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INVESTIGATION OF THE RISE EVALUATION SYSTEM
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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this qualitative study was to closely examine the RISE evaluation system and its effectiveness in non-traditional, Montessori schools. The research consisted of a qualitative study interview approach using three administrators, one who did not use the RISE evaluation system, and two who were mandated by their central office to use it; and four teachers, all who were evaluated with the RISE evaluation system. This qualitative study used the theoretical framework—hermeneutic phenomenology. Interviews with the administrators and teachers were used to collect the data. The interviews were administered in personal offices, coffee shops, and at my personal office. All interviews (except one) were tape recorded and transcribed by me. The transcribed interviews were coded to create an item analysis.

The main purpose of this study was to determine if the RISE evaluation system would be an effective tool to use in non-traditional classrooms, such as a Montessori classroom. This study was intended to give educators of non-traditional schools and classrooms information about the RISE Evaluation System's effectiveness.

This research contributes to the field by studying the RISE evaluation system's effectiveness in non-traditional classrooms. This study provides a framework for

examining the factors for conducting effective evaluations using the RISE evaluation system in non-traditional schools.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Students deserve to have great teachers in their classrooms. Years of research on teacher quality support the fact that effective teachers not only make students feel good about school and learning, but also that their work actually results in increased student achievement (Tucker & Stronge, 2005). Teachers can be among the most important and influential people in a student's life. Great teachers change lives, inspire and motivate students, and set them on a path for future success. Contrary to this, underperforming teachers can have a lasting negative impact on a student (Doyle & Han, 2012). The evidence that links teacher performance to student achievement has led schools across the country to look at teacher evaluations as a vital way to make certain students have the best and most qualified teachers in their classrooms. Assessments for educators are now being used to hold teachers accountable for student achievement.

The purpose of teaching is learning, and the purpose of schooling is to ensure that each new generation of students accumulates the knowledge and skills needed to meet the social, political, and economic demands of adulthood. Thus, for many, it seems long overdue to ensure that student-learning gains are taken into account in the design and implementation of teacher assessment systems (Tucker & Strong, 2005). There is no doubt that effective teachers are the key to student achievement (Danielson, 2011;

Darling-Hammond, 2010; Tucker & Stronge, 2005). For this reason, it is critical that school leaders hire only the best teachers for their students.

In an attempt to have the best teachers in the classrooms, Indiana has created a new teacher evaluation system called RISE. This new system is used to measure teacher effectiveness. There are teachers who have been teaching for years and have not had any meaningful evaluation or feedback at all or have had evaluations that are checklists which rate the teacher's characteristics rather than performance. For reasons like these, Indiana has made it clear that schools must implement RISE in public schools. If not RISE, then school districts must implement a similar tool that ensures teachers are held accountable for student achievement. If schools choose to use an alternative evaluation tool, it must be pre-approved by the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE).

RISE was devised to strengthen and enforce accountability for the teachers. And yet the idea of a single instrument and evaluation approach for an entire state necessarily raises questions. If RISE is the one system used to evaluate teachers, can it be validated in all circumstances? Is RISE capable of effectively evaluating non-traditional teachers such as teachers who teach in Montessori schools? Will it be fair? Will it treat all teachers the same? Will it be efficient and easily implemented and understood? Will it result in improved instruction? And, most important, will it result in improved rates of learning for all students (Cole, Murphy, Rogan, & Eckes, 2013)? A purpose of this study is discover whether the RISE system is able to measure teacher effectiveness in Montessori classrooms where teachers teach very differently than traditional teachers.

Teacher Evaluations are Being Used to Measure Teacher Effectiveness

In 2011, the Indiana General Assembly passed a broad and ambitious reform package that significantly altered how teachers and principals are evaluated (Cole et al., 2013). Teacher evaluation systems had to change dramatically. Prior to the reform, teachers in Indiana were given evaluations that were not linked to student accountability. The current quantitative evaluations of teachers based in part on an analysis of the test score gains of their students is an exciting prospect that has gained many proponents in recent years (Braun, 2005).

For many years, school districts throughout Indiana sought to develop a teacher evaluation instrument that has the capability of making a positive difference in the classroom by capturing the impact of teachers on student achievement. Several of these instruments measured teacher characteristics and had no accountability component. In an effort to change this, the RISE Evaluation System was developed in order to hold teachers accountable; keeping in mind that changes in instruction occur when teachers receive continuous support embedded in a coherent instructional system that is focused on the practical details of what it means to teach effectively (Darling-Hammond, 2010). The need to evaluate teachers rests on a simple premise—no one is perfect. Certainly, no teacher is perfect nor is any lesson. Thus, the feedback from evaluating teachers is one way in which teachers can improve their instructional skills (Fink, 1999). Does the IDOE's tool designed to evaluate and measure teacher effectiveness in the classrooms work? Does this one size fits all method measure teacher effectiveness? If after the research is conducted, the RISE tool effectively measures the teachers in Montessori Schools, it may be hypothesized that the RISE Evaluation System is applicable to not

only traditional teachers, but teachers in non-traditional school settings such as the Montessori classrooms. If this study demonstrates that the RISE is not capable of effectively evaluating teachers in Montessori classrooms, it gives non-traditional teachers a voice to the IDOE with the recently mandated RISE instrument.

The Research Issue

Montessori education is available all over the world, with all kinds of children—wealthy, poor, gifted, normal, learning disabled, blind, etc.—and environments from refugee camps and slums, to elegant schools in beautiful private homes. It is not the effect of the environment that determines the success of the Montessori classroom, but the preparation of the teacher (Duffy, Duffy, & Amann, 2012). Even though the majority of teachers teaching in Montessori schools are certified by the state, their method of teaching is very different from the traditional teachers. Most Montessori teachers receive additional training and/or certification that enhances the Montessori philosophy in the classroom. This training usually consists of an 18-month program whereas the teachers complete coursework and a residency. Throughout the training, the teachers must learn how to effectively implement the Montessori philosophy as well as learn how to implement the many Montessori works into the classroom.

Although there are several Montessori evaluation tools, the question remains—does the RISE evaluation system mandated by the IDOE capture the necessary components needed of effective Montessori teachers? The specific point of this review is to evaluate the new Indiana RISE evaluation system's validity to Montessori teachers. Will RISE effectively evaluate teachers in traditional and nontraditional settings such as Montessori classrooms? Does the one size fit all evaluation tool work in both scenarios?

This study seeks to determine if the RISE evaluation system can authentically be used to evaluate Montessori teachers. This study answered the following questions:

1. What characteristics and teaching behaviors do Montessori teachers employ that are different from traditional teachers?
2. Does the RISE evaluation system adequately capture these characteristics and teaching behaviors?
3. Does the application of the externally mandated RISE evaluation system affect the culture and practices of a Montessori school?

Montessori training programs seek to produce teachers who create environments that offer the fullest potential benefits of a Montessori education (Schneider, 2013-14). Most Montessori training programs immerse teachers into a curriculum in order to transform the teacher into a Montessori teacher. Whitescarver and Cossentino (2007), founding directors of the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector, described these qualities as “dispositions” and suggested that there are “three interconnected dispositions that lie at the heart of the Montessori approach: flexibility, restraint, and love” (p. 3).

In addition, the following characteristics must be prevalent in a Montessori teacher:

1. Teacher acts as a guide and follows the child; child determines direction of learning by own interests. The teacher must be able to observe the child for long periods of time. This will enable the teacher to begin to act as the child’s guide.
2. Montessori teacher should be curious about everything. Learning new and exciting things helps your own curiosity bounce off the children’s.
3. Be prepared. Being ready for anything helps the Montessori teacher have an easier time dealing with the unexpected.

4. Lead the children toward independence. The children, not the teacher, become the center of the classroom. The teacher blends into the classroom.
5. Trust the Montessori method. Montessori teachers give themselves and children time. We need to give ourselves time to feel comfortable with presentations, with classroom management, and time to build a special relationship with each child. It doesn't happen in a moment, a day, a week or even a month. There's a reason for the 3-year cycle.
6. Model correct behavior for the students. Children are watching our every move, and they will usually do as we do and not as we say. Are we polite to other adults? Are we honest? Are we gracious and courteous? Or do we complain, gossip or act annoyed when others don't do what we want them to do? Children are always watching.
7. Be the connection between the children and the materials. Think of what else you can do to link the children to their environment. Show them how to clean and care for the classroom. Don't have anything in the classroom that they can't touch. Be ready to show them how to use a material when they ask you about it. (Bourne, 2008, paras. 4-12)

These characteristics embedded in the Montessori teacher are not easy to evaluate.

However, there are several instruments available that attempt to measure these characteristics of the Montessori teacher. One of these instruments is the Montessori Integrity Evaluation Tool (Appendix A). The Montessori Integrity Evaluation is a tool designed by Montessori teachers to help administrators look for strategies that are implemented into the Montessori classroom. The instrument gives the administrators guidelines to follow when visiting in the classroom to conduct the observations. The Montessori Integrity Evaluation model asks the administrators to look for evidence rather than write a narrative. Such items that are included are style of relating to children and others. Using this instrument, the administrators are supposed to check boxes and write short statements where there is evidence. A few examples of the characteristics that administrators are able to check are "communicates respect for the individuality of children and adults, gives evidence of liking children, sets classroom expectations,

demonstrates listening skills with adults, demonstrates good rapport with adults, and is observant and responsive to individual needs as they arise.” (Appendix A, p. 1). This instrument resulted from a group of teachers who did not feel that their administrator understood how the Montessori classroom worked. These teachers did what Montessori teachers demonstrate in their classroom. They helped the administrator by giving the administrator the tool they needed for understanding, just like they do with their students. These teachers have worked hard to achieve a Montessori program in their school. They did not want a new administrator who was not familiar with the program to unfairly evaluate them with another device.

Another more comprehensive evaluation tool used in Montessori classrooms to evaluate Montessori teachers came from the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector (Appendix B). The instrument is used to measure the extent to which the classroom teachers are able to produce high functioning Montessori environments. This instrument measures student engagement, work with Montessori materials, beauty and order of the classroom, classroom procedures and routines, grace and courtesy, work habits of the students, organization and maintenance of space and materials, and the teachers’ instructional approach. The National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector’s Evaluation Tool asks evaluators to tally marks for each category. The tallies are then used to create a rubric that assists the observer in the Montessori classrooms. Further recommendation of this tool is to use it for formal audits, self-assessment, and group reflection (See Appendix B).

Although both these tools have necessary components to evaluate Montessori teachers, how do they compare to RISE? Do they satisfy the accountability mandates

required from the IDOE? Will RISE be able to measure teachers who are truly immersed in the Montessori philosophy? What will the new evaluation tool miss when administrators evaluate Montessori teachers? Since Montessori teachers' instruction is based largely on sensory materials developed by Montessori (Rhyniker & Shoho, 2001), how will the RISE System be able to effectively measure student achievement using these tools? From analyzing past and current research, will the RISE Evaluation System be able to review instruction in both traditional and Montessori schools from classroom observations? How will the RISE validate itself as a tool to help administrators make sure every teacher in their building is competent and able to help students obtain optimal test scores and growth (Schlegel, 2012)?

This is my 21st year as an administrator. Since RISE has been mandated by IDOE, RISE has been the topic of discussion among teachers and administrators in countless situations. The countless interest and many discussions fueled my desire to explore the implementation of the new system in the Indiana schools. My research sought to determine whether the new evaluation tool being used by administrators with teachers is authentic in non-traditional schools, such as the Montessori schools.

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Overview of Literature Review

The review of literature provides motivation to further examine teacher effectiveness, Montessori education, and the RISE Evaluation as a tool to evaluate Montessori teachers. Requiring more rigorous evaluation is a necessary step towards making schools better (Stokes, 2011). Evaluation tools have been used effectively and ineffectively for years in schools. The hope is that the changes in the Indiana evaluation system would make it easier to identify ineffective teachers and remove them from the classrooms, as well as identify and reward top performing teachers (Elliott & Butrymowicz, 2013).

The No Child Left Behind Act

The No Child Left Behind, (NCLB) reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary School Act requiring states to develop high standards and exhibit measureable goals to improve individual outcomes in education. With the implementation of NCLB act came greater accountability in schools across the nation. Schools must produce students who are able to pass assessments and meet standards that allow them to complete high school and enter higher institutions of education. The new accountability makes school leaders look at strategies for improving school teaching performance, alternative certification, licensing exams, and teacher evaluations (Toch & Rothman, 2008). One of the strategies districts are implementing is designing new tools to evaluate teacher performance.

Research shows that teachers are the most important school-based factor impacting student success. Teachers will be outstanding when they acquire certain attributes, such as humility and the skill of reflection and patience (Braun, 2005). Additional research indicates that students who are taught by effective teachers exhibit an understanding of the concepts targeted in instruction that is more integrated, more coherent, and at a higher level of abstraction than the understanding achieved by other students (Hattie, 2003). Knowing what attributes are important in an effective teacher helps create a better-prepared teaching staff.

If this is known, then why is this not used in the classrooms? The answer is that most evaluations are short and infrequent (most are based on two or fewer classroom observations, each lasting 60 minutes or less), conducted by administrators without extensive training, and influenced by powerful cultural forces, in particular, and expectation among teachers that they will be among the vast majority rated as top performers (Weisber, Sexton, Mulhern, & Keeling, 2009). Thus, the developers of RISE attempt to address many of these concerns so current evaluation systems reflect changes that are being instituted in evaluation systems in Indiana and across the country.

Characteristics of an Effective Teacher

What is an effective teacher? Everyone can think of teachers who were their favorites and teachers they tried to avoid. What qualities does an effective teacher have? Most research says that effective teachers have several qualities that make them effective. Tucker and Stronge (2005) stated that a teacher must have the following qualities in order to be effective:

- Have formal teacher preparation training

- Hold certification of some kind (standard, alternative, or provisional) and are certified within their fields
- Have taught for at least three years
- Are caring, fair, and respectful
- Hold high expectations for themselves and their students
- Dedicate extra time to instructional preparation and reflection
- Maximize instructional time via effective classroom management and organization
- Enhance instruction by varying instructional strategies, activities, and assignments
- Present content to students in a meaningful way that fosters understanding
- Monitor students' learning by utilizing pre and post assessments, providing timely and informative feedback, and reteaching material to students who did not achieve mastery
- Demonstrate effectiveness with the full range of student abilities in their classrooms, regardless of the academic diversity of the students (p. 2).

In reviewing the literature of an effective teacher, Tucker and Stronge have several qualities that are repeated when describing an effective teacher.

RISE not only has ratings for teachers who are effective, but also ratings for teachers who are highly effective, improvement necessary, and ineffective. The RISE definition for

Highly effective is: Consistently exceed expectations for professional practice, student achievement, and professional contribution to the school or corporation.

Effective: Consistently meets expectations for professional practice, student achievement, and professional contribution to the school or corporation.

Improvement Necessary: Room for growth in professional practice, student achievement and professional contribution to school or corporation. Ineffective:

Consistently fails to meet expectation for professional practice, student achievement and contribution to school or corporation. (Indiana Department of Education, 2012, p. 8)

There is a reasonable consensus not only on what effective teachers do to enhance student learning, but also meta-analysis by researchers such as Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock (as cited in Tucker and Stronge, 2005) have begun to quantify the average effects of specific instructional strategies. If a teacher is effective, the percentile gains of a student may reach 29-45 points in one year. Such an increase would mean that the score of an average student at the 50th percentile might rise to the 79th or even the 95th percentile with the effective instructional practices of an effective teacher (Tucker & Stronge, 2005)

RISE was to be implemented in all schools during the 2012-2013 school years unless the school had received permission to use a modified evaluation system. Even the modified evaluation systems had to contain several components embedded within the RISE evaluation system that linked student achievement to classroom instruction. If a school chose to use another evaluation tool, the school in Indiana school districts had to submit samples of modified evaluations to the IDOE in order to receive approval to use their chosen modified system of measurement. It is only upon approval that districts are allowed to vary from RISE evaluation system.

Mandating that teachers meet the minimum requirements to be considered highly qualified is a first step toward ensuring teacher effectiveness, but just meeting those requirements is no guarantee that teachers will be effective (Goe, 2007; Gordon, Kane, & Staiger, 2006). Teachers strive to get a least a 3.5 on a 4.0 scale in order to be considered highly effective with the RISE tool. If a teacher receives anything below a 3.0, they are put through an improvement phase. If improvements are not met, the teacher may face dismissal.

