Teacher Evaluation Systems and Their Impact Upon Academic Dance Educators and Their Evaluators

Elizabeth C. Brennan

University of Northern Colorado, elizabeth.choreo@gmail.com

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TEACHER EVALUATION SYSTEMS AND THEIR IMPACT UPON ACADEMIC DANCE EDUCATORS AND THEIR EVALUATORS

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment Of the Requirements for the Degree Of Master or Arts

Elizabeth C. Brennan

College of Performing and Visual Arts School of Theatre Arts and Dance Dance Education

December 2019
This Thesis by: Elizabeth C. Brennan

Entitled: *Teacher Evaluation Systems and Their Impact Upon Academic Dance Educators and Their Evaluators*

has been approved as meeting the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in the College of Performing and Visual Arts, School of Theatre Arts and Dance, Program of Dance Education.

Accepted by the Thesis Committee:

___________________________________________

Christy O’Connell-Black, M.A., Chair, Advisor

___________________________________________

Sandra L. Minton, Ph.D., Committee Member

___________________________________________

Accepted by the Graduate School:

___________________________________________

Cindy Wesley, Ph.D.
Interim Associate Provost and Dean
The Graduate School and International Admissions
ABSTRACT


The purpose of this study was to explore gaps and biases within public school teacher evaluation systems and their effects on traditional public school dance educators and their evaluators. At the heart of this is the attempt to answer a series of questions involving the voice of six dance educators and five instructional evaluators concerning their experiences with teaching evaluation systems and their direct correlation to educational dance in the areas of fairness, equitability and bias. The research instruments used in this study included electronic surveys and face-to-face interviews, both of which were created specifically for each participant population. The data suggested that public school educational dance teachers and their evaluators felt the best way to conduct observations and evaluations of dance educators was through the professional lens of qualified, educational dance professionals and that evaluators without professional background or experience in educational dance are ill-equipped to support educational dance teachers.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Public school teachers across the United States are subject to evaluations determining their overall effectiveness as educators. Based on surveys, teachers receiving such evaluations, which are meant to measure overall effectiveness in the classroom, feel the outcomes of such evaluations are out of their control (Grissom and Youngs 7).

Teachers are required to comply with these evaluations in which administrators, teaching coaches, or district appointed evaluators observe their teaching and then provide coaching and strategies meant to help teachers become more effective in their classrooms. Teachers are then tasked to take this feedback, apply it, and demonstrate growth of their teaching practices. Often, educators strive to implement the strategies given them by their evaluators; however, they find themselves defeated as despite all efforts, they are unable to satisfy the expectations of their district or state evaluation rubric. This study will look into the perceptions and concerns of traditional public school dance educators and their evaluation processes as they apply to dance education.

Historically, one-room schoolhouse teachers were the single governing body of the educational administration, acting as principals, secretaries and deans of discipline, as well as evaluators of teaching, which they measured through student achievement. These teachers were often selected by a type of community school board (Vardas and Ewell 8). As time passed, public school reform was politically promoted, and local school boards became the governing bodies for local public education and held the power to retain or
dismiss teachers. However, in the 1890’s school reformers, made up of social elites, “demanded centralization as an antidote to low-performing schools and advocated control by professionals as the cure for the incompetence and corruption of local school boards” (Ravitch 5). Centralization landed greater responsibilities upon public school teachers making non-instructional tasks and subjects beyond general education were delegated to others in an attempt to decrease the strain modern education put on public school teachers. As public education reform continued through the 1960’s, there was a call for decentralization, breaking up and widely redistributing educational authority, of the recently centralized, singularly controlled, public education system. Now, all school-age children had received the right to free public education despite background, and cultural and political capitol. Therefore, classroom sizes continued to increase, diversity grew, and curriculum was standardized. With all these changes, came growing pains, as public school educators once again found themselves in the line of fire.

In the late 1960’s, the issue of decentralization versus centralization turned into a heated battle. Newspapers featured daily stories about community groups demanding decentralization of the schools and blaming teachers and administrators for the school system’s lack of success. (Ravitch 4)

The political battle was underway and public school educators were caught in the middle. Leftist revisionists, those seeking accountability in public education, attacked it with the:

goal of demolishing what they saw as a widespread myth about the benevolent purposes and democratic accomplishments of public education, treating the public school scornfully as institutions devised by elites to oppress the poor. (Ravitch 5)

Overall, the basic daily demands upon educators and job responsibilities, increased to a boiling point. In the 1990’s and early 2000’s, reformers continued to speak with conviction about the need to apply accountability to public education, meaning teachers, principals, and governing school bodies needed to be held accountable for student
achievement. Corporate reformers comprised one of the loudest sets of voices calling for change. It was through these voices that the accountability movement was born (Ravitch 11-2).

Throughout the one-hundred-year time span of major public educational reform, public school teachers evolved with the world of education and their roles within education grew beyond instructing just their subject matter, so their responsibilities continued to be outsourced. Around 1910, subject areas like physical education and foreign languages were removed from the core classroom and delegated to expert teachers within those fields. (Tustin) This cycle continued as disciplines, like music and visual art, also required specialized teaching professionals and are now known as “specials” (Appling) or “electives” (Wolpert-Gawron) to the modern public school student. However, with this outsourcing, public school teachers (elective and general education) lost all freedom to, independently and without evaluative processes, determine whether their teaching was producing highly educated students.

Goal of Thesis

The purpose of this study was to explore gaps and biases within public school teacher evaluation systems and their effects on traditional public school dance educators and their evaluators. At the heart of this is the attempt to answer a series of questions involving the voice of dance educators and instructional evaluators concerning their experiences with teaching evaluation systems and their direct correlation to educational dance in the areas of fairness, equitability and bias. The research attempts to identify gaps and provide suggestions for improvement within evaluative systems.
This research is not intended to prove that teacher evaluation systems are ineffective, rather to magnify gaps within the system and offer suggestions for improvement within the system, where appropriate.

**Purpose of Study**

This study was meant to identify the biases within the teacher evaluation systems and their effect on public school dance educators and their evaluators within a particular public school district. The researcher attempted to answer a series of questions based on research involving the voice of dance educators regarding their experiences with fairness, equity and bias of the evaluation system as well as with their evaluators. Additionally, evaluators of dance educators will be given the opportunity to expand on their abilities to conduct fair, equitable and unbiased evaluations. Each participant was given the opportunity to discuss and expand upon the following questions:

- **Q1** How have teachers felt the impact of teacher evaluation systems upon public school educational dance?
- **Q2** How have instructional evaluators felt the impact of teacher evaluation systems upon public school education dance?
- **Q3** Do public school educational dance teachers feel they receive fair and equitable evaluations?
- **Q4** Do public school instructional evaluators feel they provide fair and equitable evaluations?

**Significance of Study**

Research of this kind has a very narrow reach into nationally mandated public school teacher evaluation systems because it often only focuses on a single set of general educators. Despite its narrow breadth of research participants and data, this research study is still a considerable step for educational dance.
It is nearly impossible to find a single district that offers educational dance from Kindergarten through 12th grade in multiple schools, and due to the point that, American education historically marginalizes art education in K-12 curriculum (McCutchren 18). Studies on teacher evaluation systems are rare, if any at all can be found with a focus on educational dance. Opportunities for research specifically related to the effect of teacher evaluation systems upon educational dance teachers, are even less prolific than studies related to teacher evaluation systems and how they affect core content areas.

This research will contribute to educational dance as it will further the understanding of and advocacy for dance educators and the dance content area within public education. This is accomplished by discussing whether the research suggests the need for evaluators to have background knowledge in educational dance. Additionally, it will explore their systematic ability to provide dance educators with impactful and equitable coaching, evaluations, and professional growth opportunities. It was also necessary that the research determine if districts should provide an evaluator with a background in dance education if one cannot be provided at the school level. Such a resource may be a way in which non-dance evaluators could be equipped with the tools necessary to collaborate their knowledge and potentially increase their effectiveness with and for dance education.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction to Educational Reform

Because states and districts are left to their own devices, yet expected to comply with teacher evaluations, it is important to investigate who is responsible for checking for equity and ensuring that all teachers have access to fair and accurate evaluations, as well as knowledgeable and experienced evaluators within their content area. This chapter will focus on teaching evaluation systems and what current research says about their effectiveness for public school dance educators.

*A Nation at Risk* (1987 as qtd. in Vardas and Ewell), The Education Summit (1989 as qtd. in Vardas and Ewell), No Child Left Behind (2001 as qtd. in Vardas and Ewell), and the Race to the Top (2009 as qtd. in Vardas and Ewell) are all measures of federal educational reform. In 1983, the Reagan administration published “A Nation at Risk” setting to warn the American public about the need to reform U.S. Schools (as qtd. in Vardas and Ewell 25). In 1989, President George Bush Senior, organized the Education Summit at the University of Virginia in which “no teachers, professional educators, cognitive scientists, or learning experts were invited” (Ansary). In 2001, President George Walker Bush continued his father’s educational reform efforts with the No Child Left Behind Act. Most recently, in 2009, the Obama Administration initiated the Race to the Top initiative (as qtd. in Vardas and Ewell 25), in which American public
education’s primary, elementary and secondary institutions were urged and rewarded for implementing higher state standards and strengthening low performing schools, in turn beating other districts at getting all students to grade level proficiency. The federal educational policies that came to be, as a result of the efforts to reform public education in the United States, carried drastic changes that educators would feel across the nation. One of these changes arrived in the form of teacher evaluation systems. These systems are a result of the high stakes testing practices put into place by the NCLB Act of 2001 (as qtd. in Vardas and Ewell 25). Eventually, teacher evaluation systems were adopted as an educational norm (Ravitch 11). These evaluative processes began as an attempt to combat education seen as “homogenized, diluted and diffused to the point that they [it] no longer have[s] a central purpose” (“A Nation at Risk” Par 3 as qtd. in Vardas and Ewell 25).

While the Reagan administration was a point in history many years ago, the fact is, it was with the Reagan administration that federal policy and education began to collide.

While it is unfair to describe any one of these federal policies as the reason teacher evaluation systems are in place, they must all be recognized as major athletes in the Olympic educational reform endeavors. As reform led policy makers to mandate teacher evaluation processes, teacher evaluation systems were only in their infancy at the time of NCLB in 2001. Proponents for educational reform felt that teachers and schools should be held responsible for poor student achievement. Thus, a standards-based system of accountability was put into place and required that all 50 states comply (Vardas and Ewell 26).
While *A Nation at Risk*, the Educational Summit, No Child Left Behind and the Race to the Top were all major factors in establishing the current American educational climate (as qtd. in Vardas and Ewell 26), it was the adoption of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, signed into law by President Bush on January 8, 2002, that placed educational reform center stage (Spillane 2).

**Introduction to Teacher Evaluation Systems**

Today teachers are held accountable for the quality of their teaching through a system of evaluation. They are provided rubrics and teaching guidelines, which they are required to follow, and are then evaluated on how well they met the rubric standards (explanatory rules) in order to achieve certain levels of proficiency in their teaching. Teachers who achieve those expectations at a satisfactory or above level are considered effective, while those falling below the mandated expectations can be placed on mandatory improvement plans or even lose their jobs if they do not meet the requirements.

**Teacher Accountability**

Public education is made up of many different content areas, however, despite the differences and uniqueness teachers bring to their students, each is expected to meet levels of proficiency provided by their state or district in order to be considered at the level of “achieving.” Meaning, just as states were required to create and implement their own standards and standards-based curriculum under NCLB, they were also left to independently decide how their teachers would be evaluated (Vardas and Ewell 27).

The U.S. Department of Education (2014) defines the role of the federal government in education policy as primarily a State and local responsibility. It suggests that states and communities, as well as public and private organizations
institute schools and colleges, develop curricula, and determine requirements for enrollment and graduation. However, over the last three decades, districts and schools have been increasingly impacted by policy measures that occur at the federal level. As such, reform measures trickle down from the state, to school districts, and then individual schools. It is the intent of these policies to improve education however; educators implementing those changes within a school are often left out of the conversation... Reform efforts are often perceived as being rolled out haphazardly with minimal thought in what it needed for successful implementation. (Vardas and Ewell 11)

**Evaluation: State Versus District**

Teacher evaluation systems are conducted differently across states and districts. The Obama administration’s, Race to the Top, continued the accountability measures put in place by the Bush Administration’s, No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, federally mandated teacher evaluation, requiring all states and districts to evaluate and rate their teachers (as qtd. in Vardas and Ewell 12). The districts within the state can then elect if they are going to use the state system or create a system of their own. For instance, the Colorado Department of Education provides the *Colorado State Model Evaluation System, Practical Ideas for Evaluating Teachers of the Arts: Dance* (CDE), for every school district in Colorado. Some districts chose to use the system provided to them by the CDE, while others chose to create their own, such as the Denver Public School District with their evaluation system known as *Leading Effective Academic Practices*, or LEAP (DPS). However the evaluative process takes place, the overall outcome must be a system under which teachers are evaluated and provided ratings that are based on teacher quality, standards, and measures of student learning and growth. To do this, states and districts provide their administrators with systems comprised of rubrics and assessment processes that can be used to evaluate teachers and their instruction. In many cases, a single principal or administrator cannot take on the task of evaluating all of the teachers
in their building; therefore, they have other members of their staff trained to employ the evaluation system required by their state or district. Any person conducting these evaluations is considered an evaluator.

Evaluators and Coaches

In addition to evaluation, many states, districts and schools often implement a coaching model under which teachers are provided with training in order to improve their effectiveness per their state or district evaluation system. Often, a teacher can expect their evaluator and coach to be the same person; however, the model under which teacher evaluations take place is not consistent across states or districts. A teacher cannot expect the evaluation system in one state or district, to mirror that of another, hence, the major issue facing public school teacher evaluation systems (CDE). While state education standards are regulated and required to comply with national education standards, there are no national evaluation standards available to regulate the state and district evaluation standards for teacher evaluation systems. As a result of this lack of regulation, there is no shared definition of “good teaching” and inconsistencies remain unregulated (Marshall 21).

Evaluative Inconsistencies

Current research also concludes that teacher evaluation systems have been a subject of resentment for many educators and those administering evaluations. Kim Marshall, author of Rethinking Teacher Supervision and Evaluation: How to Work Smart, Build Collaboration and Close the Achievement Gap expands on teacher discomfort with evaluation processes.

