Peer Teacher Evaluation: A Literature Review

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There are numerous systems in place to evaluate teacher effectiveness, and in our current accountability culture, pressures are rising to hold teachers accountable for student achievement (Darling-Hammond, Amrein-Beardsley, Haertel, & Rothstein, 2012). Traditional methods of evaluation often utilize administrators, mainly principals, to be in charge of teacher observation and evaluation. However, peer teacher evaluation is becoming much more common both at the K-12 and higher education institutional levels. Peer teacher evaluation models use various names, including Peer Observation of Teaching (POT) and Peer Assistance and Review (PAR). Chism (1999) calls this form of evaluation *peer review of teaching* and defines it as “informed colleague judgment about faculty teaching for either fostering improvement or making personnel decisions” (p. 3). Most models include aspects of observation, evaluation, and feedback and share many of the same goals, but the impact of the evaluative element on a teacher’s job varies. This Literature Review will: analyze the theoretical framework that supports peer teacher evaluation; describe the rationale behind the practice; identify implementation practices; distinguish various program models; and pinpoint goals and challenges related to peer review.

Peer observation is gaining popularity in educational institutions, and the literature argues there are various explanations for this trend. One is the fervent focus on accountability that has developed mainly from No Child Left Behind (Darling-Hammond et al., 2012). All students are expected to reach proficiency in Math and English Language Arts, and when they fail in these areas, teachers are often to blame. National and state assessments measure student achievement, but the teacher role in student learning is more difficult to measure. Brix, Grainger, and Hill (2014) argue that peer teacher evaluation systems have been developed as part of the neo-liberal agenda, which is focused on data and accountability. Many others argue these systems of observation, evaluation, and feedback aim at the deprivatization of teaching (Brix et al., 2014; Louis & Marks, 1998). In a checks-and-balances system of peer observation, teachers lose some of the isolation and anonymity that are traits of the profession.

No matter the societal changes that impact teacher evaluation, the literature encourages thoughtful considerations before implementing a peer teacher evaluation system. Darling-Hammond et al. (2012) maintain that teacher evaluation should take advantage of research on effective teaching and use this knowledge to guide evaluation design. Sullivan (1995) states the need for a clear purpose in any peer teacher evaluation system, which should focus on help, advice, and evaluation. She also describes the need for a clear system that evaluates various aspects of teaching, including peer and student evaluations and teaching portfolios. Hammersley-Fletcher, and Orsmond (2005) further argue that the value in peer evaluation systems comes from participants’ understanding of why the system is in place. The quality of the program depends on the process and practices, and feedback is essential for defining quality teaching and learning within an institution. Peer teacher evaluation has to be linked to professional development and be part of the learning and teaching strategies at educational institutions. Peer observation is most successful if the role of the observer is clearly understood and the program has clear objectives, methods, and has identified potential drawbacks (Cosh, 1998).

**Theoretical Framework**

 Peer teacher evaluation borrows elements from many different theories, including: Experimental Learning Theory, Transformative Learning Theory, Reflective Practice Model, Theory of Self-efficacy, and Stage Theory. First, Kolb’s (1984) Experimental Learning Theory highlights the value of a mentoring relationship, especially identifying the ability of the learner to learn through observation and reflection. Learners are more successful when they reflect and share with supportive peers. Peer teacher evaluation includes colleague collaboration and reflection, which thus leads to learning.

Mezirow’s (1997) Transformative Learning Theory also supports peer teacher evaluation, as it focuses on adult learning through reflection. Learners are encouraged to create new worldviews by considering the value of past actions and experiences. Transformative Learning Theory believes learners take responsibility for learning through planning, implementation, and evaluation. The evaluative aspect of peer observation, in addition to reflective dialogues between the observer and observed, supports the methods of learning in Mezirow’s theory.

