Using Video in a Collaborative Teacher Team Within a Special Education School: A Case Study

Belinda Akua-Kisiwaa Amoako

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USING VIDEO IN A COLLABORATIVE TEACHER TEAM WITHIN A SPECIAL 
EDUCATION SCHOOL: A CASE STUDY

by

BELINDA AKUA-KISIWAA AMOAKO

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Urban Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

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Belinda Akua-Kisiwaa Amoako

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Urban Education in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT

Using Video in a Collaborative Teacher Team within a Special Education School: A Case Study

by

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Advisor: David J. Connor

This dissertation focused on studying ways in which a mandated professional development policy influenced teachers’ professional learning within a special education school and within a single collaborative teacher team. The study explored Advance, the teacher evaluation system introduced by the NYCDOE to support teaching and learning. An emphasis of the research was utilizing video as a professional learning tool to gather specific evidence in conjunction with the Danielson Framework for Teaching to support teachers of students with disabilities. The primary methodology driving the study was case study; however, ethnography and action research were used for data collection analysis. Video proved to be useful in supporting teachers learning as it provided the “professional vision” which allowed teachers to “notice and interpret significant events” that took place in one teacher’s classroom. This study makes it clear that the framework is, indeed, not a one-size-fits-all tool to guide the evaluation process and professional development of teachers. However, the framework can be used to inform classroom practices and provide teaching and learning language to guide feedback even within special education classrooms. The possible examples provided under the current evaluative mechanism does not provide relevant supports for classrooms with students with disabilities (SWD). This study points to the knowledge gaps amongst school leaders who work with teachers of students with disabilities and who apply the framework. Among the key claims that this study makes about video as a professional learning tool are that it presents opportunities to (1) facilitate discourse in
a collaborative team, (2) identify problems of practice, (3) define possible examples specific to special education classrooms, and (4) provide the teachers a lens through which to see their own practices.
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For Sister Adwoa.
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Chapter One

Introduction

This introductory chapter discussed my career trajectory as a public school educator including my development as a teacher and teacher evaluation coach for school administrators. In this chapter I focus on the importance of building teaching skills through action research and the use of video as a transformational and professional learning tool rather than as an evaluative and potentially punitive tool. The chapter also delineates a brief background of the current teacher evaluation system and then discuss the framework which grounded the research, an overview of methods and methodology employed, and the significance of the results.

Personal-Historical Context

Sink or Swim – Learning to Improve Knowledge of Content and Pedagogy

My professional career as an educator began over a decade ago as a New York City Teaching Fellow initially assigned as a Special Education teacher to a general education school. I was what is currently identified as an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) teacher, providing services to six students in a classroom of twenty-five students. This was a great experience, as I worked with a veteran teacher with fifteen years of experience who supported me by co-planning and parallel teaching mathematics with me at the middle school level. My experience with collaboration with others was particularly useful because of the opportunity to work with a teacher with experience and also because of the structured time provided for us to meet and discuss our plans for teaching. After completing my internship as a Teaching Fellow, I was hired and placed in another New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) school in the South Bronx that provided services to students with disabilities in self-contained classrooms. There, I was assigned to teach in the 12:1:1 program. A 12:1:1 program is a class with no more than
twelve students, one full-time special education teacher, and one full-time paraprofessional. This special class/staffing ratio serves students whose “academic and/or behavioral management needs interfere with the instructional process, to the extent that additional adult support is needed to engage in learning and who require specialized/specially designed instruction which can best be accomplished in a self-contained setting” (Brown, 2009, p. 1). I was initially charged with teaching in a self-contained classroom with a primary focus on all four content areas—mathematics, science, social studies, and English language arts. Though I was confident in my knowledge of important concepts in mathematics and in science, I struggled to teach all subjects as a first year teacher, particularly Social Studies and English. My assigned mentor displayed extensive knowledge in the subject of English, and when I requested support in improving my pedagogical practices, her advice to me was to “sink or swim” and to find my own niche in teaching. As I walked away with this advice, I wondered how I could learn to swim because I was not prepared to sink. My training in college was academic and did not address the practical day-to-day realities of my newfound career. Through my university, I learned to write lesson plans, to research, to find resources to support my plans, and to re-teach when students did not understand what I had taught. The remainder of my learning experiences and my professional growth occurred in isolation; I gradually tried to simply stay afloat through each day.

Classroom observations were virtually non-existent. Observations that did occur would last about ten minutes, and in the end I received a sheet of paper with check marks indicating one or two areas of strength and one or two areas for growth. As a teacher, I was not evaluated regularly, and the feedback from the observations behind the evaluations were of poor quality with limited and irrelevant actionable steps to support my development as a new teacher who did not have a background in education. My evaluation consisted of, at most, two short “drive-by”
observations. The feedback I received from my supervisors was limited and rarely provided suggestions to improve my practices as a teacher. I had no choice but to learn to float and later learn to swim by observing others. Most of my learning in the field was done in isolation because the school’s culture did not allow collaboration amongst teachers. DuFour (2004) argues that “despite compelling evidence indicating that working collaboratively represents best practice; teachers in many schools continue to work in isolation…the willingness to collaborate often stops at the classroom door” (p. 3). The lack of a supportive collaborative peer community and professional learning process hindered my ability to improve instructional strategies within the confines of the school.

I experienced the formal evaluation process as a compliance activity to satisfy mandates by the United Federation of Teachers and Department of Education rather than as a thoughtful process with meaningful feedback to improve my practices. As a tenured teacher, I found that observations were done once annually, and the only feedback was a rating of Satisfactory (S) or Unsatisfactory (U). The observations I received were not structured to provide effective feedback that would allow me to grow. Although they did occur and the feedback was often positive, they were infrequent and did not foster professional development. The evaluation was a simplistic rating and was a routine procedural assessment, not a collaborative, supportive process. This Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory rating system was, in some ways, a reflection of a sink or swim system where a single observation could determine my entire career. It was a binary system with poorly and limited conceptualized procedures for supporting a teacher’s growth. Learning to teach was a struggle; however, I learned from university colleagues and general education mathematics teachers within the school. I did this by sitting in different classrooms with pen, paper, and jotting down pedagogical practices and methods used to support student learning.
My experiences as a struggling teacher coupled with my experiences as a school administrator provides me with a vantage point that is somewhat biased in regards to professional development and teacher evaluations. Partee (2012) argues that the urgency for teacher effectiveness mandates stems from too many school systems implementing evaluation as a compliance activity rather than as an opportunity to provide meaningful feedback to teachers to support them in improving their pedagogical practices. Partee’s research is significant to the teacher evaluation process and current policies and practices because there is a need to engage teachers in collaborative conversations about teaching, about learning, and about how to make improvements.

Teacher evaluation has become the paramount focus in the national discourse around preparing American children to become college- and career-ready in a globalized economy. In 2010 President Barak Obama introduced the Race to the Top campaign in an attempt to support the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA). While the NCLBA was well intended, it has not been re-authorized by Congress. In 2010, New York State applied for and was awarded funds to support and to improve the current education system, which included the implementation of a new methodology and metric for teacher evaluations.

**Research-based Rubric as Part of Teacher Evaluation**

In alignment with New York State Education Law 3012-c, the NYCDOE introduced a pilot program for a new teacher evaluation system using the Danielson Framework for Teaching as a research-based evaluation rubric in the fall of 2010. In this evaluation system under the pilot, teachers were observed in the classroom six to eight times for fifteen minutes for informal observations and a minimum of forty-five minutes each for formal observations. The intent of these frequent and short observations was to gather specific evidence in the classroom to support
teaching and learning. Once this evidence was gathered, school leaders would code their evidence according to the Danielson Framework then rate observed practices. Subsequent to these ratings, school leaders met with the respective teachers and provided next steps to support their instructional practices. Several schools took part in the pilot implementation of this new teacher evaluation process.

This new process was very different from what I experienced as a teacher. This new process promoted frequent observation cycles, which provided teachers with actionable next steps. It was an attempt to improve teacher evaluations and feedback cycles that had taken top down approaches in providing teachers with professional development support. Teachers essentially were not completely engaged in a collaborative dialogue about their own practices and were not discovering ways to improve. Teacher engagement through critical dialogue and radical listening are most important in teacher observations cycles (observation, calibration, rating, and actionable feedback), particularly in providing actionable advice; however, this has not been a common practice. According to Tobin (2009), Kincheloe (2004) discussed radical listening as a way “to understand others’ texts in terms of their standpoints and axiological commitments” (p. 505) without projecting the listener’s own mindsets into a conversation. Radical listening implies learning to listen to and hear difference as a “resource by understanding and valuing the possibilities that emerge” (Alexakos & Pierwola, 2013, p. 41-42). Through radical listening, participants “seek to learn as much as possible from the ongoing dialogue” (Tobin, 2009, p. 507).

Teacher engagement and collaborative approaches to teacher evaluations vary in different schools and programs; for this reason, this research will explore the cultural environment that mediates collaborative engagement. Though Danielson (2008) posits that her framework takes a
constructivist approach that engages teachers as learners and knowers, I question the level of teacher engagement with the process in different contexts. The intended outcome for pursuing this work is to contribute to current teacher evaluation methods subsequent to the 2010 New York State Education Department (NYSED) Law 3012-c and new guidelines for teacher evaluations in New York City. The hope is that the findings from this research can be shared among and utilized by teachers, school leaders, and policy makers in negotiating collaborative professional development methods. This study explored the extent to which the implementation of a mandated policy mediates a teacher’s professional learning.

**Historical Context of Teacher Evaluation in NYC**

**Federal Decisions**

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), was a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act signed into law by President George W. Bush in 2001. Stipulations from NCLBA called for annual testing of students in grades three to eight; academic progress, evidenced by individual schools meeting state “adequate yearly progress” criteria; a requirement for states to provide annual school report cards; evidence for teacher qualifications; an introduction of Reading First, a competitive grant program; and funding changes to Title I (Gill et al, 2009). In regards to teacher qualifications, the NCLBA called for all classroom teachers to be “highly qualified.” Those identified as highly qualified teachers have attained a bachelor's degree or better in the subject they teach, obtained full state teacher certification, and demonstrated knowledge in the subjects taught (Gill et al, 2009). The focus on preparing qualified teachers to enter the classroom, however, is not sufficient when it relies simply on such qualifications because it does not adequately ensure that teachers are effective in the classrooms. Goldhaber and Brewer (2000) and others argued that minimum teacher
qualifications such as bachelors and master’s degrees are not predictive of students’ outcomes.

To address deficiencies in the requirements of the NCLBA, the United States Department of Education granted two-year waivers to allow states time to address new reforms (Ayers, Owen, Partee, & Chang, 2012). Based on the waiver applications submitted, Ayer et al. (2012) identified three practices implemented by some states: (a) college- and career-ready expectations for all students; (b) state-developed differentiated recognition, accountability, and support; and (c) support of effective instruction and leadership.

This research focuses on the third practice emphasized by states, i.e., supporting structured professional collaboration around meeting schools’ goals and student learning outcomes. This includes but is not limited to using classroom observations to support and improve instructional practices; using an inquiry approach to guide and develop relevant professional learning experiences; and supporting teachers in continuously evaluating, reflecting upon, and revising their practices. Recent policy initiatives to improve teaching and learning for applicants for Round 2 waivers for the NCLBA initiated the need for additional support. Particularly, Race to the Top Funds have emphasized the need to revamp teacher evaluation. The rhetoric over teacher effectiveness became more pronounced in the last three years as twenty-three states rushed to apply for funding from the federal government. Current policies subsequent to considerations under the NCLBA call for high-stakes accountability measures forcing schools and districts to reconsider measures for teacher effectiveness. Political interests tied to Race to the Top and philanthropic preferences such as those of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation as well as the Milken Family Foundation have shifted the focus from highly qualified teachers to a linking of teacher evaluation to student test scores. President Obama’s American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009, which provided $4.35
billion for Race to the Top, presented a competitive grant program that encouraged individual states to focus on improving teaching and learning by developing plans to prepare American children to become college- and career-ready in a globalized economy (United States Department of Education, 2009). The purpose for Race to the Top program was to “reward states that have demonstrated success in raising student achievement and have the best plans to accelerate their reforms in the future” (United States Department of Education, 2009, p. 2).

Implementation of state improvement plans were required to include four core areas delineated by the United States Department of Education (2009): (a) adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy; (b) building data systems that measure student growth and success and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction; (c) recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most; and (d) turning around the lowest-achieving schools.

Prior to this study in 2014, about twenty-six states and the District of Columbia submitted applications to win Race to the Top funds. Twenty-three states were approved, including New York State. Data from the twenty-three waiver applicants show that these states’ focus is creating multiple measures and multiple methods for teacher evaluations including criteria for supporting instruction and criteria for delineating student progress (Partee, 2012). According to Papay (2012), value-added models (VAMs) are viewed as objective because they are based on external assessments – they focus explicitly on educational outputs and not inputs (process). However, some have argued that they are not stable and are not an effective method to determine teacher effectiveness (Partee, 2012). Additionally, Partee (2012) and Papay (2012) posit that VAMs provide readily
available and inexpensive datasets that are used to make educational decisions that can determine policies guiding the educational process. Partee (2012) argued that value-added models show positive relationships to other teacher performance measures such as classroom observation and principal evaluations. Papay (2012) also posits that current evaluation approaches which utilize value-added measures provide an avenue to reward teachers judged as good while casting out those evaluated as bad. Papay (2012) proposed evaluation approaches as a professional development tool that "enables teachers to leverage areas of strength and remediate areas of weakness" rather than one that simply categorizes teachers (p. 133). Papay discussed two main issues concerning reliability in classroom observations: (1) because high quality observations are time consuming, evaluators must make judgments based on a relatively limited sample of instruction and (2) different evaluators may have different standards, thus, achieving sufficient inter-rater reliability may be difficult (even when evaluators have received training). Papay (2012) and Partee (2012) argued that teacher development should be prioritized in improving teaching and learning. Additionally, Papay and Partee stated that an effective standards-based observation system which includes value-added models should also take into consideration teacher-student interactions rather than simply evaluating the teacher.

Race to the Top does not mandate national standards for states to follow in deciding on measures and methods for professional practice. Thus, some states have utilized the Council of Chief State School Officers Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium, Model Core Teachings Standards, and the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards to create their own protocols for teacher evaluations (Partee, 2012). According to Partee (2012), states developed and presented a myriad of measures to determine the quality of professional practices
which included observation, self-assessment and reflection, artifacts, student learning measures, and student and parent surveys. A number of states such as Connecticut opted to use teacher observations, surveys from peers, parents, and students. New York State created its own research-based measures (based on the Danielson Framework) to support multiple classroom observations and structured reviews of teacher artifacts of practice. More specifically, New York State opted for a teacher evaluation system that attributed sixty percent of teachers’ ratings on their classroom practices to be based on multiple observations and forty percent on student growth on state assessments and local measures.

New York State Education Law 3012-c (Ed Law 3012-c)

NYS has made strides in an effort to build an appropriate evaluation system for teacher evaluation and support within the last three years. The current evaluation system has progressed from the unsatisfactory or satisfactory rating, which did little to improve pedagogical practices, to scaled measures that use a researched-based framework to guide professional practices. Competitive federal programs such as Race to the Top pushed several school districts to develop systems such as New York City's Advance System. In response to Race to the Top, New York State submitted its application for Race to the Top Phase II in June 2010. On August 24, 2010, the United States Department of Education awarded approximately $6.9 million to the State. In compliance with Race to the Top, New York State proposed “a new teacher and principal evaluation system that makes student achievement data a substantial component of how educators are assessed and supported” (New York State, 2010, p. 3). A major point under this new teacher and principal evaluation policy was the establishment of “a new comprehensive annual evaluation system for teachers and principals based on multiple measures of effectiveness, including forty percent student achievement…” (New York State, 2010, p. 3) and
differentiating teacher effectiveness using the following four rating categories: Highly Effective, Effective, Developing, and Ineffective.

The New York State Education Law 3012-c (Ed Law 3012-c) was passed in May 2010 in support of the Race to the Top policy as educators wanted to support Race to the Top’s intent to “foster teacher development and create more rigorous, fair, accurate assessments of teacher effectiveness” (New York State, 2014, p. 7). Under this accountability framework “decisions about promotions, retention, tenure determination, termination, and supplemental compensations” will be based solely on teacher competencies and student performance (NYSED, 2014, p.7). Each district and Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) in New York State, for example, the NYCDOE district, was charged with developing procedures to be negotiated and aligned with civil service law in determining teachers’ annual performance review. As a result, the NYCDOE (starting with teachers in the 2010-2011 and 2012-2013 pilot) negotiated with the United Federation of Teachers to determine a process by which to assess teacher effectiveness. New York City created an observation process aligned with mandates under Ed Law 3012-c, i.e., forty percent of the evaluation based on measures of student learning (MOSL) and sixty percent based on measures of teaching practices (MOTP). The MOTP was based on teacher evaluations grounded in turn in research-based frameworks such as the Danielson Framework for Teaching and a combination of multiple classroom observations, structured review of teacher artifacts of practice, and approved surveys of students and parents in addition to measures of student achievement and growth.

Critical features delineated in the Ed Law 3012-c for improving the teaching and learning framework were introduced by the NYCDOE and were piloted in some schools as a support structure for teaching competencies and measuring student learning. To improve teaching and
learning and to adhere to legislation, the NYCDOE developed five objectives: (1) the introduction of the rating scale of Highly-Effective, Effective, Developing, and Ineffective; (2) the use of student growth as a criteria; (3) a uniform qualitative rating criteria; (4) the introduction of frequent, timely, constructive feedback to teachers; and 5) the implementation of a new teacher evaluation process into pilot schools as early as the school year 2010-2011 (NYCCOE, n.d.).

**The New York City Advance System of 2013-2014**

Implementation of Ed Law 3012-c was initially introduced into New York City public schools in the 2010-2011 school year. At that time, a selected number of schools participated in pilot testing an approach to teacher evaluation that was aligned with the education law. Several observation frameworks were considered; some schools used Kim Marshall’s Teacher Evaluation Rubrics, whilst a majority of schools used the Danielson Framework (2009). The Danielson Framework was dominant in New York City schools and eventually became the rubric of choice. In the 2011-2012 school year, the implementation of the new teacher evaluation process using the Danielson Framework pilot was extended to more schools to include multiple grade levels and, for the first time, programs in District 75.

Under the leadership of Chancellor Dennis M. Walcott, the Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE) was introduced to prepare all students beyond the high school years. The main expectations of the CIE, in alignment with Ed law 3012-c, was to strengthen student work by analyzing and refining curriculum, strategically planning assessments, and supporting classroom instruction in addition to improving pedagogical practices by analyzing and refining the feedback teachers receive from observations. Because of this legislation, schools in NYCDOE had options for what “centrally approved rubric” they would use for teacher
evaluation. In order to develop a process that met the requirements outlined by the State for evaluating teacher effectiveness, the NYCDoe consulted with Charlotte Danielson and used the rubric introduced in her Framework to guide teacher evaluations. The Danielson Framework for Teaching, which is grounded in a constructivist approach, provided common language for professional conversations that presented clear descriptions of pedagogical practices to strengthen teaching and learning (Danielson, 2007). The NYCDoe agreed to use this framework as a tool to support and guide teacher evaluations. Therefore, in his CIE the Chancellor called for selected sections of Danielson’s Framework to be used as a guide for teacher observations and feedback.

A focus on teaching and learning, particularly in supporting teachers’ practices, was an emphasis on short and frequent cycles of classroom observation; collaborative examination of student work by teachers with their administrators; and timely, specific, low inference evidence-based feedback to the teacher. During the 2012-2013 school year, over two hundred schools staffed with over 8,500 teachers and school leaders participated in the third-year teacher effectiveness pilot. The second year of the CIE – 2013-2014 – was introduced with a focus on providing New York City educators with a stronger understanding of the pedagogical demands of the Common Core Learning Standards. In the program’s third year, network instructional teams and school leaders across the city participated in cycles of intensive training on how to use the Danielson Framework to support teacher evaluation and professional development. During the 2013-2014 school year, the NYCDoe introduced Advance, a new evaluation system of teacher evaluation and development along with a new principal evaluation system aligned to the Ed law 3012-c. School leaders were provided three Job-Embedded Supports for Advance professional development (JESA) along with targeted support for those schools that required or
requested centrally-provided training in addition to resources to support training and implementation of *Advance*. The third annual Citywide Instructional Expectations focused on improving curriculum and teachers in an effort to foster higher academic and graduation rates across the city.

**Danielson Framework for Teaching as a Response**

The Danielson Framework is a research-based structure that can be used as a guide to support professional development, hiring practices, mentoring for teachers, teacher recruitment, and teacher preparation programs (Danielson, 2009). The framework is grounded in a constructivist perspective of teaching and learning which holds that learning happens when individuals are actively involved. Danielson explains that the framework presents a common language of practice that can be used by teachers when engaging in conversations and that helps them learn from one another through focused dialogue. Teachers or as learners thereby develop pedagogical knowledge through active engagement. The framework also posits that consistent support in these areas with effective evaluation systems help teachers to be “more thoughtful practitioners,” “ensures quality teaching and… promotes professional learning” (Danielson, 2008, p. 6-7). The most significant part of this framework, according to Danielson, is the self-assessment and reflection by teachers. She regards these as most significant because they serve as an authentic approach to constructing a teacher’s own knowledge. The Danielson Framework is divided into four domains supported by twenty-two components. The four Domains are (1) Planning and Preparation, (2) The Classroom Environment, (3) Instruction, and (4) Professional Responsibilities. Domain 3 is supported by five components and Domain 4 is supported by six components, which are all indicated by letters. Component 4e: Growing and developing professionally of the Danielson Framework (2013) states:
As in other professions, the complexity of teaching requires continued growth and development in order for teachers to remain current. Continuing to stay informed and increasing their skills allows teachers to become ever more effective and to exercise leadership among their colleagues. The academic disciplines themselves evolve, and educators constantly refine their understanding of how to engage students in learning; thus, growth in content, pedagogy, and information technology are essential to good teaching. Networking with colleagues through such activities as joint planning, study groups, and lesson study provides opportunities for teachers to learn from one another. These activities allow for job-embedded professional development. In addition, professional educators increase their effectiveness in the classroom by belonging to professional organizations, reading professional journals, attending educational conferences, and taking university classes. As they gain experience and expertise, educators find ways to contribute to their colleagues and to the profession (p. 46).

Specifically, the element from this component stresses feedback from colleagues and the importance of staying informed and increasing skills that allow teachers to become ever more competent in their work. This description delineates that working collaboratively in planning lessons, study groups, and lesson studies (a form of professional learning where teachers plan a lesson collaboratively, implement it, and study the impact to determine how students learn best) provides opportunities for teachers to learn from each other as I did from colleagues. It is critical, therefore, for school systems to develop communities of practice in which teachers share goals, work, and responsibility for student outcomes (Walstrom & Louis, 2008). It is also equally important to direct efforts that establish strong foundations where teachers play a facilitative role in looking at their own practices and having the language to support professional
development. Transformative actions such as providing actionable feedback to teachers (Hattie, 2009), offering abundant support for the work of teachers (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005), and creating systems in which teachers have the opportunity to routinely develop and refine their skills (Bryk et al., 2010) are critical to school improvement.

An introduction of an evaluation tool such as video can support teacher engagement with evaluation processes. Papay (2012) argues that evaluation tools that assess teacher practices and student achievement should also inform and support ongoing teaching practices. The quality of feedback should include the voices of the teachers whom the feedback/evaluation will influence. The Measures of Effective Teaching project (MET) has published reports that have described three ways to measure teacher practices: student surveys, classroom observations, and teachers’ records of accomplishment of student achievement measures. Implications of the research by MET and other researchers such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation suggest a system that supports the use of multiple observers and a system that checks and compares the feedback given to teachers by the different observers. Most importantly, the research concludes that a teacher evaluation system is not supposed to be used primarily to support accountability measures; it should be used to support the improvement of teaching practices.

Research Questions and Statement of the Problem

This research centers on the following question and related sub-questions:

In what ways does a mandated professional development policy influence teachers’ professional learning within a special education school?

Primarily:

1. How can the use of video in the classroom support teachers’ professional learning within collaborative teacher teams?
2. How can video support the evaluation process in special education classrooms within the parameters of a mandated tool?

City et al. (2009) stated, “teachers usually have limited experience observing classrooms [because] the bulk of their time is in their classrooms” (p. 84). Although administrators, coaches, and other school leaders may have experience with observations, the current observation milieu tends to be evaluative and not necessarily geared toward “learning to see” (City et al., 2009).

I am interested in the knowledge and learning that occurs in collaborative teacher teams in the special education context. The Danielson Framework for Teaching frames the discourse that teachers of students with disabilities have in regards to observations and professional development. However, the Danielson Framework is not designed specifically for teachers who work with students with disabilities and, thus, many of the “possible examples” prescribed in the rubric are not applicable in such classrooms. Additionally, although there has been an improvement in professional development in the last ten years, access to professional development for teachers who work with students with disabilities is limited (Wei, Darling-Hammond, & Adamson, 2010).

**Purpose of the Research**

This research explored the extent to which a mandated professional development policy influenced teachers’ professional learning within a special education school. The study explored *Advance*, the teacher evaluation system introduced by the NYCDOE to support teaching and learning. An emphasis of the research was utilizing video as a professional learning tool to gather specific evidence in conjunction with the Danielson Framework to support teachers of students with disabilities. This method of using video as a professional learning tool to support teachers, was intended to support a teacher’s self-reflection and
pedagogical growth and stems from the implementation of the teacher evaluation system. As a school leader who participated in the NYCDOE pilot for teacher evaluation, I used video as a tool not only to gather evidence but also to facilitate discussion between teachers. After watching videos, some teachers participated in collaborative discourse, highlighting their best practices and focusing on areas for improvement. Empowering teachers with such a tool enhanced professional development and promoted and supported a transformative evaluation process.

The study focused on the experiences of a teacher of students with disabilities in a significantly restrictive environment during the second year of implementation of the new teacher evaluation system by the NYCDOE. It focused on how the teacher negotiated the evaluation process within a segregated special education context using video as a tool and the Danielson Framework to improve pedagogical practices. Part of the study explored collaborative approaches to teacher evaluation and learning and accountability measures in a restrictive teaching environment. A restrictive teaching environment, according to the NYCDOE, is a program that provides services to students with disabilities in a separate school/and or classroom.

This study sought to understand how the implementation of a mandated policy influences collaborative engagement between administrators and teachers and among teachers. Primarily, the study focused on how one teacher negotiated current mandates within a collaborative team and developed understanding in order to advance her pedagogical practices. At the heart of the study was the school context in which teachers developed collaborative professional learning communities to support pedagogical practices. In particular, I attempted to understand how teachers developed a culture of trust in a professional learning community to support teaching and learning. Of interest was learning and understanding the impact of feedback provided by
peers with similar students compared to feedback provided by school leaders. As Papay (2012) states, “evaluation can provide valuable information to drive professional growth…and raise teacher effectiveness” (p. 124) rather than be used solely as a measuring tool to determine how effectively teachers are doing their jobs. Information derived from evaluations can be used to drive collaborative learning dialogues that support teachers. Particularly, evidence observed by a team of teachers provides a positive impact on professional learning that yields effective pedagogical knowledge to support students in meeting academic goals. This research focused on how video can be used to foster collaborative learning dialogues amongst teachers and peers to support their professional development and pedagogical practices.

I plan to share what I have learned from this research with teachers, administrators, staff developers and coaches, and other stakeholders involved with students labeled as having disabilities. Typically, teachers experience accountability frameworks that incorporate high stakes teacher evaluation that decide career trajectories. Evaluations resulting from using the Danielson Framework are often misaligned with the professional development needs for many special education teachers and administrators. Specifically, a school leader may identify that a teacher needs to focus on student engagement to improve that teacher’s practices and may provide the teacher with professional learning that focuses on lesson planning. While a teacher may need support with planning, specific emphasis may be to engage students in a classroom based on tasks such as engaging students in discussions or encouraging them to ask questions. This form of support and/or feedback can be garnered from a team of teachers who may have suggestions based on what they have done in their own classrooms. Central to this research was the act of video recording of one teacher’s practice in the context of the classroom. Recording a classroom and its activities can provide not just a voice and a different lens into the classroom; it
also enables teams of teachers to identify lesson-specific evidence to support their feedback. This research was designed to foster environments of pedagogical discourse and professional development. To do this it was necessary to have all constituents and stakeholders at the discussion table. To ensure this happened, I first met with the district as part of my responsibility as a talent coach, met with the school leader and later with teachers at the school.