Evaluation has become a polite, if near-meaningless matter between a beleaguered principal and nervous teacher. Research has finally told us what
many of us suspected all along; that conventional evaluation, the kind the
overwhelming majority of American teachers undergo, does not have any
measurable impact on the quality of student learning. In most cases, it is a waste
of time. – Mike Schmocker (Marshall 19)

There is a general consensus amongst educators that the evaluation systems are “broken”
(20), meaning they feel as if they are pigeonholed into a specific type of teaching.
Educators lose authenticity and their effectiveness suffers because of the expectations of
the evaluation systems. Meanwhile, administrators struggle to keep up with the demands
of conducting evaluations and often there is no shared definition of “good teaching”
across districts or states. Even more troubling, public school administrators, evaluators
and teachers often differ in their definitions of good teaching (23). All parties may agree
that the rubrics used for evaluation are not poor examples of teaching; rather, they may
say that such rubrics are isolated examples of good teaching. Unfortunately, because
these rubrics are single examples and expected to be the exemplary example meant to
propagate a mutual understanding of high quality teaching between all parties, the rubrics
themselves possess limits as its inconceivable for any person conducting or receiving
evaluation to expect evaluation rubrics to include every possible example of good
teaching (24). Additionally, the different approach taken by districts and states in their
evaluation systems may cause such widespread inconsistency and educators may be
unable to draw conclusive adjustments for their classrooms.

Teacher Evaluation and
Professional Identity

A question many ask concerning teacher evaluations is: “Why use them if they
are hated so much?” The fact is, “most teachers do the right thing most of the time, but
when teachers are left alone, mediocrity happens” (21). In a study conducted by Marshall
of Long Island New York public school educators, “end-of-year evaluations by administrators” received zero votes in an anonymous poll, about which factors-of-teaching most improved their effectiveness. Following closely behind “end-of-year evaluations” was “supervision suggestions from administrators” receiving only four votes from the group surveyed (20). Additionally, many teachers find themselves in situations where their professional identity controls their teaching and according to this poll put forth by Marshall, “natural talent and ingenuity” rated the second highest in public school teacher votes, declaring it the second most important factor in informing their instruction.

**Professional Identity**

Koff and Mistry, authors of “Professionalism in Dance Education,” from the *Journal of Research in Dance Education*, discuss professional identity, stating that teachers who carry a strong professional identity, positively contribute to classroom environment, school culture, career development and personal/professional growth. They further support the finding that teachers, across content areas, need a healthy professional identity. This study found that having a positive professional identity is the key to receiving and maintaining the status of an effective teacher on a public school, teaching, evaluation rubric (Koff and Mistry 84). Additionally, they discovered that “job satisfaction has a strong association with professional identity and that teachers are less likely to claim ‘burnout’ or leave their job if they have a healthy professional identity” (85). Marshall further supports this claim by stating:

> Principals need to create working conditions conducive to good teaching. These conditions include positive school culture, a clear vision and mission, curriculum clarity, high-quality assessments, good classroom materials and technology, time for teacher teamwork, a sane schedule, and smooth operations – including the absolute minimum of classroom interruptions. (21)
These two studies help support research that public school teachers’ professional identity and overall happiness directly correlate to an administrators’ ability to create “working conditions conducive to good teaching.” Because teachers’ egos and professional identity correlate, it is important they maintain or build a professional identity if they lack one. This process and public school teacher evaluation systems could go hand in hand. As mentioned, when there is not a shared definition of good teaching, teachers may experience discontent with their evaluations and their evaluators, making it imperative that all parties have a shared understanding of good teaching. Evaluation rubrics must be clear, and all parties must agree on their intended outcome before any progress towards building a teacher’s practice can take place (195). Finally, as argued by Kenneth Kastle author of *Educators Must Rally for Reform*, all of this is complicated by the fact that “with over twenty years of reform, educators have developed a professional inferiority complex combined with a strong sense of hopelessness” (Vardas and Ewell 28).

Marshall describes how none of these can exist and evolve without a coaching model, meaning teachers cannot be evaluated and expected to accept their results without first being allowed the chance to reform their teaching in order to receive a higher evaluative score. Additionally, teacher hopelessness cannot be managed if teachers are not allowed a sense of control over their profession. Thus, teachers must receive coaching along with evaluation (195), and if that coaching model is damaged, or less than adequate, conventional evaluations do not “have any measurable impact on the quality of student learning. In most cases, it is a waste of time” (Schmoker and Marshall 19). If students are not achieving, neither is the teacher and a healthy professional identity is impossible. Therefore, “teachers’ beliefs about good teaching are inseparable from their
notion of professional identity.” (Koff and Mistry 86) Furthermore, some of the greatest influences upon a positive professional identity are school culture and environment, teacher preparation, practice, and teaching experience (86).

**Professional Artist and Art Teacher Identity Comparison**

Koff and Mistry’s research further dissects the teachers’ professional identity by specifying the professional identity of arts educators. It is important to understand the potential impact teacher evaluation systems have on teachers of the arts and their identities:

as a result of their artist-educator dichotomy, this population presents a unique case when looking at professional identity. Many of the influences on professional identity are experienced differently due to the fact that arts educators must negotiate between their identity as artists and their identities as educators without creating a hierarchy between the two identities or giving preference to the identity that was established first. (86)

The above statement plainly says that artists and arts educators are in a constant battle within themselves as to whom they identify as or with. Therefore, when an arts teacher’s ‘teaching,’ professional identity is almost inseparable from their ‘artistic’ professional identity, finding satisfaction in an evaluation system or coaching model could be nearly impossible and twice as devastating if the process goes poorly. Separation of self from profession may be impossible for a teacher of educational dance, or any performing art. Such a situation and the possible destructive role coaching and evaluation could hold for dance educators is further explained by Koff and Mistry:

artistic experiences, teaching context, technical knowledge and skills, involvement in the world of their art apart from education; affiliation with a professional community; certification; aims, purposes and primary motives; and public responses are all factors that influence the professional identity of the arts educator… roles of the professional artist and the professional teacher of art
clearly separated in regard to education, training and prerequisites, yet the idea that the art educator often has to conform and identify with only one of these fields only lays the foundation for creative, intellectual, personal, and professional stagnation. (86)

This research suggests that requiring an educator of the arts to separate him or herself from their artist identity and conform to an identity as a professional arts educator is destructive to their ability to be an effective teacher. And, in the case of public school teacher evaluation systems, Koff and Mistry’s analysis of artistic professional identity, may be a cause for concern, as public school arts educators are required to conform their teaching to the rubrics evaluating their artistic nature. It is the identity of the professional arts educator that must overcome that of the professional artist, thus laying “the foundation for creative, intellectual, personal, and professional stagnation.” (86) In 1960, the Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism provided a less eloquent description of artistic personality; however, despite the linguistic quality, Koff and Mistry’s claims are confirmed. An artist greatly struggles with professional separation from their craft:

Artists tend to be neurotic personalities. They cannot live with themselves or adjust to others. Even if others were to conform to them, they would not be able to accept the status quo for long. Should their neuroticism become overly severe, they would become unproductive altogether. They are cursed and at the same time blessed with a high degree of sensitivity. (Nadel and Miller 157)

**Evaluation and Educational Dance**

Teacher evaluation and coaching systems hold profound power over a teacher’s daily practice. Dictating how exactly a lesson should be run. In the case of arts educators, such dictation could challenge their ability to effectively teach as regulations and guidelines restrict creative processes. In the case of this research, it is important to
discuss what claims the impact of teacher evaluation and coaching systems has on public school educational dance teachers.

Research states that evaluators and coaches must be qualified to provide meaningful feedback, critique, and appropriate evaluation scores or coaching to dance teachers. But most importantly, teachers of educational dance and their evaluators and coaches must know the definition of educational dance and understand artist identity in order for any system of evaluation or coaching to be effective. Brenda Pugh McCutchen discusses the difference in educational dance in her book, *Teaching Dance as Art in Education*. Identifying these differences may help evaluators and coaches understand the definition of dance that public school dance teachers adhere to, which is vital to the evaluation system as it will help provide evaluative equitability for dance teachers.

*Educational Dance Teaching Models*

The following table displays the differences between the many dance related teaching models.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gifted Education</td>
<td>• Students identified as gifted and talented</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Pursue career in professional dance</td>
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<tr>
<td>After-School Education</td>
<td>• Generally unregulated programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Do not produce quantity or quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Widely varied content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Dance Studio</td>
<td>• Stress technique and performance, specialized styles and skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Activity based classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Measure success of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Promote company model</td>
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<tr>
<td>Educational Dance</td>
<td>• Dance taught as art form in school based programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Learning in and about dance, to educate rather than produce professionals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Broadly educate all students in all facets of dance</td>
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</table>
McCutchen describes educational dance as “the process of teaching and learning how to create and produce the visual and performing arts and how to understand and evaluate arts forms created by others” (4). There are considerable differences between each of the educational dance models. Unfortunately, many models outside of the educational dance model, lead to students receiving fragmented instruction, isolating aspects of the dance discipline resulting in shortfalls of overall contextual learning. Many times, “a single dance class risks becoming a random event, not connected to anything else, and not even connected to other aspects of dance. Such models exclude many aspects of dance or build a larger perspective, leaving learning random” (McCutchen 14).

As represented above, there are many varieties of dance education, however, formalized in educational dance, having particular criteria that teachers must agree to in order to teach in public education. Because of this specified educational purpose, private studio, conservatory and dance company models are not appropriate models for K-12 public education (7). In comparison to the models above, “dance is taught as an art form in school based programs to effect learning in and about dance. To broadly educate all students in dance as an art form in all facets. To educate rather than produce professional performers” (5).

Without knowing the defining details of K-12 public school educational dance, an evaluator or coach may assume that all models are one in the same; although, K-12, public school, educational dance is about the use of the artistic process for all, not just gifted children or those with financially able families. Students in educational dance participate as a homogeneous group with heterogeneous individuals that offer an array of abilities,
skills and interests. Within these groups, multiple cultures, languages, experiences, and socioeconomic backgrounds are represented. Of course, some students can be classified as gifted, but overall, levels of experience will vary. Again, the curriculum used for such programs is not meant to create professional performers but rather to broaden students’ educational horizons. Educational dance in the public schools teaches human expression, emphasizes many styles, analytic inquiry, value, and analysis of dance using academic dance vocabulary, and provides a broad spectrum across cultures. This process helps students connect with other arts, academics and performances. In educational dance, the academic purpose comes first and ultimately governs instruction. Overall, teaching dance as an art form in public education affects learning and increases aesthetic awareness.

Educational dance is held to a high standard and dance educators are required to meet such standards with formalized education and licensing, making the evaluation of a dance educator’s teaching practices very important as it solidifies their achievement of a higher standard of educational dance. This high standard is also the reason evaluation of dance educators’ instruction needs to be taken seriously by administrators, districts, and states. By not providing them with evaluators and coaches knowledgeable of dance educational content does not show equivalence or integrity.

The dance specialist sets out to achieve educational goals similar to those of every other classroom teacher in the building, although, the way of achieving these goals and the teaching spaces differ. (McCutchen 8)

This speaks to the point of equity and integrity due to the “way” dance instruction is described. The way a subject is taught is extremely important, as it directly supports the research stating that dance is taught differently than other subjects (McCutchen 8-15). Therefore, rubric based teacher evaluation systems or coaching models originally slated
for specific core contents are not designed for subject areas that are instructionally different than those specific core content areas. This difference in instruction supports the possibility that such systems are inequitable measures of dance educators. This possibility of inequity leads to determining how to go about providing dance educators with fair evaluations or coaching from instructional grids that were originally intended for core contents. Additionally, how can an evaluator without experience in public educational dance understand what is and is not appropriate measures of evaluation for dance educators? McCutchen clarifies this further by defining educational dance in a manner that allows dance educators to clearly articulate their work allowing for greater understanding of the differences between educational dance and core content areas.

McCutchen describes six different defining characteristics of educational dance, which are represented in the following chart. Such descriptions are integral details of public school educational dance that not only public school dance teachers need to be aware of, but also that all evaluators and coaches need to be well versed in prior to evaluating any dance educator’s teaching.
Table 2. Six Defining Characteristics of Educational Dance (McCutchen 8-16)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Description</th>
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| Comprehensive  | • Broad scope of educational dance  
                   • Covering many facets of dance  
                   • Diverse styles and experiences |
| Substantive     | • Challenging and significant approach  
                   • Stimulating, content rich subject matter |
| Sequential      | • Ordered and incremental characteristics  
                   • Systematically builds skills by years through K-12  
                   • Compounding instruction, developing concepts, sequenced content |
| Aesthetic       | • Pursuit of fine quality, Appreciation of quality and beauty in diversity  
                   • Defining characteristic of educational dance, Separating from all other models  
                   • National Standards of Dance Education aesthetically driven |
| Contextual Coherence | • Relates dance to other aspects of learning across contents  
                     • Does not isolate dance learning as stand-alone event or fragmented instruction  
                     • Understandable and coherent as an art form |
| Inquiry         | • Students process of investigation, active, personalized and individualized  
                   • Meaningful and aesthetic inquiry, problem solving, higher ordered critical thinking  
                   • Creative, evaluative, reflective, participatory  
                   • Promotes artistic standards with learners responsible for learning |

Most of these educational elements can also be found in general core education as well, therefore, just as core content education is comprehensive, so is educational dance.

It is important to consider that educational dance addresses psychomotor, cognitive, and affective domains, and it parallels the breadth of national and state standards. It emphasizes dance as an art form and makes connections to other art forms but also draws from other aspects of dance such as social, recreational, and ritual dance. (McCutchen 8-9)

Additionally, dancing activities alone are not comprehensive or substantive enough to satisfy the goal of educational dance. “We must ask students to think critically as well as to articulate about these experiences to take on significance, and are processed into the
total learning experience” (Eisner, McCutchen 18). Rigorously challenging students to reach for their academic, aesthetic, and kinetic achievements requires interactions with materials of the craft, interaction with classmates, and collaboration with teachers. Challenging students to deal with complex material in the classroom makes complexities outside of the classroom more manageable and provides a medium for learning that students can apply to daily life.

Educational dance is also sequential, ordered, and incremental, systematically building one skill onto another, compounding instruction, and developing one concept to the next. From simple to complex, content is sequenced and skills are layered by year in K-12 public school educational dance. “Teaching [educational dance] is more than determining where students are right now and what they need to learn next” (McCutchen 11). McCutchen describes this holistic feature of educational dance as “spiraled” content, as it grows deeper and richer each year. Isolated learning experiences or activity-based teaching does not allow for this spiral effect and ultimately does not provide a fully comprehensive and substantive dance education for students.

