last year and then push everybody out one year… Anyone who would have [*been*] due 2021–22 is now due 2022–23, with the exception of the people with a five-year extended plan." P3 further explained that "those people, we are making them stick to their five years."

Another participant, P4, explained that the collaboration between the labor unit and administration also resulted that they "mutually agreed" they "would suspend the evaluation process for all our permanent staff." P4 also stated that they "still needed to continue the evaluation process for temporary and probationary staff, because there are timelines for that, and so we agreed on that and it took a lot of stress off everybody."

Only a few survey responses from small districts with fewer employees revealed that they made an informal decision on the evaluation. They either did not conduct evaluations or simply conducted them as usual. Their circumstances were so immediate and intimate that a formal process was not seen as a requirement.

Questions regarding the district's methods of communication with teachers and administrators about teacher evaluations were asked. The questions were the same for teachers and administrators, so each set of questions was separated with a heading that distinguished

between the two. Because the COVID-19 pandemic created virtual work environments, the participants were asked about the modes of communication utilized during the 2020–21 school year in particular when communicating about teacher evaluations.

Participants were asked to choose all the modes of communication used to inform teachers about any changes regarding the teacher evaluation process during the 2020–21 school year. The most common forms of communication were email and in-person meetings. The choice "email" was the highest response selected, with 65 (43.33%) responses, and the second most common response was "meetings," with 56 (37.33%) responses. A total of 14 (9.33%) participants chose "none of the above" as an answer. In the semi-structured interviews, P1 elaborated when asked how the district ensured teachers were informed of any shifts or changes in the teacher evaluations for the year and stated that both email and in-person meetings, with some online-virtual flexibility for staff who needed to quarantine, were utilized to support teachers and keep them informed of any updates.

One of the participants, P1, indicated that communication was consistent "via email and then also through staff meetings [*at*] the sites." P1 reported that "the teachers had to be on campus five days a week [*and*] they had staff meetings." Moreover, P1 stated, "Schools are safe places [*and they*] tried to hold the meetings in person as often as possible, and Zooming was also allowed. This provided, teachers who needed to quarantine could still participate."

Additionally, the overall responses from participants confirmed that selecting "none of the above" was because it was not necessary to inform the teachers of modifications since the evaluation process did not change for the 2020–21 school year.

To determine who was given the responsibility to share information about teacher evaluations, participants chose from an array of applicable answers to the question, "Who related the information about teacher evaluation status during the 2020–21 school year to teachers?" The

most common answer, with 75 (37.69%) responses, was that site administrators were responsible for relaying information about teacher evaluations. The second most selected response (64 responses or 32.16%) was "district administrators." The third most common choice was "teachers," with 40 (20.10%) respondents. Participants were also asked about the timeliness of the notification. Most (67 or 58.26%) of the respondents indicated they notified teachers about teacher evaluations and/or timelines for the 2020–21 school year at the beginning of the school year. Twenty-three (20%) of the respondents indicated that teachers were notified before the start of the school year, and 10 (8.7%) of the respondents notified the teachers before winter break. When asked how teachers were notified of the teacher evaluation timelines and/or guidelines, most (72 or 46.45%) of the respondents selected "email." The second-highest response indicated they were notified in a meeting, with 65 (41.94%) of the participants making this selection. For the third-highest response received, only 7 (4.52%) of the participants selected "district printed mail." This response was not clarified, but it can be attributed to the fact that some rural areas may not have had reliable access to the internet, and this method would ensure the notifications were received via regular mail.

Consistent with the previous section about teachers, participants were asked to choose all the answers that applied to the modes of communication used to inform administrators about any changes to the teacher evaluation process during the 2020–21 school year. The most common responses selected as means of communication were meetings and email. The choice indicating that communication occurred in a meeting was the highest response selected, with 85 (50.30%) of the responses, and the second most common response indicated communication about changes via email, with 60 (35.50%) of the responses. A total of 12 (7.10%) chose "none of the above" as an answer. The semi-structured interviews revealed a consistent theme in the responses for teachers. The responses affirmed that sending out information was an unnecessary step since the

evaluation process either did not change for the 2020–21 school year or teacher evaluations were not conducted.

Participants were asked to choose all the applicable answers to the question, "Who related the information about teacher evaluation status during the 2020–21 school year to site administrators?" Most respondents (94 or 80.34%) selected "district administrators." The second most selected response was "site administrators," with 11 (9.40%) of the responses. The choice with the third most responses was "other," with 8 (6.84%) of the responses. Participants were also asked when the notification occurred. Most respondents (48 or 41.38%) indicated administrators were notified about teacher evaluations and/or timelines for the 2020–21 school year at the beginning of the school year. Another 43 (37.07%) of the respondents indicated that administrators were notified before the start of the school year, and 11 (9.48%) of the respondents stated that administrators were notified before winter break. To determine how administrators learned about the status of teacher evaluations for the 2020–21 school year, the participants were asked how administrators were notified of the teacher evaluation timelines and/or guidelines, and most (87 or 52.73%) selected "meetings" as the response. The second most selected response indicated that they were notified via email, with 62 (37.58%) of the participants making this selection. The third most selected response was "none of the above," with 8 (4.85%) of the participants choosing this answer which was consistent with how the teachers were notified. For the districts were changes had not been made, the respondents indicated that the communication was an unnecessary step since their district had not made any changes to the teacher evaluation process or timelines.

4.2.3   *Attitudinal Information Response Analysis*

The participants' attitudes regarding teacher evaluations during the 2020–21 school year were captured through a series of open-ended questions on the survey and follow-up questions

during the semi-structured interviews. When asked about the participants' recommendations for changes, their responses were most favorable to returning to evaluations being conducted as they were before the COVID-19 pandemic (see Table 7). The second most selected recommendation was to create a new evaluation process. From those who selected "other," the most consistent response indicated that they were engaged in renewing their teacher evaluation process.

Table *7* depicts the total number of selected responses and the percentage who made each recommendation.

Table 7

Recommendations Regarding Teacher Evaluations for the 2021–22 School Year

Recommendations for changes	N	Percentage
Go back to teacher evaluations as they were before the pandemic	64	57
Create a new teacher evaluation process	24	21
Keep the teacher evaluation process the same as in 2020–21	11	10
Other (short answer)	14	12
Total	113	100

Participants were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with the MOUs for the 2020–21 school year (see Table 8). As revealed in its totality, the majority of the participants (54 or 51.43%) were satisfied with the teacher MOUs process during the 2020–21 school year. With the first set of data collection, respondents were indicating the process had been less than satisfactory. As more responses were collected, the number of responses indicating at least a satisfactory level was increased. Table 8 depicts the total number of responses and total percentage per level.

Table 8:

Satisfaction Level with the 2020–21 School Year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

Level of satisfaction	N	Percentage
Completely satisfied	23	22
Satisfied	54	51
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	23	22
Dissatisfied	5	5
Completely dissatisfied	0	0
Total	105	100

The process of creating and developing the teacher MOU during the 2020–21 school was reported by most participants (77 or 73.33%) as collaborative. The second most selected choice by participants was "other," with 10 (9.52%) responses and the participants giving a short answer. The short answers included text, such as "not applicable," as their school district did not have an MOU. The process of the MOU included some districts engaging in regular ongoing meetings. The meetings were "extensive—we met >20 times in online meetings over various issues, however, teacher evals [*sic*] were fairly easy, maybe 1–2 sessions." A couple of other written answers referenced the need for state guidance and political influence. It is "one-sided - no guidance or support from [*the*] state as to direction—passing the buck" and "politically driven due to CTA involvement." The other responses indicated teacher evaluations were not part of the MOU. The third most selected choice, with 7 (6.67%) of the responses, was "combative." As with previous responses, the third most selected choice was received in the early responses, and, as more data was gathered, it revealed that the most common response was that the process was collaborative.

When asked about the following school year's MOU, most participants did not anticipate the MOU for the 2021–22 school year to be the same. Most respondents (83 or 81.37%) gave negative responses, which were attributed to the fact that students and teachers were returning to

in-person school. Only 19 (18.63%) of the participants indicated they expected the MOU to be the same for the following school year or the 2021–22 school year. In the survey, some participants indicated they had arrived at a decision regarding teacher evaluations during the 2021–22 school year before the beginning of the school.

4.3   Responses: Online Open-ended and Semi-Structured Interview

The online survey included two open-ended questions to which participants provided written responses. Respondents were asked what contributed to the challenges of completing teacher evaluations during the 2020–21 school year and what contributed to the successes of completing the teacher evaluations during the 2020–21 school year. In response to what contributed to the challenges of completing the teacher evaluations, the responses varied, but the top three responses were detailed as distance learning (43 responses), "not applicable" (13 responses), and stress (10 responses).

The participants' responses to the what contributed to the success of teacher evaluations included the return to in-person learning and the return to normal teacher evaluations, which eliminated the need for an MOU. Other responses were considered more practical and addressed issues, such as events on the calendar. Also, consideration for the human element was revealed: "We originally thought we would go back to past practice, but by Thanksgiving break, we realized it was something we could adjust/take off people's plates so we are only formally evaluating probationary teachers again this year." The participants reflected on the challenges created by the remote teaching and learning environment: "Distance learning made evaluations problematic."

The semi-structured online evaluations consistently supported the same range of responses. One of the four participants in the semi-structured interviews emphasized the

importance of cooperation between teachers and administrators. P2 stated that site administrators "rose to the challenge. It was definitely stressful, meaning the things that they like … to observe … from the drop-in observation to the formal observations and evaluations, witnessing those things that they normally pay attention to like organization, classroom management, … was much more challenging in the virtual media." P2 added that site administrators expressed concern about "the quality of their evaluation … as well as the feedback they were able to provide to their teachers." Lastly, P2 indicated that returning to in-person learning did not require teacher evaluations. Some participants reported postponing evaluations for permanent teachers due to stress, and most resumed regular evaluations due to the return of in-person instruction.

P4 indicated the level of collaboration between the "employee association leaders" and the administrative team was focused on "open dialogue" about "how [*they*] wanted to proceed with everything that [*was*] going on with … the evaluations [*including*] the stress of what it is to be in front of the computer all day." Therefore, [*they*] "mutually agreed that we would suspend the evaluation process for all our permanent staff, but we still needed to continue the evaluation process for temporary and probationary staff… [*They*] agreed on that and it took a lot of stress off everybody. We want to work together you know."

4.4 Challenges in Completing Teacher Evaluations

When participants were asked what contributed to the challenges in completing teacher evaluations, most of the responses (43) indicated that distance learning inhibited the completion of teacher evaluations. Their responses both on the online survey and during the semi-structured interviews stated that the evaluation tool was not designed with online learning in mind. Participants indicated that remote learning presented challenges, such as the evaluation tool not

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supporting the new format, most teachers being new to online teaching, varying teacher adaptability and understanding of online platforms, the amount of time spent teaching remotely, and online observations being limiting for some administrators. Lastly, the concern about being evaluated with limited online teaching experience was listed. The second-highest reported contributor to the challenges with 13 entries was varied but indicated "not applicable." The responses included a variety of non-issues, such as:

· "Principals were very successful in completing teacher evaluations last year";

· "Most teachers seemed satisfied with the process";

· "Timelines were followed prior to COVID shutdown and per negotiated MOU";

· "No challenge school was open the entire year 2020–21"; and

· "We all agreed evaluations were not a priority; being with students and support staff was the priority."

Other despondences from the online survey indicated that the evaluations were finished, and some participants had returned to in-person learning: "They were completed. We were in person." Other responses indicated they were able to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic because they did not evaluate or create an MOU: "No difficulties—we suspended evaluations for that year"; "Evaluation was the same as before the pandemic. We did not do an MOU to extend or delay them." Lastly, some respondents quoted the education code as the reason they continued evaluating teachers, while others made informal adjustments to accommodate for the conditions presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, such as hybrid education: "The education code outlines the rules for teacher evaluations, so we followed that"; "Our evaluations are based on professional standards, so our leaders simply took into consideration Covid-19 and our hybrid learning model."

The third-highest reported contributor to the challenges of teacher evaluations during the pandemic was stress, with 10 participants identifying general examples, such as "high levels of stress," to specific examples, such as "stress levels of teachers, [*the*] timeline of in-person instruction." The respondents indicated in general terms what they were hearing from teachers and/or colleagues: "Many of our teachers were in high stress and could not manage 'one more thing.'"; "Administrator time, teachers mostly teaching from home, stress at being new to distance learning."; and "Everyone was stressed the entire year due to constant pandemic-related changes/situations." However, the participants did not indicate any further collaboration or additional elaboration on specific stressors were identified in subsequent questions.