Teacher effectiveness and professional development has typically been top down, from administrators to teachers, but with a collaborative approach teacher development was conducted in a shared and safe environment. This study used elements of critical design ethnography to explore how one teacher in a highly specialized program, supporting students with disabilities, negotiated the evaluation process within this special education context using video and the Danielson Framework. Prior to my current position, I served as a school leader as part of a pilot program for the implementation of this new teacher evaluation system in the NYCDOE.

During the implementation of Talent Management's pilot in 2010, I worked with other schools and those schools’ principals to provide a selected group of teachers with video recording devices to use for instructional purposes and for gathering data to support post-observation dialogues. Post-conferences with teachers took the form of a dialogue between at least two teachers and their supervisor; video recordings were used to evidence student learning and support teachers in their reflection. Prior to any discussions, those who watched the video (teachers and/or school leaders) took low-inference notes while watching. Teachers were encouraged to select vignettes that spoke to patterns or contradictions observed and those that reflected the Danielson Framework. For example, if teachers asked several questions in an area they wanted to improve, they were asked to record exactly what they heard in the video – questions asked and students’ responses or actions. The same video took an interpretive research
approach by answering the following questions: what do you see and hear in terms of instruction and how does it influence student learning outcomes and the teacher’s pedagogical practices? As the school leader and evaluator of these teachers, I watched the video in addition to conducting classroom observations and was engaged in an interpretive research approach, which required me to ask questions that were relevant to the classroom practices and components delineated in the rubric. Teachers received feedback not only from me but also from a group of peers who were teaching similar students and/or content areas. Participating teachers were encouraged to implement feedback, and suggestions were made for future video analysis.

Outline of Dissertation

This research is a case study that employs a bricolage of methods, contingent on the ethical and commitment to the teacher-participant. Because the study focused on one teacher’s experience of learning to improve her pedagogical practices within a collaborative teacher team guided by current mandates, the study appropriated methodologies that can be used by the teacher and teacher teams subsequent to the study. Chapter 1 serves as the introduction to this dissertation and outlines the purpose of the study and the research questions. It also briefly discusses research methods and methodology. Chapter 2 is a literature review of professional development in the United States. In it I discuss current research in the United States to shed light on the state of professional development over the last decade. In Chapter 2, I also discuss types of job-embedded support that are currently provided in schools that illuminate how professional learning communities can mediate teaching and learning under the current evaluation system. In addition, this chapter introduces research on the use of video as a professional learning tool to support teachers’ professional voices, and it discusses critical aspects of how video can mediate pedagogical practices. Chapter 3 focuses on the
methodologies employed in this research. This chapter introduces standpoint theory as a framework to guide the research design, methods, and methodology because of the “power structures on knowledge” existing in school between the teachers and school administrators and myself, and the teacher-participant. Because the current project sought to examine a collaborative approach to teacher evaluations and because this process depends on the perspectives of those being studied, it rejects a positivistic framework that tends to be linear with a systematic structure and a determined conclusion. In contrast, I identify some methods and methodologies in Chapter 3 that have served as resources in guiding my interests and the study. Chapter 4 presents the findings from the study, providing themes that emerged from the case study analysis of how one teacher negotiated the NYCDOE’s evaluation system to improve her pedagogical practices. This chapter starts by describing the context of the school based on the NYCDOE’s Quality Review report from the 2013-2014 school year and a discussion with the school leader. Archival reports from the focused teacher’s evaluations are coupled with an interview designed to bring about an understanding of the teacher-participant’s instructional background. Finally, the professional development sessions in which the teacher teams engaged for this study are discussed, presenting patterns in teacher and school leaders’ knowledge. Chapter 5 focuses upon implications for larger conversations with professional learning teams in districts providing services to students with disabilities and in-service professional development within the NYCDOE.
Chapter Two

Literature Review

“A revolutionary leadership must…practice co-intentional education. Teachers and students (leadership and people), co-intent on reality, are both Subjects, not only in the task of unveiling that reality, and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge. As they attain this knowledge of reality through common reflection and action, they discover themselves as its permanent re-creators. In this way, the presence of the oppressed in the struggle for their liberation will be what it should be: not pseudo-participation, but committed involvement” (Paulo Freire, 2004, p. 69).

Reciprocity in Teaching and Learning

The above quote speaks to the importance of collaboration in developing pedagogical knowledge needed to improve teaching and learning. Freire (2004) coined the term “banking system,” by which he meant that teaching and learning should be reciprocal and a collaborative effort on the part of both the teacher and the learner to develop knowledge. It communicates that learners are not empty vessels into which learning and knowledge is somehow deposited; rather, they are knowledgeable people and are able to produce and co-produce knowledge when provided a supportive environment to do so. As a teacher, teacher mentor, teacher educator, former school leader, and researcher, I genuinely believe in the need for teachers to collaborate, create, and recreate practices that meet the needs of the students they are charged to teach and that every teacher has a responsibility to improve his or her instructional outcomes. Engaging in reciprocal learning is paramount to the development of a teacher’s pedagogical practices.

Anna Commitante, in her introduction to the NYCDOE Professional Learning Handbook, posits that in order for teachers’ learning to be effective, their learning has to “take place in an active and coherent intellectual environment where ideas are exchanged and connections [are]
made” (NYCDOE, 2014, p. 3). This connects to arguments made by several professional development researchers (Borko, 2008; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Papay, 2012) and connects to Freire’s (2004) concept of learning as recreating knowledge through common reflections and actions. Professional development that encourages active and intellectual engagement by the learner is critical in any profession because it ensures that practices are continuously improved to support teachers in carrying out the responsibilities that the profession requires. Effective professional development for teachers should particularly foster growth and improve pedagogical practices to increase students’ learning outcomes.

The purpose of this literature review is to present relevant research on professional development and professional learning communities. The chapter is divided into two sections: the first focuses on research related to professional development and professional learning communities, and the second focuses on a framework that supports exploration of professional learning communities using video as a tool to provide a professional lens. Before discussing research supporting professional development, I will first define professional development and professional learning and the expectations set forth by New York State.

The New York State Commissioner’s Regulation 80-3.6(b) (1) specifically requires that professional certificate holders complete a determined number of hours to maintain their certification. Professional license and certificate holders include teachers who must complete 175 hours and school leaders who must complete 75 hours. Additionally, the Commissioner’s Regulation 100.2 (dd) and (o) stipulates that each BOCES including NYCDOE develop a professional development plan that includes a process for teacher evaluation and a plan for improving professional practices. In a presidential address at the 2004 American Educational Research Association (AERA) conference, Hilda Borko stated, “…professional development can
lead to improvements in instructional practices and student learning” (p. 3); she also pointed out that how teachers learn from professional development greatly affects how they change their practices to improve student learning outcomes. The term *professional development* has been contested by researchers because of the connotations of the word *development*. Similar to the idea of the banking system for teaching and learning, the word *development* connotes something that is done or provided to a learner rather than something that is learned, co-constructed with the learner.

For example, Fullan (2007) recognizes professional development as something that happens to teachers as distinguished from professional learning that involves teachers and continuous learners. Fullan has made a distinction between professional development and professional learning. Professional learning recognizes teachers as agentic in improving their practices and posits that they should be continuously learning to improve their practices when provided opportunities (Fullan, 2007). In a way similar to Freire’s (2004) “banking system,” Fullan (2007) argues that the “notion that external ideas alone will result in changes in the classroom…is deeply flawed as a theory of action” (p. 35) because an effective theory of action requires collaboration and a conscious effort to include all. An effective theory of action, according to Fullan, does not only require the active involvement of all stakeholders in planning, but also in the implementation of any transformational actions. The term *professional learning* instead of *professional development*, according to Fullan, promotes communities of teachers who are continuously learning to improve their pedagogical practices as they encounter new challenges.
Defining Professional Development

Professional development and learning opportunities provided by schools and districts have focused on a traditional model of professional development that has not shown significant improvements in pedagogical practices and, more importantly, has not led to significant improvements in student learning outcomes (Wei et al., 2010). Traditional forms of professional development (e.g., university courses, observational visits to schools, workshops, conferences) have not had great impact on teachers’ pedagogical practices because these types of learning are not situated in the context of classrooms nor connected with the challenges of practice (Darling-Hammond, 2009). I present this differentiation of terms because, as a teacher-participant, I recognize and understand that learning to teach should include the voices of all stakeholders, particularly the teachers for whom the practice is developed. For the remainder of this paper, I will use professional learning and professional development interchangeably.

Effective Professional Development

Darling-Hammond et al. (2009) define effective professional development as that which “results in improvements in teacher’s knowledge and instructional practice” and which improves student learning (p. 1). According to Jaquith, Mindich, Wei, and Darling-Hammond (2010), professional development should be

- Focused on specific curriculum content and pedagogies needed to teach that content effectively
- Designed to engage teachers in active, collegial learning that allows them to try out ideas in the classroom and make sense of what they are learning in meaningful ways
• Presented in an intensive, sustained, and continuous manner over time (with an average of about 50 hours or more on a given topic associated with changes in practices that produce gains in student achievement)
• Linked to analysis of teaching and student learning, including formative use of assessment data
• Supported by coaching, modeling, observation, and feedback connected to teachers’ collaborative work in school-based professional learning communities and learning teams
• Integrated with other school-level policies or reforms, so that there is a coherent approach to curriculum, instruction, assessments, and professional development (p. 2).

Professional development is a “comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach to improving teachers’ and principals’ effectiveness in raising student achievement” (Slabine 2011, p. 1) that involves courses, workshops, institutes, networks, and conferences. Additionally, professional development is defined as one that” fosters collective responsibility…comprised of professional learning that is conducted among educators at the school and facilitated by well-prepared school principals and/or school-based professional development coaches, mentors, master teachers, or other teacher leaders…” (p. 1). This working definition of professional development supports teaching and learning as “a cycle of continuous improvement” which calls for engagement in job-embedded professional learning that focuses on improving teaching knowledge (Wei et al., 2010, p. 2).

Research shows that well-structured professional development influences teaching and student learning outcomes (Darling-Hammond, 2009; DuFour, 2004; Guskey, 2000). The
introduction to the New York State Professional Development Standards (n.d.) states, “teacher quality is the single most important influence on students’ achievement, it is essential to ensure that teachers are provided with ongoing, high quality professional development to sustain and enhance their practice” (p. 1). Guskey (2000) defined professional development as “those processes and activities designed to enhance the professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes of educators so that they might, in turn, improve the learning of students. In some cases, it also involves learning how to redesign educational structures and cultures” (p. 16). Consistent with all these definitions is the emphasis on active engagement from all participants and a collective and collaborative effort to link teaching and learning with students’ instructional outcomes. In the next section, I provide a literature review of current professional development practices across the United States shaped by teacher evaluations and within this context explain the purpose of this study.

**Research on Professional Development**

Research on professional development in education indicates that effective learning for teachers influences their students’ learning outcomes. Importantly, teacher efforts are sustainable when rooted in day-to-day experiences of teaching and learning. The Common Core State Standards, which have now been adopted by over forty-six states and the District of Columbia, require extensive, sustainable, and well-structured professional learning experiences for teachers to support students in developing critical thinking and problem-solving abilities that are necessary for long-term learning. This section of the literature review will introduce a three-phase research on professional development in the United States conducted by Learning Forward and implications for implementations as states attempted to execute Common Core Standards.
In the first report on professional development in the United States over the last two decades, Darling-Hammond, Orphanos, Richardson, Andree, and Wei, (2009) discuss that there are relatively few available resources and professional development efforts to support teaching and learning in the United States compared to other countries. The report by the authors particularly states that “effective professional development is intensive, ongoing, and connected to practice; focuses on the teaching and learning of specific academic content; is connected to other school initiatives; and builds strong working relationships among teachers” (p. 5). The first study reports that professional collaboration sharing practices are under-utilized and, where collaboration has occurred, it was not differentiated to support the individual needs of teachers. Although there are professional development opportunities in which teachers participate, many are not differentiated based on what individual teachers need to improve their practices.

In the Darling-Hammond et al. (2009) study, the types of professional development utilized were workshops, study groups, mentoring experiences, opportunities to view other teachers’ classrooms, and numerous other formal and informal learning experiences. The authors argued that well-developed professional learning experiences for teachers should include learning content in addition to the opportunity for reflection on practices and making necessary changes to current practices in order to support students’ learning outcomes. Discontinuous professional learning opportunities or those that are offered infrequently are disconnected from teachers’ practices and do not allow teachers the relevant opportunities to implement new ideas and then reflect on lessons learned to improve future instructional practices (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Darling-Hammond et al. proposed that effective professional development should: (a) be intensive, ongoing, and connected to practice; (b) focus on student learning and address
the teaching of specific curriculum content; (c) align with school improvement priorities and goals and, most importantly; and (d) build strong working relationships among teachers.

Researchers have argued that teachers who received support from coaches for Job-Embedded Professional Development are conscious of ensuring that the sessions embed day-to-day teaching practices and design sessions to enhance teachers’ content-specific instructional practices (Croft et al., 2010, p. 2). According to Croft et al, teachers are likely to implement what they had learned compared to those who attended traditional professional development sessions.

Additionally, American teachers participating in professional development that focused on content-specific instructional practices report the sessions did not provide in-depth learning to support content knowledge and signature pedagogies. In addition to content-specific professional learning, almost two-thirds of American teachers who work with students with disabilities had not participated in professional development focused on improving pedagogical practices to support this population of students.

In the 2002-2004 school year, 40% of teachers participated in collaborative research on a topic of professional interest, 70% engaged in regularly scheduled collaboration with other teachers, and 63% participated in peer observations (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Wei et al., 2010). Darling-Hammond et al. (2009) concluded that there is a need to provide “support for a new paradigm of teacher professional learning—one based on evidence about the kinds of experiences that appear to build teacher capacity and catalyze transformations in teaching practice resulting in improved student outcomes” (p. 27).

The United States has made progress in providing structured professional development for teachers to support teaching and learning and, subsequently, students’ learning outcomes. Still, greater efforts to provide well-structured professional learning and supports are paramount
to sustaining teachers’ learning and change particularly in Job-Embedded Professional Development (JEPD). The overall understanding based on this initial research is that professional development in the United States is “…short, episodic, and disconnected from practice [and] has little impact, and that well-designed professional development can improve teaching practice and student achievement” if it is effectively implemented (Wei et al., 2010, p. vi).

The Three-Phase Study on Professional Development Trends in the United States (Darling-Hammond, et al, 2009; Jaquith, et al, 2010; Wei et al, 2010) provides a state-by-state comparison of progress in professional development based on data collected in 2000, 2004, and 2008. These data reveal the present trends and challenges that exist across the United States in providing effective professional learning opportunities. The authors compared responses from teachers and schools from four states – Vermont, New Jersey, Missouri, and Colorado – in the Schools and Staffing Survey (2008) to analyze progress that had been made towards effective professional development being provided to support pedagogical practice. Albeit there is noticeable improvement found in the research regarding teachers’ participation in professional development, this second report found there was a decline in the intensity of professional learning. This claim was based on data collected from the 2008 survey (Wei et al., 2010, p. v). These data are similar to findings from the first report which identified the shortcomings of sustaining professional development, namely that:

- [the] United States is far behind in providing public school teachers with opportunities to participate in extended learning opportunities and productive collaborative communities;
- … [the] United States [does not] invest heavily in professional learning and build time for ongoing, sustained teacher development and collaboration into teachers’ work hours; and
• American teachers spend...less time to plan and learn together, and to develop high quality curriculum and instruction.

What is alarming about the findings is the fact that approximately 42% of the teachers surveyed in 2008 reported they did not have access to professional development to support students with disabilities. Accordingly, “only a third of teachers agreed that their schools provide support for teaching students with special needs, a lower proportion than in 2004” (Wei et al., 2010, p. vi). The School and Staffing Survey (SASS) Teacher Questionnaire revealed limited opportunities for job-embedded collaborative professional development as teachers spent an average of 2.7 hours per week involved in such activities in 2004 (Wei et al., 2010). Both the surveys from 2004 and 2008 show a decline in cooperative effort among staff members in schools (Wei et al., 2010). The percentage had declined from a mere 34% in the 2000 survey to 16% in the 2008 survey. The authors stated that they did not know how teachers used their time outside of teaching in the classroom, but they did present an increase in common planning time, a time provided in the school day for a group of teachers teaching the same content, grade and interdisciplinary groups of teachers. Though there is an increase in common planning time for teachers, this does not necessarily translate into cooperative effort amongst teachers (Wei et al., 2010). Though teachers have common planning time, that time may not be used to structure collaborative efforts to improve content and pedagogical knowledge. Interestingly, 67% of teachers surveyed in a 2009 Met Life Survey agreed that “greater collaboration among teachers and school leaders would have a major impact on improving student achievement” (Markow & Pieters, 2010, p. 9). Although 24% of teachers spent an average of 2.7 hours per week to collaborate with others, “the least frequent type of collaborative activity is teachers observing each other in the classroom and providing feedback” (Markow & Pieters, 2010, p. 9). Although
there has been some progress made in the last decade in professional development for teachers in the United States, there is still limited access to and time for collaborative professional development, and teachers do not experience sustained and ongoing professional development.

The final report of the three-phase research study of teacher professional learning opportunities in the United States focused on case studies related to state policies and strategies in Colorado, Missouri, New Jersey, and Vermont. This report states that “sustained, collegial professional development, the kind that produces changes in teaching practice and student outcomes are much more limited in the United States than in most highly achieving nations abroad” (Jaquith et al., 2010, p. iv). Darling-Hammond et al. (2009), Wei et al. (2010), and Jaquith et al. (2010) suggest critical elements to provide strong and sustainable collegial professional development. Policy implications based on this third study include the need for: (a) a common and clearly articulated vision for professional development that permeates policy and practice; (b) effective monitoring of professional development quality; (c) mentoring and induction requirements that are linked to and create a foundation for ongoing professional learning; (d) an infrastructure of organizations for facilitating professional development; and (e) stability of resources.

Based upon the findings outlined above, it is no surprise that American teachers “…have much less time in their regular work schedules for cooperative work with colleagues…” (Wei et al., 2010, p. vi). While structures exist to support collaboration amongst colleagues, there is limited time afforded to this endeavor. Only a small portion of states (i.e., South Carolina, Iowa, Colorado, Pennsylvania, and Delaware) have made significant progress in supporting incoming teachers or in supporting their veteran teachers (i.e., Arkansas, Colorado, Oregon, and Utah) (Wei et al., 2010, p. vi).
Professional Development as Active Learning

Knowledge claims are always socially situated, and the failure by dominant groups, critically and systematically to interrogate their advantaged social situation [,] and the effect of such advantages on their beliefs leaves their social situation a scientifically and epistemologically disadvantaged one for generating knowledge. (Harding, 1993, p. 54)

Undeniably, the Danielson Framework for Teaching has several educational benefits. However, it was chosen for this project because of its unique ability to provide a shared understanding of teaching and learning to support improvement of teacher effectiveness (Danielson, 2007). Professional development that is social, situated, and distributed among colleagues is more effective in developing teachers within a school because it generates conversations about concrete acts of teacher and student learning (Croft et al., 2010; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). A particular social situational context, (e.g., special education) under the Danielson Framework influences knowledge construction and identifies best practices differently thus the situated context presents different types of knowledge to inform effective feedback. Teachers of students with disabilities have a different set of knowledge compared to teachers in general education classrooms or administrators who have not themselves taught in the special education context. Active participation and learning, therefore, must take into account the “situated learning” of teachers who work with students with disabilities.

Professional Development for Teachers of Students with Disabilities (SWD)

According to Wei, Adamson, & Darling-Hammond (2010), based on trends in the United States between 2004-2008, the highest priority in furthering professional development is “teaching students with special needs” and the “use of technology in instruction” (p. 26). Wei, Adamson, & Darling-Hammond (2010) suggest that professional development—access to and
support for teachers of students with disabilities (SWD) and English Language Learners (ELLs) in schools is less than 50% of that for professional development of general education teachers in public schools. Further, Wei et al. (2012) suggested that there has been a decline in the number of teachers who report opportunities to collaborate with colleagues from 34% in 2000 to 16% in 2008. Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, and Orphanos (2009), assert that, although research is growing on the characteristics of effective professional development, many teachers, particularly those working with students with disabilities, are not experiencing high-quality professional development. The report stated, “Effective professional development is intensive, ongoing, and connected to practice; focuses on the teaching and learning of specific academic content; is connected to other school initiatives; and builds strong working relationships among teachers” (p. 5). Accordingly, Jones and Brownell (2014) argue that, “neither researchers nor practitioners have arrived at a consensus on the best methods for evaluating special educators” (p. 112); therefore, planning professional development can be challenging. For this reason, for teachers working with students with disabilities, it is not sufficient to provide professional development that is not aligned or connected with ongoing daily practices. Professional development for teachers working with students with disabilities tends to be top-down under the NYCDOE, particularly as it applies to access to professional development options because of the new evaluation system.

During the implementation of the Advance evaluations system, the NYCDOE provided Learning Opportunities (LO) through the Achievement Reporting and Innovation System (ARIS) for teachers, teacher leaders, and other professional development staff. LO range from article links to resources and videos that were aligned to different components from the Danielson Framework for Teaching. The most useful for coaches such as myself in building capacity in
schools was an LO that provided component studies with supporting videos based on the twenty-two components aligned to the four Domains in the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Though these professional learning modules were useful because they provided videos, facilitation guides, and resources, they lacked sufficient videos to support teachers and school leaders working with students with disabilities. Out of the thirty-six videos provided to support teaching and learning, only five videos (14%) were provided to showcase classrooms with students with disabilities—two for Integrated Collaborative Teaching (ICT) classrooms and the other three for self-contained classrooms. The three videos that were selected and used to support and build capacity in SWD programs were limited in multiple ways. First, the videos were not good measures of effective and/or highly effective practices to support component 3b (Questioning and Discussion Techniques) of the Danielson rubric. To illustrate this point, I have included below in Figure 1 - Effective and Highly Effective Descriptions from Danielson Framework for Teaching, the description with critical attributes and possible examples of practices as they are delineated in the Danielson 2013 Rubric, adapted to the NYCDOE Danielson Framework for Teaching. Specifically, component 3b of the Danielson Framework calls for teachers to create environments that promote student-led discussions. A classroom where students are able to ask questions to each other and to the teacher and/or respond to their classmates’ questions according to the Framework for Teaching is deemed “highly effective”.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>HEDI Rating</th>
<th>Effective</th>
<th>Highly Effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td>While the teacher may use some low-level questions, he poses questions designed to promote student thinking and understanding. The teacher creates a genuine discussion among students, providing adequate time for students to respond and stepping aside when doing so is appropriate. The teacher challenges students to justify their thinking and successfully engages most students in the discussion, employing a range of strategies to ensure that most students are heard.</td>
<td>The teacher uses a variety or series of questions or prompts to challenge students cognitively, advance high-level thinking and discourse, and promote metacognition. Students formulate many questions, initiate topics, challenge one another’s thinking, and make unsolicited contributions. Students themselves ensure that all voices are heard in the discussion.</td>
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</table>
| **Critical Attribute** | • The teacher uses open-ended questions, inviting students to think and/or offer multiple possible answers.  
• The teacher makes effective use of wait time.  
• Discussions enable students to talk to one another without ongoing mediation by teacher.  
• The teacher calls on most students, even those who don’t initially volunteer.  
• Many students actively engage in the discussion.  
• The teacher asks students to justify their reasoning, and most attempt to do so | • Students initiate higher-order questions.  
• The teacher builds on and uses student responses to questions in order to deepen student understanding.  
• Students extend the discussion, enriching it.  
• Students invite comments from their classmates during a discussion and challenge one another’s thinking.  
• Virtually all students are engaged in the discussion. |
| **Possible Examples** | • The teacher asks, “What might have happened if the colonists had not prevailed in the American war for independence?”  
• The teacher uses the plural form in asking questions, such as “What are some | • A student asks, “How many ways are there to get this answer?”  
• A student says to a classmate, “I don’t think I agree with you on this,”  
• A student asks, “How many ways are there to get this answer?”  
• A student says to a classmate, “I don’t think I agree with you on this,” |
things you think might contribute to _____?”

• The teacher asks, “Maria, can you comment on Ian’s idea?” and Maria responds directly to Ian.

• The teacher poses a question, asking every student to write a brief response and then share it with a partner, before inviting a few to offer their ideas to the entire class.

• The teacher asks students when they have formulated an answer to the question “Why do you think Huck Finn did _____?” to find the reason in the text and to explain their thinking to a neighbor.

because…”

• A student asks of other students, “Does anyone have another idea how we might figure this out?”

• A student asks, “What if…?”

• And others…

Despite research efforts to improve teaching and learning in the United States, “states and districts [are] grappling with how to adjust evaluation systems to deal with the unique needs of these [special education] teachers” (Jones & Brownell, 2014, p. 115). Because of challenges with supporting students with disabilities based on a standardized rubric, it is important to look closely at teaching quality and not teacher quality. According to Jones and Brownell (2014), teaching quality refers to “the context in which instruction occurs, including characteristics of students, the school, and various related factors,” and teacher quality refers to certifications and education levels (p. 113). As defined in NCLB, a highly qualified teacher is defined by certification, education and experiences that do not always influence teaching quality. The above descriptors and possible examples have posed multiple challenges for teachers and school leaders who work with students with disabilities. This is because teachers, particularly teachers of students with disabilities, are highly qualified teachers if they possess teacher certifications in
special education. Highly qualified special education teachers do not necessarily possess content-based certifications, nor do they hold specific certifications aligned to particular disabilities.

As a highly qualified special education teacher in New York State, I passed two examinations required for all teaching certification and had to complete fifteen credits in special education. Despite my limited knowledge of a specific content area and not having been required to pass any content-level exam, I was charged with teaching mathematics to students with multiple disabilities. With this one certification, the assumption was that as a highly qualified special education teacher, I could teach any student with a disability – Autism, Emotional Disturbance, Intellectual Disability, Multiple Disabilities, and even Orthopedic Impairment – despite my limited knowledge and understanding of students with diverse knowledge. This raises challenges for observers and teachers using a researched-based rubric that does not provide possible examples for those who work with students with disabilities and who know signature pedagogies to promote teaching and learning. However, this phenomenon is not indicated in this particular rubric as an effective or highly effective practice. The language delineated in this rubric does not recognize the social and academic contexts. Another reason that NCLB does not adequately capture the teaching effectiveness of teachers working with students with disabilities is that the NCLB rubric measures students’ actions as a means for rating a teacher. However, in the special education context, students with moderate, severe, and/or multiple disabilities may not have the capacity to engage in some of the behaviors that NCLB requires for a teacher to receive a rating of Effective or Highly Effective.

There is evidence from what can be observed in a teacher’s planning and preparation aligned with the language in the Effective and Highly Effective description that states, “teacher creates a genuine discussion among students” (NYCDOE, 2013, p. 36). However, the dilemma
arises with language and expectations such as the teacher “challenges students to justify their thinking and successfully engages most students in the discussion,” and “[s]tudents formulate many questions, initiate topics, challenge one another’s thinking, and make unsolicited contributions. Students themselves ensure that all voices are heard in the discussion” in multiple classroom settings (e.g., self-contained classrooms, resource rooms, and in co-teaching arrangements in general education classrooms) (NYCDOE, 2013, p. 36). It is a challenge to align evidence observed in a classroom with students with disabilities to this Framework. Although a teacher may plan and create structures and questions to guide discussions, requirements for a teacher to receive a high score, may not be what an observer has been trained to look for. Additionally, standardized guides to promote questioning such as the Depths of Knowledge (DOK) framework may not present questions that are accessible to some students because of the diverse abilities within one class, one that is not recognized by this framework. This may even be more difficult in classrooms where an annual goal set forth for a student is to be able to point or make eye contact as a form of communication. This child may never have the cognitive capacity to ask a question verbally, initiate a conversation with another student, and/or formulate questions.

Effective or Highly Effective teaching particularly aligned to the Danielson Framework may not be an accurate researched-based tool to rate teachers of SWD without taking into consideration the context, population, and specific needs of individual students within a classroom. The Danielson Framework for Teaching as an evaluative tool is similar to research in special education that is “far removed from the realities of teaching in challenging situations involving large numbers of students with many diverse needs” (Connor & Valle, 2015, p. 1112). Effective teaching in SWD classrooms requires the “explicit emphasis on the why and how to
provide different instruction for students to ensure their academic, social, and emotional growth” (Connor & Valle, 2015, p. 1118). Jones and Brownell (2014) define effective teaching in SWD classrooms as:

...teachers provide explicit instruction that enables students to understand important concepts, skills, and strategies. Explicit instruction involves building a rationale for learning a concept, strategy, or skill; modeling how to use the strategy or skill or showing examples; giving clear explanations of concepts and connections between concepts; and practicing with students until they understand a concept and how to apply it, or use a strategy or skill with novel tasks. (p. 115)

This definition for effective teaching in special education classrooms is more useful and relevant when evaluating teachers and applying the Danielson Framework rubric.