**Evaluation and Aesthetically Driven Instruction**

Educational dance remains aesthetically driven, with the pursuit of fine quality as a characteristic. It is aesthetics that stand as the defining factor, separating educational dance from all other forms of traditional dance education and core teaching models. Aesthetics tend to be forgotten in teacher evaluation systems and coaching models. Trying to describe the importance of aesthetics to evaluators/coaches can be an excruciating task for dance educators.
Aesthetics

Aesthetics is "scientifically" described as a branch of philosophy dealing with the nature of beauty and our response to it (McCutchen 12). Developing an aesthetic perspective, according to McCutchen’s description of educational dance, is the defining characteristic of teaching dance as art in public school education. Aesthetics is that which is beautiful, well designed, and artistic. It allows us to explain away confusion surrounding differences in creativity and helps us appreciate quality and beauty in diversity. Aesthetics are pieces of nature not fully understood and the nature of dance is aesthetic art, which is easy to feel, yet difficult to explain. Valuing quality dance performance, balance, correct artistic forms, artistic value and exquisite qualities, aesthetics includes our responses to things of beauty around us and calls upon our personal feelings of satisfaction, emotional movement, accomplishment, and drive to do one’s best work. The importance of aesthetics in public school educational dance often goes beyond what tests and standards can assess:

Although Aesthetics is an individual feeling response (of the heart), aesthetic quality is also evaluated (by the mind) by what is collectively believed to be of good quality and form… it relates all dance experiences to matters of artistry and the degree to which artistry can be achieved for the satisfaction of the doer and the beholder. (McCutchen 12)

Ravitch, using different terms, also discusses the importance of aesthetics in public school education.

We must make sure that our schools have a strong, coherent, explicit curriculum that is grounded in the liberal arts and sciences, with plenty of opportunity for children to engage in activities that make learning lively. We must ensure that students gain the knowledge they need to understand political debates, scientific phenomena, and the world they live in. We must be sure they are prepared for the responsibilities of democratic citizenship in a complex society. We must take care that our teachers are well educated, not just well trained. We must be sure that
schools have the authority to maintain both standards of learning and standards of behavior. (Ravitch 14)

Ravitch does not stop at “liberal arts”, “science,” or “responsibilities of democratic citizenship.” What she is describing is education that calls on the “individual feeling response (of the heart).” She is describing “aesthetic quality as it is (evaluated by the mind)” (14). She recognizes that the children we are educating must be able to think critically through multiple lenses, thus supporting the immense need of aesthetic education through multiple forms of media. In the case of McCutchen and this research, this media is educational dance. It is upon the grounds of aesthetics that educational dance truly separates itself from other forms of dance education and core contents.

The research of Margaret H’Doubler supports both Ravitch and McCutchen in their grounds for aesthetic educational purpose. In an excerpt from her writing in The Dance Experience: Readings in Dance Appreciation, she holds that every individual (child), regardless of social, financial, religious, or educational standing, is entitled to the “fundamental belief in the artistic and aesthetic capacities of human nature and in the values of expression through some creative art activity” (352). She continues by quoting the Greek philosopher Plato who stated, “the purpose of education is to give to the body and soul all the beauty and all the perfection of which they are capable” (353). In such a quote, H’Doubler confirms Ravitch’s ideal that the education system must equip students for their intended role as members of the American Democratic society, as aesthetic qualities of education build a student’s capacity to fully participate in the complex society for which their role is inevitable. Furthermore, H’Doubler recognizes the danger educational dance can pose for the dance educator, student, and evaluator by confirming McCutchen’s purpose of the educational dance teaching model:
In the teaching and study of dance we should not be concerned whether or not students develop into professional or recital dancers. The concern should be to develop the power of expression through the study of dance… Everyone has intellect, emotion, spirit, imagination, ability to move, and educable responses. Every normal person is equipped with limits of his capacities. To bring this to the realization of our youth necessitates an approach that is based on these fundamental human capacities. (McCutchen 354-5)

National Standards for Arts Education

Research again describes the significance this partition between educational dance and core content subjects as aesthetics drives the “why” behind public school educational dance, dictating “how” it is taught. It is on the grounds of aesthetics that the high standards, demanded by educational dance, must be honored through the teacher evaluation systems. In 1994, the National Standards for [Teaching] Arts Education (NSAEs) were published. “The purpose [of their publication] was to stop the marginalization of the arts in American education and to ensure a place for the arts in K-12 public school curriculum” (McCutchen 18). The committee who banded together to create the NSAEs was the Consortium of National Arts Education Associations (DAMT for Dance, Art, Music, and Theatre). This committee held that the NSAEs were to be aesthetically driven, therefore upholding the aesthetic rigor and instruction of the arts content areas. Aligning ones’ instruction with the NSAEs is a responsibility placed upon teachers and, while teacher evaluation systems may check to determine if teachers’ instruction is aligned with national standards, there are no aesthetically based standards with which teacher evaluation systems are aligned. While aesthetics are forgotten in public school evaluations of educational dance teachers, the standards these teachers are following are indeed aesthetically driven, therefore the two models can not coincide as they are not both based off of the same national standards.
The final partition between public school educational dance and other models lies in the fact that the NSAEs are aesthetically driven. K-12 educational dance curriculum seeks the highest point of refinement in all aspects of dance, not just certain styles or specialties. (McCutchen 18) Educational dance reaches to attain what is extraordinary in student achievement, increasing artistic awareness and processing student's overall perception of exquisite beauty through their senses on a cognitive level. Aesthetic processes increase student’s overall engagement, satisfaction and retention, teaching students to transform ideas into movement through artistic thought and expression. Such artistic expression builds a perspective that looks at the whole world including dance, as compared to fragmented pieces of dance without the rest of the world. Student work in this setting should be refined, technically sound, artistically presented, and fluid in motion, and choreography should be based off artistic principles and the analysis of quality critiqued through educated student observers, which develops student’s aesthetic perspectives. The aesthetic drive behind the NSAEs is what drives rigor in the educational dance classroom. Therefore, when aesthetics is left out of the evaluation processes of dance teachers, the entire basis behind educational dance is left out. This then leaves only the term “educational dance” without any of the content or rigor associated with the subject area. Thus, making the high standard, public school educational dance teachers seek to achieve and have agreed upon providing students, null and void of any importance.

Aesthetic perspectives, built through an educational dance model, are collective aesthetics acquired through education and experience. Teachers of educational dance, as well as their evaluators or coaches, must also hold such perspectives. Students, who learn
aesthetic pluralism, meaning they are able to look at quality through multiple lenses, are able to develop a perspective of artistic quality based off the previously discussed principles of design. These experiences allow them to build personal aesthetics under which their individual responses are formed through their unique inner aesthetic perception. This process then comes full circle as it is enhanced by educational experiences in the arts and dance. “Aesthetic education in dance helps individuals make refined, personal, artistic choices within the context of what is considered good by collective, artistic standards without feeling rigidly bound to those norms” (McCutchen 12). Once again, aesthetics is the most significant characteristic of educational dance as it is the foundation for the difference between it, other models of dance education, and core content areas.

McCutchen also describes educational dance as contextually coherent, relating dance to other aspects of learning (14-16). A student of dance needs to not only understand, but also be coherent of dance as an art form. Such an understanding includes all aspects of dance learning within a broad perspective.

A dancer must also be a musician; that is, his body must be as musical when dancing as any instrument in an orchestra. A choreographer must have a command of music literature so broad that no music is overlooked for its potential use with dance. He must have a command of the musician’s craft so great as to be able to speak to his collaborators with intelligence and to understand the marriage of the two arts that can take place. A choreographer must have a sense for, and skills in, basic design in order to communicate with customers and set designers. He must know the art and craft of stage lighting in order to control the presentation of his work. A dancer and choreographer must know acting and directing in order to portray dramatic circumstances when need be and to handle the production of total theatre. Poetry and literature often provide stimuli for the choreographers’ work. (Nadel and Miller 156)

When dance is related to a cross-curricular and sustained learning environment, students achieve their educational goals and understand their learning by connecting it to
a larger picture of dance. When possible, students apply that learning to the rest of the world with relevance rather than disconnected ignorance. Such a process allows classification of dance works by style, function and genre much like that of music, providing deeper understanding of what dance is and how certain dances relate to particular styles. Without this context, learning is isolated in fragmented experiences and does not achieve complete understanding of dance (McCutchen 8-11).

Because dance inquiry is about investigation, this learning process is just as much for students as it is also a teaching style for teachers, inviting students to participate and problem solve in an active learning environment where they can explore diverse topics essential to their academic growth. Student investigation stimulates learning as discriminating choices are made by what they see and do in dance. They are called to rely on their critical and creative thinking, which requires a questioning attitude provoking them to investigate complexities they uncover and students are put in situations in which they must invest their entire self, body, mind and spirit to question and explore their learning. Ultimately, this process deepens the learning experience, advances education, energizes learners and engages them on many levels of critical thinking, requiring them to use their entire brain. To analyze, students must use their left-brain, while to imagine, students must use their right, placing them at the center of their learning where they personally acquire understanding of dance, fully individualizing their learning. (McCutchen 19-20) Individualizing learning builds student ownership as they personally seek relevant information and experiences. When students are made responsible for their learning they create, evaluate and reflect on their work with higher ordered and critical
thinking, fulfilling artistic standards through aesthetic inquiry, active participation, investigation, questioning and problem solving.

Dance as a creative art activity should be as basic to the education of the human being as any creative art, and its force should be recognized for its potential in human development. Dance in education cannot be an opiate for society. But the fact that education heads toward an integration of human capacities in terms of cognitive knowledge, physical control, and the total ability to express one’s unique ideas give dance (in which these qualities are inherent) a very important place in education. (Nadel and Miller 351)

The outlined characteristics above are visible in all areas of teaching; however, the aesthetic principle is unique in this analysis. Aesthetics is a major part of educational dance, making it well rounded and comprehensive. Teacher evaluation systems fail to recognize this aspect of educational dance, therefore, what may be considered the largest part of a educational dance teacher’s curriculum is completely disregarded by many, if not most, evaluation systems. Because of the ommitance of aesthetics in public school teacher evaluations of educational dance teachers,

It is important to investigate what a system that evaluates public school educational dance teachers should include and how these evaluation systems came about in the first place.

**The Evolution of Teacher Evaluation Systems**

Teacher evaluation systems are the result of the federal call for accountability by Republicans and Democrats alike in the early 2000’s during the era of No Child Left Behind (Ravitch 41). The system, which Ravitch describes as “a monumental failure,” changed the way teachers teach. This is due to the high-stake accountability system put into place by the call for school, principal, and teacher accountability for student test scores. Diane Ravitch examines the pitfalls of the NCLB system in her 2007 publication of *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice*
are Undermining Education. Ravitch discusses educational reform and how she was once a strong supporter of things like choice, accountability and charter. She also expresses that her view changed as she saw the system unfold. She admits that she began “seeing like a state” meaning, she was “looking at schools, teachers and students from an altitude of 20,000 feet.” She was looking at them as if they were chess pieces or objects that could be manipulated and moved around by big ideas and ambitious plans. As policy makers often do, she admits she had a poor understanding of education and drew false analogies between education and the areas she understood. In the case of education, policy makers drew conclusions about educational accountability by paralleling education with business, organization, management, laws, and data collection systems. Policymaking can be defined as, “Requiring one to make decisions that affect people’s lives without their having a chance to cast a vote.” (10) In this case, when policy makers chose to run the education system after a business model, they chose to imitate the data collection systems that provide information necessary to incentivize the workforce with appropriate rewards and sanctions for their efforts. However, educators are not general day laborers or white collared business people sitting behind desks. The NCLB accountability policy was a result of a ten-year gripe by Democrats and Republicans alike bemoaning the “lack of accountability in American public education.” They complained that, “no teacher, principal or student was held accountable for poor test scores.” Therefore, the resolution was to provide a system, like that implemented in places of labor or business, where teachers and schools would be held accountable; NCLB was this accountability system.
No Child Left Behind was passed on January 8, 2002, and modeled after a high-stake testing system in Texas, which was producing results but failing to keep the heart of education comprehensive. Policy makers wanted results and evidence that tax dollars were being invested accordingly. Therefore, comprehensive education was ignored and NCLB was passed.

An educational reform bill like No Child Left Behind was ground breaking. Supporters of the initiative promised that the U.S. would once again be in competition with other countries for the top spots in primary and secondary education. Unfortunately, the fall out was deadly for American education. “Teachers spent more time preparing students to take standardized tests, the curriculum was narrowed: such subjects as science, social studies, and the arts were pushed aside to make time for test preparation” (Ravitch 8). Meanwhile, the central focus of NCLB and the Race to the Top initiative, was accountability, and accountability was the start of teacher evaluation systems with sanctions and incentives only proven successful in business models (Ravitch 9). Such models may be right for business organizations, but they are not right for schools. Sanctions and incentives feed financial gains and bottom lines which are not the priorities of public education; “Some of the nation’s largest foundations are promoting school reforms based on principles drawn from the corporate sector, without considering whether they are appropriate for educational institutions” (Ravitch 4). NCLB and the Race to the Top initiative continued forth despite lack of correlation between business and education. The fact that “educators are often left out of the conversation when policy is determined however, they are often left with the task of implementation,” (Vardas and Ewell 2) was also well known, yet ignored and the process continued. Regulations and
requirements were placed on school, principals and educators, which proved impossible to meet. NCLB held that every child in America be educationally proficient in reading and math despite competency differences, socioeconomic differences, and differences in race, background, gender, and learning abilities, by 2014. This was out of reach and Ravitch expands on this expectation saying it:

> is comparable to congress declaring ‘that every last molecule of water or air pollution would vanish by 2014, or that all American cities would be crime free by that date’ … there is an important difference. If pollution does not utterly vanish, or if all cities are not crime free no public official will be punished. No state or municipal environmental protection agencies will be shuttered, no police officers will be reprimanded or fired, no police department will be handed over to private managers. But if students are not on track to be proficient by 2014, then schools will be closed, teachers will be fired, principals will lose their jobs… all because they were not able to achieve the impossible. (Ravitch 103)

Such a mandate with drastic consequences produces a compliance driven system that actually recreated the issues it was trying to resolve. As of Ravitch’s publication in 2007, there was no substantial body of evidence that demonstrated turn-around of low performing schools using the remedies prescribed by NCLB and the Race to the Top initiative. Additionally, with the passage of NCLB in 2001, the educational landscape of the United States drastically changed on a federal landscape, as prior to 2001, all standards based reform was held at a state level rather than national, since the federal involvement was seen as advisement rather than directives (Desimone 2013). Thus, creating a major disconnect “between policy makers and reformers, on the one hand, and the realities of urban schools, on the other side, is especially plain when we look at the assumptions in play when reformers try to put their ideas into actual practice” (Desimone 213).
Doing very little to improve the public educational climate here in America, NCLB and the Race to the Top initiative put policies in place that were inappropriate for education, removed necessary content areas from the comprehensive nature of K-12 public education and changed the role of educators for the remaining history of “The Great American School System.”