4.5   Successes in Completing Teacher Evaluations

In the open-ended responses, the top three most common responses that participants identified as contributors or factors supporting the successes in completing teacher evaluations during the 2020–21 school year were collaboration, evaluation of only probationary teachers, and communication during the school year. Most participants (23 responses) indicated the success in completing teacher evaluations was due to collaboration, specifically between teachers and site administrators, site administrators and human resource administrators and collaboration with other administrators. The reports included principals and teachers working together to make the teacher evaluations a meaningful and collective process. Partnership and collaboration between the union and district leaders as well as all staff making things work, engaging in reciprocal feedback and in professional development with their site administrators. The actual responses are listed in the Appendix (see Table 9). The second most common response, with 16 responses, indicated that completing evaluations only for teachers in probationary status attributed to the success in completing teacher evaluations during the 2020–21 school year (See **Table 10**). The

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third most common response, with seven responses, was communication (See **Table 11**). One of the questions for this study was, What role did communication, collaboration, and transparency play in the discussion around teacher evaluations during the COVID-19 pandemic? The question was asked but most participants gave more general responses regarding communication. When they specifically mentioned communication, they often linked communication to other elements that aided in the success of completing teacher evaluations during the 2020–21 school year.

4.6 An Overview of Semi-Structured Interview Data Findings

The semi-structured interviews confirmed the established themes and trends from the surveys, with an overarching theme of collaboration: 1) teacher evaluations were best when they could be conducted in person, which is a much more inclusive and collaborative observation teaching practice when administrators are in the classroom; 2) the change in responsibilities for site administrators allowed them more time to be in the virtual classrooms, evaluating teachers and supporting them and the students while building relationships with the new teachers since they were evaluating fewer teachers; and 3) principals would "try to emphasize a reflective practice." It was also noted by one respondent that the need to conduct online-class observations facilitated different processes and increased opportunities to be in the classroom, albeit virtually.

Overall, the interactive interviews with human resource/personnel administrators confirmed teacher evaluations were best when they were conducted in person for the 2020–21 school year. When participants were asked how they would compare the 2019–20 school year evaluations to the 2020–21 school year evaluations, their responses indicated a much more inclusive and collaborative teaching practice of classroom observation of instruction when administrators could be in the classroom. P4 outlined the importance of interaction "between the

evaluator and the teacher and the relationships that they have and how they navigate that. With a new teacher, they do not know what to expect, so whatever they got is what they got."

Other responses highlighted the fact that the change in responsibilities for site administrators allowed them to have more time to be in the virtual classrooms, not only evaluating teachers but supporting staff and students. Furthermore, administrators had additional time to build relationships with new teachers because they evaluated fewer teachers. P3 indicated that "our principals had more time to really spend with those new teachers since the new people were the only people we were evaluating than they typically would. So, I think in some ways they had the ability to help and support them more and to really focus on them and give them more constructive feedback than they do in a traditional year." Additionally, P3 outlined how the evaluation process differed during the COVID-19 pandemic. P3 stated principals begin their evaluations with new teachers, and "they got to start picking up their permanent staff who are actually being evaluated during that second [pause] typically for us the second cycle." This time, P3 stated, "is when … principals got to bring their permanent people, or they are not going to get to all their evaluations. So, I think, they were able to actually provide better feedback and understanding because it was a small group of people."

The district administrators related their efforts to "try to emphasize a reflective practice." Participants shared that the need to conduct online-class observations facilitated different processes and increased opportunities to be in the classroom, albeit virtually. The district administrator, P3, noted, "I never heard complaints or praises about it [*virtual classrooms*] … [*But*], it wasn't uncommon for them to say how much they enjoyed being able to pop into classrooms much more than … during the normal school year." Likewise, P4 stated, "I think many of our principals felt like they were able to be in the classrooms much *[sic]* more times because they did not have to deal with discipline or parents or things like that" which provided

more time and more opportunities for collaboration with new teachers as shared by the participant.

4.7 Summary

This chapter outlined the data gathered to illustrate the findings and highlights from the surveys. Detailed information on the data is presented while following the structure and format of the survey. Subsequent interviews elucidated the individual and the collective picture of the respondents and their respective school districts while maintaining their anonymity. The following chapter, Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations, presents conclusions from the findings and makes recommendations for policy, practice, and further research.

Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Summary

When this mixed methods non-experimental multiple-case research study began, the United States was experiencing its first months of the COVID-19 pandemic. This study was conducted using a grounded theory research approach to facilitate the investigation of social interactions between teachers and administrators and how they managed the radical change brought on by the novel COVID-19 pandemic. A specific area in need of study was identified after conducting thorough research on teacher evaluations in the United States, specifically in California, during the COVID-19 pandemic. With the specific target population of human resource administrators identified, the state of teacher evaluations in California K–12 public schools during the pandemic was studied. Human resource administrators in public school districts serving students K–12 across all 58 counties in California were invited to participate in an online survey. Out of the 940 invitations to participate in the voluntary survey, 191 (20%) responded. Out of the 191 respondents, 134 (70%) participated in the survey. The representation consisted primarily of participants from rural and suburban school districts, with 43% from rural school districts and 30% from suburban districts, while participants from urban school districts comprised 16%, and the remainder of participants reported being from a mixed setting or serving various settings.

Using the grounded theory research process, participants were selected as key members from a group who had first-hand knowledge of teacher evaluations during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their participation in the online surveys provided the initial data for coding, comparison, memo writing, diagramming and developing categories. The online survey supported the first step into the revelation of patterns and themes or categories, which were

consistent across all district representations. The data analysis, utilizing the subcategories on the survey and coding, revealed a greater understanding of participants' perceptions, experiences, and generalizations across all data. After the results of the online survey were completed and categories and themes had been established, a subsequent group of human resource administrators was invited to participate in a semi-structured interview to further determine if the consistent categories developed through the theoretical sampling yielded the same results. At this point, theoretical saturation was achieved because all of the other responses had been consistent throughout the survey responses. The interview participants readily corroborated the multiple-choice, open-question, and written responses obtained in the survey.

Three research questions were drafted for the study: 1) What was the state of teacher evaluations in California K–12 public schools during the 2020–21 school year? 2) How were teacher evaluations measured and used to support teacher performance during the COVID-19 pandemic? and 3) What role did communication, collaboration, and transparency play in the discussion around teacher evaluations during the pandemic?

5.2 Conclusions

The collection of data for this study on the state of 2020–21 teacher evaluations in California K–12 public schools during the COVID-19 pandemic took place after the 2020–21 school year had concluded. In this section, the conclusions from the analysis of the data from the surveys and semi-structured interviews are provided. A summary and a brief discussion of the literature review conducted and detailed in Chapter 2 are presented with the findings from this study.

The research conducted for this study investigated the international response in the field of education to the COVID-19 pandemic. Worldwide relevant reports and research studies were

summarized to contrast, corroborate the findings, and consider their recommendations as they support or differ from studies in the United States, California and this study. The following section highlights consistent and inconsistent findings and recommendations from studies and reports across the world, the nation, California and this study.

In a study from China, Ma et al. (2020) chronicled the online education methods during the COVID-19 pandemic, and one of their recommendations was to establish an evaluation system that included "qualitative and quantitative" data to "increase the proportion of process evaluation" (p. 571). This study only found limited evidence of qualitative and quantitative data used for teacher evaluations in California public schools during the 2020–21 school year. Another study in Indonesia concluded that for successful implementation of remote learning, among other factors, teachers needed to have access to training and collaboration, which would improve the process and promote morale (Aliyyah et al., 2020). While participants in this study articulated either in the survey or text entries that there was a need for training, they reported that most of the provided support came from making other teachers or administrators available to new or struggling teachers. However, this was not a consistent finding, as only a few participants shared such support. Nevertheless, this study found consistent reports of collaboration between teachers and administrators and among administrators. Collaboration was found with high frequency in the accounts of participants who wrote or spoke about collaboration being a contributor to the successful completion of teacher evaluations for the 2020–21 school year.

Huber and Helm (2020) created a survey, which was administered in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, and concluded that information should be promptly provided to inform practice and policy. This study revealed that the surveyed school districts shared some consistency in practice as they reported providing information to teachers and administrators about decisions regarding the teacher evaluation process for the 2020–21 school year. The respondents showed

proactive communication with staff. By the beginning of the school year, 78% of the participants reported they had informed teachers and administrators about teacher evaluations, with the same percentage being reported for each group. Furthermore, Huber and Helm (2020) posited that collaboration among teachers contributes to "school quality" and "development" (Huber and Ahlgrimm 2012)" (p. 253). As previously stated, in this study, collaboration was similarly attributed to being a contributor to success.

From the national studies and publications, researchers and educators explored the state of teacher evaluations during the COVID-19 pandemic their MOUs revealed that only about 25% or less of national school districts had either addressed teacher evaluations in their MOUs or had an MOU (Hemphill & Marianno, 2021; Nittler & Saenz-Armstrong, 2020). This study revealed that, out of the 134 school districts surveyed, 103 (77%) had an MOU in place, and 100 had their MOU approved by their board. Out of the 103 school districts that had an MOU, only 68 (66%) had addressed teacher evaluations in their MOU. Also, out of the 103 school districts, 40 (39%) indicated teacher evaluations were not applicable. Individual responses in the survey and during the interviews revealed an agreement and/or a decision about teacher evaluations had been reached outside of the MOU.

Educators and researchers (Daley, 2020; Fensterwald, 2020; Frost, 2020; Gerber, 2020; Whitlock, 2021; Will, 2020) advised against suspending or reducing teacher evaluations. Instead, they advocated for teacher support systems to include flexibility, feedback, and training, particularly on technology. These supports, they argued, would engage educators in meaningful evaluations. However, this study found that out of the 134 participants, 25 (19%) indicated that teacher evaluations were suspended for the 2020–21 school year.

Various researchers, worldwide and nationally, have reported challenges with collaboration and communication due to inaccessibility to virtual connectivity. They reported that

limited or non-existent resources to connect online hindered communication and collaboration (Assunção Flores & Gago, 2020; Babić et al., 2020; Hebebci et al., 2020; Hemphill & Marianno, 2021; Fauzi & Khusuma, 2020; Herring et al., 2020; Rouadi & FaysalAnouti, 2020). Even though this survey did not inquire if connectivity was an issue, none of the participants mentioned a lack of connectivity as a factor that contributed to the challenges of completing teacher evaluations or virtual connectivity being a burden for communication or collaboration. However, some responses on the survey and two participants in the interview mentioned that it was difficult to evaluate a teacher's ability to engage students since students were not consistently online, either due to connectivity issues or a lack of engagement. Furthermore, one participant (P4) discussed the proactive and supportive approach that support staff took to ensure student attendance and engagement by calling students' homes to support students, families, and the teacher. Another participant (P2) indicated the struggle for teachers was focused on "participation. Meaning, during the pandemic there were students who never had their video up, [*and*] who were not fully engaged. [*Other*] students … wanted to participate but had technology issues." Moreover, P2 stated that "the challenges relating to the quality and access to education at the time was definitely visible throughout the feedback being provided during the evaluations and observations."

When discussing the virtual classroom versus the in-person classroom, P4 reported, "I think they felt more comfortable if they could have gone into, you know, a real classroom versus the virtual room." P4 expounded on the issue stating, "technology gets in the way. So, we gave people grace, you know, if their screen froze or [*if the kids or classroom management needed to be addressed*] because they're in their home. The kids are in their homes; they are not in their classroom. So, we gave grace for that and understanding." P4 explained that support personnel assisted "if kids were not engaged, because we looked at attendance for not just being online but

for what they were doing to get engagement. So, if we were getting kids that weren't engaged, our site administrators would be calling their families and their counselors to get those kids engaged and learning."

5.3 Findings: Survey Questions

The first question of this study (What was the state of teacher evaluations in California K–12 public schools during the 2020–21 school year?) and the findings are presented in this section. The findings revealed that the state of teacher evaluations in California K–12 public schools during the 2020–21 school year were inconsistent with previous studies (Hemphill & Marianno, 2021; Nittler & Saenz-Armstrong, 2020), in which less than 25% of school districts had enacted an MOU and addressed teacher evaluations. At least 19% of the 134 school districts that participated in this study suspended teacher evaluations for the school year but had addressed them. A total of 51 school districts, 40% of the 134 school districts surveyed, conducted teacher evaluations only if the teachers were year-one or year-two probationary teachers or if teachers had an unsatisfactory evaluation before the closure of schools.

Another 30% of the school districts surveyed responded they had modified their teacher evaluations. The participants whose school districts modified teacher evaluations explained they had changed the timeline to give teachers and administrators a chance to engage in the process of teaching without worrying about evaluations. Other respondents indicated the modification was the evaluation of only year-one or year-two teachers or other certificated staff whose previous evaluation reflected an "unsatisfactory" or "needs improvement status." Additionally, few respondents indicated their school districts made informal decisions about conducting or not conducting teacher evaluations. They reported a decision was made in collaboration with their

labor bargaining unit, but it was not part of the MOU or official agreement between the bargaining unit and the district.

The second question of this study and the findings are presented in this section: 2) How were teacher evaluations measured and used to support teacher performance during the COVID-19 pandemic? The results of the study revealed a consistent number of responses stating collaboration was a contributor to the success of completing teacher evaluations. Most school districts conducted teacher evaluations in the same manner, and neither training nor modifications were made to the evaluation tool. Therefore, the level of support was only indicated through the reduction of teacher evaluations that an administrator had to conduct or by providing additional staff to support new or struggling teachers. A couple of school districts stated that because a new evaluation tool had been released, teacher evaluations during the 2020–21 school year were suspended.

