

Implementing a Formalized Rounding Model:
A Study of Special Education Teacher
Perception of Communication With
Special Services Administrators
And Special Education
Teacher Engagement

Danielle A. Hamblin

Dissertation Committee:
Dr. Joanne Jasmine, Sponsor
Dr. Lauren Banker
Dr. Tracy Reilly

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Abstract

This study explored one district's attempt to increase communication and special education teacher engagement within the Department of Special Services. Engagement is characterized by being involved, dedicated, and ardent in one's work (Nink & Welte, 2011; Saks, 2006) and in special education, engaged teachers are critical in their effect on instructional delivery in the classroom. This researcher studied 20 special education teachers and seven Child Study Team rounding leaders among five schools as they participated in a formalized system of rounding.

Rounding most often occurs between supervisor and employee and involves asking specific questions of all employees in order to obtain information from which the supervisor can act (Hotko, 2004; Studer, 2003). Actionable information includes recognizing staff members on behalf of the employee and taking steps to address issues brought forth during the round. The outcomes of rounding include building relationships, learning and acknowledging what is working well, and identifying who within the organization is contributing behavior and efforts toward the goals within the organization.

Findings were triangulated from the quantitative Employee Engagement Survey (Gallup, 1999) and qualitative data from rounding logs, exit questions, open-ended questionnaires, and interviews. While the data from teachers at all levels revealed the preferred forum for communication was face to face with the administrator, the non-supervisory rounding leaders effectively supported two-way communication and contributed to increased engagement levels among the special education teachers.

When teachers perceived that requests were taken seriously and when they have input on issues related to their job, they felt a greater sense of trust for the administrator and were more willing to communicate their needs. Additionally, the opportunity to give

and to receive recognition of one another, was noted to have a positive effect on the department's climate.

As a result of this study, administrators may want to consider the implementation of a formalized rounding model. The structured, formalized system provides a forum for open communication between employee and administrator which may lead to trust, and a faculty committed to the common goals and team efforts within an organization.

Dedication

To my Lord and Savior, for giving me the mental and physical capacity to endure this journey of hard work and personal growth. May my life decisions in work and play, glorify You. -Matthew 25:21

To my husband and life partner, Loren Hamblin, for always supporting my dreams and aspirations, and to my two amazing children, Colin and Kyle, who are my inspiration for fulfilling the commitment to my goals. To Alyeska and Riley Grace, my furry companions who remained beside me for countless hours of writing and research over the past year and a half.

To my grandfather, Joseph Koziar for igniting my passion for service, and leading me to conversations with my mother on the organizational benefits of rounding for outcomes.

To my parents, Barbara and Daniel, who have instilled within me a strong work ethic and molded my motto “*No one rises to low expectations.*”

And, to my employees whom I value and appreciate for the work that they do each day and the impact they make on future generations (see Appendix D).

“Heart power is the strength of your corporation.” –Vince Lombardi

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I could not have completed the journey without the dedication and commitment of the rounding leaders within my district, the rounding teacher participants, and the non-participants. I wish to thank them for their time, honesty, and commitment to our one team, one purpose philosophy.

Studer Education has been the foundation of the study, and I would like to acknowledge the coaching leadership and partnership of Dr. Melissa Matarazzo, and from My Rounding Software, Ms. Nancy Burke, who provided me the opportunity to explore the medical rounding software in an educational setting. I am hopeful that the research I have completed is valuable to educational leaders well beyond this small, suburban district in northern, New Jersey.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Engagement is an employee attribute that has been identified as vital for goal attainment within an organization (Nink & Welte, 2011; Saks, 2006), and is characterized as employees who are involved, dedicated, and ardent in their work. In addition, these employees are loyal, remain with the organization over time, and contribute to organizational goals even when experiencing challenges (Mishra, Boynton, & Mishra, 2014). Engaged employees contribute to the desired outcomes of the organization through increased financial benefit such as increased sales (Robison, 2012), improved employee retention rates (Lowe, 2012), and increased customer service satisfaction scores (Deering, 2004). As a result, many organizations identify a culture of engagement within the workplace as a priority and develop actionable goals to affect engagement (Saks, 2006; Swarnalatha & Prasanna, 2013). Research studies (Lowe, 2012; Mishra et al., 2014; Swarnalatha & Prassana, 2013) have concluded that there are various attributes that contribute to employee engagement. Primary is the relationship of trust between employee and supervisor that precedes employee engagement. When there is trust between employee and supervisor, the employee is more likely to be engaged and willing to act in the interest of the organization (Nink & Welte, 2011). To yield this trust and engagement necessary to support the goals of the organization, employees need to implement a system of two-way communication between employee and supervisor (Deering, 2004; Lowe, 2012; Mishra et al., 2014; Robison, 2012). In the field of education, engaged employees are vital in their effect on instructional delivery to students within the classroom. Therefore, administrators must seek practices that support a culture

of engagement (Deao, 2016; Mishra et al., 2014). Rounding is one such practice. Rounding (Studer, 2003) is the consistent practice where specific questions are asked of employees in order to obtain actionable information. Within the process, the supervisor gleans from the employee information such as particular resources needed for the classroom, faculty, and staff who are deserving of recognition, and issues that the teachers ask to be addressed. Issues might include teacher requests for professional development in ways to modify a general education lesson for special education students in an inclusive classroom. Consequently, this process of rounding supports the relationship between supervisor and teacher, provides insight to the supervisor on what is working well within the classroom and school, and identifies areas in need of improvement (Baker, 2010). This process of rounding may also lead to increased trust between supervisor and teacher which could result in teacher engagement.

In 1999, the Studer Group began their consulting firm with a focus on improving quality of service within the healthcare industry and with the goal of increasing patient satisfaction scores. The Studer Group established a formalized practice called rounding for outcomes (Studer, 2003, 2008). Over time, Studer learned that he needed to listen to his employees and improve his communication skills with them. His conversations with employees needed to move beyond a quick inquiry about how the employee was doing and transition to specifics, thus, the process of rounding was developed and consisted of a leader systematically engaging in a dialogue with each employee and asking a standard set of questions (Studer, 2003). The practice continues as the leader then acts on information gathered from the conversation (Cunningham, 2015). For example in a school setting, if a teacher identifies that students require a touchscreen laptop to improve

instruction and address curricular issues, the rounding leader takes action on the request and communicates the status of the request back to the teacher. With this process, rounding provides a set of questions designed to create a positive working climate within the organization, to ensure the employee has the tools and resources needed to do the work, to identify the things that are working well, and to give employees the opportunity to recognize colleagues for their contribution to the organization (Baker, 2010; Cunningham, 2015; Studer & Pilcher, 2015). For instance, during a round with a teacher and a supervisor, the general education teacher may share their interest in having an established time to meet with special education colleagues to review a new grading system. The supervisor listens to the request, establishes a response to the request, and in turn, the teachers recognize that their input matters. Rounding provides employees with a sense of purpose that they can make a difference (Studer, 2003, 2008). As a result of the two-way communication it requires, the supervisor and employee develop a trusting relationship. This trust strengthens employee motivation, and their effort and persistence in work is directed toward the collective goals of the organization (Mishra et al., 2014). Engaged employees permeate the culture of an organization and assist with building a shared vision and a unified, successful system (Senge, 1994). Therefore, implementing a formalized rounding model may be one way to increase communication between employee and supervisor and affect employee engagement.

This study examined the way in which a Department of Special Services in a PK-12 school district developed and implemented a formalized rounding model as a means to increase communication among special education teachers, child study team leaders, and

the special services administrators to positively affect special education teacher engagement.

Research Problem

Relationships between employee and supervisor have been found to be the catalyst between how well an organization performs (Dubrin, 2013) and employee commitment to the organization. Bradberry and Greaves (2012) identified that employees work harder for a boss they trust. For this reason, supervisors need to search for ways to connect with their employees and empower them to act with a sense of responsibility for the organization (Bradberry & Greaves, 2012; DuBrin, 2013; Marzano & Waters, 2009). Mone and London (2009) identified communication between employee and supervisor as a crucial leadership action that affects employee engagement. A supervisor who communicates honestly and fairly gains respect from the employees and then the employee believes that the supervisor is trustworthy and acting with the knowledge of the organization's goals (Mishra et al., 2014; Swarnalatha & Prasanna, 2013). This two-way communication ensures that employee needs are addressed and met and that the supervisor responds with transparency when taking action (Nink & Welte, 2011). Strong communication practices lead to increased trust between employee and supervisor and ultimately stronger job engagement (Lowe, 2012; Mishra et al., 2014).

In this study of one PK-12 school district, the Department of Special Services was lacking a system for communication between special education teachers, the Director of Special Services, and the Supervisor of Special Services. Consequently, the teachers did not have a formal system to provide input to the special services administrators regarding the resources needed to do their job, they did not receive feedback on issues that they

brought forward, and they did not have a structured way to receive recognition for doing the job effectively. As a result, the Director of Special Services instituted a formalized rounding model in an effort to increase communication between special education teachers and the special services administrators across three elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. This researcher studied the implementation of a formalized rounding model that occurred between special education teachers and Child Study Team rounding leaders (CSTRs), who were the liaison to the special services administrators, to determine its effect on communication between the special education rounding teachers (SERTs) and the special services administrators, the level of engagement of the SERTs, and their perceptions of the rounding process.

Through this implementation study, this researcher addressed one primary research question and four ancillary questions:

- Do special education teachers who participated in the formalized rounding model perceive that they are more engaged in their teaching and communicating more effectively with special services administrators?
- What aspects of rounding influenced special education teacher perception of effective communication with special services administrators?
- What aspects of rounding influenced the perception of special education teacher level of engagement in their jobs?
- In what ways did Child Study Team Rounding Leaders have an effect on communication between special education rounding teachers and special services administrators and special education teacher level of engagement?
- What are the differences among elementary, middle and high school level special education teacher perception of rounding?

Scope of the Research

This researcher conducted this study in a public PK-12 school district in New Jersey. The district factor group was an I, on a scale of A to J, with A being the most economically disadvantaged and J being the most economically advantaged. The New Jersey State Department of Education (2004) used the following six criteria to determine the district factor grouping: percentage of adults with no high school diploma, percent of adults with some college education, occupational status, unemployment rate, percentage of individuals in poverty, and median family income. Within the district, approximately 4 % of the students qualified for free and reduced lunch services. The district did not receive Title I federal funding for any school in particular due to the provisions set forth in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), but rather utilized Title I funding solely for use across the five schools for a target population of students requiring intervention.

The Director of Special Services and Supervisor of Special Services participated in monthly coaching sessions with Dr. Melissa Matarazzo, Studer Education coach (see Table 1), and then trained CSTRs monthly between February and June 2017 in the rounding process. These monthly leadership training sessions were offered to the seven CSTRs who volunteered to serve in the role of rounding leader (see Table 2).

Table 1

Special Services Administrator Training Agendas – 2017

Training Month	Date	Agenda Topic
January 2017	1-23-17	Overview of Rounding: issues, reward and recognition and, bright spots, CSTRL training plan
February 2017	2-13-17	Feedback on first rounds, questions from CSTRLs, agenda for February 2017 CSTRL training
March 2017	3-8-17	FAQs and solutions for the rounding process, overview of leadership qualities and training techniques
April 2017	4-4-17	Leadership competency checklist, coordinating rounding software overview training
May 2017	5-22-17	Feedback on software reporting and ease of use, planning for employee engagement survey
June 2017	6-14-17	Reflection on rounding and benefits of the employee engagement survey for strengthening communication and engagement
June 2017	6-30-17	Review of June 2017 survey results and action planning for the rounding process

The Director of Special Services assigned one CSTRL to each elementary school, two CSTRLs to the middle school, and two CSTRLs to the high school. In January 2017, the Director of Special Services introduced rounding at school-based Department of Special Services meetings with the special education teachers.

Table 2

CSTRs Leadership Training Agendas – 2017

February 2017	2-1-17	The what, how and why of rounding?
	2-17-17	First round, what do we do with the information? Stoplight reports, reward and recognition
March 2017	3-27-17	Leadership and communication strategies for CSTRs, an introduction of competency checklist
April 2017	4-25-17	Review of CSTRL competency checklist: how do we strengthen the rounding process?
May 2017	5-1-17	Rounding software overview: report options, patterns found through the reports, status of issues
June 2017	6-14-17	Reflection on rounding and benefits of the employee engagement survey for strengthening communication and engagement
September 2017	9-11-17	Review of June 2017 survey results and action planning for the rounding process

The Director of Special Services introduced the process, the benefit of participation, and the goal of enhanced cohesion toward the department mission of functioning as one team for students with special needs. In the February 2017 meeting with CSTRs, they learned how to conduct a round and practiced the process of rounding with Studer Education coach, Dr. Matarazzo. During the month of February, two trainings for CSTRs were needed to support the start of the rounding process. Additionally, in September at the start of the 2017-2018 school year, an additional training was held with CSTRs to re-launch the rounding process with special education teachers.

At the conclusion of each of the monthly department meetings, the CSTRL, special services supervisor or director provided updates to the SERTs on the progress of items brought forth during the rounding process. They utilized these monthly meeting forums to communicate the status of issues with the SERTs, even in times when an issue was not able to be resolved. Regardless of whether a resolution was tangible, the special services administrators hoped that the SERTs would appreciate the feedback on items brought forth, gain a sense that their contribution mattered, and recognize that the supervisors were treating them as professionals (Lowe, 2012).

The topic of faculty recognition also was included in the monthly meetings to recognize faculty who were identified during the rounding process. The topic of recognition occurred with all members of the department faculty, and there were often times that non-rounding special education teachers (NRSETs) were recognized during the meetings. This process may support the relationship of trust between employee and supervisor which may lead to an engaged employee (Lowe, 2012). Employee engagement may also be influenced by such two-way communication as employees observed their leader communicating openly and honestly (Lowe, 2012).

Of the 48 special education teachers in the district, 37 volunteered for this study. This researcher divided the 37 participants by level taught, elementary, middle, high school, then randomly chose 20 SERTs and 17 NRSETs by drawing names from a hat. Seven of the 14 Child Study Team members in the district volunteered to participate as CSTRLs in the staff rounding process. Each were assigned to round in the building where they worked as a Child Study Team member.

As the Director of Special Services facilitated its implementation, this researcher served as a participant observer in the study. She minimized bias by employing the leadership of CSTRs to conduct rounds rather than conducting them personally. The CSTRs met with the SERTs and collected rounding log data and exit questions which assisted with the rounding implementation. In this way, the Director of Special Services to whom the study's participants reported, had limited influence on the authenticity and feedback during the rounding process. Additionally, the researcher collected all data with confidentiality.

Need and Purpose of the Study

The practice of rounding with teachers communicates that their supervisor cares for them and that the work that they do each day is meaningful. Rounding may be especially valuable for special education teachers because their students have specialized needs and the resources needed may be different than the general education population. Supervisors, who meet individually with these teachers and seek to identify the resources and tools needed for them to effectively instruct, are communicating that the teacher's work is important and that the supervisor has a vested interest in supporting that teacher (Bradberry & Greaves, 2012).

In the district studied, the position of Supervisor of Special Services was established in January 2016 with the purpose of supporting the Director of Special Services and working directly with special education teachers. The goal of the new position was to provide a formal method of communication between special education teachers and the Supervisor of Special Services, but there was still a lack of continuity in how needs were brought to the attention of the Director of Special Services and the way

in which the resolution of these issues was communicated back to special education teachers across the district. These special services administrators had no system to track issues or to identify what was working well within the department. Department meetings with the special education teachers did not include standing agenda items that communicated the status of issues brought forth by teachers nor did they include the opportunity to recognize and reward teachers. This lack of communication may have negatively affected the trust needed between special education teachers and their supervisors to achieve organizational goals (Lowe, 2012; Mishra et al., 2014; Nink & Welte, 2011). Consequently, the Director of Special Services recognized that communication was fragmented and needed to unify the department toward a common purpose. Through the rounding process, special services administrators attempted to develop trusting relationships with the SERTs, increase communication and engagement, and achieve department goals.

Special Services Administrator Benefits

Implementing a system of rounding may allow department leaders to more fully support teachers by demonstrating that their work is meaningful and that they are valued by their supervisor. Boshamer (2008) noted that special education teachers leave the profession at a higher rate than general education teachers because they feel secluded in their role, overwhelmed by the multiplicity of special education student needs, have limited resources to do their job, and experience a lack of administrative support. Through rounding, special services administrators may be able to support teachers by tracking patterns of concerns, taking steps to address these issues, identifying systems that are not working effectively, and providing resources that would support teachers in

their daily work (Studer, 2008). Through accessibility of building-based CSTRs and implementation of the rounding process, the two special services administrators may provide teachers with a platform to routinely voice their needs and then provide a timely response. Because CSTRs are school-based, they are available to special education teachers routinely and serve as the link with the special services administrators who are often located in other buildings and supervising all special education teachers and programs in a district. In addition, utilizing Child Study Team members as rounding leaders may support the sustainability of the rounding process and be a valuable resource for strengthening communication within a Department of Special Services.