To succeed as teachers, those working with students with disabilities need to acquire a broader understanding of the Danielson Framework for Teaching, how the curriculum they are using addresses component 3b (Questioning and Discussion Techniques) as well as the other components of the framework, and learn how to incorporate effective strategies that support all students in the classroom. According to Darling-Hammond et al. (2009), “Ensuring student success requires a new kind of teaching, conducted by teachers who understand learning and pedagogy, who can respond to the needs of their students and the demands of their disciplines, and who can develop strong connections between students’ experiences and the goals of the curriculum” (p. 7). This cannot be done in isolation nor can it be done with only internal staff members such as content-focused coaches, mentors, school leaders, etc. within schools. External expertise is necessary to support teachers in building capacity within the schools. Because teachers of students with disabilities have “limited joint planning time, distant classroom locations and heavy case-loads”, (Leko & Brownell, 2009, p. 66) compared to general education
teachers, it is important to provide a network of collegial supports, which can sometimes be done with video. On the other hand, expert-centered professional development fails to provide teachers with needed and impactful practices that increase students’ learning outcomes because research-based strategies are simply not translated into the classroom (McLeskey, 2011). When teachers are active participants in any form of professional development, in conjunction with external expertise, their learning is more useful because they contribute to the learning with support from others. Similar to Guskey (2009) and Darling-Hammond et al. (2009), McLeskey (2011) argues that when teachers are “active participants in identifying, learning about, adapting, and using instructional strategies” to improve practice in their own classrooms, “it is assumed that teachers have the power over change…and may choose to share this power with collaborators” (p. 28). While I think teachers of students with disabilities can and should learn with general education teachers to provide more inclusive access to academic curricula, I contend it is critical to master teaching and learning for all students in providing access for students with disabilities in multiple settings. An appropriate space for such learning to take place is a school context where teachers are involved in job-embedded professional learning with peers who have similar experiences. Collaborative teacher teams, sometimes referred to professional learning communities, are an example of the space where teachers can engage in teaching learning.

**Collaborative Teacher Teams**

Professional learning amongst teacher teams through observations is powerful when well structured and collaborative; affording teachers to support each other within differentiated teams based on areas of need. Teacher observations of each other as collaborative teams are a great opportunity for teachers to gain feedback from colleagues to improve their practices, but more
importantly, is an opportunity for them compare their own teaching with their colleagues to learn from and to identify how they can make the appropriate revisions in their practices. A professional learning community is a space for reflective learning amongst teachers and “an ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve” (AllthingsPLC.info, 2014). DuFour (2004) states the term professional learning, is “used so ubiquitously that it is in danger of losing all meaning” (p. 6) and therefore presents key principles to guide engagement with this process for teacher learning.

DuFour (2004) presents core principals guiding PLC he terms “big ideas”. The first big idea according to DuFour is ensuring that students learn. The idea centers on three questions:

- What do we want each student to learn?
- How will we know when each student has learned it?
- How will we respond when a student experiences difficulty in learning?

The second big idea focuses on the culture of collaborations with emphasis on results and impact on student learning outcomes. According to DuFour (2004), when teacher teams come to function as a professional learning community, “teachers become aware of the incongruity between their commitment to ensure learning for all students and their lack of a coordinated strategy to respond when some students do not learn” (p. 2). This second idea particularly focuses on the importance of the collective effort of true collaboration working to improve learning for students. According to DuFour, most staff members in schools have “equated the term collaboration” with a focus on building camaraderie to support operational procedures and other committees in school that function in supporting student behaviors and even technology (p. 3). Albeit these supports are necessary and in fact are useful to improvement of teaching and
learning, these do not promote the “professional dialogue that can transform a school into a professional learning community” (p. 3). The type of collaboration that supports sustainable professional learning communities according to DuFour is a “systematic process in which teachers work together to analyze and improve their classroom practice” and “…work in teams, engaging in an ongoing cycle of questions that promote deep team learning” (p. 3). A professional learning community is therefore defined as a learning community with similar interests focused on student learning that meet in structured cycles to review several data points and revise them to create action plans that continuously support student-learning outcomes.

My epistemological stance in terms of collaborative teacher teams or professional learning communities and working with adult learners is that learning is important if it is meaningful for the learner. In order to make learning meaningful, learners must be actively engaged. This requires the learners to “buy-in” so they understand the benefits of such experience. This can not be accomplished effectively if school administrators are the only ones that serve as knowers of knowledge to fuel teacher’s minds with that knowledge. To develop new knowledge, one must be fully engaged in constructing that knowledge. It is with this understanding that I came to this study that focuses on an in depth analysis of one teacher’s practices in a self-contained special education experience and involving the expertise of other teachers in the same or similar classroom contexts. The use of video as a learning tool is central to this form of professional learning because it provides teachers opportunities to firstly, take a closer look at their own practices and secondly provide other teachers opportunities to offer feedback and reflect on their classroom practices.
Effective Professional Development Using Video

Video as a Professional Development Tool

Video is a useful tool to provide teachers with opportunities to improve their practices and it provides school leaders an opportunity to gather evidence-based data to guide feedback needed to support teachers. For decades, video has been used for teacher education, to support certification procedures and for professional development. In addition to these usages, research supports video as a tool to facilitate discourse and to provide in-service teachers with a lens into their own classrooms. Using video to support pre-service teachers and in-service teachers is not new to the New York City Department of Education, the New York State Department of Education nor nationally. Video-based observations, however is a new approach introduced to New York City Department of Education in the 2013-2014 academic year as an option to support school administrators to gather evidence during classroom observations. Though there is research to support video-based professional learning, many teachers in the NYCDOE did not select using video as part of their professional evaluations because of assumed repercussion they my face when practices are captured on video. Rather than using video to gather evidence for evaluative practices, video can be used to support teaching and learning for both teachers and students.

Video can help teachers notice critical pedagogical practices and also help in reproducing good practices and newer practices to support student learning. It requires “introducing teachers to specific frameworks for attending to instruction or directing teachers’ attention to particular features of classroom interactions” (Sherin & van Es, 2009, p. 21-22). Video-based professional learning creates exciting possibilities for teacher learning and it “affords opportunities for participants to precisely describe problems of practice, to develop a shared vision and language of ambitious instruction, and to collectively construct frameworks to guide their work” (Tunney
Video-based professional development additionally provides teachers with a voice and a specific professional lens to looking at their own teaching and the impact on student learning.

**Video as a Professional Vision for Teachers**

According to Sherin (2004), "video allows one to enter the world of the classroom without having to be in the position of teaching" (p. 13). Video provides teachers with a specific “professional vision” (Sherin, 2009), which allows teachers to not only notice, but it also provides opportunities to interpret significant events that take place in a classroom. When using video, teachers can attend to specific details by selecting relevant details while ignoring others that are not critical to a focus area of study. For example, in watching a video, teachers can specifically focus on questions and discussion techniques that promote discussion among students. Sherin (2004) presents video clubs as a professional learning experience where teachers meet consistently, weekly or bi-weekly, taking turns to share videos with a specific focus with colleagues with similar interests. Video clubs are ongoing professional development sessions where teachers record videos of their classrooms, watch the videos and discuss selected vignettes from the video and develop action plans to support their practices (Sherin, 2004). It is important to note that simply because teachers are able to select vignettes from video clubs does not automatically guarantee their ability to notice problems of practices to promote relevant professional learning. To enhance and build on teachers’ professional vision, it is critical to organize for success by focusing on specific areas of practice such as ways to improve student engagement, and promoting discussion among non-verbal students etc. It was therefore important to engage with the teacher-participant in a cycle of action and reflection to address practical issues she was facing in daily pedagogical practices to further an inquiry space for
engaging in this type of learning. To engage with the work of using video to improve teaching and learning, a teacher needs to have a well-defined professional vision and an inquiry stance requiring a critical lens to look at his/her own practices, an identified problem of practice, and expectations of receiving critical feedback that can implemented in practice.

Video can support teacher’s engagement in professional learning communities to "support collaborative learning focused on reflection, analysis, and consideration of alternative pedagogical strategies" (Borko, Jacobs, Eiteljorg, & Pittman, 2008, p. 419). Using video to engage teachers in collaborative discourse about pedagogical practices can be more stimulating for participants compared to other forms of professional learning (Borko, 2008). Video can be manipulated in ways that extrapolate information that will otherwise not be captured in classrooms. Video can also save time and money when used as a tool to support reciprocal peer mentoring and peer inter-visitations (NYCDOE, 2014).

Blomberg and Sherin (2014) found using video in pre-service education can be powerful, however, they argue that it is important to link instructional strategies to teacher learning outcomes. Coles (2013) reported in his research that teachers found using video watching to be more useful and effective than lesson observations without video. Additionally, Coles argues that video produced by teachers is found to be more useful than commercialized video. Similar to the work with former teachers who used video as a tool for learning, teachers in Cole’s study volunteered to record lessons then selected a vignette of choice to share with colleagues. Video was used as a tool to scaffold productive discussion about teaching and learning in research conducted by Borko et al (2008) to support mathematics professional learning. According to Borko et al. (2008) teachers found the use of discussion video of their own classrooms helped with seeing “what they were doing well and to identify areas for improvement” (p. 434).
Additionally, they argued that “observing their colleagues in action helped the participants learn new pedagogical strategies, better appreciate their students’ capacity…and realize that they all struggle with similar issues” (p. 434). In a later article, Borko et al (2011) argue, “video can be used in practice-based professional development (PD) programs to serve as a focal point for teachers’ collaborative exploration of the central activities of teaching” (p. 175). Sherin (2004) argues that “video clubs offer teachers and researchers important opportunities to learn about teaching and to gain an understanding of particular classrooms by pooling their different perspectives” (p. 43). According to Sherin (2004), videotapes can advance teachers’ understanding of teaching and learning and collaboration between teachers. As a forum for teachers, video clubs serves as an effective professional development approach because it provides opportunities to collaborate, to understand and learn from each other’s classroom practices.

The most important element of video clubs according to van Es and Sherin (2006) is to support and guide teachers having a lens into their classrooms in order to learn to notice and interpret critical elements from their classrooms. Video clubs play a critical role in learning to notice good practices and those that can be improved. Learning to notice can guide one to focus on a single key in a vignette such as a teacher or student when watching a ten to fifteen-minute video clip. It is important to have a specific focus when watching video so one does not limit what is observed to a single element. It is critical to notice actions from both teacher and students, in addition to the environment, including resources that are used in the classroom to engage students in learning. When teachers learn how to properly notice elements of teaching and learning, they access to an inquiry space that enable them to examine specific practices to support discussion amongst non-verbal students for instance, then teachers can think differently
about their practices and reflect on interactions that occur within the classroom. As Rich and Hannafin (2009) argue, “video…allows an individual to both capture and analyze video of personal teaching practice, enabling teachers to review, analyze, and synthesize captured examples of their own teaching in authentic classroom contexts [and] scrutinizing instructional decisions within a specific teaching context” (p. 53).

This chapter focused on research and the working definitions of professional development. Specifically, the chapter sheds light on the effectiveness of professional development as a collaborative experience where learning and knowledge is co-constructed among teachers. Video is introduced as a professional learning tool and as a professional lens to support teachers’ professional learning in a given context. The following chapter will introduce theoretical frameworks, research methods and research methodologies guiding this study.
Chapter Three
Research Design and Methodology

Introduction of Methodology and Methods

This research examines the ways in which a mandated professional development policy influences teachers’ professional learning within a special education school and within a single collaborative teacher team. The study also focuses on exploring the use of video as a professional learning tool to support teachers’ learning and on understanding the cultural environment, which influences collaborative engagement. It seeks to provide teachers with opportunities to improve their teaching by collaborating with other teachers within the same context using a mandated, research-based evaluation rubric to guide, identify, and continuously improve best practices in the classroom. Because the current Danielson Framework for Teaching does not specifically provide examples of what questioning and discussion look like within the special education context, specifically classrooms with students with moderate-to-severe disabilities who may be non-verbal, it is important for the teachers of students with such disabilities to define for themselves what best practices in classrooms should be. To identify what questioning and discussion techniques to use in these classrooms, this study emphasizes the use of video as a professional learning tool which teachers can use to gather specific evidence of a sort that they may not observe themselves when they are teaching. Using video as a professional learning tool to support teaching and learning is a method that is intended to support teachers’ self-reflection on their practice to inform and improve their pedagogical growth while empowering them to become fully engaged in the evaluation process.

This case study focused on one teacher as the immediate topic within a collaborative special education teacher team, which was the unit of analysis for this research. The teacher-
participant engaged in a collaborative process with other teachers in the confines of a community of teachers of students with disabilities (SWD) to define strategies that can be used to promote questioning and discussion in the classroom. In addition, the research studied the cultural context of the school’s support of professional learning in order to understand the challenges and supports, which affect teachers’ engagement in professional learning teams. The study employed a bricolage of methods that were contingent on ethical and ideological commitments between the teacher-participant and myself and contingent on my relationship and discussions with the school leader. The study seeks to answer the question: In what ways does a mandated professional development policy influence teachers’ professional learning within a special education school?

It primarily deals with the following two issues:

1. How can the use of video in the classroom support teachers’ professional learning within collaborative teacher teams?

2. How can video support the evaluation process in special education classrooms within the parameters of a mandated tool?

Chapter 3 is divided into three sections: the conceptual framework, research methodologies, and research methods employed in the study. The chapter starts with a discussion of research participants and the methods for selecting the immediate focus of the case study and then discusses research design and methodologies. The first section focuses on the conceptual framework guiding selection of research methods and the methodologies used to prepare, develop, design, and redesign data collection and analysis. The first section particularly describes my experience as a teacher, administrator, participant-observer, and primary investigator. It also discusses the teacher-participant’s experiences, perspective, and reasons for
engaging in this study. The second section introduces and discusses the three methodologies – action research, ethnography, and case study – that guide and develop the methods of and protocols for gathering data for the study. The third section presents the research methods employed for data collection and data analysis.

**Research Participants**

During the implementation of *Advance*, I served as a talent coach for approximately twenty-five schools in one of the largest districts in the NYCDOE. Talent coaches in the NYCDOE were charged with providing Job-Embedded Support for *Advance* to schools to support school leaders in completing requirements for certification and re-certifications as lead evaluators of their respective schools. As the talent coach, I developed and maintained a professional relationship with several school leaders and teachers during the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years. My initial contact with the school leader was oral, oral and open ended (Tobin, 2009), allowing them to invite whomever they wanted to participate in the professional learning opportunity, followed by a letter explaining the proposal. The letter explained that approximately five individuals would be expected to participate in this study: three teachers, one talent coach, and one school leader. The level of participation, however, would differ based on the needs of the teacher participants, the needs of the school, and my ability to provide the professional learning sessions required. We scheduled a face-to-face meeting at the research site to discuss how I could use this study to support teachers’ professional learning in this school. In conversation, I informed the school leader that, because teachers would be engaging in using video of their teaching as a data source, school leaders might not be invited to the collaborative teacher team meetings. However, I noted that I would participate in the meetings to ensure that teachers were effectively engaged in the observation and feedback process.
This case study’s immediate topic was one teacher who volunteered to engage in action research to improve her teaching practices. The teacher-participant from here on will be referred to as Mrs. Stevens. Mrs. Stevens was a paraprofessional who worked with me when I was a school leader in the 2011-2012 school year in a self-contained high school in the NYCDOE. Mrs. Stevens was a good choice for this study because she is confident, inquisitive, and constantly tried to improve her practices. As a paraprofessional she would often request to observe other classrooms that she was not supporting at that time to improve her role and responsibilities. As a student-teacher, Mrs. Stevens shared that she used video in her studies to learn about her teaching and improve on practices in supporting her host teacher. During my visit to the research site, I learned that Mrs. Stevens was working as a full-time teacher at the research site. I met briefly with Mrs. Stevens and shared my research proposal. She volunteered to share her classroom with me because she as she explained, she respected the work I did as a school leader in addition to the opportunities provided to visit and learn from other teachers under my leadership. My interest in working with Mrs. Stevens stemmed from her penchant for improving her own practices as an educator and my experience with her as being a reflective practitioner who takes an active role in her professional learning. Mrs. Stevens was a good candidate for this study because she brought a clean and a different knowledge as a new teacher with experience as a paraprofessional who strived to “become a model teacher” (communication with Mrs. Stevens, October 11, 2014). In addition to an interest in improving her teaching skills, Mrs. Stevens was familiar with the aspects of action research protocols, which was useful to me as a researcher. I shared with the school leader that I had spoken to Mrs. Stevens who had expressed interest in not only partaking in this research but also having an interest in sharing videos of her teaching with other teachers.
The school leader identified several teachers who could provide differentiated professional learning sessions. Most of those teachers’ professional development resulted from the mandated professional learning policy that required new teachers and those who had earned ratings of ineffective the previous school year to log a certain number of hours. The school leader initially identified three whose requirements aligned with the hours required for this research; all three teachers were new to the teaching profession and two had served as paraprofessionals. Subsequent to this meeting, the principal emailed me requesting another meeting to discuss when and how to build capacity within his school. Although we had discussed the matter and agreed that the talent coach would work with three to four teachers, the school leader expressed an interest in including other teachers not necessarily in the study but as teachers who would engage in the sessions to build their skills and to support professional development in other teacher teams.

At the conclusion of each meeting with school leaders, talent coaches are required to provide next steps to support the schools with planning and implementation of the teacher evaluation process. Prior to leaving this meeting, the school leader and I discussed next steps to guide professional learning which included the principal reviewing data from the Advance website application that would guide a more strategic selection of teachers who would benefit from the first reciprocal inter-visitation cycle. Initially, the school leader wanted to include a group of teachers who were struggling with engaging students in discussions during classroom instruction. These teachers received overall ratings of ineffective or developing for the 2013-2014 school year and subsequently received mandatory professional development plans. The principal had not yet determined what professional learning he needed to develop to meet the teachers’ needs, so he saw this as an opportunity to provide certain teachers with much needed
support. The following next steps were developed with the school leader to be completed prior to September 2014:

1. Review and analyze *Advance* data to identify focus areas for teacher teams and use this same data to differentiate professional learning for all teachers

2. Review available student work from all content areas to understand what tasks were being provided to students and how students were asked to show their thinking in these tasks

3. Identify teachers who would benefit from the job-embedded professional learning (reciprocal inter-visitation using video) that the talent coach would provide.

Two weeks before the second scheduled visit with the school leader and his instructional team, I requested Measure of Teacher Practices (MOTP) data from the school to support my planning of professional learning activities for teachers. At the first meeting, the school leader was able to discuss and provide what he perceived as areas for growth needed by his teachers based on data gathered from oral discussions with his administrative team. Most of the evidence provided in the first meeting was based on data collected from the beginning of the school year and based on discussions during cabinet meetings both of which were not specific to data gathered from *Advance*.

During the second meeting, the school leader was able to provide additional qualitative data in addition to quantitative data to support our discussions. The principal wanted to increase the level of teachers’ engagement in inquiry-based professional collaborations to develop and implement strategies to improve student-led discussions during classroom instruction. The inter-visitation protocol using video was introduced to the school leader during this meeting. The review of this protocol with the school leader was first to clarify his commitment to this type of
professional learning for his school and secondly to remind him about teachers’ choice to decide to record classroom practices or not. Based on final teacher ratings that included Measures of Student Learning and MOTPs, the school leader identified a core group of teachers whose final rating for the school year earned only a developing or ineffective rating. The school leader’s plan was to support these teachers in addition to the original three he had identified in our first meeting. I advised the school leader to include teachers with effective ratings as well as highly effective ratings to mentor the new teachers and to guide professional learning discussions when the sessions commenced in September 2014.

As a result, the school leader identified five teachers in addition to the three whom he had selected to participate in the first professional learning cycle as part of the mandated professional development that must be provided to teachers under Advance. Three of these teachers had earned ratings as effective, and the other two had some experience teaching but for less than three years and had received ratings of developing and ineffective. The school leader provided email addresses for all teachers and asked me to introduce myself as the talent coach assigned to the school to support Advance, and the principal subsequently arranged a time for me to meet with all the teachers and explain the purpose of professional learning cycles. The research participants for the collaborative teacher teams were the eight identified teachers with one teacher as the immediate focus who volunteered to share video recordings of her classroom.

**Theoretical Framework**

**How Standpoint Informs Research Methodology**

According to Sandra Harding (1997), the social groups to which people belong shape what individuals know and how they communicate. My experiences as a teacher, mentor, mathematics coach, and now as an administrator provided me with multiple perspectives of an
epistemological approach to collaboration, teacher evaluation, and the professional learning opportunities aligned with areas for growth for teachers. The inter-sectionality of myself as a researcher, classroom teacher, and administrator was inseparable from being a participant researcher in this study and my authority in making knowledge claims was rooted in my lived experiences within these social categories. My standpoint, thus, was informed by my “insider” status – a lived experience as one who was observed and worked in isolation and an “outsider-within” – now as a person with authority to observe and provide supportive feedback based on what I observed in the context of special education practices. In producing a stronger objectivity in teacher evaluation, it is critical to take the experiences of educators working day-to-day with SWD as a starting point to produce a more useful knowledge base that informs teacher observations and assessment. To this end, the methodology and the methods employed in the observations and evaluation process was a collaborative effort wherein administrators were to have a dialogue with teachers as opposed to talking at them in developing and enhancing good pedagogical practices.

Standpoint theory is the theoretical framework guiding the selection of research methods and methodologies to support the teachers’ learning and also shaping my understanding of the context of the school, which was going to engage in professional learning using video. Dorothy Smith (2005) and Harding (1993) have explained that standpoint research starts from the daily lives of non-dominant groups, goes beyond simple conventional ethnographies, and seeks to explain which non-dominant groups need to improve and in what areas they need to do so. Harding (1993) explains that “standpoint claims that all knowledge attempts are socially situated and that some of these objective social locations are better than others as starting points for knowledge projects” (p. 56). According to Julia Wood (2012), standpoint theory is something
that “arises when an individual recognizes and challenges cultural values and power relations that contribute to subordination or oppression of particular groups” (p.1). This definition of standpoint theory resonates with Harding’s (1993 & 2004) explanation that the social groups to which people belong shape what they know and how they communicate. My standpoint as a teacher is extremely different from the one I have in my role as a talent coach supporting school leaders with observation processes because of power structures existing within the school context, as is the standpoint of the teacher-participant as a new teacher in a new school. As teacher, I was supervised and evaluated by the school leader; however, as a talent coach, I supported principals and trained them in evaluating teachers. Although I was not an evaluator as a talent coach, I was an expert rater trained by the NYCDOE, and the knowledge that I brought to schools was different from that which teachers experience in their lived experiences in a school. For this reason, it was critical to locate the knowledge that I had and brought to the study; it was critical to use that knowledge to support ‘in planning and designing the study.’ I recognized the teacher-participant in this research as agentic in producing and co-producing knowledge that not only guided this study but also provided her with knowledge to improve her pedagogical approaches. Taking the lens of standpoint theory, this research sought to engage the needs and desires that emerged from the daily lives of the teacher who was subjected to the standardized research-based evaluation tool, the Danielson Framework, in classrooms where students experienced non-traditional classroom settings.

Collins (1986) references the lives of Black women who experienced a sense of self-affirmation within White society because of their positionality as insiders within White society. However, because their insider status was not based on their intellect or talents, they understood themselves as outsiders-within because they would never belong to the presumed superior status
of Whiteness. Collins (1986) references outsider-within status when referring to the Black feminist standpoint on “self, family and society that present[s] unique standpoints” to knowing and belonging. As holder of outsider-within and insider status, I shared the challenges of the nearness and remoteness as a former teacher of SWD and now as a researcher and talent coach in terms of my positionality (Collins, 1986, p. 15). As a teacher who often worked in isolation, I came to this study with experiences that guided my thinking in regard to the importance of teachers’ voices. My experience as one who was not effectively supported provided me with an interest in paying close attention to what teachers say and do particularly during collaborative team meetings. My standpoint as a former teacher who worked in isolation produced certain commonalities with my participants that spoke to my outlook on professional learning that shapes and promotes teachers’ ability to be reflective in their own practices. As a researcher, I needed to constantly tap into my experiences as a former teacher because “the more one is like the participants in terms of culture, gender, race, socio-economic class and so on, the more it is assumed that access will be granted, meanings shared, and validity of findings assured” (Merriam, Johnson-Bailey, Lee, Kee, Ntseane & Muhamad, 2001, p. 406).

At the same time, as researcher and a talent coach, the outsider-within the collaborative teacher teams, I was regarded as a reporter to the superintendent and the school principal. Because of this status and how some teachers viewed my positionality, it was critical to include them in decisions prior to and during the professional learning series to build trust. Despite my experience as a teacher and my conviction to remain a teacher-learner, I was an outsider-within because of my positionality as a researcher and talent coach. My positionality as both outsider-within and insider provided advantages and disadvantages. My experience as teacher of SWD for several years who had worked within the same special education context granted me access
as an insider, talking to teachers to provide suggestions on improving their practices. My outsider status, contrary to my positionality as one who worked for the district, provided teachers with greater access to me than they had to their principal, as they felt comfortable talking to someone who has been there and understands. Compared to that of Mrs. Stevens, my outsider status became an asset when eliciting information from teachers and building trust. In spite of the obstacles of being an outsider, my dual status also granted me access to go between the teachers and school leaders to identify the needs of both groups of people and to support them effectively in promoting student learning outcomes. Mrs. Stevens’s insider status as a teacher at the research site also provided advantages to the research because I saw her as one who already knew the success and challenges within the school and in the classroom.

This research employed methodologies that gave voice to the teachers who are subjected to the teacher observation and evaluation process. As Harding (1997) explains, knowledge emerges in a dialectical relationship where meaning is made as a product of dialogue between and among individuals. The method of using dialogue in assessing knowledge claims is powerful and critical to working from the perspectives of marginalized groups. Both Harding (1997) and Kincheloe (2003) have argued that learning is co-produced and that it involves a continual construction of meaning and purpose. Being a member of a marginalized group (former teacher) in my career and now as a talent coach working with school leaders and teacher teams in this new teacher evaluation system reminds me of my positionality and informs my actions when working with teachers. As Merriam et al. (2001) explain, “Positionality is thus determined by where one stands in relation to ‘the other.’ More importantly, these positions can shift: The loci along which we are aligned with or set apart from those whom we study are multiple and in flux” (p. 412). As a former teacher, assistant principal, and now talent coach working with both
teachers and school leaders, I was aware of my position as part of the dominant forces that affect teacher evaluation and professional learning. Albeit I was not an evaluator in the schools I supported, my perspective as one who trains evaluators can determine the ratings of teachers. I recognized this power structure exits because of my positionality, and I use this status to garner more teacher input in the topics to be covered based on their needs, in addition to the school leaders’ focus.

**Knowledge as Situated**

Teachers’ lived experiences and generated knowledge from day-to-day teaching is a good place to start knowledge projects, particularly those about improving student outcomes. Teachers have been constant variables since the inception of the teacher evaluation process; therefore, their areas of knowledge and experience should and are great places to start learning how to improve their abilities. Though dominant structures such as the EdLaw 3012-c and the Danielson Framework prescribe how teachers will be evaluated, the teacher participants in this research were interested both in understanding the processes and the practices that supported learning and in developing learning environments that supported the enhancement of teaching practices. Teachers’ knowledge is equally as important as administrators’ knowledge, because “knowledge claims are always socially situated, and the failure by dominant groups critically and systematically to interrogate their advantaged social situation and the effect of such advantages on their beliefs leaves their social situation a scientifically and epistemologically disadvantaged one for generating knowledge” (Harding, 1993, p. 54). The collective approach of starting from teachers’ lived experiences and empowering those instructors as knowers is an accurate and objective basis for the production of knowledge (Harding, 2004, 1997, 1993). Teachers’ lives and experiences are socially situated, and thus they are a good place to start knowledge projects,
particularly those about teaching and learning. As Harding (1993) states, it is important to learn from a community when starting from marginalized lives and taking everyday life as problematic to properly target the support needed to make appropriate adjustments.