RISE bases teacher effectiveness into domains. Domain 1 is planning. Administrators evaluate teachers by rating them on 1.1 their ability to utilize assessment data to plan lessons, 1.2, the teacher's ability to set ambitions and measure achievement goals, 1.3 the teacher's ability to develop standards based unit plans and assessments, 1.4 the teacher's ability to create objective driven lesson plans and assessments, and 1.5 the teacher's ability to track student data and analyze the student's progress. Domain 1 consists of 10% of the total teacher effectiveness rating.

Domain 2 evaluates the teacher's instruction. The components of Domain 2 are as follows: 2.1 the teachers understand and master of lesson objectives, 2.2 the teacher is able to demonstrate and clearly communicate content knowledge to the students, 2.3 engage students in academic content, 2.4 check for understanding, 2.5 modify instruction as needed for the students, 2.6 develop higher level of understanding through rigorous instruction and work, 2.7 maximize instructional time, 2.8 create a classroom culture of respect and collaboration and 2.9 set high expectations for academic success. Domain 2 is composed of 75% of the teacher's total score.

Domain 3 evaluates the teacher leadership characteristics. Domain 3 evaluates how the teacher 3.1 contributes to the school culture, 3.2 how the teacher collaborates with peers, 3.3 if the teacher is able to seek professional skills and knowledge, 3.4 how the teacher advocates for student success, and 3.5 engages in families in the student's learning. Domain 3 is composed of 15% of the overall RISE rubric score.

Finally, Domain 4 measures the teacher's professionalism. Domain 4 is different because it does not have a percentage attached to the evaluation; rather the teacher receives points for the following: attendance, on time arrival, policies and procedures, and respect. If the observer/evaluator answers yes to the question the teacher is given a 0. If the answer is no, the teacher receives a 1 (Indiana Department of Education, 2012).

In comparison with the two Montessori evaluations and RISE, there are some similarities when evaluating teachers. Both instruments evaluate teacher management strategies, classroom culture, and student engagement. However, does the RISE evaluation tool include rubrics that will evaluate a high functioning Montessori environment?

Many teachers did not like the new evaluation system. Most teachers believe that many district evaluation systems do not function well because they don't address valid performance competencies (Toch & Rothman, 2008). That is why evaluation tools must include an essential effective evaluation system for helping improve teaching and learning, particularly for the most vulnerable students who, upon experiencing academic failure early in their schooling, and may never quite catch up (Liu & Mulfinger, 2011). These systems must also provide feedback to teachers.

RISE evaluates teachers in four categories: planning, instruction, leadership, and core professionalism. A rubric score is implemented that puts teachers into a category of one of the following: highly effective, effective, improvement necessary, ineffective (Schlegel, 2012). RISE was designed in collaboration with educators across Indiana to evaluate a teacher's professional practice as well as provide evidence of student learning in order to present a fair, accurate, and comprehensive picture of an educator's performance. RISE then uses multiple sources of information to identify strengths and areas for improvement, all designed to help teachers improve. The components included in RISE are professional practice (knowledge and skill) and student learning (measures). Each component has a measure, which is scored to compile a summative rating for the teacher. Student learning measures include individual growth model data, school wide learning measures and student learning objectives. Upon rating these components, the administrator supplies regular actionable feedback that hopefully leads to effective instruction. RISE was designed to allow school leaders to be responsible for the performance of their schools and have the autonomy to make necessary improvements. RISE was also designed to empower school leaders to make staff decisions that will ensure students are receiving the highest quality education (Schlegel, 2012). The question is when RISE is implemented in the schools, will it be able to provide a fair, accurate, and comprehensive picture of a teacher's performance? Can RISE be a useful tool when evaluating nontraditional Montessori teachers who use hands-on materials that stress the understanding over memorization, process over product, and problem solving over merely getting the right answer (Duffy, & Duffy, 2012)?

Teacher Effectiveness: Student Achievement

There is no limit to the skill and qualities that a good teacher should have. However, a teacher is outstanding when he or she acquires certain attributes, such as humility and the skills of reflection and patience (Leif, 2010). Research has shown that highly effective teachers appear to be effective with students of all achievement levels, regardless of the makeup in their classrooms (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Researchers have also consistently shown that the quality of the teacher is the single most important in-school factor having an impact on student learning (Hanusheck, 1992). Thus, an administrator must make sure every teacher in his or her school is competent and able to help students make academic progress. After reviewing all of the literature on the qualities of an effective teacher, the commonality of effective teachers share the following characteristics: loves to teach, has a caring attitude, relates to students, thinks outside the box, is a good communicator, is proactive rather than reactive, works to be better, uses a variety of media when teaching, challenges their students, and knows how to explain lessons in a manner that their students understand (Meador, 2012).

When properly implemented, instructional strategies such as identifying similarities and differences, summarizing and note taking, and reinforcing effort and providing recognition can result in percentile gains of 29-45 points in student achievement (Pickering, 1992). Students who have the privilege of being taught by these teachers exhibit an understanding of concepts targeted in instruction that is more integrated, more coherent, and on a higher level of abstraction than the understanding achieved by other students (Hattie, 2003).

Important Elements in Montessori Schools and Teachers

In Children's Houses, the old-time teacher, who wore herself out maintaining discipline of immobility, and who wasted her breath in loud and continual discourse has disappeared. For this teacher we have substituted the Didactic Material, which contains within itself the control of errors and which makes auto-education possible to each child. The teacher has thus become a director of the spontaneous work of the children. (Montessori as cited in Casa dei Bambini, 2002, par. 1)

Maria Montessori (1870-1952) was the brilliant figure who was Italy's first woman physician. After innovating a methodology for working with children with disabilities, she started her Casa dei Bambini (Children's House) in 1907 for children ages 4 through 7 in a housing project in the slums of Rome (Edwards, 2002). Maria Montessori envisioned a new kind of teacher. A Montessori teacher is one who is able to carefully prepare an environment for the classroom so that it is peaceful and productive. Montessorians often refer to the teacher as a guide, directress, or director because the teacher does not teach in a traditional sense (Gordon, 2007). The Montessori method of education has been successfully assisting in the development of children for more than a century (Chattin-McNichols, 1992). Maria Montessori's influence is seen in many schools throughout the world. Montessori teachers provide a wealth of information to their students using "structured learning environments that will inspire and guide spontaneous activity" (Gordon, 2007, p. 32). The adults in charge of these environments require unique preparation.

Allowing for the work of the inner guide is the hardest part of working in the classroom. “It is easy to emphasize our own agenda; to weigh the academics disproportionately, to push for the quick solution to substitute our will for the child’s” (Dubble, 2015, para. 3).

Within this environment, students are able to move and choose activities for learning. Classrooms function as “the students’ workplace. Each environment is unique. Classrooms are prepared and modified as a function of the basic floor plan, the particular preferences of the teacher and the needs, characteristics and ages of the students.” (Gordon, 2007, p. 33). Instruction is based largely on sensory materials delivered by Montessori (Ryniker & Shoho, 2001).

Montessori classrooms employ an open concept in which desks are arranged in rafts to promote individual and small group learning and students’ age range across three years, whereas traditional classrooms have desks oriented in one direction for whole group instruction and consist of same grade students (Chattin-McNichols, 1992). The role of the teacher in a Montessori classroom is to guide, model, observe, keep records, obtain professionalism, and to become an advocate for parents. Montessori teachers provide guidance to their students with the materials. They do not force students to complete or pick lessons; instead they watch and entice them with the excitement of wanting to learn the lesson. Montessori teachers continually model correct behavior for students. At no time is it acceptable for a Montessori teacher to raise his or her voice or reprimand a child in a demeaning way. Even though it is well documented that Montessori students outperform their peers, most public Montessori schools must adhere to the same state-mandated standards as traditional public schools. With the emphasis on

allowing students to learn at their own pace within a prepared environment where the teacher's role is to guide the students, standardized assessments are used with traditional methods of assessment practices. Montessori teachers typically use student portfolios, audio/visual recordings of student's work, individual conferences and checklists to evaluate students.

Montessori schools are also held accountable for student growth. With the growing accountability associated with teacher effectiveness, schools, both public and private that are Montessori, must produce students that can master standards, pass statewide assessments, and are productive citizens. Many schools have this capability already; however, schools must abide by the new mandates. Since the IDOE mandated an evaluation system that was to be implemented in every school district in the 2012-2013 school year, this study provides evidence as to whether the new evaluation system should be used in Montessori schools. This study was used to evaluate the new IDOE's RISE evaluation system to see if it is applicable to Montessori teachers. The study was used to capture the important effective elements of Montessori teachers. Montessori teachers provide valuable input as the system is implemented as a part of their evaluation.

Teacher Evaluations

The methods of evaluating teachers in the past have been held to be inadequate (Soar, Medley, & Coker, 1983). Administrators evaluated a teacher on their characteristics rather than teaching abilities. Was the teacher on time? Was the teacher professional at school? Was the teacher able to handle his or her own discipline problems? Evaluating a teacher's characteristics and orderliness had little to do with the holding the teacher accountable for student achievement; therefore, changes in the

process began to appear. Evaluations began to hold teachers accountable for the success of their students in the classroom by using standardized means to measure student achievement. New models of evaluation were being considered to reflect more accurately on teaching performance and student outcomes. Across the U.S., 32 states and the District of Columbia public schools have made some change to their state teacher evaluation policy in the last three years. Just two years ago, only 15 states required annual evaluations of all teachers, with some states permitting teachers to go five years or more between evaluations (National Council on Teacher Quality, 2011). In spite of these efforts to improve how teachers are assessed, many evaluations do not always reflect real differences in teacher effectiveness, especially in nontraditional classrooms. Evaluations often fail to identify the best educators and neglect to highlight specific areas for improvement (Schlegel, 2012).

Teacher evaluation is, first, about documenting the quality of teacher performance; then, its focus shifts to helping teachers improve their performance as well as holding them accountable for their work. In recent years, as the field of education moved toward a stronger focus on accountability and on careful analysis of variables affecting educational outcomes, the teacher has proven time and again to be the most influential school-related force in student achievement (Stronge, 2002). With this being evident, the IDOE jumped on board and adopted a new evaluation system called RISE.

Definition of Terms

Accountability is the obligation of a teacher to account for his or her activities, accept responsibility for them, and to disclose the results using data.

Achievement is meeting a uniform and predetermined level of mastery on subject or grade level standards.

Effective teacher is a teacher who is able to produce desired outcomes from his or her students.

Evaluation is assessment or statement of value.

Growth is improving skills required to achieve mastery on a subject or grade level standard over a period of time.

Indiana Growth Model expands the conversation of student achievement. The model measures a student's academic growth in relationship to students with similar academic histories, as well as progress towards proficiency standards. The Indiana Growth Model currently uses ISTEP+ results in a new way to help parents, schools, corporations, and the state to understand how students are growing from year to year. It also provides a common measure to show how much growth the students of each school have achieved. By incorporating growth measures, conversations on student achievement are greatly enhanced.

Montessori refers to Dr. Maria Montessori, founder of the Montessori method of education, or the method itself. The components encompassed in the Montessori method are hands on learning, structured learning environments designed to facilitate self-directed learning, intrinsic motivation and student choice of activities, multi-age groupings peer tutoring and cooperative learning, self-correcting material, ecological studies, global education, peace education, mastery or outcome-based learning rather than strict curriculum outlines or credit hours (Gordon, 2007).

RISE is the IDOE evaluation system developed to evaluate teachers using teacher practice and student performance.

IDOE's RISE Evaluation System

Although teacher evaluation is currently changing markedly across the nation, it remains an unstable tool for identifying and supporting effective teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2010), because it is almost impossible for school districts to obtain a teacher evaluation instrument that has the capability of making a positive difference in every classroom. Furthermore, determining what type of teacher evaluation method is best for a given purpose includes understanding of the validity and reliability of the instrument or process being used (Millett, Stickler, Payne & Dwyer, 2002).

The Indiana Evaluation Cabinet developed the RISE evaluation system over the course of a year. This group consisted of educators from all over the state. Many of the members have received awards in the past, such as Teacher of the Year and The Milken Award. RISE relies on multiple sources of information to paint (what is supposed to be) a fair, accurate, and comprehensive picture of teacher's performance (IDOE, 2012). RISE examines the growth and achievement of students using multiple measures. Measures of student learning will consist of 20% to 50% of a teacher's final evaluation rating. The Indiana Growth Model was used to measure the student learning of all math and English/language arts (ELA) teachers in Grades 4 through 8. To complement the growth model and to account for those teachers who do not have such data available, RISE also includes measure of student's progress toward specific growth or achievement goals known as student learning objectives.

Student learning objectives involve setting rigorous learning goals for students around common assessments. All teachers must have student learning objectives. For teachers who have a growth model (math and ELA Grades 4 through 8), these objectives serve as additional measures of student achievement. For teachers who do not have growth model ratings, the student learning objectives form the basis for the student learning measures. Upon using the growth model, whole school growth can also be calculated, which is relevant to all teachers in elementary and intermediate schools. To reflect that the IDOE believes all teachers contribute to the success of the students, a portion of their final evaluation score is tied to whole school growth using the Indiana Growth Model (IDOE, 2012).

The RISE evaluation system outlined core beliefs that are to be used in order to obtain successful teacher evaluations. The core beliefs of RISE are

1. **Nothing we can do for our students matters more than giving them effective teachers capable of driving student-learning outcomes.** Research has proven this time and again. We need to do everything we can to give all our teachers the support they need to do their best work, because when they succeed, our students succeed. Without effective evaluation systems, we can't identify and retain excellent teachers, provide useful feedback and support, or intervene when teachers consistently perform poorly.
2. **Teachers deserve to be treated like professionals.** Unfortunately, many evaluations treat teachers like interchangeable parts-rating nearly all teachers the same and failing to give need to create an evaluation system that gives teachers regular feedback on their performance, opportunities for professional growth, and recognition when they do exceptional work. We're committed to creating evaluations that are fair, accurate and consistent, based on multiple factors that paint a complete picture of each teacher's success in helping students learn.
3. **A new evaluation system will make a positive difference in teachers' everyday lives.** Novice and veteran teachers alike can look forward to detailed, constructive feedback, tailored to the individual needs of their classrooms and students. Teachers and principals will meet regularly to

discuss successes and areas for improvement, set professional goals, and create an individualized development plan to meet those goals. (IDOE, 2012, p. 5)

From these core beliefs came the implementation of the three fundamentals embedded in the RISE System. Under this framework, the education system takes on a very specific function. The role of the education system and all of its components (teachers, administrators, curriculum, and infrastructure) is to add value to the economy by increasing the knowledge of its labor force. Teachers and administrators must then be evaluated based on how much knowledge value is added to students. In a human capital model, teacher evaluation monitors inputs, or teacher activities, and compares them to outputs, or student growth. The inputs that are most highly correlated with desired outputs are promoted with the hopes of maximizing results. However, this arrangement has the potential of de-professionalizing teachers by emphasizing a systematic approach to instruction and neglecting other important purposes of teacher evaluation (Whitman, Dingjing, & Plucker, 2011, pp. 4-5). Although an effort has been made to address many of the short-comings of previous teacher evaluation systems in the new RISE model, it still needs to be determined whether the model works in nontraditional settings such as Montessori schools.

Significance of the Study

With growing accountability associated with teacher effectiveness, schools must produce students that can master standards, pass statewide assessments, and be capable of being productive citizens. Many schools have this capability already; however, schools must abide by new regulations from the IDOE tying teacher performance to student academic achievement. As Montessori schools continue to practice their varied approach

to education there is a question about whether the new IDOE evaluation process is able to effectively evaluate teachers who use alternative classroom instruction and assessment practices to evaluate student achievement. The American Montessori Society believes that assessment procedures used in American's schools should move away from reliance on written tests as the only format for indicating educational achievement, and toward formats (portfolios, presentations, and multi-media projects) that more authentically gauge the ability to interrelate ideas, think critically, and use information meaningfully (American Montessori Society, 1998). The purpose of this study is to evaluate the new IDOE's RISE evaluation system to see if it is applicable to Montessori classrooms.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine whether the RISE evaluation system in Montessori schools effectively identifies the essential components that all Montessori teachers hold. The first part of the study analyzed how Montessori teachers are evaluated by their administrators. The second part of the study consisted of interviewing teachers and administrators who are using the mandated RISE evaluation system with Montessori teachers. Montessori teachers and administrators were asked specific questions pertaining to the use of RISE in their Montessori schools. Ten people were chosen—four administrators and six teachers—to answer questions from four different Montessori schools. Three of the schools were public Montessori schools that had implemented the RISE evaluation system. The fourth school refused to implement the RISE evaluation system. Since they were a public charter school, this school had the opportunity to create a modified version of the RISE evaluation tool. The administrator was interviewed at School D, (Nomenclature) in the hope of providing in depth information about the evaluation tool that was created and the reasons why RISE was rejected. Upon conducting the interview with the administrator at Nomenclature, it was discovered that there were no teachers in that school who had experience or had been evaluated with the RISE evaluation system. From this information the determination was made that they could not provide quality information about the RISE evaluation system, and as a result,

two of the teachers were not interviewed. It was disappointing to report that one administrator did not respond when asked to participate; therefore, only three administrators were interviewed. School A (The Pink Tower), was located in the city with a population of 468 students during the 2012-2013 school year. The Pink Tower's ethnicity enrollment rate was 182 (39.5%) White, 35 (7.3%) multiracial, 69 (13.2%) Hispanic, and 182 (38.9%) Black. The Pink Tower had 215 (45.9%) students who received free meals, whereas 224 (47.9%) students paid for their meals, and 29 (6.2%) students received reduced price meals. The Pink Tower had 82.4% passing rate on both English/language arts and math on the ISTEP+ in 2012-13. These statistics are reflect in Tables 1 and 2.