CSTR Benefits

While the CSTRs are non-supervisory in nature, they serve in a leadership capacity on behalf of the students with special needs by supporting special education teachers and communicating with special services administrators. In this study, Child Study Team members volunteered to serve as CSTRs in the five school buildings. Responsible for the identification, evaluation, determination of eligibility, development, and review of the individualized education program and placement of students with special needs (NJAC 6A:14-3.1, 2015), CSTRs may feel that they are better able to meet their job requirements through increase in communication between special education teacher and special services administrator. For example, Child Study Team members routinely offer support to teachers regarding techniques, materials, and programs for students in the classroom setting (NJAC 6A: 14-3.1 (d)3, 2015). The rounding process provides a formalized manner to share such needs with the special services administrators and track the status of the requests. The CSTRs would benefit

from this system because communication that flows between the classroom teacher and the CSTRL, and the CSTRL and supervisor, keeps all constituents well informed of the status of the students and their respective programs. Finally, throughout the process of rounding, the special services administrators consistently developed leadership skill sets of the CSTRLs. This is also an added benefit for the CSTRLs as the leadership training may establish a trusting rapport with the special education teachers and provide a pathway for communication.

Special Education Teacher Benefits

Special education teachers that have a supervisor who displays behaviors that are supportive of inclusion, acceptance, and success of students in the least restrictive environment (Boshamer, 2008; Kamens, Susko, & Elliott, 2013; McLaughlin & Nolet, 2004; Pennington, Courtade, & Ault, 2016) are likely to feel motivated and committed to their work. Supervisors who employ the practice of rounding with special education teachers communicate that they care about the unique needs within the classroom setting and provide the opportunity for special education teachers to share their needs required to do the job. The supervisors can empathize through the rounding process, demonstrate that they are truly listening, and validate teacher needs (Studer & Pilcher, 2015) resulting in an increased respect and trust between supervisor and employee (Nink & Welte, 2011). In addition, through the rounding process, the supervisor is made aware and then can provide the tools and resources needed for the special education teacher to support the learners in the classroom. Feeling as though their work is meaningful and their contribution matters, teachers experience a sense of shared responsibility for the organization, and as a result feel valued and engaged in their work (Deao, 2016; DuBrin,

2013). For special education teachers who often feel isolated from their colleagues, rounding may be the process that develops trust in their supervisor, a sense of significance in their work, and greater job engagement (Boshamer, 2008; Pilcher & Lague, 2009).

Research Design

This researcher designed this study as an implementation case study (Cone & Foster, 2006) to determine whether a formalized rounding system had an effect on the perception of the level of special education teacher engagement and the communication between special education teacher and supervisor. Case studies are a study of individuals or groups, typically of a small sampling of a population, which can provide an in-depth analysis of causal relationships (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). This design was selected to understand the impact of implementing a formalized rounding model to increase communication and engagement between CSTRs, SERTs, and special services administrators and to compare any difference to those special education teachers who did not participate in the rounding process. This research study entailed the self-reporting of special education teacher participants engaged in the implementation of rounding in a natural, local school setting (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The study involved a mix of participants from five schools from across three levels including elementary, middle, and high schools. This researcher collected and analyzed statistical data and used qualitative data to clarify the quantitative findings. The researcher measured special education teacher rounding participants at two points in time, and then compared special education teacher rounding and non-rounding participant level of engagement and perception of

communication between teacher and supervisor to determine if the findings show a positive effect of rounding.

Prior to the study, this researcher received permission from Studer Education, the authors of the Employee Engagement Survey, to administer the survey (see Appendix B). This researcher administered the Employee Engagement Survey (Studer Education, 2012) to the 20 SERTs in June 2017 after five months of rounding, and again in November 2017 after eight months of rounding to evaluate if there was a difference in employee level of engagement and perception of two-way communication within the work environment between the two points in time. Additionally, she administered the Employee Engagement Survey again in November 2017 at the conclusion of the study to 20 SERTs and 17 NRSETs to establish a t-test data set to compare means and determine if there was a difference between the participants within this study (Witte & Witte, 2015) who were participating in rounding and those who were not participating in rounding. Special services administrators and CSTRs did not participate in the survey as the questions were relevant to those teaching in the classroom setting.

Between February 2017 and November 2017, CSTRs conducted rounding sessions where rounding log data was collected. In February and March, rounds were conducted to acclimate to the process and training sessions for CSTRs were held to support the implementation of rounding (see Table 2). Stoplight reports within the rounding logs communicated the status of needs and issues within the department, recognized faculty on behalf of the SERTs, and contained exit questions that were asked between the months of May through November 2017 to gather data on whether SERTs believed the rounding process was effective. The goal of the rounding log components

was to understand whether rounding was supporting communication between supervisor and teacher, whether SERTs were receiving or observing other faculty receiving recognition, and whether there were specific aspects of rounding that were favorable to the SERTs.

Next, in November 2017, this researcher collected and analyzed qualitative data from an open-ended questionnaire completed by SERTs, NRSETs, and CSTRs. The qualitative data helped the researcher describe ways rounding affected special education teacher perception of engagement and communication with their supervisors and if the SERTs and NRSETs had similar or differing experiences. The open-ended questionnaire provided further data on the perception of SERTs about the rounding process and its effect on communication and engagement. This qualitative source allowed the researcher to add credence to the data from the Employee Engagement survey.

This researcher further triangulated data using structured interviews with a sampling of SERTs and NRSETs in November 2017. This allowed the researcher to determine the differences in communication between special services administrators and special education teachers who participated in rounding and those who did not participate in rounding. Additionally, in December 2017, CSTRs participated in a focus group forum to discuss the implementation of rounding and its effect on communication within the Department of Special Services and the impact on teacher engagement. Finally, this researcher analyzed data to determine any differences in the perception of rounding among teachers at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Research Methods

This researcher utilized a mixed-methodology. The combination of qualitative and quantitative methods within the single study allowed the researcher to respond to the research questions which could not adequately be addressed solely by either method (Beaudry & Miller, 2016). The qualitative data was useful as it uncovered subjective opinions and perceptions and provided insight into the experience from the point of view of those who were knowledgeable about the implementation of rounding and those who did not participate in rounding (Beaudry & Miller, 2016). Mixed methods research involves collecting, analyzing, and integrating quantitative and qualitative data into a single study in order to better understand the research questions. This researcher combined multiple measures from SERTs and NRSETs across the five district schools. The process of triangulation further validated the findings of the study and assisted with ensuring confidence with the data results.

Data collection instruments for this study measured rounding participant level of engagement and perception of communication at two points in time and then measured SERT level of engagement and communication compared with data from those who did not participate in rounding. The Employee Engagement survey is a 16 question 5-point Likert scale that measures employee engagement with a rating from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Statements within the survey sought the perception of special education teachers through statements such as, “The special services administrators provide me with the resources to do my job,” and “Special services administrators recognize good performance.” These results determine whether teachers are engaged in their work as well as their perception of communication between supervisor and teacher.

The Employee Engagement Survey was completed during department meetings in the month of June 2017 after 5 months of rounding and November 2017 after 8 months of rounding to determine if there was any change in the SERT perception of communication and engagement over the two points in time. The Department of Special Services employed a total population of 48 special education teachers of which a sample of 20 special education teachers served as rounding teachers and 17 who did not participate in rounding. The remaining special education teachers did not participate in this study. NRSETs completed the survey in November as a source of data to compare participants and non-participant perceptions after the rounding process had been occurring for 8 months. The survey took approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

Next in November 2017, 20 SERTs and 17 NRSETs completed an open-ended questionnaire for this researcher to identify patterns that validated perceptions of communication and levels of engagement addressed on the Employee Engagement survey. In addition, this researcher interviewed a subgroup of three elementary, two middle, and two high school SERTs and three elementary, two middle, and two high school NRSETs to further validate the data collected through the open-ended questionnaire and the Employee Engagement survey. In December 2017, the seven CSTRs participated in a focus group in order for this researcher to understand their perception of the rounding process and its effect on communication and engagement with the SERTs.

Exit questions from the monthly rounding log data also provided qualitative information to determine if the SERTs understood the process of rounding, whether the participants observed any difference in communication between the special services

administrators and special education teachers, and if participants were seeing their needs or issues being addressed through the rounding process. The exit questions were given at the end of each monthly rounding session between the months of May – November 2017. This researcher examined responses to these questions, the rounding logs, interviews, and open-ended questionnaires based upon common terms and phrases in the Employee Engagement survey that define two-way communication and employee engagement (Cone & Foster, 2006). These terms were categorized within the following six themes: having the tools/resources to do the job, receiving recognition, demonstrating a genuine concern for teacher welfare, having the opportunity to be heard, open communication, and achieving to one's highest potential. These data collection methods may help to define the level of impact the implementation of rounding had on the department goal of engaging staff through strengthened communication for the purpose of providing students with effective instruction.

The data collected was confidential and anonymous and no participants were identified through the study with the exception of whether they were employed at the elementary, middle, or high school level.

Definition of Concepts

The following are a list of integral terms to the study.

Two-way Communication – a system that identifies the fundamental needs of the employee, garners input and demonstrates leadership responsiveness. Communication is seen as the fundamental trait of leaders to develop a trusting relationship with employees and produce an engaged workforce (“Secrets of High Engagement,” 2016).

CSTRs – non-supervisory, Child Study Team Rounding Leaders who conducted the formalized rounds on special education teachers.

Engagement – the passion, commitment and vigor for one’s work within an organization (Swarnalatha & Prasanna, 2013).

Rounding for outcomes - a process by which leaders check in with their faculty using questions to gain standardized perceptions of the organization (Studer, 2003, 2008).

Studer Group – an organization, founded by Quint Studer in 1999, which focuses on improving quality in customer service fields such as health care and education.

Limitations of the Study

This implementation study of a formalized rounding model only provided a small sample of participating and non-participating teachers in the rounding process over a period of 8 months in five schools in one district in New Jersey. This small sample was a limitation as it could reduce the validity that the results related to department communication and teacher engagement were attributed to the implementation of rounding within the school district. It cannot be generalized across a larger population of teachers as the study was merely a case study for one PK-12 school district.

Furthermore, the NRSET participants, initially, had volunteered to be included in the rounding process; however, when not chosen they agreed to be part of this study as non rounding participants. This may impact the data findings when comparing SERT and NRSET perception of communication and engagement within the department. To counteract this limitation, the researcher attempted to separate participants and non-participants during the faculty meetings where the SERTs would receive updates on

requests brought forth during rounding. In addition, she included CSTRL data and the rounding log data to add credibility to the SERT and NRSERT data. Additionally, the quantitative data analyzed from the Employee Engagement Survey could not deduce the effect of rounding at the elementary, middle, and high school level due to the small sample population. Therefore, qualitative data was utilized to analyze any differences among the levels.

Second, the study relied on self-reporting of teacher participants, however, the use of rounding log data specifically, the stoplight report, provided factual data on whether issues brought to the attention of the special services administrators were addressed. The open-ended questionnaire and interview questions were revised with the assistance of the CSTRLS which may have had a bias due to the CSTRL participation in the study and their desire for it to yield favorable results. The researcher offset this limitation by utilizing a SERT and a NRSET who did not participate in the study to pilot the interview and open-ended questionnaire. Additionally, CSTRLS completed the open-ended questionnaire and participated in a focus group as they led the rounding process and observed its impact on SERTs.

Third, the Director of Special Services, who was the supervisor of the participants, conducted this study and, thus, may have interfered with the reliability of the data collected. To counteract this limitation, she utilized CSTRLS to conduct the rounding, which may have assisted with reducing bias. Fourth, the CSTRLS and the SERTS had limited exposure to the rounding process prior to its implementation. Specifically, the CSTRLS had one, half-day training prior to beginning the rounding process and the SERTs participated in an introduction of rounding in January 2017. This

could affect the rate and quality of the implementation, however, this researcher employed monthly training and observed the rounding process at least once with each CSTRL to ensure competency in the process. Finally, this case study occurred for a short period of time between February 2017–November 2017 and did not provide data on the complete implementation process of rounding; however, the goal of this study was to examine the rounding process as a pilot program to determine changes that needed to be addressed prior to full implementation. The collection and triangulation of multiple forms of data may increase the credibility of participant responses and counteract the limitations.

Summary

In a formalized rounding model, a supervisor establishes a system for two-way communication to positively affect employee engagement (Cunningham, 2015; Studer, 2003). To determine the level of communication and engagement of special education teachers, this researcher studied how implementing a formalized rounding process affected communication among special education teachers, CSTRLs, and the special services administrators. There is limited documentation of school districts that implement a formalized rounding model, thus, this study may provide evidence of a process that increases employee engagement and strengthens two-way communication between supervisor and teacher within a Department of Special Services.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The relationship between employee and supervisor is a strong indicator of employee commitment to an organization (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009). Employees accrue a sense of service to a bigger cause if there is mutual regard between themselves and their supervisors (Cunningham, 2015; Scouller, 2011). When employees leave a job, often it is not because of the organization, but due to supervisors who do not appear to care or to show compassion consistently and visibly (Baker, 2010; Bradberry & Greaves, 2012; Gallup, 1999). Thus, in order to accomplish organizational goals, leaders who serve in supervisory positions must find a balance for meeting timelines and managerial responsibilities, while supporting employees and their commitment to the work place (Avolio et al., 2009; Bradberry & Greaves, 2012). These supervisors need an understanding of what motivates employees for the collective benefit of the organization. Studies (Mishra et al., 2014; Mone & London, 2009; Swarnalatha & Prassana, 2013) have identified communication between employee and supervisor as a leadership behavior that affects motivation and engagement. Communication that is two-way ensures that the input of the employee is sought and the leader is responsive to requests (“Secrets of High Engagement,” 2016). When two-way communication occurs and input from the employee is requested by the supervisor, the employee feels valued, which positively affects engagement and commitment (Swarnalatha & Prasanna, 2013). This increased job engagement results in employees willing to contribute to the shared vision and unification of the organization (Senge, 1994). Contrarily, the disengagement of

employees has a direct impact on morale among members and productivity toward the goals within the organization (Hargie & Tourish, 2009; Lencioni, 2007).

School districts have these same organizational characteristics. In schools, administrators who invest in developing relationships with teachers by learning about and responding to their needs create a culture where teachers feel connected to the organization and are engaged in their work (Deao, 2016; Schouller, 2011). For example, once an administrator learns that a teacher requests professional development in an aspect of the job and validates the need by allocating the funds for that opportunity, the teacher feels supported and vested in the work. Similarly, when an administrator seeks teacher input about classroom or school wide issues, the teacher may feel that their contribution is valued and subsequently be motivated to act in ways that support the goals of the school and district (Fullan, 2011).

Motivation refers to commitment and passion about one's role in an organization (Mone, Eisinger, Guggenheim, Price, & Stine, 2011). This motivation permeates all levels of an organization. For example, motivation is evident when a teacher takes personal initiative to write a grant to acquire funds for an educational improvement in his/her classroom. This teacher is exhibiting attributes such as effort and persistence directed toward the organizational goals (Mone et al., 2011) and as a result other faculty may also become motivated. This may occur if the teacher has written the grant for educational materials that impact more than his/her classroom, as there is likely to be excitement among additional members within the organization. Motivated employees are energetic and involved in the work place and can be identified as engaged employees (Mone et al., 2011). Involved, committed, and passionate in their work, engaged

employees are more likely to talk positively about their organization, remain with the organization, and help their organization perform effectively (Mishra et al., 2014).

In 2011, a Gallup management study at the Stryker plant in New Jersey concluded that engaged employees are critical to achieving organizational outcomes (Robison, 2012) as they drive innovation and move the organization forward due to their commitment to improvement within the organization. This orthopedics plant which made hip, knee, and upper extremity products found that 48% of their 800 employees indicated that they were engaged in their work. Stryker leaders found these results to be less than satisfactory, even though they surpassed the United States engagement score of 28% (Robison). Stryker leadership members developed a survey which utilized questions generated from the Gallup organization's Q12 Meta-Analysis study (Gallup, 1999; Harter, Schmidt, Killham, & Asplund, 1998). Based upon their survey results and to increase employee engagement scores, Stryker's leadership focused on instituting a system to listen to their employee needs and improve two-way communication. Communication between supervisor and employee was also found to be the most critical attribute associated with trust for the supervisor and employee at Stryker. Sales increased by 8.9% in a year which the president of the plant attributed in part to employee engagement (Robison). In addition, Stryker's leadership team met with day shift, afternoon, and evening shift employees to share the results and collectively to generate action plans for improving engagement (Robison). Through a second administration of the survey, the company's scores improved from 48% to 57% engaged, 37% to 32% not engaged, and 15% to 11% actively disengaged in less than a year. The increase in employee engagement scores is believed to be one of the main reasons for Stryker's

increased product sales. The study found that Stryker's workforce culture changed as the leadership invested time in listening to the ideas of the employees and taking action steps to improve upon engagement issues within the organization (Robison, 2012).

Therefore, employers who seek an engaged work force should implement a system of two-way communication with their employees to build trust between employee and supervisor (Mishra et al., 2014). Two-way communication can include face-to-face interactions such as meetings, written communication in the form of memos, or electronic communication through e-mails. While there is a growing preference for electronic communication, supervisors should take caution when delivering messages in this manner if action is needed to occur or major change initiatives will be occurring (Mishra et al., 2014). Strengthening communication within an organization requires leaders to determine how to deliver the right message, in the right forum, and at the right time (Gallup, 1999). An example of face-to-face communication that may be preferable would be communication about issues regarding pay scale and personnel changes. This face-to-face communication conveys that the supervisor cares and provides an opportunity for dialog whereby the employee can ask questions directly to the supervisor. Because the information is received directly from the supervisor, it also helps the employee to feel secure about his place in the organization (Mishra et al., 2014). Frequent, timely communication in a school setting by the supervisor demonstrates the commitment to the shared work of the teachers and administrators in the school and district, and consequently, strengthens ties between them. These communication techniques build a trusting relationship between teacher and administrator which may result in increased teacher engagement (Swarnalatha & Prassana, 2013).