Despite growing momentum to reform teacher evaluation in order to increase it’s impact on teachers’ practice and persistence in the profession, very little research examines how current reforms influence teachers’ attitudes or reported instructional practices. (Vardas and Ewell 13)

Public school teacher evaluation systems are measures of accountably existing because of remaining NCLB policies which morphed in policies promoted by the Race to the Top initiative. Like their students, teachers are tested and the ramifications of these tests can be devastating if applied incorrectly:

Test based accountability has corrupted education, narrowed the curriculum, and distorted the goals of schooling. By holding teachers accountable for test scores in reading and mathematics, schools pay less attention to student’s health, physical education, civic knowledge, the arts and enrichment activities. When faced with the demands to satisfy a single measure but neglect the other perhaps more important goals of the organization. (Ravitch 161)

Schools, principals, and teachers became preoccupied with checking the boxes of the requirements under NCLB, just as teachers are preoccupied in checking the boxes of their evaluations. Because of this, they fail to remember the reason they are teachers:

While these competencies are important prerequisites for living in our modern world and fundamental to general and continuing education, they represent only a portion of the goals of elementary and secondary schooling. They represent neither the humanities nor the aesthetic and moral aims of education that cannot be measured. The scholars warned that ‘when test results became the arbiter of future choices, a subtle shift occurs in which fallible and partial indicators of academic achievement are transformed into major goals of schooling… those personal qualities that we hold dear – resilience and courage in the face of stress, a sense of craft in our work, a commitment to justice and caring in our social relationships, a dedication to advancing the public good in our communal life –
are exceedingly difficult to assess and so, unfortunately, we are apt to measure what we can, and eventually come to value what is measured over what is left unmeasured. (Ravitch 166)

Vardas and Ewell support Ravitch by concluding that,

Teachers are faced with a new set of standards that will change how they approach their curriculum and instruction. Teachers and administrators are required to implement a lengthy evaluation process that requires frequent administrative walkthroughs as well as lengthy conferences. As discussed, educators are left out of the conversation pertaining to reform that directly influences their work. (Vardas and Ewell 16)

Such short fallings are devastating to education; particularly to areas constantly considered last, like the arts. Ravitch mentions multiple times that the arts were forgotten during the era of NCLB. Evidence of this is still glaringly visible in education today. The arts are the first content cut in times of financial crisis. Literature thus far has supported this claim, however obscure arts like dance, are on the chopping block before those like music or visual arts because, like so many of the arts, dance is difficult to measure. McCutchen discusses aesthetics and makes a strong case for how and why aesthetics is perhaps the biggest academic portion of educational dance. Ravitch discussed how the aesthetics of education were washed away with the implementation of NCLB and perpetuated with the Race to the Top initiative. She persists that without aesthetics, the public school education system is unable to produce productive members of the American democratic society. Koff and Mistry discussed the aesthetics behind artistic identity and professional identity, how separating the two are impossible in the face of educational demands. Additionally, using evidence provided through the NSAEs, public school teacher evaluation systems fail to consider aesthetics when evaluating public school educational dance teachers. Failure to recognize national dance standards in public school teacher evaluation systems, creates an unjust system of evaluation for public
school educational dance teachers which fails to allow validation of public school educational dance at a federally academic level.

If dance is to function again as a vital experience in the lives of our people, it must be the responsibility of our educators. The inclusion of dance in the general education program is the one means of giving free opportunity to every child for experiencing the contributions it can make to his developing personality and his growing artistic nature. (H’Doubler 351)

**Validation of Educational Dance**

McCutchen speaks of the aspects of educational dance that are the reasons behind the accreditation of the content area. The *National Standards for Arts Education* (NSAEs) were put in place at the same time that all other academic areas were given national standards. The purpose of these standards was to ensure a place for the arts in K-12 public school curriculum and discontinue the marginalization of the art content areas within the American education system. These standards are meant to behave as stepping stones, upon which teachers can produce informed tasks for their students and to drive all learners forward in quality programs. It is through the process of accountability that teachers were given standards to inform their teaching. Teacher evaluation systems happened after the national standardization of the arts, but nonetheless, the accountability agendas were the starting point for both.

Standardization of the arts framed the manner in which learners are able to think, reason, imagine and express themselves. Public school dance education specifically hinges upon curricular cornerstones (McCutchen 16), under which all students should possess skills in dancing and performing, creating and composing, knowing dance history, culture and context as well as analyzing and critiquing. Under these basic standards, best practice for educational dance is brought forth for the educator to instill in
each of their students. Best practices are specifically, “those that educate students broadly in and through dance” (18). Students are guided through the enduring understandings of educational dance and artistic expression, they are pushed beyond what can be measured through testing and listed standards, and that the richness of dance is factored into the intrinsic value of performing, refining choreography, analyzing professional pieces and learning about social, political and artistic impact dance has upon the world. To put this plainly, on a federally academic level, educational dance is expanding the “fundamental belief in the artistic and aesthetic capacities of human nature” by allowing learners to express through creative dance activities (*The Dance Experience* 5).

Historically, the belief that educational dance is paramount to academic education is not new. Educational dance may perhaps be an area that cannot be explained to anyone other than educational dance teachers or those experienced in dance, but it is possible to argue that with the correct measures, understanding of the art, and appropriately trained or experienced evaluators, educational dance professionals can continue to find ways to prove the validity of their craft. Validation will help in future instances where the livelihood of educational dance is threatened, making it easier to keep off the chopping block.

Dance is a basic educational tool and a creative art activity that every student should be guaranteed. The right to creative freedom should not be overshadowed by policies or accountability measures. Educational dance has goliath educational potential; however, it is clear that through the history of educational reform, choice and accountability. Educational dance holds little value to business minded policy makers. It
is hard to measure and historically it belongs to societal elite or those who can afford aesthetic education outside of school walls.

The peasants outside the courts of King Louis the XVIII once marveled upon dance, in keeping with historical tradition. Dance began its journey in popularity out of reach of common folk and those considered less deserving. Research discussed the importance of creativity within child development... so why is it so greatly ignored? How can a revision to the way dance is measured within the public education system help create a platform fit for what was once the past time of kings?

The goal of this research is to look at the history, the research, and what we know about dance and how educational dance is measured, to find a way to enforce equitability across contents. Educational dance is confusing, there are many forms of dance education and it is easy to believe educational dance classrooms are meant to train the next best dancer, but that is simply not the case. Margaret H’Doubler published the following quote in 1967 about the nature of educational dance:

It should be expected that not everyone will be a great dancer, and that dancing, of course, will be experienced as a complete art form more by some than others but, as every child has a right to a box of crayons and some instruction in the fundamental principles of drawing and in the use of color, whether or not there is any chance of his becoming a professional artist, so every child has a right to know how to achieve control of his body in order that he may use it to the limit of his ability for the expression of his own reactions to life, even if he can never carry his efforts far enough to realize dance in its highest forms, may he experience the sheer joy of the rhythmic sense of free, controlled, and expressive movement, and through this know an addition to life to which every human is entitled. (H’Doubler 355)

Argument for Teacher Evaluation Systems

Frequent high-quality conversations with a skillful observer who has evidence about what went on and how it is impacting students can be immensely valuable to teachers. We should focus on that. – John Saphier (Marshall 43)
Marshall discusses how mainstream teacher evaluation process can be detrimental to teachers of all content areas. However, he also offers systems and processes that can help improve evaluations, build confidence in teachers, and grow a collaborative environment between teachers and their evaluators with student learning central to the process. Speaking on his experience as a principal, Marshal discusses how his initial encounter with the evaluation process was soured by the reality that teacher self-worth relied heavily upon the evaluations themselves. Additionally, he found that when teachers feel their professionalism and ability within the classroom is threatened, they will fight back. He tried multiple tactics, but regardless of how complimentary he was of a teacher’s teaching, he knew they didn’t believe him:

Every time an administrator steps into my classroom, I feel like my job is on the line.’ These fears make it difficult for teachers to open up, admit errors, and talk honestly about things they need to improve. In all too many evaluative interactions, teachers put on their game face and get through it with as little authentic interaction as possible. The evaluators own the feedback, not them. (37)

Through trial and error, Marshall concluded through his research, that teacher mediocrity goes unchecked if supervision lacks, but excessive supervision causes similar results. He argues the notion of a shared definition of “good teaching” is imperative to a quality evaluative relationship between teacher and evaluator. To do this, he argues that teachers must be included in a shared discussion at the beginning of each school year to discuss the evaluative rubrics. By doing this, teachers can self-assess their own teaching and are extremely clear about the caliber of instruction that is expected in the classroom.

Marshall recognized that in addition to teachers being involved in a larger discussion around the evaluation rubrics, he explains the need for knowledgeable and perceptive evaluators and coaches. He states that the best way for an evaluator or coach
to gain knowledge about a teacher and their content area is to hold open discussions with teachers about their classrooms, become involved in the curriculum and meet the teachers at their level, as compared to looking at classrooms through a glass window. By doing this, evaluators and coaches are able to share with teachers in a way that is essential to student learning and helpful in curriculum planning. Additionally, this helps evaluators, observers and coaches gain knowledge about what it is the students of the classroom are supposed to be learning, how well they are learning and whether or not the learning is robust:

Some common interpersonal dynamics can also present teachers from learning from critical feedback. A young teacher might see a middle-aged administrator as a parent figure… A veteran teacher might resent criticism from a twenty-something administrator… to some teachers, criticism feels like a power trip on the boss’s part. (37)

Finally, all feedback must be clear and provide a roadmap for teacher growth (195-196). All written comments must also precede the observation/evaluation conversation as an informal conversation prior to official documentation allows for possible misconceptions to be corrected. If the comments precede the conversation, teachers often think their evaluators mind is made up, putting the teacher on the defensive (77):

 teachers reject or ignore a lot of thoughtful feedback from evaluators. There’s a certain emptiness in the professional relationship between school leaders and teachers, with very few personal conversations about the daily struggles of teaching and learning. If evaluators are not setting the tone, its less likely that their colleagues will engage in rich discourse with one another. (37)

Ultimately, Marshall closes his study by stating “accurate appraisal of teachers’ overall performance is only the first step of supervision and evaluation” (38). First must come relationships and teachers must feel included in the administration of the evaluation
process. By lowering the states of the climate, teachers and evaluators are able to learn more about one another, their teaching and student learning. By putting such practices into play, Marshall found his teachers were thriving, appreciated his time in their classrooms and set a positive tone on formal evaluations.

Marshall’s research is supported by Grissom and Youngs’ in *Improving Teacher Evaluation Systems: Making the Most of Multiple Measures*. They, like Marshall, recognize that the absence of evaluator investment in effective training, content certification and recertification, produces useless teacher observations (3). They discuss that evaluator biases and limitations of the value-added measures of rubric based evaluation processes have laid the groundwork for improvement of the systems being used:

substantial research on value-added measures has illuminated a variety of concerns about their limitations and biases and may have pushed practitioners to more highly value observation-based measures, when in fact, observation instruments face many potential sources of inaccuracy and bias… suggesting that value-added captures only a relatively narrow range of a teachers’ contributions… overlook[ing] important contributions to the school that many teachers make and that the multidimensional nature of teachers’ work requires a multiple measures approach to evaluation. (3-4)

To remedy this situation, Grissom and Youngs suggest a multi-dimensional system of evaluations, one that enriches a teacher’s differences. Value-added measures and systems can be used to improve teacher practice and inform districts and states about how to best provide for their schools, teachers and students. By adding multi-dimensional measures to evaluative systems, the authors suggest that teacher potential, once unrealized can be fully realized.

Donaldson and Cobb, authors of *Implementing Student Learning Objectives and Classroom Observations in Connecticut’s Teacher Evaluation System*, represent a multi-
dimensional evaluation approach as so proposed by Grissom and Youngs. In this study, the researchers recognize that “standards-based observations have the capacity to facilitate direct, specific feedback about a teacher’s instruction and that the standards undergirding these measures define high-quality instruction” (132). They recognize that “evaluator measurement bias and reliability remain concerns, but comprehensive training for evaluators can help mitigate these threats” (132). Additionally, their research suggests techniques like goal setting are positive forms of employee motivation and studies from the private sectors of education confirm their finding. Ultimately, the research determined, that by using multi-dimensional evaluation approaches, teachers’ reception of evaluations and observations was more positive than value-added evaluation and teachers expressed that they desired more feedback from their evaluators and spent more time analyzing student data.

Editors of Designing *Teacher Evaluation Systems: New Guidance from the Measures of Effective Teaching Project*, state that real teacher improvement requires high quality measurement and that without feedback and guidance about what teachers are doing well or what they need improvement on, they will never know what to continue or do differently “Teaching and learning will not improve if we fail to give teachers high-quality feedback based on accurate assessments of their instruction as measured against clear standards for what is known to be effective” (1). Additionally, the complexities surrounding measurement and evaluation of teachers teaching are equally recognized:

Teaching is a complex interaction among teachers, students and content that no single measurement tool is likely to capture. The list of things teachers do that may have a significant impact on student learning is extensive. Ensuring accuracy is the face of such complexity poses a major challenge to the design and implementation of tools for measuring effective teaching… Feedback and
evaluation or an exercise in futility if they don’t increase the chances that students will learn, grow, and ultimately lead healthy, productive lives. (1-2)

The evaluation process is further discussed through the supporting research of Mihaly and McCaffrey. This research discusses the differences across grade levels and in the case of this thesis, content areas: “An important consideration for states and districts is whether equally effective teaching receives the same score on the observations protocol regardless of the classroom context” (9). The research here concludes that observation and evaluation scores provide teachers with feedback that can be incorporated into future practice and ultimately, teacher performance improves in response to the evaluation. However, these two researchers state that it is imperative that for observations and evaluations to be successful and meaningful for teachers, “it is critical to document and understand whether and how observation scores vary across classrooms, schools and teachers” (10). Expanding upon this an emphasis is places upon the point that,

An important consideration for states and districts implementing teacher evaluation systems is whether teachers in different grades [contents] can be compared with one another… In most states and districts, observation scores are not adjusted for grade-level [content] differences before these scores are used in teacher effectiveness calculations. A tactic assumption underlying the use of unadjusted scores is that observation results are comparable across grade levels [contents] and that any difference in observation scores reflects true differences in teaching quality across grades [contents]. Moreover, the use of unadjusted scores assumes that the differences in teaching quality that are observed are attributable to teachers alone, rather than the context of the school or classrooms. (10)

In this research, recognition of the need for teacher accountability was rampant, however further recognition of factors that could cause issues in systems of teacher evaluation was highly considered. According to this research, a way to ensure equitability across evaluations is to recognize cultural differences across grade levels [contents] and
adequately prepare evaluators for those differences. By doing so, student achievement is positively impacted and teacher evaluations can be considered fair and equitable (29).