School B (Golden Beads) was located in the city as well and served 580 students. Golden Beads ethnicity enrollment rate was 141 (24.3%) White students, (300 (51%) Hispanic students, 17 (2.9%) multiracial students, and 122 (20.9%) Black students. Golden Beads had a 59.9% passing rate in English/language arts and math on the ISTEP+ test in 2012-2013. Golden Beads had 513 (88.4%) students who received free meals, 40 (6.9%) students who paid for meals, and 27 (4.7%) students who received reduced-priced meals (Tables 1 and 2).

Finally, School C (Stamp Game) was in the city and served 334 students. Stamp Game had 236 (70.7%) Black students, 43 (12.9%) Hispanic students, 41 (12.3%) White students, and 14 (4.2%) students who identified as multiracial. Stamp Game had 245 (73.4 %) students who received free meals, 35 (10.5%) students who received reduced price meals, and 54 (16.2%) students who paid for meals. Stamp Game had 79 (78.2%)

students pass the English/language arts and math portion of the ISTEP + test (Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1

Montessori Schools Report

School	ISTEP+ English/Language arts passing %	Free lunch	Reduced lunch	Paid lunch
Nomenclature	52.4%	62.7%	16.5%	20.5%
Golden Beans	59.9%	88.4%	4.7%	6.9%
Stamp Game	78.2%	73.4%	10.5%	16.2%
Pink Tower	82.4%	45.9%	6.2%	47.9%

Source. IDOE (2013)

Table 2

School Ethnic Percentages

School	Black students	White students	Hispanic students	Multiracial Students
Nomenclature	1.7%	86.9%	3.8%	6.5%
Golden Beads	20.9%	24.3%	51.0%	20.9%
Pink Tower	38.9%	39.5%	13.2%	7.3%
Stamp Game	70.7%	12.3%	12.9%	4.2%

Source. IDOE (2013)

Three administrators in these three Montessori schools were asked questions pertaining to the RISE evaluation system and how it was utilized in their schools. Three

of the seven teachers were strategically selected because they were teaching before RISE was implemented. All participants received an electronic request asking for their participation in an interview. It was ideal conducting the interviews in person; however, phone interviews were conducted as a last resort. The Montessori teachers and administrators answered questions that explored the phenomena created by RISE. The phenomena were analyzed and sought each interviewee's perspective using the qualitative method of research. This study utilized an exploratory qualitative method utilizing phenomenological interviews for the best results. I paid close attention to patterns and similar words and phrases used by the interviews. While interviewing the teachers, I asked probing questions to probe a richer meaning or to clarify an answer. This study did not test a hypothesis or theory, but instead it provided information that was interpreted through hermeneutic phenomenological interviews and thus formed a theory. From the data generated in this study, non-traditional schools should have a better understanding about how the RISE evaluation system will or will not produce the results needed to conduct their evaluations.

Defining Phenomenology

The focus of a phenomenological study is to capture the meaning, structure, or essence of the lived experience for a person or group of people (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009, Merriam, 2009) to the fullest extent. Phenomenology is defined as the "study of essences" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. vii). The term essence refers to the essential meanings of a phenomenon; that which makes a thing what it is (Van Manen, 1996). Langdridge (2007) defined phenomenology as a discipline that "aims to focus on people's own perceptions of the world in which they live and what it means to them; a

focus on people's lived experience" (p.4). The researcher gathers the information with a goal to arrive at an investigation of essence by shifting from describing separate phenomena to searching for their common essence (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009; Merriam, 2009). In order to gather Phenomenological data, a researcher must conduct interviews with individuals who have direct experience in the phenomena of interest. The goal is to arrive at an investigation of essence by shifting from describing separate phenomena to searching for their common essence (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009; Merriam, 2009). The researcher then takes the information from the interviews and interprets it.

Hermeneutics

When hermeneutics are applied, the question to be answered is, "What are the conditions under which a human act took place or a product was produced that make it possible to interpret its meanings," therefore the researcher will listen closely to interpret the impression of the teachers and administrators of the RISE evaluation system (Patton, 2002). With this in mind, I sought to gain depth from the teachers and administrators by listening and interpreting meaning from their own personal experiences.

As the researcher explores and attempts to interpret the interviewee's experiences, the researcher's own experiences may be included in the results. This gives the researcher a clearer understanding of the phenomenon (Merriam, 2009).

Hermeneutic Phenomenology

Hermeneutic phenomenology includes interpretation by the researcher based on the researcher's own personal knowledge and experience (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007). The researcher listens to the responses in an "attempt to unveil the world as experienced by the subject through their life world stories" (Kafle, 2011, p. 186). Participants are

encouraged to describe as precisely as possible what they experience, what they feel, and how they act (Kvale & Brindmann, 2009).

Upon using the hermeneutic phenomenology method, the researcher will be able to gather a much deeper meaning from the data due to personal experiences. Since the researcher has been an administrator for twenty-one years, and has participated in a plethora of evaluations, deeper meaning will be applied to the analysis of the data that might not occur in other circumstances.

Conducting the Interviews

The methodology of this research is based on interviews. Teachers and administrators were interviewed to obtain in-depth information on the participant's perception of the new mandates indicating evaluations must be tied to student learning outcomes. Participants answered questions to help determine whether the RISE evaluation is or is not applicable to Montessori schools. The primary purpose of hermeneutical phenomenology is to create rich descriptions of the experiences of individuals who are engaged in the phenomena being studied. Unlike phenomenology, where researchers bracket experiences to create an unbiased approach to the research (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Patton, 2002), hermeneutic phenomenology includes interpretation by the researcher based on the researcher's own personal knowledge and experiences (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007).

The participants are encouraged to describe as precisely as possible what they experience, what they feel, and how they act (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Throughout the interviews, the researcher listens to hear themes or correlations between each interview. I recorded each interview in order to capture the exact information.

Data Collection and Analyses

Data collection and analyses are aimed at acquiring descriptive and explanatory concepts and/or correlations. Interviews were recorded and transcribed after obtaining prior permission from the interviewee and after obtaining permission through the IRB process. Interviewees were encouraged to honestly and thoroughly provide opinions, facts, and feelings about the use of the current RISE evaluation system in their Montessori schools. Participants had opportunities to share personal experiences as they themselves were evaluated by RISE. Each interview was then transcribed and analyzed to help me further construct an identification of themes, patterns, and categories. The information was reviewed several times to ensure precise analyses. The outcome of the data provided important information from Montessori teachers and administrators as to whether or not the RISE evaluation system used to evaluate Montessori teachers had changed the culture in the school. The transcribed interviews were read several times with meticulous attention given to the responses in order to obtain a deep reflection. Emergent themes and patterns were coded from the transcripts. The qualitative data obtained from the questions asked during the interviews were used to produce an inductive data analysis for categorizing patterns, themes, and categories that enabled coding to emerge. A thematic framework was designed for each question so that I was able to view the written responses side by side. I then categorized the responses into descriptive codes, using words to describe the participant's responses. After the interview responses were identified, I linked common passages of data. The linked data were labeled and categorized together showing patterns with teachers and administrator's responses. Themes emerged allowing me to draw conclusions and theories from the data.

The final outcome of this data provided important information to Montessori teachers and administrators as to whether or not they should continue using the RISE evaluation system to evaluate Montessori teachers.

Limitations of the Study

I am currently in my 31st year as an educator. I have been a classroom teacher, Title I coordinator, assistant principal, principal, and am currently an executive director. I was a building administrator for 16 years and for the past three and a half years have been a corporation administrator, serving the role of superintendent. During this time, I have served on several evaluation committees, have been evaluated several times by many different administrators, and have personally evaluated hundreds of teachers and school staff. I have experienced administrators who do an exemplary job of evaluation and also administrators who were very inefficient. I myself have had times where I conducted hundreds of school staff evaluations using checklists and other times where I had to use summative data for evaluations. I have used reflective approaches along with rubric and check box evaluation tools. There are not many examples of evaluations that come to mind that I have not used or have experience using.

When I was being evaluated, my experience was that no two evaluators rated or evaluated the same way even though the district expectations were the same. I have had to evaluate teachers differently; some more aggressively and others more passively depending on their classroom academic and disciplinary competences. Therefore, I already realized that no two administrators evaluate teachers exactly the same. It was difficult for the interviewees to focus on the RISE evaluation system and not the administrator who was evaluating them. Personal experiences are often brought forth

when discussing evaluations. To counter this, I listened with intent and used probing questions to gather the information I needed.

Additionally, my personal experiences with the RISE evaluation system was that I am certified in conducting RISE evaluations after attending the three day in service training. I have evaluated teachers using the RISE evaluation system and have heard first hand thoughts and feelings about the system.

Due to my background and experiences, I had to make sure I did not bring my own opinions and biases into the research. I identified, documented, and made myself aware of my own thoughts, feelings, assumptions, and viewpoints prior to interviewing my candidates. I had to remain neutral at all times. The results of the biases were bracketed and temporarily set aside, so as to not influence data collection (Patton, 2002).

Interview Questions for Principals

This study sought to determine whether the RISE evaluation system is a useful tool for measuring effectiveness in Montessori teachers. Participants' candid answers to the following questions were of interest to everyone in nontraditional elementary schools.

Specific Montessori Issues

1. How useful is the RISE evaluation system in evaluating the Montessori philosophy and approach to human development, such as the teacher's response to the child based on a sensitive period, developmental needs, and child's interests? Where is it useful? Where does it fail?
2. How useful is the RISE evaluation system in evaluating the teacher's style of relating to children? For example, communicating respect for the individuality of children, demonstrating listening skills with children,

reinforcing student-adult relationships, and using positive coping strategies to solve conflicts and problems? Where is it useful? Where does it fail?

3. How useful is the RISE evaluation system in evaluating the Montessori Learning Environment's Peace Education (Peace Table, Peace Agreement), snack and restroom freedom process, respect of student work space and work, use of Montessori materials, self-correcting material use, character development, and how well the materials are sequenced, free of clutter, and in order? Where is it useful? Where does it fail?
4. How well does the RISE evaluation system evaluate student learning outcomes? Where is it useful? Where does it fail?
5. How useful is the RISE evaluation system in evaluating the teacher as a reflective lifelong learner? Where is it useful? Where does it fail?
6. How well does the RISE evaluation system evaluate the Montessori philosophy and culture? Strengths? Gaps?
7. Have you had to make any adjustments to the school's culture and practices due to implementing RISE?

General Issues in Evaluation

1. Do you use another evaluation measurement system instead of RISE or in combination with RISE? If yes, what do you use? How well do you think your hybrid model meets your needs as an evaluator in the context of a Montessori school?
2. Is there anything else you would like to say about the authenticity of the RISE evaluation system in a Montessori classroom?

Interview Questions for Teachers

This study sought to determine whether the RISE evaluation system is or is not appropriate to use in the context of Montessori schools. Teachers' candid answers to the following questions were of interest to everyone in nontraditional elementary schools.

Specific Montessori Issues

1. Are you a certified Montessori teacher?
 - a. Where did you obtain your certification?
 - b. How long did it take you to finish the coursework in order to obtain your certification?
2. How long have you taught in a Montessori classroom?
3. The RISE evaluation system is useful in evaluating the Montessori philosophy and approach to human development, such as the child-based sensitive period, developmental needs, and child's interests.

Strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

Please tell me more about why you chose this answer.

4. The RISE evaluation system is useful in evaluating your style of relating to children? For example, communicating respect for the individuality of children, demonstrating listening skills with children, reinforcing student-adult relationships, and using positive coping strategies to solve conflicts and problems.

Strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

Please tell me more about why you chose this answer.

5. The RISE evaluation system is useful in evaluating the Montessori Learning Environment's Peace Education (Peace Table, Peace Agreement), snack and restroom freedom process, respect of student work space and work, use of Montessori materials, self-correcting material use, character development, and how well the materials are sequenced, free of clutter, and in order.

Strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

Please tell me more about why you chose this answer.

6. The RISE evaluation system is useful in evaluating the teacher as a reflective lifelong learner.

Strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

Please tell me more about why you chose this answer.

7. The RISE evaluation system is adequate when evaluating the Montessori philosophy and culture.

Strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

Please tell me more about why you chose this answer.

8. The RISE evaluation system is adequate when evaluating the Montessori philosophy strengths.

Strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

Please tell me more about why you chose this answer.

9. The RISE evaluation system is adequate when evaluating the Montessori philosophy gaps.

Strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

Please tell me more about why you chose this answer.

General Issues in Evaluation

10. Does your administrator use another evaluation measurement system instead of RISE or in combination with RISE? If yes, what do they use? How well do you think the hybrid model meets your needs in the context of a Montessori school?
11. How well does the RISE evaluation system evaluate student learning outcomes? Where is it useful? Where does it fail?
12. What problems or issues do you see in applying the RISE system in the context of a Montessori school?
13. What positive effects of applying the RISE system in the context of a Montessori school can you cite?
14. Is there anything else you would like to say about the authenticity of the RISE evaluation system in a Montessori classroom?

Instrumentation

The purpose of the research was to understand if the RISE evaluation system is or is not effective when evaluating Montessori Teachers. The outcome of the data provides important information to Montessori teachers and administrators as to whether or not they should continue using the RISE evaluation system to evaluate Montessori teachers, or whether they needed to augment the RISE evaluation with other evaluation elements more appropriate to teaching in a Montessori context.

Before the interview was conducted, each participant received an email of the questions that were asked during the interview. This allowed the participants to prepare in advance by thinking of the answers to the questions with time to deliberate. The

participants were informed and asked to sign an Informed Consent for Participants of Investigative Projects form. This form outlined the study, risks, benefits, extent of confidentiality and contained signed permission from the interviewee.

After completion of the interviews, the surveys were transcribed verbatim from the participants. The methodology of this study consisted of a qualitative research design. Data collection and analyses were aimed at acquiring descriptive and explanatory concepts. The data were collected and coded to give an accurate picture of how the teachers and administrators interpret the RISE evaluation system in Montessori Schools.

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The data collected and analyzed in this study were utilized to help analyze whether or not the Rise evaluation system is a useful evaluating tool for the Montessori schools. The population of this study consisted of three Montessori administrators and four Montessori teachers. In an effort to maintain confidentiality for those who were interviewed, each person was given a pseudonym for his or her name and school. Furthermore, a female or male pronoun or name given as a pseudonym did not constitute the participant as a man or a woman in this study.

Data Analysis

Each participant was provided the questions through email prior to the interview. The questions were given in advance in an effort to allow the participants time to become familiar and reflect on the questions prior to the interview.

Six interviews were tape recorded and transcribed word for word to reduce bias and to get a clear description of the interview. One participant would not allow me to tape record the interview. I took notes on this candidate's information. Upon completion of the interviews, I chose to personally transcribe them. I was attentive to the participants during the interviews, and the participants allowed me to ask probing questions as needed. During the transcription of the interviews, I was able to hear many words and voice reflections I did not initially hear. I listened to the recordings and reread the transcripts several times to capture the information from the participants. Several

participants' voice reflections gave indication of a strong belief to the questions they were answering. Respondents received a copy of their transcribed interview so that they could validate, elaborate, and clarify any information I had composed. I asked each participant to read what I had transcribed to see if I had captured the interview correctly or if there was anything I needed to delete or add that I had missed. There was no additional information to be added from any of the participants.

Key phrases and commonalities began to emerge during transcription. As I identified outliers and themes, I began the coding process by pulling these themes and outliers together from all participants. Each participant added personal opinions and beliefs about the RISE system. The interview allowed all participants to openly discuss how they felt about the RISE evaluation system. Several were very adamant that RISE would not work. They even gave me recommendations to improve RISE. I found the interviews to be valuable in establishing a sense of trust with each participant. The participants who were teachers were more than willing to divulge information about individuals conducting their evaluations. I found this to be extremely interesting and informative. Patterns and themes emerged as teachers spoke of evaluators who were evaluating them. I was able to see several emerging themes to code based on their information.