To foster teacher engagement, administrators must implement a formalized system of communication with teachers where each communicates openly and routinely. Such a formalized system for communication demonstrates to the teachers that the administrator has a vested interest in their work and needs and is committed toward a common goal (Bradberry & Greaves, 2012). A formalized system also ensures that the administrator is approachable and that two-way communication between teacher and administrator occurs regularly (Fullan, 2011). Therefore, as teachers provide input on problems and successes within the district or school, the administrator has a continual opportunity to refine systems or processes and provide resources and tools to support the teacher. This partnership between teacher and administrator evolves into a collaborative culture (Baker, 2010) developing shared ownership toward goals within the organization (Fullan, 2011).

Rounding is an example of a formalized system of communication that emphasizes the dialogue between supervisor and employee. In a school setting, rounding is a practice whereby conversations are focused around a set of specific questions that occur routinely in a one on one setting between teacher and administrator (Cunningham, 2015; Studer, 2003). In this process an administrator meets with each teacher separately then questions and records teacher responses in writing so that following the round, the administrator acts on the information learned from the conversation. During a round, the administrator connects with the teacher by asking a personal question initially, followed by a series of job related questions which inform the administrator of what is working well within the scope of teacher responsibilities, what supports are needed for the teacher to successfully do the job, and who among the faculty the teacher would like to recognize

for his/her contribution to the department or school's mission (Cunningham, 2015; Dubrin, 2013; Studer & Pilcher, 2015). For example, the teacher may choose to recognize a teacher assistant for her support in establishing a new behavior plan for a student with special needs. The administrator then recognizes the teacher assistant on the teacher's behalf either through written or verbal forums. In addition, the administrator may respond to the needs that the teacher brought forth during this round. The teacher may inform the administrator that she is in need of resources for a new behavioral plan, and the administrator may respond by acquiring the materials and then communicating the status of the request to the teacher. If, however, the administrator is unable to purchase the materials due to budget constraints, the administrator still would follow the same process and communicate the status of that request to the teacher. Regardless of the outcome, the teacher experiences the support of the administrator. This support of increased communication is the major goal of the rounding process.

Studer (2003) first introduced the concept of rounding in the health care industry as an effort to increase patient satisfaction rates in hospitals. In this model doctors and unit supervisors "make the rounds" meeting individually with their direct reports such as resident physicians and nurses and engage in conversations with them personally and professionally. The purpose of these rounds was to strengthen the individual care of patients, to develop trust between the leader and employee, to build unity among colleagues, to work towards continued employee engagement, and to have a process for two-way communication for improvement ("Secrets of High Engagement," 2016; Studer, 2003). For example, when an employee brings forth a concern to his supervisor such as having warm blankets available for patients, the issue can be addressed by the supervisor

or assigned to an ancillary staff member such as the housekeeping department, and communicated back to the employee. In this example, the patient benefits because the concern was addressed, the supervisor and employee strengthen their relationship as the employee sees his input is valued, and the supervisor demonstrates that she is committed to patient care (Carrig & Wright, 2006; Swarnalatha & Prasanna, 2013).

In 2010, the Studer Group expanded their consulting into the educational field. They partnered with organizations to build culture through the Evidence-Based Leadership (EBL) model where goals, actions, and processes are aligned to foster quality organizational outcomes and ensure leader accountability (“Studer Group,” n.d.; Studer, 2003). In a school setting, administrators round on faculty who they directly supervise. In many districts, the faculty may have multiple administrators who supervise them. For example, a building principal rounds with teachers; in a larger school setting a vice principal may share with the principal the responsibility of rounding with teachers. In another model of rounding, a building principal may accompany instructional coaches or department supervisors such as a special services supervisor to round with special education teachers (Studer & Pilcher, 2015). In each model, administrators round with faculty utilizing the same set of questions consistently on which to act. Thus, administrators may avoid reactive leadership as they proactively have gathered information from the rounds and developed relationships with faculty (Cunningham, 2015; Spaulding, Gamm, & Griffith, 2010; Studer, 2003). A situation may arise in which an administrator is made aware of teacher concerns about the inability to have instructional planning time with grade level colleagues each day. During a round, this information becomes available to the administrator so that the administrator can

implement an action plan based upon teacher concerns and input. With each issue reported, the administrator provides an update on the status to the teacher in a timely manner. Thus, the process of rounding becomes purposeful, puts employee needs first, and gains and retains the respect and commitment of the employee (Crouch, Ketelsen, & Baker, 2014).

The Studer Group Philosophy

The Studer Group philosophy is derived from the work of Covey (2004) and Senge (1994), both who connect success within an organization to a commitment to purposeful and worthwhile work. They ascribe to personal mastery for leading change in an organization and building a shared vision with employees. Covey (2004) added the focus of interpersonal communication. Adapting these ideas, the Studer philosophy consists of nine principles of service and operational excellence that support an organization's realization of its goals. The principles include the following: committing to excellence, measuring the important things, building a culture of service, creating and developing leaders, focusing on employee satisfaction, building individual accountability, aligning behavior with goals and values, communicating at all levels, and recognizing and rewarding success (Studer, 2003). The principles were developed to help leaders focus on actions, techniques, and behaviors that will have the greatest impact on the goals of an organization.

For an organization to be successful in this model, employees need to be self-motivated and eager to be a part of the organization. This motivation is generated when leaders within the organization adopt the belief that employee engagement is a major component of achieving organizational goals. Rounding can improve employee

engagement by generating trust between the administrator and employee (Crouch et al., 2014). For example, in 1999 a study was conducted at Delnor Community Hospital where an employee satisfaction survey cited concerns with trust and communication between the staff and leaders (Deering, 2004). Delnor nurses were rounding on patients, not employees. After implementing rounding by unit supervisors on unit nurses, they realized that rounding on the nurses was paramount to patients having increased satisfaction due to these interactions (Deao, 2016). Through implementing rounding on the nurses, quarterly inpatient satisfactions rose from 80% in 1999 to 98% in 2003, annual nursing turnover dropped from 26.2% in 1999 to 8.8% in 2003, and employee satisfaction rose from 83.2% to 86.3% (Deering, 2004). While the hospital CEO felt rounding was a good practice for nurses to conduct on patients, he also found rounding to be more important for the unit supervisors to conduct on nurses. Deao (2016) names employee satisfaction as the foundation for employee engagement, where employees apply their level of satisfaction into commitment to daily work. This engagement is experienced when all employees believe that the organization's purpose is focusing on employee satisfaction, communicating at all levels, and recognizing and rewarding success. Rounding is the basis of developing these relationships between administrator and employee to build shared commitment and ownership (Scott, 2003).

Employee Engagement and Communication

Engagement

Engaged employees are committed to their supervisor, satisfied with their work, and willing to give extra effort to attain the goals of an organization (Nink & Welte, 2011; Saks, 2006). They have strong emotional and behavioral attachments to their jobs

and experience pride, values congruence, and are inspired in their work. Employees who willingly mentor other teachers or who initiate leadership through leading professional development are examples of employees who are inspired in their work life. Because engaged employees have higher retention and job performance rates, many organizations set goals to nurture a culture of engagement within the workplace (Saks, 2006; Swarnalatha & Prasanna, 2013).

Mone and London (2009) identified communication and feedback between employee and supervisor that are rooted in positive reinforcement and affect employee engagement. Furthermore, acting with integrity and fairness and demonstrating competence to carry out leadership responsibilities are supervisor qualities that have been associated with employee engagement (Lowe, 2012; Nink & Welte, 2011). Supervisors who communicate honestly and fairly gain confidence from the employees who believe that the supervisor is trustworthy and acting in the interests of the organization. The supervisor responds to issues openly with the faculty and provides details that demonstrate no partiality. If, for example, a group of faculty wants to attend a conference and there are only funds for a limited number to attend, the leader may address the interested parties face to face and explain the rationale for those permitted to attend. The leader may explain that those selected were district employees who are able to turnkey the training at a later date to all who were interested or that those selected to attend were not classroom teachers and, therefore, would not disrupt learning. In these examples, the leader acts with fairness and honesty and addresses all who are interested in a face to face meeting. In addition, employees have the opportunity to contribute their suggestions for the turnkey training dates and times. Leaders who are strong communicators recognize

the value of face to face communication when trying to resolve issues. They demonstrate to their faculty that open communication provides information and allows for interaction (Mishra et al., 2014) ensuring that employee core needs are met and that the leader responds to the two-way communication with transparency (Nink & Welte, 2011). Strong communication practices lead to increased trust between employee and supervisor and, ultimately, stronger job engagement (Lowe, 2012; Mishra et al., 2014). Supervisors aim to utilize communication strategies that build trust and engagement through two-way, honest dialogue with their employees and as a result, find themselves in a role of fostering engagement among employees in the workplace (Mishra et al., 2014).

In a study conducted in 16 Ontario hospitals of over 10,000 employees, 10 work environment characteristics of engagement were identified through an employee survey. The Likert scale survey included elements related to work environment, job characteristics, and organizational supports that were scored using a multi-item scale (Lowe, 2012). The study categorized participant scores into categories of high, medium, and low levels of engagement based upon the total points for each rating on the survey. Those participants with a total point score of 23 or higher, were rated in the highly engaged category, those with ratings of 19-22 points were rated as average engagement, and those with 18 points or less were rated as low engagement. The work environment categories include feeling that the employee can trust the organization, having the opportunity to make improvements in work, feeling valued in one's work, identifying managers as committed to high quality care, having clear job goals and objectives, feeling a sense of belonging to the team, feeling as though the organization promotes staff health and wellness, having a good balance within personal and professional life,

having a supervisor who can be counted on to help with difficult tasks, and having adequate resources and tools to do one's job (Lowe, 2012). In rank order, trust within the organization had the greatest net influence on employee engagement. After trust, the top three factors included the organization valuing the work of the employees, supervisors committed to high-quality care and reliable, and having clear goals and objectives. The study not only identified the attributes of employee engagement within an organization, it also identified the approach of managing and motivating employees by delineating leadership techniques of acting with open and honest communication, and treating employees fairly (Lowe, 2012). The study concluded that the higher the level of employee engagement, the greater the employee's likelihood to remain with the organization, and the greater the quality of patient care or service. Notably, the study found that 90% of the highly engaged faculty indicated that they intended to remain with the organization while 47.9% of the low engaged faculty indicated that they were likely to look for a new job within 12 months. Similarly, when correlating the patient care category scores reported by the employees, it was noted that 46% of the highly engaged employees had patient care scores in the top quartile. Highly engaged employees reported that their level of care was closely aligned to the goals for patient care within the organization, where by contrast, only 21% of disengaged employees were in the top quartile. These elements support trust between employee and supervisor through open and honest communication resulting in increased engagement among the employee and supervisor that are likely to achieve organizational goals. To continue with an organizational goal of employee engagement, leaders in Ontario hospitals continue to utilize employee engagement surveys to measure engagement and involve employees in

developing action steps to improve the percentage of highly engaged employees to positively affect the level of care for patients (Lowe, 2012).

Communication

Internal communication within an organization occurs between employees and supervisors and is important for building a culture of trust and increasing engagement among employees (Mishra et al., 2014; Thomas, Zolin, & Hartman, 2009).

Communication between supervisor and employee provides employees with the information needed to do their job and is critical to building relationships with employees (D'Aprix, 2009). When employees perceive that they are being provided with information that is timely and relevant, they are likely to feel less vulnerable and more willing to rely on their supervisor (Thomas et al., 2009). An example of this in a school setting occurs when a supervisor provides a special education teacher with the requested software licenses for student use for a computer-based supplemental reading class. The teacher observes the supervisor responding promptly, and when additional needs arise, the teacher will be more likely to trust that the supervisor will address the requests. When they perceive greater support from their supervisor, employees respond by becoming committed to their supervisor and, thus, more engaged in their jobs (Carroll, 2006). Supervisors who share open communications with their employees promote a sense of belonging and commitment and provide opportunity for the employees to understand the goals of the organization (Carroll, 2006; Welch & Jackson, 2007).

In 2000, the Great Place to Work Institute conducted an exploratory study (Mishra et al., 2014), through a semi-structured interview process with six public relation executives from different industries including finance, utilities, construction, and retail.

The goal was to explore the role of communication within an organization and its effect on employee engagement. Through in-person and phone based interviews, and in some instances follow up questionnaires for elaboration of responses post interview, the results demonstrated that employees enjoyed working in an environment where they trusted the people for whom they worked, had pride in what they did, and enjoyed the people that worked with them. Through the practice of coding using cluster analysis, the key contributors to engagement were identified based upon frequency and intensity. The data identified that a trusting environment within an organization was typically characterized by open communication where the supervisor demonstrates honesty, transparency, genuine care, and a willingness to listen to the employees. Employee engagement as a top priority involved building trust through two-way communication first with the employees, identifying the appropriate communication channel for the message, and utilizing face-to-face communication to inform employees and help them to feel secure about their place in the company. An important contribution of The Great Place to Work Institute's qualitative research was recognizing that transparent communication between employee and supervisor affects employee engagement (Mishra et al., 2014). When an organization shares information widely, employees feel a sense of belonging and validation which strengthens the bond of trust between employee and supervisor and ultimately leads to greater employee engagement (Lowe, 2012; Mishra et al., 2014; Nink & Welte, 2011).

High performing supervisors intuitively understand that face to face communication is most preferred by employees as it has the greatest potential for resolving ambiguity and uncertainty, and the opportunity to share information and to

interact (Daft, Lengel, & Trevino, 1987; Mishra et al., 2014). Supervisors who demonstrate the importance of allowing employees to be heard and who provide feedback to their employees develop the trust and commitment of their employees (Chia, 2005). The stronger the trust is between employee and employer, the stronger the employee's engagement and willingness to act in the interest of the employer and organization (Nink & Welte, 2011). A formalized communication system between supervisor and employee may develop trust and employee engagement.

Origin of Rounding

In 1999, the concept of rounding was formalized as a technique to improve patient satisfaction in hospitals as part of the establishment of Studer Group. In 1993, Studer was the CEO of Holy Cross hospital in Chicago where patient satisfaction scores were in the 5th percentile (Goozner, 2014; Studer, 2003). Studer was charged with improving patient satisfaction scores to the 75th percentile in a year. To accomplish this, Studer consulted with the CEO and organizational leaders of Southwest Airlines, a company identified as setting the standard in customer satisfaction (Deao, 2016; Gittell, 2009; Vuong, 2016). The leaders of Southwest listened to the patient satisfaction problems that Studer identified and they asked him if his staff had the tools to do their job and if they were feeling rewarded and recognized (Studer, 2003). Through discussions with Southwest leadership, he found that his conversations with the staff needed to move beyond personal greetings and begin asking specific questions which might provide information linked to organization productivity and customer satisfaction (Gallup, 1999; Studer, 2003). Southwest Airlines executives also introduced Studer to questions such as asking employees if they had the resources to be effective in their job. For example, with

questions such as “How are you doing?” the leader is not informed (Cunningham, 2015; Gittell, 2009). The question should be one that helps the leader identify barriers that need to be addressed such as “Do you have the tools, equipment, and resources to do your job today?” (Crouch et al., 2014). These questions focus on establishing a good relationship between supervisor and employee, creating and maintaining efficient systems, acquiring tools and equipment to do the job, and receiving appreciation (Crouch et al., 2014; Hotko, 2004; Studer, 2003). Finally, Southwest leaders emphasized that asking specific questions needed to be done in a systematic and consistent way with all employees.

Subsequent to the meetings with Southwest Airlines, Studer recognized the quickest solution to the low patient satisfaction scores was his relationship with the nursing staff; thus, he began developing the rounding process where he could gather meaningful feedback consistently in a one on one setting (Gallup, 1999; Studer, 2003). Studer implemented this process by modeling the behavior so that nursing staff could then make the necessary changes to improve patient satisfaction scores. Studer’s administrative rounding practice provided the nursing staff with ongoing communication resulting in process improvements and the recognition of staff members who made meaningful contributions to the mission of the hospital (Taylor, 2007). The outcome of a more engaged staff became evident in patient satisfaction results. By December 1993, the hospital patient satisfaction scores rose from the 5th percentile to the 73rd percentile, and those scores placed Holy Cross in the top 27th percentile of hospitals across the nation that were using the same measurement tool (Studer, 2003).

The Studer Group began consulting across the healthcare field to help other hospitals improve patient satisfaction scores through rounding. Gallup (1999) studies

indicated that employees want someone to talk with them regularly about their responsibilities and progress. Systematic leadership behaviors, such as rounding, provide employees with this opportunity and builds trust between employee and supervisor leading to employee engagement (Deao, 2016). A supervisor who institutes rounding demonstrates that he is committed to the work within the organization, can be counted on to help with issues brought forth, and is dependable to provide resources for the employees. The Ontario hospitals study found that employees identify a greater sense of engagement when their managers are committed to the work of the organization, they support their employees with difficult tasks, and they ensure the employees have the resources to do their work (Lowe, 2012). Consequently, these leadership behaviors promote increased trust between supervisor and employee and results in the employee sharing successes and opportunities for improvement (Cunningham, 2015). Employees gain trust when the supervisor implements a system for communication which shows the administrator cares, is approachable, and values the employees. This, in turn, results in the employees' commitment to their work and the goals of the organization.