**Summary**

The research presented in this thesis demonstrates two sides of an argument. On one side, teachers struggle to feel equity and significance through the evaluation systems they are under. On the other side, policy makers struggle to understand the world of education. Schools, districts and states struggle to understand aesthetic education while teachers and evaluators fail to operate under the same understanding of “good teaching.” Meanwhile, there is progressive recognition of the need for a change in discourse and perception of teacher evaluation systems, particularly so that teachers may place students learning at the forefront of their teaching, rather than feeling like they are complying to the rubrics of the evaluation processes.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore gaps and biases within public school teacher evaluation systems and their effects on traditional public school dance educators and their evaluators. At the heart of this is the attempt to answer a series of questions involving the voice of dance educators and instructional evaluators concerning their experiences with teaching evaluation systems and their direct correlation to educational dance in the areas of fairness, equitability and bias. The researcher used the following essential questions to guide the study:

Q1 How have teachers felt the impact of teacher evaluation systems upon public school educational dance?

Q2 How have instructional evaluators felt the impact of teacher evaluation systems upon public school education dance?

Q3 Do public school educational dance teachers feel they receive fair and equitable evaluations?

Q4 Do public school instructional evaluators feel they provide fair and equitable evaluations?

The following chapter describes the methodology used while conducting this study and collecting data. The researcher used electronic surveys for quantitative data and interviews for qualitative data in order to gauge and measure the perceptions of dance educators and instructional evaluators and coaches of dance educators on the impact teacher evaluation systems have on educational dance.
Prior to conducting the study, the researcher required approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). A formal narrative including the purpose, methods, data procedures, risks and benefits of the study were submitted to the board for approval. The consent form, educational and evaluator survey, and interview questions were also submitted for review. Within four days of submitting the application, IRB approved the study deeming it low risk. A copy of the IRB approval document and consent form can be viewed in appendix A.

**Instrumentation**

The researcher collected data using an electronic survey that measured teacher and instructional evaluator’s and coach’s perceptions of teacher evaluation systems and their impact upon educational dance. The instruments were completed both online through surveys as well as with face-to-face personal interviews (appendix B). The researcher did not know the identities of the survey participants and all interview participant information was kept confidential and stored in a secure location in the researcher’s office. The electronic survey was designed by the researcher using secure Google forms, which was also used in the collection and analysis of data. The survey and consent forms were emailed to each individual participant however the responses received were anonymous. Face-to-face interviews were voice recorded and transcribed by the researcher. All identities of interview subjects were kept confidential. Transcribed interviews were also stored in a secure location in the researcher’s office.

The survey and interviews were each comprised of eleven questions, which included short answer response, multiple choice or open ended questions. Both instruments required the teaching background of interview subjects as well as statements
of teacher and evaluator perceptions of the impact of teacher evaluation systems on educational dance. Multiple choice survey question responses could be answered on a scale of one to ten, one being low and ten being high. Responses to the electronic survey and conducting of interviews were collected between Tuesday, July 9, 2019 and Friday August 30, 2019. A copy of the electronic survey questions and interview questions can be found in appendix B.

**Research Participants**

The participants in this study were current and past educators teaching educational dance in traditional public schools, as well as instructional evaluators and coaches of dance educators. The participants were recruited from the researchers’ professional colleagues, who received personal invitations to participate either via email or personal phone calls. Each participant was provided with an emailed description of the study, a link to the consent form, which could be electronically signed or printed off and returned to researcher prior to interview. Upon receipt of consent form, all participants were invited to complete the survey, which was provided through an emailed link. Those participating in the survey were required to electronically sign their consent form prior to completing the survey. A copy of the consent form is present in appendix A. Participation in the study was voluntary and did not include compensation for those involved. Participants submitted all surveys and electronically signed consent forms through the secure Google forms, while interview participants had the choice between electronic submission or handing their consent form directly to the researcher. The researcher then kept all responses secure.
Survey Demographics

The sample of the study was an even split of male and female participants with fifty percent being male and fifty percent being female. Demographic data such as race and ethnicity of the participants was kept confidential unless omitted by the subject. Six research subjects were traditional, public school dance educators, and four were public school instructional evaluators and coaches of dance educators. All research subjects were certified to teach through the Colorado Department of Education (CDE), while all evaluators, observers and coaches held varying certifications per their employment requirements, and all participants were required by the CDE to hold teacher licensure as well, age nor grade level of instruction was considered in this research. Further explanation of limitations of this study can be found in the limitations section in chapter five.

Teaching Demographics

The teaching demographics of the subjects is divided between teachers of educational dance and evaluators of educational dance, which participants were asked to self-select in both the electronic survey and interviews. Participants were asked to identify the number of years they have been involved in education, either teaching or evaluation. Student grade level was not required, but all participants revealed this information to the researcher.
Years of Teaching and Evaluation/Coaching

Graph one and two show the precise breakdown of participants’ years of teaching or evaluating experience.

Figure 1. Participant Years of Teaching Dance

Figure 2. Participant Years of Evaluation and Coaching and Teaching Dance
Subject Area of Certification

The graphs in figures three and four show the precise breakdown of participants’ area of teaching certification.

Figure 3. Teacher Participant Teaching Certifications

Figure 4. Evaluator and Observer Participant Teaching Certifications
Specialties

The graphs in figures five and six show the precise breakdown of participants’ specialties in education.

![Teacher Specialities Graph]

**Figure 5. Teacher Participant Teaching Specialty**

![Evaluator and Observer Specialties Graph]

**Figure 6. Evaluator and Observer Participant Teaching Specialty**

Grade Levels

Research participants were not required to disclose the grade level of which they teach, however every research participant disclosed such details through the interview or survey process, therefore the researcher has included it in the analysis of data. Graphs seven and eight show the precise breakdown of participants’ grade level instruction or evaluation environment.
Data Collection and Analysis

For this study, both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used to analyze data. Survey participants answered eleven questions of multiple choice, short answer or open-ended style. Interview participants also answered eleven questions, which were asked in the same manner to each participant, but answered and developed as they specifically related to each interviewee adding to the description of the study.
Quantitative data was all collected and analyzed through secure Google forms, while all qualitative interview data was collected through recorded interviews and transcribed by the researcher. All confidential documents including interviews and consent forms were stored in a secure location at the researchers’ office.

*Quantitative Data*

In addition to the demographics of the research participants, analysis of quantitative data was done so through the online survey provided to each participant. This survey, sixteen questions in total, five yes or no, eight open-ended, two multiple choice and three requesting a rating between one and five. Each of these questions allowed the researcher to gain necessary information regarding each participant’s position on the effect teacher evaluation systems hold upon public school educational dance teachers. It is through this survey that all quantitative data was anonymously collected from research participants. However, open-ended questions were considered qualitative by the researcher and included in the analysis of qualitative data.

*Qualitative Data*

The second half of the data collected was done through face-to-face interviews with most research subjects and one phone interview. The questions posed consisted of eleven open-ended questions and each research subject was allowed to expand upon their opinion of each question. These questions, like in the quantitative process, allowed the researcher to gain necessary information regarding each research participants position on the effect teacher evaluation systems hold upon public school educational dance teachers. The researcher designed these questions without bias as it asked the honest opinion of the
participants. The qualitative questions from the interviews are located in appendix B, while the results of this data are reported in the discussion chapter of this thesis.

Summary

The methodology chapter of this thesis discusses the context of this study and identifies the strategies in which data was gathered and analyzed. Electronic surveys and face to face or phone interviews were used to identify teacher and evaluator/coach perceptions of the impact teacher evaluation systems has on public school educational dance teachers. These two methods provided both quantitative and qualitative data outcomes meant to inform the researcher regarding how teacher evaluation systems impact public school educational dance teachers. Detailed findings and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data are presented in the discussion chapter.
CHAPTER IV
DISCUSSION

As stated in the introductory chapter, this thesis study examined the impact teacher evaluation systems have on educational dance teachers and their evaluators, and coaches, through their own points of view. The surveys and interviews used in this study aimed to identify such an impact. This chapter discusses the detailed and individual responses, recorded by the researcher, of both educational dance teachers and public school evaluators and coaches of educational dance teachers. This chapter is organized to first examine the results of the quantitative data collected through surveys, followed by examination of the results of the qualitative data collected through face-to-face and phone interviews (appendix B).

Quantitative Data

The quantitative data collected through surveys identifies individual opinions of both educational dance teachers and their evaluators of the impact teacher evaluation systems have upon educational dance teachers.

Demographics of Public School Educational Dance Teachers and Their Evaluators

Educational Dance Teacher Research Subjects

The six educational dance teacher research participants surveyed in this study reported they were all current or retired educational dance teachers. Table eleven represents the quantified survey data of the educational dance teacher research
participants and their experience with evaluation systems and their evaluators. Each teacher participant has received evaluation under a teacher evaluation system. Everyone answered that their evaluations take place under an in-building observer, while five of the six stated they had both an in-building evaluator and a peer observer in charge of their evaluations, meaning one of the six surveyed teachers does not have a second observer assigned to their evaluation. Finally, only one of these research subjects believed that their evaluators had an open mind and grew in their professional practice alongside their own, while the other five felt they do not.

![EVALUATION DATA](image)

Figure 9. Teacher Participant Evaluation Data

In addition to the above data, figure 10 discusses the teacher participants’ opinions of the impact evaluations have had upon their professional practice. Three felt their evaluations were an ineffective tool for their professional growth, five felt they do not help advance their professional practice and three felt the evaluations were unbeneficial to their professional growth.
Figure 10. Teacher Participant Numeric Evaluation Data

**Educational Dance Teacher Evaluator Research Subjects**

Figure 11 discloses the role and responsibilities of the educational dance teacher evaluators. All five participants disclosed that they operate as both evaluator and coach for the educational dance teachers on their caseload. Four were evaluators and coaches within the same school building as the teacher’s they work with, one was a peer observer while one was an administrative evaluator. All five disclosed that they used a teacher evaluation system and that they currently or in the past have had a dance teacher on their caseload. Four out of five research subjects disclosed that they did not have enough knowledge of the educational dance classroom to accurately evaluate educational dance, while four also stated that they felt resistance and pushback from educational dance teachers when they were working with them.
Figure 11. Evaluator and Coach Participant Evaluation Data

Figure 12 displays further data concerning evaluator and coach competencies showing that three out of the five evaluators and coaches surveyed, did not feel confident in their abilities while observing, evaluating and providing feedback to dance educators. Additionally, three felt they lacked in their understanding of how a public school educational dance classroom was run, while three also felt the teachers on their caseload are relatively confident in their abilities.
The researcher collected qualitative data through two separate instruments survey and interview. The qualitative data collected through the survey was the result of a request to explain one’s answers to the quantitative questions (appendix B) within the survey, while all data collected through the interview was qualitative. The qualitative questions within the survey were designed to provide the researcher with an explanation behind each subject’s answers. By providing an explanation for their answers, the researcher was able to provide further analysis of the perceptions of teacher evaluation systems held by public school educational dance teachers and evaluators/coaches. The qualitative data collected through interview was expanded upon through natural conversation between researcher and research subject. The data is organized first by instrument and then by question, in order to provide insight into themes and feedback from the participants of this study.
Qualitative Research Data from Public School Dance Teacher and Evaluator Survey

Public School Educational Dance Teacher Survey Qualitative Data

Participants were asked to briefly explain their answers to the quantitative questions represented in their survey. Specifically, teacher participants briefly discussed their reasoning for rating each statement in a particular way. These explanations helped the researcher further determine the effect teacher evaluations systems have upon public school educational dance teachers and evaluators.

Effective Evaluations

Educational dance teachers were asked to explain why they gave a certain rating score to the effectiveness of their evaluations. They were given a scale of one through five, one being lowest and five being was highest. The quantitative data presented that four of the six teachers surveyed, felt that their evaluations failed to impact their professional growth. Their explanations were all similar, stating that random evaluations happening only three to five times every year represented a poor ratio to the teaching they performed all year long. Additionally, these teachers felt their professional practice was not understood by their evaluators and that their evaluation scores suffered because their evaluators lacked proper knowledge of the educational dance content. Finally, teachers were asked their opinion of equity, and whether or not they felt their evaluators were able to provide fair and equitable evaluations. The quantitative data representing this question disclosed that three of the six teachers surveyed felt their evaluators were unable to provide fair and equitable evaluations.
Again, their explanations were similar, stating that evaluators uneducated in their content struggle to understand their subject area in a manner that provides an equitable lens.

**Public School Educational Dance Teacher Evaluator Qualitative Data**

Similar to the educational dance teacher survey, evaluators were asked to explain their responses to statements using a one through five rating. Again, these responses helped the researcher further understand each research participant’s position in their answer.

*Effective Evaluators*

Educational dance teacher evaluators/coaches were asked to explain why they rated themselves the way they did in regards to their confidence in their evaluation abilities, understanding of the dance content area and the confidence they felt the teachers on their caseload held in them. The responses were varied. The qualitative data presents three evaluators who lacked confidence as evaluators of educational dance teachers and also admitted they struggle to understand the dance classroom, especially when they first started their evaluation process. Additionally, a few disclosed that as they continued to evaluate, they became more aware of the demands of the subject area, however still felt their knowledge of the content inferior to that of the teacher. Also, one evaluator recalled their time as a student of a dance studio and felt such dance experience helped them understand the dance classroom. Finally, all evaluator research subjects were asked to rate their own opinion of the confidence held in their abilities by the educational dance teachers on their caseload. Four of these five evaluators rated this as a three out of five, which is rather high compared to their own confidence. In their explanation, they felt that the teachers on their caseload trusted them to offer an unbiased and equitable opinion of
the teaching they observed. One referenced their time in the studio as a decent enough qualification, while another stated that they felt the teachers on their caseload understood that their training in evaluations was thorough enough to provide teachers with equitable scores and meaningful feedback.

**Qualitative Research Data from Public School Dance Teacher and Evaluator Interviews**

All educational dance teachers who filled out the survey, also participated in either face-to-face interviews or phone interviews. One of these teachers also served as an evaluator and completed both sets of survey and interview questions. The teachers in this study were posed with questions and allowed to expand upon those questions through natural discussion with the observer. Responses to these interview questions varied although overall themes were similar. Additionally, due to the fact that many of the questions in the survey were very similar to the questions in the interview, the answers provided by participants to the researcher between both research instruments was consistent and the answers to interview questions one through three, six and seven are represented in the quantitative analysis of the survey data presented within this thesis. In contrast, the interview questions that differed from the survey questions and the conversations stemming from those questions between the researcher and the participant varied greatly and allowed for a rich analysis of the true feelings and experiences of educational dance teachers stemming from evaluation processes.