Kincheloe’s (2003) take on critical theory and using teachers as researchers is of interest, and it also guided my standpoint in the selection of methods and methodologies in this study. McLaren and Kincheloe (2007) explain critical theory as a framework that challenges and disrupts the status quo and one that is constantly changing and evolving. According to Kincheloe (2003), “the human being as part of history is a reflexive subject…reflexivity recognizes that all knowledge is a fusion of subject and object” (p. 48). This means that the teacher-participant in this research was agentic in producing and co-producing knowledge and participating in every action that promoted her understanding (McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007). This research included the voice of the teacher-participant, and it was guided by Kincheloe’s (2003) requirements for doing critical research. According to Kincheloe, critical research:

a. Rejects positivistic perspectives of rationality and objectivity;

b. Is aware of interpretations of educational practices held by those who perform the acts

c. Seeks to become aware of the interpretation placed on practices;

d. Reveals aspects of dominant social order; and

e. Is guided by an awareness of how the research relates to practice.

I found Kincheloe's (2003) connection of the knower and known in creating an emancipatory system of meaning to be an interesting concept that informed my research. Teachers involved with the Advance evaluation process using the Danielson Framework since its inception who chose to include video as a professional development tool during my tenure as an
administrator did so because of their professional and personal commitment to improving their pedagogical practices. Kincheloe (2003) writes, “all knowledge is a fusion of subject and object...” and, therefore, knowers must participate in the construction of knowledge, particularly that which will support their practices” (p. 48). If the expectations are for teachers to improve their skills in teaching, then it is pertinent for them to take an active role in the entire process.

Kincheloe's (2003) explanation of the knower and known in creating transformative systems of meaning is an interesting concept that applies to standpoint theory. A transformative system of making meaning is “grounded in human communication,” and, in terms of adult learning, this form of learning was a process by which the teacher-participant used prior knowledge and experience to develop and create new knowledge that was then used to develop effective actions (Taylor, 2008). Landau (2007) explains that people are socially positioned and that social positions influence knowledge differently, therefore, it is critical that the voice of the teacher was heard in the research process to present different types of knowledge (Landau, 2007). How teachers teach and how students learn on a day-to-day basis affects teachers’ lived experiences, and the learning and those engaged in the learning enhance knowledge gained through critical reflection. Because knowledge is situated, the different roles a person plays is critical to the learning that occurs. Therefore, it was important to include the voices of school leaders when necessary but, more importantly, to include the voice of the teacher whose work in the classroom was equally important to me as talent coach in working to support relevant practices to improve student-learning outcomes.

**Situatedness of Andragogy**

In addition to the importance of teachers’ existing knowledge that contributes to knowledge development, it was important to understand the differences between teaching and
learning with students and andragogy – teaching and learning among adult learners. The concept of andragogy is defined as “the art and science of helping adult learning” (Merriam, et al 2001, p. 5). Knowles (1973) sheds light on some possibilities and necessities in work with adult learners. In his book, *The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species*, Knowles (1973) explains that it is important to note that adult learning, particularly in professional learning settings, is a collaborative process that motivates and allows learners opportunities to reflect and self-actualize their learning. Knowles’s idea of adult learning rests upon four assumptions, which state that first, learning is self-directed. As with pedagogy, in andragogy there is some of the dependency of children on their teachers, the adults who support and guide learning. This is similar to adult-learners; however, most educational professionals seek professional learning to improve their pedagogical practices. This is something that must be acknowledged in working with teacher teams because it is a basic premise of promoting collaborative learning communities. That is, it is necessary to start with a beginner’s mind-frame that positions adult learners as knowledgeable professionals, people not in a position that warrants their being treated like children. Secondly, the role of experience and building on those experiences is critical in any learning space. Specifically, with adult learners it is important to decrease transmittal approaches and increase experiential knowledge (Freire, 2004; hooks, 1994; Knowles, 1973). As a talent coach supporting school administrators and teachers, it was critical for me to allow those with whom I worked to come to a common understanding and to identify approaches to support and promote student learning. My telling teachers and school leaders what to do and how to do it was not enough to change their mind-set; walking through the process of grounding statements in evidence from classroom observations was a more critical approach as teacher teams and school leaders were able to base their statements on experiences derived from seeing and noticing. They
needed to see the relevance of what they had learned to the situation at hand in order to bridge any learning gaps. Coaches can support practitioners in putting the pieces of new knowledge to work in the classroom context and can help adult learners see how their own personal beliefs and attitudes can be integrated with that new learning and with expectations.

The third assumption in Knowles’s andragogy is the readiness to learn. For example, providing teachers with an evaluative rating based on classroom observations can be a delicate, even petrifying process for some, particularly if the resulting rating is not favorable. In working with adult learners, it is important to ascertain whether they are ready for constructive feedback, especially that which comes from engaging in collaborative discussions with colleagues. This is because adults may not think they need the particular feedback that is being provided to them, and thus such feedback may not be useful. The fourth assumption involves “problem-based orientation to learning” (Knowles, 1973, p. 58). In collaborative teams, teachers come with specific needs that must be addressed based on individual feedback and recommendations for next steps identified from an observation or problem of practices identified in inquiry teams. These four assumptions are critical to the difference between working with adult learners and working with children.

There are several research-based approaches to adult learning, but the ideas and assumptions presented by Knowles contribute to the conceptual and theoretical frameworks guiding this study. It is critical to revisit the guiding principles of andragogy throughout this study because of this study’s transformative nature and the intent of this study to support teachers’ professional learning within the implementation of the Danielson Framework. It took a conscious effort to collaborate with the teacher-participant as research partner not only to build capacity within the school but also to support that teacher’s professional learning.
Bricolage of Methodologies

Using Bricolage as an Overarching Methodology

Because of my standpoint as talent coach and former teacher, I used bricolage to support my study in a very dynamic context. Bricolage is a methodology that addresses “growing concerns” in social life (Kincheloe, 2004), and, as explained by Berry (2006), it is a methodology that “works with elements of randomness, spontaneity, and self-organization, far-from equilibrium conditions, feedback looping, and bifurcations” (p. 89). According to Wibberly (2012), "the emergent nature of bricolage allows for bite-size chunks of research to be carried out that have individual meaning for practice, which can then be pieced together to create a more meaningful whole" (p. 1). This idea of bricolage was important for this study because the research employed methods for collecting and analyzing data as needed as a situation unfolded (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). In this study, as mentioned earlier, I employed a bricolage of methods and methodologies that were contingently and serially guided by standpoint theory. According to Kincheloe (2011), bricolage is an emancipatory “process of employing methodological processes as they are needed [in the] unfolding context of the research situation” (Denzin & Lincoln, p. 168). Bricolage “highlights the relationship between a researcher’s way of seeing and the social location of his or her personal history” (Kincheloe, 2011, p. 170) by shaping the production and interpretation of knowledge based on the experiences that one brings to the study. Bricolage in research presents catalytic validity promoting a “reality-altering impact of inquiry process and directs this impact so that those under study will gain self-understanding and self-direction” (Kincheloe, 2011, p. 171). Bricolage was useful because of the dynamic context of the school where this study was conducted and also because of my concern for the teacher-participant particularly in regard to the question of what was her focus compared to the school and
principal's instructional focus.

The intent of employing bricolage in this study was not only to guide the selection of methods to collect data and analyze processes, but it was also to encourage and promote a process that served the needs of the participant in the study. This study thus understands teachers as producers of knowledge and affirms “reciprocal interpretations” of what is observed. The conceptual perspective in conducting the research study was framed and guided by an awareness of how teaching and learning in a special education context differs from general education classrooms. Additionally, it was guided by the way in which what is learned relates to practice and an understanding that teachers are critical assets in the implementation of mandated policies and new methods that continuously attempt to improve pedagogy. However, this is true only if teachers are actively involved in the development of those practices. In alignment with the belief that knowledge is co-produced within a community, this research was a case study using a bricolage of methods to collect and analyze data. It focused on one school during its second-year implementation of Advance, which was then the new teacher evaluation system in the NYCDOE. It relies on action research as a framework to support teachers’ participation in inquiry and calls on ethnography as a method for gathering data and for data analysis. The study draws data primarily from low-inference notes taken from classroom observations, dialogue within teacher teams and one-on-one conversations with the teacher-participant and school leaders. The study promotes teachers’ voices and engagement in professional learning by encouraging them to evaluate their own thinking about teaching practices and question methods that may otherwise be ignored and/or surfaced only through inquiry.

Standpoint theory was the basis for negotiating access to the teacher-participant and guiding my selection of methods and methodologies in this research. My epistemological stance
in conducting a study using a bricolage of methodologies was based on its providing me with an opportunity to respond to concerns from the field. These include a teacher's interest in engaging in action research to receive a high rating, a school’s interest in receiving a favorable rating concerning the way it supports teachers, and other similar parameters. Bricolage allowed me the flexibility in moving within research methodologies when necessary to address research questions. Figure 3.1 Standpoint Theory: Insider and Outsider-Within, presents the way selected methodologies work together to support research questions.

Figure 3.1. **Standpoint Theory: Insider and Outsider-Within**

The complexity within the school under the Quality Review, *Advance*, and the dynamic nature of the day-to-day experiences of teachers and school leaders working with SWD calls for
a bricolage of methodologies to shape the production and interpretation of the knowledge that has come from the experiences of the study. Standpoint theory was first introduced as a theoretical framework supporting my approach to this study, but, additionally, it presented the existing dynamics between myself as researcher and at the teacher-participant creating my outsider and my insider perspective throughout the study. The primary methodology driving this study is case study; however, ethnography and action research also drive data collection analysis because they allow me to meet the needs of the teachers and to study the cultural environment influencing professional learning opportunities at the research site.

Action research was used as a methodology to ground the teacher-participant’s approach to reflecting and learning about her own practices, and ethnography was used to support the understanding of the context of policy implementation at the school and collaborative teams. Action research is a central piece of current professional learning practices in the NYCDOE in terms of teachers’ ability to facilitate their professional learning. However, many teachers who are rated with the Danielson Framework and their respective school leaders have not been exposed to action research as a process useful for developing their teaching practices. As a result, the teacher-participant and researcher-participant agreed to delve deeper into using this methodology to support the former in developing classroom strategies to support student discussions. Action research is a method that can engage teachers and school leaders in learning to notice good practices that take place in the context of their school setting. Ethnography is used to understand, describe, and interpret implementation of Advance and to interpret the teacher’s experience as the immediate focus in the case study. The ethnographic approach used in this study supported the participant researcher with the understanding of culture as policy context that mediated collaborative engagement.
In the previous pages, I introduced my standpoint as a researcher-participant, introduced knowledge as situated, and the importance of andragogy when dealing with adult learners. In the remainder of this chapter, I will introduce action research, ethnography, and case study as the methods guiding this research. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the methods used for data collection and interpretation as well as the limitations of the study.

Figure 3.2., Bricolage of Methodologies, presents how my theoretical framework works with the methodologies used to guide the research.
**Action Research**

Action research is an inquiry method adopted for the teacher-participant because of her need to understand this process as delineated in the Danielson Framework. Action research provided an opportunity for the teacher, the immediate focus of this study, to look at her practices on video, think about what she could do to improve based on feedback provided by colleagues, and act on strategies developed. According to Altrichter et al. (2013), action research is “intended to support practitioner researchers in coping with the challenges and problems of practice and carrying through innovations in a reflective way” (p. 6). The purpose of engaging in action research for this study is akin to Kincheloe’s idea of building reflective practitioners, for example, teachers as researchers. Most teachers I have encountered in the NYCDOE, including myself, tend to seek professional learning opportunities to improve instructional practices from both internal resources and external ones. Although the concept and process of the action research process is seldom referred to in teacher observations, feedback cycles, and coaching sessions, action research is a well-intended aspect for teachers’ professional learning experience that engages them in self-reflections to improve their pedagogical practices.

Action research is evident in the description and critical attributes for a rating of Highly Effective using the Danielson Framework’s component 4e, Growing and Developing Professionally, which requires that a teacher “…seeks out opportunities for professional development and makes a systematic effort to conduct action research. The teacher solicits feedback on practice from both supervisors and colleagues. The teacher initiates important activities to contribute to the profession…” In comparison, a rating of Ineffective is based upon inaction, as the language of the Framework reads, “Teacher engages in no professional development activities to enhance knowledge or skill. The teacher resists feedback on teaching
performance from either supervisors or colleagues that are more experienced. The teacher makes no effort to share knowledge with others or to assume professional responsibilities” (NYCDOE 2013, p. 48). To receive a rating of Highly Effective under the Framework, a “…teacher’s principal rarely spends time observing in her classroom. Therefore, she has initiated an action research project in order to improve her own instruction. The teacher is working on a particular instructional strategy and asks his [sic] colleagues to observe in his [sic] classroom in order to provide objective feedback on his progress,” (NYCDOE, 2013, p. 48). For meeting this criterion, the teacher-participant received a favorable rating.

Action research is an opportunity for teachers to study their own classrooms to understand how their actions affect students’ learning. It additionally presents teachers a voice, and it provides opportunities for dialogue, collaboration, and learning through individual reflections. Mills (2011) explains that action research is also a “professional disposition of teachers and the teaching profession” (as cited in Mertler, 2013, p. 14). However, the teacher-participant had not experienced nor had she been introduced to action research in either her current school or her previous school.

Action research “affords teachers opportunities to connect theory with practice, to become more reflective in their practice, and to become empowered risk takers” (Mertler, 2013, p 26). Methods employed in action research align with standpoint theory in that the process in looking, thinking and acting privileges knowledge production of “localized knowledge,” the teacher (Collins, 1986), and it privileges localized knowledges as experts (Harding, 1993; Stringer, 2014). Earnest T. Stringer (2014) has defined action research as “a systematics approach to investigation that enables people to find effective solutions to problems they confront in their everyday lives” (p. 1). In terms of educational research, teachers can conduct
action research for the purposes of improving teaching and student learning outcomes. Mills (2011) explains action research as “any systematic inquiry conducted by teachers, administrators, counselors, or others with a vested interest in the teaching and learning process or environment for the purpose of gathering information about how their particular schools operate, how they teach, and how their students learn” (as cited in Mertler, 2013, p. 4). Richard Sagor (2000) defines action research as a “disciplined process of inquiry conducted by and for those taking the action” (p. 3). The primary reason for engaging in action research is to assist teachers in improving and/or refining their actions within a particular context where the research is conducted. For the purpose of this study, the teacher participant engaged in action research to understand how she could improve her teaching methods to support student discussion and to improve her rating under component 4e, Growing and Developing Professionally, of the Danielson Framework.

According to Hendricks (2009), action research is participative, practical, and relevant to classroom teachers, and it develops critical reflection about an instructor’s teaching. It is appropriate for engaging teachers in learning about their own practices and reflecting on how it can be improved to better students’ learning outcomes. Through action research, teachers can look at their own practices in the classroom and develop knowledge about how to improve these practices by collecting relevant data on their own work, analyzing and reflecting on how to use them to foster professional growth. Teachers can reflect on their normal practices in order to make a change that improves teaching and learning. Action research is a cyclical process that requires testing ideas generated from an inquiry approach that involves planning, acting, developing, and reflecting (Hendricks, 2009). Reflections are an integral part of action research,
requiring teachers to look at their own practices, reflect, and then figure out in a team what methods they can change and or implement to support and improve students’ outcomes.

In an action research process, participants select a focus, clarifying theories, identifying research questions, collecting data, analyzing data, and taking informed actions (Sagor, 2000). Similar to Sagor (2000), Stringer (2014) presents steps in conducting action research. He identified four steps that include: identifying an area of focus; collecting data; analyzing and interpreting data; and developing a plan of action. These steps in action research, according to Stringer, are characterized by a continuing effort to closely interlink, relate, and confront action and reflection based upon conscious and unconscious doings in order to develop actions and therefore develop knowledge.

Action research is intended to support individual teachers and groups of teachers in coping with the challenges and problems of practice from teacher observations and inquiry teams and supports carrying through educational initiatives in reflective ways. There have been several adaptations of action research; however, despite the different process models that exist, all focus on a cyclical, yet iterative process. For example, Stringer’s Action Research Interacting Spiral (2014) consists of the Look, Think, and Act routine. In the looking stage, participants observe an event or data, asking the question, “What do I see?”, to gather relevant information to describe the situation. In the thinking stage, participants explore and analyze by asking “What is happening here?” and then interpret and explain by asking, “How or why are things as they are?” (Stringer, 2014, p. 8). Finally, in the acting stage participants analyze by reflecting and then taking effective actions. In the looking stage, participants design an action and a plan based on the looking and thinking stages, implement the plan, and then assess the effectiveness of the actions taken prior to returning to the initial stage where they look at data again.
A rating of Highly Effective in the Danielson 2013 Rubric component 4e, Developing and Growing Professionally, includes teachers’ engagement in action research. Action Research has not been an area that has been formally addressed in most pre-service programs for teachers. Currently, it is presented to in-service teachers as part of an inquiry process. Some teachers have engaged in structured inquiry teams involving a selected group of students and mostly facilitated by school administrators; however, this idea of action research has not been a norm for classroom teachers. This research follows methods modeled in action research because it allows the researcher and participants to be linked with great emphasis placed on participants’ knowledge. A critical component of action research is to work from what is important to both parties but particularly what will improve the teachers’ practices. Action research calls for the modification of methods when it does not suit the participants’ needs. An example of this occurs when teachers are engaged in an inquiry process and change questions based on their findings or based on a current problem of practice.

**Ethnography**

Ethnography was introduced as a methodology in this study because the researcher who was a talent coach, a position introduced under the mandated policy, was a participant-observer who also engaged in one-on-one interviews and had conversations with the teacher-participant prior to, during, and after professional learning sessions. It is used to understand how the school and teachers’ beliefs about the *Advance*, the Danielson Framework for Teaching, and the structures that were development to interpret and implement the policy. Ethnography was appropriate for this study because it allowed insider and outsider perspectives in interpreting experiences within the collaborative teacher team under the mandated policy. Ethnographic research attempts to describe social interactions between people in a group setting (Madison,
This study took an ethnographic approach to gather data, as the researcher was immersed in the day-to-day teaching experiences of teachers through her position as a talent coach for the NYCDOE. Creswell (2007) explains, “ethnography involves extended observations of the group, most often through participant observation, in which the researcher is immersed in the day-to-day lives of the people and observes and interviews the group participants” (p. 68). Through conversations with the teacher-participant prior to her participation in the study, I understood that this teacher believed her ratings under this new mandated policy from her former school were unfair. Mrs. Stevens shared in an interview her current principal had a better working relationship with her compared to her former principal. Not only was she unable to develop a positive relationship with her former school leaders, but Mrs. Stevens also expressed that the ratings she received did not reflect her practices as a reflective teacher. For this reason, critical ethnography is relevant to study the implementation of teacher observation mandate influencing the teacher-participant’s engagement in the collaborative teacher team.

Madison (2011) writes, “Critical ethnography begins with an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice” (p. 7). Critical ethnography really focuses on what-is rather than what-could-be and additionally “use[s] resources, skills, and privileges available to her to make accessible – to penetrate the borders and break through the confines in defense of—the voices and experiences of the subjects whose stories are otherwise restrained or out of reach” thereby contributing to “emancipatory knowledge” (Madison, 2011, p. 6). What is critical about this study is the relationship between converging power relations among school leaders and classroom teachers. I took an activist stance, in line with Fine (1994) allowing me to intervene on hegemonic practices with the teacher-participant to communicate the environment influencing
Mrs. Stevens’ growth through collaborative teacher teams. Albeit this study does not explicitly study power dynamics in schools, it does acknowledge and starts from the perspective of teachers and their understanding of the Danielson Framework as it applies to the special education programs with which they work and develops best practices based on this understanding. Critical ethnography in this study supports the teacher’s voice in an environment under current mandates, which they see as unfavorable to the advancement of their learning.

The ethnographic design for the study includes interviews of the teacher-participant and conversations in person and via telephone and participant observation during the four collaborative teacher team sessions. The researcher conducted interviews by asking the teacher-participant questions that went beyond the immediate concerns of classroom observations alone. She also placed “engaged listening on a similar footing to participant observation” (Forsey, 2010, p. 3) in gathering data from all teachers in the professional learning team developed by the school leader. Interviews can create a holistic picture of an individual or can serve as a data source for understanding a larger unit of analysis such as beliefs of a group or organization and, in this case, the implementation of the Danielson Framework for Teaching as the selected research-based rubric. Initial questions to guide the conversation with the teacher-participant focused around beliefs about the implementation of the framework, collaboration, and preparedness for the implementation of Advance, particularly the introduction of the Danielson 2013 Rubric. The first part of the interview focused on understanding the teacher-identified areas of need based on self-assessment and areas of need identified by the school leader in observation reports. Part two of the interview, focused on understanding the school’s culture by asking questions such as:

1) How would you describe the culture of your school?
2) How did the culture of the school mediate your pedagogical practices?

3) How would you define collaboration?

4) Did you feel comfortable talking to other teachers and your administrators in the school? Why or Why not?

The third part of the one-on-one interview with the teacher focused on professional learning opportunities and experiences concerning teaching and learning such as:

1) Do you think you were well prepared to use the teacher evaluation rubric and other tools?

2) How do you make learning experiences engaging for all students in your classroom?

3) What would you do if a student did not want to do his or her work in class?

Critical ethnography requires negotiation and dialogue situated in multiple experiences from different subjects. In addition to interviewing the teacher-participant, observations of the teacher who was the subject of the case study and the other participants listening in the collaborative teacher team meetings was a part of the ethnographic design. Listening more attentively to the teacher-participant in the collaborative teacher team was important to this study because it first provided me with clarifying questions to support her learning; it also provided the opportunity to listen for teachers’ concerns instead of interjecting my outsider knowledge as a talent coach. Participant observation is synonymous with radical listening, as it provides a way to understand the teacher-participant’s standpoint as an insider as well as an outsider within the teachers’ team. It allowed me as a researcher to suppress my talent coach and assistant principal voices and listen carefully to the different ideas that emerged from the meetings.
Case Study

This research was a case study to investigate a teacher team and one teacher’s engagement with and trajectory of improving strategies to support SWD in a special education program. I considered using a case study as a method and methodology primarily because, as a researcher, I had little to no control over the behavioral events that occurred in the dynamic of the school environment and within the collaborative teacher team (Yin, 2014). Action research emerged during an interview where the teacher-participant shared that she wanted to improve her rating in professional responsibilities in addition to the school’s instructional focus on improving questions and discussion in classrooms. The iterative nature of a case study allows investigators to return to any part of the linear process to redesign, as evidenced in Figure 3.3, Case Study Research Model by Yin (2014). Employing case study parameters as a methodology was useful because its dynamic structure allows the researcher to move between the preparation stage and the collection phase and from the collection phase to the design stage when appropriate. The ability to do this was critical both to working with the teacher participant in the special education context—because of day-to-day experiences that are often unpredictable within a school setting—and in attempting to support a teacher in her effort to qualify for a higher rating on the teacher observations area.
There are two working definitions proposed by Yin (2014) for case studies:

(1) A case study is an empirical inquiry that

- Investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the “case”) in depth and within to real-world context and

(2) A case study inquiry that

- Copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest
- Relies on multiple sources of evidence
- Benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis (p. 16-17)
Yin explains that case studies investigate a contemporary phenomenon to explain questions of how something occurs and why it takes place (p. 2). They focus on decisions and actions taken by individuals, organizations, and/or institutions, and they explore how and why actions are taken to further developments and explorations. Doing case study research is a linear process, which involves planning a data collection design and analyzing and presenting the data. Specifically, a case study involves planning, designing, preparing, collecting, analyzing, and sharing. Although this seems to be a linear approach, Yin (2014) argues that the beauty of a case study is its ability to revisit any section of the process when necessary to suit the needs of the participants and to respond to events that may arise.

The nature of a case study requires an inquiring mind during the process where participants pose questions. This requires opportunities to redesign. In answering why and how questions during the data collection stage, a researcher may return to the planning or designing stage to develop new approaches and/or questions to address what has surfaced, as happened during my interview with the teacher-participant. This occurred because questions that arose needed immediate attention in order to identify evidence to support the inquiry. Any well-designed case study research requires good questions for the participant(s) that can be adjusted if the need arises from the beginning; it requires all participants, particularly the researcher, to listen carefully, stay adaptable, and be cognizant of biases that may exist. Albeit a case study focuses on a single reality based on a single observer’s perspective, it can extend to a relativist perspective to accommodate multiple realities such as the perspective of the teacher-participant and participant-observer.
The planning stage of a case study requires both investigators to develop research questions that address the how and why of a given phenomenon. The question guiding this study was as follows:

In what ways does a mandated professional development policy influence teachers’ professional learning within a special education school?

This primarily addresses the following two issues:

(1) How can the use of video in the classroom support teachers’ professional learning within collaborative teacher teams?

(2) How can video support the evaluation process in special education classrooms within the parameters of a mandated tool?

Starting with these questions was an attempt to understand how, *Advance*, the mandated professional development policy in the NYCDOE, influences teachers’ opportunities to collaborate with other teachers. Once research questions are generated, according to Yin (2014), the next step is to design a plan. The design stage required the primary investigator to develop a plan that guided the way that data would be collected, analyzed, and interpreted. Once the design was developed, the primary investigator prepared for data collection; which included training for a specific case study, developing a protocol for the study, and screening for candidates to participate in the study (Yin, 2014, p.71). A case study is an inquiry approach such as action research which relies on multiple sources of evidence that are triangulated to explain how and why decisions are made (Yin, 2014; Bhatnagar, 2010). Yin (2014) argues for a consideration of six sources of evidence including documents, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observations, and physical artifacts. The present research considered four sources in collecting data: archival records of teacher evaluations reports, direct observation
of a teacher team meeting, participant-observation within a teacher team, and individual interviews. I initially reviewed archival artifacts such as teacher observations and Quality Review (QR) reports, engaged in component studies with the teacher team, and collected low-inference notes from my observations – both via video and in the classroom. The purpose of engaging teachers in component studies was to understand up front teacher-participants’ working knowledge of the Danielson Framework and then to support the teachers in developing a common understanding of rubric language used in it so that they could identify a good practice when they saw it in a video. Interviews and discussions coupled with participant observation within the collaborative teacher team meetings were research methods used to study the participant teacher’s interaction within the teacher team and to understand her concerns in developing positive collaborations. A one-on-one interview was conducted as a needs assessment of the teacher. This one-on-one interview focused directly on themes identified by the school leader in addition to questions about school culture and professional learning experiences.

**Preparing for Data Collection**

**A Conversation with the School Leader**

Planning the professional learning series for the school and for this study required needs assessment based on readily available public data. Needs assessment is critical prior to entering meetings with the study participants, because it presents a lens into the areas of strength and fosters focus on the areas that need to be improved (Guskey, 2010). There was an initial commitment of one hour for participants to engage in an interview/dialogue with the primary investigator. Conducting a needs assessment of the school by specifically speaking with the teachers gives them a voice in their professional learning.
A conversation with the school leader revealed that the school-wide goals aligned with the Quality Review feedback, *Advance* data from 2013-2014 school year, and baseline assessments from the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System (F&P BAS). F&P BAS is a “comprehensive system for one-on-one assessment [that] reliably and systematically matches students' instructional and independent reading abilities” to the F & P Level Gradients. It also links assessment to instruction along a selected literacy curriculum to improve student learning outcomes. One of the guiding principles that we (teacher team and the talent coach) were asked to address by the school leader was a focus on the Danielson Framework component 3b, Questioning and Discussion Techniques. Specifically, the school leader wanted to support teaching and learning by engaging teachers in professional learning that would provide multiple access points for all students. For example, the school leader’s goal was to support teachers in developing and implementing different rigorous tasks which were challenging for students at their present level of performance and which required students to explain and extend their thoughts in classroom discussions. The school leader identified that students were struggling with making inferences according to baseline assessments. The Quality Review served as an opportunity not only to complete mandated training for recertification by conducting observations but also to support the school in developing its teacher teams based on data collected from classroom observations. The Quality Reviewer noted that teachers’ schedules reflect time for them to meet in teams, which focus on looking at students’ work. It is also reported that teacher teams received support from external coaches including external consultants, district-based support, and school-based content-based coaches. In regard to teachers, the reviewer reported that, while school leaders were using a research-based rubric to provide teachers with feedback, there was a lack of systems and structures to adjust and provide
specific and measurable feedback to students and especially teachers. It was also reported that, while school leaders provided teachers with time to meet collaboratively, assessments of the effectiveness of these meetings including those from external coaches and district-based coaches was limited to reviewing minutes from earlier meetings and the agenda for the current one.

According to the report, the school had no system in place to assess how next steps identified by teacher teams were implemented and were affecting learning in classrooms. Further, although there was evidence of a call for a focus on supporting teachers with questioning and discussion, student engagement in the classroom and student work displayed on classroom bulletin boards did not evidence the school’s instructional focus. Additionally, there was no evidence that the school had implemented any ongoing professional development to support teachers. Finally, there was limited evidence of actions aligned with the school’s articulated beliefs on how students learn best, which, in this case, called for a focus on students making their learning visible through student-led discussions.