Rounding and Education

Within individual schools of a district, goals are developed and often times shared among the faculty within the same school rather than with district and central office personnel (Marzano & Waters, 2009). A district wide system of rounding assists district and central office personnel with identifying areas of strength and weakness across all schools and helps to develop a unified culture of respect and value among the faculty. Rounding between supervisors and teachers around a set of specific goals, across all schools in a district can result in increased engagement on the part of teachers. This

sense of purpose is affirmed and trust for the administrators develops through strengthened internal communication (“Increasing employee engagement,” 2015). Administrators in a district, for example, that is beginning the implementation of individual student chrome books in the classroom may find that teachers throughout the district feel there should be safeguards on the computers. A responsive administrator will communicate back to the teachers the steps taken to address the issue, validating teacher concern and building trust with the administrator.

A system of rounding is usually implemented by all administrators with the faculty who directly report to that administrator. The administrator meets monthly in a one to one setting with each direct report to collect data, including information for recognition of employees and for process improvement (Studer, 2003). For example, a building principal may round on teachers within the school building (Studer & Pilcher, 2015). This process communicates that the administrator is making a deliberate effort to work together with the teacher, and indirectly affects the goal of increasing student performance and experiences (Kafele, 2015). During rounding, when an administrator learns that a teacher requires support with using a new software application in a reading classroom, he responds with providing the teacher the supports to rectify the issue. Or, in instances where the issue cannot be rectified, he communicates the steps that are in process or the reason why there is not an immediate solution. It is not the outcome of the issue that results in teacher engagement, but rather the perception that the administrator values them and their work (“Increasing employee engagement,” 2015).

With the rounding leader the teacher has the opportunity to recommend improvements at the classroom and school-wide level, generate input that makes him/her

feel a part of the team, engage in open and honest communication, and receive feedback such as job performance recommendations or suggestions for training and development. If a special education teacher feels as though the professional trainings offered on the use of technology are not relevant to non-verbal students in the class, she may request additional training geared more to these specific needs. Because the rounding leader records the request on the rounding log, she communicates to the teacher that her contribution is acknowledged and valued.

In alignment with Studer Group framework, (“Q&A: Baldrige,” 2006), school district administrators can adopt the practice of rounding to demonstrate an investment in all of their teachers and staff, recognize who and what within the organization is working well, and to accomplish goals set forth for improvement (S. Sperry, personal communication, August 4, 2017). For example, a building principal would conduct individual rounds with each teacher monthly, and as a result, identify that new sensory materials were working well for students with behavioral needs within the classroom, identify that the process for requesting technology support in the classroom needed to be addressed, and acknowledge that the physical therapist was deserving of recognition for her support with the use of the sensory materials with students (Cunningham, 2015). In another example, teachers may identify the benefits of a new mathematics program, the professional development needed for implementation, and the need to purchase supplemental tools such as an add-on software component that would allow the students to practice their math skills. Rounding practices demonstrate the supervisor’s support to fulfill employee core needs and develops respect for the supervisor (Nink & Welte, 2011).

Within a district, all administrators would make the practice of rounding “hardwired” (Studer, 2004), which means to consistently execute the practice with the highest of quality (Studer & Pilcher, 2015). To accomplish this, a high-level supervisor such as a superintendent in a school district would ensure quality implementation by having the administrators utilize specific tools such as rounding logs and stoplight reports to log information from the round and then provide a written documentation of the status of each item brought forth as an issue. The superintendent may also set the expectation that meeting agendas are set based upon the goals within the school or district. For example, if a district goal is to foster two-way communication between teacher and administrator, each meeting agenda would need to show evidence (Studer, 2004).

Janesville School District located in Wisconsin has been utilizing Studer Education principles for the past 7 years (S. Sperry, personal communication, August 4, 2017). The practice of rounding was put into place to strengthen communication between teachers and administrators. When implemented consistently, the use of rounding has revealed an increased culture of trust, teamwork, communication, and commitment among the teachers and administration (Studer & Pilcher, 2015). The Studer Group principles are in the district’s strategic plan, including descriptions and expectations for district administrators to utilize rounding as a routine practice (K. Schulte, personal communication, May 28, 2017). Janesville is comprised of 21 schools, approximately 1500 total employees and 10,000 total students. The district leaders began utilizing rounding with their principals initially, and upon recognizing the outcomes of rounding suggested instituting the practice with their assistant principals and supervisors. Outcomes included increased two-way communication between supervisor and teacher,

and teachers feeling valued, and supported in their roles. Thus, the superintendent expanded rounding among all administrators and certificated staff members (S. Sperry, personal communication, August 4, 2017). The annual data compiled through the district's engagement survey demonstrated increases in mean scores in areas including having the materials and supplies need to do the job, and believing that the supervisor demonstrates a genuine concern for the teacher's welfare. The district leaders demonstrated their commitment to on-going improvement by reviewing the annual data, identifying the areas of strength, and working with the teachers to develop action steps for areas in need of improvement.

Rounding and Special Education

In the past several decades, federal legislation has led to increased integration of students with disabilities into general education classrooms (Kamens et al., 2013). Integrating students with disabilities requires administrators to reflect efforts to educate students in the least restrictive environment (Boshamer, 2008; Kamens et al., 2013; McLaughlin & Nolet, 2004; Pennington et al., 2016). Supervisors who employ the practice of rounding with special education teachers communicate that they care about the unique needs within the classroom setting and the different supports that the teacher may require. Unlike in a faculty meeting where the administrator communicates with the entire faculty, the supervisor who implements individual, face to face rounding sessions with the teachers communicates that there is an organizational interest in the needs of each teacher and values the opportunity to connect with the faculty (Bradberry & Greaves, 2012). For example, a special education teacher may identify the need for additional personnel to support the toileting needs of a disabled student. In this instance,

the special education teacher, teacher assistant, and school nurse may need to collaborate on how to address the student's needs. Through rounding on special education teachers, the school administrator gains understanding of the programming needs for students with disabilities and is able to recognize the resources and tools that are needed for teachers in the classroom (Pennington et al., 2016). The supervisor can empathize through the rounding process, demonstrate that she is truly listening, and validate teacher needs (Studer & Pilcher, 2015) resulting in an increased respect and trust for the supervisor (Nink & Welte, 2011). In another example, based upon rounding outcomes that emphasized more planning needed by special education teachers, an administrator may need to create a common preparatory period for collaboration among the faculty servicing special needs students (McLaughlin & Nolet, 2004). Through the two way communication process of rounding, the administrator may be able to allocate resources that are aligned to the unique classroom needs of special education teachers for successful development and learning of their students (Pennington et al., 2016). In turn, the teachers may feel valued and that their work is important to the school setting; the sense of belonging strengthens their commitment to the profession (Mishra et al., 2014; Ruck & Welch, 2011).

School administrators have an important role of providing the structure and support needed for all teachers. Boshamer (2008) identified that special education teachers leave the profession at a higher rate than general education teachers because of feeling isolated in their role, experiencing overload by the diversity of the special education needs, lacking the resources to meet student needs, and most frequently cited, feeling a lack of administrative support (Boshamer, 2008). Teachers in self-contained

settings and inclusive settings, need to feel that they are supported by their supervisors and appreciated for their work. Implementing rounding within the school setting, promotes an environment in which employees have a sense of shared responsibility for the organization, and as a result feel valued and engaged in their work (DuBrin, 2013). Rounding provides teachers with a voice within the organization, where they contribute to identifying the strengths by stating what is working, proposing opportunities for organizational growth when naming issues, and supporting a positive climate by recognizing colleagues deserving of recognition. For special education teachers who often feel isolated from the general education faculty, rounding may be the communication strategy that builds trust with their supervisor, provides a sense of value in their work, and may result in greater job engagement. Similarly through rounding, the supervisor is able to recognize the special education teacher's unique role in the classroom and show that she values the work of the teacher (Boshamer, 2008; Pilcher & Largue, 2009).

The Rounding Process

Rounding is the consistent practice of asking specific questions of all key stakeholders such as employees or patients in order to obtain actionable information (Hotko, 2004; Studer, 2003). Actionable information includes recognizing staff on behalf of the employee and taking steps to address issues brought forth during the round. Supervisors can conduct rounds in many different ways. For example, a site-based supervisor such as a principal or head nurse rounds with teachers or nursing staff at their school or on their unit respectively. Or, senior leaders such as a CEO or district superintendent can round on unit leaders, or school-based leaders such as a head nurse or

building principal. Whichever style an organization implements, the outcomes include building relationships, learning and acknowledging what is working well, identifying areas for improvement, and ensuring staff are able to do their job effectively (Baker, 2010).

Site-based rounding in schools, for example, would be a building principal rounding on each teacher in the building. The process is implemented by all building principals, and is set to support a specific goal such as increasing employee engagement by sending handwritten notes to recognize employee contributions (Baker, 2010; Studer, 2003). The building principal walks through the school and builds relationships by asking questions in a one on one setting with each teacher; in this situation the administrator recognizes teacher needs and shows appreciation or identifies who warrants recognition.

Senior leader rounding occurs when a high level supervisor such as a superintendent of a school district rounds on leaders such as a building principal. For example, the senior supervisor may demonstrate ways to respond to issues that were previously brought forward and still require attention. In a school setting, during a rounding session, a superintendent may demonstrate to the principal the process to explain to faculty a reason why a request was unfulfilled. The superintendent may indicate that the district's budget does not support the addition of a modular classroom or that the student population for the upcoming school year has not changed. The faculty member would then have accurate knowledge of the situation. With this senior level rounding the school administrator receives coaching from the district superintendent. It

also provides the superintendent a greater awareness of the principal's practices and the needs and achievements within that setting (Pilcher & L argue, 2009).

To formally implement the rounding process, a superintendent conducts senior level rounds with the principals within a district. The superintendent schedules the round and may ask that the principal make available a summary of the school's strengths and current issues. Therefore, in addition to role modeling how to conduct a round and address an issue that a teacher has brought forth, the principal provides the superintendent with information about the school which he can then review to gain a perspective on issues in one setting or a global understanding of a pattern across the schools in the district. Once background information has been provided, the questioning process begins and rounding logs are completed.

Rounding Questions

Studer developed the questions utilized in rounding based upon questions that were the most effective in Gallup's Q12 study. Within this Meta-Analysis study (Gallup, 1999) of 80,000 in-depth interviews with managers in over 400 companies, Gallup concluded that the strength of a workplace can be simplified to 12 core questions which generate insight into the aspects that are working well within the organization, items that require process improvements, and whether there is a culture of recognition and formal process within the organization (Gallup, 1999; Hotko, 2004). Valuable questions are those that have the most consistent links to multiple business outcomes and that are actionable such as asking employees if they have the equipment they need to do their jobs. When a supervisor asks questions such as these, he communicates to the employees that their opinions matter and their work is important to the mission of the organization

(Gallup, 1999). In addition to a personal connection question such as “How is your family?”, there are three standard questions asked during a round. The supervisor asks the following:

- What is going well?
- Is there any individual you would like me to recognize on your behalf?
- Do you have the tools, resources, systems, and processes in place for you to do your job?

These rounding questions are based on the Q12 goal of measuring and improving upon employee engagement (Gallup, 1999). Initially with the personal question, the rounding leader is building a relationship with the employee to communicate that someone at work seems to care about him/her as a person (Gallup, 1999). In the first formal question, the supervisor asks the employee if the processes at work are going well. Second, the supervisor asks the employee to recognize a staff member for his/her contribution toward the success of the organization; and third, the supervisor asks if the employee is equipped with the materials to do the job effectively and to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement within the organization (Baker, 2010; Cunningham, 2015; Hotko, 2004). These questions are intended to communicate that the supervisor cares for the employees and wants to make the work environment a better place (Gallup, 1999; Harter, Schmidt, Killham, & Asplund, 1998; Hotko 2004). In a school setting, this questioning during rounding also identifies areas for process improvements such as the amount of time teachers may be spending with a new lesson planner software or systems issues such as teachers being interrupted during student contact time to attend to non-

instructional matters. By identifying and responding to concerns based upon the questioning, the rounding leader is able to make organizational improvements.

For the employees, this series of questions allows them to have the opportunity to voice their concerns through sharing problems but also reflecting on positive occurrences and recognizing others in their efforts to improve the work place (Studer, 2008). Thus, the rounding process trains the employee and the supervisor to examine the organization and celebrate successes (Studer, 2003) while also addressing employee needs. For example, a teacher may be eager to share concerns about the implementation of a new reading program and the time required to plan and prepare materials with the language arts supervisor. Because of the rounding questions and the answers the teacher supplied, teacher and supervisor may decide to utilize the early dismissal days for planning and material preparation for effective implementation of the reading program. Later, the rounding leader may choose to recognize the language arts supervisor for support with implementing the new program. Thus, rounding serves as the medium for this communication to happen regularly and consistently. Implementing a communication system of questioning where employees can share issues and supervisors can gather information proactively, school administrators may be more effective in engaging faculty to achieve organizational goals (Studer, 2008). Once the questioning occurs, supervisors need certain tools to continue the implementation process.

Rounding Tools

Organizations that are successful with rounding implement the use of specific tools to ensure consistency among rounding leaders (Crouch et al., 2014; Hotko, 2004). A high level supervisor such as a superintendent of a school district would complete

competency checks to ensure that rounding leaders round routinely and collect information based upon the questions and then take action. Tools that are recommended for the rounding leader include a staff roster, rounding log, stoplight report, reward and recognition log, competency checklist, and thank you note accountability grid (Crouch et al., 2014).

staff roster. Rounding leaders maintain a list of staff member names and a space to indicate the dates when rounding occurred. The roster verifies compliance with the expectation that all rounding leaders round on their employees.

rounding log. Rounding leaders maintain a log which includes the questions that they are to ask to each employee and space to record the responses. Rounding leaders write these responses verbatim to ensure that notes are remembered and shared with supervisors of rounding leaders. This provides a process whereby the rounding leader communicates to the employee that what is being shared is important and accurate (Crouch et al., 2014).

stoplight report. The stoplight report allows the supervisor to report back to the employee the status of issues discussed during the round (see Table 3). It is a component of the rounding log.

The green section of the stoplight report records the items the rounding leader or ancillary staff member such as a technology support employee, was able to fix or accomplish. For example, a teacher may report difficulty logging students into a reading software application. The rounding leader would tell the technology support employee of the situation. If this person could fix the problem, the outcome of the rounding would be recorded in the green section. The yellow

section of the stoplight report outlines the issues that are in the process of being addressed. For example, if the technology support employee is unable to log students into the reading software application in the immediacy, the status of this issue would remain in the yellow section since it was in the process of being rectified. It may also list the next steps needed to address the issue. Finally, the red section shows those items that the rounding leader was unable to address and the reasons (Crouch et al., 2014). In this situation, there may be a request for computers in a classroom. In consultation with the superintendent, the rounding leader may need to communicate that this request cannot be honored due to budgetary constraints (Crouch et al., 2014).

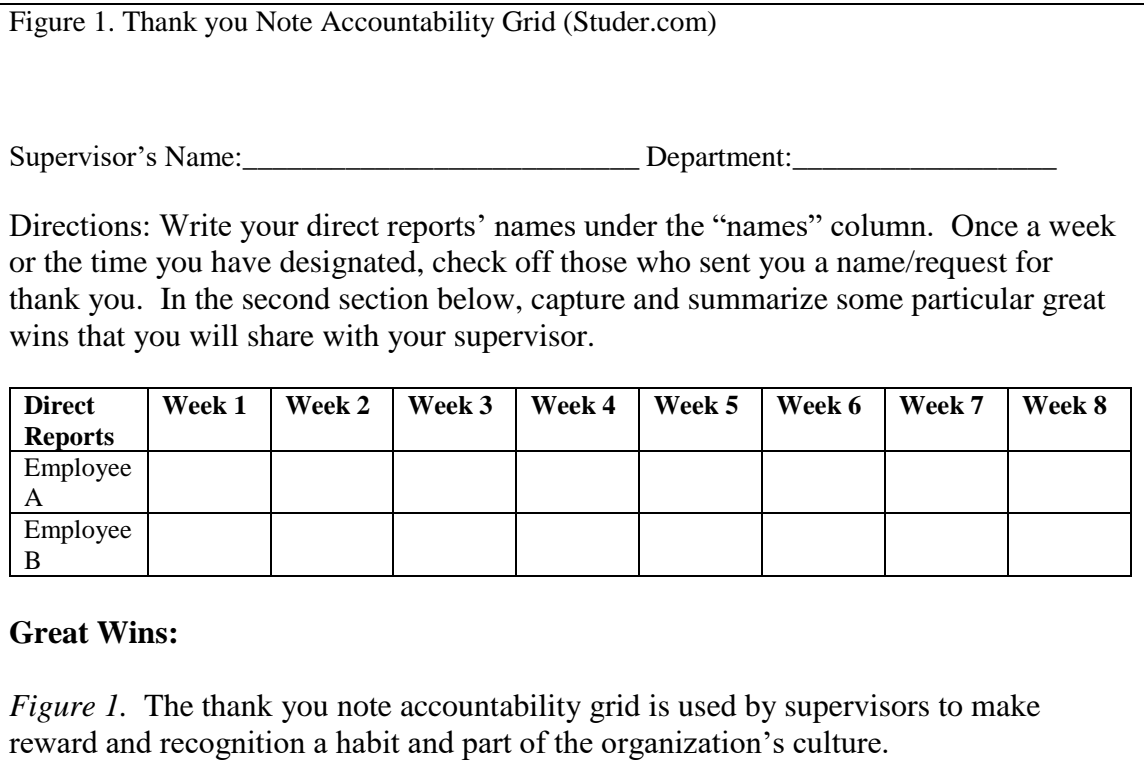
Table 3

Sample Rounding Stoplight Report to Report Status of Issues

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Level of Issues</u>		
	<u>Red/Can't Complete</u>	<u>Yellow/In Process</u>	<u>Green/Completed</u>
3 laptops for room 30	-will order for new school year		
Log in issues reading software, room 31		-contacted tech liaison -reported quantity of laptops for update -scheduled updates for winter recess	
Professional training requested for reading software: 2 nd grade team			Training date scheduled for August 2017

competency checklist. Using a competency checklist, the senior level supervisor may shadow the rounding leaders to observe and coach them or may meet with them periodically to discuss the process. For example, a superintendent may schedule a quarterly meeting with each rounding leader and review the rounding logs and stoplight reports. The competency checklist contains specific categories to ensure that a relationship question is asked at the beginning of a round and that the rounding leader provides a follow up to issues brought forth by the employee during the previous round (see Appendix C).

thank you note accountability grid. During rounding, organizations track employee recognition by collecting names of employees deserving of recognition. Following the round, a supervisor records on a thank you note accountability grid the employees who have been sent a hand written note or an email as a result of the round (see Figure 1).