Schön’s (1987) Reflective Practice Model relates directly to peer teacher observation in its encouragement of honest, reflective feedback and self-evaluation. The model claims that transformative learning occurs when one questions and reframes assumptions and contemplates alternate perspectives, such as the perspective of the evaluator (Donnelly, 2007). In a peer review relationship, teachers can learn from each other, especially when a more experienced master teacher mentors a less experienced teacher.

Bandura’s (1977) Theory of Self-efficacy explores one’s capacity to experience confidence in his/her own abilities. He contends that when one experiences self-mastery in a skill, that experience is the most influential factor in one’s own belief of self-efficacy. One’s own expectations of success impact the effort and determination one has to overcome obstacles. The strength of other people’s convictions affects behavior, and if one has fear of success, he/she will avoid a threatening situation. According to Bandura, “People process, weigh, and integrate diverse sources of information concerning their capability, and they regulate their choice behavior and effort expenditure accordingly” (p. 212). If teachers believe in their own ability to succeed, have personal experiences with success, and receive positive feedback from respected peers, they will be more likely to persevere in the field of education with a strong sense of self-efficacy.

A final theoretical framework that relates to the process of peer teacher observation is Stage Theory, which focuses on development. Berliner (1994) identifies five stages of teacher development: novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient, and expert. In observations, expert teachers are able to give more complex feedback than novice educators. Experts can recognize patterns in the teaching practice and are able to respond from a multitude of perspectives. They have more flexibility in their own teaching practice and enter an observation with a broad skill from which they can share constructive feedback (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). Peer groups that provide observational feedback, mentorship, and support can aid non-expert teachers in learning to enact new skills (Joyce & Showers, 2002). This relationship can stimulate reflection and skill development. Taking a developmental perspective on peer teacher evaluation strengthens the implementation of programs and also increases student achievement (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005).

**Rationale**

There are many motivators for institutions that create programs of peer evaluation. The American Association of Health Education (AAHE) supports peer evaluation for the following reasons: 1) student evaluations are insufficient; 2) faculty collaboration is essential for learning; 3) faculty highly values the respect of their peers; 4) faculty have control of their work quality (Wellein, Ragucci, & Lapoint, 2009). Chism (1999) further describes several ways in which peer review of teaching is used to determine educator performance, including: hiring decisions, coaching faculty, reviewing faculty for salary increases, contract renewals, and performing annual reviews, determining faculty assignments, judging promotion and tenure cases, approving teaching sabbatical requests, choosing teaching award winners, and conducting post-tenure reviews. Peer evaluation can assist in creating more valid and comprehensive outcome results in these various processes.

In addition to these specific reasons to implement peer teacher evaluation programs, there are additional intangible outcomes related to teaching practice, one of which is reflective teaching. Hammersley-Fletcher and Orsmond (2005) define reflective practice as reflecting on the process of teaching. They believe peer observation creates a reflective practitioner who can understand the *why* of the learning process, not only the *how*. If a peer observer conveys the most objective feedback he or she is able, then partakes in a reflective dialogue with the observed educator, improved future instruction can occur. Marshall’s (2004) model of Peer Enhancement of Learning and Teaching, which includes team teaching, moderate assessment and feedback, curriculum development, and annual project review, also encourages reflective teaching. The nature of this comprehensive model encourages individual and team reflection on good practices, which leads to professional development.

Current research points to the benefits of peer teacher evaluation. A professional community that includes peer observation leads to authentic pedagogy, which boosts student achievement (Louis & Marks, 1998). Donnelly (2007) claims that peer observation helps connect theory and practice and increases self-confidence and self-efficacy. Furthermore, Fullerton (2000) highlights numerous benefits to peer observation of teaching, which has become common practice in higher education the United Kingdom. Teachers are validated in what is working well and are able to collaborate with colleagues to problem solve and align theory with practice. Teachers can also gain confidence and competence. Moreover, Fullerton offers a list of benefits derived from teacher peer observation:

* Insight into what helps learners to learn and what happens in effective teaching sessions;
* Feedback on individual teaching skills and style;
* Discussion, collaboration and exchange of ideas;
* Mutual support between colleagues;
* Earmarked ‘quality time’ to talk about learning and teaching;
* Feedback on piloting a new idea, method, or solution to a problem;
* Triangulation with other evaluative procedures, for example student perception questionnaires, module, and program evaluations;
* Focused reflection on teaching sessions; and
* The opportunity to see exemplary practitioners at work (p. 227).