The third question of this study was What role did communication, collaboration, and transparency play in the discussion around teacher evaluations during the COVID-19 pandemic?, and the findings are presented in this section. The answer to the third question provided an opportunity to explore the relationships between the variables included in the question. Even though the study was focused on communication, collaboration, and transparency, the results were inconsistent across the terms and with previous research findings and recommendations. This study found that individual references to communication and flexibility, though mentioned in the responses, appeared either rarely or in connection with another element. For example, this study only found one response in which flexibility was mentioned, and it was in conjunction with other attributes for success. Unlike prior research or recommendations for communication, this study found that communication was rarely mentioned, and, when it was mentioned, it was in conjunction with other attributes. Even though the question asked about communication,

collaboration and transparency, collaboration was more consistently mentioned. Propitiously, this study revealed that the collaboration of administrators and teachers and the collaboration between administrators were highly valued and attributed to the success of implementing teacher evaluations during the COVID-19 pandemic. Another finding from this study, which was corroborated by other studies, highlighted the importance or the need for collaboration and/or was included as a recommendation for overcoming the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic (Aliyyah et al., 2020; Assunção Flores & Gago, 2020; Babić et al., 2020; Hebebci et al., 2020; Hemphill & Marianno, 2021; Herring et al., 2020; Huber & Helm, 2020; Fauzi & Khusuma, 2020; Rouadi & FaysalAnouti, 2020; Nittler & Saenz-Armstrong, 2020).

The grounded theory research approach uncovered a salient category among the surveys and interviews as the core for a successful teacher evaluation process during the COVID-19 pandemic. The themes/categories pointed toward collaboration. The participants and student populations across all school district settings consistently reported praise and commendations about the collaboration among staff and the ways they handled the challenges of the pandemic. The data revealed by the surveys were consistent with the data from the interviews in all aspects. The interviews provided additional details, and consistency reached theoretical saturation, as categories were created from the themes, patterns, memoing, and diagramming created from the collected data and online survey analysis.

A question was added during the study because the business and private sectors have identified special considerations were given to female employees, but given the inconclusive results it was eliminated from the final questions. The question: What special considerations were given to female staff, teachers, or administrators? elicited genuine reflective wonderment from the participants. The participants indicated gender-neutral considerations were given to staff if they needed special considerations. The findings in this survey were contrary to the studies and

recommendations from the business and private sectors (Bastone, 2020; Mackenzie et al., 2020; Mullen, 2021). The studies of the private and business sectors revealed employers had given much thought to how women, particularly minority women, were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The issues discussed were childcare and remote learning.

When participants were asked about the same issues, P4 replied, "No. We were just there if people needed something. We wanted to be there for them." P4 further explained that even though "most teachers in elementary and administration are female and, in secondary, male. What I also noticed [*is it's*] mostly [*a*] male field. We lift women up in leadership."

However, the responses from this study revealed teachers were given the same considerations regardless of their gender. Some respondents shared they had males handling the childcare and remote learning at home while the female counterpart was working. One of the participants (P2) stated, "We did not make any special considerations; however, there were females in our negotiating team as well as our CBO is female. My wife is an oncology nurse, and during the year of COVID, while my son was not in school, I was actually the one at home." Furthermore, he stated, "One of the supports, in general, [*was that*] most districts provided access to remote work made available to all staff."

Likewise, additional findings were surprising. The preliminary data analysis provided space for speculation. As coding and memoing began, it appeared that specific training would have been provided to support teachers and/or administrators as the pandemic had shifted normal practices. After conducting the semi-structured interviews, the belief that administrators were trained by someone else in the school district or that they had already been trained was dispelled. The interviewees indicated administrators had not received any specific training to deal with the different situations during the pandemic and for online learning. However, some interviewees indicated administrators were given support through the adjustment of timelines or by having

regular check-in times to ensure they were supported during the completion of the teacher evaluations.

When the survey data was analyzed, an area of interest was determining if access to information was delayed for teachers. The flow of information to teachers and administrators was consistent. In other words, the district administrators did not relate information at different times to site administrators than they did teachers. Also, the mode of communication was fairly consistent, with the majority of responses revealing that email and meetings were the primary forms of communication to keep teachers and administrators informed. Emails were the primary format to communicate with teachers, and meetings were the primary format of communication with site administrators.

Like the teachers, the administrators were informed about the status of teacher evaluations for the 2020–21 school year by site and district administrators, with a third group learning about them from others or teachers. Please note, because the respondents could have selected more than one choice, the total number of responses is not equal to the total number of participants. In alignment, too, were the responses for the time information was shared with teachers and administrators regarding teacher evaluations for the 2020–21 school year. Respondents could only select one choice, and the selections were consistent with the response for teachers. Most of the participants responded that teachers and administrators were informed of teacher evaluations at the beginning of the year.

5.4 Importance, Meaning, and Significance

The implications of the findings from this study apply to practice and policy. Teacher evaluations and the COVID-19 pandemic presented challenges for those in the field of education, and research documented these challenges. Early research recorded the struggles and hurdles the

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COVID-19 pandemic created in education worldwide. This study focused on these two challenging situations because, as they are combined, the challenges multiply exponentially. In a review of the survey data, the goal of this study was achieved through the analysis of the themes and patterns or categories and through the recoding of the datAa and interviews. This study has unearthed a substantive theory that explains how a "social circumstance," (i.e., teacher evaluations) "during a radical change" (i.e., the COVID-19 pandemic) can coexist. Much speculation circulated, highlighting the levels of stress present not only during teacher evaluations but, more extraordinarily, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, the results of this survey revealed limited instances where stress was noted as a hindrance to teacher evaluations. The one answer that was clear through the iterations of data analysis, coding, diagramming, memoing, categorizing, and saturation through the interviews was that collaboration made supposedly impossible situations manageable.

This substantive theory was developed: "Collaboration overcomes adversity." However, this substantive theory is currently limited to education and teacher evaluations. Yet, the crisis created by the COVID-19 pandemic provided some evidence that people collaborating through adversity of this magnitude can overcome any adversity. The substantive theory of collaboration overcoming adversity holds that communication and flexibility are important elements for overcoming adversity, but collaboration is essential. Furthermore, collaboration must exist between and across groups and include flexibility and continuous timely communication.

The impact of this study can be considered for other fields, such as public health, business, and public policy. It is imperative to exercise good practices and provide support for the leaders of these different organizations to ensure they have the space and financial resources to create flexible, prompt, ongoing communication and to ensure collaboration happens organically and across all groups from the ground up and from the top down as well as across all levels in

between. The glimpse of the educational challenges presented by the pandemic and captured by this study proved to provide an incalculable benefit. The researcher was afforded to opportunity to retroactively live vicariously through the experiences of 134 human resource administrators across California public school districts from urban, suburban, and rural settings. The takeaways from this collective study require action toward more collaborative practices and a recognition of the dedication and hard work of all educators, teachers, administrators, and human resource administrators during the COVID-19 pandemic. A collective and individual sense of wellbeing and efficacy were found when people worked together with colleagues and supervisors during the pandemic, this lesson cannot be overlooked. If individual employees and organizations can work in challenging situations in a collaborative fashion, I trust a much more efficient work environment a positive employee morale can be attained during normal situations.

5.5 Recommendations for Future Research

For future research, the researcher recommends five areas be considered to build further on this study's theory and expand on the knowledge learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, which impacted daily life and will continue to impact everyone in the foreseeable future. When this research study was conceived, the pandemic was just developing in the United States, and it was a novelty in California. The research study focused and was conducted on all school districts in California K–12 public schools. One area of serious consideration is more research on the targeted school districts in California to further delineate and investigate teacher evaluations. Looking specifically at targeted school districts, either defined by their geographic location, size, student demographic population, or another aspect of teacher or administrator demographics can shed some light on how these specific populations interact, support one other, and collaborate during a crisis.

A second consideration for future research would be to determine the degree of consistency and the extent of collaboration, which was reported by human resource administrators during the 2020–21 school year. In other words, if the administrators and teachers were asked, would their perceptions, attitudes, behaviors, and recollections be congruent with those reported by the human resource administrators? Also, additional research can be conducted by surveying teachers. Teacher surveys were not mentioned by any of the human resource administrators as a method of identifying teachers' needs during the 2020–21 school year. A survey into their needs would elucidate and prepare future leaders to be proactive and supportive of teachers before the next crisis. Moreover, the results from this study can also inform policy to create resources that would prevent or remedy any shortcomings from this recent crisis.

A third consideration would be an investigation via teacher surveys. These surveys would investigate how teachers perceived the levels of collaboration with administrators and teachers and could prove the importance of collaboration between teachers and administrators as evidenced in the survey responses and from the semi-structured interviews. If teachers were given an opportunity to express their perceptions and experiences during the 2020–21 school year, would the findings of that survey support the findings in this study or shed some new light?

A fourth consideration would be for research to be conducted within rural school districts, as their representation constituted the majority of participants (43%) in this study and reported consistent collaboration. It is the researcher's perception that rural school districts, particularly districts with student populations smaller than 1,000 students, tended to rely more on each other for support and resources. Lastly, a fifth recommendation would be to conduct a study that evaluated the responses of private school districts across California to the COVID-19 pandemic during the 2020–21 school year to replicate this study and compare findings. Private school districts that are independent of the operations of public school districts can be studied, and the

findings from these can be compared to the private business sector and the public school districts. Many private school districts were challenged by parents and groups early in the pandemic to return to in-person education. Reports about parents creating learning pods readily surfaced in the headlines of local newspapers. How did private schools meet the demands of teacher evaluations during the pandemic? These are some of the studies that are recommended for future research to support the importance and intricacies of collaboration during extenuating circumstances, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Appendix

Consent Form

Claremont
Graduate
University

AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A STUDY SEEKING TO IDENTIFY HOW

TEACHER EVALUATIONS WERE HANDLED IN THE 2020–21 SCHOOL YEAR (IRB #

4058)

Dear Human Resources Administrator,

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled "The State of Teacher

Evaluations in California K–12 Public Schools during COVID-19." Volunteering may benefit

you directly, and you will be helping Irene Preciado, the investigator of this study, to determine

the state of teacher evaluations during the 2020–21 school year. If you volunteer, you will be

asked to fill out an online survey and may be invited to participate in an online Zoom semi-

structured interview. This will take about 15 minutes of your time to complete the online survey,

and you may be asked to participate in a 45-minute online interview. Volunteering for this study

involves no more risk than what a typical person experiences on a regular day during the

pandemic. Your involvement is entirely up to you. You may withdraw at any time for any reason.

Please continue reading for more information about the study.

STUDY LEADERSHIP: This research project is led by Irene Preciado, principal investigator of the Claremont Graduate University, who is being supervised by Dr. Thomas Luschei, professor of Educational Studies at the Claremont Graduate University.

PURPOSE: The study seeks to identify how teacher evaluations were handled in the 2020–21school year and what steps were taken in the discussion and decision-making process about teacher evaluations.

ELIGIBILITY: To participate, you must have been employed as a human resource administrator in a California public school district during the 2020–21 school year. Private school human resource administrators in California and public school district administrators working in a state other than California are not eligible to participate in this study.

PARTICIPATION: During the study, you will be asked to complete an online survey and might be asked to participate in an interview via Zoom. The total time asked of you is one hour (15 minutes to complete the survey and may be completed at different times and 45 minutes to complete the interview, if selected).

RISKS OF PARTICIPATION: The risks that you run by taking part in this study involves no more risk than what a typical person experiences on a regular day during the pandemic.

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION: I expect the study to benefit you personally. The account of your experiences will contribute to research about teacher evaluations and challenges

and opportunities brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Educational leaders, like you, teachers, and policymakers will be better informed by the collective findings. This study will benefit the researcher by the aforementioned reasons and will contribute to the fulfillment of one of the requirements for a PhD degree in education.

COMPENSATION: You may choose to be compensated with an entry to win one $100.00 Amazon Gift Card (ten $100.00 Amazon Gift Cards will be raffled) in this study. To participate, you will need to complete the survey (if you choose not to answer any particular question for any reason, you may still be entered into the raffle). Upon the completion of the survey, you need to provide your email address to receive a separate email with the Amazon gift card access code if you are a winner. To participate in this study and in the raffle, you must have been employed as a human resource administrator in a public school district in California during the 2019–20 school year in your current or by another California public school district.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may stop or withdraw from the study, and you may refuse to answer any particular question for any reason at any time without it being held against you. Your decision whether or not to participate will have no effect on your current or future connection with anyone at CGU.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Your individual privacy will be protected in all papers, books, talks, posts, or stories resulting from this study. I may use the data I collect for future research or share it with other researchers, but I will not reveal your identity with it. In order to protect the

confidentiality of your responses, I will code the original data and remove identifying

information once the data has been coded.