The grid is maintained internally within the organization among the administrators to ensure that the practice of recognizing faculty becomes hardwired throughout a school or district (Deering, 2004). For these tools to be effective, rounding leaders need to be trained and to effectively implement the process of rounding and how each tool is to be used.

Rounding Leaders and Employees

Rounding leaders should be trained in the Studer principles so they are able to connect the relevance of the actions the senior supervisor is imposing to the core values of the organization (Deao, 2016). For example, a superintendent that is implementing rounding with her staff would ensure the rounding leaders are trained through workshops facilitated by Studer Group to use the tools of rounding effectively. Trainings can be personalized to district needs and occur over time. If a district is newly implementing rounding, the superintendent would provide the time for rounding leaders to receive training throughout the year to encompass topics of an introduction to rounding, goal setting and using rounding data, and troubleshooting issues.

During the training process, rounding leaders also learn ways to introduce rounding to their faculty and demonstrate its value to them and the organization. For example, he/she will share with the faculty that communication will be timely between supervisor and teacher and through the process the rounding leader will make sure they are equipped with the resources to do their work each day. Through this consistent communication, administrators remove faculty misperception that rounding is used to evaluate their performance (Pilcher & Largue, 2009). If implemented correctly, faculty will experience rounding as a process for two-way communication with their supervisor

to achieve district goals (Studer, 2008). This positive work environment is important and is achieved through the rounding leader gaining input from the employees (Studer & Pilcher, 2015). Faculty need to understand that the purpose of rounding is to gain information and feedback that will result in specific actions to improve the quality of the workplace.

For action to occur, supervisors who implement rounding ensure that the practice is scheduled on their calendar at least one time per month for approximately 10 minutes with each employee (Crouch et al., 2014). After collecting information during the round, the rounding leader assures the employee that he will make every effort to resolve the concern, will follow up with the personnel who can assist with a resolution, and then will report back to the employee the status of the issue during the next round (Studer, 2008). Rounding enables a leader to proactively identify opportunities, rather than reactively take action (Studer, 2008).

This proactive approach supports communication and trust among employee and administration, and in turn, increases employee engagement (Spaulding et al., 2010). Chippewa Falls Unified School District, located in rural, west-central Wisconsin, began using rounding to increase communication and employee engagement among the faculty. In 2014, the administrators of Chippewa Falls consulted with the Studer Group and adopted rounding as one of the techniques that all 24 school leaders would institute with their employees throughout the school year. Within the six elementary, one middle, and two high schools, building administrators rounded on their faculty, department leaders including facilities managerial leaders rounded on their faculty, and collectively, the district administration utilized the data from the Employee Engagement Survey to

identify opportunities for improvement (H. Taylor-Eliopoulos, personal communication, August 12, 2017). The Employee Engagement Survey was first administered in November 2014 and was administered twice in 2015, 2016, and most recently in March 2017. Comparing the November 2014 results of the survey representing 6,838 employees with the March 2017 results representing 7,641 employees, the overall mean percentage of faculty who either strongly agreed or agreed to the 16 engagement questions on the 5 point Likert scale survey increased from the 72.7th percentile to the 80.8th percentile. The leadership teams consisted of rounding leaders that focused on several issues from the lack of reward and recognition for employees to complaint resolution and communication between teacher and supervisor. They learned of these needs through instituting the practice of rounding identified in the district's March 2017, Employee Engagement Survey Results Report (H. Taylor-Eliopoulos, personal communication, August 12, 2017). The approach strengthened lines of communication among levels within the organization and increased accountability from superintendent, to department leader and building administrator, to teacher. The highest mean scores for the Likert scale ratings of agree and strongly agree increased in three areas including having the tools and resource to do the job, receiving information through a variety of communication methods, and feeling as though the supervisor had a genuine concern for the employee's welfare. In Chippewa Falls, the superintendent built the type of culture where people felt part of purposeful work and the sense that they were making a difference at all levels within the organization (H. Taylor-Eliopoulos, personal communication, August 12, 2017; Studer, 2008).

Reward and Recognition

During the rounding process, the rounding leader asks a question regarding who deserves recognition. The rounding leader makes sure to send a personalized thank you note to validate an employee for their contribution. The note should connect the employee with why their work is purposeful, communicate a culture that shows the employee is valued, and identify the behaviors worthy of being repeated (Stavrenos & Crouch, 2004). For example, the rounding leader may send a thank you note to a teacher for covering another teacher's class while the teacher was observing. The supervisor details the appreciation in the thank you note by recognizing that this voluntary effort allowed her colleague to improve practice through observation of a model lesson. The thank you may reference a district goal such as developing teacher skills in a specific technique through observation of teacher leaders and validate the teacher's contribution to support this goal. In addition, the supervisor would provide the opportunity for this teacher to experience the observation of another teacher. The more specific the thank you to the organization's goals and mission, the more likely the behavior will be repeated and emulated by others (Studer, 2004). Organizations that implement a system of reward and recognition and have superintendents track which leaders are sending them are likely to establish this practice into daily operations (Stavrenos & Crouch, 2004), making recognition a behavior that has become hardwired in the organization. An example of a tracking system for reward and recognition (see Figure 1) is an organized listing of staff members with a column for upcoming weeks. In this way, the supervisor is able to track who among the faculty has received recognition. When a superintendent conducts a high level round with supervisors, a component of the competency check could be to discuss

the great wins or the successes that are found through asking who is deserving of recognition. For example, rounding leaders across the district may note that recognition was given to the reading coach for supporting the implementation of a new program. This may generate recognition for this employee across the district by the superintendent. Recognition is an important goal of the rounding process as it validates teacher efforts and their commitment to their work.

Goals of Rounding

Leaders want their employees to be engaged and productive and, therefore, must create the conditions to enable these traits in their employees (Studer, 2008). Through rounding, supervisors are able to participate in open communication with employees in a manner whereby the employee feels cared for and valued, which translates into the employee feeling trust for the supervisor leading to engagement in work (Deao, 2016; Studer, 2008). Throughout this process, employees are able to share their needs such as a desire for professional growth, receive recognition for successes, and acquire coaching support to develop their skills. Each of these areas is identified as critical elements that employees look for in their supervisor (Studer, 2008). By addressing these elements through the rounding process, administrators strengthen communication which directly impacts employee engagement within the organization (Deao, 2016).

Because of the communication involved in rounding, leaders know the problems employees are experiencing and can take the necessary steps to solve them. Without the appropriate resources and tools in a classroom, for example, teachers are not able to deliver quality instruction. This can cause frustration for the teacher and negatively affect their level of engagement for their work and trust in the administration. However,

rounding provides the platform for administrators to know if teachers have the resources needed. Thus, if an administrator can acquire the needed resources or at least provide reasons to the teachers for not satisfying the request, the faculty will feel valued through the process and exhibit an increased trust for their leader and commitment to the organization (“Increasing employee engagement,” 2015; Togna, 2013). Trust is a byproduct of increased two-way communication between supervisor and employee (Chia, 2005) and results in the employee responding with behaviors characterized by a high level of commitment and engagement (Togna, 2013).

Summary

Rounding is a technique that was developed in the healthcare field for hospital administrators to implement with their employees. The main purpose of rounding in schools is to develop relationships between administrator and teacher to ensure a solid communication system (Cunningham, 2015; Pilcher & Largue, 2009). In addition, rounding provides a leader with information from the employees on which she can proactively respond. Supervisors institute a system to ensure that each faculty member has the opportunity to meet with the rounding leader monthly to express successes and concerns. During a round, the rounding leader asks a personal question followed by questions that inform the rounding leader on what is working well within the scope of the employee’s role, anyone that the employee believes is worthy of recognition by a supervisor, and whether the employee has the resources necessary to do the job (Cunningham, 2015; Pilcher & Largue, 2009). A rounding log is maintained during the round to record the information from the employee so that the rounding leader can act upon items that require follow up conversations or actions (Cunningham, 2015). In

addition, the rounding leader ensures that the employee receives follow up information in a timely manner. School administrators who implement rounding demonstrate for the faculty that two-way communication is important, teacher needs are valued, and teachers are supported in the work they do with students each day (Pilcher & Largue, 2009; Studer & Pilcher, 2015).

When individual behaviors within an organization incorporate a hardwired behavior such as rounding, it reinforces attitudes and values that contribute to a culture of service and organizational accountability (Spaulding et al., 2010). Rounding, when implemented consistently, supports the key traits that employees look for in their leader (Studer, 2008). These traits include a good relationship between supervisor and employee which can be attributed to the supervisor's commitment to being approachable, providing an efficient system for two-way communication, recognizing good work, and providing the equipment and tools for the employees to do their work (Studer & Pilcher, 2015). In turn, employees are then motivated toward the organization's mission of purposeful work. Therefore, in an educational setting, a principal may round on the teachers in his/her building, or a Director of Special Services may conduct competency checks on school-based rounding leaders with teachers in the building. Studer (2008) believed that rounding targets the relationship between supervisor and teacher to support communication and employee engagement.

This study focused on the degree rounding positively affected special education teacher perspective on work place engagement and communication between teacher and supervisor. The literature reviewed served as the basis for the development of a model of rounding in one school district in New Jersey.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

Two-way communication between supervisor and employee has become recognized as a vital attribute within an organization. Noted to strengthen workplace trust, loyalty, and engagement of the employee (Lowe, 2012; Mishra et al., 2014; Swarnalatha & Prasanna, 2013), organizational leaders that establish a system for communication may yield outcomes from the employee that supports the interest of the organization (Deering, 2004; Lowe, 2012; Mishra et al.; Nink & Welte, 2011; Robison, 2012). In the field of education, teachers experience ongoing change coupled with new initiatives for which they will be evaluated. Therefore, without communication between supervisor and teacher to identify teacher needs to implement such changes, the teacher may feel unsupported and the supervisor may be unable to develop trust with the teacher. Without this trust, school supervisors may have difficulty engaging teachers who would otherwise demonstrate commitment and persistence in their work. As a result, school district administrators may be unable to meet the accountability goals within their organization (Deao, 2016; Mishra et al., 2014).

Data collected from the implementation of a formalized rounding model may provide school district administrators with a system that increases communication and employee engagement. This researcher sought to understand the way in which the Department of Special Services, within one suburban school district in New Jersey, attempted to implement rounding. The purpose, ultimately, was to unify the Department of Special Services by fostering communication between the special education teachers, Child Study Team members, and the special services administrators to increase employee engagement and strengthen communication. Specifically, this researcher sought to

measure the level of engagement of SERTs who participated in the rounding process over two points in time and at the conclusion of the study NRSETS who did not participate. In addition, this researcher examined the perception of communication between SERTs who participated in the rounding process with the special services administrators in the district and also compared findings with NRSETS who did not participate in rounding. Next, she analyzed the perception of communication between CSTRs and special education teachers to determine if the rounding process facilitated the communication with the special services administrators and was perceived to positively affect teacher engagement. The perception of the role of the CSTR was valuable since they conducted the rounds with the special education teachers and collected information brought forth during rounding. They were knowledgeable about whether the status of issues was communicated and were the liaison in most instances with communicating information to and from the special services administrators. Furthermore, this researcher sought to understand which aspects of rounding influenced teacher engagement and communication and if there were differing perceptions among teachers at the elementary, middle, and high school level.

Background of the Study

In the district studied, the special services administrators oversaw special education programs and services for students ages 3-21 across five schools. Due to the responsibilities of the job such as state and federal reporting and research and preparation for litigation, the Director of Special Services recognized that she was unable to have regular interactions with faculty to discuss their needs, provide feedback, and offer solutions. Concurrently, the special education teachers became frustrated and were

unclear on how to bring to the attention of the Director the tools or resources they needed to effectively teach their students. Communication between special education teachers and the Director of Special Services was lacking.

During the 2015-2016 school year, the district superintendent, with approval from the Board of Education, developed the position of Special Services Supervisor with administrative responsibilities to support the Director of Special Services and work directly with special education teachers. The additional supervisor in the department supported the Director in supervisory responsibilities, but this still did not address the lack of cohesive communication needed in the department. In order to improve communication within the department, the Director of Special Services developed a job-embedded rounding leaders' training program and sought volunteers from among the district's Child Study Team members to serve as rounding leaders who would listen to special education teacher concerns and communicate them to the director and supervisor. In February 2017, seven of the 14 Child Study Team members who volunteered along with two special services administrators participated in professional trainings and coaching sessions (see Tables 1&2) to learn about the formalized system of rounding and how to implement it with special education teachers.

Between February 2017 - June 2017 and at the start of the new school year in September 2017, monthly professional trainings and coaching sessions for the CSTRs continued to refine the practice of rounding, to provide opportunity to reflect on data, and to develop rounding leader techniques. The practice of monthly rounding began in February 2017 with volunteers comprised of 20 special education teachers from across the five schools and the seven CSTRs in the district. Monthly 1:1 rounds occurred

through November 2017. The rounds were conducted between SERT and CSTR, and the protocol included the CSTR asking the SERT a personal relationship question, what was working well in the classroom, whether the teacher had the tools and resources to do the job, and if there were any faculty deserving of recognition. Consequently, the CSTR recorded information from the rounds through rounding logs and subsequently the Director of Special Services and Supervisor of Special Services read these logs and responded to issues. For example, through the review of rounding logs by the Director of Special Services, she noted that the special education teachers communicated the need for articulation between special education teachers during the transition years where students were moving to the next school building. As a result, eighth grade special education teachers at the middle school level were able to observe different course levels at the freshman level in the high school in order to appropriately place students into these classes. Thus, the agenda for department meetings included the topic of rounding so that monthly, the special services administrators could provide an update on the status of issues brought forth and the special education teachers would become accustomed to receiving an update. The special services administrators utilized a stoplight report to identify issues that had been resolved, those that were in the process of being resolved, and those that could not be resolved at that time (see Table 3). The goal of this study was for the researcher to identify whether a formalized system of communication between special education teacher and CSTR, and CSTR and administrator would affect special education teacher communication and engagement.

Research Design

The purpose of this case study was to evaluate the attempt of one Department of Special Services to improve special education teacher communication and engagement through the implementation of a formalized rounding model. Case studies are a study of individuals or groups, usually of a small sampling of a population, which can provide an in-depth analysis of causal relationships (Cone & Foster, 2006; Marshall & Rossman, 1999). This study involved a mix of participants in one school district from across three levels of schooling including elementary, middle, and high schools (Bogdan, 2007; Creswell, 2003). This researcher triangulated data collection through a mixed methods approach by collecting quantitative data about the formalized model of rounding and incorporating qualitative data examining SERT and NRSET reactions to this process. This allowed the researcher to validate the study's findings through minimizing the limitation of any singular approach (Beaudry & Miller, 2016; Creswell, 2003).

In June 2017 after 5 months of rounding and November 2017 after 8 months of rounding, this researcher administered the Employee Engagement Survey (Studer Education, 2012). In June and November 2017, SERTs completed the survey and in November 2017, NRSETs also completed the survey. Through the use of this measure, the researcher evaluated employee engagement and teacher perception of two-way communication between special services administrators and special education teachers. The researcher utilized a within participants t-test, where the total SERT participant mean score data was analyzed over two points in time to determine if rounding had an impact on SERT engagement and communication within the Department of Special Services (Cone & Foster, 2006). The SERT mean data was compared in June 2017 and November

2017 to examine if there was any difference in the SERT engagement and perception of communication due to the implementation of rounding. Additionally in November 2017, a between participants t-test of the SERTs and NRSETs was utilized to compare the mean score data for rounding and non-rounding participants (Witte & Witte, 2015) at the conclusion of this study. The between participants t-test would allow this researcher to analyze whether the difference of participants and non-participants in their perception of communication and level of engagement was influenced by the rounding process.