Goldstein and Noguera (2006) identify benefits of Peer Assistance and Review (PAR), many of which can be applied to various peer evaluation models. PAR reduces isolation, allows proper time for teacher support and evaluation while reducing burdens on principals, and links professional development and evaluation. It also increases transparency, improves district and union partnerships, and increases the confidence and accuracy of teacher evaluation. Additionally, PAR aids teachers in creating new curriculum through collaboration and promotes instructional leadership. For instance, principals better utilize the strengths of faculty by using them as evaluators. Other benefits of PAR include the insurance of the quality of the consulting teacher through training programs, defining good teaching, reframing labor relations and instructional leadership, and potentially building bridges to a mentorship program (Goldstein, 2007).

In 1999, California implemented statewide PAR programs. Goldstein and Noguera (2006) analyzed the results of surveys and interviews of over 300 hours of observation and 200 participants, including 12 coaches and 140 teachers. They found that PAR increased transparency and increased validity in the evaluation process. There was higher confidence in the decisions made regarding future employment. Additionally, there was a greater focus on the quality of teaching.

Wellein et al. (2009) analyzed a peer review process at a higher education institute whose goal was to improve teaching and documentation of teaching performances. They created a Best Practices of Teaching document prior to observations in order to focus evaluations on a shared vision, including the following domains: objectives, organization, lecture content, presentation style, interaction and rapport with students, assignments, and examination. At the end of the year, they surveyed the faculty, and the main criticism was the amount of time the process consumed. However, results showed an agreement or strong agreement that the evaluation process was beneficial for both evaluators and those being evaluated.

**Implementation**

If an institution is planning to implement a peer review of teaching program, there are many factors to consider. Chism (1999) identifies several *pitfalls to avoid*, which include:

* Ignoring history of poorly done reviews;
* No plan, poor plan, overambitious plan;
* Lack of buy-in by faculty and/or administrators;
* Not integrated into other performance systems (promotion and tenure, annual report, awards); and
* Lack of model for reviewers (p. 36-37).

Darling-Hammond (2014) and Marshall (2004) believe teacher evaluation should be utilized as part of a comprehensive system of teaching and learning. Darling-Hammond argues that existing systems of teacher evaluation, with principals as the primary evaluator, do not adequately help teachers improve and do not accurately identify struggling teachers. She claims that systems of peer teacher evaluation need to create and sustain collaborative teaching environments in order to increase student learning. Many factors need to be in place in order to use peer teacher evaluation to improve teaching, including: connecting evaluation to induction programs, daily practice, and instructional content; connecting evaluations to professional teaching standards that are also linked to student learning standards and curriculum and assessment; focus on curricular goals; and provide time and training for evaluators to be successful. Furthermore, Darling-Hammond identifies five elements of a successful evaluation plan that focuses on teaching and learning:

1. Common statewide standards for teaching that are related to meaningful student learning and are shared across the profession;
2. Performance-based assessments, based on these standards, guiding state functions, such as teacher preparation, licensure, and advanced certification;
3. Local evaluation systems aligned to the same standards, for evaluating on-the-job teaching based on multiple measures of teaching practice and student learning;
4. Support structures to ensure properly trained evaluators, mentoring for teachers who need additional assistance, and fair decisions about personnel actions; and
5. Aligned professional learning opportunities that support the improvement of teachers and teaching quality (p. 8).