Codes as used in this research were words or short phrases that were assigned from the interviews. The codes assigned captured common words and phrases that emerged in the transcripts.

Upon completion of the coded transcribed data, themes emerged as a result of my professional knowledge and experience as an administrator. Findings were linked to the research questions with a narrative analysis.

Open Coding for Administrators Interviews

Table 3

Open Coding Chart for Question 1: Administrators

Question #1	Administrator #1	Administrator #2	Administrator #3
How useful is the RISE evaluation system in evaluating the Montessori philosophy and approach to human developmental needs and child's interests? Where is it useful? Where does it fail?	What I try to do with staff is the same thing we try to do with children. Help them to be self-reflective, regulated, and design the things they need to practice. A lot of what we do with children and staff is to help that introspective metacognition piece. And so I have purposely never ever formally evaluated our teachers in a formal way at our school. I purposely do informal; I do coaching; I have firm conversations at times; what I don't want to do is to make it real and that is my way or the highway. Perception is the most just in the same way we try to do that as Montessorians, try	I don't think RISE is very responsive to evaluating Montessori philosophy, and I don't use it that way. I use it to evaluate teacher's direct instruction.	It's trying to fit that round peg into a square hole. If you look at the way that the teacher effectiveness rubric—and I put some thought into your questions here—the teacher effectiveness rubric, as you know, is divided up into four domains. You have got planning, is Domain 1, and then Domain 2 is instruction and three is the professional—teacher leadership, and the last one is the core professionalism. So if you look at the way those three things are set up, I can see Montessori embedded in the different domains. There is content focus in the way that

to do that with children. The teacher is not the know all be all. We don't constantly correct them and tell them what they need to do. We want them to think about, is this your best work?

What I understand about the RISE is that it is focused on the feedback part, and did you do this, and if you didn't do this, are you this or are you that? It is trying to put labels on short observations of what serves us as adults. We are all in an improvement process.

the rubric is set up. I made some notes here. It does talk about modification, and modifying teaching based upon student's needs, I think that they expect the rubric wants children to be engaged which they are in Montessori classrooms all the time. There are checks for understanding that are written into the rubric that we do all the time. One of the things I tell people is that when you are in a Montessori classroom, we do not have to stop and do the thumbs up or thumbs down. Are you on task, are you not on task, we kind of do it inconspicuously as we are moving around the classroom.

There are several things that are in the rubric evaluation that I think we do all the time. We check for understanding every moment. We are guiding practice, there is independent learning, there's independent instruction, there's guided instruction,

there's time for small group instruction, the teachers are moving and choosing, and the students are coming in and out of groups almost simultaneously with instruction so it's guided practice, it's independence practice, it's collaborative work, it's all those different things are going on at the same time.

There's modification with the instruction; in fact, the materials have built in to it the control of error which you can look at while the teachers are teaching. That gives the teacher that pulse and instructional feedback and instructional monitoring that is happening all the time. And it's embedded in here in the teaching piece that is the second one.

It's higher order thinking skills. The rubric talks about higher order thinking skills, it also talks about differentiation. We maximize instructional time, every moment of every classroom in a Montessori classroom,

the classroom time is maximized and the instructional time is maximized.

Two things a Montessori kid should never say—I'm bored and there is nothing to do. Because they're always is. There is always something to do at your level at that time based upon what you need. '

The classroom culture, which is part of the rubric, it's perfect. You know, we talk about grace, a courtesy lessons. We talk about respect, the peace environment, collaboration, working in small groups, we do that all the time as a matter of fact. The teachers in the multiage classrooms have the older students modeling and mentoring for the younger students, so I think that is embedded in here. If I were to pull up one of the particular strands of the rubric—oh that's another thing too—mastery, that's perfect. Montessori is about mastery and developing student

understanding,
mastery of lesson of
objectives. Yeah, the
goal in Montessori is
mastery. The way we
design our lessons
whether you're
writing a work plan,
or you're writing a
week long work plan
or a month long work
plan, whether you are
writing a contract for
someone, or for some
students all those
things. I think are
embedded in RISE.

Well there was
another one, let me
check here,
engagement, well I
checked on that.
Modifications—that is
what we do almost
instantaneously. The
same thing with
higher order thinking
skills, but the culture
and creating a
classroom of culture
and respect and
collaboration, if that's
not a Montessori
classroom which is
2.8 in the
competency, then I
don't know what it is.
So it is pretty easy to
incorporate, I will
give you an example
from the highly
effective teacher,
during the year.
Students are invested

in their academic success of their peers by unprompted collaboration without assistance. That is a Montessori classroom. I can make this work, Sue. I mean if I am looking at it through the lenses of this rubric, I can look at a Montessori classroom and say it fits.

Because Montessori—really if you boil it down to it, is good teaching. It's effective teaching, and I think that is what the rubric is looking for. So it's high expectations, it's respect, it's collaboration, its classroom management. Here's another one too.

When you get into 2.10 and 2.11 as far as classroom procedures, I mean the Montessori classroom is independent because the kids know what to do. They get up and walk around. They move with purpose, they know how to fix a snack for themselves without stepping all over each other and hitting each other or grabbing each other.

One of the things I love about Montessori classrooms is that the kids manage each other and that's highly effective according to the rubric. They are doing what they are supposed to be doing.

Table 4

Open Coding Chart for Question 2: Administrators

Question #2	Administrator #1	Administrator #2	Administrator #3
Is RISE useful in evaluating teachers' style in relating to children?	<p>Why is it not, and that piece this creates strong successful teachers.</p> <p>From my point of view, what I understand about the RISE is that it is focused on the feedback part and did you do this and if you didn't do this are you this or did you not do this or are you this or are you that?</p> <p>It is trying to put labels on short observations of that what serves us as adults. We are all in an improvement process.</p>	I don't think so. In terms of that we have, the observer's notebook, we pull things out of that in terms of me evaluating teachers.	<p>If you are looking at classroom management, I think is another one if you look at the classroom procedures, there's also another one in here too that I think talks about high expectations, but it is really 2.8 the classroom culture. I am a huge fan of climate and culture not only in the classroom but also in the school. So if you look at what particular competency and RISE hits that on the head it's 2.8.</p> <p>When you look at reinforcing positive character, behavior, and discouraging</p>

negative behavior amongst themselves, that's a Montessori classroom. Creating a classroom culture of respect and collaboration, working with their peers, collaborating with each other in the learning process, positive character and behavior, and uses consequences appropriately, I mean we have natural consequences in a Montessori classroom that are really good. There is no artificial creation of the fact that you get a sticker or a bead or a piece of candy just because you're doing the right thing. It's intrinsic motivation.

Yes, I think it matches well with it and I think it's very handy and that's really what you want an authentic classroom to look like. And in Montessori, that's what a good classroom should look like anyway. You do not want it to be punitive or oppressive; you do not want it to be stifling for children.

You want it to be a place where they learn and grow and feel successful and they develop a feeling that they can trust their teacher and trust the environment to let them explore and do things. It's one of the things we talk about in Montessori that I think RISE reinforces. Choice within limits, you are free to choose, we don't want you to be afraid to choose, but the teacher kind of guides you once you have mastered that. Let's move on to something else. And I think that with the classroom and the way it is set up the teacher knows and has their finger on the pulse as to the way kids are learning and can guide that and continue to challenge them and the kids know that they get instruction and can work at their level. Everybody is not working at the same level at the same time, which is boring; and that is why traditional classrooms, I think, fail is because teachers want to maintain it. It's hard and I think RISE, the

highly effective teacher, if you look at the way the highly effective rubric is geared, it's less control and more child centered which is actually what the teacher wants to do in the classroom is letting them be responsive and in control of their learning. High expectations. You want it to be rigorous, you want them to be challenged, but the teacher is more of the guide like the Montessori classroom, and I think RISE reinforces that.

Table 5

Open Coding Chart for Question 3: Administrators

Question #3	Administrator #1	Administrator #2	Administrator #3
How useful is the RISE evaluation system in evaluating the Montessori Learning Environment's Peace Education (Peace Table, Peace	Administrator #1 did not use the RISE evaluation system and, therefore, told me it was not applicable.	I think you can see some of those types of procedures that would be in place through RISE and the various domains. In terms of material use, self-correcting material, if you were observing a child or observing a teacher, you might see some of that. In terms	The classroom culture which is part of the rubric—it's perfect. You know we talk about grace, a courtesy lessons, we talk about respect, the peace environment, collaboration, working in small groups; we do that all the time. As a matter

Agreement),
snack and
restroom
freedom
process,
respect of
student work
space and
work, use of
Montessori
materials, self-
correcting
material use,
character
development,
and how well
the materials
are sequenced,
free of clutter,
and in order?

of peace education,
again only
procedurally you
would know that these
things were happening
in the class because
you would document
that you saw the table
so you would assume
that is happening and
that is documentable
evidence that they
kind of think is
happening. If you
were to look at lesson
plans and those were
just submitted plans
through their
evidence, then you
can see it there but in
terms of just
observing and
scripting, what you
would see unless you
happen to be in there
while the teacher is
specifically teaching
about peace, then, no
RISE does not.

of fact, the teachers in
the multi-age
classrooms have the
older students
modeling and
mentoring for the
younger students, so I
think that is
embedded in here. If
I were to pull up one
of the particular
strands of the rubric,
oh that's another thing
too, mastery that's
perfect. Montessori is
about mastery and
developing student
understanding
mastery of lesson of
objectives. Yeah, the
goal in Montessori is
mastery. The way we
design our lessons
whether you're
writing a work plan,
or you're writing a
week long work plan
or a month long work
plan. Whether you
are writing a contract
for someone, or for
some students; all
those things, I think,
are embedded in
RISE.

Table 6

Open Coding Chart for Question 4: Administrators

Question #4	Administrator #1	Administrator #2	Administrator #3
How well does the RISE evaluation system evaluate student learning outcomes?	<p>We created by the staff, and we review it every year, the differentiated teaching structure that created this form that helps us to identify that we don't give people more money for just being here. There's a base salary that is a component that is a scale with 4-5,000 between it at a starting point and then every year for the first three years there is a \$1,000 then \$750.00 for what equates to success. We have lots of components on there like the family survey whether they do things we have created like MRX and so forth, and this is all online if you want to look on it.</p> <p>Then we put that school success part, that testing part that is 25% or 20% somewhere around there. That piece is</p>	<p>I think again where you would see in your SLO it's only as good as the SLO, is well written and aligns to your building vision, and you know that's an administrator piece about whether or not that you require that SLO's match your vision and match your data and what you need. But if you don't require that then it really wouldn't at all.</p>	<p>You are artificially creating; like we talked about before you know master, you have to force them into a situation—and I am talking about the teachers and not the students—point. At the end of the year you have to be able to do the assessment. I think that naturally happens, it happens it may not be just at the end. Your SLO will be the course of the year. You want to do check ins, you want to evaluate and ask teachers where they are. I think a good teacher naturally does that in the Montessori classroom. It doesn't fit exactly because what if a child does not get that at the end of the year? What if they are not on that level or at that artificially created standard by the end of the year? Do you punish the teacher according to the rubric? You didn't do that! You're</p>

the biggest part, and we also created a criteria of an exceptional teacher so if they want to increase their base pay they have to use that criteria for the exceptional teacher and tell what have I adjusted; what have I approved on, and how have I been effective and so forth, because as you know, children's success is measured in a billion different ways, and there is no one time thing that you can look at to say if a child is successful. There is not one student outcome that will determine that there has got to be lots of different ways and processes.

Of course, we do lots of other different things, and what we do every year is try to make sure that the validity of Montessori philosophy and teaching is consistent. We are not there a 100% at all, but when we give a lesson on the stamp game we make sure there is

ineffective or needs improvement so that might not be the best way to gel the two. To me, I think we are starting to get the point that it's just growth. That's one thing I like about the SLO is—that we are growing somebody from point a to point b. Now have they gotten there yet? Probably not, but are they growing? And see, to me, the teacher can notice that and you can have some type of assessment that looks at where they were and from point a to point b. I think as long as the child is moving in that right direction and growing, then it compliments it, but not exactly.

repetition, and we support that process and support of layers of that, and at some part we tie that to the written part of that based on the observations we are seeing that's the Montessori validity.

What happens and what I see out in the world is that people do part of that and then they get nervous and scared, and they try to go right to paper. And then the child gets confused and then we are trying to do what is expected for the state and what is expected for Montessori, and we are not doing either one of them well.

And so that's why we work to do the Montessori part really well and to the best of our ability, and we are not there yet. Then we try to do the standards approach as kind of a second tier or like an afterthought. Just to do enough of that ok. So here's the Montessori scope and sequence for the lesson plans and to

know that the topic for standards is graphing so I want to make sure I put it in a way for them to practice graphing and what can I connect that with. I connect that with the theatre project of whatever.

Table 7

Open Coding Chart for Question 5: Administrators

Question # 5	Administrator #1	Administrator #2	Administrator #3
How useful is the RISE evaluation system in evaluating the teacher as a reflective lifelong learner?	Administrator #1 expressed that the question had already been answered in previous answers.	I don't think that as we use it currently there was an idea that you were going to use a step up plan for everybody, and in reality that is pretty challenging. To make sure we are using it with other information and have done some self study work so that people can identify where their areas of weakness are, and we use that information to inform our RISE and lifelong learner stuff, but just RISE itself, I don't think it does. I mean it's on the teacher to you know if you're in the	You know not really, Sue, you know RISE is kind of like a guideline to me. It kind of gives you boundaries of what an evaluation should look like. It kind of gives us the rubric as to coin their term, to use their term. It kind of gives us the parameters to work through the evaluation system. I guess the evaluation system process, to me the evaluation has always been as a principal. We are using RISE, we are using Charlotte Danielson, or somebody else, we used two years ago, it

effective category and want to be highly effective. It's on the teacher to document and show that they are being a lifelong learner. Certainly there is ability to include that, but it's not something in terms of what you observe, the conversations you have, or any kind of timeline because we check your SLO at mid-year, and since we don't talk to you about what you have done as a lifelong learner at mid-year.

wasn't Rise it was Own it or whether we use Standards for Success which is what we are using now. To me the evaluation process is collegiate. We are working together to help you become a better teacher. Instructionally. It's that instructional feedback that you are receiving from me about your instruction. It's not about playing gottcha, it's not about punishing you, it's about giving you some feedback so that you can grow and learn as an educator. And that's part of my job as the principal teacher in the building. I am supposed to set the stage for you to learn and grow at least instructionally and give you the opportunity to do that. It's going to be rigorous I am going to give you some feedback. I always look at when I talk to teachers using the RISE model, and we do a preconference, post conference. I do the observation. I do two short observations and one long observation minimally

for the course of the year. But then, I also ask them how do you think the lesson went? I want there to be some reflection. I want it if you had a chance to teach the lesson again what would you do differently? What would you do the same? What would you keep? There is a collegiate conversation about what you are doing instructionally and how can I assist you to become a better teacher? I think RISE has some of these things included. These are some things I ask you to work on, and what is your strength? We always talk about this. This was awesome. I saw these things in your lesson, and I think RISE does a good job given these areas.

But as far as growth, these are some things, not that you're bad, and doesn't mean that you can't, this is where I think I need you to work on some things. I saw this. It's not conjecture; it's what I think. As far as observers and

evaluators, I write down everything you say and do for 40 minutes. And I come back and digest it and look at it and say next time I come in I want to see you working on X, Y, Z. That doesn't mean that you are bad and that doesn't mean that you failed, it means that everybody has a growth area and that's why I look at it as potential for growth. So I think it does a pretty good job in complimenting what we do in the classroom and a lot of that is based upon how the principal views the evaluation process.

If you view it as an opportunity for instructional feedback, for collegial relationships, then I think it will be a positive experience, but if you look at it as something punitive, or playing gotcha, then it might not help.