Next, qualitative data of exit questions from SERTs were collected monthly beginning in May 2017 through November 2017 (see Appendix B). Exit questions at the conclusion of individual rounds with SERTs served to complement the findings and identified whether the SERTs had recognized changes in communication between themselves and the special services administrators, as well as, commenting if faculty recognition practices within the Department of Special Services had occurred. The exit questions also helped to identify if the teachers had received feedback on issues that they had brought forth through the rounding process. The exit questions were collected as a component of the rounding log, where CSTRs logged SERT input. The rounding log was another qualitative measure used to determine if the rounding process was being implemented effectively. The proper implementation of the rounding process was examined to support the analysis of engagement and communication. The rounding log issues also included a tracking component known as a spotlight report, where the director updated the status of issues that could not be resolved, those in the process of being resolved, and those which had been completed (see Table 3). Review of the rounding log

and stoplight data provided credibility to the self-reporting qualitative data as the logs and stoplight reports were factual records of issues during the rounds.

In November 2017, SERTs, NRSETs, and to CSTRs completed an open-ended questionnaire as another form of qualitative data (see Appendix B). In connection with the questions on the Employee Engagement survey, this researcher administered the open-ended questionnaire to the SERTs for the purpose of collecting expanded information about their experience with rounding. Similarly, the purpose of administering the questionnaire to the NRSETs was to compare their perception of communication within the Department of Special Services. The open-ended questionnaire was adjusted for NRSETs and did not include questions relative to participation in rounding, but did identify whether the NRSETs felt that they had the tools and resources to do their job or the opportunity to provide input on issues related to their job. Collecting the open-ended questionnaire responses from NRSET participants was beneficial to the researcher as the responses could yield data that identifies the rounding process as a factor in increasing communication and engagement.

Similarly, CSTRs participated in the open-ended questionnaire for the purpose of understanding their perspective of the rounding process as they were the liaison between the special services administrators and the SERTs. CSTR questions were similar to those of the SERT but were adjusted to reflect from their role whether they observed any difference in communication within the department.

At the end of November, this researcher conducted individual interviews with seven SERTs and seven NRSETs to further corroborate the responses with the qualitative and quantitative sources and to identify if there were differences among the SERT and

NRSET perceptions (see Appendix B). This sampling allowed the researcher to expand on responses to the open-ended questions to further examine whether these participants recognized strengthened communication with special services administrators. The questions were asked to provide insight into the observations that SERTs and NRSETs may have noticed directly or indirectly with the implementation of the rounding process, and for SERTs to discuss the aspects of rounding that they believed were most beneficial.

Finally, CSTRs participated in a focus group forum in December 2017 (Beaudry & Miller, 2016). The discussion group focused around semi-structured questions related to communication within the department and teacher engagement as a result of the implementation of rounding. A semi-structured format allowed this researcher to utilize a specific set of questions but employ the leniency to answer the questions in no particular order (Beaudry & Miller, 2016).

CSTR and Special Services Administrator Training

In June 2016, the Director of Special Services sent an email to the Child Study Team district personnel. In the email, the director explained a leadership opportunity that would commence in January 2017 and would involve a commitment of time during the work day to support communication within the department and unify the department's one team, one purpose mission. Of the 14 Child Study Team members, seven volunteered to participate in the leadership opportunity. These seven CST members participated in monthly, half-day leadership development sessions on the process of rounding and data mining (see Table 2). For example, training commenced in February 2017, and CSTRs learned the value of rounding and how to conduct a round. During the month of February, two trainings were needed to support the start of the rounding

process. At one session, they practiced the process of rounding with Studer Education coach, Dr. Matarazzo. Simultaneously, monthly webinars and coaching sessions with Dr. Matarazzo occurred for The Director of Special Services and Supervisor of Special Services (see Table 1), and in turn they trained the CSTRLs monthly at all subsequent meetings between February and June 2017 and in September 2017. In addition to developing training sessions focused on the needs of the CSTRLs, Dr. Matarazzo recommended a series of topics relative to the process of rounding. For example, once rounding began in February and the CSTRLs began utilizing the MyRounding software, at the following session special services administrators reviewed software reporting features, data reports such as stop light reports where issues were reported, and compliance of the CSTRLs with the rounding process. In May, the training agenda included the topic of rounding compliance where the Director of Special Services shared with the CSTRLs the recommendation to begin each round by providing an update to the SERT on the status of requests that were brought forth during the last rounding session. Additionally, at the start of the 2017-2018 school year, an additional coaching session for CSTRLs was held in September 2017. Due to the small number of CSTRLs, rounding training could be scheduled to ensure 100% attendance at each training session.

Through the monthly CSTRL trainings, the special services administrators and the CSTRLs reviewed important steps such as the goal of engaging teachers and communicating with them effectively. One way the special services administrators supported the CSTRLs in communicating effectively with the SERTs was through the use of a competency checklist (see Appendix C). Special services administrators utilized this tool to outline the common components of a round and to offer the rounding leader

specific and timely feedback while they conducted a round. The special services administrators would accompany the CSTRL periodically while they conducted a round with a special education teacher to observe whether the rounding process was implemented properly. For example, the competency checklist includes elements such as whether the CSTRL began the round with a personal question. Through observation, the special services administrator documented the implementation process and then used the competency checklist as a discussion tool to provide feedback to the CSTRL.

Collectively, the CSTRL and special services administrator utilized the tool to reflect and refine individual practice and to identify common patterns among the CSTRLs that needed to be reviewed. An example of this was when the Director of Special Services noted that the rounding leaders were not providing the SERTs a status update during the rounds and only at the department meetings were they updated on issues they had mentioned during a previous round. The CSTRLs and special services administrators discussed the value of communicating back to the teachers on these issues.

In another training session, the CSTRLs learned the value of utilizing specific details when recognizing faculty. Recognition developed from general praise for any employee such as saying they were doing a good job or provided assistance beyond what was expected. CSTRLs made it a part of their routine to notify the director weekly of faculty who were deserving of recognition. During all training sessions, the CSTRLs had the opportunity to brainstorm issues that they were experiencing. For example, one CSTRL indicated that it was taking much longer than 5 to 10 minutes per round. The CSTRLs shared techniques to address this problem.

Introduction of Rounding to Special Education Teachers

In January 2017, the director introduced rounding at department meetings with the teachers from all five buildings. She discussed the benefit of participation and the goal of enhanced cohesion toward the department mission of functioning as one team to effectively serve students with special needs. Teachers were able to share if they would be interested in participating in the implementation of rounding during this meeting. CSTRLs and special education teachers began the rounding process in February 2017.

Population of Participants

The district studied was a suburban, public, PK-12 district in New Jersey, which supported approximately 3,200 students. The district was comprised of three elementary schools one of which was PK-2, one grade 3, and one grades 4-5, one middle school (6-8), and one high school (9-12).

District wide, approximately 90% of the total student population were white, 3% were Asian, 2 % were African American, and 5% were under multiple categories. The district had approximately 5% of the student population identified as Hispanic and 95% of the student population identified as Non-Hispanic. Of the total student population, 17 students or less than 1% received English as a Second Language (ESL) services. Of the total student population, 17% or approximately 539 students were classified and in need of special education and related services. Schools A, B, and C were elementary schools with populations representative of the combined grade level within each (see Table 4).

Table 4

Student with Special Needs in Participating Schools

School	Total School Population	Students with Special Needs Population
Elementary A	662	87
Elementary B	196	34
Elementary C	468	86
Middle School D	763	130
High School E	1101	175

School A included students in grades PK-2, School B, was solely a grade 3 school as it also housed the district's board offices, and School C included grades 4-5. School D included students at the middle school grades of 6-8, and the School E included the high school students, grades 9-12. Additionally, 27 total students were not represented in the table as they were educated in private, out of district school placement.

Of the 48 total special education teachers, 37 volunteered to be a part of the implementation of rounding in addition to the seven CSTRs (see Table 5). Through randomly selecting names from a hat, this researcher selected 20 of the 37 to serve as rounding participants and 17 were selected to serve as non-participants. The elementary participants in schools A, B, and C were combined into one subgroup; School D and E participants represented the middle school and the high school respectively (see Table 5).

Table 5

Special Education Teachers in Schools

School	Total Special Education Teachers	Study Participants	
		SERTS	NRSET
Elementary A	9	4	4
Elementary B	3	2	1
Elementary C	6	2	3
Middle School D	14	8	3
High School E	16	4	6

School A had a total of nine special education teachers, eight of whom participated in this study with four SERTs and four NRSETs. School B had a total of three special education teachers all of whom participated in the study with two as SERTs and one as NRSET. In School C, of the six total special education teachers, five participated in the study, with two as SERTs and three as NRSETs. School D had 14 special education teachers with 11 participating divided into eight SERTs and three NRSETs. School E had a total of 16 special education teachers of whom nine participated with four as SERTs and six NRSETs.

Confidentiality and Consent

In March 2017, this researcher submitted a proposal for this study to the Caldwell University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The exempt review form indicated that this research would be conducted anonymously and confidentially in order to protect the identity of the participants. In April 2017, the IRB committee accepted the proposal. Once this study was approved, this researcher reviewed elements of the study with all

SERTs and NRSETs, and they signed consent to participate (see Appendix A). In addition, this researcher received permission to access archival data in the form of rounding logs that began in February 2017.

Adhering to the guidelines outlined in the IRB proposal, this researcher administered surveys anonymously and did not identify individual participants while reporting on results. Survey participants provided the level at which they taught so that the researcher was able to learn of any differences at the elementary, middle, and high school level. In addition, participant names and identifying information were purposefully omitted from the study's findings in order to maintain confidentiality and anonymity. Consent was received by all participants prior to engaging in the study (see Appendix A). The consent summarized the purpose, description of the study, experimental procedures, foreseeable benefits and risks for participation, a confidentiality statement, and disclaimers and withdrawal without penalty guidelines.

Role of the Researcher

This researcher was the Director of Special Services for the five schools in the district studied. Additionally, she was a training leader for the CSTRs in the implementation of the rounding model. She was a subjective participant because she was involved in the collection of self-reported data from the special education teachers; however, she utilized CSTRs to conduct 1:1 monthly rounds rather than herself to increase objectivity in teacher reporting. This researcher additionally maintained an objective point of view by counteracting subjectivity through the collection of multiple data sources. For example, the rounding logs were collected and submitted by the seven CSTRs and the Employee Engagement Survey and open-ended questionnaire were

submitted anonymously (with the exception of identifying whether they were an elementary, middle or high school teacher) allowing for open and honest response by the teachers.

Sources of Data

This study included a mixed methods approach where data was collected through quantitative and qualitative sources. The Employee Engagement Survey measured employee engagement on a 5-point Likert scale (see Appendix B). This researcher also used qualitative measures to determine the perception of communication within the Department of Special Services and the level of teacher engagement as a result of the implementation of the rounding process. Qualitative measures included rounding logs with exit questions, the open-ended questionnaire, interviews, and a focus group discussion forum (see Appendix B).

Employee Engagement Survey

The Employee Engagement Survey is a 16 item Likert scale which enabled the special education teachers to rate statements on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). This researcher administered the survey to the SERTs in June 2017 and to SERTs and NRSETs in November 2017. Participants completed the survey during department meetings and took approximately 15 minutes to complete. A limitation of the Employee Engagement Survey included the inability to disaggregate elementary, middle, and high school teacher perceptions due to the small population of participants within each school level subgroup.

Studer Education (2012) tested the reliability and validity of the survey by administering it to employees across five Studer partner school districts. The survey was

administered to evaluate employee experience in respective schools or departments and to determine if the tool could measure the overall construct of employee engagement. Studer obtained the aggregate mean for each question on the survey for participants across all five school districts, noting scores that reflect outlier (or low mean) data, and those that reflected internal consistency among items. Internal consistency was analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha and a Test-Retest correlation. Administered at three points in time, December 2010, May 2011, and December 2011, the Cronbach's Alpha demonstrated that the survey found high internal consistency. Cronbach's Alpha utilizes a value of near 1.000 to represent near perfect internal consistency among items, and when administered across three applications in five districts, the Alpha score of 0.941 affirmed the questionnaire was a valid measure of employee engagement. The Test-Retest reliability measures whether a questionnaire is consistent when administered over multiple administrations. Item correlation ratings below 0.3 identify weak questions and should be removed from a survey. The Employee Engagement Survey Reliability and Validity Analysis conducted by Studer Education (2012) found that there were no questions that needed to be removed, since the test-retest correlations fell between a range above 0.3 in all areas.

In the reliability and validity analysis (Studer Education, 2012) the survey included questions correlated to the superintendent and therefore, this researcher collaborated with a Studer Education coach to adapt the survey to reflect application into a Department of Special Services. The adaptations were reviewed and approved by Studer coach, Dr. Matarazzo in February 2017 (see Appendix A). The adapted survey equates to 16 total questions just as the original survey, only with modifications to the

wording of questions. An example of a wording adaptation includes adjusting the question that reads “The superintendent manages district finances effectively” to “The special services administrators make the best use of available funds.”

The Employee Engagement survey consists of questions linked to the Q12 statements from the Gallup study which inform leaders of actionable items that lead to employee engagement (Gallup, 1999). From the Employee Engagement survey, this researcher identified six themes that can be aligned to specific questions within the survey around employee engagement and communication (see Table 6). The themes and examples will be utilized to examine the qualitative and quantitative data, drawing a cohesive analysis of the effects of rounding in this district study.

Advantages of using the quantitative survey include the ability of the researcher to collect data efficiently and anonymously. The use of a Likert scale allowed the researcher to produce attitudinal data that could be measured by combining the participant responses across all items on the 5-point scale (Uebersax, 2006). The Likert scale may also provide themes anchored across several items (Uebersax, 2006). For example, within the Employee Engagement Survey, six of the questions can be attributed to the theme of open communication (see Table 6). The survey may provide insight into participant perception of communication with special services administrators and engagement within that department.

Table 6

Employee Engagement Survey Themes the Supervisor Has Influence Upon

Survey Statement or Phrase	Survey Questions	Description
Tools/Resources to do the job	1, 5, 6, 9	Providing teachers with what is needed to do the job. Example: Funds are allocated for special programs.
Recognition	2, 4	Teachers need feedback to know if what they do matters. Recognition should be based on performance and given frequently.
Genuine Concern for Teacher Welfare	9, 12, 16	Teachers are provided with opportunities to share and exchange ideas and have the support to accomplish their work objectives. Example: Establishing a structure to support teachers with cross-school articulation.
Teachers have the Opportunity to be Heard	3, 7, 8, 11, 13, 14	Asking for the employee's input and considering the input allows them to feel a part of the mission. They take ownership for outcomes.
Open Communication	6, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14	Ensuring the communication flows between teacher and administrator, and teachers receive feedback on issues brought forth to the administrator.
Achieve Highest Potential	15, 16	Teachers are provided with the supports to learn and grow. Example: Administrators schedule bi-monthly articulation meetings between self-contained teachers at the request of teachers.

Rounding Logs and Exit Questions

Program records are a source of data which can offer information from teachers as they are recorded in real time (Patton, 2015). Rounding logs are a tool utilized in the process of monthly rounding, where information is collected and recorded either on paper or in an electronic format such as through Google Forms or through a rounding software program such as Huron Consulting's MyRounding software. In this study, rounding logs provided the special services administrators and the rounding leaders with a monthly memory-aid of issues brought forth, faculty deserving of recognition, and what was working well for the special education teachers. From the rounding logs, the special services administrators provided a status update through stoplight report for teachers. The Director of Special Services was also able to identify faculty deserving of recognition through review of the rounding logs. CSTRs collected this information based upon questions asked during the 1:1 rounds with special education teachers. In addition, beginning in the month of May 2017 through November 2017, the CSTR asked an exit question at the conclusion of each round to allow the special education teachers to provide information on their experiences throughout the rounding process. One example was whether they observed the special services administrators responding to issues brought forth as a result of the rounding process. The exit questions provided further documentation when answering the research questions. These questions also included whether the teachers understood the process of rounding, ways communication changed since rounding was implemented, ways in which teacher needs were addressed through rounding, whether teachers felt rounding provided a venue for their input, and whether recognition for teachers changed as a result of rounding.

Through rounding logs and exit questions this researcher reviewed the implementation of the rounding process over the course of the study to provide an account of participant reaction to rounding and its relation to communication between teacher and supervisor.

Open-Ended Questionnaire

In November 2017, SERTs, NRSETs, and CSTRs completed an open-ended questionnaire (see Appendix B). The questionnaire was developed in a constructed response format (Beaudry & Miller, 2016) which allowed participants to respond with original answers. The questionnaire was aligned to the questions on the Employee Engagement Survey in an effort to triangulate the qualitative and quantitative findings to the study's research questions and to corroborate teacher perception of communication within the department and their level of employee engagement. For example, in relation to rounding, one question included asking whether the participant felt they had the tools and resources to do the job. The CSTRs received the same question but rather than asking if they had the tools, the question was reworded to acquire whether the CSTRs felt that the SERTs were provided with the tools and resources to do the job. CSTRs reviewed the open-ended questionnaire, however, to ensure the reliability of the questionnaire, this researcher asked one SERT and one NRSET to review the questionnaire and identify if it would elicit the type of responses needed to answer the research questions (Cone & Foster, 2006). Thus, this researcher refined the questions that required adjusting before administering to the participants within the study (Cone & Foster, 2006). For example, the CSTRs suggested adding an open-ended question that

would show ways that NRSET and SERT communicated with the special services administrators and whether there were disadvantages or advantages.