She further identifies criteria for an effective teacher evaluation system, which should include the following:

1. Teacher evaluation should be based on professional teaching standards;
2. Evaluations should include multifaceted evidence of teacher practice, student learning, and professional contributions;
3. Evaluators should be knowledgeable about instruction and well trained in the evaluation system;
4. Evaluation should be accompanied by useful feedback, and connected to professional development opportunities;
5. The evaluation system should value and encourage teacher collaboration;
6. Expert teachers should be part of the assistance and review process;
7. Panels of teachers and administrators should oversee the evaluation process (p. 12).

Darling-Hammond believes that a strong teacher evaluation system includes all of the previously mentioned elements, but also focuses strongly on collaboration among teacher teams. Teaching practice can improve if student data and work are analyzed, if curriculum is thoughtfully designed and critiqued, if teachers observe and coach each other, and if there are common classroom assessments that are developed and scored as a team. Darling-Hammond views the peer evaluation and observation aspect of teacher improvement as simply one element in a complex system of improving teaching and learning.

Marshall’s (2004) conception of peer observation is called Peer Enhancement of Learning and Teaching. This concept focuses on creating opportunities for teachers to learn from each other by sharing in each other’s teaching experiences. It involves individual and team reflection on good practice and should be embedded into the school system. Examples of how to normalize this system include team teaching, moderating assessment and feedback, utilizing student feedback, developing curriculum, maintaining confidentiality, and reviewing the program annually. This scheme encourages reflective teaching, which Marshall argues is helpful and empowering.

**Program Models**

There are various program models of peer teacher evaluation throughout the country and around the world. Most models entail observation of colleagues accompanied by written feedback (Cosh, 1998). Teaching pairs or teams who partake in reciprocal peer review are also common (Chism, 1999). Appraisal models, which link observations with merit pay for the evaluator, are no longer used, as they were strongly opposed by staff and union leaders (Cosh, 1998). Cosh argues that peer observation must focus on professional growth and development, and it must exist in an environment of trust and support.

One sample model of utilizing peer observation in the evaluation of teachers is the Teacher Advancement Program (TAD) (Darling-Hammond et al., 2012). In the TAD program, teachers are evaluated four to six times per year using master or mentor teachers or principals. The evaluators have attended a four-day training, so evaluations are streamlined. Teachers are aware of the evaluation criteria, which include video taping, rubrics, discussing plans for growth, professional development, mentoring, and classroom support.

Another model for peer teacher observation is Peer Assistance and Review (PAR). The “Toledo Plan” is viewed as the first of many PAR programs and provides a model for implementation (Goldstein & Noguera, 2006). In the Toldedo Plan, teachers who have been identified as “excellent” become coaches to new teachers and veteran teachers who are struggling. They act as both a mentor and a formal evaluator to the teachers, observing them multiple times a year. The coach reports on the progress of the teachers to a teacher/administrator board in a district wide meeting several times throughout the year. The board includes the union president and director of human resources. In the spring, coaches and sometimes the principal make a recommendation about the future employment of the mentored teacher. Recommendations are passed on to the superintendent for final decision-making.

Goldstein (2007) conducted a longitudinal study of an urban school district in Rosemont, California utilizing a PAR system. Rosemont had 10 consulting teacher observers and 88 participating teachers in 28 schools. Data collected included observations and evaluations. Results indicated that PAR allowed the building of trust and rapport among faculty, ongoing instructional feedback, individual support, and performance-based evaluations. There are several key factors in the results. First, principals did not have time to give the support that coaches had, especially because coaches were relieved of their teaching duties. Second, performance criteria of the evaluations were clearer, which increased validity. Third, PAR increased transparency and reduced teacher isolation. Finally, PAR increased teacher accountability; rather than being reassigned, the consulting teacher observers did not recommend poor teachers for contract renewal, and the panel trusted this feedback. This particular PAR program included frequent teacher observations and teams of colleagues working together to support each other. Relationships with the union also improved. Goldstein uses Table 1 below to summarize her findings and comparisons.