**Interview Question’s Four and Five: Confidence**

Question four and five of the interview asked teachers weather their experiences with evaluators of their educational dance instruction was negative or positive and how
confident they were in working with their evaluators. They were asked to share their feelings of frustration or the positive celebrations they could recall with the researcher, which led into their confidence in their observers. Responses discussing the positive celebrations teachers experienced with evaluators of their instruction stemmed from working with colleagues of educational dance or other electives subjects who helped coach them through how to best handle evaluations and observations. They consistently referred to their peers and how they were able to collaborate with them to clarify and work through their evaluators analysis of their teaching to put a positive and helpful spin on it so that it impacted their classroom, instruction, and students in a manner that was beneficial. Through that process of their own, they felt appreciated by their peers, and they were able to make their observations and evaluations relevant as they felt their evaluators were unable to do so. Additionally, every teacher interviewed recalled the times they had an evaluator that kept their evaluations and observations strictly about instruction rather than content, and that when such a lens was used, they found the process could be helpful. One teacher stated, “When they keep it about instruction instead of content, that’s when I believe in the evaluation process. It’s when they cross into evaluating a content they know nothing about that it doesn’t work.” Revealing, that educators felt confident in their evaluators when they kept the process simply about instruction and did not cross into content evaluation.

The educational dance teacher participants discussed varying different frustrations with the evaluation processes used by their district. One teacher stated, “it feels like a punitive system instead of a system meant to help us improve our instruction.” Another
teacher explained that they felt evaluators were inexperienced in educational dance, particularly in building evaluators, were unhelpful and caused extreme anxiety as they lacked the creative mindset to see how educational dance instruction fit into their rigid, box-like rubric stating, “they expect what we do to fit into their box and it just doesn’t.”

Another teacher discussed how they were uncomfortable with their evaluator because not only didn’t they have any experience in dance, “not even baby ballet when they were three”, but they were also brand new to evaluating in general. Referencing this experience, this teacher said,

> If they know nothing about teaching dance in a tough setting like public school, or dance in general, they come into my studio classroom expecting to see teaching like theirs and it turns into a ‘their teaching against ours’ and that’s not how this is supposed to work. This evaluator refused to do any coaching before they evaluated, so it all felt like a trick to catch me doing something wrong, and of course, my scores were horrible. They always said things like ‘when I was teaching I would do this’ or ‘in my classroom I would do this’, but they never once recognized that I wasn’t them, or that I wasn’t teaching language arts in their classroom.

One teacher, who felt as if they could place quite a bit of confidence in the evaluation process, discussing how after a massive point of struggle in their teaching career with a particular evaluator, they made the conscious effort to shift their mindset about how to approach all evaluations. They discussed how a particular evaluator they were required to work with refused to recognize dance instruction as containing any rigor and that an evaluator understanding an educational dance mindset is extremely important stating that,

> evaluators must communicate with the teacher to understand and collaborate with their vision for their classroom so that they can first understand how to be a student of dance in order to understand how it is challenging.

This participant continued by saying that the “system of evaluation is a game” and that teachers just need to find a balance between their “real” teaching and the teaching they
show when their evaluator is around. Additionally, in conversation with other teachers around the same interview question, one shared that they felt the evaluation process was skewed against the teacher while another said the success of the process depends completely on the willingness of the evaluator to recognize their own biases before engaging in evaluating a teacher of public school education dance.

**Interview Question Eight: Feelings**

Further into the interview process, educational dance teacher participants were asked to share with the researcher how they perceived evaluators feelings of working with them. Unlike the previous question, this was answered quickly by each participant without much conversation. Every participant discussed the intensity of the job held by evaluators, recognizing that they had a very big job to do with few hours in the day to do it. One said, “I feel they were often overwhelmed because they lacked any dance training and they didn’t understand what was going on or why it was important.” Each teacher participant felt they did a good job of developing personal relationships with their evaluators with one stating,

> they enjoyed working with me because I am open and collaborative and they could be supportive of that. But I knew I had to be the open and collaborative one because they have a huge job to do and just want to get it done. It is my responsibility to set the tone I want and need, they are so overwhelmed with their responsibilities that relationships come second to the evaluation.

Others echoed this opinion, recognizing that evaluators “don’t care” who you are because they have so much to do. They know their roles is seen as a “piece of the game” and that both sides understand that. Participants also brought up that evaluator bias plays a big role in how they feel working with educational dance teachers. One teacher participant told a story of an evaluator who said “what you teach doesn’t matter next to math and
language arts.” That educator recalled first the feelings of hurt, followed by recognition that their entire year was going to be an evaluative nightmare. Knowing their evaluator didn’t value or hold any stake in students need for dance instruction, they would not receive any feedback or coaching to help them become a better teacher. They said:

I knew in that first meeting on the second day of school that my job would be gone the following year, and not only was it, but it was the worst year of my teaching career because this evaluator treated me with the same opinion they held of my content. I wasn’t important and they made sure I knew that.

**Interview Question Nine: Differences in Understanding**

The researcher also sought to understand teacher and evaluator understanding of teaching model differences. To do so, participants were asked the following question: “In your own words, can you compare and contrast educational dance in the public school setting and dance education in the private studio setting?” This question was meant to help reveal the level of knowledge participants held concerning teaching styles. The following table provides the teacher participants’ responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public School</th>
<th>Private Studio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Culturally diverse</td>
<td>Product and technique oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based in education arts standards</td>
<td>Teacher instruction superior to student influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process oriented</td>
<td>Students are not encouraged to be creative or share their own voice or opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple student background knowledge prior to instruction</td>
<td>High technical exposure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers poorly valued</td>
<td>More freedom for teachers, “not constantly walking on egg shells”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based in recreation and creativity</td>
<td>Teacher directed instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connects to a deeper level of dance</td>
<td>Students invested, less entitled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student entitlement to dance instruction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural significance recognized</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based in science</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The purpose of this question was to help discover whether or not both educational dance teachers and evaluators understood that there are differences in educational dance instruction. As represented above, while the answers are unique to each teacher participant, they were able to discuss some of the differences between two dance teaching models. The result of the answers from evaluator participant responses will be discussed in the next section of this thesis and compared and contrasted in the discussion section of this chapter.

**Interview Question Ten: Support**

To conclude the interview, teacher participants were asked if they knew of an evaluator in their district that is knowledgeable or experienced in educational dance? Each participant said they currently were not aware of one. A few teachers referred to one that had served as an educational dance teacher within their district for many years and operated as an evaluator in their last two years of their career, but had since retired. Participants were then asked if they felt an evaluator experienced in educational dance would be a good area of hire for their district, all of whom answered yes, while one referenced the current educational funding climate saying “there’s no way it would ever happen.” After participants had answered the first two parts of this question, they were then asked to explain their feelings. One teacher elaborated on their answer declaring that proper evaluation of educational dance teachers requires an understanding of dance language and that Evaluators must be open minded, collaborative and understand that there is a special relationship that must be built between dance student and dance teacher for any learning to take place. This teacher firmly expressed their belief, that without understanding this relationship need, no evaluator could successfully understand the rigor
within the dance classroom. Other teacher participants also recognized this same relationship, expanding on this by saying “the arts are always considered last” and “dance teachers need more protection and representation. They are often the only dance teacher in their school building and sometimes the only one in their district.” Finally, the teacher who recognized that there is no funding for such a position in their district expanded on the point by discussing personal feelings around the need for leadership within the dance content and that by having such a position, there would be a chance at standardizing a system within districts to give educational dance teachers solid grade level expectations and trajectories.

**Interview Question Eleven:**

**Conclusion**

At the end of each interview, all participants were asked if there were any other things they would like to discuss with the researcher prior to finalizing their interview. Most teacher participants did not have any additional questions or statements, however one expressed how they felt evaluation processes needed to be more of a preparation tool and training system rather than a scoring system, but ended her statement by saying “whatever, they won’t ever listen to me though because the teachers who are directly impacted by these systems are always left out of those hard conversations.”

All educational dance teacher evaluators who filled out the survey also participated in face-to-face interviews. One of these participants also served as an educator and completed both sets of survey and interview questions. Teachers and evaluators were posed the same questions however wording was changed to fit participants’ job description. Like the teacher participants, evaluators were also allowed to naturally expand upon their answers through candid conversation with the researcher.
Responses to these interview questions varied greatly with the exception of the questions in the survey were very similar to interview questions. The answers provided by participants between both research instruments were consistent and the answers to interview questions one through three, six and seven are represented in the quantitative analysis of the survey data presented within this thesis. However, the interview questions that differed from the survey questions and the conversations resulting from those questions between the researcher and the participant varied greatly and allowed for a rich analysis of the true feelings and experiences of educational dance teacher evaluators stemming from their experiences with evaluation processes.

**Interview Question’s Four and Five: Confidence**

Question four and five of the interview asked evaluators whether their experience with educational dance teachers was negative or positive and how confident they were in working with these teachers. They were asked to share their feelings of frustration or the positive celebrations they could recall with the researcher, which led into their confidence in their as observers.

With the exception of one evaluator participant, none had any background in educational dance or studio training. The single participant who did, was also the retired evaluator mentioned by the teacher participants. All evaluators felt they have had positive experiences with educational dance teachers through the evaluation process. One discussed how they were able to collaborate with dance teachers and they were all able to learn from one another by bringing new ideas to the table, however they also recalled a less positive time with a teacher who did not agree with her feedback. This situation was referred to the participant as a “lose-lose” situation as they felt the teacher was never
receptive to their feedback regardless of how they presented it, but outside of this situation, this evaluator felt “very confident” in their ability to equitably evaluate public school educational dance teachers sighting their own work as a dance educator for twenty-four years. Two other evaluators, who both confessed they had no experience or knowledge in dance prior to becoming educational dance evaluators, admitted to feeling very uneasy at the beginning of their time in working with educational dance teachers. One felt that over the course of time, they have become accepted by the dance teachers in their district, while the other feels it was the teachers’ expertise that carried the evaluation process. They described this experience by saying, “if the teacher I was working with wasn’t so competent, I would have completely failed.” Both of these participants stated how much they enjoyed working with the dance teachers on their case-loads because they enjoyed the teachers’ motivation and admired their talent within their content areas. Both also discussed how they felt extremely incompetent on taking on their role with educational dance teachers. One expressed their frustration with the evaluation rubrics and their lack of flexibility as they feel the dance language does not conform well with the rubric language, recognizing that there is a major disconnect between the evaluation system their district uses and educational dance content specific language and processes. Additionally, both of these evaluators were frustrated with the lack of district support for educational dance teachers as well as support for in-building evaluators supporting dance educators. They both felt there could be more effort to do right by dance teachers and provide them with the support they deserve and that this starts by the district providing content specific training for evaluators who do not have knowledge of the content areas
they are observing. The evaluator citing their teacher’s competence as the reason for their success said:

I began with no confidence. The dance teacher helped me through the process of understanding the content and classroom so I could give feedback. But without their help, I would have been a useless evaluator and unable to help this teacher. In the long run, the greatest learning was on my end, the teacher already knew what they were doing and could apply the evaluation system our district uses to their teaching without my support. Because of this teacher, I can now confidently observe and evaluate educational dance teachers. I have a lot to thank them for.

In correlation to this evaluator’s perspective of their positive experience with a teacher on their case load, another evaluator described how they felt comfortable evaluating dance teachers because their content expertise, while not in dance, was in the arts, however as an observer in such a position, they understood that “the expertise in the classroom lies with the teacher.”

Of all participants in this population, only one discussed how their limited experience placed them in a situation that they could not be successful. They felt that because of their limited knowledge of the dance content, they could only be confident in their ability to evaluate a dance teacher, if the teacher themselves were confident. Expanding on their point by saying, “I do not have the knowledge to support a dance educator, but they fell onto my caseload, so I had to do it.” In each of these situations painted by participant evaluators, it was the dance teacher who informed their evaluation feedback rather than themselves as the trained observers/evaluators.

**Interview Question Eight: Feelings**

Similar to the teacher participants being asked to share how they perceived their evaluators opinions of working with them, evaluator participants were asked to share the same about their perception of their teachers’ feelings of working with them. Four
evaluators were very upfront about their lack of content knowledge and background in educational dance instruction. One said,

> I feel like they probably lack a little respect for me because I don’t have a dance background and have no dance teaching experience. So, I always try to show I respect them and acknowledge their wishes for an observer with dance knowledge. This seems to help. I feel that by being vulnerable with them they are much more open to my feedback because they understand that I respect them and will help advocate for them to the best of my abilities.

Another echoed the need for evaluator transparency by saying, “I think the dance educator on my case load was okay working with me because I was vulnerable and very upfront with my position in being new to the role of a dance evaluator.” Additionally, a third participant stated that they understood the educational dance teachers on their caseload saw his appointment as their “boss for lack of better words” as the beginning of a “nightmare”. This participant then further explained how they always try to help their educational dance teachers feel as if they are in their “corner” and because of this, they have been able to build appropriate working relationships. Another summed this up by saying,

> I think they feel supported by me because I express my appreciation for them and try to show that I value the unique nature of their expertise and content, but I think they are also realistic of their expectations of me as I have no dance background, so they know I can’t give them the feedback and instructional support they need.

Of all participants in this study population, only one acknowledged their ability to connect with educational dance teachers through content similarities, referring to their 24-year career as a public school educational dance teacher prior to their retirement. This participant said:

> I think they appreciated working with me because I’ve been them before. I feel this way because they are always so overwhelmed, especially new teachers. I
could help them navigate being a new dance teacher AND help them through their evaluations.

**Interview Question Nine: Differences in Understanding**

The researcher attempted to understand the average evaluators understanding of different dance teaching models. In question nine of the interview, evaluator participants were asked to describe the differences between the public school educational dance teaching model and the private studio teaching model. Participant responses are listed in table 4, with two participants simply stating that they did not know the differences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public School</th>
<th>Private Studio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diversity amongst students</td>
<td>Focused on product and technique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and process oriented</td>
<td>Teachers and students do not creatively collaborate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standards based</td>
<td>No student voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of academic language</td>
<td>“I would assume it is a college and career readiness pathway.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dance is not isolating to a career</td>
<td>Traditional dance training model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holistic world view</td>
<td>“I don’t know”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I don’t know”</td>
<td>“I have no background so I would not know.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I don’t know”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The purpose of this question was meant to determine whether or not it is realistic to consider the claims made by teachers, that their evaluators must receive training prior to evaluating public school educational dance teachers.