The questionnaire included 25 open-ended SERT questions and 19 open-ended NRSET questions. There were 26 open-ended questions for CSTRs. The purpose was to expand on the data collected through the Employee Engagement Survey by providing in-depth questions related to communication and engagement. The SERT, NRSET, and CSTR data was analyzed into the two categories of engagement and communication by reviewing key words and phrases that could be attributed to the six themes that a supervisor could influence (see Table 6) and to further identify if there were differences at the elementary, middle, or high school level. This researcher administered the questionnaire through Google Forms at the November department meeting in each building and during a professional development day on December 1, 2017, for the CSTRs. The questionnaire allowed respondents to record their input in detail anonymously, with the only identifying information being the level at which they taught. The researcher was present when the questionnaire was administered due to the fact that it was administered during each department meeting in November; however, she was able to counter this limitation by ensuring there was no identifying information within the questionnaire. The questionnaire took approximately 30 minutes to complete.

Interviews

This researcher conducted interviews to elicit further information from a subgroup of seven SERTs and seven NRSETs about communication and employee engagement within the Department of Special Services (see Appendix B). For SERTs, this researcher also focused on the perception and implementation of rounding. The purpose of

conducting individual interviews to a subgroup from the study was to indicate whether responses in the open-ended questionnaire, exit questions, and Employee Engagement survey could be further validated by the sampling of participants. The researcher created a structured set of questions for the interview so that the same questions were asked of each SERT, and a similar set of questions was asked of the NRSETs. The questions included description or opportunities to provide concrete accounts of the effect of rounding. An example included asking the SERTs the aspects of the rounding process that were most helpful in communication between administrators and teachers. Structural questions were also provided to seek explanation for the descriptive responses. For example, SERTs were asked whether the consistency of questions affected the rounding experience. Contrasting questions were also asked to provide data and analysis of similarities and differences with SERT and NRSETs (Beaudry & Miller, 2016). Additionally, the questions provided behavioral experiences where the interviewees were able to identify what they observed through involvement in rounding, opinion questions where they offered input on the implementation process, and feeling questions where the participants shared their emotional response to the process of rounding (Patton, 2015).

The interview questions were aligned to the questions on the Employee Engagement Survey and open-ended questionnaire. To ensure the reliability of the interview, this researcher asked the CSTRs to review the interview questions and provide input on whether the interview would provide the type of responses needed to answer the research questions (Cone & Foster, 2006). In order to do this, the researcher provided the study's research questions along with the six themes. Collectively, their input guided the revision of the interview questions. For example, the CSTRs

recommended the addition of a question related to the advantages of having the CSTRs as the rounding leaders. Involving the CSTRs allowed the researcher to adjust the questions prior to administering to the interview participants within the study (Cone & Foster, 2006). Once the interview questions were reviewed and revised, this researcher piloted the interview with one SERT and one NRSET who did not participate in the study.

The interview included 19 structured questions for seven SERT and 15 structured questions for seven NRSET teachers. A limitation included the researcher conducting the interviews however, using other anonymous data collected from the exit questions, Employee Engagement survey, the open-ended questionnaire, and non-self-reporting rounding logs allowed the researcher to reduce bias. This researcher conducted interviews individually on November 20-21, 2017, and took approximately 20 minutes to complete with each individual.

CSTR Focus Group

A group interview is called a focus group (Beaudry & Miller, 2016) and was conducted with the seven CSTRs at the conclusion of this study on December 1, 2017. The seven CSTRs participated in the semi-structured interview, where a set of focus questions provided the framework for the interview but allowed for leeway in responding (Beaudry & Miller, 2016). Within the focus group, the CSTRs provided responses to descriptive questions about their experiences as a rounding leader such as how rounding affected teacher access to resources. In addition, CSTRs noted similarities and differences among their experiences at elementary, middle, or high school levels.

The focus group questions were aligned to the Employee Engagement Survey, open-ended questionnaire, and interview questions in an effort to triangulate the qualitative and quantitative findings to the study's research questions. While CSTRs did not participate in the Employee Engagement Survey, as the survey was designed for special education teachers, this researcher created qualitative data sources that would follow the same six themes identified as areas where a supervisor could have influence, and modified the questions so that the CSTRs could provide input on their perception of the rounding process and its effect on special education teachers. The focus group included 10 semi-structured questions. The purpose was to determine if the CSTRs corroborated the special education teacher responses and to understand the effect that rounding had on engagement in the workforce. The focus group was conducted in December 2017 during a professional development day. The session lasted 1 hour. The audio recording was later transcribed to code and triangulate the data.

A limitation of the focus group data comes from the researcher serving as the direct supervisor of the participants and being the individual conducting the focus group. Additionally, as the Director of Special Services she created the questions for the qualitative measures but involved the Supervisor of Special Services in review and revision of the measures to assist with reducing bias. Additionally, to ensure content validity, the researcher developed the type of questions for the interviews and open-ended questionnaire that were aligned to the Employee Engagement Survey which had been deemed a valid and reliable source (Studer Education, 2012). By first creating goals and objectives for the study, she also developed the data collection questions to answer the research questions. For example, she listed the intended outcomes of the qualitative

measures such as discovering if SERTs felt communication within the Department of Special Services has been affected as a result of rounding. Questions were generated to answer those goals which ultimately answered the research questions (Walonick, 2017). Additionally, the use of rounding logs, which is a non-self-reporting data source, provided objective information on whether the process of rounding was improving communication within the department.

Procedures

In January 2017, all 48 special education teachers were given the opportunity to participate in the Employee Engagement Survey during a department meeting. Because this study was not approved until April 2017, this data was not utilized as a component of the study, but rather to provide a baseline for the special services administrators to understand teacher perception of communication and their level of engagement in order to begin the rounding process. In addition, because the study had not begun, this survey did not disaggregate the teachers and would not have been a strong source of data. During this meeting, the special education teachers learned what rounding was, how, when, and where it would occur, and the role of the CSTRs in the process. They were informed of the type of questions that would be asked during each round and how issues brought forth would be communicated back to them. Thirty-seven special education teachers indicated their interest in participating in the rounding process with 20 SERTs and 17 NRSETs selected by drawing names from a hat during the month of January. CSTRs began rounding on special education teacher participants in February 2017. Next, in June 2017 the researcher administered the Employee Engagement survey at the

department meetings across the district. SERTs completed the survey on their laptop through Google Forms.

When the school year commenced in September 2017, the director met with the CSTRLs to review the results of the Employee Engagement Survey and collectively identified the three lowest mean scores on the survey for the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Together, they identified action steps to implement based on these score areas. For example, the CSTRLs discussed that at the department meetings the director should share the way in which special education department funds are utilized. Additionally, the Director of Special Services attended the September 2017 department meetings and met with the SERTs in each building to review the scores and provide opportunities for the SERTs to give feedback. For example, elementary teachers responded with very low scores regarding having input on things that affected their job. When this item arose, one elementary teacher referenced her change of assignment for the new school year and how she felt she had no input in the decision.

In October 2017, this researcher developed and piloted questions for the open-ended questionnaire and interviews with the CSTRLs and Supervisor of Special Services in an effort to ensure reliability of the tool. Collectively, their input guided the revision of the interview questions. Before administering to each group, this researcher piloted the questionnaire and interview with one SERT and one NRSET. This pilot occurred in October 2017. The SERT and NRSET were selected by drawing a name from the participant pool. Each pilot session occurred in this researcher's office. Each participant was made aware that the interview process would be less of a discussion, but rather a question session by the researcher eliciting response from the participant. The individual

interview and open-ended questionnaire took approximately 50 minutes. The researcher did not provide the participants with the interview questions in advance of the interview.

In November 2017, this researcher administered the Employee Engagement survey again to SERTs and for the first time to NRSETs. This allowed the researcher to evaluate if there was any difference between participant and non-participant perception of engagement due to the implementation of rounding.

Concurrent with the Employee Engagement survey, the researcher administered open-ended questionnaires to SERTs, NRSETs, and CSTRs. The questionnaire also was administered through Google Forms. Following the administering of the open-ended questionnaire and the Employee Engagement survey, in November 2017, this researcher interviewed seven SERTs and seven NRSETs. They were randomly selected from the elementary, middle, and high school subpopulations of the participating teachers. This researcher interviewed teachers in person and via audio-recorder, and the recording was transcribed. Prior to the interview, the interviewee was sent a reminder invitation. The participants were not provided the interview questions in advance of the interview.

Finally, a focus group with the CSTRs occurred at the beginning of December 2017 to identify the effects of rounding on special education teachers. The focus group was audio-recorded and took on a semi-structured format where this researcher provided the questions to the group in writing for them to review and then openly discuss. The audio-recording was transcribed.

Upon completion of the qualitative resources in December 2017, this researcher gathered the documents and utilized a coding schema to organize the data into categories aligned with the Employee Engagement survey.

Data Analysis

Employee Engagement Survey

This researcher administered the Employee Engagement Survey to SERTs in June after 5 months of rounding and in November 2017 after 8 months of rounding and to NRSETs in November 2017. The two groups produced two independent samples since observations were based on different and unmatched subjects (Witte & Witte, 2015). This allowed the researcher to identify whether there was a difference between the SERT and NRSET perceptions as the SERT participants were involved in the rounding process and the NRSETs did not participate. Of the 37 teacher participants, 20 were SERTs and 17 were NRSETs. The June 2017 mean score population data was compiled and when administered again in November 2017, the mean score data was compared to determine if the difference in mean scores for SERTs increased as a result of rounding over two points in time (Witte & Witte, 2015). In addition, the November 2017 mean score population data was disaggregated between SERTs and NRSETs due to the belief that the implementation of rounding would increase communication and engagement among all special education teachers in the district. This researcher described each sample population using means and standard deviations to determine the balance point for each sample as well as variance from the mean. The null hypothesis was tested using a t-test for a composite comparison of means among SERTs in June and November, and NRSETs as compared with SERTs at the end of the study. A p-value was calculated to determine the probability that the researcher's findings were not due to chance (Witte & Witte, 2015).

Coding Protocol

A coding protocol was developed prior to the data collection (Beaudry & Miller, 2016). In order to analyze the data, the data was reduced to six themes that the researcher identified to be central to the purpose of the study (Beaudry & Miller, 2016) and which could provide understanding of rounding.

The protocol included the following steps:

- This researcher first sorted the data into sub categories by data source. For each qualitative source, the data was divided by SERT, NRSET, or CSTR, and then divided again by elementary (E), middle (M), or high school (H). This allowed the researcher to identify if there were differences in themes and patterns among the three subgroups and the participants.
- Based on the terms derived from the EES survey, six themes were selected. This researcher read through all qualitative data sources once and identified terms and phrases from the responses and placed the data into the six categories including having the tools/resources to do the job (1), recognition (2), genuine concern for teacher welfare (3), teachers having the opportunity to be heard (4), open communication (5), and achieving to highest potential (6). For example, the number 2 was placed next to a data source that referenced the category of recognition. Additionally, the categories provided the opportunity for transferability, or the opportunity to apply the findings beyond the boundaries of the study (Beaudry & Miller, 2016).
- Then this researcher re-read the qualitative data with the highlighted terms and phrases and organized responses to align with each research question. For

example, for the element of communication, the researcher listed terms such as: open and honest two-way communication, different forums, and status of issues. The researcher identified the data source, the school level of the participant, and the type of participant while triangulating the data (Beaudry & Miller, 2016). To support the findings on teacher engagement, the researcher listed words or phrases such as recognizes performance, provides input on items related to work, and having the tools and resources, all of which have been identified as contributors of employee engagement (Mishra et al., 2014).

- Next, the researcher identified recurring themes in the data as well as any outlier elements. For example, a recurring theme may be participants feeling the special services administrators utilized different forums to communicate with special education teachers. This was noted in the coding protocol and then disaggregated to determine if this could be attributed to the elementary, middle, and high school subgroups.
- Finally, a second coder was employed to ensure inter-rater reliability.

Inter-Rater Reliability

In order to limit researcher bias and ensure an objective interpretation of qualitative data, this researcher employed a second coder, who was not a participant in the study but had familiarity with the programs and terms used during the implementation of rounding. In December 2017, this researcher trained a second coder. The training included a face to face meeting and the second coder was provided a written protocol. This method allowed the second coder to ask questions and to ensure understanding of the process prior to the review of the data.

- To familiarize the second coder with the research study, the researcher explained the rounding process and terms and phrases related to employee engagement and communication within an organization. The researcher explained the steps that would be used in the coding process and the relation to the Employee Engagement survey.
- This researcher reviewed the written protocol with the second coder. The written protocol included a sample data source to code together so that the second coder could acclimate to the research questions within the study, the different participants, and how the participant responses could be attributed to one of the six categories. This process helped to ensure the process of inter-rater reliability and trustworthiness in the second coder.
- The second coder was provided with 20% of the qualitative data from each data source and asked that the second coder utilize the written protocol to code the data. In example, the second coder was provided five open-ended SERT and NRSET questionnaires, and two CSTRL open-ended questionnaires. The second coder was provided with a month's time to code the data.
- Inter-rater reliability was determined by comparing the consistency of the raters over a sampling of qualitative data. A percentage of agreement was calculated to ensure inter-rater reliability and then the second coder and researcher met to clarify discrepancies.

The researcher met with the second coder to compare the analysis of data from the coding protocol and review any disparity. Collectively, the researcher and second coder

found that 85% of their data analysis aligned which is considered inter-rater reliability, and therefore reliable (Gwet, 2014). They reviewed the disparities and attributed the differences to the overlap among some of the six themes. Most notably, a genuine concern for teacher welfare was identified when SERTs were provided with the tools and resources or where SERTs felt they had the opportunity to be heard. The researcher and second coder determine that the prevalence of the theme that contributed to the feelings of genuine concern from the special services administrator should be recorded to the respective theme. In this way, the researcher determined when reporting the data, there may be instances where the theme of genuine concern would be embedded within the reporting of the other themes of engagement.

Rounding Logs and Exit Questions

Rounding logs were reviewed monthly and kept electronically through the course of the study. This researcher printed the rounding logs which included exit questions beginning in May 2017-November 2017. Then she analyzed the exit slip questions utilizing a coding protocol which was divided into manageable units of six themed categories so that a researcher could make sense of the data and provide a cohesive summary of the findings (Beaudry & Miller, 2016).

Open-Ended Questionnaires

Using the coding protocol, this researcher coded and analyzed the open-ended questionnaire data from the SERTs, NRSETs, and CSTRs. The researcher coded each question with symbols that would attribute the response to one of the six categories. From there, the researcher was able to record any further words or phrases from the data that could be included in one of the six categories. This researcher coded the open-ended

questionnaires as OEQ, and divided by SERT, NRSET, or CSTRL, and again by elementary, middle or high school level.

Interviews

This researcher audio-recorded the one to one interviews and had the recordings transcribed. Once the recordings were transcribed, the researcher was able to analyze the data and utilized the coding protocol. Interview data was documented as “I,” followed by whether the participant was a SERT or NRSET, and whether they taught at the elementary (e), middle (m) or high school (h) level.

CSTRL Focus Group

This researcher audio-recorded the semi-structured, group interview with the CSTRLs. After the group interview was transcribed, the researcher utilized the written coding protocol to further document data related to the six categories or themes as viewed by the CSTRLs. The focus group (FG) was further coded to reveal if the CSTRL worked at the elementary (e), middle (m), or high school (h) level.

A mixed methodology was conducted to validate findings through multiple sources of data. Additionally, the Employee Engagement survey was deemed valid and reliable to measure employee engagement (Studer Education, 2012). This researcher also collected data in the form of monthly rounding logs, open-ended questionnaires, and interview questions, and a group forum to determine the level of engagement and communication with the implementation of the rounding process.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This study was conducted to determine the effectiveness of one PK-12 district's implementation of a formalized system of rounding (Studer, 2003, 2008) among special education teachers, Child Study Team members, and special education administrators. The study documented the level of communication and engagement among these stakeholders and the steps in rounding to understand if the process of rounding affected the outcomes. Furthermore, this researcher conducted an analysis of whether there were differences in the perception of special education rounding teachers as compared with special education teachers who did not participate in rounding as well as differences among special education teachers at the elementary, middle, and high school level.

In education, special education teachers instruct students who require specialized techniques and resources. Thus, special education teachers require the support of a supervisor so they are able to do their job effectively. Various studies have found through strong communication between leaders and employee, a trusting relationship ensues and serves as a prerequisite to engagement (Deering, 2004; Lowe, 2012; Mishra et al., 2014; Robison, 2012). The practice of rounding creates a relationship that communicates to teachers that the supervisor values their input, and the unique needs they may have to be successful in the job (Boshamer, 2008). When special education teachers have input regarding their work and receive timely feedback from a supervisor, they feel valued.

This researcher examined data from 20 special education teachers who participated in rounding between February 2017 - November 2017 and compared their

experiences over two points in time and then at the conclusion of the study with 17 special education teachers who were not participants in rounding (see Table 5). Seven CSTRLs who were trained to implement the rounding process met individually at least six times with each assigned SERT during the 8 month study. During each round, the CSTRL documented what was working well, the tools and resources needed for the SERTs to do their job, and any staff deserving of recognition.