Table 1. Summary Comparison of Literature and Findings in Rosemont PAR Program



Reflective approaches to peer evaluation are common, usually focusing on the goal of self-development through reflection and feedback. One of these programs is called Supported Reflective Practice (Bell, 2001). This model focuses heavily on feedback and borrows concepts from Schön (1987) and Mezirow (1997). This program follows a three-step process: 1) feedback from a support colleague on the observed teaching; 2) reflection on the feedback; 3) feedback on the reflection. This program model was implemented at an Australian university within a Teaching Development Program (TDP). The goals of the TDP were to have an awareness of teaching, increase skills, knowledge, and understanding, and increase reflective practice. The efficacies of the Supported Reflective Practice model at this university are divided into themes: there were improvements of the teaching process; there was an increase in teacher confidence; professional development was more effective; and collegiality increased. Following this research project, Bell (2001) argues that effective peer teacher evaluation models include the following elements: 1) structured, cyclic action research framework; 2) support colleagues who provide monitoring and feedback; 3) participants choose their support colleague, who is also observed; 4) planning, feedback, critical reflection, and implementation of change.

Additionally, Fullerton (2000) describes an observation model used at the University of Plymouth in England, which entails four stages. Stage 1 is an initial discussion prior to the observation at which colleagues discuss the context of the lesson, background on the students, the goals and objectives of the lesson, specific areas of feedback the observed individual is seeking, and any materials to be used in the lesson. Stage 2 is the observation itself at which the observer records specific teaching strategies that aid in student learning. Stage 3 is a follow-up discussion ideally immediately following the observation, which includes reflective dialogue. Stage 4 is the record of the observation, which is a written summary of the main points from the observation and feedback session.

Hammersley-Fletcher and Orsmond (2004) describe two separate models implemented at universities in the United Kingdom. One system involved staff in the development of paperwork, training of observers, and linking development outcomes to staff appraisal. The second approach used members from four separate departments to create trios, so each person was observed by and observed two other individuals from different departments. The intention of these models was to link peer observation of teaching with staff professional development.

Another international model of peer observation that presents slightly different identifying characteristics is called Lesson Study, initiated in Japan (Lewis, 2000). Lesson Study is the overarching name of a program that entails research lessons, which are classroom lessons that Lewis defines with five distinctive characteristics: 1) lessons are observed by others, both faculty and members of the outside community; 2) lessons are collaboratively planned over a long period of time; 3) lessons focus on broader educational goals; 4) lessons are recorded, through video, audio, notes, and/or student work; 5) lessons are discussed. Research lessons may occur in the school, may be open to teachers outside of the school, or may be part of a national conference. The format of a research lesson includes detailed collaborative planning, implementation of the lesson, often with full-school participation, and a follow-up research seminar. At this seminar, there are comments from the instructor, the collaborators, a group discussion, and remarks from a commentator, who is often an outsider.

Lewis conducted a research study on Lesson Study in Japan. She conducted 75 interviews in Japanese with elementary school teachers and administrators. She performed 40 observations at 30 different schools around the country. According to her data, research lessons are common in nearly every school in Japan, no matter the size, socio-economic makeup, or the location. Her research identifies numerous strengths regarding research lesson implementation at schools. First, this form of education encourages individual professional development and critical self-reflection. Next, the teaching practices of individuals connect to the goals of a school. Also, research lessons increase the demand for educational improvement, honor the role of teachers, and influence national policy. Many respondents claim that research lesson allowed the teachers to “see children,” meaning there is a focus on the whole child, and teachers learn about their students through data gathering, observing engagement levels, and monitoring prior knowledge. The Lesson Study model lacks an explicit evaluative component, but shares the qualities of observation, collaboration, reflection, and potential for pedagogical change to occur that are present in other models. Peer teacher evaluation could easily be implemented into this program model.