After reviewing the QR data, I scheduled face-to-face meetings with the school leader and his cabinet to discuss his expectations for the 2014-2015 school year. Based on phone conferences and a meeting with the District office, a face-to-face meeting with the school leader was required to ensure that the school was prepared for the first day of school and prepared to observe teachers and provide actionable and effective feedback in the first few months of the school year.

During the initial meetings with the school leader, he communicated that the instructional focus for the 2014-2015 school year was on student-led discussions. Specifically, the school leader wanted to focus on Danielson 2013 Rubric component 3b, Questioning and Discussion Techniques for teachers, based on feedback provided by the Quality Reviewer in the 2013-2014
school year. The school leader wanted the talent coach to design a professional development program for all teachers so that the school would receive a rating of Proficient or Well Developed on indicators 4.1, Teacher Support and Supervision, and 4.2, Teacher Teams and Leadership Development. This meeting was guided by sample questions selected from the needs assessment tool from the NYCDOE Handbook for Professional Learning. The needs assessment in this initial face-to-face meeting was driven by data from the previous Quality Review because most of the responses from the school leader referred to the need to score higher than it had in previous years.

The leadership team needed to delve deeper into specific areas to improve both students’ learning outcomes and teaching practices by reviewing multiple data sources including data from Advance. Data from a source like Advance provided specific areas focused on instruction and/or preparation of lessons for the school and individual teachers when planning professional learning sessions to support needs.

Archival Records

Prior to collecting data to address the research questions, I reviewed several data sources. This included the school’s Quality Reviews from the 2013-2014 school year, the Advance data from 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 and conversations with the superintendent’s team to construct generative themes aligned to the Danielson Framework rubric. The evidence gathered provided some insight into issues of concern and areas of need that required support to improve students’ instructional outcomes. Asking questions from all parties with situated knowledge of the current conditions – the school principal, assistant principals, and the teachers – was critical to shaping the context and understanding the needs of the school (Kincheloe, 2012). While the Quality Review provided the data from the case study school, observation reports provided some
understanding of the teacher-participants’ prior experience and teaching practices based on prior evaluations.

**Context of School.** Prior to each school visit, the talent coach builds an understanding of each school by reviewing various data points. Data points include but are not limited to a conversation with the superintendent, review of school reports such as the Quality Review and school surveys. The school selected for this study is one that was identified by the superintendent’s team as needing additional support to improve teaching practices and student learning outcomes. First, the school had a new principal who was in his second year. Additionally, the school had two new assistant principals with an average of 2 years’ experience, and a leadership consultant who was a former assistant principal but with limited experience. The selected school is located in the Melrose section of the South Bronx in New York City. The school provided high-need special education services interventions in a self-contained setting to over 300 students in grades K-8. According the school’s 2014 Comprehensive Education Plan and Quality Review, the student body was 55% Latino, 35% African American, 4% White, 2% Asian, 4% American Indians. Approximately 83% of the students were male and 17% female. Students who attend this school are classified as either children with emotional disabilities and/or pupils on the autism spectrum. All students who attend this school have an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) and a mandate for a 12-month school year. Additionally, all students received one or more related supplemental services such as reduced student-teacher-paraprofessional ratios and in the most severe cases a 1:1 paraprofessional.

**Preparation for Classroom Observations**

**Component study with teacher-participant.** As a former school leader, I encouraged teachers to use video as a tool to guide them in pursuing collaborative discussions about their
pedagogical practices to improve student learning outcomes. Prior to engaging teachers in using video as a professional learning tool in team meetings, the process of looking at video specifically for improving teaching and learning in collaborative teacher teams was modeled for those teachers. A similar process was used in preparing the teacher-participant because “the training also provides an important opportunity for uncovering problems within the case study plan” (Yin, 2014, p. 82). Training the teacher helped her become knowledgeable and have access to the dominant discourse of school leaders, in this case, the Danielson Framework. As the teacher-participant had not worked with video as a professional learning tool, it was necessary to introduce this process to her so that she was confident about looking at and discussing her teaching practices with her colleagues.

Because the research focused on analyzing videos and low-inference notes of pedagogical practices from teachers, it was necessary to train the teacher-participant to properly record classroom instruction with a focus on selected components that aligned with the school leader’s identified areas of need. The first step taken in training the teacher-participant was to discuss the purpose of the case study by presenting the research questions and discussing why she was selected as a participant. After a discussion of the purpose of the study, the four-step protocol discussed previously was introduced, allowing Mrs. Stevens to review the plans and ask questions. Her queries included what to collect during component studies and the types of evidence that would be collected to support identified elements in the Danielson Framework rubric.

Under Chancellor’s regulations A-640 Part I, filming or photographing in school facilities during school hours is permitted only with the written approval of the principal and, additionally, employees or students may be filmed and photographed with written permission of the principal.
and, in addition, the respective Department employee or the student’s parent or guardian. This understanding was communicated to participants prior to any data collection in writing and verbally. However, filming observations was an optional selection for a new teacher under an evaluation observation cycle (NYCDOE, n.d., p. 6). Though many teachers did not select this option as part of their observations, the teacher-participant was prepared undertake this process. In order to conduct research that involves documenting students’ actions in the classroom using video, schools are required to obtain parental consent. Most New York City public schools, including the case study school, obtain parental consent during the first few weeks when school is in session to allow filming and photography in classrooms and in the school community. Additionally, using video was part of the way schools support teachers with teaching and learning, therefore, no additional parental consents were required for the study. Once it was understood by the researchers that there were no consent forms required to engage in this professional learning, the talent coach continued training the teacher-participant in the Danielson Framework rubric.

The talent coach and teacher-participant engaged in a component study, specifically on component 3b, Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques, to support the teacher’s understanding of the language used in the component to identify what questions and discussion strategies would look like in her classroom setting. A copy of the entire Danielson Framework, which is provided to school leaders during training, was provided to the teacher-participant to support aligning observable practices in the videos with the language of the rubric. To delve deeper into understanding this component, the talent coach and teacher-participant read the description of component 3b presented in Figure 3.4 Excerpt from NYCDOE Danielson 2013
Rubric and collaboratively highlighted phrases and words that resonated with regard to what was currently observable in classrooms in the school.

Figure 3.4. Excerpt from NYCDOE Danielson 2013 Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component 3b:</th>
<th>Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questioning and discussion are the only instructional strategies specifically referred to in the Framework for Teaching, a decision that reflects their central importance to teachers’ practice. In the Framework, it is important that questioning and discussion be used as techniques to deepen student understanding rather than serve as recitation, or a verbal “quiz.” Good teachers use divergent as well as convergent questions, framed in such a way that they invite students to formulate hypotheses, make connections, or challenge previously held views. Students’ responses to questions are valued; effective teachers are especially adept at responding to and building on student responses and making use of their ideas. High-quality questions encourage students to make connections among concepts or events previously believed to be unrelated and to arrive at new understandings of complex material. Effective teachers also pose questions for which they do not know the answers. Even when a question has a limited number of correct responses, the question, being nonformulaic, is likely to promote student thinking.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class discussions are animated, engaging all students in important issues and promoting the use of precise language to deepen and extend their understanding. These discussions may be based around questions formulated by the students themselves. Furthermore, when a teacher is building on student responses to questions (whether posed by the teacher or by other students), students are challenged to explain their thinking and to cite specific text or other evidence (for example, from a scientific experiment) to back up a position. This focus on argumentation forms the foundation of logical reasoning, a critical skill in all disciplines.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not all questions must be at a high cognitive level in order for a teacher’s performance to be rated at a high level; that is, when exploring a topic, a teacher might begin with a series of questions of low cognitive challenge to provide a review, or to ensure that everyone in the class is “on board.” Furthermore, if questions are at a high level but only a few students participate in the discussion, the teacher’s performance on the component cannot be judged to be at a high level. In addition, during lessons involving students in small-group work, the quality of the students’ questions and discussion in their small groups may be considered as part of this component. In order for students to formulate high-level questions, they must have learned how to do so. Therefore, high-level questions from students, either in the full class or in small-group discussions, provide evidence that these skills have been taught.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After revising the description for the component, the teacher-participant was asked to identify five critical aspects in component 3b (such as quality of questions/prompts, discussion techniques, student participation) that needed to be improved. Once this was accomplished, the talent coach and teacher-participants worked collaboratively to identify possible examples, which supported effective practices. To ensure professional learning communities respond to teacher learning and to ensure implementation of practices that allows students to learn, DuFour (2004) argues that “collaborative teacher conversations must quickly move beyond “What are we
expected to teach?” to “How will we know when each student has learned?” (p. 2). Therefore, it was important to support the teacher in moving from what the expectations were in teaching non-verbal students to engage in discussions about how she would know when students were engaged in classroom discussions. Once this was accomplished, the teacher-participant was equipped with the understanding and the knowledge needed to effectively observe a classroom. She was prepared to review her teaching in the video with a focus on improving her teaching practices in order to engage all her students (verbal and non-verbal) in discussion.

Prior to reviewing and taking low-inference notes from the videos, the teacher-participant recorded a fifteen-minute session from her classroom. The talent coach and school leader were not present during this lesson so that the teacher would take ownership of capturing evidence to support her focus area. After reviewing the video in isolation, the teacher provided a copy to the talent coach for review. This was followed by a scheduled meeting outside of school hours to review the video and understand it in line with the Danielson Framework, specifically the possible examples developed prior to watching the video in the component study. Finally, the talent coach and teacher-participant engaged in a focused conversation developing actionable steps the teacher could take to improve some of her practices based on what she and the coach observed in the video. This process – component study, review of video observation, taking low-inference notes, and generating actionable next steps – was modeled for teacher teams organized by the school leader. The difference between the training school leaders received and the training teachers received was that teachers were not charged with providing a component rating for what they observed; they were charged with providing actionable next steps to support the teacher’s practices. Training for teacher teams followed a structured protocol and the meeting was co-facilitated by the teacher-participant.
The NYCDOE Teacher Observation protocol. To prepare teacher participants for classroom observations, it was important to develop the protocol that would be used to engage participants in taking a closer look into their own practices as well as those of others. The protocol developed for the study was similar to the one that had been used to train school administrators in the new teacher evaluation system. To prepare school leaders to fairly and accurately rate teachers' practices, talent coaches followed a protocol developed by the NYCDOE Office of Teacher Effectiveness. The three-step protocol guiding teacher evaluations for each observation cycle includes:

1) Step 1 – Observe. This first step required a classroom visit where school leaders and talent coach gathered low-inference evidence of a teacher’s practice from the classroom in light of the Danielson Rubric. When collecting low-inference notes, school leaders were encouraged to document exactly what they saw and heard based on what teachers were doing and students’ actions and reactions to the directions provided to them.

2) Step 2 – Prepare and Share Feedback. During this step, the talent coach facilitated collaborative discussion focused on the classroom visit using the Danielson Framework. Using low-inference notes gathered from Step 1-Observe, school leaders were trained to align the evidence with the language of the Danielson Framework and provide a rating of Highly Effective, Effective, Developing, or Ineffective to the practice they observed in the classroom. Next, the school leader was guided in identifying and prioritizing a high-leverage area to provide feedback and specific, measurable, and relevant next steps and an action plan to support the teacher in improving her practice. Working in collaboration, school leaders engaged in learning-focused conversations to guide them in providing the feedback they had generated to the teacher they had observed.
3) **Step 3 – Develop.** This step required school leaders to provide teachers with a time, preferably two to three weeks, for the teacher to implement the action plan provided during the feedback cycle. Part of the Develop stage involved school leaders identifying the relevant resources – another teacher, coaching sessions, online resources – that a teacher might need to improve both practices and student learning outcomes. The school leader was then encouraged to visit the classroom within that period to monitor implementation of the feedback provided to the teacher and repeat the three-step process.

The protocol designed for this study combined the NYCDOE Teacher Effectiveness protocol discussed above with Reciprocal Peer Mentoring. Reciprocal Peer Mentoring, as defined in the NYCDOE Handbook for Professional Learning, is a “teacher-facilitated, non-evaluative classroom visit focusing on the collaborative development of instructional knowledge and skills” (p. 89). This type of mentoring involved teachers taking turns as host in their classroom and allowing other teachers to visit and observe. During Reciprocal Peer Mentoring, host teachers use evidence from what students do such as student-student questioning or student-teacher questions and conversations that occur in the classroom and reflect upon their practices using the Danielson Framework aligned with professional learning goals. Similar to the Teacher Effectiveness training the school leaders received, visiting teachers used evidence aligned to the Danielson Framework to confirm the host teacher’s reflections and/or bring to light additional areas of strength and potential areas for growth. By combining the Reciprocal Peer Mentoring model and the Teacher Effectiveness protocol, a four-step process was developed to guide this study.

Prior to the introduction of the developed protocol to the teacher teams, participants selected a host teacher who had already volunteered and a facilitator to guide discussions during
professional learning communities (aka teacher teams). The talent coach served as the facilitator to guide teachers in the first cycle of the developed protocol. The facilitator’s task was to guide conversations about videos and vignettes selected by participating teachers by asking relevant questions to probe and to intervene when appropriate. In the four-step process developed for the study,

1) Step 1 asked teachers to first observe a classroom lesson together through watching a video pre-recorded by the host teacher. All participants gathered low-inference evidence in their notebooks while watching the first video. Low-inference data focused on what was observed visually or auditorily. Teacher observers were encouraged not to make inferences about an observation nor to label an observation as simply good or bad. After observing and gathering low inference evidence, participating teachers were asked to review their notes and share them with other visiting teachers in the meeting to make sure that the evidence gathered from the observations were low-inference.

2) Step 2 the facilitator asked specific questions using an adapted version of Save the Last Word by for ME protocol from the National School Reform Faculty Harmony Education Center to structure sharing of evidence and to allow all voices to be heard. The first question asked was “What did you see and what did you hear?” By asking this question, participants had an opportunity to individually share one item of evidence that stood out to them while observing the classroom. This step helped teachers with organizing and identifying relevant ideas and prior knowledge to analyze effective pedagogical practices in the classroom. All participants were encouraged to contribute the first time around but could pass if they had no new low-inference evidence from the observation that they wanted to share. If participants shared low-inference evidence that included analyses or
judgments, the facilitator reminded the participant to state observable evidence only in terms of what was seen and/or heard. In this step, the facilitator surveyed the room to first ensure that all participants had shared their low-inference notes and secondly that enough evidence had been gathered to provide a rationale for selected components that aligned with the Danielson Framework. To support lesson-specific evidence, the facilitator had an opportunity to ask some probing questions such as:

a) Were students cognitively engaged in this lesson? What is the evidence?

b) What did students do in this lesson? Was it rigorous? How do you know?

c) What was the lesson’s objective and did students attain it? What is the evidence?

These questions specifically focus on student learning outcomes and engagement during the observed classroom instruction. During classroom observations, observers may see teacher actions that lead students to take an action, however, these actions of both teacher and student may not cognitively engage students.

3) Step 3 required the review of the Danielson Framework rubric to determine a rating supported by evidence. The area of focus selected by teachers was based on the school’s instructional focus as presented by the school leader and/or Advance data for a teacher’s ratings and previous feedback. The facilitator asked participants to quietly and independently identify a rating and encourage visiting teachers to select the appropriate score on the rubric and record it on an index card. It was important to remind participants at this stage to make sure others did not see their rating for the components selected. Teachers have some knowledge of the Danielson Framework rubric; however, many have not participated in component studies that focus on looking at the elements and identifying possible examples. Teachers will therefore extend their limited knowledge of
the rubric but extensive knowledge of their students to develop practices best suited to their classroom settings. This will help teachers interrogate their own practices and understand contextually their own situations (Kincheloe, 2003). When all participants were ready, the facilitator asked everyone to reveal their responses and recorded them on a chart paper. The facilitator then asked two to three participants including the host teacher to respond to the following questions:

- Why did you rate this component as you did?
- Based on what you have heard from other teachers; would you change your response? Why or why not?

When the first question was asked, the facilitator was responsible for eliciting responses from each participant, targeting areas of disagreement.

4) Step 4 is critical as it is directly linked to pedagogical shifts that teachers must make to ensure that teaching and learning is effective in their classrooms. This step required the team to come to an agreement on one to two specific areas of strengths and one to two areas that needed improvement to guide the host teacher. To provide specific, measurable, actionable and relevant feedback, the team decided on what specifically they wanted the teacher to focus on to improve student learning outcomes. Specifically, the team needed to decide to focus on a given component from the Danielson Framework rubric and select a specific element or two on which to provide feedback. This constituted the recommendation of areas for the teacher to improve in order to create better student-learning outcomes. To support this feedback cycle, participants were reminded that it is important to explain why the teacher needed to change a practice. This explanation was based on the school’s vision and mission concerning how children learn, their
instructional focus, and the implementation of the Danielson Framework rubric. The last step in providing feedback was for the team to present specific actions that the teacher could take in planning and/or instruction to support improved student learning outcomes.

As part of this study, the talent coach trained teachers how to use the Danielson Framework rubric—using low inference notes from videos, peer-coaching, conversation protocols, providing actionable next steps, and teachers on looking at videos objectively as part of the professional development plan. Additionally, the researcher reviewed protocols for professional development sessions for teachers including the required JEPD for school leaders. Specifically, the discussion included the charge that after each classroom observation school leaders would commit to providing teachers with feedback within twenty-four to forty-eight hours. A new approach to ensuring that school leaders provided specific and actionable feedback was for the talent coach to observe focused conversations with the school leader without mediating but subsequently to provide feedback on the observed conversation. The school leader and talent coach agreed to a four- to six-week cycle focusing on specific components from the Danielson Framework. Figure 3.5. Protocol and Timeline for Four-Six Week PD Session, shows an outline of what was presented to the school leader subsequent to our meeting. The Reciprocal Peer Mentoring inter-visitation started with a self-assessment from teachers to identify areas in which they needed to focus during professional learning sessions. This was followed by training teachers in using the proposed protocols identified by the researcher coupled with component studies from the Danielson Framework. The next step was to set five dates for a teacher volunteer to record a fifteen-minute classroom observation and another date for teachers to meet and discuss their observations. The last step in this professional
learning proposal presented to the school leader involved summative evaluations from teachers to guide the focus for the next learning cycle.

Figure 3.5. **Protocol and Timeline for Four-Six Week Professional Learning Cycle**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Item</th>
<th>Date, Time, Location</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before Inter-visitations Teachers should have revisited self-assessment from the beginning of the school year, analyzed it, and reflected on their progress since it was developed. Some teachers may have chosen to revise the goal/plan they developed for themselves. Teachers could also use the “Specific Considerations for Teachers of Students with Disabilities” to guide them and keep them focused.</td>
<td>December 17, 2014</td>
<td>Discussed the process of the PLC and asked for a volunteer to provide video resource for next session.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trained teachers on using the Norming Protocol and Danielson Framework for Teaching</td>
<td>January 8, 2015</td>
<td>• Component Studies (3b, 3c, 3d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Provided all teachers with a copy of the Danielson Rubric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Introduced teachers to the Norming Protocol using a pre-recorded video.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter-visitations</td>
<td>Bi-weekly from December 15, 2014 to February 26, 2015</td>
<td>Host teacher(s) recorded a minimum of 15 minutes of teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Host Teacher(^1) shared the video with Visiting Teachers before each Thursday PLC session using Norming Protocol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/5/2015</td>
<td>1/8/2015</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/20/2015</td>
<td>1/22/2015</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/2/2015</td>
<td>2/5/2015</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/9/2015</td>
<td>2/12/2015</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) The individual host teachers are simply those who provide a video record of their teaching prior to Professional Learning Communities and the Visit. Teachers are those who will watch the video, gather low-inference data, and provide feedback using the Norming Protocol.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/23/2015</td>
<td>After one Cycle of Intervisitation, teacher completed Summative Professional Learning Evaluation Form.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/26/2015</td>
<td>February 12, 2015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Limitations of Research Methodology**

In this chapter, I presented my standpoint as a theoretical framework guiding my use of bricolage and selection of methodologies. I explained that this research explored the extent to which a mandated professional development policy influenced teachers’ professional learning within a special education context under *Advance*, the teacher evaluation system introduced by the NYCDOE to support teaching and learning. I introduced case study as the primary methodology supported by action research and ethnography. An emphasis of the research as explained in Chapter 2 was the use of video as a professional learning tool to gather specific evidence in conjunction with the Danielson Framework to support teachers of SWD. Finally, I presented my methods for collecting and analyzing data to guide further data collection. While this study supported the teacher-participant; the school leader’s preparation for his QR; and myself, by virtue of my being able to move between three methodologies, there are two major limitations to the methodologies and video as a professional learning tool. The same methodology-bricolage that allowed me to perform this study also was a limitation for several reasons.

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2 From the New York City Department of Education *Handbook for Professional Learning: Research, Resources and Strategies for Implementation*, p. 103.
First, there is some literature presenting bricolage as a plausible methodology, however, there is a limitation in literature providing information on how to do bricolage, particularly in education. The literature accessible to me in pursuing bricolage was Kincheloe and Berry in Denzin and Lincoln’s (2011) introduction to *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* and other literature from Kincheloe (2001; 2004). Markham’s (2005) paper was useful in developing my knowledge of interpretive ethnography but not useful to providing me with a how-to research approach. One of the most useful papers that supported my understanding of the importance of bricolage when working with teachers was Hatton’s (1988) account. Hatton concludes that teachers’ work is bricolage because of the experiences teachers bring to learning in the field. Steinberg and Kincheloe’s (2012) chapter on employing bricolage in science education provided a better understanding of how I could use different epistemological methodologies when doing research. I continued with this methodology by employing other methodologies with sufficient literature to guide the duration of my study.

Gaining access to research participants and a research site within a short time frame was possible because of the relationships I had developed with the school leader based on my primary research work as a talent coach. Anticipated limitations to this research included technical difficulties and the school leader’s expectations of the talent coach. Technical difficulties such as poor sound quality and sometimes no sound at all when teachers recorded their fifteen-minute videos limited low-inference evidenced gathered during the first meeting. Initial challenges with collecting video evidence were a result of teacher and student anxiety about being taped. In the first video used to train teacher teams, video recording was distractive to learning, and, as a result, the teacher was unable to accurately capture fifteen minutes consistently. Similar to challenges that Derry et al. (2015) faced in their research, teachers
struggled with “(a) knowing how to choose and place cameras and microphones, (b) deciding when to start and end shooting, (c) deciding whether to shoot mainly wide angle or close up, and (d) making panning and zooming decisions in what is called camera editing” (p. 9).

Despite the challenges presented by the lack of sufficient literature to guide and support the use of bricolage as a methodology and technical challenges that emerged prior to and during the study, I continued with this study with an understanding that the knowledge produced will contribute to a body of work focused on the professional learning of teachers in special education contexts.
Chapter Four
Findings and Discussion

This research explored the extent to which a mandated professional development policy influenced a teacher's professional learning in a collaborative team within a special education school. The primary policy presented in the study was Advance, the new teacher evaluation system introduced in the NYCDOE to support teaching and learning. To support teachers in making sense of the NYCDOE Danielson Framework 2013 Rubric, which is used to evaluate teachers and to support the teacher-participant with her professional growth, video was enlisted as a professional learning tool. The research question that guided this study was the following: In what ways can video influence teachers’ professional learning under a mandated professional development policy within a special education school?

The study primarily dealt with the following two corollary questions:

1. How can teachers’ use of video in the classroom support professional learning within a special education collaborative teacher team?
2. How can video support the evaluation process in special education classrooms within the parameters of a mandated tool?

To study these questions, case study, action research, and ethnography were used as a bricolage of methodologies guided by standpoint theory.

In this chapter, I will first introduce my primary methodology and take the reader through the stages for conducting this study. I will present my findings in sections aligned in a narrative form telling a story from the beginning where I met with the school leader to plan for the professional learning session and I will end with my last session with the teachers. I will start with description of the context of the school based on review of the Quality Review,
observations and conversations with the school leader and the teacher leader. I will then present findings through building an explanation as a participant-observer in the collaborative teacher team and based on interviews with Mrs. Stevens, the teacher-participant. I will focus more on the analyses of my findings by presenting the research questions and addressing each through an explanation. I take a narrative approach to portray a full context of the experiences and the culture of research participants as I observed and analyzed them.

**Findings**

**Quality of Implementation of a Mandated Policy in a Special Education Program**

Prior to meeting with the school leader, I met with the District Network Leader to discuss areas of focus for the school. During my first meetings with the school leader, he shared his Quality Review ratings and recommended areas of focus. The school leader also shared data from the school’s Initial Planning Conference (IPC) so that I could effectively support teachers and the school’s leaders. Part of the *Advance* teacher evaluation process requires school leaders to conduct an IPC to review teachers’ prior data based on their rating from the previous year, areas of strength, and areas that need improvement so that they can continue to promote student learning and do so more effectively. In the preparation stage I met with the school leader to discuss and plan for the IPC. Figure 4.1 – Quality Review Data 2013-2014 provides evidence supporting the school leader’s and the district’s interest in the school’s focusing on component 3b of the Danielson Framework.

**Quality Review Report 2013-2014.** The Quality Review Report is one of the several data sources that talent coaches use to understand some areas of accomplishment and other areas in need of focus for improvement. The NYCDOE Quality Review (QR) is a process used to evaluate how schools are performing based on stated outcomes in the Comprehensive Education
Plans. The QR is an annual qualitative assessment conducted by the NYCDOE principal and school communities to ensure that action plans delineated in a school’s Comprehensive Education Plans are being implemented effectively. QRs are a one- or two-day process during which an external evaluator meets with school leaders, teachers, students, and parents to discuss, observe, and rate school performance using a specific rubric. Similar to the teacher evaluation, the QR assigns overall ratings of Underdeveloped, Developing, Proficient, or Well Developed in ten selected indicator areas. The rubric that is used to evaluate the quality of work being done at schools is divided into three sections – Instructional Core, School Culture, and Systems for Improvement. These sections are in turn divided into ten quality indicators which are evaluated during the QR. After each QR, school leaders debrief with the evaluator and are provided with the evaluations of areas that are strong and areas that require growth and improvement along with next steps to implement for improving specific quality indicators.

The school had a QR in the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years and was once again selected under Chancellor Farina’s administration in the 2014-2015 school year because of its overall past ratings. The date for the 2014-2015 Quality Review had not yet been provided prior to my initial conversation with the school leader. In the 2013-2014 school year, this school received an overall rating of Developing. As a result of receiving this rating, the school was selected once again to be evaluated in the 2014-2015 school year. According to the 2013-2014 QR Report, the school needed to improve in indicators:

- 1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school’s instructional goals and meet students’ learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student products such as culminating projects, written work, exams, etc.
• 3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school,

• 4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework along with an analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and to implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, and

• 4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on student learning

Additionally, QR indicator 5.1, which focuses on school leaders making adjustments as needed and monitoring implementation of school initiative, was rated Underdeveloped.

Figure 4.1. Extract from School Quality Review Data 2013-2014

Build upon pedagogical practices that demonstrate the school’s beliefs about student learning, and ensure that all students are presented with the means with which to engage in learning tasks that promote high levels of thinking. (1.2)

• The administration clearly articulates their beliefs related to student learning; collaboration is meaningful, multiple entry points are provided, reciprocal respectful practices are in place, supplemental resources support learning, and tasks are varied to meet student learning needs. There is a strong focus on supporting teachers in component 3b of the Danielson Framework, questioning and discussion within lessons. However, student work products displayed on bulletin boards and within individual work folders were primarily curriculum or teacher developed worksheets, mostly at the same level for all students. While professional development related to building questioning and discussion within lessons is ongoing, classroom visits identified students often sitting in groups to engage in partner work with their peers. During the majority of instructional periods observed, teachers provided students with the same task. Most were in the form of completing worksheets. Although SMART board usage within some classrooms led to high levels of student engagement there was limited opportunity
for all students to be challenged in their learning, or tasks did not consistently offer high levels of challenge for varied levels of student performance. In addition, questions posed, despite a focus on including DOK [Depth of Knowledge] level questions in lesson plans at the elementary school level, seldom required more than responses that asked for recall of information. For example, teacher’s questions focused on the “who” or the “what”, rather than the “why”.