FURTHER INFORMATION: If you have any questions or would like additional

information about this study, please contact Irene Preciado at (phone number omitted) for

dissertation publication or irene.preciado@cgu.edu. You may also contact the faculty research

supervisor, Dr. Thomas Luschei, at tluschei@cgu.edu. The CGU Institutional Review Board

(IRB) has approved this project. For additional information or questions regarding this study,

please contact me via email or telephone: irene.preciado@cgu.edu or (phone number omitted) for

dissertation publication. You may also contact the faculty research supervisor, Dr. Thomas

Luschei, at tluschei@cgu.edu.

If you have any ethical concerns about this project or about your rights as a human subject

in research, you may contact the CGU IRB at (909) 607-9406 or at irb@cgu.edu. A copy of this

form will be given to you if you wish to keep it.

CONSENT: Your signature below means that you understand the information on this

form, that someone has answered any and all questions you may have about this study, and you

voluntarily agree to participate in it.

Signature of Participant _____ Date _____

Printed Name of Participant _____

The undersigned researcher has reviewed the information in this consent form with the participant and answered any of his or her questions about the study.

Signature of Researcher _____ Date _____

Printed Name of Researcher _____

Research Questions Graphic

How have teacher evaluations measured and supported teacher performance during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Teacher Evaluations:
- Clarity and Consistency
- Benefits

Teacher Evaluations - Considerations:
- Teachers

What role did communication, collaboration, and transparency play in the discussion around teacher evaluations during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Teacher Evaluations - Communication and Transparency:
- Teachers
- Administrators

Teacher Evaluations - Decision-Making:
-Modified
-Suspended
-Uninterrupted

Qualtrics Survey

Q1. To read the consent form that gives you the information about participating in this survey, please copy and paste this URL below into your internet browser:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/10GEgpfwFj8YWhStSUM0jxCVT6oBj7z8y/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=106614479557835620289&rtpof=true&sd=true

Below, please select option 1 to continue, 2 to stop, or 3 if you have questions.

· I agree to participate by entering my full name. This option means you have read and understood the information on the consent form, that someone has answered any and all questions you may have about this study, and you voluntarily agree to participate in it.

· I do not wish to participate. This option means you will not be taking the survey. Please enter email address to ensure you do not receive a reminder.

· I need more information. This option means you will contact Irene Preciado at (number omitted) or irene.preciado@cgu.edu. You may also contact the faculty research supervisor, Dr. Thomas Luschei, at tluschei@cgu.edu. If you have any ethical concerns about this project or about your rights as a human subject in research, you may contact the CGU IRB at (number deleted) or at irb@cgu.edu.

Q2. What is the name of your school district?

Q3. Is the school district self-described as urban, suburban, or rural?

· Urban

· Suburban

· Rural

· Mixed (i.e., more than one)

· Other

Q4. What is your current job title?

- · Director

- · Coordinator

- · Assistant Director

- · Assistant Coordinator

- · Assistant/Associate Superintendent

- · Superintendent

- · Other

Q5. Did you hold the same or similar job title during the 2020–21 school year in this district or another CA public school district? If you answer "yes, at another CA public School District," or "No, but I will continue to take the survey because I was in a CA public school in HR last year," the rest of the answers will apply to that district.

- · Yes

- · Yes, at another CA public school district - District Name & Position

- · No, but I will continue to take the survey because I was in a CA public school in HR last year.

- · No, I will not continue to take the survey because I was not in CA public schools in HR last year.

Q6. What is your gender?

- · Male

- · Female

- · Non-binary / third gender

- · Prefer not to say

Q7. What was the range of grades in this school district in the 2020–21 school year?

- PreK

- TK

- K–5/6

- 6–8/9

- 9–12

- All of the above

Q8. What was the total student enrollment reported in October 2020 for this district?

- Under 100

- 101–1,500

- 1,501–9,000

- 9,001–15,000

- 15,001–35,000

- Over 35,000 students

Q9. How many teachers did the school district employ in the 2020–21 school year? (full-time or part-time with a class roster)?

- Under 100

- 101–500

- 501–1,500

- Over 1,500

Q10. What percentage of teachers self-reported as female? (full-time or part-time with a class roster) (approximate percentage)

- 0–24%

- 25–50%

- 51–70%

- 71–89%

- Over 89%

- Do not know or not sure

Q11. What percentage of teachers self-reported as male? (Full-time or part-time with a class roster) (approximate percentage)

- 0–24%

- 25–50%

- 51–70%

- 71–89%

- Over 89%

- Do not know or not sure

Q12. Did you participate in certificated labor unit negotiations **during or in preparation** for the 2020–21 school year?

- Yes

- No

Q13. Were teacher evaluations interrupted due to COVID-19 in the 2020–21 school year?

- Yes

- No

- Do Not Know

Q14. Was there a collective bargaining agreement in place (Memorandum of Understanding [MOU]) for the 2020–21 school year between the teachers and the district?

· Yes

· No

Q15. For the 2020–21 school year, was the collective bargaining agreement (Memorandum of Understanding [MOU]) signed and board-approved?

· Yes

· Maybe

· No

· Not Applicable

Q16. Did the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) address teacher evaluations during the 2020–21 school year?

· Yes

· Maybe

· Not Applicable

Q17. Did you lead or participate in the teacher evaluation process for this school district for the 2020–21 school year?

· Yes

· No

Q18. What was the status of teacher evaluations in your district for the 2020–21 school year? (Choose all that apply. You can add comments for answers as needed.)

· Teacher evaluations were suspended for the 2020–21 school year.

· Teacher evaluations were modified for the 2020–21 school year.

· Teacher evaluations were conducted for year 1 and/or year 2 teachers only for the 2020–21 school year.

· Teacher evaluations were issued only as summative when possible for the 2020–21 school year.

· A decision was not made about teacher evaluations for the 2020–21 school year.

Q19. Did **teacher** representatives participate in **negotiations** regarding **teacher evaluations**?

· Yes

· No

· Do Not Know

Q20. **How** were **teachers** informed of the changes on the teacher evaluation **process** for the 2020–21 school year?

· Email

· District printed mail

· Regular post office mail

· Meeting

· All of the above

· None of the above

· Do Not Know

Q21. **Who** related the information about the teacher evaluation status for the 2020–21 school year **to** the **teachers**?

· Teachers

· Site administrators

· District administrators

· Other

· Do Not Know

Q22. **When** were **teachers** notified of teacher evaluation timelines and/or guidelines for the 2020–21 school year?

·   Before the start of the school year

·   At the beginning of the school year

·   Before winter break

·   Not applicable

·   Do Not Know

·   Other (short answer)

Q23. **How** were **teachers** notified of teacher evaluation **timelines and/or guidelines** for the 2020–21 school year?

·   Email

·   District printed mail

·   Regular post office mail

·   Meeting

·   All of the above

·   None of the above

·   Do Not Know

Q24. Did you train, participate or coordinate training for administrators to conduct teacher evaluations during the 2020–21 school year?

·   Yes

·   No

Q25. Did site administrators participate in the negotiations regarding teacher evaluations?

·   Yes

- No

- Do Not Know

Q26. **How** were **administrators** informed of the changes on the teacher evaluation process for the 2020–21 school year?

- Email

- District printed mail

- Regular post office mail

- Meeting

- All of the above

- None of the above

- Do Not Know

27. **Who** related information about teacher evaluation status for the 2020–21 school year to the site **administrators**?

- Teachers

- Site administrators

- District administrators

- Do Not Know

- Other

Q28. **When** were **administrators** notified of teacher evaluation **timelines and/or guidelines** for the 2020–21 school year?

- Before the start of the school year

- At the beginning of the school year

- Before winter break

·   Not applicable

·   Do Not Know

·   Other (short answer)

Q29. **How** were **administrators** notified of teacher evaluation **timelines and/or guidelines** for the 2020–21 school year?

·   Email

·   District printed mail

·   Regular post office mail

·   Meeting

·   All of the above

·   None of the above

·   Do Not Know

Q30. What changes would you recommend for the 2021–22 school year based on your experience with teacher evaluations during the 2020–21 school year?

·   Go back to teacher evaluations as they were prior to the pandemic

·   Create a new teacher evaluation process

·   Keep the teacher evaluation process the same as in 2020–21

·   Other (short answer)

Q31. Describe your level of satisfaction with the **teacher MOUs process** during the 2020–21 school year?

·   Completely satisfied

·   Satisfied

·   Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

·   Dissatisfied

·   Completely dissatisfied

Q32. How would you describe the teacher MOUs process during the 2020–21 school year?

·   Constructive

·   Collaborative

·   Combative

·   Limited

·   Other (short answer)

Q33. Did you anticipate the MOU for the 2020–21 school year would be the same for the 2021–22 school year if an MOU was needed? Why?

·   No

·   Yes

Q34. What contributed to the challenge(s) in completing teacher evaluations during the 2020–21 school year?

Q35. What contributed to the success(es) in completing teacher evaluations during the 2020–21 school year?

Q36. Thank you for completing the survey. Congratulations! You may now enter your email address if you want to be entered into a raffle to win a $100 Amazon gift certificate. Ten $100 Amazon gift certificates will be raffled for a total of ten winners. A redemption code will be emailed to each winner.

·   Email address

·   I choose not to participate in the raffle.

Human Resource Administrator Questionnaire

      Directions: Please complete this 15-minute survey and share your honest feedback about the state of teacher evaluations during the school year 2020–21. This survey data will be kept confidential, and names of participants and the names of the school districts will be confidential. The results of the survey will be used as a first part of a qualitative (was determined to be mixed methods) study in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy in Education at Claremont Graduate University.

      Classification Questions: The information will be used to group the respondents and districts to differentiate within the group. This kind of information will be obtained in every survey.

Actual Questions	Parameters	Choices	Question Type	Coding
What is the name of your school district?	Open	Short answer	Open answer	Unified = 1; Elementary =2; High = 3
Is the school district self-described as urban, suburban, or rural?	Range	Urban; Suburban; Rural; Mixed; Other short answer	Multiple Choice	
What is your current job title?	Range	Director; Coordinator; Assistant Director/Coordinator; Assistant Superintendent; Other	Multiple Choice	Director = 1; Coordinator = 2; Assistant Director/ Assistant Coordinator = 3; Assistant Superintendent = 4; other = 0
Did you hold the same job title during the 2020–21 school year in this district?	Binary	Y; N	Binary	Y=1; N=0
What is your gender?	Range	M;F; Other; Prefer Not to State	Multiple Choice	F=1; M=2; Other = 3; Prefer Not to Say = 0

What was the range of grades in this school district in the 2020–21 school year?	Range	PreK; TK; K-5/6; 6–8/9; 9–12	Multiple Choice	PreK = 1; TK/K-5/6 = 2; 6–8 = 3; 9–12 = 4
What was the total student enrollment reported in October 2020 for this district?	Range	Under 100; 101–1,500; 1,501–9,000; 9,001–15,000; 15,001–35,000; over 35,000 students	Multiple Choice	Under 100 = 1; 101–1,500 = 2; 1501–9,000 = 3; 9,001–15,000 = 4; 15,001–35,000 = 5; over 35,000 students = 6
How many teachers did the school district employ in the 2020–21 school year? (full-time or part-time with a class roster)	Range	Under 100; 101–500; 501–1,500; over 1,500	Multiple Choice	Under 100 = 1; 101–500 = 2; 501–1,500 = 3; over 1,500 = 4
What percentage of teachers self-reported as female? (full-time or part-time with a class roster)	Range	0–24%; 25–50%; 51–70%; 71–89%; over 89%; do not know or not sure	Multiple Choice	0-24% = 1; 25–50% = 2; 51–70% = 3; 71–89% = 4; over 89% = 5; do not know or not sure = 0
What percentage of teachers self-reported as male? (full-time or part-time with a class roster)	Range	0–24%; 25–50%; 51–70%; 71–89%; over 89%; do not know or not sure	Multiple Choice	0–24% = 1; 25–50% = 2; 51–70% = 3; 71–89% = 4; over 89% = 5; do not know or not sure = 0

Behavioral Information: Factual information about the respondents and their experience

Did you participate in certificated labor unit negotiations **during or in preparation** for the 2020–21 school year?	Binary	Y/N		Y=1; N=0
Was there a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the 2020–21 school year between teachers and District?	Binary	Y/N	Binary	Y=1; N=0
For the 2020–21 school year, was the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed and board-approved?	Binary	Y/N	Binary	Y=1; N=0
Did the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) address teacher evaluations during the 2020–21 school year?				
Did you lead or participate in the teacher evaluation process for this school district for the 2020–21 school year?	Binary +	Y/N		Y=1; N=0
Were teacher evaluations interrupted due to COVID-19 in the 2020–21 school year?	Binary	Y/N	Binary	Y=1; N=0 (conditional; Y = next question; N = skip next five questions
What was the status of teacher evaluations in your district for the 2020–21 School Year? (Choose all that	Range	Teacher evaluations were suspended for the	Multiple Choice, with short answer option	Checked = 1

apply. You can add comments for answers as needed.)	2020–21 school year.	
	Teacher evaluations were modified for the 2020–21 school year.	Checked = 2
	Teacher evaluations were conducted for year 1 and/or year 2 teachers only for the 2020–21 school year.	Checked = 3
	Teacher evaluations were issued only as summative, when possible, for the 2020–21 school year.	Checked = 4
	A decision was not made for teacher evaluations for the 2020–21 school year.	Checked = 5

The following questions are about teachers.