Next, Yon, Burnap, and Kohut (2002) researched a university’s program in a southeastern U.S. state whose law required the university to develop a peer observation system. The university had 17,000 students, 700 faculty, and 6 doctoral programs. Peer observation was required of untenured faculty. The format of this university’s program involved a pre-observation conference in which the class syllabus and objectives were made clear to the observing colleague. The observed teacher could share his/her teaching philosophy, goals, provide materials, and share any concerns. During the actual observation, the observer maintained a record and/or checklist to assess content knowledge of teacher, organization of presentation, clarity, engagement and interaction with students, and use of visual aids. There was a post-observation conference in which the evaluation was discussed. The goal of the observation program was to improve teaching and measure teacher efficacy.

One final program model is from the University of Texas at Austin (Sullivan, 1995). Their peer review program evaluated faculty performance in the Department of Sociology and consisted of a four-part process. First, at the beginning of the year, a peer evaluation committee was formed, consisting of three members, including a subject matter specialist. This committee rotated annually. The second step was for the committee to review the teaching portfolios of the colleagues to be evaluated who were all in their third year of appointment at the university. These portfolios included syllabi, exams, objectives, pedagogy, philosophy, and student evaluations. The third step was to arrange observations. Multiple observations occurred throughout the semester. They were planned and as unobtrusive as possible. Finally, the committee created a written report and reviewed it with their colleague in a casual setting, such as over lunch. The goal of this program was advisory: to help teachers in monitoring and improving the quality of teaching at the university. The reviews were also considered as part of a promotion.

**Goals of Peer Teacher Observation**

In addition to the goals stated in the program models mentioned above, there are broader institutional and individual goals behind peer teacher evaluation. Chism (1999) separates the goals of peer review of teaching into two categories: formative and summative. If the goal is formative, the observation focuses on constructive feedback. There is a focus on changeable behaviors rather than personal attributes. In summative peer review, the observed teacher is being judged. The judge should be chosen carefully, and standards for the review should be clear. Feedback should be supported by evidence and focus on overall performance rather than single changeable behaviors as in formative review.

One of the main goals of peer teacher observation and is a recurring theme in the literature is reflective teaching (Brown, Fry, & Marshall, 2000; Cosh, 1998; Donnelly, 2007; Fullerton, 2000; Louis & Marks, 1998; Marshall, 2004). When reflection is the main goal of peer observations, it leads to self-development (Cosh, 1998). According to Marshall (2004), reflective teaching highlights best practices of teaching and enhances learning at a program level, not just an individual level. Reflection also encourages institutions to focus on future priorities. Brown et al. (2000) argue that “when we are expert practitioners, if we wish our practice to continuously move on, we will have become ‘unconscious reflectors’” (p. 217), meaning teachers should be incorporating new knowledge, understanding, and creation into their practice. Louis and Marks (1998) add that a professional learning community has shared values, a focus on student learning, collaboration, and reflective dialogue. A professional community with these characteristics allows for a collective focus on student learning.

 Additionally, Brockbank and McGill (1998) argue that teachers need both the ability to engage in reflective practice and to engage others in reflective dialogue in order to facilitate learning. This two-fold engagement provides a model for students to become reflective learners as well. Institutions also add a reflective element to the process of evaluation and feedback through monitoring. The value of reflection stems from disseminating findings to faculty, which Cosh (1998) suggests doing in a variety of ways, including: seminars, workshops, discussions, feedback forums, pre and post discussions, and feedback forms. Using these various types of reflection will ultimately lead to staff development and action research.

In addition to reflective teaching, Martin and Double (1998) identify several goals for a peer teacher observation program, including:

1. Improve understanding of curricular development and implementation;
2. Use collaboration to improve teaching practice;
3. Allow teachers to communicate about specific teaching skills following observations, thus improving both communication and teaching performance;
4. Improve observation and self-evaluative skills;
5. Plan effective curriculum with colleagues;
6. Identify improvement areas in instruction and in subject matter (p. 162).

These researchers seems to agree that the main goals of peer teacher evaluation include a reflective element, professional development, collaboration, and improved caliber of teaching.