According to this data, although the school was focusing on the Danielson Framework component 3b and was providing professional development to teachers helping them improve their questioning and discussion techniques, this was not evident in classrooms. According to the reviewer, “Despite a focus on including DoK [Depths of Knowledge] level questions…[questions] seldom required more than responses that asked for recall of information” (NYCDOE, n.d.). A special emphasis in the report is the quality of implementation of pedagogical strategies developed during professional development sessions. Although school leaders introduced research-based methods of questioning to teachers in professional learning sessions to improve classroom practices, what was observed did not mirror expectations that leads to increased discussions amongst students. This is because although research-based methods such as DoK are introduced to teachers to support with student learning outcomes, some of the demands may not be accessible to students based on their present levels of performance. A common misunderstanding of the use of DoK, as I observed the practice, is the difference between complexity of questioning compared to difficulty in questioning. Feedback to teachers and implementation of what is articulated tends to guide teachers in developing difficult questions that are not necessarily accessible to students. A question asking me to recite the names of all forty-five presidents of the United States of America is a difficult one because it requires that me to recall and this is hard for some to do. A difficult question is not the same as a
complex question as a difficult questions requires accessing knowledge that students may not have experienced; whereas complexity in questions relates to a type of thinking, action or knowledge a child may need to complete a given task. Just because a student has difficulty with understanding the difference among various types of nouns does not mean that the question asked is a complex one; the difficulty they are having can be attributed to the fact that it is new information. The professional learning that I noticed in this school focused on teachers asking DoK levels 3 and 4 (see Appendix B) which tended to be difficult for some students and not necessarily complex. In order to raise the level of questioning to DoK levels 3 and 4, teachers needed to understand the difference between difficulty and complex in questions so that it is accessible to students.

**Reluctance to permit videotaped observations.** During visits to the school which were part of job-embedded support for *Advance*, a mandated professional development for school leaders, I had an opportunity to meet with and discuss teaching and learning with teachers. Among these teachers was Mrs. Stevens, the ultimate teacher-participant. I sent an email to her asking if she would be interested in participating in a study to support teaching and learning using the Danielson Framework and employing video as a tool for professional learning. She responded to the invitation with a telephone call sharing her interest in improving specific practices in her classroom. Upon review of her IPC, which was provided by the school leader during one of our training sessions, I noticed that Mrs. Stevens selected an observation option that mandated a minimum of six informal observations for the 2014-2015 school year during which time the school leader did not have to announce his visit or meet with the teacher to discuss a focus area prior to the visit. I also observed that Mrs. Stevens did not consent to
videotaped observations; however, she informed me during our telephone conference that she would record herself and share the tape and its contents only if she could review it with me first.

As part of the new evaluation process, teachers can consent to videotape evaluative classroom observations where evaluators are present for the recording unless the teacher and school leader both agree that the evaluator does not need to be present. In order for this to happen, teachers needed to indicate in the beginning of the school year during their IPC whether they wished to allow observations to be videotaped. Teachers had two choices: (1) the school leader choosing which observations, if any, would be videotaped or (2) the teacher designating that some observations must be videotaped. According to data from the Advance reports provided by the school leader, approximately 6.3% (six teachers out of ninety-five teachers represented in the school), consented to videotaped observations. Among the six teachers who consented to videotaped observations as part of their annual evaluation, four teachers selected the option which allowed the evaluator to choose which observations to record, and the other two selected specific observations – e.g., formal, informal, first, or second observations – that they wanted to be documented and used as evidence. All of the teachers selected by the school leader to participate in the professional learning cycle withheld consent from videotaped observations, including Mrs. Stevens.

When asked why she had not elected to be observed using video, Mrs. Stevens stated, I mean I really like him [my principal] and all, but I am not going to put myself on the video to be evaluated. He doesn’t really observe me; the new AP does. I don’t know her and I don’t trust her, you know…she is not in the classroom. I just don’t know, but I will do the video if I can see it first. (communication with Mrs. Stevens, September 9, 2015)
This initial conversation with Mrs. Stevens raised some concerns about trust and the relationship she had with the school principal and the new administrator. Although I had a relationship with Mrs. Stevens, I had to build a level of trust with her – one that was grounded in evidence. To do this, I explained the process for providing feedback to the Mrs. Stevens and we discussed that I would only share with the school leader what she wanted me to, and that my communication with the school leader would focus on observed evidence from the classroom and not our conversations. I thereby built trust with Mrs. Stevens by communicating honestly with her, based on evidence observed from her classroom and also from her interactions with her colleagues. Subsequent to this conversation, Mrs. Stevens shared copies of her Annual Performance Review for me to review and to highlight areas in which I could provide my expertise.

**School leaders’ knowledge aligned to Danielson Framework.** The first evaluative observation in the 2014-2015 school year was conducted by the principal of the school. This informal observation was conducted on October 2, 2014, and feedback was provided to the teacher on November 23, 2014. In the area of component 3b: Using Questions and Discussion Techniques, the teacher received a rating of Ineffective with a rationale stating:

The teacher’s questions are of low cognitive challenge, with single correct responses, and are asked in rapid succession. This was evidenced when teacher asked student to point at the picture with two animals, student pointed at the page, teacher then held student’s hand and pointed at the two animals. Student was then asked to circle the picture with 2 animals. Next steps: Allow wait time after asking student a question and let student work on trying to figure it out. (MOTP report on Mrs. Stevens, October 2, 2014).
It is important to note that I had been working with the principal weekly as a Talent coach as part of my responsibility to identify effective practices. I worked with the school leader in reviewing previous observation reports to understand and discuss expectations for effective practices. What we learned from our first three job-embedded support visits was that most of this administrators’ ratings were misaligned with the evidence and mostly did not provide effective next steps for teachers to implement. Additionally, the principal realized after our sessions that many of his effective ratings for some components, in retrospect should have been rated as developing or ineffective.

The second observation was conducted by the assistant principal, who was new to the school and to the student population whom Mrs. Stevens was charged with teaching. The assistant principal’s experience with the Danielson Framework came from cabinet meetings with the principal; I had not yet trained her in using the rubric. In the the second observation, conducted on December 8, 2014, the teacher’s practice in the same component was given a rating of Effective with the following rationale, “The teacher used some low-level questions designed to promote student thinking and understanding, as evidenced by the teacher asking, ‘What do you think so far the story is about?’ and ‘What is important to learn about this chapter?’” (MOTP report of Mrs. Stevens, December 8, 2014). Both rationales send conflicting messages because, although the school leaders selected the same language from the Danielson Framework to rate the teacher and the evidence is aligned, the ratings are different. This example presents gaps between the principal and the assistant principal. Though both capture similar evidence during two separate classroom visits, the rating is misaligned which leads to feedback that does not align to the teachers’ needs.
Although Mrs. Stevens did not trust the ratings of the assistant principal, her rating in this case was favorable; however, the feedback was of poor quality. The written observation report that the teacher received on January 12, 2015 did not provide specific feedback focused on improving this component. Although the teacher received feedback from the first observation report, the only next step provided was for her to “[a]llow wait time after asking student a question and let student work on trying to figure it out.” Both rationales provided low-inference data based on what was observed; however, there was a misunderstanding on the part of both administrators about what questions and discussion should look like in this particular teacher’s classroom. Both of these reports did not provide effective feedback and high leverage strategies to promote classroom discussions between students. The knowledge that the school leaders bring to teacher evaluation emerged from the data gathered from reviewing the teachers’ MOTP reports.

**Towards Structured Collaborations**

As discussed earlier in this section, Mrs. Steven is one who showed a great interest in participating in the study. After confirming professional learning cycle dates with the school leader and after a brief phone conference with the teacher, I conducted a one-on-one interview to learn more about Mrs. Stevens. Although I had not completed the preparation stage of the case study, which included a review of the protocol that would be used during the professional learning cycles and a component study with Mrs. Stevens, I moved to the collection stage with an interview of the teacher-participant to learn more about her experiences.

During my phone conversation with Mrs. Stevens, she expressed that she had struggled as a first-year teacher at her previous school and decided to transfer to her current school in the 2013-2014 school year. According to Mrs. Stevens, she worked in isolation for two years as a
new teacher because her previous school did not encourage collaborations. Although there were structured times for teachers to meet, meetings were not consistent, and, when teachers did meet, they were provided with logistical information. Additionally, Mrs. Stevens stated that she did not have access to the principal and other school leaders when seeking additional support to develop strategies for improving questioning and discussion techniques. I decided to interview Mrs. Stevens to understand and learn from her about the school’s environment post-Danielson, in addition to the school’s attitude toward collaborative teacher teams. Particularly, I wanted to learn how the implementation of *Advance* influenced collaborative teacher teams compared to my own knowledge about the school. The questions I selected to ask focused on the school environment and culture as it related to professional learning environments and teachers’ preparedness to engage with the Danielson Framework. Specifically, I asked Mrs. Stevens questions about teacher team collaborations and teachers’ preparedness for implementation of *Advance*, particularly the introduction and implementation the Danielson Framework. Additionally, some interview questions focused on professional learning experiences aligned with Mrs. Stevens’ self-assessment, which identified areas of growth and areas for improvement in addition to focus areas identified by the school leader in his earlier classroom observations of Mrs. Stevens.

I made several attempts in the beginning of the school year to meet with Mrs. Stevens to no avail and subsequently scheduled a meeting with her in a private location for the initial one-on-one interview. Rather than continuing our phone conversation about her ratings and the feedback that was provided which was misaligned, I decided to start with a general question from my interview protocol (see Appendix E). I asked her how she would describe the culture of
her school. When asked this question, Mrs. Stevens sighed and paused for a few seconds and responded by stating,

I stay mostly to myself, but compared to my old school, I am able to work with other teachers. We actually have time set aside to sometimes plan, at times we talk about [Individualized Education Plans] IEPs and deadlines approaching, and we also talk about what we need in the school during our teacher team meetings (communication with Mrs. Stevens, October 3, 2014).

To delve deeper into how the culture influences teaching and learning at the school, I asked Mrs. Stevens the following, which resulted in the dialogue below:

Researcher: How did the culture of the school mediate your pedagogical practices?

Mrs. Stevens: What do you mean by pedagogical practices?

Researcher: You know, your teaching in the classroom. How does the way you work with others, like the relationship and the environment of the school and the teacher teams influence best practices?

Mrs. Stevens was somewhat hesitant to answer this question and again paused and stated:

“I am able to talk to other teachers who have worked here and had my students last year or years before about how I can help them. The X, Y, and V houses [a house is what the school refers to as their special classes with ratios of 12:1:1, 8:1:1, 6:1:1] don’t meet with each other, but I get to meet with my house” (communication with Mrs. Stevens, October 3, 2014). The school had four different “houses,” which corresponded to the categories (see Appendix F) in which students were placed. In this particular school, 12:1:1 (V house) classrooms included a combination of students with Emotional Disturbance, Learning Disability, and Autism, and 8:1:1 (X house) and 6:1:1 (Y house) classrooms included a combination of students identified with a Learning
Disability, Autism, Intellectual Disability, Multiple Disabilities, Speech or Language Impairment, and Other Health Impairment. Students in 12:1:1 classrooms tend to take the New York State standardized tests that are administered to the general education population and those in an 8:1:1 or 6:1:1 settings take the New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA), the measures of attainment in content areas for those with severe disabilities. Compared to the X and V houses, Mrs. Stevens’ 6:1:1 classroom included a mixture of students with the aforementioned disabilities, and some of her students were verbal and others were non-verbal.

Professional learning sessions for teachers were scheduled for each house three times a week. For example, houses are scheduled once a week to review students’ progress towards IEP goals, another day to discuss logistics such as transitions, and another day to look at student work and/or review lesson plans within that house. Meetings were mostly led by administration and external coaches but seldom by teacher leaders. Although I was once a special education teacher in the same district working with SWD, I was not exposed to the different houses and how they function. For this reason, I was interested in how teachers collaborate with each other and how different houses worked together.

The team that the school leader wanted me to support was composed of teachers from different houses, teachers who had not worked together to identify best practices. I followed up with a question on collaboration asking how she would define collaboration. To this Mrs. Stevens responded, “I have five admin periods where I can meet with teams. I developed the science curriculum and shared it with the other teachers last year.” I inquired about how the curriculum was shared with other teachers, and Mrs. Stevens stated that she had provided copies of what she had written to other teachers in her house. She also explained that this same curriculum was provided to other teachers in the different houses, but she did not share how
different teams and the other teachers unpacked units and lessons. I shifted the conversation to focus on the Danielson Framework because Mrs. Stevens seemed somewhat agitated with all the questions about how she made the curriculum accessible to other teachers. Her agitation was not from the questions I was asking, rather, she expressed that she has attempted to work with other teachers including those in her house to discuss how they could improve their practices; however, the other teachers had not been receptive to her attempts.

I turned Mrs. Stevens’ attention to her experience with the Danielson Framework asking whether she thought she was well prepared to use the teacher evaluation rubric and other tools that come with it. There was some hesitation in Mrs. Stevens’ voice, and she reluctantly responded to my question by stating, “I mean I read it, but, um, no, not really. I don’t really care for the rubric; I just don’t want to get bad ratings especially when you [the evaluator] don’t know my students.” Mrs. Stevens then added, “That’s why I really want to do this because I can understand the rubric better.” When asked whether she felt comfortable talking to other teachers and administrators at the school, Mrs. Stevens stated,

I have a great relationship with him [the principal] …unlike my last school, I am able to talk to him, and I have worked on curriculum for my house. I don’t know the other AP [assistant principal]; she’s new, but she gave me good ratings and said positive things when she came to my classroom. There’s another lady, but she’s not really here all the time.

Although Mrs. Stevens had a relationship with current school leader which she attributes to having an opportunity to lead and contribute to curriculum development plan lessons and even to review IEPs, she explained that teacher teams have not had opportunities look closely at the Danielson Framework. When I pressed the teacher to share whether she felt comfortable with
working with other teachers, she was not willing to respond, but later stated “I don’t think they like me because they think I’m a favorite because I wrote the curriculum. Whatever, I’m going to do what I need. Can we talk about something else?” Although I wanted to continue with this topic and learn more about the existing relationships between teachers, particularly, between Mrs. Stevens and the other teachers, I refrained because she seemed extremely uncomfortable discussing the topic and did not want to address it further.

Although Mrs. Stevens had opportunities to work with other teachers of SWD within her new school, this experience was limited to teachers in her house. The dynamic structures and existing cultures within the school did not lend themselves to giving teachers access to professional learning to improve their teaching, especially when working across houses.

The initial interview and conversation with Mrs. Stevens provided an opportunity to gather evidence about teacher needs, and it provided a window for focusing on the highest leverage areas, which involved building trust amongst the teacher team I was charged to support. The interview session with Mrs. Stevens was informative as it provided me with some understanding of existing relationships between teachers. During my visits to the school, I have observed how some teachers watched Mrs. Stevens as she would escort me to her room. I was observed as “outsider” and Mrs. Stevens, an ally of the “outsider” so my presence at times, presented uncomfortable situations for Mrs. Stevens prior to our first collaborative meetings. Conversations during the interview also revealed that, although Mrs. Stevens had already met with school administration to complete her IPC in the beginning of the year where professional learning goals were discussed, there was no discussion of specific ways to accomplish these goals, nor was there any conversation about the depth of the teacher’s needs. Mrs. Stevens stated that she needed support with using questions and discussion techniques, specifically with how to
engage her paraprofessional to support students, nonverbal and others, with extremely limited verbal communication abilities during classroom discussions.

Our conversations tipped me off about what to expect of the teachers who were selected to participate in the first professional learning cycle. Prior to interviewing Mrs. Stevens and after my conversation with the school leader, it was my assumption that the school had engaged teachers in unpacking the Danielson Framework. Specifically, I assumed that, because 3b was a focus area identified by the Quality Reviewer, by the District, and also by the school leader as an instructional focus, professional learning cycles would focus specifically on the elements in that component. I gained a better understanding as a talent coach and as a researcher on where I needed to restructure my research methods and process. I also gained relevant understanding about what teachers including Mrs. Stevens struggled with when planning and preparing lessons for diverse student populations. Because I had planned to complete a component study and because Mrs. Stevens felt more comfortable with having access to any analysis of her own video, I returned to the preparation stage of the case study methodology.

**Video as a professional learning tool and not an evaluative tool.** Based on my experience as a talent coach and my conversations with Mrs. Stevens in regard to her feeling that her professional learning goals were not specifically in synchronization with her needs and the Danielson Framework, to prepare her to engage in action research, we first reviewed effective elements delineated in component 4e: Growing and Developing Professionally. Specifically, we explored the sections that showed that she could make “a systemic effort to conduct action research” (NYCDOE, 2013, p. 48) We discussed the process involved in conducting this form of study as a practitioner, and I shared the observation protocol with her. We then engaged in a component study for 3b: Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques to identify best practices
that we would see in her classroom. We reviewed how Mrs. Stevens would capture videos of her instruction, and I provided her with the recording device.

While reading the description, Mrs. Stevens objected, “See, this is not my classroom, these words, word, [pointing to the text] this may not happen in my classroom. I mean I don’t think…I am not a bad teacher, but these words just don’t match, and I am trying my best with my students.” (communication with Mrs. Stevens, October 6, 2014). Mrs. Stevens continued by stating, “look at this here… [she read the rubric] ‘Good teachers use divergent as well as convergent questions…’ I don’t see how this applies to my classroom and, if it does, I just want to know so I can do it.” When asked to identify critical aspects in component 3b aligned with the quality of questions/prompts, discussion techniques, and student participation, Mrs. Stevens stated,

I am not against this rubric, but everything here will also put me in “ineffective” or “developing,” and that’s not fair especially when the person evaluation [sic] does not know your students. If you look at possible examples under Ineffective [Mrs. Stevens reads from rubric] “All questions are of the recitation type, such as What is 3 x 4? … The teacher asks a question for which the answer is on the board; students respond by reading it.” [She laughs and states] but that is exactly what I have to do for my students most times. Look here, sometimes when you walk into my classroom, you will just see me saying why, why several times. And I point, yes, point just so my student can make eye contact. Sometimes I will just need them to point to tell me they understand or have the right answer. But if you don’t know my students and walk in to judge me, then I will not do well and you will give me ineffective or developing on my observation (communication with Mrs. Stevens,
Similar to the school leader who was concerned about earning a favorable rating on the Quality Review, Mrs. Stevens was very much concerned about her MOTP ratings as she had expressed prior to this study and during this interview. From this monologue, I understood that eye-gazing, recitation of repeated words, and pointing were forms of questioning and discussion techniques that Mrs. Stevens might have used in her classroom to promote student participation. All of which are not identified as possible examples or as effective practices under this particular component. To identify possible examples of teacher actions and student actions that would support discussion in her particular classroom, I asked Mrs. Stevens what I would see in her classroom to support the quality questions/prompts. What were some of those questions that she might ask? Mrs. Stevens replied,

Well, what you will see is not what is stated in any of this rubric. Many of the things I do as a good teacher that some of my ummm...[colleagues] may not do is not in the rubric. I may ask and point and say, what is this? Point to it. Yes or No? I repeat several times because I have to until my students are successful or they attempt to answer my question. I ask “why?” a lot. I have not really asked my students to turn and talk because some of them cannot. Part of their disability is socialization, so I can’t force that out of them, I cannot force what they cannot do. That takes time, but again if you are not in my classroom and you do not know my students, you cannot tell me [that] what I am doing is ineffective or wrong, you just can’t. I may not have answered your question, but this is good for me because it makes me think of what else I can do (communication with Mrs. Stevens, October 6, 2014).
Danielson Framework is one size fits all, it does not fit in my classroom. Mrs. Stevens recorded one video prior to our meeting and shared in a conversation that,

“I can’t believe I talked so much and so fast when I was working with my students. In one part of the video, I asked [my student] what does he see, and the answer was right there in his hand, but he just didn’t get it so I kept asking him the same question over and over, but …I was getting frustrated because he did not give the answer I was looking for and sometimes I just have to ask them to sit, ask someone else to help, or I just tell them to help them, plus we were running out of time. I guess that’s something I have to work on.”

I asked Mrs. Stevens to clarify and identify one area of strength and an area of focus based on observations of her practices in the video, and she shared that she needs to slow down. In addition, she expressed that,

I think I am really good at guiding my students, sometimes I need to slow down and not tell them the answers if they don’t answer right away, but I want to watch it again with you based on what we talked about in the component study so I can hear your feedback. I want your feedback since you are the one that trains these administrators, you know.

Using the same video, I took Mrs. Stevens through the observation protocol and guided her in taking low-inference notes specific to the elements of the component discussed during the component study. Specifically, I explained that the first part of action research was to look at evidence from a classroom observation. I also explained that we would plan by identifying one to two specific areas of focus and that we would collaboratively identify next steps for her to try prior to our meetings with the other teachers. To gather lesson-specific evidence, I provided the
NYCDOE *Advance* Observation Note-Taking Form, the same tool provided to school leaders during training (see Appendix G). I asked Mrs. Stevens to write down all questions and answers and/or actions from students, notes on any resources that she used to engage students in the classroom, and any other evidence to support component 3b. After watching the video and collecting evidence from the video, we engaged in Step 2 of the four-step process developed for the study which was sharing of low-inference evidence. I asked Mrs. Stevens, “What did you see and what did you hear in the video this second time?” She responded by stating,

Wow, I missed so much when I watched it by myself. I think I saw more now especially because we talked about what we wanted to see or actually I told you what you will see in my classroom in terms of component 3b, but I think I focused mostly on myself and what I was doing this second time around.

I smiled and asked what she saw the second time that was different from the first time.

Mrs. Stevens answered:

Well, I used the same questions to guide all my students. I asked if they knew what a noun was and [student A] said yes so I moved on. Most of my questions were just like I told you like: Which one is a place? Which one is a person? Is this a person yes or no? I have to provide a yes or no option to direct them. I learned these methods from school. With some students you have to give them only two options so they make the right choice before you teach them. That’s errorless teaching.

*Researcher*: Hmmm….errorless teaching, what is that?

*Mrs. Stevens*: I think it’s errorless learning or teaching, something like that, but it basically provides the student with options so it leads to the right answer and once they memorize that answer, you can move on to something else or add other
concepts.

Researcher: That’s cool; that’s new to me. I have to check and learn more about errorless learning. Okay so do you have more evidence to support component 3b?

Mrs. Stevens: Yeah, but I want to hear what you saw and heard.

Researcher: Well I saw a lot, but that’s because I have been trained and I have been doing this for years now.

My initial rating based on the evidence I had gathered from watching the video was an Ineffective rating because most of the questions were recall and the did not allow students sufficient opportunities to engage in discussions. I shared my evidence with Mrs. Stevens, but I was not sure how she would respond to feedback from her colleagues when we finally met. Thus, I refrained from sharing too much in one sitting. I chose not to share my rating with Mrs. Stevens also not to discourage her from participating in the professional learning sessions. We moved to the planning stage of action research, and both Mrs. Stevens and I engaged in a focused conversation developing actionable steps that could improve some of her practices based on what she and I observed in the video. I chose not to assign a rating as stated in Step 3 of the norming process, because I wanted Mrs. Stevens to focus on how she could improve her practices and also because that is what she requested, “What can I do differently to improve my practices?”

Moving to Step 3 of the protocol, I asked Mrs. Stevens the following questions:

• What specifically can you do differently to change your practices to improve student outcome?

• Why is it important for you to make this change?

• How can you make this change?

Mrs. Stevens responded by stating,
Some of my students are verbal and some of them are not, so I think I may group them and have my paraprofessional sit with one group, and I will sit with another. I [am] doing [the] whole group, and [we could] break into small group[s], but the group was small enough for more focused teaching. But I guess my para was busy recording so it will [sic] have been hard to do, but it’s important to differentiate access for my kids since each of them are at different levels. What do you think I should do differently?

I responded by affirming what Mrs. Stevens shared and stated that, in addition to grouping students, I would provide them with different forms of tools to help them communicate their thinking and also that I might not have reviewed all three elements of a noun in such a short time with students. I suggested that, while one student (Student A) was able to complete all the activities with one hundred percent accuracy, the others were struggling. I suggested partnering Student A with another student so that he could review what he knows while supporting a classmate with an activity, assigning one non-verbal student to the paraprofessional while the teacher worked with the other two students. The teacher could then rotate between students to check for understanding where appropriate. The process – component study, review of video observation, taking low-inference notes, and generating actionable next steps – was modeled for Mrs. Stevens as part of action research. By engaging in action research Mrs. Stevens gained both experience that she could repeat and also experience that prepared her for the collaborative team meetings.

**Possible examples must come from teachers, knowers of classroom knowledge.** The first professional learning cycle using video in the collaborative teacher teams commenced in January, about two months after I began engaging in action research with Mrs. Stevens. The
professional learning cycle at the school began with an introduction of the Danielson Framework component 3b, followed by observations of one video shared by Mrs. Stevens following the four-step norming process. Each professional learning session was followed with a brief conversation with Mrs. Stevens to ensure that she felt comfortable with the process and also to explore whether she had additional evidence that could help share her practice and/or next steps that she would implement in her classroom. This section will present participant-observations of one Norming Protocol for Inter-visitation (see Appendix D) completed with the collaborative teacher team to support teachers in learning with and from each other. I will introduce four different sessions with specific focus on Sessions One and Two, where teachers used video as a tool in a collaborative teacher team to improve one teacher’s practices and to build their own skills in identifying best practices aligned with the Danielson Framework.

Prior to engaging in the first professional learning session, all teachers were provided a copy of the Danielson Framework that was currently in use in the NYCDOE, the Norming Protocol for Inter-visitation, and a calendar outlining the topic to be covered at each session. We first reviewed the Norming Protocol for Inter-visitation and then reviewed the description from component 3b. Teachers were then asked to review the critical attributes and possible examples for effective practices and highlight words and phrases that aligned with their practices. During this independent work time, one teacher asked, “Why are we doing this? I mean, this does not apply to the classroom. I should be writing IEPs, so why are we not doing that?” (participant-observation, January 8, 2015). I explained the purpose of the meetings and shared that I valued teacher knowledge and that it would be helpful if they were able to develop common and best practices aligned with the Danielson Framework to guide professional learning. The teacher responded by stating, “What I need to be doing is focusing on my new class. I was teaching ED
[Emotional Disturbance] kids and now they gave me the 6:1:1, and I don’t know what to do. I need to be reading their IEPs and finding out how to talk to kids who don’t talk, not look at possible examples of that don’t happen in my classroom” (participant-observation, January 8, 2015). The teacher turned to two colleagues and laughed as they both shook their heads in agreement with what he communicated. I responded and stated, “Okay, I got you. Let’s just first finish today’s session and talk and, like I said, if this turns out to be a waste of time for you, you don’t have to be here. Okay? Just give me a chance.” Another teacher asked if we could continue and alerted us that we only had ten minutes to complete the session. I thanked both teachers and moved on to the planned activity.

As I did with Mrs. Stevens, I guided the teachers through a component study asking them to identify possible examples based on their experiences in terms of what happens in their classroom which they considered best practice aligned with questioning and discussion techniques. Table 4.1a provides possible examples generated by the teacher team during our first session.
Table 4.1a  Possible Examples in SWD Classrooms, January 8, 2015

3b: Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Expectations/Possible Examples (What should it look like and sound like?)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of questions/prompts</td>
<td>• Prompts such as “I agree/disagree with...because…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Scripted questions to guide discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Questions and prompts like:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What do you mean exactly?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How do you know? Tell me more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Explain yourself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Can you give me more details?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What do you think?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Techniques</td>
<td>• Turn and Talk (“Ask…”)/ Turn to your partner, allowing students turns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Grouping (student choice)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Think-Pair-Share</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Communication devices, i.e., GoTalk$^3$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Use of index cards to call on students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Scripted Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Participation</td>
<td>• Grouping of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Wrap around and ensure that each student shares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Eye contact with teacher and/or another student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Use of manipulatives$^4$ with another student (sharing?)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We were able to complete the generation of possible examples, although we had only ten minutes remaining after the earlier conversation with the teacher. The session ended with most of the teachers in the team stating that they looked forward to being a part of the sessions and

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$^3$ GoTalks are battery-powered augmentative/alternative communication (AAC) devices used by people who can not communicate well by speaking. Another person (a classmate, sibling or friend, for example) records messages – any messages the user will likely need, in any language, dialect or accent. Retrieved January 9, 2015 from http://www.spectronics.com.au/product/gotalk-communication-device-series

$^4$ Manipulatives are physical objects that are used as teaching tools to engage students in the hands-on learning of mathematics. They can be used to introduce, practice, or remediate a concept. A manipulative may be as simple as grains of rice or as sophisticated as a model of our solar system. Retrieved January 9, 2015, from https://www.teachervision.com/pro-dev/teaching-methods/48934.html
learning from each other. The teacher who was concerned in the beginning of the session approached me after the meeting and then apologized for his behavior. He explained that what he shared was not directed towards me but towards the administration for placing him in a classroom where he was not prepared to teach. I had a brief conversation with Mrs. Stevens after the first session, and she first asked whether I was okay. I responded by stating, “Yeah, what was that really about?” Mrs. Stevens explained that what had transpired was the teacher’s typical behavior in all teacher team meetings. She also explained that he was moved from standardized assessment 12:1:1 students to alternate assessment 6:1:1. Mrs. Stevens added, “People think [that] just because some of the students don’t speak it’s easy, but you have to understand [that] I am doing exactly the same thing you are doing and more because I have to communicate with kids that don’t speak. But don’t worry, he starts out that way, but he will calm down in a month or two.”