**Interview Question Ten: Support**

As the interview ended, evaluator participants were also asked if they knew of any evaluator employed within their district with an educational dance background who was serving educational dance teachers. All participants responded that they did not believe
there was such a person or role within their district. When asked if they believed this would be a good area of hire for their district to consider, all answered an eager “yes.”

Upon their answer, participants were asked to explain their opinion and why they feel an evaluator with educational dance experience would be a good addition to their district.

One participant concluded their statement by saying,

Dance is the only content area in my district without an overseeing expert. Dance teachers don’t feel their content is recognized. Having an expert in their area would help them feel validated. But then again, this would only be possible if education were a perfectly equitable world, which it is not.

This statement was supported by a different participant who said, “every other content area in my district has a content specific point person, but dance does not and its highly inequitable.” Another participant mentioned that they felt there were members across their district who tried to help fill this role, but that there were no trained evaluators serving the educational dance teachers in their district. One participant spoke directly to teacher support saying, “it’s a deficit in our district. We need to support all of our teachers and that means our dance education teachers as well.” Lastly, one participant was very clear about their opinions upon the impact educational dance can have on students:

Dance should be expanded to more schools throughout my district and all districts across the U.S. It should be required that all schools have dance because I think it crosses a lot of genders, multiple genres of music and serves a diverse student population. Dance has cultural significance, and it is another way in which we can connect with kids. It’s sad that most schools don’t offer it.

**Interview Question Eleven:**
**Conclusion**

At the conclusion or each interview, participants were given the opportunity to add any thoughts or ask the researcher questions. One participant took advantage of this
and brought up their feeling around the sustainability of dance in the public schools. This participant felt that public school educational dance faces a sustainability crisis. Admitting that they understood they are a poor educational dance evaluator they were very certain that lack of support for dance would be less of an issue if it were more prominent across school buildings. They said, “if there were more teachers, there would be more supports for those teachers. In my district, there are only two middle school dance teachers in the district, so of course there aren’t any supports for them.” They continued by saying that many people within school leadership fail to see the benefit of adding an educational dance program to their electives department referring to this as “leadership shortsightedness.” This participant spoke very strongly as an advocate for educational dance teacher training programs at the collegiate level as well as training for school and district leadership to build their capacities as leaders to help sustain dance programs within their districts and schools:

One of the concerns I have is that because my school is one of the few schools within my district that offers dance, I wonder how sustainable educational dance really is. Not only if or when the current dance teacher in my building leaves, but when my school principal leaves. At what point, do you get a school leader that replaces a fulltime dance teacher because they feel the money allotted for that position could be better spent elsewhere. Because it is such a rare commodity in education, finding a certified public school educational dance teacher is extremely hard. Eventually, the dance position at my school will transfer to something else because it is easier to find other types of teachers. Dance is highly valuable, but it is hard to find qualified teachers. So, what happens when a dance program is established but the teacher or principal leave? Not only is it hard to replace a qualified dance teacher, it is hard to say a new incoming principal would see the merit in a fulltime dance program if they do not understand the educational benefit dance provides students.
Discussion

Quantitative Survey
Research Analysis

The data collected from the quantitative research of this study indicates that both educators and evaluators were acutely affected by a disconnect they felt between public school educational dance and the evaluation systems used by schools and districts. Additionally, based off of this research and the differences between educational dance teachers and their evaluators, the data suggests, that such differences hold merit and that they should be considered as potential areas of growth for schools and districts.

The data shows that only one teacher felt their evaluator held an open mind during evaluations, and on a scale of one to five, there were eleven votes against evaluations as proper tools for advancing professional growth, practice and an evaluators ability to provide equitable evaluations.

![Combined Teacher Participant Quantitative Survey Data](image)

Figure 13. Combined Teacher Participant Quantitative Survey Data

The evaluator survey data shows that four of the five participants felt they have insufficient knowledge of educational dance to provide evaluations while four also feel
they experience resistance and pushback from the dance educators to whom they are providing feedback. Additionally, there were seven votes declaring they lacked personal confidence and understanding of the dance content and classroom with three votes claiming high personal confidence and dance classroom/content understanding.

![Combined Evaluator Participant Quantitative Survey Data](image)

**Figure 14. Combined Evaluator Participant Quantitative Data**

Both sets of data presented above speak of a population of public school educational dance teachers and their evaluators who struggle to feel confident in their state or districts evaluation processes. Combined this data represents the true feelings of public school educational dance teachers and their evaluators towards their states and districts teacher evaluation systems.
To create a simple example of participant responses, the researcher organized all quantitative data into categories consisting of, positive responses, negative responses and moderate responses.
Combining this quantitative data set shows the precise breakdown of responses that are positive and in support of evaluation processes, negative and not in support of evaluation process and moderate or unconcerned about evaluation processes. The overall data shows two sets of participants recognizing their overwhelming negative feelings towards teacher evaluation processes.

*Qualitative Interview Research Analysis*

The data collected from the qualitative interview questions indicate a correlation between the data collected through the quantitative survey research process and the qualitative interview research process. The data once again represents two parties struggling to find satisfaction in teacher evaluation processes. It was through the qualitative interview data that the highest levels of teacher and evaluator positivity was discovered. Teachers and evaluators alike discussed how they were satisfied with the evaluation process when they were able to collaborate with their peers in order to increase understanding of evaluations and find creative ways to apply observer and evaluator feedback. By doing this, they felt their observations and evaluations were better at informing their teaching and supporting their students. Additionally, all teacher participants felt they had positive experiences with their evaluators and their evaluations when their evaluators kept their observations/evaluations strictly about instruction and kept content out of the observations and evaluations. One teacher participant stated, “when they keep it about instruction instead of content, that’s when I believe in the evaluation process. It’s when they cross into evaluating a content they don’t understand that it doesn’t work.” Therefore, by keeping evaluations simple and instruction oriented, educators had more confidence in their evaluators abilities, fairness and equity, and the
overall results of the process. Finally, each teacher participant recognized the difficulty of
the position their evaluators hold. They shared that they understand that a mountain of
work accompanies each evaluation for their evaluator. Teachers were gracious towards
their evaluators in that regard.

Like the teacher participants, evaluator participants discussed the correlation
between positive relationships and positive experiences with the evaluation process. It is
the relationship held between the teacher and the evaluator that leads to satisfaction and
happiness, not the observation, evaluation or feedback. A direct example of a relationship
that led to dissatisfaction and unhappiness is the story one teacher participant told of an
evaluator saying “what you teach doesn’t matter next to math and language arts.” Such a
statement sent that relationship into instant and irreparable failure. This is also a good
example of how both teachers and evaluators felt personal biases could influence the
evaluation process. Teachers discussed how exclusion of personal evaluator biases
increase the chances that an evaluation will end positively. Additionally, teacher biases of
the evaluation process as well as their evaluators can handicap the process additionally it
is highly necessary for both parties involved to keep their personal biases to themselves.
Unfortunately, in the case of the teacher compared to math and language arts, that
evaluator did nothing to keep their personal biases from influencing their evaluation of
that teacher.

The qualitative data from this research shares a unique perspective into the
frustrations both teachers and evaluators feel around necessary content knowledge. Just
as teachers felt their evaluators lacked adequate content and instructional knowledge of
the dance classroom, the evaluator participants whole heartedly agreed with them asserting the teacher as the expert. Some evaluators went as far as admitting that they had to rely on the teacher to guide their evaluations as they did not know the dance content well enough to provide proper feedback or evaluations. This was confirmed by the two parties explanations of the two different dance-teaching models, public school educational dance and private studio dance education. Each teacher participant was able to completely differentiate between the two teaching models, however, evaluator participants responded from a place of assumption, limited background knowledge, and in some cases even admitted that they did not know nor could they explain the difference between the two. Ultimately, it is this disconnect that the teacher participants in this study are the most frustrated about. They expressed their discontent with their evaluation processes not because they felt they were wrong and unjust, but because the people observing/evaluating them don’t even know the most basic of information about their teaching content. In some situations, it could be considered similar to instances where the high school, fast-food worker trains their new manager on how to work the cash register. Circumstances like this are frustrating regardless of the job.

Summary

The research presented within this chapter shows two research populations. Each plays a different and vital role, both find themselves interacting with one another in sometimes a less than harmonious environment, and both are sighting the same reasons for discontent with teacher evaluation systems. Both teachers and evaluators answer to a set of expectations forced upon them by a school or district. It is the observer/evaluators job to implement the expectations of the evaluation systems and it is the job of the
teacher to take their advice and implement it into their classroom. Based on the research, each collective group knows their overall goal is to positively impact students through high quality instruction, however each sees how they should implement their school or districts principles of best practice a little differently. Both groups understand that perfect teaching is impossible with imperfect people at the helm of instruction. Therefore, their frustrations should not fall with one another, rather they should recognize that they are all humans participating in the difficult process of teacher evaluations. Ultimately, the overall the data suggests that the effect evaluation processes have upon teachers and their evaluations is alarmingly negative; however, the people involved in this study revealed a positive influence they can have on one another through teacher evaluation processes.

Although more research is needed to identify how best to implement teacher evaluation process for educational dance teachers, the responses to this survey and interview revealed that the results of satisfaction and happiness in the evaluation process lies with the educators and their evaluators. Teacher evaluation systems cannot build positive relationships, and this research suggests they are poor tools for helping a teachers’ overall effectiveness in their classroom without first establishing a positive and respectful working relationship between teacher and evaluator.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to find perceptions and concerns of dance educators, evaluators and evaluation processes as they apply to educational dance. This chapter of the thesis restates the research question, reviews the methodology used, summarizes the findings, discusses limitations to the study, and provides recommendations for further research.

The Research Questions and Methods

As explained in the methodology chapter, this study utilized an electronic survey made specifically for each set of research participants, as well as face-to-face and phone interviews also comprised of questions specifically relating to each set of research participants. At the core, each subset of questions within each instrument of measure sought to answer the following essential questions:

Q1 How have teachers felt the impact of teacher evaluation systems upon public school educational dance?

Q2 How have instructional evaluators felt the impact of teacher evaluation systems upon public school educational dance?

Q3 Do public school education dance teachers feel they receive fair and equitable evaluations?

Q4 Do public school instructional evaluators feel they provide fair and equitable evaluations?
Study Participants

Participants in this study were current and past educators teaching educational dance in traditional public schools, as well as instructional evaluators of dance educators. The participants were recruited from the researcher’s professional colleagues, whom received personal invitations to participate either via email or personal phone calls. All participants were either certified public school educational dance specialists, or certified evaluators, all of which held appropriate professional teacher licensure or principal licensure. Participants taught a variety of ages and contents: however, all teacher participants were designated as dance teachers. The survey used incorporated both quantitative and qualitative sections while the interviews were fully qualitative.

Interpretation of the Findings

Findings within this study present under two different categories, teacher participants and evaluator participants. The following interpretation of the findings is organized as such.

Teacher Participant Findings

Survey

The analysis of the quantitative survey results showed that the dance educators involved in this study held four to twenty-four years of public school dance teaching experience and all held dance certifications with multiple teachers holding more than one area of endorsement in public education. Each participant identified that their teaching specialty was in educational dance and a few mentioned additional specialties. Each disclosed that they were subject to teaching evaluations under a building supervisor, while five of the six admitted to also having a district peer observer participating in their
evaluation process. Three felt their evaluations were an ineffective tool in positively impacting their professional practice while five felt the evaluations are unbeneﬁcial to their professional growth.

**Evaluator Participants**

**Quantitative Findings**

**Survey**

Unlike the teaching participants, the evaluators and coaches involved in this study held no dance teaching experience with the exception of one research participant who held the position of teacher and evaluators or observers; boasting twenty-four years of public school educational dance teaching. Additionally, only the single evaluator participant held a dance teaching endorsement and specialty, all others held different types of teaching or administrative credentials, with specialties in content areas other than dance. Of the evaluator participants in this study, one was a district peer observer, one was an administrative evaluator, and four were in-building evaluators. Four out of five evaluator research participants disclosed that they felt they did not have enough knowledge of the public school educational dance classroom to accurately evaluate educational dance, and four also disclosed that they felt resistance and pushback from educational dance teachers when they were working with them. Three out of the five of these participants felt they did not have conﬁdence in their abilities while observing, evaluating and providing feedback to dance educators and that they lacked in their understanding of how an educational dance classroom should be run. However, in contrast to this, three of the five also felt that the teachers on their caseload are relatively conﬁdent in their abilities to provide fair and equitable evaluations citing their personal experiences or training as grounds for teachers’ belief in their abilities.
Teacher Participant Qualitative Findings

Survey

The findings of the qualitative survey results of this study suggests that the teacher participants felt their evaluations failed to impact their professional growth. They explained this by stating that random evaluations happening only three to five times every year represented a poor ratio to the teaching they performed all year long. Additionally, these teachers felt their professional practice was not understood by their evaluators and that their evaluation scores suffered because their evaluators lacked proper knowledge of the educational dance content. Additionally, teachers explained that they felt their evaluators, uneducated in their content, struggled to understand their subject area, which caused them to fail in providing an equitable lens to the evaluations they conducted of their teaching.

Evaluator Participant Qualitative Findings

Survey

The findings of the qualitative survey results of this study suggests that the evaluator participants lacked confidence as evaluators of public school educational dance teachers and also struggled to understand the dance classroom, especially when they first started evaluating educational dance teachers. They also stated, that as they continued to evaluate the dance teachers on their caseload, they became more aware of the demands of the subject area, but still felt their knowledge of the content inferior to that of the teacher.
Finally, evaluator participants in this study believed that the dance teachers on their caseload were confident in their abilities, which is a strange contrast to their personal feelings of confidence.

*Teacher Participant Qualitative Findings*

**Interview**

The qualitative findings of the interviews conducted of teacher participants in this study confirms the quantitative finding that this population of educational dance teachers feel the evaluations they received from their evaluators failed to provide them with the necessary tools to increase their effectiveness in the classroom unless they worked with their content specific peers to interpret and apply the feedback they received from their evaluators. Additionally, teacher participants held positive views about the outcomes of evaluations that maintained an unbiased approach by their evaluators in which only basic instructional practices were evaluated and opinions of content were left out of the evaluation analysis. Additionally, these participants were very gracious towards their evaluator colleagues as they recognized the magnitude of their positions and they understood that there are situations and circumstances that are very difficult for observers/evaluators to work through, especially when they struggle to understand or appreciate a content area in which they have no background. Finally, the teacher participants in this research discussed their frustrations with their evaluators when they did not keep evaluations strictly about instruction and attempted to evaluate them based of off content differences between subject areas. It was with this type of observation/evaluation that all teacher participants showed extreme frustration and deemed the process inequitable. It was this lens of reference that all teacher participants
felt was the most important reason for schools and districts to employ evaluators qualified in educational dance to support educational dance teachers.