General Issues in Evaluation

Table 8

Open Coding Chart for Question 6: Administrators

Question #6	Administrator #1	Administrator #2	Administrator #3
<p>Do you use another evaluation measurement system instead of RISE or in combination with RISE? If yes, what do you use?</p> <p>How well do you think your hybrid model meets your needs as an evaluator in the context of a Montessori school?</p>	<p>We created by the staff and we review it every year the differentiated teaching structure that created this form that helps us to identify that we don't give people more money for just being here.</p> <p>There's a base salary that is a component that is a scale with 4-5,000 between it at a starting point, and then every year for the first three years there is a \$1,000 then \$750.00 for what equates to success. We have lots of components on there like the family survey whether they do things we have created like MRX and so forth and this is all online if you want to look on it.</p>	<p>No, not at this time.</p>	<p>I have in the past, one of the things is that I have used and there are some things that we came up with a number of years ago before we had RISE like daily strategies for reading. These are something's like Fry words or reading fluency, or those types of things that go with reading. I even had a little cheat sheet that I had on here where we had these walk through forms that talk about the Montessori method here and these were like little sheets that I would use to write down notes about what you were doing in the classroom.</p> <p>Here's an old one that I had right here where I am going in there and you can see Montessori strategy is utilized. Independent in Montessori; so in some ways if it's recording things or</p>

Then we put that school success part that testing part that is 25% or 20% somewhere around there. That piece is the biggest part, and we also created a criteria of an exceptional teacher so if they want to increase their base pay they have to use that criteria for the exceptional teacher and tell what have I adjusted; what have I improved on and how have I been effective and so forth because, as you know, children's success is measured in a billion different ways and there is no one time thing that you can look at to say if a child is successful. There is not one student outcome that will determine that there has got to be lots of different ways and processes.

Of course we do lots of other different things, and what we do every year is try to

just giving teacher's feedback, there are some things that we have used in the past, and I continue to use some of these things when I walk into a classroom. They complement RISE.

make sure that the validity of Montessori philosophy and teaching is consistent. We are not there a 100% at all, but when we give a lesson on the stamp game we make sure there is repetition and we support that process and support of layers of that, and at some part, we tie that to the written part of that based on the observations we are seeing, that's the Montessori validity.

What happens and what I see out in the world is that people do part of that and then they get nervous and scared, and they try to go right to paper. And then the child gets confused, and then we are trying to do what is expected for the state and what is expected for Montessori, and we are not doing either one of them well.

And so that's why we work to do the Montessori part really well and to the best of our ability, and we are not there yet. Then we try to do the standards approach as kind of a second tier or like an after thought. Just to do enough of that, ok, so here's the Montessori scope and sequence for the lesson plans and to know that the topic for standards is graphing. So I want to make sure I put it in a way for them to practice graphing and what can I connect that with. I connect that with the theatre project of whatever.

The next set of question responses were taken from teachers who work in a Montessori school. Each of the participants was willing to share his or her personal perspectives. Most felt at ease speaking to me and even added conversations about what should be in a Montessori teacher's evaluation.

Table 9

Open Coding Chart for Question 1: Teachers

Question #1	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4
Are you a certified Montessori teacher?	No, I am not certified in Montessori. I have	Yes, I am certified. It took me 2½ years to complete my Montessori certification.	Yes, I will be certified in July. It took me approximately 18 months to complete my Montessori certification.	Yes, I am certified. It took me 2 1/2-3 years to finish my Montessori certification.
b. Where did you obtain your certification ?	taught in the traditional classroom for 10 years.			
c. How long did it take you to finish the coursework in order to obtain your certification ?				

Table 10

Open Coding Chart for Question 2: Teachers

Question #2	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4
How long have you taught in the Montessori classroom and a traditional classroom?	I have taught in the Montessori classroom for six years and the traditional classroom for 10 years.	I really do not want to say for fear that people will know who this is.	I have taught 3 years in the Montessori classroom and 15 years in the traditional classroom (some in private schools).	I have been in the Montessori classroom for 26 years and have taught in the traditional setting for three years prior to coming to Montessori.

Table 11

Open Coding Chart for Question 3: Teachers

Question #3	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4
The evaluation system is useful in evaluating the Montessori philosophy and approach to human development needs and child's interests.	RISE tends to be test centered—when you develop your objectives, SLO's and all of your learning metrics you have to be based on measurable data. Which we are told has to be acuity, some organic test we make	Rise has nothing to do with these items. It cannot measure these things.	I feel it is fairly appropriate, but the fact that it still does not account for how we treat and follow the whole child.	DISAGREE—because if you are teaching to the child, you're not always going to include all of the things that the RISE evaluation is looking for. A higher order question for one group of children is going to be totally different than the higher order questioning skills for

ISTEP
ourselves.

another student,
and I just
haven't found
that it makes for
allowances for
that. I mean
that I think they
are looking for
certain
questions that
are based upon
a certain grade
level, and
everybody may
not be there.

I also think
that if doesn't
take into
consideration
the personal
relationship in a
Montessori
classroom you
have with a
child because
for example,
myself, I have
the children for
a three-year
cycle. Well, I
really know that
child really well
and so there are
going to be
nuances, and
how I am
responding and
what I am
asking that
individual child,
and it may not
fit into that
rubric. I just
don't think

there's enough from my experience with it, there is enough room for that personal reflection for myself or for the child. As an administrator coming in, it looks to me that you are looking for very specific items that may or may not be there.

Table 12

Open Coding Chart for Question 4: Teachers

Question #4	Teacher #1	Teacher #2	Teacher #3	Teacher #4
The RISE evaluation system is useful in evaluating your style of relating to children. For example, communicating respect for the individuality of children, demonstrating listening skills with children, reinforcing student-adult relationships,	Disagree—I think because the Montessori culture should and does have better outcomes than a traditional test-focused curriculum pedagogy, so I think the outcomes on the SLO's and overall	An administrator can only see how a teacher is relating to children if they are in the classroom on a regular basis. I do not mean twice/three times a year for the evaluation. They need to	I don't think so, I don't think it is a part of that. I don't want to say traditional, but it's more book learning, and it misses a lot of the human interaction that is done in everyday learning of lifetime skills, and I think that it has big gaps	Disagree—that's a tough one because there again, however, depending on who was doing the evaluation, I think it could be very good on what their take on it was and what they were looking and listening for. Sometimes, I think they try to

and using positive coping strategies to solve conflicts and problems.	learning objectives could end up being better because of the culture and as a direct measure because of the culture if the culture is fostered in the correct way. Once again, that's a stretch.	be in the classroom watching, listening and viewing what I am doing to get an accurate picture of my relationship with children. Relating to children can sort of see listening.	in it because of that. We teach a lot of the lifetime skills, and we incorporate that into learning. I don't think RISE does that.	make it into such a rubric where they are looking for specific words and wording and things that are scripted and in Montessori you are not teaching a scripted lesson. Say this and this is the answer you are looking for then from that you want to go here. It's more developing as you go along.
		I strongly disagree—I have not been authentically evaluated. Cannot evaluate authentically by coming into a classroom 3x a year.		

Table 13

Open Coding Chart for Question 5: Teachers

Question #5	Teacher #1	Teacher #2	Teacher #3	Teacher #4
The rise evaluation system is useful in evaluating the Montessori Learning Environment's Peace Education (Peace Table, Peace Agreement), snack and restroom freedom process, respect of student work space and work, use of Montessori materials, self-correcting material use, character development, and how well the materials are sequenced free of clutter and in order.	Same situation. I will put strongly disagree on that one. When a principal goes in for an observation, there is nothing in there to look at any of that. In fact, you are going to be marked off for students who are not present in the lesson and moving around so the fact that the movement even exists, isn't going to play well for you in the observation.	Strongly disagree. RISE has nothing to do with Montessori.	I don't think RISE takes any of this into consideration. Montessori has it ingrained to use the peace table; it's engrained to use conflict resolution. I don't think RISE takes this into account. It's kind of geared to more traditional kinds of teaching.	Strongly disagree with that. I don't see anywhere in it where they are allowing time for any social or emotional growth or development. It just seems to be all about academic, academic, academic.

Table 14

Open Coding Chart for Question 6: Teachers

Question #6	Teacher #1	Teacher #2	Teacher #3	Teacher #4
The RISE System is useful in evaluating the teacher as a reflective lifelong learner.	No, disagree, maybe because I think that if the principal wants to work the system a little bit, but I think there are some areas of that looking at your professional growth plans, there might be some way to accommodate that and work with that, but the nature of the RISE does not lend itself to that.	Strongly disagree. RISE has no idea about lifelong learners.	I think it does a fairly decent job because if I remember correctly, it asks, what are you doing to make yourself a better teacher? And so, I think it does an ok job, but I don't know if it takes into consideration the fact that we are always learning about new materials, and making materials, and implementing them into your classrooms. But I do think it asks about what are you doing to help make yourself better for kids.	I would have to disagree with that one as well because I just don't feel like from what I have seen of it. I am not sure it has a way to quantify or measure that. To me there doesn't seem to be a good measure. I mean, sure, I can put down I went to 52 hours of in-service, and I had a student teacher, and I did XY and Z, but it is not asking me or giving me an opportunity to do anything with it. I have not found it to be real helpful and maybe part of that is my own I am not good and do not want to have to keep track of all of that. . . oh yeah, that was really great! I loved that, now let me

type that up!
Plus sometimes
the Montessori
in-service that
we do, may not
always be
recognized.
Then again, if
you have an
administrator
who values the
team meetings
and things like
that, then yes, it
can be useful.
Like we do a
book club, and
we are all
reading a book,
and we come
together and
discuss chapters
from the book,
and it's a
Montessori book
the Tao of
Montessori. And
yes, I can use
some of that but
to me, what I
have seen of the
RISE, it's more
about what
professional
development is,
how many PGP
points you get,
and I think it is
too much on that.

Table 15

Open Coding Chart for Question 7: Teachers

Question #7	Teacher #1	Teacher #2	Teacher #3	Teacher #4
The RISE evaluation system is adequate when evaluating the Montessori philosophy and culture.	I strongly disagree. I don't think there is any diagnostic tool in there that you would be able to specifically pinpoint a gap that may exist not with the way the evaluations are set up. I think quite frankly it is a dog and pony show. You're going in there and people know you are going in and have prepared for that to show you what you want to see, or they see you come in and change what they are doing to show you what you are going to see,	Strongly disagree. I explained earlier.	I think I already answered this question.	I don't think it's adequate at all for that because it focuses so much on the academic and not on the community and in Montessori you are trying to build your classroom community, your teacher community, your building community. It doesn't see that. Montessori encompasses so much more than academic and the fact that to get that community you have to look at more than academic and look at children as more than academic and you have to look at parents then more than just that. You have to build that community and trust. It is so focused on me

so there is not way that even there. So No.	giving each child XYZ and I can sit there and read a script and give XYZ, but if this child is not ready to receive XYZ because they are thinking about something else or there is mistrust, they are not going to get it. If their parent doesn't trust me or if they don't know it.
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Table 16

Open Coding Chart for Question 8: Teachers

Question #8	Teacher #1	Teacher #2	Teacher #3	Teacher #4
The RISE evaluation system is adequate when evaluating the Montessori philosophy strengths.	Once again, if we are looking at one metric, I will put disagree on this, but because there is one metric, if the system and philosophy are working well, those system outcomes should be in the norm.	Strongly disagree. This question was already answered in the beginning.	I think it gives you a baseline, but I am not sure how effective it is going to be as it is two different areas that are traditional to Montessori. As I said I think it is a baseline and there is so much more to it than that.	I answered that in the last question.

However,
because it is
one metric, I
don't think it
is valid data
by itself, I
think you
take that
within other
things you
might have
something,
but it's hard
to explain
and I think
you are
going to have
better
outcomes,
and since
you are
measuring
outcome with
the one
metric that
RISE looks
at, there is
some tip of
the iceberg
that it is
working in
some
capacity.

Table 17

Open Coding Chart for Question 9: Teachers

Question #9	Teacher #1	Teacher #2	Teacher #3	Teacher #4
The RISE evaluation is adequate when evaluating the Montessori philosophy gaps.	Good Lord, where do we start? Wow, where do I start? I think the RISE system in any classroom has the same issues, I don't think there's anything possible to quantify a teacher's effectiveness using this system let alone in a system as holistic as Montessori. When you are looking at social, emotional in the respects of learning, there is no consideration with that within this process. So much of it is dependent on the principal that you could have two	Strongly disagree. This is a repeat question.	I wish that they would take into consideration that we are trying to be a well-rounded person and that we are really trying and give it everything we have got. Putting just RISE down leaves out so much of what we do, and who we are. I think if they were to add more of a human aspect to it would help that out.	Strongly disagree. I think I have already stated numerous gaps!

principals
administering
the RISE and
have two
completely
different
philosophies
within those
two principals
who are
administrating
the same
system that
the data that
they are
getting would
not even be
comparable.
You put a
Montessori
system that
also is added
to that the
individual
differences of
the students
impacting the
teaching that
is happening
in the
classroom,
two different
classrooms are
going to have
very different
experiences,
whether it is
the same
grade level on
the same
lessons
depending on
the needs of
those children
at the time

those principals come in. In essence, I think RISE was created if not for the classroom but a system to help regulators regulate an increasingly complex regulations that they have already put into place. So it's more systematic to a broken system than it is reflective on the needs of the children of the teachers and administrators. So there is all that to consider. When you look at a Montessori classroom it's holistically learning as holistically as it does, it's the wrong tool for the wrong job. There's not anything that matches. So the struggle is that teachers

have to
change what
they are doing
for the RISE
in response to
the RISE, and
administrators
have to try to
adapt the
RISE for what
is happening
in the
classroom
creating the
whole new
tool itself that
is neither valid
or reliable for
the purpose it
is intended.

General Issues in Evaluation

Table 18

Open Coding Chart for Question 10: Teachers

Question #10	Teacher #1	Teacher #2	Teacher #3	Teacher #4
<p>Does your administrator use another evaluation measurement system instead of RISE or in combination with RISE? If yes, what do they use? How well do you think the hybrid model meets your needs in the context of a Montessori school?</p>	No	No	<p>My administrator uses Montessori evaluations with the RISE that are geared more toward the RISE. I think the combination of the RISE and what she added into the RISE is very effective. I don't think that if she just used RISE it would be as effective.</p>	<p>We are working to develop that. We as teachers have proposed this to our administration, and we have tried to come up with a key list of things for them to look for when they come into a classroom that take into account things like, what does your environment look like? How are children interacting with one another? How are children interacting with materials? Are there materials being used? Where are students sitting? Are they engaged with one another? We have tried to come up with a list of things that we would like for</p>

				<p>our administrators or evaluators to look at, but it's like we are almost asking them to do two separate evaluations, and so we are kind of struggling because we do not want to make more work for our administrator or evaluator, but from our stand point, we are concerned about the Montessori things then what is in the RISE. It's sort of like well if we are doing the Montessori piece of it you are going to at least be effective with the RISE. You may never be exemplary by that standard, but we just felt that it was really important that they are listening and looking for things other than key words and phrases and knowing that a student who is off task is really not and is on</p>
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				<p>task. As an example, in the k and 3-6 year old classroom, it may look like well they spent all morning playing with something. They were developing their concentration, which is very important and prepares them for what I am going to want them to do when they go to work with a material that takes a long time. They are developing concentration. And if you are not trained to know that and recognize that, then you may ask Leslie why did you let Sam sit there all morning playing with the color tiles? Well, you may not know Sam and that that was the first time Sam was able to attend to a material for more than five minutes and that he was working peacefully and calmly where he</p>
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				<p>may have been opposed to working two weeks ago or a month ago. My experience with the rise is that it expects everybody to come to us the same. They are not little widgets that came off the assembly line the same way, and I just think the RISE expects this and that everyone comes to us the same. They don't. Their experiences are so, so different.</p>
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Table 19

Open Coding Chart for Question 11: Teachers

Question #11	Teacher #1	Teacher #2	Teacher #3	Teacher #4
<p>How well does the RISE evaluation system evaluate student learning outcomes? Where is it useful? Where does it fail?</p>	<p>I don't know if it evaluates them; it's a report on them. It shows you who grew and who did not grow; I don't think there is any diagnostic as to why they grew or why they didn't or any actual data as to why they grew or why they didn't.</p> <p>Is it useful? Yes, the SLOs are useful to me. I always enjoy seeing how those guys did throughout the year and it helps me focus about things that are going on in the classroom. Sometime it's a good reminder that</p>	<p>No. The test cannot tell you what a child knows on that day the student may have either known the answer at the time of the test.</p>	<p>Not to the fullest degree. I think it goes with the testing, the ISTEP, NWEA, the standardized testing, but it does not go into really what a child learns, anything about and what the child really knows. Any child can have a bad day and do poorly on a test and show that is not really what they know.</p>	<p>I think it's terrible. With the RISE is not looking at growth. You are looking for a particular goal and not taking into account that every year it is a different group of children. But there are no allowances for that, and everyone is expected to pass, and they do not look at where everyone has come from. Everybody needs to do this and so I just think we need a measure where we are following children and what progress they are making rather than the percentage in a classroom that passes or things like that. There are so many things that I can't control. I do not</p>