Did **teacher** representatives participate in **negotiations** regarding **teacher evaluations**?	Binary	Y/N	Binary	Y=1; N=0
How were **teachers** informed of the changes on the teacher evaluation process for the 2020–21 school year?	Multiple Choice	Email; district printed mail; regular post office mail; meeting; all of the above; none of the above	Mark all that apply	email = 1; district printed mail = 2; regular post office mail = 3; meeting = 4; all of the above = 5; none of the above = 0
Who related the information about the teacher evaluation status for the 2020–21 school year to the **teachers**?	Multiple Choice	Teachers; site administrators; district administrators; other	Mark all that apply	Teachers = 1; site administrators = 2; district administrators = 3; other = 4
When were **teachers** notified of teacher evaluation timelines and/or guidelines for the 2020–21 school year?	Multiple Choice	Before the start of the school year; at the beginning of the school year; before winter break; not applicable; other (short answer)	Multiple Choice	Before the start of the school year = 1; at the beginning of the school year = 2; before winter break = 3; not applicable = 0; other (short answer)
How were **teachers** notified of teacher evaluation timelines and/or guidelines for the 2020–21 school year?	Multiple Choice	email; district printed mail; regular post office mail; meeting; all of the above; none of the above	Mark all that apply	email = 1; district printed mail = 2; regular post office mail = 3; meeting = 4; all of the above = 5;

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The following questions are about administrators

Did you train, participate or coordinate training for administrators to conduct teacher evaluations during the 2020–21 school year?	Binary	Y/N	Binary	Y=1; N=0
Did site administrators participate in the negotiations regarding teacher evaluations?	Binary	Y/N	Binary	Y=1; N=0
How were **administrators** informed of the changes on the teacher evaluation process for the 2020–21 school year?	Multiple Choice	Email; district printed mail; regular post office mail; meeting; all of the above; none of the above	Mark all that apply	email = 1; district printed mail = 2; regular post office mail = 3; meeting = 4; all of the above = 5; none of the above = 0
Who related information about teacher evaluation status for the 2020–21 school year to the site **administrators**?	Multiple Choice	Teachers; site administrators; district administrators; other	Mark all that apply	Teachers = 1; site administrators = 2; district administrators = 3; other = 4

When were **administrators** notified of teacher evaluation timelines and/or guidelines for the 2020–21 school year?	Multiple Choice	Before the start of the school year; at the beginning of the school year; before winter break; not applicable; other (short answer)	Multiple Choice	Before the start of the school year = 1; at the beginning of the school year = 2; before winter break = 3; not applicable = 0; other (short answer)
How were **administrators** notified of teacher evaluation timelines and/or guidelines for the 2020–21 school year?	Multiple Choice	email; district printed mail; regular post office mail; meeting; all of the above; none of the above	Mark all that apply	email = 1; district printed mail = 2; regular post office mail = 3; meeting = 4; all of the above = 5; none of the above = 0

Attidunial Information: Information about the respondents and their experience with teacher evaluations

What changes would you recommend for the 2021–22 school year based on your experience with **teacher evaluations** during the 2020–21 school year?	Multiple Choice	Go back to teacher evaluations as they were prior to the pandemic; Create a new teacher evaluation process; keep the teacher evaluation process the same as in 2020–21; other (short answer)	Multiple Choice	Go back to teacher evaluations as they were prior to the pandemic = 0; Create a new teacher evaluation process = 1; keep the teacher evaluation process the same as in 2020–21 = 2; other (short answer)

Question				
Describe your level of satisfaction with the **teacher MOUs process** during the 2020–21 school year?	Multiple Choice	Completely satisfied; satisfied; neither satisfied nor dissatisfied; dissatisfied; completely dissatisfied	Multiple Choice	Completely satisfied = 1; satisfied = 2; dissatisfied = 3; completely dissatisfied = 4 neither satisfied nor dissatisfied; = 0
How would you describe the teacher MOUs process during the 2020–21 school year?		Constructive; collaborative; combative; limited; other (short answer)	Multiple Choice	Constructive; collaborative; combative; limited; other (short answer)
Do you anticipate the MOU for the 2021–22 school year will be the same for the 2021–22 school year if an MOU is needed?	Binary +	Y; N (why -short answer)	Binary with short answer	Y = 1; N = 0
What contributed to the challenge(s) in completing teacher evaluations during the 2020–21 school year?	Open	Short answer	Open	
What contributed to the success(es) in completing teacher evaluations during the 2020–21 school year?	Open	Short answer	Open	

Follow-up Semi-structured Interviews

Actual Questions

The following questions are about all teachers.

What supports were provided for teachers who struggled during the 2020–21 school year?

What supports were provided for teachers who were being evaluated and experienced success during the 2020–21 school year?

Who was involved in deciding whether teacher evaluations will be conducted? How were teachers and administrators trained during COVID-19?

How did teachers and administrators collaborate during COVID-19?

The following questions are about teachers who were evaluated during the 2020–21 school year.

What supports were provided for teachers who were being evaluated and struggled during the 2020–21 school year?

What supports were provided for teachers who were being evaluated and experienced success during the 2020–21 school year?

How will you compare the quality of teacher evaluations during the 2020–21 school year to the previous evaluations during the 2019–20 school year?

How will you compare the quality of teacher evaluations during the 2020–21 school year to the previous evaluations during the 2019–20 school year?

What were some unique components of the teacher evaluations due to COVID-19?

How was the use of technology included in the evaluation process?

Which CSTPs were excluded in the evaluation process?

What changes did you see regarding the number of evaluation ratings, in other words, satisfactory or unsatisfactory evaluations?

Were teacher evaluations used to extend their teaching career in your school district?

How were teacher evaluations used for teachers to attain tenure?

The following questions are about administrators who were involved with evaluating teachers during the 2020–21 school year.

What training did they receive to evaluate teachers during the pandemic?

How did they respond to their responsibility of conducting teacher evaluations?

What struggles did they report?

What successes did they report?

What changes were put in place to support site administrators while conducting teacher evaluations?

Questionnaire Framework

Research Questions	1) What is the state of teacher evaluations in California K–12 public schools during the COVID-19 pandemic? 2) How have teacher evaluations measured and supported teacher performance during the COVID-19 pandemic? 3) What role did communication, collaboration, and transparency play in the discussion around teacher evaluations during the COVID-19 pandemic?	
Survey Questions	Literature Review Topics: Business	Literature Review Topics: California Public School Districts
12; 13; 16; 18	Modified Employee Evaluations (RQ 1 and 3)	
	Mullen (2021) presented the results from the Gartner polls from 2020, which indicated "most organizations are tweaking evaluations rather than canceling them entirely amid the pandemic" as published by *The Wall Street Journal*.	Hemphill and Marianno (2020) "only twenty-five school districts formally altered contract language in their spring response to COVID-19 by signing Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with their teachers unions" (p. 2)
	Mullen (2021) summarized the managers' responses to their evaluations during the pandemic as becoming "more frequent, informal check-ins [,*which*] have become popular instead of formal evaluations."	Moreover, Gerber (2020) and Goldstein and Shapiro (2020) found "as school district leadership, administrators, teachers, and their labor representatives navigate the reality of COVID-19 schooling, questions regarding … labor agreements on the ability to flexibly address student needs have arisen" (p. 2).
	In 2020, executives overwhelmingly reported being concerned with evaluations; yet, in 2021, Mullen reported employers being flexible and empathetic as they evaluated their employees.	Hemphill and Mariano (2020) exemplified the importance of teacher evaluations during the COVID-19 pandemic. "Reducing the required number of observations or standards … or suspending measures of student growth (p. 179).
	Bastone reported, "Facebook will also do away with its upcoming review cycle and instead will give all of its employees an 'exceeds' mark, which could unlock significant bonuses. Facebook will also give its full-time employees a $1,000 cash bonus to help during the coronavirus crisis—a gesture that was not extended to its hourly contract worker."	As challenging as the COVID-19 pandemic has been in education, an article published by Whitlock (2021) advised administrators to consider engaging in evaluations that are meaningful.

	Mullen (2021) reported "Hilton has simplified its process, turning formal reviews into three-question evaluations, and focusing on employee effort, not just results."	She recommended administrators support and give feedback to teachers regarding their creativity, "high technical skills," quality over quantity, and flexibility (Whitlock 2021).
		Hemphill and Marianno (2020) synthesized from Gerber (2020) and Goldstein and Shapiro (2020) that "the impact of labor agreements on the ability to flexibly address student needs have arisen" (p. 2).
		Hemphill and Marianno (2020) stated, "A dynamic response to COVID-19 during the fall will likely require that unions and school district leaders revisit agreements early and often so they can flexibly adjust contracts and labor expectations to the ever-changing circumstances concomitant to the COVID-19 pandemic" (pp. 10–11).
	Suspended Employee Evaluations (RQ 1 and 3)	
12; 13; 16; 18	Bastone (2020) reported Google would be suspending their employee evaluations.	Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Long Beach, suspended all evaluations…" (Hemphill & Mariano, 2020, p. 177).
	Considerations Toward Female Employee Evaluations During COVID-19 (RQ4)	
10; 11; SSI	In a Harvard Business Review article, Mackenzie et al. (2020) identified the struggles women faced with the pandemic and urged managers to take responsibility to ensure "the bias against women" (in particular women of color) "doesn't do further damage." (possible quote)	
	Mackenzie et al. (2020) reported on how women, in particular, are greatly impacted by a crisis.	
14; 15; 16; 17; 18; 19; 20; 21; 22; 23; 24; 25;	Consistency and Clarity Teacher Evaluations (RQ2)	
		The process in which principals engage to evaluate teachers (Mathers, Oliva, & Laine, 2008) needs to be considered.
		Yet, Young et al. (2015) argued two important aspects lack clarity regarding the teaching profession: 1) and

26; 27; 28; 29		Marzano et al. (2011) argued "Supervision has been a central feature of the landscape of K–12 education almost from the outset of schooling in this country" (p. 1).
Continuing Teacher Evaluations During COVID-19 (RQ2)		
18; 33; 34; 35		Whitlock (2021) recommended, "While administrators might be tempted to relax evaluations during the pandemic, teachers deserve attention and candid feedback to grow and be successful." (possible citation)
		Hemphill and Marianno (2020) argued "…the lessons learned in spring contract negotiations have implications for the design and implementation of fall schooling plans, and that how fall schooling plays out will shape teacher morale and labor relations beyond the 2020–21 school year" (p. 2).
		Small contract enhancements do not appreciably impact student learning (either positively or negatively) (Marianno and Strunk, 2018); but could improve teacher morale."
		Moreover, Hemphill and Marianno (2020) note, "failure to carefully attend to teacher working conditions as outlined in contract language could exacerbate teacher morale and lead to labor unrest" (p. 170).
		Teachers are "the most important influence on student learning (Aaronson et al., 2007; Goe, 2007; Leithwood et al., 2004)."
		Consider how teacher evaluation improves teacher performance (Taylor & Tyler, 2012, p. 158).
Consideration of Teacher Evaluations During COVID-19 (RQ 1 and 2)		
30; 31; 32; 33; 34; 35		Regarding the Vergara case, Cohn (2014) offered support for teachers and teacher leaders.
		Moreover, Cohn (2014) argued, "enlisting, engaging and collaborating with classroom teachers as they are the only ways to genuinely move the needle on student achievement."
		Cohn (2014) posited "an effective leader …goes to work every day trying to figure out how best to motivate, inspire, and develop the adults who work with kids."

Table 9: Highest Number of Responses Leading to Successful Completion of Teacher
        Evaluations

Collaboration
1. Principals [sp] and teachers worked together to make it a meaningful process and principals [sp] ensured that teachers did not feel that their administrators were "out to get them" in any way. There was a lot of grace afforded due to distance learning.
2. Lots of partnership with the union leadership and administration.
3. Working collaboratively [sp] with our union
4. Staff that were willing to "make things work" with their site administration.
5. Collaboration on what will help teachers be the best version of themselves for our students.
6. Administrator collaboration
7. Strong collaboration between union leaders and district admin.
8. Collaboration, transparency, and communication.
9. The common sense collaboration of our teacher's [sic] association and district admin leadership.
10. Collaboration
11. Administrators and teachers had to work together to give and receive feedback on their teaching practices.
12. Collaboration between administrators and teachers
13. We have a collaborative relationship with our union partners, so that helped a lot.
14. Our admin team were trained and shared best practices in regards to online teaching and desired outcomes for lessons.
15. The main reason we were successful was based on the constant collaboration between the union, admin, board and those being evaluated.
16. Collaborative nature of the sudden changes in educating students.
17. Evaluated skills vs. canned lessons
18. Higher levels of collaboration lead to increased informal opportunities to collaborate - newly hired teachers were more open to different methods of teaching and feedback
19. Collaboration, training
20. Administrators were organized and were collaborative with their colleagues.
21. The collaboration between the teachers and administrators
22. Collaborative working relationships with unions. Ed Code requiring evaluations for prob/temp.
23. Collaborative working relationships with unions. Ed Code requiring evaluations for prob/temp.