Evaluator Participant Qualitative Findings

Interview

The qualitative findings of the interviews conducted of evaluator participants in this study also confirm the quantitative findings that this population of public school educational dance teacher evaluators struggled to find satisfaction with the evaluation process of public school educational dance teachers. The evaluator participants in this study fully admitted to lacking adequate content knowledge of educational dance and admitted to leaning on the teacher to provide professional content insight when needed. Additionally, these participants discussed situations of collaboration with dance teachers and how there was always a positive outcome when they worked together as colleagues. Like their teacher participant colleagues, they agreed they were able to build positive relationships with the dance teachers on their caseloads and the evaluation processes were highly positive. Finally, most participants of this research population confirmed through the interview process that there were times they felt push back and resistance from educational dance teachers during the evaluation process. Again, like their teaching colleagues, they confirmed such resistance was due to the evaluators’ lack of dance content knowledge and background that caused strained relationships and also served as the main reason they too felt it important for schools and districts to employ evaluators qualified in educational dance to support educational dance teachers.
Limitations to the Study

The survey and interview instruments of measure used in this study each offered unique limitations. Additionally, the population of research participants available to the researcher presented limitations as well. The primary limitations include the survey and interview questions, number of participants, and their geographic location.

Survey Limitations

The first major limitation to this study was that the researcher wrote and designed the electronic survey and designed the questions to be without bias, however these questions were not tested prior to research implementation for validity and reliability. Some questions may have been answered incorrectly by participants, skewing the data collected in this research. Additionally, while each participant was provided the opportunity to explain their answers within the survey, some took advantage of this while others did not.

Interview Limitations

The next limitation to this study was also the interview questions and the fact that again, the researcher wrote and designed the interview questions to be without bias. However, like the survey questions, these went untested for validity and reliability prior to implementation in research. Some questions may not have been discussed in full truthfulness as participants may have felt uncomfortable.

Participant Limitations

The final, and perhaps largest limitation of this study lies in the fact that every research participant was gleaned from the researcher’s personal colleagues, all of whom were employees of the Denver Public School system. Additionally, each participant is
either a teacher or evaluator using the LEAP evaluation framework, which is Denver Public Schools system of teacher evaluation, based off of the Colorado Department of Education’s evaluation system. Finally, because of the limited number of traditional educational dance teachers employed with Denver Public Schools, the teacher participant sample size was limited further. As a result of this limitation, evaluators were chosen based off of their experience with traditional dance educators as those participants could not have served as dance evaluators in non-traditional schools. The purpose of these small sample sizes was to keep research narrow and definitive; however, larger participant numbers would be highly beneficial to future research.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

Verification of this study requires additional research. Public school educational dance is different in every state and district methodologies and best practices will change and evaluation processes will evolve beyond what they are now.

A similar study with larger sample sizes and greater geographic diversity in participants would provide additional support to the findings of this study.

Other types of evaluation systems all need more research as this study focused solely on a single example of an evaluation system. Since states and districts all use their own version of teacher evaluations it would be helpful to focus a future study on more than one type of system as well as teacher. This study included only traditional public school educational dance teachers and evaluators that have only served as traditional public school educational dance teacher evaluators.
If future research remained within the boundaries of Denver Public Schools, it would be impactful to look into schools, teachers, and evaluators designated as nontraditional, such as charter and innovation schools.

This study provided general feedback from traditional public school educational dance teachers and their evaluators in an attempt to increase knowledge and understanding of how to best support public school educational dance through evaluation systems and processes. To gain full perspective on what supports educational dance teachers really need, further research must take place.

**Conclusion**

The researcher believes that this study shows there are both positive and negative effects of teacher evaluation systems on public school educational dance teachers and their evaluators. The general feedback about the process was highly negative, a trend which was consistent between both research instruments, however when both populations were able to discuss their personal feelings with the researcher, a beautifully human element became apparent in the process. The conclusion of the researcher is that the system and oftentimes, human nature, is left out of the evaluation equation. People are conducting and performing under evaluation processes that are precise, complicated and rigid; it is up to the people conducting and participating in the process to make it wholesome and meaningful. By doing so, teachers and students are able to benefit. Additionally, in the case of educational dance teacher evaluations, the researcher highly suggests schools and districts work to provide the highest qualified people possible to conduct evaluations of public school educational dance teachers. Both populations of participants confirmed that the best people to evaluate public school educational dance
teachers are those experienced in and familiar with the dance content. By not providing appropriate content supports for educational dance teachers, students cannot be guaranteed a fully supported classroom like they can in many other subject areas and teachers cannot be guaranteed equitable employment.
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APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DOCUMENTS
CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH
DANCE EDUCATOR AND OBSERVER/EVALUATOR

Thesis Title: Teacher evaluation systems and their impact upon academic dance educators and their evaluators

Researcher: Elizabeth Brennan, Graduate Student at the University of Northern Colorado

Contact Information: Elizabeth.choreo@gmail.com

Research Advisor: Christy O’Connell-Black, University of Northern Colorado, Christy.black@unco.edu

You are being asked to take part in a research study exploring teacher evaluation systems and their impact upon academic dance educators and their observers/evaluators. I am asking you to take part because you are either a dance educator or evaluator within the Denver Public Schools and subject to the evaluation system titled Leading Effective Academic Practice or LEAP. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in this study.

What the study is about: The purpose of this research is to shed possible light upon gaps with the teacher evaluation system used in the Denver Public Schools and its effect on dance educators within the district. This research will look into perceptions surrounding the teacher evaluation system, Leading Effective Academic Practice, or LEAP. At the heart of this, the researcher will attempt to answer a series of questions based on research involving: (1) The feelings of Denver Public Schools dance educators surrounding the fairness, equitability, and bias of the LEAP evaluation system, as well as receipt of evaluations and observations that help dance educators identify their strengths and opportunities for growth. (2) The feelings of Denver Public Schools observers/evaluators of district dance educators and their ability to conduct fair, equitable and unbiased evaluations and observations in which recipients are able to identify their strengths and opportunities for growth. As part of the graduate thesis project the research will assist the researcher and future readers of the final thesis in understanding the affect teacher evaluation systems have upon dance educators and their evaluators.

Risks: There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts associated with this research. This study is meant to find gaps in with the intent of improving the system, guaranteeing that participation in this research will not cause undue harm and the analysis will not point to any one single participant based on response.

Your answers will be confidential: Every effort will be made to protect your identity. The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I make public, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. A code system will be used to identify all participant responses including e-surveys, phone interviews and face-to-face interviews. No actual names will be used. I will use
pseudonyms. The goal of this research is to simply explore the effectiveness of the LEAP system for dance educators and their evaluators. All documents pertaining to this study will be stored in a locked cabinet in Crabbe Hall, room 308, the office of Dance Education MA co-coordinator Christy O’Connell-Black. The notes will be destroyed after the completion of the thesis.

If you have questions: The researcher conducting this study is Elizabeth Brennan. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me with the information listed above. Please retain one copy of this letter for your records.

Thank you for participating in my research. Sincerely,
Elizabeth B. Brennan
Student, University of Northern Colorado
MA, Dance Education

Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in the loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future references. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact Sherry May, IRB Administrator, Office of Sponsored Programs, 25 Kempner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, Co 80639; 970-351-1910.

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study.
Participant’s Full Name (please print)     Participant’s Birth Date (month/day/year)

________________________________________     __________________________
Participant’s Signature     Date (month/day/year)

________________________________________
Researcher’s Signature     Date (month/day/year)

________________________________________
Printed Name of Researcher Obtaining Consent     Date (month/day/year)

This consent form will be kept by the researcher for at least three years beyond the end of the study and was approved by the IRB on (date).
DATE: November 30, 2018

TO: Elizabeth Brennan
FROM: University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [1139730-1] Teacher evaluation systems and their impact upon academic
dance educators and their evaluators

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVAL/VERIFICATION OF EXEMPT STATUS
DECISION DATE: November 30, 2018
EXPIRATION DATE: November 30, 2022

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB approves this project and verifies its status as EXEMPT according to federal IRB regulations.

Elizabeth -

Your IRB application is verified/approved exempt. Please make the following two small changes to your consent form before using it in your participant recruitment and data collection protocols:

1) add a space for participants to initial each page prior to the signature page (e.g., Page 1 of 2
   ___ please initial); and

2) update the last sentence of the mandatory verbatim last paragraph as follows, "If you have any
   concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact Nicole Morse, IRB
   Administrator, Office of Sponsored Programs, 25 Kemperer Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley,
   Co 80639; 970-351-1910.

Best wishes with your research and don't hesitate to contact me with any IRB-related questions or
concerns.

Sincerely,
Dr. Megan Stellino, UNC IRB Co-Chair

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records for a duration of 4 years.

If you have any questions, please contact Nicole Morse at 970-351-1910 or nicole.morse@unco.edu.
Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.
APPENDIX B

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTATION
Teacher Evaluation Systems and Their Impact Upon Academic Dance Educators and Their Evaluators

Teacher Survey

1. I understand that I am participating in research for a graduate thesis. I understand that my identity and any confidential information will not be shared within the accessible reach of anyone other than the researcher.
   a. Yes
   b. No

2. Are you currently a dance educator for the Denver Public Schools?
   a. Yes
   b. No

3. How long have you been a dance educator for Denver Public Schools?

4. Have you ever been evaluated and scored under the LEAP evaluation system?
   a. Yes
   b. No

5. Who are your evaluators?
   a. Peer Observer
   b. In Building Observer
   c. Both

6. Do you have a peer observer?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. I don’t know

7. Would you consider your evaluations an effective tool for your professional growth?
   
   1    2    3    4    5
   No Way  Absolutely

8. Please explain why you answered the previous question the way you did.

9. How beneficial and helpful are the evaluations you receive in assisting you in advancing your professional practice?
   
   1    2    3    4    5
   Not at all  Very

10. Explain why you answered the previous question the way you did.

11. How confident are you in your observers’ ability to provide you with a fair and equitable evaluation? One that is beneficial to your professional growth.
12. Explain why you answered the previous question the way you did.

13. Do you feel your observer(s) have an open mind and grow in their professional practice alongside you?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Maybe

14. Explain why you answered the previous question the way you did.

15. What is one thing you appreciate about the LEAP system and its evaluators?

16. What is one thing you would improve within the LEAP system as well as with the evaluators?

17. Please add any additional comments.
Teacher Evaluation Systems and Their Impact Upon Academic Dance Educators
and Their Evaluators
Observer/Evaluator Survey

1. I understand that I am participating in research for a graduate thesis. I understand that my identity and any confidential information will not be share within the accessible reach of anyone other than the researcher.
   a. Yes
   b. No

2. Are you currently employed with Denver Public Schools?
   a. Yes
   b. No

3. What is your role in the position you currently hold?

4. How long have you been in this role?

5. Do you currently use the LEAP system as a best practice measure while observing and evaluating educators?
   a. Yes
   b. No

6. Do you currently have any dance educators on your caseload or have you in the past?
   a. Yes
   b. No

7. What content area is your expertise as an educator?

8. Please explain why you answered the previous question the way you did.

9. Do you have any background in dance education? Please explain.

10. How confident are you when observing, evaluating and providing feedback to a dance educator?
    
    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
    |---|---|---|---|---|
    | Not at all | Very |

11. Explain your answer to the previous question.

12. When observing and evaluating dance educators, do you feel you have a good understanding of the individual function of how an educational dance classroom runs?
    
    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
    |---|---|---|---|---|
    | No | Yes |
13. Explain your answer to the previous question.

14. Which content area would you consider educational dance to be most closely related?
   a. Drama/Theatre
   b. Physical Education
   c. Both

15. How much confidence do you feel the dance educators on your caseload (past and present) hold in your abilities?
   
   1. None
   2. 2
   3. 4
   4. 5
   5. A lot

16. Explain why you answered the previous question the way you did.

17. Do you feel you have enough knowledge of dance education to accurately observe/evaluate dance educators 100% of the time?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Maybe

18. Explain your answer to the previous question.

19. Do you feel resistance and push back from dance educators when you are working with them?
   a. Yes
   b. No

20. Explain your answer to the previous question.

21. Do you think it would be beneficial for the Denver Public School’s to employ specialists in the educational dance content area to assist in observations and evaluations of dance educators?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Maybe

22. Explain your answer to the previous question.

23. Please add any additional comments.
Teacher Evaluation Systems and Their Impact Upon Academic Dance Educators and Their Evaluators

Teacher Interview

1. What is your current role in Denver Public Schools and how long have you been in that role?

2. What specifically are your responsibilities in the role you currently hold?

3. Do you ever work with an observer or evaluator? Or have you in the past? What was their role with you?

4. How has your experience been working with observers and evaluators through the LEAP system? Do you have any celebrations or frustrations you can share with me?

5. How confident do you feel working with LEAP observers and evaluators?

6. What content area would you describe as your specialty in education?

7. What is your background in dance education?

8. How do you think LEAP observers and evaluators feel working with you? Why do you feel this way?

9. In your own words, can you compare and contrast dance education in the public-school setting and dance education in the private studio setting?

10. Do you know if there is currently a dance curriculum specialist or observer experienced in dance employed within Denver Public Schools? Do you feel this would be an appropriate area of hire for the district to consider? Why do you feel the way you do?

11. Do you have any questions or comments for me?
Teacher Evaluation Systems and Their Impact Upon Academic Dance Educators and Their Evaluators  
Observer/Evaluator Interview

1. What is your current role in Denver Public Schools and how long have you been in that role?

2. What specifically are your responsibilities in the role you currently hold?

3. Do you ever work with dance educators? Or have you in the past? What was their role with you?

4. How has your experience been working with dance educators through the LEAP system? Do you have any celebrations or frustrations you can share with me?

5. How confident do you feel working with dance educators?

6. What content area would you describe as your specialty in education?

7. What is your background in dance education?

8. How do you think dance educators feel working with you? Why do you feel this way?

9. In your own words, can you compare and contrast dance education in the public-school setting and dance education in the private studio setting?

10. Do you know if there is currently a dance curriculum specialist or observer experienced in dance employed within Denver Public Schools? Do you feel this would be an appropriate area of hire for the district to consider? Why do you feel the way you do?

11. Do you have any questions or comments for me?