	<p>these guys are the ones that need the help and I need to keep the eye on the ball.</p>			<p>get to pick and choose who is in my classroom. An administrator under the system could set me up for total failure and give me a classroom full of children who probably are not going to make the kind of gains they need to. Do I want them to pass IREAD and ISTEP, of course I do, but it may not be possible in the time that I have. I wish it would look at individual children and do they make a year's growth?</p>
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Table 20

Open Coding Chart for Question 12: Teachers

Question #12	Teacher #1	Teacher #2	Teacher #4	Teacher #5
<p>What problems or issues do you see in applying RISE in the context of a Montessori school?</p>	<p>So what I have seen is what I alluded to earlier where teachers change to different models when the principal walks into the room and where teachers have learned to game the system. Instead of perfecting our teaching and practice, the rise tool has had us go back to a new set of rules to get over this hoop of the rise.</p> <p>So now we know how to use the higher order thinking questions so the administrator sees as many of those questions or targets points or whatever points they call it in the rise in as many as one lesson as possible so they</p>	<p>Does not evaluate anything with Montessori philosophy and its parameters.</p>	<p>I wish that they would take into consideration that we are trying to be a well-rounded person and that we are really trying and give it everything we have got. Putting just RISE down leaves out so much of what we do and who we are. I think if they were to add more of a human aspect to it would help that out.</p>	<p>I think the biggest thing is that it doesn't allow for a lot of measuring things that made such a huge difference in education that cannot be measured. Like how a teacher can inspire children or how children can inspire things. My opinion is that it doesn't work well in the Montessori environment and I wonder how well it works in any environment just because it is so focused on such specifics and when you are dealing with children and people, it is so much bigger than those specifics.</p>

come in and
you are not
doing anything
for the students.
You are doing it
for the rise. So
you go through
the whole
process and
then when the
principal leaves,
you go back to
do what you
were doing
before the
principal comes
in. When it is a
surprise visit,
many teachers
that I have
talked to change
on the fly and
go back into a
very traditional
mindset because
that is what
RISE is meant
to see them
teach and may
even change the
topics and do
something off
the wall and put
a performance
on and go back
when the
principal goes.
The other thing
I have seen is
the workload
RISE puts on
administrators
is insane. Now
you have
administrators

who are trying
to get through
this thing as fast
as possible who
are on
automatic and
on overload and
the benefit of an
evaluation
would be to
create a
learning tool for
a teacher. And
that is gone
because the
principals are
too overloaded
in that reporting
process to really
make it actual
data for the
teachers. So
you have
principals on
overload who
are just going
through the
motions
checking off the
box trying to
get their
teachers to pass
and going in as
many times as it
takes because
they know it
does not match
the system or
what they are
doing with the
system and you
have a very
unfortunate case
of everyone
taking their eye

off the ball—
the children. A
lot of wasted
time and energy
and focus based
on self-
preservation of
your job or self-
preservation of
your time if you
are an
administrator
and your staff
and not a whole
lot of time put
on the children
who we are
trying to
impact. I think
that's the
biggest tragedy
just the whole
culture of
education right
now, but in a
Montessori
school it
undermines the
heart of what
the teacher,
children,
parents and
administrators
all want to see
happening.
And I think
that's the
biggest problem
with that.

Table 21

Open Coding Chart for Question 13: Teachers

Question #13	Teacher #1	Teacher #2	Teacher #3	Teacher #4
What positive effects of applying the RISE system in the context of a Montessori school can you cite?	Did not see any positive effects of the RISE evaluation system.	NONE	I think it can give you a baseline, but I am not sure how effective it is going to be as it is two different areas that are traditional to Montessori. As I said, I think it is a baseline and there is so much more to it than that (teaching).	I would say if an administrator is truly Montessori and certified themselves, and understands it, understands the Montessori philosophy, there could be ways where, for example, differentiating instruction. We differentiate instruction all day long. If the administrator truly understands the work plans and how each child is maybe going to be doing something that is different, and understands that fact that although this child may look like they are playing with something when really and truly it is work, it could be used to be helpful, but

all parties have to understand what they are looking at and how they are ranking that. I guess the way that they do exactly what they say it could be helpful from looking at your different phrasing and how you are speaking to the children. So I guess it could be helpful, but I haven't found it to be that good.

When I finished the probing and open-ended questioning of my participants, I asked each teacher if they wanted to add anything else to the authenticity of the RISE evaluation system in a Montessori classroom.

Table 22

Open Coding Chart for Question 14: Teachers

Question #14	Teacher #1	Teacher #2	Teacher #3	Teacher #4
Is there anything else you would like to say about the authenticity of the RISE evaluation system in a Montessori classroom?	It will never work. It cannot work; we are in a state in education in general. If you are looking at a linear progression with Montessori not necessarily the materials or anything but the ideology; whole child, whole learner, whole climate, whole culture, of learning is the end point. That is kind of where you want to go. Whether it is Reggio or some other kind of project base or experiential learning, now I think RISE undermines the progression towards this whole idea and the whole	I do not see any authenticity!	No.	I think it could be very damaging to a Montessori school and environment if it is used just to the letter of the law, and you are looking for specific things. I think it could cause a teacher to feel as if they really just go to a traditional scripted education, and I think it could make it difficult for the administrator also. Just from a stand point of the teacher could be doing all of those things but not really doing Montessori in a very good way. I think their needs to be something besides just the RISE in a Montessori environment.

NCLB does that as well. So what happens you have NCLB when it was created and then immediately you have a system that responds to it like an immune system that is doing everything it can to protect itself from NCLB and the effects of it. So you have all these other systems and regulations in processes that are kind of like a cancer that has sprung up. It tends to be strangling it in the heart of education as we know it and this is just one more effect of it. The only way it goes away is if there is a fundamental change done to the ESEA and the federal government changes how it regulates that,

Is there anything else that you want to add or tell me?

As I have done this, it is really obvious that I really don't look at the RISE a whole lot; because as I am answering these questions, I am thinking back and thinking oh, yeah, now that I think about it. I just kind of look at my evaluation very quickly and nonchalantly and don't really read it and don't take it into a whole lot of consideration with my teaching. And maybe that because I feel like I know what I am doing because I have done this for such a long time not that I know everything, I don't by any stretch of the imagination, but

but I don't see this happening in any meaningful way in the next four years. The only way this will happen the system tends to break as it is and maybe goes to a small choice system where local systems go to their own regulation. I think this would be better and have the bleeding stop and from where we are I don't know, I wish I were more optimistic. I think to make evaluation better you have to have more data points. There has to be more metrics involved other than the test or two tests I think you have testing as one data point. I think parent input is vital; student input is vital, 360-

I don't take the RISE evaluation into account when I am planning I take my children into account.

degree
evaluations
from staff,
although they
can be
problematic
and become
political, but
this is one data
point that
could be
considered. So
there are other
things that we
could add to it,
but I think that
RISE would
take any
chance of that
happening.

Graded on
teacher
effectiveness:
IPS gave a
bonus for
anyone
effective or
higher. It was
for one year.
Do not know if
this is going to
continue.

Emerging Themes

Upon completion of listening to the recorded interviews multiple times and re-reading the transcribed information, the participant's responses began to emerge into themes. There were similarities between administrators and teachers in addition to many

differences in their views and opinions. Although two administrators were very similar in their responses, one administrator had a different outlook on several of the emerging themes. Common themes among administrators that emerged were effective student learning outcomes, labeling teachers, no one test can measure a child, RISE tends to be punitive which is not a Montessori belief, and using additional Montessori evaluation tools.

Effective Student Learning Outcomes

In a true Montessori classroom, children learn at their own pace and grade level. As the teacher begins to guide the student, the teacher is very observant as to what the child is and is not ready to learn. Although RISE uses state mandated assessments and tests to measure student growth, Montessori teachers rely more on teacher assessments. The administrators that I interviewed told me that if the student learning outcome was a match with the Montessori school's vision, it would be useful. However, I was also informed that the Acuity, North West Evaluation Assessment (NWEA) and ISTEP assessments were not aligned to the Montessori philosophy. Although these assessment give the teacher snapshots as to where the child currently is academically, they do not make any allowances for the students to work at their own pace. Administrator 1 said,

What happens and what I see out in the world is that people do part of that and then they get nervous and scared and they try to go right to paper and then the child gets confused and then we are trying to do what is expected for the state and what is expected for Montessori and we are not doing either one of them well.

Administrator 2 stated,

It's only as good as the SLO is well written and aligns to your building vision and you know that's an administrator piece about whether or not that you require that SLO's match your vision and match your data and what you need.

Administrator 3 shared,

It doesn't fit exactly because what if a child does not get that at the end of the year? What if they are not on that level or at that artificially created standard by the end of the year? Do you punish the teacher according to the rubric?

Labeling Teachers

The RISE evaluation system makes the evaluator rate teachers by putting them into categories. The categories are from ineffective to highly effective. These categories may be used as an indication as to whether the teacher receives an increase in pay or not. For the most part, Montessori administrators did not feel this was an adequate process for evaluating teachers. Teachers are at different places in their career and are still learning and growing; however, Administrator #3 said it could work, because Montessori is highly effective teaching.

Administrator's Commentary on Labeling Teachers

Administrator 1 stated,

What I understand about the RISE is that it is focused on the feedback part and did you do this and if you didn't do this are you this or are you that? It is trying to put labels on short observations of what serves us as adults. We are all in an improvement process."

Administrator 2 shared, “I mean it’s on the teacher to you know if you are in the effective category and want to be highly effective category and it’s on the teacher to document and show that.” Administrator 3 added,

It’s trying to fit that round peg into a square hole. If you look at the way that the teacher effectiveness rubric—and I put some thought into your questions here—the teacher effectiveness rubric as you know is divided up into four domains. So if you look at the way those three things are set up, I can see Montessori embedded in the different domains.

No One Test Can Measure a Child

Measuring the success of a child cannot rely on one test. Two of the three administrators were in agreement and made this very clear. Administrator 1 stated,

Because as you know children’s success is measured in a billion different ways, and there is no one time thing that you can look at to say if a child is successful; there is not one student outcome that will determine that there has got to be lots of different ways and processes.

Administrator 2 did not comment on measuring the child with one test. Administrator 3 added,

You can have some type of assessment that looks at where they were and from point a to point b. I think as long as the child is moving in that right direction and growing, then it compliments it, but not exactly.

RISE Should Not Be Used Punitively

Although all three administrators viewed the Montessori classroom as a learning environment, two of the three made it clear that RISE should not be used punitively.

Administrator 1 said,

What I try to do with staff is the same thing we try to do with children. Help them to be self-reflective, regulated, and design the things they need to practice. A lot of what we do with children and staff is to help that introspective metacognition piece. I purposely do informal, I do coaching, I have firm conversations at times, what I don't want to do is to make it real, and that it is my way or the highway perception. I try to be most just in the same way we try to do that as Montessorians, try to do that with children.

Administrator 3 added,

To me the evaluation process is collegiate. We are working together to help you become a better teacher. Instructionally. It's that instructional feedback that you are receiving from me about your instruction. It's not about playing gottcha, it's not about punishing you, it's about giving you feedback so that you can grow and learn as an educator.

As I interviewed the teachers, some were more willing and open than others. I attributed this to being afraid of being identified by an administrator or central office person. Common themes among the teachers did emerge from the interviews: RISE is not useful in evaluating the Montessori philosophy, RISE is not able to evaluate the Montessori learning environment, RISE does not effectively evaluate the teacher on student learning outcomes. Student learning outcomes are different in Montessori

schools from what is mandated by the IDOE's testing and growth model, the RISE evaluation system is not an authentic tool to use in Montessori classrooms by itself; administrators must understand the Montessori philosophy in order to effectively evaluate their teachers. The effectiveness of the evaluation depends on the administration.

Montessori Philosophy and Learning Environment

When I asked the teachers if they thought the RISE evaluation system was useful in evaluating the Montessori philosophy and how teachers related to their students, all four disagreed. They did not feel that the RISE evaluation system took into account human development needs and children's interests.

Teacher #1 stated, "RISE tends to be test centered; when you develop your objectives and student learning outcomes and all of your learning metrics, you have to be based on measurable data." Teacher #2 said, "RISE has nothing to do with these items (human development needs and child's interests). It cannot measure these things." Teacher #3's view was "I feel it is fairly appropriate, but the fact that it still does not account for how we treat and follow the whole child." Teacher #4 stated,

DISAGREE! Because, if you are teaching to the child, you're not always going along to include all of the things that the RISE evaluation is looking for. A higher order question for one group of children is going to be totally different than the higher order questioning skills for another student, and I just haven't found that it makes allowances for that. I also think it doesn't take into consideration the personal relationship in a Montessori classroom you have with a child."

Peaceful Learning Environments

Montessori teachers are responsible for making the environment peaceful by providing a peace table, snack and restroom freedom, materials that interest the child, and student freedom. When I asked the teachers if the RISE evaluation system was useful in evaluating the Montessori learning environment, each one strongly disagreed with the question. Teacher #1 stated,

When a principal goes in for an observation, there is nothing in there to look at any of that. In fact, you are going to be marked off for students who are not present in the lesson and moving around; so the fact that the movement even exists isn't going to play well for you in the observation.

According to Teacher #2, "RISE has nothing to do with Montessori." Teacher #3 offered,

I don't think RISE takes any of this into consideration. Montessori has it ingrained to use the peace table; it's engrained to use conflict resolution. I don't think RISE takes this into account. It's kind of geared to more traditional kinds of teaching.

Teacher #4 said, "I don't see anywhere in it where they are allowing time for any social or emotional growth or development. It just seems to all be about academic, academic, academic."

Teacher As a Lifelong Learner

Montessori teachers know that as teachers, they learn just as much from their students as they do in professional development opportunities. They accept and seize the opportunity to learn throughout their career. When I asked the teachers if they felt the

RISE evaluation system was useful in evaluating the teacher as a reflective lifelong learner, three disagreed and one said there may be parts of RISE that could be useful, but was not really sure. One teacher even strongly disagreed. Teacher #1 said,

I think that if the principal wants to work the system a little bit, but I think there are some areas of that looking at your professional growth plans there might be some way to accommodate that and work with that, but the nature of the RISE does not lend to that.

Teacher #2 asserted, “Strongly disagree. RISE has no idea about lifelong learners.”

Teacher #3 added,

I think it does a fairly decent job because if I remember correctly, it asks, What are you doing to make you a better teacher? And so I think it does an ok job, but I don’t know if it takes into consideration the fact that we are always learning about new materials, and making materials, and implementing them into your classroom. I do think it asks about what are you doing to help make yourself better for kids.

Teacher #4 stated, “I would have to disagree with that one. Sometimes the Montessori in-service we do may not always be recognized.

Student Learning Outcomes

Student learning is important no matter what the teaching philosophy may be. As the teachers shared their view about whether or not RISE effectively measures student learning outcomes for Montessori teachers, most agreed that it was not useful, but one teacher told me it would be useful if the student learning outcomes were written to focus on the Montessori classroom. Three of the four teachers indicated that RISE could not

tell what a child knows on that day and that “any child can have a bad day and do poorly on a test and show that is not really what they know.” All four teachers wanted their children to grow and succeed but indicated that all of the children were not at the same level on the given day of the test and RISE did not take this into account.

Using Additional Evaluation Tools With RISE

Although three out of the four teachers indicated that their principals did not use additional evaluation tools (one teacher told me they were working to develop a tool to use with RISE) to supplement their Montessori teaching, the teacher whose administrator used a hybrid evaluation system thought it was working well. “I think the combination of the RISE and what she added into the RISE is very effective.” The consensus of the teachers was clearly stated that using RISE alone was not going to effectively evaluate them in a Montessori environment.

Administrator Effectiveness in Evaluating Montessori Teachers

As I was interviewing and transcribing the tapes, the teachers mentioned at one time or another that the success of the Montessori evaluation depended on the administrator. Teacher 1 stated,

Frankly, it is a dog and pony show. You’re (the administrator) going in there and people know you are going in and have prepared for that to show you what you want to see, or they see you come in and change what they are doing to show you what you are going to see.

Teacher #2 said, “They (administrator) need to be in my classroom watching, listening and viewing what I am doing to get an accurate picture. They cannot evaluate authentically by coming into a classroom three times a year.” Teacher 3 stated, “My

administrator uses Montessori evaluations with RISE. . . I think the combination of the RISE and what she is doing is very effective.” Teacher 4 added, “We have tried to come up with a key list of things for them (administrators) to look for when they come into a classroom that take into account things like, What does your environment look like?”