**Challenges of Peer Teacher Evaluation**

Research also points out numerous limitations of peer observation. Chism (1999) identifies several: faculty anxieties about openness, threats to academic freedom, difficulty of defining a peer, problems with finding time for review, concerns about validity, concerns about post-observation effects. For example, when being observed by a colleague, often there might be a feeling of judgment (Marshall, 2004). It is important not to adopt an individualistic, competitive approach to evaluation (Darling-Hammond, 2014).

Another challenge of peer teacher evaluation models is how to measure successful instruction. In an English Language Learning class, often the observer does not speak or understand the language of instruction and may not have a background in second language acquisition (Brown & Crumpler, 2013). The evaluator’s lack of knowledge can lead to assessment of the teacher’s classroom management or instructional strategies and lack thorough evaluation of his/her content knowledge and student learning. To solve this problem, the authors recommend having foreign language teachers observe each other or have a foreign language instructor from another school come in for an observation.

Particular systems of peer evaluation require evidence of student learning, so teachers are learning to create assessments that better measure student growth (Darling-Hammond et al., 2012). However, there is a lack of research on the efficacy of peer teacher evaluation in measurably increasing student achievement. An additional challenge that repeatedly surfaces in the literature is how to define good teaching (Cosh, 1998; Darling-Hammond, 2014; Gibbs & Habeshaw, 2002). Gibbs and Habeshaw (2002) believe that peer observation of teaching is itself a method for recognizing good teaching. If observations and judgments of teaching are commonplace, teachers will be more familiar with the range of good practice and the expectations of success.

A further challenge that faces especially new peer evaluation programs is the way the program is viewed by the faculty or staff. Programs may be short-lived or seem to be in place simply to comply with school or district policies, lacking intrinsic value for those involved (Marshall, 2004). The program must balance a formalized agenda with inertia that sets in when a program becomes too formalized (Cosh, 1998). Chism (1999) summarizes this tension of how to develop a successful peer review program: “A system should not be so perfunctory that it does not reflect the complexity of teaching, but it must be realistic in the amount of effort and expertise that its use demands” (p. 32). Having clear goals and objectives is essential to a successful program.

 Finally, the environment surrounding any peer evaluation program must be one of trust. Hammersely-Fletcher and Orsmond (2005) state that colleagues have a fear of confidentiality when being observed by peers and that the timing of peer observation is an important factor to consider. Teachers should have time in the school year to react and adjust to feedback and make changes in their teaching practice. Additionally, Brockbank and McGill (1998) recognize the potential for collusion when colleagues engage in reflective dialogue. However, they counter that there is great opportunity for transformative learning to occur when an individual is able to receive feedback about factors of which they may have been unaware.

**Summary**

The expanse and variety of literature on peer teacher evaluation provides foundational resources for any institution, either K-12 or higher education, interested in developing a successful program. There is agreement on making sure the goals of any peer review process are clear to all those involved. Chism (1999) believes a successful process includes the following elements: helping and building, not judging; two professionals working with each other on teaching; engagement, collaboration, and reflection; dialogue and discourse; and describing and understanding – the ultimate goal is better teaching (p. 188-89). Whether the focus of a peer evaluation program is on reflective dialogue, documentation of teaching skills, professional development, or faculty review, research supports numerous benefits of implementing a well-planned program. Institutions need to be aware of the challenges faced by existing programs and utilize successful models that reflect the makeup and goals of their own institutions.

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Hi Rebecca,

Excellent paper. Thanks. A few comments:

1. Be careful about using non-specific modifiers. No one actually knows what a *vast* amount is. If you are trying to add emphasis then you have to describe it in the clearest terms possible. Sometimes it is best to leave out the extra modifiers.
2. I know this is a tough topic with which to gather empirical data but I’m a little concerned that many of the articles you cite are opinion pieces. They were written by very knowledgeable people but they aren’t reports on the gathering and analysis of data.
3. Sometimes it seems unimportant considering the content of what you write, but you can not relax when you get to the references. Diligence.

Dr. Carroll