Using Danielson Framework to provide feedback to support a SWD teacher. Prior to engaging teachers in Step 1 of the Norming Protocol for Inter-visitation, I explained and reviewed the purpose of the sessions. One teacher interjected and stated, “I am happy to talk, but I don’t want to be record[ed] and I don’t want to share any video” (communication with teacher team, January 22, 2015). I informed the teachers that they would not be recorded by me or anyone else and that they would be provided with a recording device that they could use when they chose and share the video if they chose. After this brief conversation, I reviewed the

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5 District 75 provides services and programs citywide in D75 buildings, agency settings, and in community school district buildings. District 75 students may participate in standardized assessment and take all city and state tests or may be assessed using New York State Alternate Assessments. District 75 provides special classes with ratios of 12:1:1, 8:1:1, 6:1:1, and 12:1:4 and other ratios for students in full inclusion. Retrieved June 1, 2016, from http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/SpecialEducation/enrolling/specializedschools/default.htm
possible examples generated in the first session and provided Mrs. Stevens an opportunity to brief the team on her students and the lesson she was presenting. Mrs. Stevens shared a video that was eleven minutes long and mentioned that there were five of six students present in the video and one paraprofessional who was in the back of the room recording the video. Students were seated in a U-shaped form facing the board, and the teacher stood in front of the students for the duration of the recording. After sharing this information, the team was directed to watch the video and collect low-inference evidence using the NYCDoe Advance Observation Note-Taking Form (see Appendix G). I modeled how they should gather low-inference evidence providing examples of what they might see and hear and how they should capture it using the tool provided. Once we finished with the video we moved to Steps 3 and 4 of the protocol. The following paragraphs will present my observation of Steps 3 and 4 of the protocol-based cycle following the Norming Protocol for Inter-visitation.

Step 3 of the norming protocol required teachers to assign a rating to what they had observed in the video and provide a rationale aligned with the component. Teachers were first asked to independently rate the video evidence in light of component 3b and provide ratings of Ineffective, Developing, Effective, or Highly Effective. All the teachers including Mrs. Stevens (Teacher A) gave a rating of Effective on component 3b except for one teacher who gave a rating of Developing. I asked the teachers who gave an Effective rating to share their evidence. Then I asked why they had rated this component as they did. One teacher (Teacher C) stated,

The teacher picked up two cards and stated, “I am going to give you two pictures and you are going to tell me which one is a person.” Then the teacher asked, “Which one is a person?” The student quickly pointed to the picture to the left, jumped up and the teacher invited him to walk to the board and place the picture
in the correct column. I aligned that to Effective because it aligns to [sic] the quality of questions and prompts because she asked a question and the student responded correctly.

I asked another teacher (Teacher D) who had provided a rating of Effective to present evidence supporting Mrs. Stevens’ practices as effective, and she stated,

Well, I am going to do what you taught us which is [to] provide what the teacher said and what the student said. The teacher asked the student “Which one is an example of person?” I didn’t quite hear how the student responded or what the students [sic] said, but the teacher said “Very good, come on and put it up…put it in the right spot.” Even though the student did not put the card on the right spot, he attempted to do it, and I think it’s because the teacher gave him two opportunities to communicate he knew which picture represented the person. For our students I think that is good and so effective here.

In the interest of time, I asked Teacher B who had given Mrs. Stevens’ practices in 3b a rating of developing to share evidence supporting that rating. Teacher B described the Figure 4.3 below which Mrs. Stevens had on the board for students to access in the second activity and shared the same evidence as Teacher C, stating,
I had the same evidence as you [Teacher C], but I rated it a developing because when the student did not get the correct answer, she asked him to sit. She said this to most of the students when they didn’t match it correctly but she asked [_______] to always answer because he knows the correct answer. So, yes, she had stuff to have students come to the board and answer, but that is all they were doing. It looks like they were learning, but they were just doing what she said. Remember she turned to the other students asking, “Is he correct? Is he correct?”
Then she turned to another and asks the same question but she didn’t even give them enough time to answer before she called on the student who always provided the correct answer. I don’t think that [is] getting students to participate even if she asks okay questions. You cannot see or hear what the student said, but you hear the teacher say ‘No, he is not correct.’

I shared my rating with the teachers and stated that I agreed with most of the evidence shared from the video because they were all observable data and lesson specific. I quoted the language from the rubric, which states, “The teacher’s questions lead students through a single path of inquiry, with answers seemingly determined in advance. Alternatively, the teacher attempts to ask some questions designed to engage students in thinking, but only a few students are involved” (Danielson Framework, 2013, p.32). I aligned the rubric language with the teacher presenting the student with two pictures then asking, “Which one is a place?” “Which is an example of a place?” When the student pointed to the correct picture, the teacher called the student to the board to place the picture on the correct column. She then called another student to board asking, “Is this a person, yes or no?” This method of questions was repeated for all students with no differentiation, even for those who answered all questions correctly. I also shared that communication occurred between the teacher and students and seldom between students. Mrs. Stevens interjected stating, “But that is what I have to do.” Teacher D responded, “You did more than most people do in the class, but when aligned to this rubric it is developing. Stevens, that doesn’t mean you did not do all that you think you need[ed] to [do to] help your students…it’s the rubric” (participant-observation, January 22, 2015).

Before moving to the next step, I asked one concluding question, “In light of what you have heard, would you change your response, why or why not?” Most of the teachers except for
one stated they would change their ratings after hearing all the evidence and rationale supporting a rating of Developing. One teacher stated that, although he agreed with the evidence shared, he thought Mrs. Steven did much “to get the lesson moving.”

In Step 4 of the protocol, teachers were charged with providing Mrs. Stevens with lesson-specific feedback and next steps to implement. One group of teachers shared that Mrs. Stevens provided opportunities for students to share, another group commented that she prepared materials to guide students, and a final group noted that, although some of the questions led students through a single path of inquiry, it was not appropriate for some. In general, all teachers agreed that Mrs. Stevens needed to differentiate activities for students by providing two to three choices, particularly for those students who responded correctly to all her questions. One group suggested that Mrs. Stevens needed to differentiate the process by which students responded to her questions. For example, rather than asking the same question about person, place, or thing, it was suggested that Mrs. Stevens differentiate by grouping students. Mrs. Stevens could then provide one group with mixed cards that had pictures to be grouped by an element of a noun. Another group, “a middle group,” could have arranged the pictures according to elements independently on a chart similar to the one in Figure 4.3. For the one student who answered all the questions correctly, it was suggested that the teacher present the student with an activity focused on the difference between nouns and verbs. This was sufficient feedback provided which was based upon observable evidence to support Mrs. Stevens with modifying her practices.

I reviewed the topic for our next session, which was to watch the video of another teacher and provide feedback as we did with Mrs. Stevens. However, the teachers wanted to revisit the possible examples they had created and add to them, therefore I modified the research approach the growing needs of the teachers. One teacher specifically expressed that she struggled with
providing possible examples because she didn’t know what to say to “score high ratings.” She also expressed that she was willing to share a video of her classroom because “it wasn’t that bad looking at someone else’s.” This was a productive meeting compared to the initial session because the teachers completed one norming activity, provided the teacher-participant with next steps to support her practices, and identified next steps to support their learning for the next meeting.

**Deepening understanding of possible examples.** Session three was targeted and even more productive because the team members were prepared to share their thoughts for best practices based on prior learning in our second session. The meeting started with a brief overview of what had transpired during the first two sessions. We started this meeting by asking Mrs. Stevens to share what she was able to implement in her classroom. Although she was unable to try all the feedback that was provided, she did try one suggestion. Mrs. Stevens worked with other teachers to understand and group students based on their IEPs. She was able to provide one activity which was having students sit with a partner to work together then come to the board to share with the whole group. Mrs. Stevens admitted, “It was very hard to do because my paraprofessional doesn’t teach, and I had to do all the facilitation. But I will say I talked less and my students communicated more with each [other] using symbols and pictures” (participant observation, February 5, 2015). While this was not effectively implemented, as Mrs. Stevens herself confessed, it was a step towards improvement.

We continued by introducing the possible examples that were developed in the second professional learning session and built on what the teachers had provided. Table 4.1b: Possible Examples in SWD Classroom – February 5, 2015 depicts improved examples of best practices aligned to component 3b.
For this particular session, we focused specifically on discussion techniques and student participation. One teacher suggested that we combine both these elements to create a tool to provide to other teachers and school leaders to use for observations but also for professional learning purposes. The examples provided in our third session were more detailed compared to our first session. The examples provided on February 5, 2015, compared to those from January 8, 2015, showed tremendous progress moving to focused collaborations to make sense of the Danielson Framework among teachers who had not worked together at this level. With a relentless focus on one specific area, teachers can master questions and discussion techniques and can learn from each other. At the conclusion of the third session, one teacher suggested that the

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team break into houses in their next meeting and develop possible examples for each. Whereas teachers were mostly focused on their ratings, participation in this professional learning cycle allowed them to focus on elements to improve student engagement in discussions.

Although teachers wanted to continue the collaborative team meeting with a focus on creating possible examples for each house, session four was the last, as the school leader had reorganized the teams to prepare for the Quality Review. For this session, all teachers were presented with the NYCDOE Summative Professional Learning Evaluation Form (see Appendix C) to complete to inform planning for the next professional learning session. Mrs. Stevens response to the question about necessary steps they required to continue with the learning cycles was that “I want to continue to work on my teaching practices with specific support like this one because it helps me with focusing on what I can do to improve my student’s learning instead of trying to get a high rating.” When asked whether her expectations were met and to provide how specifically her expectations were met or not met, Mrs. Stevens responded by writing, “Yes, for the most part I was able to get feedback that I can use from my peer teachers, external coach, and I was able to reflect… I was able to self-evaluate my practices better using the Danielson Framework.”

I provided Mrs. Stevens with a self-reflection form to help her to understand her thinking about the process and also to delve deeper into her responses from the evaluation form. In response to the question “In what ways do you think the professional learning cycle impacted your professional learning?” Mrs. Stevens wrote:

Through the PLC, I was able to share with my fellow teachers my lessons and I was given immediate feedback…The team of teachers analyzed the video taped lessons and not only provided feedback based on [the] Danielson Rubric but also
gave me suggestions on areas that can be approved [sic] to further increase students’ learning; [the cycle] allowed me to self-reflect on the lessons and make the necessary improvements.

Not only was Ms. Stevens able to share with teachers and receive immediate feedback but two teachers from her house who had not collaborated with her in the past asked her if they could meet regularly. These were the same teachers that Mrs. Stevens indicated were not very friendly with her during team meetings. Subsequent to this first professional learning cycle, Mrs. Stevens informed me that she meets at least once a week with her house to discuss possible examples from 3b and that they were planning to study other components from the Danielson Framework.

**Discussion**

Although the research question addressed the influence that video can have as a tool for professional development, neither myself as the primary researcher nor Mrs. Stevens arrived at a conclusion about the best methods for evaluation of teachers of students with disabilities. Nonetheless, video proved useful in supporting teachers learning through the observation process and provided the “professional vision” which allowed teachers to “notice and interpret significant events” that took place in one teacher’s classroom so they attend to specific details and provide relevant strategies to improve teaching practices (Sherin, 2011, p. 39). The study strongly suggests that video could be a valid tool for the teacher evaluation process in special education classrooms by providing school leaders with opportunities to support teachers effectively. The evaluation process is not limited to observations and feedback; it includes providing opportunities for teachers to learn best practices which they can implement in their classrooms.
Video served as a professional development tool to support collaborative teacher teams in identifying strategies to support questioning and discussion techniques in a classroom with verbal and non-verbal students. Video influenced the professional learning of the participating teachers of SWD by providing opportunities for them to gain understanding of a particular classroom by both pooling different perspectives and working together to unpack and make sense of a research-based rubric, the Danielson Framework. Teachers of students with disabilities can use video as a professional learning tool instead of as an observation tool to facilitate discourse, highlighting possible examples of effective practice within a professional lens. Using video as a professional learning tool was especially valuable for the professional learning of teachers of SWD because it provided opportunities to work collaboratively to understand a mandated research-based rubric and identify and develop best practices to support students in a special education setting. Even though there were several benefits to using video as a tool to support professional learning for teachers of SWD, using video in this way was not an easy feat. This process was first accepted with resistance on the part of the school leader and later was received with skepticism on the part of the teachers. However, they all developed an increasing measure of trust in the procedure as the study continued.

The Danielson Framework was initially introduced in a small number of schools in the first year as a pilot and later introduced to a limited number of special education programs in the NYCDOE. There were challenges during the implementation in the special education schools selected. Such challenges included, but were not limited to, aligning the language and possible examples to classrooms with students with moderate to severe disabilities. Although some special education school leaders were trained in using the Danielson Framework, external trainers tended to have limited knowledge about the diverse special education populations. Most
training sessions were learning sessions for these trainers. In the second year of implementation, these challenges remained, as NYCDOE and practitioners alike had not arrived at a consensus on the best methods to effectively evaluate special education instructors. Supplemental resources provided by the NYCDOE were useful in general education settings which included a limited number of students with disabilities but not effectively applicable in schools and in classrooms where all students faced disabilities. School leaders in special education programs were generally resistant to using both the Danielson Framework and the external coaches who were charged with using it to support teacher evaluation. The school leader in the school in which the study was conducted was especially resistant because of his limited experience with students with severe disabilities.

The quality of the implementation of a mandated observation tool emerged from this study as I reviewed reports from Quality Reviews and during my job-embedded visits to train the school leader. Because the school leader had limited experience with supporting and guiding teachers of students with severe disabilities, he was initially resistant to any support aligned with the implementation of this mandated policy, including the use of video in classrooms. However, when he understood that the learning cycles would not only save him time and money but also help with supporting mandated professional development for teachers and improve elements of the school’s QR, he was committed to a pilot program. For the school leader, if the professional learning cycle would not lead to an improvement in his school’s standing in its QR ratings and take it to the next level, he would not have allowed it in his school.

The study’s professional learning cycle faced extreme resistance from the teachers selected to participate. Similar to the school leader, teachers were skeptical about the professional learning cycles for several reasons. Some teachers were resistant because they were
worried about MOTP ratings, some because of lack of trust in school leaders’ familiarity with some students with disabilities. Most were resistant because they did not want to be captured on video. Most teachers – especially Mrs. Stevens – were very much concerned about their MOTP ratings when they were first approached about participating in this study. However, most teachers were not concerned with unpacking the language of the rubric to apply it to their classroom. Other teachers, including myself, believed that the rubric language was sometimes not appropriate for special education classrooms, the teachers were resistant because they had not been introduced to a different way of thinking and looking at classroom practices using the rubric.

Although Mrs. Stevens expressed in our telephone conferences and interviews that she was interested in becoming a better teacher, her focus when reviewing the Danielson Framework was mainly on getting a favorable rating. In a conversation with Mrs. Stevens she explained that the assistant principal would “give her bad ratings” because the assistant principal did not know the students in Mrs. Stevens’ class. While the assistant principal did not know Mrs. Stevens’ students, Mrs. Stevens was used to receiving favorable ratings from the principal because of his limited knowledge of the students she was charged to teach. Because the rubric did not provide realistic possible examples for school leaders to use during the evaluation process, some settled on providing favorable ratings to teachers. As Mrs. Stevens was used to the favorable ratings she had received in the previous year, she was shocked by the ratings her first observation report contained from the principal. For this reason and also because she lacked trust in the other teachers in her house, Mrs. Stevens wanted to review her video before sharing it with me and with the teacher team organized by the school leader.

During my interaction with Mrs. Stevens, she was hesitant to discuss her relationship
with other teachers in her house and other teacher teams with which she had previously dealt. I learned that in team meetings Mrs. Stevens tended not to speak much. I learned that some of the teachers were not happy with Mrs. Stevens’ ratings because they believed that they were doing similar things in their classrooms and had no received comparable ratings. For this reason, some of the teachers did not trust that what they shared in the meetings would be regarded as important. Further, they saw the sessions as a professional learning experience specifically for Mrs. Stevens. Teachers expressed a lack of trust in the school leader because they thought participation in the professional learning cycles was an episode in preparing for the QR. In the second session, teachers expressed the belief that the school leader would not take advantage of the knowledge that they had gained and the possible examples that they had identified to support them during observations. Although the teachers shared that they trusted their principal to provide them with professional learning opportunities, they did not believe that he was fair with his ratings. This was one of the reasons why most of the teachers did not consent to video-based observations and were hesitant to participate in the professional learning cycle.

Video proved to be a tool that shifted Mrs. Stevens’ thinking about her own practices in addition to building and developing trust with colleagues. After watching the video excerpt selected by Mrs. Stevens to showcase her best practices in her class, she realized that there were several areas that could benefit from improvement in the ten minutes she provided. I also learned from watching the video and from talking to Mrs. Stevens. As explained earlier in this chapter, based on the evidence I gathered from watching the video, I had given Mrs. Stevens a rating of Ineffective. After hearing about “errorless learning” from Mrs. Stevens, I was inclined to consider that it was a strategy which supported her particular classroom and was a possible example not provided in the Danielson Framework. I decided to change my rating of Ineffective
to Developing because I wanted to acknowledge Mrs. Stevens’ knowledge based on what I had learned from our initial review of the video. Additionally, it was a way for me to develop a trusting relationship and also to build Mrs. Stevens’ confidence so that she would feel comfortable sharing the video with her fellow teachers. Watching the video provided Mrs. Stevens with a professional vision and a voice to articulate her understanding of how to apply what she saw in the video to her own practices. Looking at authentic videos and allowing a teacher to select what she wanted to show and areas in which she thought that she needed support opened a window for further discussions that led to improved practice and an opportunity to embrace the Danielson Framework as a tool that – if properly adapted – could support teachers.

The National Staff Development Council (2009) defined professional development as a “comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach to improving teachers’ and principals’ effectiveness in raising student achievement…[that] fosters collective responsibility…comprised of professional learning that is conducted among educators at the school and facilitated by well-prepared school principals and/or school-based professional development coaches, mentors, master teachers, or other teacher leaders…” (p. 1). Professional development calls for engagement in job-embedded professional learning that focuses on improving teaching knowledge (Wei et al., 2010). Through this study, I learned that teachers of students with disabilities are indeed knowledgeable when it comes to developing “look-fors” when visiting non-traditional classrooms using a monolithic tool that was not intended for special education educators. The video-based professional learning in this study created possibilities for teachers to trust one another and also created an opportunity for them, particularly Mrs. Stevens, to present problems of practice, develop a shared vision and language of instruction, and collectively
construct frameworks to guide the improvement of their teaching practices. Through the use of video, Mrs. Stevens gained an understanding of her pedagogical practices and how to use the Danielson Framework to improve them by pooling the input of the different perspectives of her colleagues.

**Conclusion**

This study indicates that when teachers listen to teachers, look at themselves on video to gather evidence and talk about what they see in a collaborative team, they could build their own knowledge and improve teaching and learning. Analysis of the collaborative teacher team meetings and conversations with the teacher-participant confirmed that there are ways in which video influences professional learning in a special education program. Mrs. Stevens used video to conduct action research within her classroom and within a collaborative team to improve her learning and practices. Mrs. Stevens learned how to align her classroom practices with the Danielson Framework by first defining what these practices should look like. Mrs. Stevens inquiry space was enhanced by participating in a structured collaborative team that focused on an area she selected to improve. She learned how to use relevant evidence to support analysis of her practices and to trust her colleagues in such analysis within a collaborative team. Mrs. Stevens learned how to structure collaborative teacher team meetings and how to guide teachers through action research.

When I first met Mrs. Stevens, she showed reluctance to record her classroom and especially to share it with other teachers at her school even those within her house. When asked about her relationship with other teachers and environment of the school and teacher teams, Mrs. Stevens explained that she was not open to having others visit her classroom because they would only criticize her and question her ratings. Jaquith, Mindich, Wei, and Darling-Hammond
(2010) wrote that effective professional development focuses on specific pedagogies and engages “teachers in active, collegial learning that allows them to try out ideas in the classroom and make sense of what they are learning in meaningful ways” (p. 2). By opening her classroom through the use of video, Mrs. Stevens was forced to critique her own practices and attempt to correct it when appropriate. Through the use of video as a professional learning tool, Mrs. Stevens, along with the teacher team, learned to attend to the specifics of questioning and discussion as it applies to a classroom with verbal and non-verbal students with disabilities. The discussions that occurred in the collaborative team meetings is one that needs to happen in order for teachers of students with disabilities to make sense of the Danielson Framework.

In the pages preceding this, I have presented ways in which one teacher team engaged in collegial learning to improve practices to support student learning. Findings show that video is not only a useful tool to provide teachers with a professional vision but that video is indeed a plausible method to support unpacking of the Danielson Framework in special education programs. Chapter 5 will discuss the implications of using video to support the implementation of the Danielson Framework for Teaching in special education classrooms in future studies.
Chapter 5

Conclusions and Implications for Further Study

Introduction

As a school leader in a special education school, I struggled to provide teachers with strategies that would support students in the classroom because I was employed as a master teacher to lead other teachers. With a mindset as “the master teacher” I worked in a vacuum without always consulting with teachers to develop best practices that will effectively support them. When I discovered the use of video as a professional learning tool as a way to guide my own learning and to support teachers in planning and instruction for students with disabilities, I eagerly took advantage of it. It served me well. I no longer isolated myself to provide feedback to teachers and additionally the feedback was collaboratively developed with teacher teams and was one that was received well by teachers. My interest in conducting this study was to apply what I had learned from a small group of teachers with whom I worked to explore ways in which video could influence teachers’ professional learning under *Advance*, the new teacher evaluation process introduced by the NYCDOE for special education programs. Primarily, I wanted to learn and understand:

1. How teachers’ use of video in the classroom could support professional learning within collaborative teacher teams and
2. How can video support the evaluation process in special education classrooms within the parameters of a mandated tool?

As a talent coach charged with training school leaders to use the Danielson Framework, I understood that the framework was not designed specifically for teachers who work with SWD, and, thus, many of the possible evaluative examples prescribed in the rubric were not applicable...
in such classrooms. This study was therefore important to teachers and administrators who work with SWD because it was offered an opportunity to unpack and identify how teachers and also administrators can observe a special education classroom and provide relevant feedback to improve practices.

**Summary of the Study**

The study explored the implementation of the Danielson Framework in a special education classroom with an emphasis on utilizing video as a professional learning tool to gather specific evidence in conjunction with the framework to support teachers of SWD. This method of using video as a professional learning tool was intended to support a teacher’s self-reflection and pedagogical growth. The study focused on the experiences of a teacher of SWD in a significantly restrictive environment during the second year of implementation of the new teacher evaluation system. It focused on how one teacher negotiated the evaluation process within a segregated special education context using video as the tool and the Danielson Framework as the metric to improve pedagogical practices. In particular, I learned how teachers developed a culture of trust in professional learning communities to support teaching and learning. Most importantly, this study focused on how video can be used to foster collaborative learning dialogues amongst teachers to inform both professional learning and pedagogical practices.

According to Wei et al. (2010), professional learning opportunities provided by schools and districts have focused on traditional models which have not shown significant improvements in pedagogical practices nor led to significant improvements in student learning outcomes. Guskey (2000) has argued that professional learning processes that have improved pedagogical practices are those that are designed to enhance the professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes...
of teachers which in turn improve student learning outcomes. According to Croft et al. (2010), teachers are more likely to implement what they learn when professional learning embeds day-to-day teaching practices relevant to teachers’ instructional practices.

As Harding (1993) has argued, “knowledge claims are always socially situated” (p. 54), and failure to interrogate social situations in which learning occurs creates disadvantages in generating knowledge from practitioners such as teachers of SWD who work day-by-day in the classroom. For this reason, starting with an understanding of the subject’s strengths and weaknesses in the classroom was critical. Teachers of SWD have a set of experiences and expertise different from those of teachers in general education classrooms or administrators who have not themselves taught in the special education context. Active participation and learning, therefore, must take into account the situated learning of teachers who work with SWD.

Professional development for these teachers tends to be top-down within the NYCDOE. This is particularly the case in the matter of access to professional development options because of the new evaluation system, the Danielson Framework. As discussed in Chapter 2, resources to support teachers of SWD during the implementation of the new teacher evaluation method were limited. Of those which were available to support teachers, the most useful were professional learning modules that provided videos of SWD classrooms, but there were only two or three such videos. Those were not sufficient because of the widely diverse needs of those students and the teachers who support them. Though there were only a few useful videos to support this group of teachers during the implementation of the new evaluation process, video did prove to be a useful tool to provide teachers with opportunities to improve their practices and present school leaders with an opportunity to gather evidence-based data to guide feedback to, in their turn, support teachers. Most valuable in supporting teachers was the use of videos from their own classrooms...
to inform their practices. According to Tunney and van Es (2016), video-based professional learning creates exciting possibilities for teacher learning, and it “affords opportunities for participants to precisely describe problems of practice, to develop a shared vision and language of ambitious instruction, and to collectively construct frameworks to guide their work” (p. 105). Sherin (2011) argued that video provides teachers with specific “professional vision” which allows teachers to “notice and interpret significant events that take place in a classroom,” so that they can attend to specific details by selecting those which are relevant while ignoring others that are not critical a specific area of study (p. 39). The use of video in this study was therefore important because it provided teachers with an opportunity to study a specific instructional practice.

This research employed methodologies that gave voice to teachers who are subjected to the teacher observation and evaluation process. As Harding (1997) explained, knowledge emerges in a dialectical relationship where meaning is made as a product of dialogue between and among individuals. Because of my standpoint as a talent coach and former teacher, I used bricolage to support my study in a very dynamic context. This idea of bricolage was important for this study because the research employed methods for collecting and analyzing data on an as-needed basis as a situation unfolded (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This was a case study that focused on one teacher as the immediate topic within a collaborative special education teacher team which was the unit of analysis for this research. Action research was used as a methodology to ground the teacher-participant’s approach to reflecting on and learning about her own practices, and ethnography was used to support the understanding of teachers’ beliefs and interpretation the Danielson Framework for Teaching and collaborative teams. The teacher-participant engaged in a collaborative process with other teachers in the confines of a community
of teachers of SWD to define strategies that can be used to promote questioning and discussion in the classroom. Ethnography was appropriate for this study because it allowed insider and outsider perspectives in interpreting experiences within the collaborative teacher team and the context of the policy as implemented at the school.

**Findings and Conclusion**

When NYCDOE introduced *Advance* to school leaders and teachers, it provided a challenge for all, but it was specifically problematic for districts with large numbers of SWD. This study makes it clear that the Danielson Framework is, indeed, not a one-size-fits-all tool to guide the evaluation process and professional development of teachers. The possible examples provided under the current evaluative mechanism do not provide relevant supports for classrooms with SWD. Within special education schools, there exist students with diverse abilities including those who are verbal and those who are non-verbal, and this necessitates an unpacking of the Framework and the possible examples it provides to support teachers and students. This study points to the knowledge gaps amongst school leaders who work with teachers of SWD and who apply the Danielson Framework. These gaps can impact teachers’ MOTP ratings and, more importantly, teachers’ professional learning and student learning outcomes. Although the teacher-participant was reluctant to use video-based observations, despite her good relationship with her supervisor, she welcomed video into her classroom to support her professional learning. Among the key claims that this study makes about video as a professional learning tool are that it presents opportunities to (1) facilitate discourse in a collaborative team, (2) identify problems of practice, (3) define possible examples specific to special education classrooms, and (4) provide the teacher-participant a lens through which to see her own practices.
The overarching question guiding this research focused on the ways in which video can influence teachers’ professional learning under a mandated professional development policy, specifically in special education classrooms. Video brought opportunities that may not have existed prior to the teachers’ participation in this professional learning cycle at the school, and it provided opportunities for the teacher team to serve as critical friends and colleagues. The use of video and the collaborative effort of teachers of SWD listening to one another within a single school allowed those teachers to unpack the Danielson Framework in a way that supported those teachers’ professional learning experiences in a special education school.