Assertions

The information and emerging themes were outlined in the preceding pages in order to provide interpretation from the subjects. Phenomenological and informative information surfaced from each interview. Assertions were identified through analyses of the administrators and teachers’ experiences with RISE and Montessori. The resulting assertions are an interpretation of my qualitative data.

Assertion #1

Student learning outcomes will only be effective if they are aligned with the school’s philosophy and useful to the teacher. When writing student learning outcomes, the staff must be able to understand what you want the student to do, what knowledge skills or abilities are ideal for the student and how will the student be able to demonstrate what they have learned. Montessori and traditional schools differ greatly in what they want their students to demonstrate. Montessori students show mastery through working through completed work plans and by demonstrating they know how to use the materials to work the problems. Demonstrating mastery looks very different in a Montessori classroom from a traditional classroom. RISE has not taken this into consideration. Although public Montessori students take standardized tests, these tests may not be specifically tailored to the Montessori program. The Montessori teacher has to “teach to the test” in order to get his or her students ready for the testing session. The Montessori

school typically has to use student learning outcomes that are state mandated and not useful to its own teaching methods. It is only when the school aligns student learning to the school's philosophy that these methods are successful. This causes many Montessori schools to vary from the traditional schools or just accept what the IDOE wants them to measure and not authentically create useful data for themselves.

Traditional teachers use the measureable standards that are assessed by the tests to drive instruction. Both children in Montessori schools and children in traditional schools are compared to typical peers or children of their same age as to what their scores are on the tests. Because RISE uses traditional means to measure student learning outcomes through standardized testing and does not take into account the differences in the Montessori teacher's curriculum, it is not an effective tool to measure student learning outcomes.

Assertion #2

Several of the administrators felt that the RISE evaluation system wants teachers put into specific categories, thus giving them a label. They shared with me the rating system they have to submit which forces them to put the teachers into either highly effective, effective, improvement necessary, or the ineffective category. They told me that RISE does not take into account that teachers are at different levels in their careers. Because they may need improvement in one area, that does not mean they need to be on an improvement plan. It may be that they are not ineffective or incompetent, they are just learning at different paces as our students do. The administrators shared with me that when you rate teachers with a number, you put a label on them. They were very open about the process, and that they are not allowed to differentiate from the process even

though their teachers do not teach like teachers in traditional schools. The principals also shared with me another reason that they are not in favor of this is because it is tied to a monetary reward. They do not want anyone to lose out on additional money because they are at different learning levels; therefore, they make it work to benefit the teachers. The participants made it very clear and shared their negative feelings about this process.

Assertion #3

Measuring a student's academic success ideally includes multiple assessments. Although RISE includes more than one category to evaluate teacher instruction, all the categories relate to how well the teacher was able to prepare instruction for the standardized tests. The Montessori administrators made it clear that student success is measured in "a billion different ways and there is not a one-time thing that you can look at to say if a child's successful." RISE does not take into account the many different ways a Montessori teacher assesses the child through reflection, observation, etc. Providing more measurable ways to hold teachers accountable should be included in the RISE evaluation system.

Assertion #4

Principals are inundated with legal requirements from the IDOE. The RISE evaluation system was yet another legal mandate for principals when evaluating their teachers. Although RISE was created to dismiss ineffective teachers and reward effective and highly effective teachers, are there principals using RISE punitively? Two of the principals made it clear that it should be used as a means to improve, not a way to say, I gotcha! I have witnessed principals using evaluation systems to get individual teachers for no good reason. Having even mentioned that at all leads me to believe that there are

still principals using RISE to dismiss teachers they no longer want in their building rather than help them improve. RISE makes it easy to release teachers that a principal does not want in their building. This is not an effective way to evaluate teachers, especially Montessori teachers who may not be able to correctly teach Montessori and do everything that is expected from them in the RISE evaluation system.

Assertion #5

Both teachers and administrators felt that RISE did not and could not evaluate the Montessori philosophy or learning environment. Most agreed that there was no place in the RISE evaluation system to measure if the environment was peaceful, if the developmental needs and interests of the child's were being met, and how the teacher related to the children. One administrator felt that good teaching is Montessori teaching and that it could work. This administrator said,

creating a classroom culture of respect and collaboration, working with peers, collaborating with each other in the learning process, positive character and behavior, and uses consequences appropriately, I mean natural consequences is a Montessori classroom. That's what a Montessori classroom looks like anyway. You want it to be rigorous, you want them to be challenged, but the teacher is more of the guide like the Montessori classroom and I think RISE reinforces that.

In this circumstance, my assertion is that if the administrator truly understands and has teachers who are completely Montessori trained and running an authentic Montessori classroom, then yes, RISE is applicable because the administrator chooses and is able to make it fit. However, most individuals are incapable of this when evaluating the Montessori classrooms philosophy and learning environment.

Assertion #6

Several teachers and administrators shared that RISE did not effectively measure the teacher as a lifelong learner. Their views were from the fact that Montessori teachers are responsible for an abundant amount of professional development and that they learn more from their students than from professional development. As the Montessori teachers continue to learn about the Montessori materials and, most importantly, the children in their classrooms, there is no place in RISE that effectively measures this component. Montessori teachers frequently conduct book clubs in order to stay in tune with the new Montessori techniques in the 21st century. As a conclusion, RISE does not effectively measure or take into account the Montessori teacher as a lifelong learner. RISE does have some areas that measure professional development with growth points, but how can you measure the lifelong learning of a teacher with a child?

Assertion #7

No one disputes the fact that teachers must be held accountable for student growth. Gone are the days of ineffective evaluation checklists used for years by administrators. As teacher accountability is linked to student learning outcomes, it must be done in coordination with the school's mission, philosophy, and teachers' input, or it will not work. RISE does not effectively measure the student learning outcomes as stated in the plan. It is only when a Montessori school varies from the norm and writes its own student learning outcomes that align with the RISE method does it have merit.

Assertion #8

Alternatives to standards-based education is provided within the Montessori environment. With the Montessori learning environment is self-paced and individualized

to the student's learning goals; nothing is forced upon the student and learning is a progressive process. Because Montessori schools differ so much from traditional public schools, RISE cannot effectively measure Montessori schools. Since traditional schools learning seems to begin and end with standardized testing and Montessori education begins and ends with the child, additional evaluation tools are necessary to effectively evaluate the Montessori teacher in the classroom.

Assertion #9

Great administrators have the ability to lead a school to success. Incompetent principals can lead a school to failure. Principals' understanding of the evaluation process and using it to help teachers grow is vital in order to retain teachers and ensure student success. As the teachers became more comfortable with me when I was interviewing them, one thing that several of them told me was that the success of their evaluation depended on the administrator and how they perceived Montessori education. They were adamant that there needed to be more tools included in the Montessori evaluation, but some principals did not use additional tools effectively when they evaluated their teachers. My assertion is that RISE cannot effectively evaluate Montessori teachers by itself, unless you have a mastery principal who knows what to look for in the Montessori classroom and is able to blend the RISE evaluation system with the Montessori philosophy to make it work.

Assertion #10

The Montessori schools that implement the RISE evaluation system have a different culture in their school. There are many factors that inhibit an authentic Montessori environment as the IDOE puts more and more mandates on these schools.

Time is taken away from the peaceful learning environment to make sure students are ready for the standardized tests and benchmarks. Teachers know these tests and benchmarks are included in the RISE evaluation system. Instead of being the guide in the classroom, the teacher must act as an assessor. This cultural change is magnified when the administrator pushes teachers to have their students perform well on state tests. Administrators may do this inadvertently or overtly to the teachers, but the reason an administrator pushes teachers for results is so that their school will receive an A for the school's grade.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of the study was to investigate the RISE evaluation system and determine if it is effective and should be used to evaluate Montessori teachers in the classroom. This chapter focuses on the limitations of the study, implications of the study, and recommendations for further research to be conducted. I have been using RISE in my schools with my teachers, and have had my own struggles with the instrument, therefore, I was curious as to whether or not it could be a one size fits all model for non-traditional schools. This study was the voice and opinions of administrators and teachers who were either using or being evaluated by the RISE evaluation system. My struggles in finding an evaluation tool that measures the Montessori learning environment is what inspired me to research this topic.

The hermeneutic phenomenological study gave me the opportunity to watch and interpret each administrator's and teacher's perspective and what they thought about RISE. Voice fluctuations, eye rolling, and other various body gestures gave me greater insight to what and how they were viewing RISE's role in the Montessori classroom. The following research questions were used to guide the study:

Interview Questions for Principals

1. How useful is the RISE Evaluation System in evaluating the Montessori philosophy and approach to human development, such as the teacher's response to the child based on a sensitive period, developmental needs, and child's interests? Where is it useful? Where does it fail?

2. How useful is the RISE evaluation system in evaluating the teacher's style of relating to children? For example, communicating respect for the individuality of children, demonstrating listening skills with children, reinforcing student-adult relationships, and using positive coping strategies to solve conflicts and problems? Where is it useful? Where does it fail?
3. How useful is the RISE evaluation system in evaluating the Montessori Learning Environment's Peace Education (Peace Table, Peace Agreement), snack and restroom freedom process, respect of student work space and work, use of Montessori materials, self-correcting material use, character development, and how well the materials are sequenced, free of clutter, and in order? Where is it useful? Where does it fail?
4. How well does the RISE evaluation system evaluate student learning outcomes? Where is it useful? Where does it fail?
15. How useful is the RISE evaluation system in evaluating the teacher as a reflective lifelong learner? Where is it useful? Where does it fail?
16. Do you use another evaluation measurement system instead of RISE or in combination with RISE? If yes, what do you use? How well do you think your hybrid model meets your needs as an evaluator in the context of a Montessori school?

The collection of data in this qualitative research study led to the following discussion.

Discussion of the Findings

Research Question #1: How useful is the RISE Evaluation System in evaluating the Montessori philosophy and approach to human development, such as the teacher's response to the child based on a sensitive period, developmental needs, and child's interests? Where is it useful? Where does it fail?

Based on the administrator's responses to Question #1, benefits and barriers were identified within their information. The administrators interviewed had formed their own opinions about evaluations and RISE. There was no doubt that each administrator was familiar with an evaluation process which would be used to complete evaluations that

were directed towards helping teachers improve instruction and student achievement. Two of the three administrators stated that RISE was not the most appropriate instrument to support Montessori teachers. Their opinions reflected that it did not provide appropriate instruments, procedures, and criteria to support and monitor continuous growth for Montessori teachers. One administrator went as far to state that RISE is not used at their Montessori school. They had created their own evaluation tool to use in place of the RISE evaluation system. Another administrator was very adamant that it did include all the components that are necessary to evaluate a Montessori teacher in the Montessori environment.

The gathered information from the principals lent to the fact that although two administrators were adamant about the fact that RISE would not and could not work, one administrator was able to make it work. By making it work, RISE was made to fit into the Montessori philosophy meaning the administrator did not expect the teacher to change the way he or she was teaching at the time of the observation. Rather, the administrator was able to look at the classroom and adjust RISE to fit the teacher. The administrator looked at each category under the RISE evaluation system's rubric reading the column under highly effective. Each time the administrator read the description, the comment was made, "that is Montessori teaching. That is what I am supposed to see in a classroom."

Research Question #2: How useful is the RISE evaluation system in evaluating the teacher's style of relating to children? For example, communicating respect for the individuality of children, demonstrating listening skills with children, reinforcing student-

adult relationships, and using positive coping strategies to solve conflicts and problems? Where is it useful? Where does it fail?

The general feeling of two of the administrators was that RISE did not and could not evaluate a teacher's style and how he or she related to children. During the interview administrators expressed that there is no place in the rubric where the Montessori philosophy is addressed. One administrator shared once again that it could work. This administrator shared the fact that the rubrics have Montessori philosophy embedded in the different domains. Administrators must be very familiar with the Montessori philosophy and RISE in order to make the two work in harmony to benefit the teacher.

Research Question #3: How useful is the RISE evaluation system in evaluating the Montessori Learning Environment's Peace Education (Peace Table, Peace Agreement), snack and restroom freedom process, respect of student work space and work, use of Montessori materials, self-correcting material use, character development, and how well the materials are sequenced, free of clutter, and in order? Where is it useful? Where does it fail?

The third research question encompassed the perceptions administrators had about the RISE evaluation system effectively evaluating the Montessori component relating to Peace Education. This time, two of the three administrators reported that RISE did have procedures in place that could be applied to teachers' evaluations. However, one of the two administrators later told me that in order to see the teacher teaching Peace education in the classroom, you would have to be there to witness this happening or look through the lesson plans to see that it was taught. The third administrator was adamant that there was no place in the RISE evaluation system that could measure a peaceful classroom.

This administrator also implied that RISE did not include any domains that would effectively evaluate a teacher's ability to teach peace in the Montessori classroom.

Although Montessori teachers teach lessons about grace and courtesy, I have found that a peaceful classroom can only be developed by a peaceful teacher. RISE cannot effectively measure the peacefulness of an adult. This quality is observed through his or her everyday interactions with children and adults.

Research Question #4: How well does the RISE Evaluation System evaluate Student Learning Outcomes? Where is it useful? Where does it fail?

The administrators responded similarly to the question regarding student learning outcomes. All three stated in one form or another that student learning outcomes had to be aligned with the school's mission and vision. Student learning outcomes needed to be valuable to the teachers because they are used to make sure the child has gone from point a to point b. The three administrators were in agreement that they did not think RISE effectively evaluated Montessori student learning outcomes; however, they may not realize that the IDOE allows schools to use their own student learning outcomes if they are approved by the state.

The perceived benefits with student learning outcomes are only if they are aligned and the teacher is able to understand and use them. The barriers are that they may not be aligned with the Montessori philosophy or that administrators and teachers do not actually use them effectively.

Research Question #5: How useful is the RISE Evaluation System in evaluating the teacher as a reflective lifelong learner? Where is it useful? Where does it fail?

There is a general consensus among the three administrators that RISE does not effectively evaluate the teacher as a reflective lifelong learner. One administrator added, “There was an idea that you were going to use a step-up plan for everybody, and in reality that is pretty challenging.” Administrators want to have conversations with their teachers about what and how they are doing, realizing different teachers are at different places in their careers. Administrators want their teachers to be able to reflect on what is working and what is not working in their classrooms so that they can offer assistance or professional development opportunities. The three administrators agreed that everybody has an area of growth to work on, and RISE does not account for individual differences and learning styles.

Research Question #6: Do you use another evaluation measurement system instead of RISE or in combination with RISE? If yes, what do you use? How well do you think your hybrid model meets your needs as an evaluator in the context of a Montessori school?

Two of the three administrators said that they used another evaluation tool in addition to the RISE. This was done to help the administrator effectively evaluate the Montessori classroom. Two of the administrators wanted to make sure the validity of the Montessori philosophy and environment was captured. The third administrator did not use another tool; however, this was her first year as an administrator, and she revealed that she was struggling to make RISE fit with her Montessori school.

After the interviews with the principals and reflection upon my own experiences, I believe that the RISE evaluation system alone is not capable of capturing the Montessori teaching environment by itself. A hybrid model is best when used in addition

to RISE. The hybrid model must be one that captures elements that are present in a true Montessori classroom.

The following questions were asked from the teachers to guide the study:

Research Question #1: Are you a certified Montessori teacher? Where did you obtain your certification? How long did it take you to finish the coursework in order to obtain your certification?

One of the four teachers was not certified. This teacher taught in the traditional classroom for 10 years prior to teaching in the Montessori classroom. The three certified Montessori teachers took coursework from one and one-half to two and one-half years to complete their certification.

All, with the exception of one teacher, received at least 18 months of Montessori training. The programs that were completed were a combination of coursework, online instruction, demonstrations of materials, and field supervisor observations. This information led me to believe that these three teachers were well versed with the Montessori philosophy and had a clear understanding of what a Montessori classroom entailed. The teacher who was not Montessori certified also displayed in-depth knowledge regarding Montessori education and philosophy. As I listened to the recordings, the uncertified teacher was just as knowledgeable about and spoke with ease about Montessori education. This teacher obviously had been immersed in Montessori.

Research Question #2: How long have you taught in the Montessori classroom and a traditional classroom? The teacher who was not Montessori certified taught traditionally 10 years (as stated above) and had been teaching in the Montessori classroom for six years. One teacher had been teaching traditionally for three years and

had been teaching in the Montessori classroom for 26 years, one teacher did not want to say, and the fourth teacher taught traditionally for 15 years and had been in the Montessori classroom for three years.