24. Collaboration with the association and sharing clear expectations with staff. We took an empathetic approach to staff and prioritized addressing probationary staff and teachers who were struggling.

Table 10

Second-Highest Number of Responses Leading to Successfully Completing Teacher Evaluations

Only Probationary Teachers Were Evaluated

1. Focus on probationary teachers
2. We were lucky and hired a group of outstanding teachers who were in Prob 1 and Prob II roles and then we modified our permanent teacher eval [*sic*] process and kept that minimal/easy.
3. Support for first- and second-year teachers, collaboration on what will help teachers be the best version of themselves for our students.
4. Not requiring them was a success. For probationary teachers who were evaluated, having clear expectations about virtual instruction helped to guide them and administrators, as well.
5. It allowed us to monitor our new temporary teachers and stay on top of who is due and not have such a backlog.
6. The district was able to narrow the focus of the formal evaluations to new teachers (year 1–3). All other constructive and informal evaluation was facilitated through collegial dialogue in staff meetings and PLC configurations as needed.
7. For the prob 1 and 2 teachers, admin indicated it was easier to meet with the teachers before and after the observations because of Zoom.
8. Limiting evaluations to only first- and second-year teachers was also very helpful.
9. Very few evaluations to focus on.
10. Evaluations were completed only for non-tenured teachers.
11. Limiting the scope to temporary, probationary, or teachers who had been in Performance Improvement allowed administrators the ability to spend more time with the educators who needed the most support.
12. We limited evaluation to Year 1 and Year 2 teachers and those already participating in our Peer Assistance Review program.
13. We used the traditional evaluation system and tool as best we could for first, second, and temp teachers.
14. Principals focused solely on temporary and probationary staff; they were able to work more closely with those staff; principals had fewer evaluations to complete.

15. We focused on providing probationary teachers excellent feedback all year long, including a summary narrative in the spring with goals for next year.

16. Only non-probationary staff were evaluated. There was so much going on with the implementation of safety systems that the evaluation of all veteran/tenured-staff made no sense.

Table 11

Third-Highest Number of Responses Leading to Successfully Completing Teacher Evaluations

Communication

1. Clear communication of the evaluation process and flexibility of administration and staff, alike.
2. Timely communication
3. Ongoing communication and meetings with union leadership as well as all unit members
4. Collaboration, transparency, and communication
5. A lot of discussion and sharing of ideas
6. Communication and reset of expectations locally
7. Communication and perseverance

Table 12

Results from the drawing

Once the survey was closed, the participants' email addresses were included in a free online spinner-wheel application, *AhaSlides*. As each winner was drawn, the spinner was spun again until all 10 winners had been randomly drawn by the online website *AhaSlides*. A congratulatory email was sent to each winning participant, and each winner was asked to verify their email address prior to sending the ecard with the code to their $100 Amazon gift card. The 10 randomly selected winning entries came from across various counties, with two from Los Angeles and one from each of the following counties: Imperial, Nevada, Riverside, San Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, Santa Clara, Solano, and Sonoma. Three winners never responded to confirm their email addresses, and the researcher's attempts to reach them went unanswered. The other seven participants received their $100 Amazon gift card.

California Counties with K-12 Public School Districts Represented in this Study

Source: diymaps.net (c)

Figure 2

Participants Representing 36 Counties

Semi-structured Interviews

R will stand for researcher.

P1 will stand for participant.

Participant #1

R: (Greeted the participant)

Thank you again for completing the survey and being here today.

R: You did get asked for your permission to record?

P1:   Yes, I did.

R: The recording will be destroyed once it is transcribed. There will no connection to you or your district.

R: The first question is if there were any distinctions for the types of support they received who were not being evaluated, if they were struggling, or if they were having success?

P1:   20–21 school year … part of our COVID memorandum of agreement with our teachers, that is our certificated and our classified employees, is that there would be no evaluations for that school year – the pressure for the teachers, certificated employees to have to add evaluations on top of everything else they were doing adapting to hybrid model. You know, at home model, all of that stuff. What they were doing is not what where we wanted them to spend their time. We wanted them to spend their time focusing on their students and their instructional strategies and activities. Part of what we had done, too, was our evaluation system was brand new to us in school implementation phase in the 19–20 school year, and, as you know, the pandemic hit in March of 2020.

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And, so, we were also concerned that if we implemented the new program without or when the certificated employees had so much else that they were worried about that this new program that we are so excited about and happy about and its potential for growth model mindset for the certificated employees would all be thrown out the window.

P1: I can come back to that if you have any other questions on that.

R: Would you share the name of the model of your new evaluation tool?

P1: Yeah, it's something that we spent three years creating—shared (omitted to avoid identifying the district)—I led that endeavor.

R: —and it was created by your own district—

P1: Yeah. We spent three years creating it. I led that endeavor, and we had administrators and a variety of certificated employees that represented all types of certificated positions from nurse, to counselor, to speech pathologists to school psychologists.

R: Wonderful!

R: A lot of the questions are around evaluations so because evaluations were not included for the year—they were waived—let me go ahead and skip.

R: Does your new model include the California Standards for the Teaching Profession Standards or CSTPs?

P1: Yes.

P1: Do you want to stick with just teaching or do you want to stick with all certificated?

R: I wanted to talk about teachers and administrators.

P1: Okay. So, teachers and administrators only?

R: Yes. For teachers, yes. Absolutely CSTPs.

R: Does your new evaluation tool or model include all of the CSTPs?

P1:   Yes. For teachers, yes. Absolutely all of the CSTPs. And what we have included is
       what we borrowed from induction, which is the continuum which is just straight
       out from that model. The reason we landed on keeping. What we did though is we
       changed the … actually, I don't know if we did actually because I don't have a
       copy of the CSTPs, but we changed our rankings from exploring, applying,
       integrating and innovating and that may very well be. I think we thought about
       going away from that, but then we thought: Why if all of our brand-new teachers
       have to go through induction, why change what they are already familiar with?
       And also, we did not want to eliminate any of the other standards or the key
       elements because they are in the CSTPs. And so, the other element of our
       evaluations we include the Standards for the Teaching Profession and the
       California Stull Bill because, as you know, the state they never connected the two
       together so we needed to have both parts in there.

R: Since you did not include evaluations for the 2020–21 school year, was there an
       agreement for the 2021–22 school year regarding evaluations?

P1:   All we did for this school year was change up our timelines because there was so
       much, even though, we had been back in person last school year starting in
       October. This year every single student was back in person. There was no rooming
       and Zooming. We have a whole different model set up for any students who need
       to be virtual learning this year through the independent study program and so all
       we needed, and we had new principals. We had one new principal. And, because
       we had put pause on the evaluation system last year and I am the only one in the

district who knows it and understands it, I needed time to be able to train everybody, and we also had when our new director of human resources resigned at the end of last year because I came from the HR background in our school district for 19 years. … We, I, needed to be sure that how I restructured the HR department was up and off the ground and that everybody who was taking on additional duties to fill that position without refilling it with one person was fully aware of everything that they needed to do, but the teachers were just fine with that because they were also needing to. Oh, I remember one other element because what the teachers have noticed this year with their students is that huge—I won't call it. Well, I will call it—a gap between their students, so in a first-grade classroom, as an example, the gap is much wider for the students who do know and don't know and where they have to catch them all up. So, we needed everybody to be able to get the school year up and running.

R: So, then you are taking this year—the district is taking this year to get everyone really familiar with the model.

P1:   We are actually implementing it full board. The only thing that we did was the evaluation plans. We don't call them goals. And I have a whole reason for that, and at some point, I can get into that, but the evaluation plan and those evaluation conversations, program conversations. We just pushed them back. Instead of having to have them done in October, they needed to be done in November.

R: Let's go ahead and go into that. You chose not to call them goals because…

P1:   Because what I noticed collecting all of the goals for the year, when teachers were being evaluated, all people did was basically spit back the standards for the teaching profession and did not personalize them and never again were they ever

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referenced. The other thing for me is having sat through evaluations and looking at it for 19 years and also for a couple of years within that time I was also responsible for evaluating individual teachers like art teachers, as an example, what I realized is and know is nobody is ever evaluated on a goal. You are evaluated based on the standards for the teaching profession, so, if teachers are picking and choosing individual goals, they lose sight of the fact that they are evaluated holistically. And we actually had one teacher who was in probationary status come back, and, when we were having that non-reelection conversation with her, she actually told me that you cannot do this because you did not evaluate me on all the standards. Hold up. Evaluations and non-reelections, whether you are a fit or a match, are not connected at all. And there is only one evaluation, and that is at the end of the school year. You have these elements along the way of where the administrator is gathering data and determining on how to support you and where they need to give you feedback, but there is only one evaluation, and they are not connected at all. And so, yes, the elements the administrator talked to you all throughout the year along the way are actually used for evaluation. In our system, we have something. So we went from evaluation goals to evaluation plan, and the other thing that we realized was, through the course of the evaluation development process, that the teachers who were eligible to do a professional development program, they had to be in the district for a minimum—in their sixth year in the district—that those were the evaluations that made the most difference for the teachers were the ones eligible for that. Evaluation was personally meaningless to a teacher unless they had tied their evaluation to something that they know that they wanted to work on, so that is why we shifted to wanting to do

evaluation plans for everybody. They do differ between a temp and a pro and between a permanent and six years and beyond in our district. And then we also created evaluation sources because that was also people did not understand that how you behave as a team member, and that is not an observation in the classroom. With everything you do the whole gestalt. Who you are as a teacher in our district matters.

R: So that ties to standard 6.

P1:   And it is also is every other single element because our teachers work in teams, and so, if you are implementing a new phonics program, as an example, you are tied to that and you are tied to supporting your colleagues. So, everything is integrated and intertwined. We are no longer free agents in the classroom.

R: So, what training did teachers and administrators receive to support this new model?

P1:   Explaining, for me. So, what we did back in 2019–20 when we rolled it out, it was part of our professional development day. So, we had presenters, and all of the certificated employees were all in a room and everybody had the evaluation model. We explained the work that went into it, why it took three years to develop, why we did two full years of pilot programs with it, and how it is meant to be iterative and learning. And it is not a model that was going to sit on unused for 20 years and never have it be evaluated or looked at in it of itself. So, there was, I feel—being HR background and middle school teacher by my teaching time—it's that human beings need to understand the why. You cannot just hand somebody something over and say because I said so. I don't think that works well for people. So, we went through a big training around that, helping them to

understand the whole process we went through, the "why the model is this way," and then ensuring that our administrators understood that at a deep level because they are the ones who have to implement the evaluation program for those they are evaluating. So, if they can't explain it, then it's no good for anybody. And so, if I continue to be the only one who holds onto the knowledge and if I continue to be the one who trains everybody, then people don't end up—and it is a human nature trait—they don't end up on learning it and integrating it into their repertoire. So, it was a lot of work this, and I did not do any direct training with teachers per se, but it was the work with the administrators.

R: So, if I hear you correctly, it is now the site administrators who are now providing the training and then giving the knowledge to the teachers to understand the new model for the evaluation?

P1:   Yes. And the other component that we built in—this is my second year as superintendent in the district, and it is the first year that I have ever experienced in my 30 years in the district—that we have actually had priorities and goals. We have always had board goals, but they were not specific. So, as an example, this year our priorities are continuing to implement, develop and implement our racial equity work that gets us that were closest to the classroom in the classroom and then we never had developed an MTSS system. And then also, because our district is not basic aid among a whole bunch of basic aid districts in our county [*omitted name*], we need to be fiscally prudent and sound because we have a cliff of [*omitted amount*] that will be going off in 2023–24. Couple that on top of now, we will be in basic aid status but not deep into basic aid status. So, I have made these goals the priorities. They are in everything we talked about, in everything we do,

so they are also brought into the evaluation system. The principals as they are

working with the teachers to know that these are priorities every one of us works

on, not just the superintendent top down. Everyone. So therefore, their evaluations

must be tied to the evaluations to one of those priorities everyone must work on.

These priorities. So, I pushed but not mandated that they be focused on racial

equity.

R: Thank you. All right. I hear a lot of collaboration and communication, which were

the most consistent responses attributed to success. And another one was the fact

that a lot of districts waived their evaluations or only evaluated probationary

teachers. So how did your district handle evaluations for probationary teachers?

P1:   Since evaluation is not tied to whether or not you can non-reelect or release the

teacher, we always kept them separate. We did not have to any non-reelections.