The Danielson Framework as written requires the “explicit emphasis on the why and how to provide different instruction for students to ensure their academic, social, and emotional growth” (Connor & Valle, 2015, p. 1118). Jones and Brownell (2014) define effective teaching in SWD classrooms as that which gives “clear explanations of concepts and connections between concepts; and practicing with students until they understand a concept and how to apply it, or use a strategy or skill with novel tasks” (p. 115). When teachers of SWD are under observation by someone using the Danielson Framework’s criteria, the observer may conclude that eliciting rote responses through a single, repetitive approach is not effective when, in fact, that may actually be a best practice for a particular classroom and its students. Through watching a video and discussing it with others, the participants in this study—including the researcher—learned that errorless learning is a strategy that has been studied and proven effective in some special education classrooms. According to Nordvik, Schanke, and Landro (2011) an introduction of errors when learning impacts students immediate recall performance, whereas errorless learning promotes students’ learning outcomes. Gathercole & Alloway (2008) argue that error corrections for some students with disabilities contributes to working memory overloads, which limits
students’ abilities to access the content. Mrs. Stevens used a combination of “delayed prompting” and “response prevention” which are two errorless learning techniques that have demonstrated to be effective (Mueller, Palkovic, & Maynard 2007). The Danielson Framework does not include such an approach among the possible examples it provides in its effort to support and engage effective professional learning for teachers.

This study confirms the research of Darling-Hammond et al. (2009), who argued that success in student learning outcomes requires that teachers understand how students learn and most importantly that they understand the teaching that needs to take place in order for students to learn. This type of learning cannot be achieved in isolation, and teachers of SWD work with very diverse student populations. Therefore, it is important to provide such teachers with a network of collegial supports, a feat accomplished by the use of video recording in this research. This study extends the work of Sherin and van Es (2009) and others who have argued that video-based professional development provides teachers with a voice and with a specific professional lens through which they can examine their own teaching and its impact on student learning. Because the Danielson Framework did not support school leaders in effectively identifying areas in which teachers of SWD need improvement, a combined approach, using video and the framework, presented opportunities for teachers to unpack the framework and identify for themselves the best practices which would support their own learning and that of their students. Through the process of first reviewing the rubric and identifying best practices, then watching an authentic video from a classroom, and finally reviewing the rubric once more, teacher practitioners were able to create examples of what an evaluator might find in one classroom to guide professional learning.
Limitations of Findings

There were some limitations to this study that can be improved for future research. First, the study focused on one teacher who engaged in action research within one collaborative teacher team in a special education population. Although Mrs. Stevens was the only teacher who volunteered initially to present videos of her classrooms as a space for learning, videos from other teachers either within the same house or from other houses would have presented richer data to analyze in addressing the research questions. Secondly, most of the data collected was based on one video from one teacher-participant which was used to identify possible examples aligned to the Danielson Framework. The same video was used in the third sessions because we did not spend enough time making sense of the Danielson Framework before watching the video. It was necessary to review the possible examples identified in the first session to provide Mrs. Stevens with relevant and effective feedback. However, a review of additional, videos from other teachers would have been beneficial for the other teachers so they would have an opportunity to receive feedback from their colleagues. Time was the third limitation to the study. Because of the pressures presented by the Quality Review within the school, the first professional learning cycle which was supposed to occur within four to six sessions was rushed and limited to four sessions. Additionally, there was no discussion of how and what teachers will need to do and how school leaders could support teachers with sustaining this process. A fourth limitation to this study was teacher’s access to technology. Teachers who participated in the professional learning session were provided with video cameras, however, many had to be replaced. This influenced teachers’ ability to capture lessons in their classrooms if they chose to do so at any point in the study. A final limitation which results from time constraints is not learning about the different personalities and work styles of the teachers who participated in collaborative teacher teams.
Learning and knowing about the teachers’ different work styles among the team would have impacted teachers’ engagement, particularly in the first professional learning session.

**Reflections of the Process of Research**

I first encountered “bricolage” in my second semester as a doctoral student during a research methods course. As a novice researcher, I found the concept of working with a framework that addressed growing concerns very interesting because of my own experienced and also from working with teachers of students with disabilities in public school system. As an educator, I understood that my research would rely heavily on not only trying to provide support to teachers within the school, but also responding to the needs of teachers based on identified challenges. A focus on using bricolage as a methodology was especially important to me because it was contingent on ethical and ideological commitments between the teacher-participant and myself and also contingent on my relationship and discussions with the school leader. Bricolage allowed me to not only address “growing concerns” in social life (Kincheloe, 2004) but it also allowed my “bite-size chunks of research” to be carried out as I moved within my insider and outsider within status (Wibberly, 2012). Through bricolage, I was able to engage in a research processes based on the unfolding context of the research situation (Kincheloe in Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 168). Although the complexity within the school under the Quality Review, *Advance*, and the dynamic nature of the day-to-day experiences of teachers and school leaders working with SWD called for a bricolage of methodologies to shape the production and interpretation of the knowledge, it was not without its challenges.

As mentioned in earlier chapters, this research was a case study that focused on a collaborative teacher team as a unit of analysis and one teacher as immediate focus within the case. Though ethnography was used to support the understanding of the policy context as
implemented at the school which influenced the collaborative teams, action research was used as a methodology to ground the teacher-participant’s approach to reflecting and learning about her own practices. Action research was somewhat challenging to apply to the study because it involved a teacher-participant who was also conducting and learning about action research to support her professional development. This was challenging at times because the teacher was not always reflective as she believed most of her practices were the best she could do for her students. According to Hendricks (2009), action research is a cyclical process that requires testing involves planning, acting, developing, and reflecting and the reflections are an integral part requiring teachers to look at their own practices, reflect, and then figure out what to do to improve. Though action research was integral to this study, I only introduced it as a process where the teacher will “look”, “plan” and “act” without discussing the nuances of what each step entailed. I was fortunate to work with Mrs. Stevens who was not intimidated by being exposed among colleagues after viewing her own video. The idea of insider and outsider within came to play when conducting action research with a participant who was conducting her own action research within my study. As an outsider within, I was observing Mrs. Stevens and her colleagues through the lens of a researcher gathering data to support my research questions. As insider, my goal was to support the school as a talent coach with improving teaching practices which will influence teachers’ observations processes. I was again an outsider within the collaborative teacher teams because of position as a talent coach, but also as a researcher.

Ms. Stevens also played a role as an insider and outsider; as an insider, Mrs. Stevens was a teacher of students with disabilities within the school and one who volunteered to share her classroom with others. As an outsider within, Mrs. Steven played a role as an action researcher who engaged in looking at her own practices, developing a plan to improve her practices, and
then taking an action on that plan. She was also an outsider because of privileged conversations we had outside of the unit of analysis that influenced revisions to the research plan.

The first professional learning session was extremely challenging for me and I did not want to return to the exercise, however, I did because of my commitment to the school and the teacher-participant. I walked out of first professional learning cycle mentally and emotionally exhausted mainly because of two or three teachers’ resistant attitudes, but especially because of the teacher who asked “Why are we doing this?”. Although that teacher apologized for his behavior, I did not allow him to attend the second session because of his negative influence. I was able to negotiate that without making the teacher feel that he was being excluded. I wanted to work with him because he received unfavorable ratings according to the school leaders, but I needed the other teachers, his colleagues and friends to gain trust in me and then share with him what they experienced during the second session without forcing him to participate. The teacher joined our third session and reluctantly participated and shared feedback, but his presence did not influence others as it did in the first session.

I learned about how self-imposed barriers within the school influenced teachers’ engagement in professional learning sessions. I learned that the teachers experienced “perceived system limitations” and “inability to take charge of one’s own learning” (Fullan, 2003, p. 17). Some of the teachers experienced “perceived system limitations” because they believed that evaluations and professional learning plans were out of their control under Advance. The teachers believed that even if they worked understanding the Framework and identified possible examples to support practices, their school leaders would not use adhere to what they had developed. Secondly, I came to know that many of the teachers in the collaborative team, including Mrs. Jones were used to being told what to do and sometimes how to do it; some
teachers in turn acted on what they were told simply to earn favorable ratings. The resistance I encountered initially was a result of years of monotonous daily routines which teachers believed did not support their professional learning nor student learning outcomes. Because some of the teachers believed this was another attempt from the school leader to prepare for Quality Review, an effort that may not be sustained after the conclusion of the study, they resisted my efforts. I had hoped to complete two to three professional learning cycles with the team after the study, however, the school leader did not provide an opportunity to do so because of time constraints in preparing for the Quality Review.

**Implications for research and practice**

As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, teachers typically experience accountability frameworks that incorporate high-stakes teacher evaluation processes that decide career trajectories. Unfortunately, evaluations based on the Danielson Framework are often misaligned with the professional development needs for many special education teachers and administrators. Specifically, school leaders may identify that a teacher needs to ask DOK level 3 questions, pause, and then allow students to speak, when it would be more effective for a teacher to work through developing groups based on students’ abilities that differentiate the learning process so that students (including non-verbal ones) can communicate their thinking in a manner commensurate with their capacities. At the school level, findings of this study suggest that school leaders should structure opportunities for teachers to meet in teams to develop best practices that meet the needs of the population in their own school. At the system level, districts can engage teachers from different schools with similar student populations and engage them in professional learning cycles. Additionally, school districts can also investigate different ways to support collaborative teaching structures particularly those with more than one adult in the classroom.
Most importantly, at both national and state levels, there are policy implications for that will impact pre-service teacher preparation and school-based leadership preparation for special education programs.

A challenge experienced during this study was working with the school leader to organize structured time for teachers. To ensure that professional learning is effective, it is critical to have dedicated time to support teachers and to ensure that time was protected from other pedagogical and administrative obligations within the school. More importantly, it is critical to set expectations for each session such as a focus on unpacking the possible examples from the Danielson Framework for Teaching. One recommendation to districts with large populations with students with disabilities such as District 75 is to engage teachers in unpacking the Danielson Framework. This might mean that teachers meet and engage in professional learning cycles to look for approaches which would best suit permutations such as 12:1:1, 8:1:1, 6:1:1, or 12:1:4 classrooms, for example, and then come up with best practices that an observer could identify. What is developed through this method can replace the possible examples presented in the Danielson Framework without dismissing the critical attributes from the Framework components. Doing this will provide teachers with reasonable and effective expectations that can support and improve student learning outcomes.

An important implication from the study is how teachers are prepared for working with multiple students with disabilities and how school-based leaders are prepared to support teachers working with students with disabilities. Under NCLBA a teacher is recognized as “highly qualified” if they have attained a bachelor's degree or better in the subject they teach, obtained full state teacher certification, and demonstrated knowledge in the subjects taught (Gill et al, 2009). A policy recommendation to support teachers working with students with
disabilities and school-based leaders is a requirement to obtain state certification in working with specific category of disability. This will address knowledge gaps required to work when with students with disabilities, similar to the same requirements for subject areas such as mathematics or English.

This research focused primarily on teachers’ actions in the classrooms when identifying and developing best practices to improve students learning. Two suggestions for professional learning using video as a professional learning tool are: a focus on feedback provided by teachers of students with disabilities to peers and a focus on generating possible examples aligned to the Danielson Framework by teachers of students with disabilities. Perceived system limitations by teachers of SWD initially influenced their judgment and engagement in the collaborative teacher team, however, by looking at one teacher with similar students, teachers were interested in engaging in using video to support their learning. Research comparing teacher-generated feedback with evaluators’ feedback would be of interest for future studies. Future research should continue to look at teachers’ engagement in collaborative teacher teams using video to support their professional lens, including looking at student responses to teachers’ efforts in order to identify best practices. My current interest is to develop video clubs for looking at student work in the classroom to understand what students see and hear during instructional time. This study focused on noticing and interpreting teacher actions in the classroom and how it influenced students learning. Future research should focus on noticing and interpreting students’ actions based communication with adults and other students within a classroom.
### Component 3b: Critical Attributes and Possible Examples
(NYCDOE Danielson 2013 Rubric, p. 32)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Ineffective</th>
<th>Effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical</td>
<td>Questions are rapid-fire and convergent, with a single correct answer.</td>
<td>The teacher uses open-ended questions, inviting students to think and/or offer multiple possible answers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attributes</td>
<td>Questions do not invite student thinking.</td>
<td>The teacher makes effective use of wait time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All discussion is between the teacher and students; students are not invited to speak directly</td>
<td>Discussions enable students to talk to one another without ongoing mediation by teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to one another.</td>
<td>The teacher calls on most students, even those who don’t initially volunteer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The teacher does not ask students to explain their thinking.</td>
<td>Many students actively engage in the discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Only a few students dominate the discussion.</td>
<td>The teacher asks students to justify their reasoning, and most attempt to do so.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possible</td>
<td>All questions are of the “recitation” type, such as “What is 3 x 4?”</td>
<td>The teacher asks, “What might have happened if the colonists had not prevailed in the American war for independence?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples</td>
<td>The teacher asks a question for which the answer is on the board; students respond by reading</td>
<td>The teacher uses the plural form in asking questions, such as “What are some things you think might contribute to _____?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>it.</td>
<td>The teacher asks, “Maria, can you comment on Ian’s idea?” and Maria responds directly to Ian.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The teacher calls only on students who have their hands up.</td>
<td>The teacher poses a question, asking every student to write a brief response and then share it with a partner, before inviting a few to offer their ideas to the entire class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A student responds to a question with wrong information, and the teacher doesn’t follow up.</td>
<td>The teacher asks students when they have formulated an answer to the question “Why do you think Huck Finn did _____?” to find the reason in the text and to explain their thinking to a neighbor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>And others...</td>
<td>And others...</td>
</tr>
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</table>

And others...
Appendix B
Depth of Knowledge (DoK) Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level One Activities</th>
<th>Level Two Activities</th>
<th>Level Three Activities</th>
<th>Level Four Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recall elements and details of story structure, such as sequence of events, character, plot and setting.</td>
<td>Identify and summarize the major events in a narrative.</td>
<td>Support ideas with details and examples.</td>
<td>Conduct a project that requires specifying a problem, designing and conducting an experiment, analyzing its data, and reporting results/solutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct basic mathematical calculations.</td>
<td>Use context cues to identify the meaning of unfamiliar words.</td>
<td>Use voice appropriate to the purpose and audience.</td>
<td>Apply mathematical model to illuminate a problem or situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Label locations on a map.</td>
<td>Solve routine multiple-step problems.</td>
<td>Identify research questions and design investigations for a scientific problem.</td>
<td>Analyze and synthesize information from multiple sources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Represent in words or diagrams a scientific concept or relationship.</td>
<td>Describe the cause/effect of a particular event.</td>
<td>Develop a scientific model for a complex situation.</td>
<td>Describe and illustrate how common themes are found across texts from different cultures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perform routine procedures like measuring length or using punctuation marks correctly.</td>
<td>Identify patterns in events or behavior.</td>
<td>Determine the author’s purpose and describe how it affects the interpretation of a reading selection.</td>
<td>Design a mathematical model to inform and solve a practical or abstract situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe the features of a place or people.</td>
<td>Formulate a routine problem given data and conditions.</td>
<td>Organize, represent and interpret data.</td>
<td>Apply a concept in other contexts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**APPENDIX: Section III**

**SAMPLE FORMATIVE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING EVALUATION FORM**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of PL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are you implementing the new practice in your classroom? How?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are you making the new practice fit within the context of your classroom?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How is the new practice affecting your teaching?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you seeing the new practice positively affecting your students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you receiving the appropriate amount of support (coaching, feedback, sharing?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you see as your next steps in implementing the practice?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall comments and feedback</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Appendix D  
Norming Protocol for Inter-visitation

**Facilitator:** Ensures that all participants contribute and that all evidence is low-inference. The facilitator also selects probing questions when they are needed to help the group fully address the standard under discussion and to help them find common understandings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STEP</th>
<th>Professional Learning Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td>View a classroom lesson together—either through co-observation or using video. All participants gather low-inference evidence. Low-inference data focuses on what we see and what we hear. It does not sum up or label our observations as good or bad.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **2** | Guided Questions  
After the group has reviewed their notes and made sure observations were low-inference, the facilitator will ask these questions using an adapted version *Save the Last Word by for ME* protocol by Patricia Averette to structure sharing of evidence  

1. **What did you see and what did you hear?**  
Participants each share one item of evidence that stood out to them. ALL participants must make a contribution the first time around, but may pass if they have no new observations.

   *If participants share an observation that includes analyses or judgment, the facilitator should remind the participant to state the evidence in terms of what was seen and/or heard.*

2. **After participants have shared their observations, the facilitator may decide to ask some probing questions such as:**  
   - Were students cognitively engaged in this lesson? What is the evidence?  
   - What did students do in this lesson? Was it rigorous? How do you know?  
   - What was the lesson’s objective and did students attain it? What is the evidence? |

| **3** | Review the Danielson rubric and determine a rating supported by evidence. Based on Instructional Focus, CEP goals and Advance data, we will focus on Domain 3, particularly components 3b, 3c, and/or 3d  
Facilitator will ask participants to quietly and independently identify a rating and select the appropriate HEDI score. Please make sure others don’t see your rating for the components selected. We will have time to share. Facilitator can use index cards to support this activity.  
When all participants are ready, the facilitator will ask all participants to reveal their response and note responses aloud. The facilitator should ask 2-3 (including the Host Teacher) to their answers to these questions:  
   1. Why did you rate this component as you did? (elicit responses from each participant targeting areas of disagreement)  
   2. In light of what you have heard, would you change your response, why or... |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Feedback to Host Teacher (Think about writing a SMART goal for the Host Teacher)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 4 | **WHAT** – What specifically can the teacher change about their practice to improve student outcome? Please use the elements of the rubric to provide a specific area of growth.  
**WHY** – Why is it important for the teacher to make this change in her practice?  
**HOW** – How can the teacher make this change? Provide one specific move the teacher can make the next day to change this practice. |
Appendix E
Approved New York City Department of Education and City University of New York
Institutional Review Board Interview Protocol

Interview Questions for Teacher-Participants

Part I – School Culture

1. How would you describe the culture of your school?
2. How does the culture of the school mediate your pedagogical practices?
3. Do you feel comfortable talking to other teachers and your administrators in the school about your pedagogical practices? Why or Why not?
4. If you can change one thing about your teaching experience at your school in the 2013-2014 academic year, what would it be and why?
5. What are your thoughts about using video for evaluative purposes?
6. Did you select the option to be use video as an assessment tool during classroom observations during the 2013-2014 academic year? Why or why not?
7. Why did you decide to allow video in your classroom this school year?
8. Do you think you were well prepared to use the Danielson Framework for Teaching? Why or why not?

Part II – Post Observation Rating/Video Analysis

9. What low-inference evidence do you have to support components: 3b-Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques; 3c- Engaging Students in Learning; and 3d-Using Assessment in Instruction?
10. What is your rating for components 3b, 3c, and 3d based on the Danielson Framework for Teaching?
11. What is the strongest evidence to support student engagement in the video?
12. What other segments in the video interests you and what is doing on in the video?
13. How do you make learning experiences engaging for all students in your classroom?
14. What are your next steps based on your analysis of the video and your practices?
Appendix F

ELIGIBLE CATEGORIES OF DISABILITY

AUTISM
A developmental disability, significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age 3, that adversely affects educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines and unusual responses to sensory experiences.

The term does not apply if a student’s educational performance is adversely affected primarily because the student has an emotional disturbance. A student who manifests the characteristics of autism after age 3 could be diagnosed as having autism if the above criteria are otherwise satisfied.

DEAFNESS
A student with a hearing impairment that is so severe that the student is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification, that adversely affects the student’s educational performance.

DEAF-BLINDNESS
A student with both hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for students with deafness or students with blindness.

EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE
A student who exhibits one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects the student’s educational performance:

- An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory or health factors;
- An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers;

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7 NYCDOE District 75 Eligible Categories of Disability retrieved August 1, 2016 from http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/SpecialEducation/SEP/determination/eligible-categories-disability.htm
• Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances;
• A generally pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression;
• A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

The term “emotional disturbance” includes schizophrenia. It does not apply to students who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance.

HEARING IMPAIRMENT
An impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects the student’s educational performance but is not included under the definition of deafness in this section.

LEARNING DISABILITY
Learning disability means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which manifests itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or to do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia and developmental aphasia. The term does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing or motor disabilities; of mental retardation; of emotional disturbance or of environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage.

INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY
A student with significantly sub-average general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period that adversely affects that student’s educational performance.

MULTIPLE DISABILITIES
A student with concurrent impairments (such as mental retardation–blindness, mental retardation–orthopedic impairment, etc.), the combination of which causes educational needs that cannot be accommodated in a special education program solely for one of the impairments. The term does not include deaf-blindness.

ORTHOPEDIC IMPAIRMENT
A severe orthopedic impairment that adversely affects a student’s educational performance. The term includes impairments caused by congenital anomaly (e.g., clubfoot, absence of some member, etc.), impairments caused by disease (e.g., poliomyelitis, bone tuberculosis, etc.), and impairments from other causes (e.g., cerebral palsy, amputation and fractures or burns which cause contractures).

**Other Health Impairment**

A student with limited strength, vitality or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment, that is due to chronic or acute health problems, including but not limited to a heart condition, tuberculosis, rheumatic fever, nephritis, asthma, sickle cell anemia, hemophilia, epilepsy, lead poisoning, leukemia, diabetes, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, or Tourette syndrome, which adversely affects that student’s educational performance.

**Speech or Language Impairment**

A student with a communication disorder, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment or a voice impairment that adversely affects that student’s educational performance.

**Traumatic Brain Injury**

A student with an acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force or by certain medical conditions such as stroke, encephalitis, aneurysm, and anoxia or brain tumors with resulting impairments that adversely affect that student’s educational performance.

The term includes open or closed head injuries or brain injuries from certain medical conditions resulting in mild, moderate or severe impairments in one or more areas, including cognition, language, memory, attention, reasoning, abstract thinking, judgment, problem solving, sensory, perceptual and motor abilities, psychosocial behavior, physical functions, information processing and speech. The term does not include injuries that are congenital or caused by birth trauma.

**Visual Impairment**

An impairment in vision including blindness that, even with correction, adversely affects that student’s educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness.
Appendix G
NYCDOE Advance Observation Note-Taking Form

Observation Note-taking Form
Remember to capture:
• What do you see and hear the teacher and students doing? Quantify and quote.
• What evidence can you gather of student learning? Actively collect evidence.
• What will students know and be able to do at the end of the lesson? Search out evidence of rigor and new understandings from students.

Evidence of Student Outcomes
Examples of student outcome data can include: number of students who write down a correct answer, student responses to probing questions about the lesson objective, length and complexity of specific answers given by students, etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Teacher Actions</th>
<th>Student Actions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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</table>
### Appendix H
Reponses from Summative Professional Learning Evaluation Form
(NYCDOE Handbook for Professional Learning, 2014, p. 103)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Responses from Teachers</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| Were your expectations met?                    | *Teacher A:* “Yes, for the most part I was able to get feedback that I can use from my peer teachers, external coach, and I was able to reflect”  
*Teacher B:* “I expected to become more educated regarding the Danielson system and I got a great look at it from a different perspective, however, I am hoping it is used by admin for our own ratings”  
Teacher C: “It helped watching another teacher’s practice but would’ve liked to see another teacher that had students similar to my population”  
Teacher D: “Yes, I got to see and hear how ‘questioning and discussion’ looks like in [other] teachers classroom and what I can take back to my classroom” |
| How specifically were they met or not met?     | Teacher A: “I was able to self-evaluate my practices better using the Danielson framework”  
Teacher B: “Concerned for usage discussions and ‘look fors’ by admin could be extremely helpful if utilized. Expectations met within the confines of the actual meetings.”  
Teacher C: “Met: By breaking down the rubric and redefining rubric standards and criteria based on our unique population. Not Met: I would’ve liked to watch more videos to see different teaching practices with different students”  
Teacher D: “how ‘questioning and discussion’ looks like in [other] teachers classroom and what I can take back to my classroom” |
| What is the evidence in your practice?         | Teacher A: “Follow-up video showed that I tried the feedback that was provided to me and changed my teaching practices to help my students”  
Teacher B: “using look fors and implementing feedback from teacher in same setting”  
Teacher C: “used feedback and the modified rubric for my teaching”  
Teacher D: students pairing to solve problems and students using the dry-eraser board to talk to each other |
| What is the evidence in your students learning? | Teacher A: “In house assessments showed that my students achieved their short term IEP goals in math…”  
Teacher B: “Increased socialization of students and routine after practice in class”  
Teacher C: “more student to student talk and self-evaluation for each student” |
| What next steps do you need for the PD committee? | Teacher D: “there was more student participation from students because the asked questions which is different from before”  
Teacher A: “I want to continue to work on my teaching practices with specific support like this one because it helps me with focusing on what I can do to improve my student’s learning instead of trying to get a high rating”  
Teacher B: “Admin buy-in”  
Teacher C: “helping administration follow the modified criteria to evaluate teachers”  
Teacher D: “I need to learn more about what I can do to help my students take charge of their learning” |
| --- | --- |
| What next steps do you plan to take personally? | Teacher A: “Practice on receiving critical feedback and work on implementing what I learned from the team in my classroom”  
Teacher B: “Continue to develop questioning techniques and non-verbal/low functioning student discussion methods”  
Teacher C: “self-evaluating myself following lessons” |
| Overall comments and feedback | Teacher A: “I think this was a great way to get extra support”  
Teacher B: “Very helpful and glad to get another perspective. Glad to discuss with peers on best practices and practical usage methods using rubric as a guide”  
Teacher C: n/a  
Teacher D: The meeting was informative and should continue |
Appendix I
Self-Reflection from Inter-Visitation Professional Learning (PL)

In what ways do you think the professional learning cycle impacted your professional learning? Please describe your learning.

Through the cycle, I was able to share with my fellow teachers my lessons and I was given immediate feedback based on 3b (questioning and discussion techniques) in the Danielson rubric. The team of teachers analyzed the video taped lessons and not only provided feedback based on Danielson Rubric but also gave me suggestions on areas that can be approved to further increase students’ learning. The cycle was specified to 3b, which was an area I needed to improve. The PL allowed me to self-reflect on the lessons and make the necessary improvements. I was able to take charge of my own professional learning. I was able to share with fellow teachers my dilemma in the classroom and learn from my experiences. Through the PL, the teachers came together to provide additional support in my professional growth.

Do you feel the PL had an impact on your students learning? How? Please describe

The PL directly impacted the students learning. I was able to use what I learned to improve and specify questioning and discussion techniques in my classroom. The students began to further understand what was being asked of them. The students were able to all participate in the lesson in various ways. I was able to check for understanding through higher level questioning. The students were also able to demonstrate what they know and also encourage other students in the learning progress. As I received feedback from the PL, I implemented the changes in the classroom and saw the difference in the students’ assessment.

What areas do you want to continue to learn more about professionally to support your students?

I would like to focus on 1e Designing Coherent Instruction. I would like to focus on organizing instructional groups to support student learning. I would also like to work on engaging students with difficulty attending in learning activities.

Next Steps
What steps can you take to continue to learn? What steps can the researcher take to support you with your learning?

I will continue to evaluate my teaching by reflecting on my practices and specific lessons. I will continue to collaborate with teachers to get feedback on my lesson plans before teaching the lesson. I can be further supported if I am provided with strategies and techniques to help increase attention of students with attention deficits.

Additional Comments/Feedback
Based on my experience as a student teacher, I noticed that I was not given specific feedback that will help me develop professionally. I noticed that there was a significant focus on evaluation of teachers and not providing supports for teachers to grow professional. As a second year teacher, I sought out opportunities to develop as a teacher. I used the PLC to get feedback on the area 3b and was able to receive feedback based on the Danielson feedback. I was then prompted to take the feedback and adjust my practices which, ultimately impacted students. I was able to specialize my professional development and tailor it to help me in specific areas.
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Autobiographical Statement

Belinda Akua-Kisiwaa Amoako is a teacher, a learner, and currently serves as a Senior Director Director of Instruction, Advance Placement (AP) for All with the New York City Department of Education. Belinda Akua-Kisiwaa has worked in the field of education for over decade as a classroom teacher, an instructional coach, regional professional development specialist, adjunct instructor, and full time school-based leader. In her school teaching career, Belinda Akua-Kisiwaa taught mathematics to students with learning disabilities in a self-contained learning environment. Belinda Akua-Kisiwaa Amoako holds a B.A. in Sociology from the State University of New York (SUNY) at Geneseo, a M.S. in Childhood Education with a focus in Special Education from Mercy College, and a M. Phil in Urban Education from the Graduate Center of the City of New York (CUNY). Her research interests include social and cultural understandings of disability, using video as professional learning tool, video as a lens to look at student learning and transitioning of students from self-contained programs to Community Schools.