There were no significant barriers to affect the outcome of the study based on the teacher's number of years in the traditional and Montessori classrooms. This was a surprising revelation. I felt that there would be differences in opinions and stronger beliefs one way or another with teachers who taught longer in a Montessori classroom. In fact, I discovered that the teachers who were traditional teachers first and then became Montessori teachers were just as passionate if not more passionate about the questions as the Montessori teachers. In conclusion, I discovered that even teachers who were known as traditional teachers before they became Montessori teachers were just as adamant about the RISE evaluation system and the pitfalls it produced as teachers who taught only in Montessori classrooms.

Research Question #3: The RISE evaluation system is useful in evaluating the Montessori philosophy and approach to human development needs and child's interests.

The general feelings of teachers participating in this study was that the RISE evaluation system is not effective when evaluating the Montessori philosophy. The findings revealed that Montessori teachers look at the child and create an environment to fit the child's needs. Teachers felt RISE overlooks this and many more important characteristics in Montessori education. Instead, RISE held teachers accountable for state standards. The teachers felt RISE did not include important parts of student learning that is a part of the Montessori classroom.

Research Question #4: The RISE evaluation system is useful in evaluating your style of relating to children. For example, communicating respect for individuality of children demonstrating listening skills with children, reinforcing student-adult relationships, and using positive coping strategies to solve conflicts and problems.

It is imperative for Montessori teachers to be able to have great relationships with their students. A Montessori classroom's success depends on the teacher's ability to know the child in order to prepare the classroom for the child's success. Teachers must be in tune every moment of the day with the children in the classroom. All four teachers felt that the RISE evaluation system does not evaluate how the teacher relates the Montessori philosophy to the child. The teachers relayed to me that the relationship of a Montessori teacher is very different from a traditional classroom teacher.

Research Question #5: The RISE evaluation system is useful in evaluating the Montessori Learning Environment's Peace Education (Peace Table, Peace Agreement), snack and restroom freedom process, respect of student work space and work, use of Montessori materials, self-correcting material use, character development, and how well the materials are sequenced free of clutter and in order.

Teachers believe the RISE evaluation system does not evaluate any of the items incorporated into the Montessori classroom's learning environment's peace education. In fact, they were very vocal stating that RISE was not appropriate for making sure the Montessori teacher has these items in place.

Research Question #6: The RISE system is useful in evaluating the teacher as a reflective lifelong learner.

Three of the four teachers indicated that RISE was not useful in evaluating them as lifelong learners. One teacher indicated that since RISE asks what you are doing to make yourself better it does a “fairly decent job, but later didn’t know if it took into considerations the fact that Montessori teachers are always learning and making materials.”

Of course teachers are responsible for keeping their licenses current through professional development, taking additional courses, and attending workshops, but does RISE take into account all the Montessori in-service. Teachers who teach Montessori classrooms appear to go above and beyond what is expected of them, participating in book clubs, conducting parental information nights, etc.; that is not taken into consideration in the RISE evaluation system.

Research Question #7: The RISE evaluation system is adequate when evaluating the Montessori philosophy and culture.

Once again, all three teachers did not think that RISE evaluated the Montessori philosophy and culture. The teachers expressed to me that this question repeated itself.

Research Question #8: The RISE evaluation system is adequate when evaluating the Montessori philosophy strengths.

The teachers felt that again this was a repeat question; however, one teacher explained that RISE measured one metric and was not valid. Another teacher expressed that it gives a baseline and not much more to it than that.

Research Question #9: The RISE evaluation is adequate when evaluating the Montessori philosophy gaps.

When I asked this question, I believe the teachers thought I was asking if RISE had gaps when evaluating the Montessori philosophy. I did not realize this until after I had interviewed each teacher and was transcribing the materials. Had I realized this when I was conducting the interviews, I would have asked additional probing questions.

Research Question #10: Does your administrator use another evaluation measurement system instead of RISE or in combination with RISE? If yes, what do they use? How well do you think the hybrid model meets your needs in the context of a Montessori school?

There was only one administrator who used additional evaluations with the RISE. One of the teachers stated that the school was working on “coming up with a list of items they would like for their administrator or evaluator to look at.”

Research Question #11: How well does the RISE evaluation system evaluate student learning outcomes? Where is it useful? Where does it fail?

Teachers agreed that RISE does not evaluate student learning outcomes as it should. Three of the four teachers stated that RISE could not measure how a child grew that year. The fourth teacher stated that testing was not the way to evaluate student growth. All teachers seemed to imply that RISE does not account for the Montessori classroom environment’s differentiated instructional practices.

Research Question #12: What problems or issues do you see in applying RISE in the context of a Montessori school?

When asked what problems or issues did they see in applying RISE, all three were quick to imply in one way or another that RISE would not and does not work in a Montessori classroom evaluation. Three out of the four implied that RISE does not take

any of their personal characteristics as a Montessori teacher into account. I found it very interesting that one teacher implied that Montessori teachers change their teaching method when an evaluator came to observe so that they could score higher on the RISE rubric, and another teacher implied that it probably did not work in any environment.

Research Question #13: What positive effects of applying the RISE system in the context of a Montessori school can you cite?

Two of the four teachers did not see anything positive with RISE. One teacher implied it could be used as a baseline, and the fourth teacher implied that if the administrator truly knew Montessori teaching methods themselves and understood them, “there could be ways for differentiating instruction.”

Research Question #14: Is there anything else you would like to say about the authenticity of the RISE evaluation system in a Montessori classroom?

Two teachers had nothing to add; however, the remaining two teachers indicated that RISE will never work effectively when evaluating Montessori teachers. Although one teacher told me their evaluation was not given a whole lot of consideration, another teacher referred to RISE and other federal government regulations as a “cancer that has sprung up.” All teachers led me to believe that they did not see any authenticity in RISE for evaluating the Montessori classroom.

To summarize, Montessori teachers have very different characteristics from traditional teachers. There is no stand and deliver, whole group instruction in a Montessori classroom. The Montessori teacher is a guide to the children unlike traditional classroom teachers who are in charge of the classroom. The RISE evaluation system does not contain areas to address this style of teaching.

Furthermore, the culture and practices of a Montessori school are affected if the RISE evaluation system is being used by an administrator who cannot infuse it into the Montessori teachers' characteristics. The teachers are very intelligent and able to figure out what the administrator is looking for during the observation. Administrators who are more traditional than Montessori will force teachers to meet state mandates which will change the authenticity and entire culture of a Montessori school.

Recommendations

“Teacher evaluation systems ideally should foster improvement in both professional development opportunities and teaching practices” (Kelley & Maslow, 2005, p. 1). “School corporations should acknowledge building and corporation wide goals and teachers' responses and contributions to those goals” (Whitman, Dingjing, & Plucker, 2011, p. 20) when implementing an evaluation assessment for the teachers. In other words, the teacher evaluation system has to be relevant.

Additional research needs to be conducted to validate and add substance to the subject's interviews. Further research could include interviewing additional administrators and teachers in non-traditional schools other than Montessori schools.

Further research should include a follow up with the administrators and teachers that would include the opportunity to observe the administrator while they were actually evaluating the teacher. First hand observations would enable the researcher to actually witness the actions of the teacher and administrator as the RISE evaluation system unfolded. The findings in this research indicate that the teachers' perceptions imply that a majority of their evaluators do not have the knowledge to use the RISE evaluation system effectively when evaluating the Montessori classroom.

This study emphasizes that evaluations are important to teachers. Learning how to effectively evaluate staff is a vital trait for an administrator, no matter what kind of school he or she is leading. The teachers were definitely passionate about the fact that they wanted to be treated fairly and have their work noticed and appreciated. Given this information, the IDOE needs to revise the RISE evaluation system so that it captures and validates the role of the Montessori teacher in the classroom. If a revision to the RISE evaluation system is not attainable, then a supplemental tool that captures the Montessori teacher using the Montessori philosophy to drive instruction. Perhaps this will allow for teacher to not change their style of teaching in order to appease the administrator conducting the evaluation.

Limitations

There were some limitations to the study that arose during the interviews. One participant would not allow the interview to be recorded. This inhibited my study because listening to the recorded interviews more than once contributed to added depth with my research. The second and even third time I listened to these interviews allowed me to hear desperation and passion in voice fluctuations of the administrators and teachers. This made it possible for me to emphasize emerging themes and gauge strong feelings and passions when I reviewed answers to my questions. When I could not record the interview I had to rely on notes.

Another limitation was there were not many Montessori schools using the RISE evaluation system. Because I chose to study the public school Montessori schools which are mandated to use RISE, the selection was limited to only a few schools, and one school did not choose to use the RISE instrument at all. Embedding Montessori schools

in a public school system and mandating that they use the same set of standards as the traditional schools in the district, does create constraints that a stand-alone Montessori school wouldn't necessarily have.

Finally, as I am a Montessori administrator as well, certain biases were put aside. Although the feeling was that these did not play a part in the research, there were times the subjects may not have been completely open and honest for fear of insulting administrators in general.

Conclusion

Montessori classrooms are very different from traditional classrooms. Teachers who have been trained in the Montessori philosophy understand and implement this philosophy. However, when an evaluation instrument comes along that has a number attached to it, teachers are willing to change their philosophy and the culture of the classroom to satisfy the components within the evaluation. Central office has to allow at least a hybrid model: this was a problem for some of the schools.

The success of the evaluation depends on the ability of the administrator to be able to use a tool that is applicable to the Montessori environment and not something that will not benefit the Montessori teachers. The administrator must acknowledge the differentiated styles of teachers as they do students. Administrators need to look beyond mandates and not be so concerned about the pressures put on them to obtain a higher letter grade. Administrators who lack competence will not be effective when evaluating teachers. Rather, they focus on general behaviors, such as delivery, rather than content-specific pedagogy (Kelley & Maslow, p. 1). Most likely, this will not be the RISE

evaluation system, unless the administrator is able to take the RISE evaluation system and fit it to meet the needs of the classroom without compromising Montessori integrity.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Montessori Integrity Evaluation

Montessori Integrity Evaluation

Name _____

Date _____

Style of Relating to Children and Others

- Communicates respect for the individuality of children and adults
- Gives evidence of liking children
- Demonstrates listening skills with children
- Demonstrates listening skills with adults
- Demonstrates a good rapport with children
- Demonstrates a good rapport with adults
- Is observant and responsive to individual needs as they arise
- Setting Classroom Expectations
- Building/ Reinforcing Student-Adult Relationships
- Dress and appearance indicate self-regard as a professional
- Communicates ground rules effectively and successfully enforces them
- Uses positive coping strategies to solve conflicts and problems

Comments on Style of Relating to Children and Others Goal Statement:

Classroom Management Strategies

- Maintains effective overview (total environment awareness)
- Participates in maintaining order in the environment
- Has definite expectations of self and students
- Expectations are realistic and appropriate
- Demonstrates skill in solving behavioral problems
- Works effectively with individual children
- Works effectively with small selective groups of children
- Demonstrates effectiveness with the entire collective group
- Uses appropriate movement and body language
- Interacts in a positive manner with other adults in the room
- Uses a well modulated voice in the classroom
- uses proper timing to move in and out of presentations and conflict situations

Comments on Classroom Management Strategies Goal Statement:

Observation Skills

- Readily detects situations in the environment which call for adult interaction
- Makes valid observations of child behavior, identifies needs
- Correctly assess individual needs for reinforcement or further challenge

Appendix B: National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector

NATIONAL CENTER for
MONTESSORI in the PUBLIC SECTOR

Observing Work Engagement¹ Elementary Classroom

In high functioning Montessori environments, the vast majority of students will be engaged in concentrated, independent work with materials the guide (teacher) has prepared and to which the student has been introduced through a lesson or presentation. This rubric was developed to assist with charter school audits. It is designed to direct the observer's attention to student engagement, with special focus on the characteristics of purposeful, effortful activity – what is known in Montessori as “work.” In addition to formal audits, this tool may be used for self-assessment, informal or formal supervision, and group reflection.

School/Classroom _____ Visit Focus _____ Number of children _____ Date _____

1. Sample of Work Engagement of Students

- Observe for two minutes or until you count each student once
- Tally each category observed; one tally mark per student

At the beginning of visit time _____	Engaging in work	Using work as a prop	Choosing work	Receiving help	Wandering/interfering	Behaving disruptively
	engaging in age-appropriate and concentrated work independently or in presentation	not engaging with material in front of him/her	in process of selecting and/or setting up work	consulting with or receiving direction from a teacher in class	moving aimlessly or conversing without focus	yelling, defiant, leaving room, obvious misuse of materials
Tally marks						
Totals						

2. Work on Montessori Materials observed

Cultural History, Science, Art, Music	Language	Math and Geometry	Practical Life Care of the Environment, Social Activity

3. Sample of Work Engagement of Students (repeat observation)

At the end of visit time _____	Engaging in work	Using work as a prop	Choosing work	Receiving help	Wandering/interfering	Behaving disruptively
	engaging in age-appropriate and concentrated work independently or in presentation	not engaging with material in front of him/her	in process of selecting and/or setting up work	consulting with or receiving direction from a teacher in class	moving aimlessly or conversing without focus	yelling, defiant, leaving room, obvious misuse of materials
Tally marks						
Totals						

NATIONAL CENTER for
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Observing in the Prepared Environment¹

The Montessori prepared environment is a holistic, integrated and highly coherent space for learning. Every element of the environment is organized intentionally to create an optimal setting for purposeful interactions among students, guides, and materials within the space. This rubric is designed to assist the visitor in tracking qualities of the environment that are necessary for ensuring high quality Montessori implementation.

Classroom _____ Level _____

O= Observed NO= Not Observed

	O	NO
Beauty and Order		
Shelves are clean and uncluttered		
Materials are in the correct sequence within each shelf		
Materials are kept in good repair		
Students assist in the maintaining of the room, as appropriate for their age		
Plants, pictures, fabrics, and work samples are displayed beautifully		
Procedures and Routines		
Students and Guides open and close doors quietly		
Students follow directions cooperatively and in a timely manner		
Students and Guides handle materials with respect		
Students get help from each other and the guide in the manner consistent with class protocol		
Students transition independently from one activity to another		
Students use work rugs, tables, and low tables appropriately		
Students respond to a bell or other signal to- stop, look and listen		
Students gather materials for their work as needed		
Students work independently		
Students clean up and put away work in proper location when complete		
Grace and Courtesy		
Student voices are quiet and peaceful		
Students speak next to each other quietly, not across the room		
Students move carefully and calmly		
Students use steps of peaceful conflict resolution		
Students use a respectful tone		
Students use please and thank you with each other		
Students know how to offer an apology		
Work Habits		
Students engaged in work individually, in a small group and in the whole group daily		
Students exhibit persistence and confidence in their efforts		
Students have follow up-work		
Students have opportunities for independent work choices daily		
Student behavior supports concentration in the classroom		

¹ Thanks to our friends at [New View Montessori Consultancy](#) for developing and sharing this document.

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Students know the system for filing work in folders, binders, and bins		
Organization and Maintenance of Space & Materials	O	NO
Montessori Materials- a full spectrum of Montessori materials are available in every area representing the majority of materials on each shelf		
Walls- attractive, current, relevant, appropriate amount, uncluttered		
Classroom library - organized by genres, author, topic, etc.; bins at student eye level or lower		
Seating - space is available for groups at tables, low tables, or on work rugs and for individual work with freedom of seating as the norm		
Whole group area - designated area for whole group lessons, carpeted		
Small group area - designated area for small group lessons		
Supply area - materials available to whole class as appropriate for each level- pencils, assorted paper, markers or crayons, scissors, tape, hole punch, stapler etc.		
Daily schedule posted - as appropriate for each level		
Observer's Chair- a chair is designated for the purpose of daily observations, and for visitor use		
Instructional Approach		
Guide follows the rhythm - present, circulate, observe		
Guide's voice is quiet- not heard above others		
Guide approaches children at their level		
Guide has drinks and snacks at snack area- not walking around the room		
Guide presents lessons in various locations through out the classroom		
Guide uses a lesson plan/ record keeping system		
Guide uses intentional movement, careful and calm		
Guide observes classroom regularly, has recording system		
Guide confers with other adults quietly		

VITA

VITA

Susan J. Fries

EDUCATION

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| 2015-present | Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana
Ph.D. in Educational Administration |
| 1995 | Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana
M.S. in Educational Administration |
| 1990 | University of Indianapolis, Indianapolis, Indiana
M.S. in Elementary Education |
| 1984 | University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Ohio
B.S. in Elementary Education |

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 2008-2012 | Indianapolis Public Schools
Administrator |
| 2002-2008 | Clark Pleasant Community School Corporation
Administrator |
| 1987-2002 | Indianapolis Public Schools
Administrator
Technology Title I Director
Teacher |
| 1984-1987 | Lockland City Schools, Lockland, Ohio
Teacher Grade 1 |