R: In regards to communication, how did you ensure… how did the district ensure

that teachers and administrators were aware of any shifts or any evaluation

changes for the year?

P1:   Via email and then also through staff meetings that the sites had. The teachers had

to be on campus five days a week, so they had staff meetings again. Schools are

safe places. We tried to hold the meetings in person as often as possible. Rooming

and Zooming was also allowed. This provided teachers who needed to quarantine

could still participate.

R: That covers all the questions I had. Is there anything else you would like to add? I

think we covered all the different areas I wanted to discuss.

P1:   No. Well, let me just say I think when evaluation is meaningful is when it makes

the most difference. We are trying to treat our evaluation program as a growth

mindset, but it is also a continuous improvement model. And then, the only other thing I would like to add is, even though the state no longer requires PAR, our district has continued that model again for that same reason. We would do everything we can do to support them and get back on track because at some point they were on track.

R: Thank you. Let me stop the recording.

Participant #2

R: Now we are recording. You probably will get a statement asking if you are okay with recording.

P2: Yes, ma'am.

R: Okay. Again, I am Irene Preciado. Thank you for completing the survey and coming to this semi-structured interview. I will be recording. As we are recording, know neither your name nor your district will be identified, and as soon as the recording is transcribed it, it will be deleted.

P2: Perfect.

R: Wonderful. I have a set of questions for us. The first question is: Who was involved in the decision-making about whether or not teacher evaluations would be conducted during the 2020–21 school year?

P2: It started as a cabinet-level decision with the superintendent and the three assistant superintendents. That would be the CBO, Ed Services, and HR, and the discussion was around obviously how the COVID pandemic would be impacting the classroom. We then had a discussion with the teachers' association and negotiated

some language around delaying evaluations for teachers who were in good standing for that particular year.

R: It sounds to me like you decided not to evaluate teachers who were not in need of evaluations, correct?

P2:   Correct. So, we did still evaluate teachers who were temporary employees and also probationary employees who were gearing toward tenure. The employees who we waived the evaluations for were basically any other permanent staff member who did not have any unsatisfactory evaluations during the last, I think it was, four years.

R: Wonderful. Now, were there any distinctions made for the types of supports available for teachers who were not being evaluated and were struggling or having success? Were there any supports for them?

P2:   There were. Our education services department did have both a coordinator and—I am sorry. Technically, she was a teacher on special assignment for a .7— and one of our directors of curriculum to work with any staff members who needed support. We also had gotten additional training and created like little web trainings on Google Classroom and a myriad of other tools that teachers who weren't used to utilizing the technology would have access to. And then our principals were also able to trigger support for any staff who needed any additional mentoring or help as it related to technology.

R: Okay. How were the teachers and administrators trained in terms of getting ready for evaluations?

P2:   That was a little tougher. The administrators were trained on scripting evaluations in the new platform. We used Google Meet in our district. The new platform they

looked at ways that they could attempt to increase student participation and things like that during evaluations. But, as to teacher support, preparing just for evaluations, to my knowledge, there wasn't anything that was differentiated between just the additional training and support for the regular classroom instruction.

R: Okay. How would you compare the quality of teacher evaluations from 2019–2020 to the 2020–21?

P2:   They definitely suffered, and the challenge also even with the 2019–20 year was any educator who was up for an evaluation, once we called it "COVID locked down March 13," once that happened, that year was also impacted with some second evaluation, so it was definitely not the same as our regular evaluation cycle. Thankfully, we've gotten back to our normal evaluation for the current school year.

R: Yes. What role did technology play in the evaluation process during the 2020–21 school year?

P2:   For our secondary students [*staff*], the evaluation was done electronically. We were fortunate in terms of our district. We brought our students back in early November for our TK–5th grade, so all of our elementary evaluations were able to be done in person. It was only our secondary evaluations during that school year that we had to do them utilizing Google Meet.

R: Does your evaluation tool utilize the CSTPs or the California Standards for the Teaching Profession?

P2:   Yes.

R: And were there any CSTPs excluded in the evaluation process?

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P2:   Our district has a selection of which areas are going to be focused on. The entire

        or all of the various components of the standards are evaluated; however, there are

        a set group that are targeted in terms of more time being spent on the evaluation

        and the actual pre-meeting post-meeting and so forth, but there was nothing that

        was excluded.

R: By the same token, nothing was emphasized in the CSTPs?

P2:   No. And our evaluative tools have the "not applicable," so if some of the

        instances—like classroom culture and climate—if it was something where the

        evaluator did not observe it, we would have that option in terms of in the

        evaluation.

R: I believe you already answered this question, but I am going to ask you anyway.

        Were teacher evaluations used to extend their teaching career in your district? In

        other words, to gain tenure during the 2020–21 school year?

P2:   They were.

R: What was the collaboration like between teachers and administrators?

P2:   Very positive. We're fortunate to have a district that emphasized teamwork and

        collaboration. Everything from the COVID, MOUs themselves, to the actual

        schedule and what the dates would look like for the students was built through a

        collaborative process.

R: How did the administrators respond to the responsibility of conducting teacher

        evaluations during COVID, the 20–21 school year?

P2:   They rose to the challenge. It was definitely stressful, meaning the things that they

        like to be able to observe and even from the drop-in observation to the formal

        observations and evaluations, witnessing those things that they normally pay

attention to like organization, classroom management, it was much more challenging in the virtual media, so it did increase their stress related to the quality of their evaluation that they were able to provide as well as the feedback they were able to provide to their teachers.

R: The next question—I believe you have already alluded to that—is what struggles and successes did administrators report? Is there anything else you would like to add to that?

P2:   I don't know that it would be evaluators that had issues, but it was the participation that teachers struggled with, meaning during the pandemic there were students who never had their video up, who were not fully engaged, to those students who wanted to participate but had technology issues. So just the challenges relating to the quality and access to education at the time was definitely visible throughout the feedback being provided during the evaluations and observations.

R: Very true. You have already talked about the supports that teachers received. What about the administrators? What supports were put in place for them while they were conducting teacher evaluations?

P2:   The technology supports. We had our executive director of technology always working on improving our network, making sure we had newer devices and really making sure we had access to the equipment. And, the backbone of the district server, everything functioned appropriately so that there wasn't an issue with buffering or dropping a call. So, the technology support was huge. And then also access to the Ed Services department and their ability to provide insight in terms of ways to support with questions and things like that.

R: Were there any special considerations for female staff, that being both teachers and administrators?

P2:   There wasn't any differentiation between male or female staff in our district.

R: The private sector. The business world. There was quite a bit of distinction?

P2:   We did not make any special considerations; however, there were females in our negotiating team as well as our CBO is female. My wife is an oncology nurse, and during the year of COVID while my son was not in school, I was actually the one at home. One of the supports: in general, most districts provided access to remote work made available to all staff.

R: Important distinction. Is there anything else you would like to add?

P2:   No, not really.

R: Again, I want to thank you. I am very appreciative of the time you have taken to participate. Let me stop the recording.

Participant #3

R: Thank you again for taking the time to fill out the survey and to participate in this semi-structured interview. It will be just as a reminder, neither you nor your school district will be mentioned in the survey.

P3:   Okay.

R: Who was involved in the decision-making about whether or not teacher evaluations would be conducted during the 2020–21 school year?

P3:   2020–21 was last school year. The decision-making in general would be our bargaining team, which would be myself, our CBO. We have two principals on the team. Obviously in consultation with our superintendent, but, primarily, the way I

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structure it is the two principals that are in our team—we are a K-8 district—and so one is an elementary principal and one is a middle school principal. They are kind of like: If we have questions that we want to ask, they get the feedback from their colleagues and bring it back to us. So, I know what we have said "Hey, ask them if they think this an issue or not." So, in a sense it was everybody, but in a sense, it was just us at the table.

R: So, what was the decision? Did you conduct teacher evaluations or did you not?

P3:   We did do teacher evaluations on all temp and probationary employees. But for permanent employees, at the beginning we said we would not be doing anything until after our October break. We have a non-traditional calendar, so we have a two-week break at the beginning of October. And then as October came and it was clear that it did not look like in-person in sight for a while, we were still trying to negotiate hybrid and those kind of things at that point. We decided to forgo evaluations last year and then push everybody out one year. So, anybody due last year is now due this year. Anyone who would have been due 2021–22 is now due 2022–23, with the exception of the people with a five-year extended plan. Those people, we are making them stick to their five years. If last year was year five, obviously this year they are being evaluated this year, and, if this year was their year-five, they are being evaluated this year.

R: Got it. Thank you. How were the teachers and administrators trained and what training was provided to conduct to be able to conduct the evaluations during COVID?

P3:   We did not do any training.

R: How did teachers and administrators collaborate during the 2020–21 school year?

P3: I think a lot… I think many of our principals felt like they were able to be in the classrooms much *[sic]* more times because they did not have to deal with discipline or parents or things like that. So, they were spending a lot of time popping in Zoom sessions and talking to them. In talking to our principals about our teachers, particularly in talking about many of those same people and talking about whether or not we are going to reelect them or not, it's very interesting how our site administrators really saw some key engagement strategies that teachers (really our new people) were really great at last year and how some of those things translated to the classroom but other things, they didn't. They did not really have to deal with classroom discipline the same way, right, when kids are in. We said "oh, wait these people really don't great classroom management skills," because they didn't, you know, specially newbies. They maybe got two or three months of student teaching, and then there was nothing at all and then maybe they picked up the last month or so teaching virtually, and they came into our classroom completely virtual so those are skills they are missing now. I felt like in conversations with the principals about our temps and probs, they actually got to know those teachers and in a different way but in some way more in-depth last year because they were only focusing on them than they do in a traditional year because you are trying to get through evaluations.

R: Now, were there any distinctions made for the types of supports that the teachers received for the 2020–21 school for teachers not being evaluated if they were struggling or if they were having success? How were they receiving supports? Any distinctions on that?

P3: I think there were some additional trainings and things. A lot of additional training that we provided last year through our curriculum and instruction department, much more than in typical way. I think it also pushed us to provide it in ways that people could access those trainings in a, you know, asynchronously at any time. Whereas you know our traditional training would be an after-school training, and that's it. You come to this after-school training from 3:30 to 5, and, if you are not present, you don't get access to the training. Whereas being virtual, really forced us to kind of say "hey, if we record it, more people could access it, more than typical."

R: Yes. Now these next questions are about teachers being evaluated. So, your temporary and probationary teachers, what types of support did the teachers receive when they were struggling or being successful?

P3: So, I think in all cases in our district, not just our induction, but we offer mentor support to anyone who is new regardless of whether or not it's required for them or not. So, anyone who is new to our district, even someone who came in with ten years from another district and came to us, we offer and strongly encourage them to voluntarily participate in a mentor program, so they have that support of a mentor. They have principals, kind of sharing and coaching them along the way. Our instructional coaches, which there are only two. Well, last year we actually had, no, we still, it was we still … we had two and a half, last year. They did a lot coaching and work with our temps and probs last year as it was needed, and our principals always know they can pull on those instructional coaches to help target people who need that additional support.

R: Now, what, how would you compare the quality of teacher evaluations from the 2019–20 to the 2020–21 school year?

P3:   Like I said, in some ways, I think our principals had more time to really spend with those new teachers, since the new people were the only people we were evaluating, than they typically would. So, I think in some ways they had the ability to help and support them more and to really focus on them and give them more constructive feedback than they do in a traditional year. Where while they focus on them during the beginning of the year, then they got to start picking up their permanent staff who are actually being evaluated during that second cycle. Typically for us, the second cycle is when at that point the principals got to bring their permanent people or they are not going to get to all their evaluations. So, I think, they were able to actually provide better feedback and understanding because it was a small group of people.

R: Do you use the CSTPs or the California Standards for the Teaching Profession in your evaluation tool?

P3:   Yes. We use CSTPs but ancient CSTPs. We are on the two previous versions. They were revised. They are being revised. We are not even on that previous version, on the R… the original… yes, the original CSTPs.

R: Now, were any of those excluded for the evaluation or emphasized?

P3:   No. There weren't any explicit exclusions or emphasis.

R: Were teacher evaluations used to extend their teacher career during the 2020–21 school year? I think you already answered this. In other words, were teacher evaluations used to gain tenure?

P3:   Yes, so people we did do a couple of non-reelects last year. We had a group of

        people who moved to permanent status in July when we started school.

R: This is about administrators for the 2020–21 school year. What training did

        administrators receive to evaluate teachers during the 2020–21 school year?

P3:   We did not have any specific training for them for that school year.

R: I forgot one question earlier. What role did technology play in the evaluation

        process?

P3:   It would not have been any different than a typical year, you know, other

        obviously than the technology of them all being in Zoom and principals popping

        into Zoom versus being in a live classroom. But we did not change any of the

        other aspects of technology. We do not use any other platforms for our teacher

        evaluations. We are an old school. It is a Word doc that they fill out. We are not

        using like *Evaluatee* or even *InformK–12* or any of those other platforms that you

        can put your evaluations in. I think *Frontline* has evaluations as well. We are not

        using any of those platforms.

R: How did the administrators respond to the responsibility of conducting evaluations

        during the 2020–21 school?

P3:   I mean, I never heard anything one way or another from them. I never heard

        complaints or praises about it, other than it wasn't uncommon for them to say how

        much they enjoyed being able to pop into classrooms much more than they could

        during the normal school year.

R: What supports were put in place to support administrators to conduct teacher

        evaluations?

P3:   Nothing specific.

R: Were there any special accommodations for female either teachers or administrators?

P3:   No.

R: The reason I asked: in my research, the public and the business sector made specific accommodations.

P3:   Our teachers were not required to work from their classrooms. It varied significantly from site to site. We gave principals some latitude of that as well. Our schools were where we have day care programs. Administrators? We do not have many who have school-aged children, so it would not have impacted them much.

R: Is there anything else you would like to add?

P3:   I don't think so.

R: Well, again, I want to thank you. I know it's late, so I do not want to keep you much longer. Let me stop recording.

Participant #4

R: We'll go ahead and begin recording. I just want to reiterate my thanks to you for the time you've taken to fill out the survey and to come and join me for this semi-structured interview. Neither your name nor your school district will be associated with any of the responses. When the recording is transcribed, then everything will be deleted. Again, thank you. Let's go ahead and get start it.

P4:   Sounds good.

R: I'd like to know who was involved and what was the process of the decision-making about whether or not to conduct teacher evaluations during the 2020–21 school year?

P4: So we meet with our employee association leaders, and we have an open dialogue about how we wanted to proceed with everything that is going on with everything, with the evaluations, just the stress of what it is to be in front of the computer all day, and all of that. So, we mutually agreed that we would suspend the evaluation process for all our permanent staff, but we still needed to continue the evaluation process for temporary and probationary staff because there are timelines for that. And, so, we agreed on that, and it took a lot of stress off everybody. We want to work together, you know.

R: So in the committee who made the decision, tell me who in terms of position was involved? (Waited a few seconds) So you said there were union representatives or labor negotiators, but in terms of were there any site representatives like administrators from the site or was it just district? (Waited a few moments) I cannot hear you, so I don't know if you are talking or not because I cannot hear you. So, I will wait for a reconnection. (A few minutes later) Welcome back. Welcome back. Can you hear me?

P4: Sorry, yes, I can hear you. Can you hear me?

R: Yes, now I can.

P4: Did you hear that I said who the leaders were, or do you want me to repeat that?

R: Yea. If you can, repeat that because we did not hear that. We, meaning the recording and I.

P4:   Right, right, right. I am going to get inside my truck because I think that is going to help us a lot.

R: Okay.

P4:   So, the union president and vice president and their California Teacher Association field representative and myself, the assistant superintendent, and my director of HR.

R: How did teachers and administrators collaborate during the 2020–21 school year?

P4:   We do what's called association round tables. So monthly we have set calendar dates where we would Zoom in together and talk about what's on top, what's needed, what can we do to support each other, and have an open dialogue.

R: And we, is?

P4:   The superintendent, all of cabinet, which is the assistant superintendents for business, learning, and HR, my director of HR, and the president and vice president for each of the associations.

R: Where there any distinctions made for the types of supports that teachers were receiving during the 2020–21 school year if they were not being evaluated and if they were struggling or if they were being successful?

P4:   That is a great question, and that was probably the biggest area of support needed because who's done this before, right? So, what we did, we had a bunch of teacher leaders that got involved in looking at instruction and tools and resources. We are a very progressive district so were already using Google and a lot of its functions, but we helped everybody or tried to. We did not enforce it, but we strongly suggested to go to Google Classroom and—ah, gosh, you know, there is another program that we used, and it's not off the top of my head—but we wanted to give

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our teachers options so students could log in during asynchronous time to do their work and they could see what the teachers needed because some kids can work independently very well and some needed extra support and interventions. So, having Google Classroom and using our Parent Square, which is our communication to inform our families where they can get the supports needed. Our tech services department made sure that everybody had Chromebooks, and we were able to make sure that happened within a week of going into locked down or home or whatever we called that I forgot.

R: Remote learning or distance learning?

P4:   Yeah.

R: Did they also receive hotspots?

P4:   Yeah. If teachers needed equipment for their homes. We didn't require them to come to work. They could use their office or classroom as their studio, and some did. But the ones that wanted to be home, we helped them get set up, and we tried to keep costs at minimum. So, if paper copies had to be made, then you had to come into the school and make those copies, because some families preferred the paper packets because they had difficulty struggling with the technology, so we didn't want to use that against them. We did not want a learning loss, so we did whatever it took.

R: So the following questions are about teachers who were being evaluated. So your probationary teachers. What types of supports did they receive if they were either struggling or being successful?

P4:   We went on because of Zoom, and most of us used Zoom with a little bit of Google Meets, but mostly Zoom as a district. The opportunity to go watch other

teachers and be supportive you know as a guest in the classroom and what have you. And we set it up naturally so that people didn't feel they had to do it. We just wanted teachers willing to be a host, and they would sign up to be host so that a new teacher could get in. But, here is the funny part: some of our new teachers were the hosts, and our veteran teachers came in as guests. It was very symbiotic.

R: The fact that you created an open opportunity, I think, that is what made the difference.

P4:   Because we knew that the socioemotional stress was on everybody, and we wanted to give grace. And so, if there was a teacher who was probationary one, and we were not quite sure how they would be with the classroom environment, unless they were just not doing their job professionally in a lot of different areas, we allowed them to come back to do probationary two because we knew it would be in-person to get more of a lens on it. So, the probationary two people, that was a tough one, but they got to see them year one, and usually we don't let you go to year two unless you are doing satisfactory work in year one. So, we felt pretty good about that. And then just thinking setting up professional communities at each of the schools and grade levels. We did create grade-level Google Classrooms for all grade levels so teachers can go back and forth and look at what other second grade teachers are doing across the district, so not it's not just at your school site, but across the district, so we could share the best of everybody's practices. And, thank goodness, we have so many teachers that love to share and help each other out, so it worked it really well, I think. I mean we are not perfect, so I am not going to try to tell you everything is perfect.

R: Of course, it was a learning experience for all of us. What training did teachers receive to prepare for their evaluations?

P4;   So basically, they sit down with their site administrator who is doing the evaluation, and we put together a guideline and a calendar so that they can share that with their teachers, so that they know they can hit all their target dates for support and how to use the forms. We started going with an online system for evaluation, so no paper had to be used. They would just go into the portal, and they could see what the evaluator was writing and the evaluator could see what the teacher was writing in the reflective aspects of the evaluation. And we had to train our administrators, and we asked our administrators to train our teachers, so it was, you know, a lot of people having to learn the system, but we wanted to go with the system anyway. It's just with the pandemic helped force it even more so that we could use the technology to be our support.

R: Was this the first year of the evaluation tool?

P4:   The software, the online, yea. The software and the tool were the same. The documents are negotiated, and that can't change, so the actual evaluations stayed the same. Using this portal to navigate it, that was new, but that was going to happen no matter what. It just proved itself very necessary where we were. So, people could stay home and not have to print documents and come in and do electronic signatures and all that.

R: What role did technology play in the evaluation process? And I think you already started to answer that.

P4:   Yes. Technology was the system being used with the district collective bargaining agreement evaluations.

R: Did it play a role in terms of administrators coming into the classrooms via Zoom? You know, access to technology for students? Or, for teachers, did that have any impact on that?

P4:   Well, I mean the administrator has to do informal visits versus and formal visits. So, in setting that up, they would communicate through email and communicate on one-to-one Zooms how to navigate that together. We don't like doing surprises, so everything is preplanned, organized. And, yes, you can have somebody have extra time to support an official visit, but an informal can happen at any time. So, our administrators had all the Zoom links for all their teachers and could pop in at any time they wanted to, but we try to do that in a way that is supportive and not just like "ding! Who are you and why are you here?" So, yeah, because it is a stressful time. And, as you know or what I used to tell the teachers when I hired them because I meet with all new teachers, is that I used to pretend my room was all windows and all my parents were watching me teach. I put that much pressure on myself. Guess what the pandemic did? Exactly that, because there is now… you are not in the classroom. The doors aren't closed. The windows aren't shaded. Everybody can be in your living room or wherever you are teaching and see you teaching now. So, I think that put stress on teachers, but I think teachers that, you know, had that confidence in not the technology piece but just, you know, put that pressure on themselves they were fine. I think the stress came to people not being used to having people in the room, having the parents watching or from behind the camera. I think that did add some stress to people, but I think it made us better teachers, so that this year in-person, if they have the same mentality of everybody is watching you and we just do the best we can, and not worry about it, you know.

R: Does your evaluation tool utilized the CSPTs or the California Standards for the

        Teaching Profession? And if so, were there any that were excluded or

        emphasized?

P4:   Yes, per our collective bargaining agreement, the teachers don't have to do

        "goals," but we do our own induction program. So, we follow the induction

        program to get there clear. So, the first year they work on the first three standards,

        and their second year, they work on the second three standards.

R: So, they were no changes made, then?

P4:   No, no, no.

R: I think you already addressed this, but were teacher evaluations used to extend

        their teaching career in your district, in other words, get tenured?

P4:   Yes.

R: How would you compare the quality of teacher evaluations from the 2019–20 to

        the 2020–21 school year?

P4:   That is a good question. I think it's situational. I think it's between the evaluator

        and the teacher and the relationships that they have and how they navigate that.

        With a new teacher, they do not know what to expect, so whatever they got is

        what they got. But my coaching of my principals is that we are here to support

        people. We are here to make it an observation and a coaching experience, not like

        an evaluation tool. So, we do not even call it evaluations. We call it—ah. Of

        course, I just went blank. Oh sorry. Gosh, I am so sorry it will come to me.

R: It's okay. It will come to you.

P4:   But we don't use the word "evaluation" because it just feels evaluative versus, you

        know, an observation of teaching practice. I think that's not the name, but that is

kind of the genre that I am trying to get to. It's a teaching practice. That is, it's informative, and that we help people navigate that so that their nerves aren't so jittery. Just be yourself, plan ahead. But that is why you preconference so that there is no surprises. Right? And then you go execute your plan, and then you go debrief it. Then we try to emphasize a reflective practice rather than what you could have done better and stuff like that, and more like: what did you feel that went really well for you and the kids? What was the evidence of that? And then: what are some things you would do differently? And then: what are some areas that you think if you had to do it all over again, what would you do? So very reflective.

R: Nice. I believe you have already answered this. What training did administrators receive to conduct or to evaluate teachers?

P4:   So that's through me and my office. Admin meeting, where we go over that with new and veteran administrators, so we have consistency of practice.

R: How did administrators respond to the responsibility of conducting teacher evaluations?

P4:   They were relieved, too, that they only had to do the new people.

R: What struggles and success did administrators report?

P4:   I think they felt more comfortable if they could have gone into, you know, a real classroom versus the virtual room. You know, technology gets in the way. So, we gave people grace, you know, if their screen froze or if the kids or classroom management because they're in their home. The kids are in their home; they are not in their classroom. So, we gave grace for that and understanding. And then the other support with, if kids were not engaged, because we looked at attendance for

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not just being online but for what they were doing to get engagement. So, if we were getting kids that weren't engaged, our site administrators would be calling their families and their counselors to get those kids engaged and learning.

R: What supports were put in place to support site administrators while conducting teacher evaluations?

R: (After a moment of silence) Can you hear me? Can you hear me? I cannot hear you. I do not know if you heard the question.

R: Did you hear the question? Can you hear me? Can you hear me?

P4:   Yes, I can hear you. I don't know if you lost my signal. Sorry. Sorry.

R: Did you hear my question?

P4:   I thought I did. Maybe you did not hear me. Did you not hear my answer?

R: No.

P4:   Would you repeat the question?

R: What supports were put in place to support site administrators while conducting teacher evaluations?

P4:   We gave them a timeline to make sure they got everything done. We would periodically check in with them. They would have a management meeting. We would debrief to see how things were going.

R: Were there any special accommodations for gender, or female staff, both teachers and administrators?

P4:   No. We were just there if people needed something. We wanted to be there for them. Not so much that we took it to that link. You are right. Most teachers in elementary and administration are female and in secondary male. What I also

noticed, mostly male field, we lift women up in leadership. I want to see you being

successful. Her husband is in tech. The men still get to work from home.

R: Is there anything else you would like to add?

P4:   Just, you know, I think everybody did the best they could. For my district, I

believe, that we tried so hard to make sure people had the resources they needed,

the time. We negotiated a one-time salary bonus just to say thank you. It's not

enough, but we did increase our salaries too because our budget allowed it. You

know, there is always things you wish you could have done better afterwards and

what have you. What I recommend and wish people did. We constantly met with

our associations to make sure we understood what they needed, where they were

coming from, but it did not make it harder or easier. But it was just, ah, I am ready

for this thing to be done.

R: Just so you know that communication and collaboration have been consistent

themes throughout, so it is nice. Let me go ahead and stop the recording.