A mixed methodology approach included the Employee Engagement Survey constructed of 16 questions on a Likert rating scale. The survey was administered at two points in time during the study. This researcher first administered the survey after 5 months of rounding, in June 2017, to SERTs and the second after 8 months of rounding, in November 2017 to SERTs and NRSET participants. Additionally, qualitative data in the form of an open-ended questionnaire, exit questions and stoplight reports from rounding logs, and interviews were collected to analyze the effects of rounding. Finally, the CSTRLs participated in a discussion forum and an open-ended questionnaire at the conclusion of this study. In education, engaged teachers contribute to the collective goals within the organization (Saks, 2006). For this reason, this researcher sought the practice of rounding to strengthen communication and to support a culture of engagement within the Department of Special Services.

Do Special Education Teachers Who Participated in the Formalized Rounding Model Perceive That They Are More Engaged in Their Teaching and Communicating More Effectively With Special Services Administrators?

Employee Engagement Survey

In June 2017, the Employee Engagement Survey scaled mean of SERTs was 3.82 with a standard deviation of 0.62. In November 2017, the mean increased to 4.33 and the standard deviation decreased to 0.56 with a difference in mean of 0.52 (see Table 7).

Table 7

Employee Engagement Survey for SERTs

	Rounding Special Education Teachers (SERTs) n=20		Rounding Special Education Teachers (SERTs) n=20		
	<u>June 2017</u>		<u>November 2017</u>		
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Difference
Total Scale	3.82	0.62	4.33	0.56	0.52
Communication	3.83	0.66	4.34	0.57	0.80
Engagement	3.83	0.63	4.36	0.56	0.52

While teachers initially were engaged in their jobs, the increased mean and decreasing standard deviation in November indicate that overall, teachers felt even more engaged. Furthermore, the total Employee Engagement Survey scale t value on the one-tailed t-test was 2.78 with a corresponding p value of <.01 which indicates a statistical significance in the means (see Table 8).

Table 8

Results of the t-tests on Employee Engagement Survey for SERTs

	<u>t value</u>	<u>p value</u>
Total Scale	2.78	<.01
Communication	2.61	<.01
Engagement	2.78	<.01

In November 2017, this researcher administered the Employee Engagement Survey to NRSETs as well, to determine if there was a difference between NRSETs and SERTs (see Table 9).

Table 9

Employee Engagement Survey for SERTs and NRSETs

	<u>Non-Rounding Special Education Teachers</u> <u>(NRSETs) n=17</u>		<u>Rounding Special Education Teachers</u> <u>(SERTs) n=20</u>		Difference
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	
Total Scale	4.14	0.84	4.33	0.56	0.20
Communication	4.13	0.74	4.34	0.57	0.20
Engagement	4.18	0.86	4.36	0.56	0.17

The scaled mean of 4.14 for NRSETs was slightly lower than the mean of 4.33 for SERTs and standard deviations were 0.84 and 0.56 respectively (see Table 9). The difference in mean scores was 0.20. Thus, the smaller mean and larger standard deviation indicated that NRSETs were less engaged than their SERT counterparts. While the total scaled mean for SERTs was slightly higher than the NRSET mean score, the

results of the independent sample t-test reveal no statistical significance. The Employee Engagement Survey scale t value was 0.83 with a corresponding p value of $>.05$ (see Table 10). Therefore, there is not enough evidence to conclude that the SERT perception of communication and level of engagement was significantly greater than NRSETs as a result of rounding.

Table 10

Results of the t-tests on the Employee Engagement Survey for SERTs and NRSETs

	<u>t value</u>	<u>p value</u>
Total Scale	0.83	$>.05$
Communication	0.91	$>.05$
Engagement	0.71	$>.05$

Communication. Communication results for SERTs revealed means of 3.83 and 4.34 in June and November 2017 respectively and standard deviations of 0.66 to 0.57 respectively. The increased means and decreased standard deviations may suggest that these teachers believed communication within the Department of Special Services did improve (see Table 7). When compared with NRSETs, communication results revealed a mean of 4.34 for SERTs and 4.13 for NRSETs and the standard deviations of 0.57 and 0.74 respectively showing that SERTs felt communication within the Department of Special Services was slightly more effective than reported by NRSETs. However, the results do not reveal a statistical significance between the SERTs and NRSET as confirmed by the t value of 0.91 and corresponding p value of $>.05$ (see Table 10).

Engagement. SERT engagement results showed an increase of means from 3.83 to 4.36 in June and November respectively with standard deviations decreasing from 0.63 to 0.56 thus, the SERTs felt more engaged at the conclusion of the study. Furthermore, in comparing NRSETs and SERTs, the mean scores of 4.18 for NRSETs and 4.36 for SERTs with standard deviations of 0.86 and 0.56 respectively, demonstrate more SERTs felt engaged in their work than NRSETs. The results however, do not reveal a statistical significance with a t value of 0.71 and p value of $>.05$ (see Table 10).

Summary

These statistical data suggest that rounding did positively affect SERT perception of communication with special education administrators, and ultimately, may have resulted in a greater level of teacher engagement. The subgroups of communication and engagement indicated similar results with a t value of 2.61 and a corresponding p value of $<.01$ and a t value of 2.78 with a corresponding p value of $<.01$. While communication and engagement were already somewhat high as reflected in most SERT data, the implementation of rounding may have positively affected the level of SERT engagement as data revealed an increase over this time period. This may be the result of the increased comfort level SERTs experienced with the rounding process after implementation.

Next, NRSET data indicated these teachers were only slightly less engaged and experienced slightly lower levels of communication than SERTs, therefore, resulting in data that was not statistically significant. This is possibly due to the tangential effects of rounding as NRSETs were often beneficiaries of this process. For example, requests made by SERTs often included materials and resources not solely for that rounding teacher but rather for a group of teachers including NRSETs, such as the grade level team

that requested software licenses for spelling practice. In addition, all teachers learned the results of requests communicated through rounding and their status at department meetings or through their colleagues. Consequently, as communication increased between CSTRs and SERTs, this may have been indirectly experienced by NRSETs which may have affected their levels of engagement and communication.

Rounding Logs

The seven CSTRs maintained a rounding log each time they rounded with their assigned SERT. Each of the 20 SERTs were rounded on six times with the same CSTR, resulting in 120 total rounding logs occurring between February - November 2017. The process of rounding was implemented systematically, occurring one time on average, at a frequency of 4-6 weeks with each SERT during the school year. The special services administrators ensured the proper implementation of rounding between February - April 2017, through instituting a competency check where the Director of Special Services shadowed each CSTR.

Open communication was analyzed by this stand-alone theme as rounding is a practice utilized to strengthen communication. The category of engagement, contrarily, was analyzed according to the five themes that may result from implementing rounding and include the following: tools and resources to do the job, employee recognition, opportunities to be heard, and achievement to the highest potential. Having a genuine concern for teachers' welfare, the fifth theme, was embedded within the four categories.

Communication. Of the 120 logs, 18 reflected the theme of open communication within the Department of Special Services as an area that was working well. Six of the 18 logs at the elementary level indicated SERTs were receiving information on the status

of their requests and three reports revealed that they believed that requests appeared to be taken seriously by the special education administrators. At the middle school level, 12 of the 18 logs reflected open communication as an area that was working well with two logs noting communication was “better than ever,” while in another three logs, SERTs mentioned that they were receiving reasons when requests were not fulfilled and were appreciative of the feedback. For example, one SERT indicated that while it was taking some time to get a response to the change in pay for summer school teachers, she acknowledged she was appreciative of the honesty from the director. One of the 12 middle school logs noted that a SERT felt more relaxed with sharing issues and concerns with the rounding platform. No high school SERTs revealed any information related to the status of their requests. Ultimately, data from the rounding log revealed that many SERTs felt communication within the Department of Special Services was improving.

Engagement. To analyze and corroborate findings among the themes related to engagement (see Table 6), this researcher identified phrases that correlated with questions within the Employee Engagement Survey that focused on the five themes.

Tools and resources. Of the rounding logs, 34 of 120 referenced receiving the tools and resources to do the job. At the elementary level, 18 instances were reported as teachers referenced receiving materials such as sensory items for the classroom and supplemental literacy kits for students with a learning disability. In three instances, SERTs referenced having the opportunity to articulate with colleagues at the grade level above or below, three other SERTs referenced that the timeline for annual review IEP meetings had been better communicated and organized, and 10 recognized that they received the materials and resources requested such as iPads. At the middle school level,

there were 14 references in rounding logs to receiving the tools and resources to do the job. Written in one rounding log a SERT stated, “My schedule this year makes me happy; I have the same students in the inclusion setting for multiple subjects.” As a result of the rounding process, the CSTRL served as a resource to the building administrator who develops the schedule and provides the support needed. In two of the 14 logs SERTs referenced having access to competent teacher assistants, four referenced the positive effect of the master schedule for the school year and of those four, two indicated that the schedule addressed the request to have the same students in the in-class support setting throughout the day. Thus, the process created a formalized system of communication between SERTs and the special education administrators to understand the successes and needs of special education teachers and students. Finally, the remaining eight of the 14 middle school logs noted receiving the resources needed to do their jobs. One SERT stated, “Getting the interactive whiteboard fixed was so helpful, and receiving Learning Ally happened quickly.” At the high school level, one log referenced the value of having teacher assistants who have the skill set and initiative to assist students, while another log mentioned the benefit of the professional support for co-teachers.

Recognition. During monthly rounds, the SERTs were given an opportunity to identify staff they felt were deserving of recognition. Of the 120 rounds conducted, logs contained 56 instances of faculty named by a SERT to be recognized with 41 receiving an email and 15 receiving a handwritten card by the Director of Special Services. At the elementary level, one round revealed that she had received a letter from the director which was, “thoughtful and a nice way to be recognized.” At the middle school level,

one indicated that recognition was motivating and wondered if there were ways to increase recognition through other venues. One rounding log from a high school SERT noted, “kudos are a nice change,” and another indicated, “recognition in any way, is always nice to hear.” Data from the rounding logs revealed that the faculty provided praise to their colleagues, and teachers felt the personal recognition from the Director of Special Services demonstrated care and concern.

Opportunity to be heard. Rounding log data revealed 25 of the 120 logs referenced instances where SERTs identified that they felt their voice was being heard, they could address issues, and have input with their job. At the elementary level, in four logs of 48 teachers referenced feeling heard and valued as two SERTs recognized that co-planning had improved since September 2017. One was pleased with the early release time allotted at the preschool level for this purpose. Rounding logs similarly reflected middle school SERT satisfaction as 19 of the 48 middle school logs referenced SERTs commenting that they had the opportunity to be heard. Of the 48, four logs noted input had increased as a result of rounding. One stated that rounding had allowed the CSTRL and special education teachers to interact more, and two felt that conversations with the CSTRLs had moved from solely student issues to conversations about professional needs. One SERT noted that rounding had given teachers a “voice to the higher ups.” At the high school level, two of the 24 rounding logs reflected the ability for the SERT to discuss common issues such as the challenge of working with multiple general education teachers or teaching various subjects and grade levels each day.

Achieving to highest potential. Within the 120 rounding logs, four teachers specifically made reference to feeling as though they were better able to achieve to their

highest potential as a result of rounding. One SERT at the middle school identified having the environmental space needed for laboratory course work, and another referenced that having touch screens for students with fine motor issues provided them the opportunity to participate in technology-related instruction. At the high school level, one log revealed that a SERT felt through rounding, he had increased professional connections to address issues that he was experiencing in his professional role. This occurred with the articulation with middle school teachers for scheduling students for ninth grade classes. While data is limited due to rounding not explicitly discussing reaching one's potential, it may indicate that rounding supported SERTs through providing a way to increase communication. SERTs became equipped with tools and resources, had opportunities for input on issues experienced within their job, and received professional supports to address student needs within the classroom.

Rounding logs provided data on the categories of engagement and communication through the routine process of rounding. Exit slips were added to the rounding sessions to gain further detail on the effects of rounding within the Department of Special Services.

Exit Questions

Between May and November 2017, SERTs were asked a specific question at the conclusion of the monthly rounding session. Unlike the three questions asked during every rounding session, the exit questions were asked to specifically identify the effect of rounding on communication and engagement within the department.

Communication. Exit questions in May and June 2017 focused on the theme of open communication. In May 2017, SERTs were asked if they understood the rounding

process. Seventeen of the 20 SERTs indicated they did of which seven were elementary teachers, eight were middle school teachers, and two were high school teachers. Three of the 20 SERTs, one elementary, one middle and one high school, raised questions regarding where the information went following a round, and whether there would be a report. One elementary participant voiced confusion on the process and the connection to the administrator. CSTRs responded to each of these questions.

In June 2017, the exit question focused on whether the SERTs felt that they had received feedback on items brought forth during rounding. Eighteen of the SERTs answered positively and two SERTs at the high school level, responded that they had not brought forth issues or requests that required feedback. Seven of the 20 SERTs identified the CSTR as being instrumental with communicating the status of items brought forth, eight identified the special services administrators as sharing feedback during the department meetings, and two SERTs responded the stoplight report had been informative in communicating status updates on issues. Thus, SERTs felt they understood the process of rounding and were receiving feedback on the status of items brought forth to the special education administrators.

Engagement. The exit question in September 2017 focused on the theme of recognition, in October 2017 having the tools and resources to do the job, and in November 2017, whether rounding affected the SERTs likelihood of providing input and having the opportunity to be heard.

Tools and resources. In October 2017, the exit question asked whether requests for tools and resources were being addressed. Of the 20 SERTs 18 reported that requests were addressed through rounding. At the elementary level, one SERT stated, “The

availability of the BCBA to serve in the classroom as a resource in the afternoons has been very helpful.” Also, at the elementary level, all eight responses indicated that rounding supported the SERTs as six of the eight indicated that they received materials or supports, when requested. One SERT commented that requests were taken seriously and discussed at department meetings and another SERT noted that while most requests were considered, many were granted. One felt she should invest the time in thinking about the needs in the classrooms for monthly rounds because needs were being addressed by the special education administrators.

At the middle school all eight SERTs responded that rounding provided them with the tools and resources to do the job. Six noted issues were acknowledged in a timely manner and feedback about issues was communicated at department meetings. One responded that touchscreen laptops were requested and that feedback had been received from the technology department when they were expected to be delivered. The second reported that she requested a classroom with a sink for science class and the request was granted.

At the high school level, two of the four SERTs indicated that they had heard back from the special education administrators on the status of items brought forward, one for curriculum resources and the other for increased professional development. One SERT stated, “Co-teaching trainings have been very helpful.” The remaining two responded that they did not make requests that required feedback. The October exit question revealed that most SERTs perceived the process of rounding to be supportive of fulfilling requests for tools and resources.

Recognition. In September 2017, the exit question asked whether SERTs had received recognition or seen a colleague receive recognition. Sixteen of the 20 responses identified being recognized or having observed a colleague receive recognition from another colleague or from a special education administrator. Four SERTs indicated that they received recognition through email, while eight indicated they heard staff being recognized at the monthly department meetings. Four received a personal letter with, two indicating that they felt this would be a thoughtful way to be recognized. Of the four who had not been recognized or observed others receiving recognition, one elementary SERT identified the value of being recognized with sincerity, and a high school level SERT indicated that it is helpful to know the specifics about how a staff member had impacted someone.

Opportunity to be heard. During the final round in November 2017, SERTs were asked whether they had increased opportunities through rounding to provide input on decisions that affect their job. Fourteen of the 20 SERTs agreed. At the elementary level, six of the eight SERTs identified that rounding did provide an opportunity to identify needs. For instance, they identified resources received from rounding such as a software license for student use, believed the system for communication to be more organized and efficient, noticed the quick feedback received from the special services administrators and, voiced concerns and complimented others. Two elementary SERTs did not feel rounding allowed for input but rather identified rounding as “one more thing to do just like report cards, and lesson planning” while the other indicated she would like to see the opportunity to provide input when a change in teaching assignment is being considered.

At the middle school, all eight SERTs identified that their input had increased through advocating for tools needed to do their job by providing more input. One SERT stated, “I got my science classroom!” At the high school level, no one indicated rounding to be the source of increased input. However, all four indicated there had been increased forums to discuss issues and common concerns, identifying the department meetings positively. Three of these SERTs noted that they had the ability to let a CSTRL or special services administrator know if they had any needs and perceived they had support from the Department of Special Services.

Achieving to highest potential. There was not a specific exit question related to highest potential. Rather, this researcher reviewed the monthly exit questions and identified teacher comments. Within the exit questions collected between June - November 2017, four teachers specifically made reference to feeling as though they were better able to achieve to their highest potential as a result of rounding. One teacher at the middle school level stated, “Rounding is about me and what I need to be the best that I can be in the classroom,” while another teacher at the middle school stated, “More educational opportunities have become available to help us improve what we do in the classroom.” Furthermore, a SERT at the high school indicated, “The administrators want to know how they can support us, and they communicate back to us on things we ask for.” This data may indicate that some SERTs perceived that they were supported by the special education administrators to achieve to their highest potential.

Rounding logs and exit questions revealed 17 of the 20 SERTs perceived a greater sense of communication within the Department of Special Services. Eighteen of the 20 SERTs identified the formalized system of rounding as a venue where requests for tools

and resources could be made and where they would receive feedback on requests. The majority of SERTs perceived the rounding forum provided an opportunity to be heard, where 14 of the 20 felt issues could be communicated through rounding and in turn, professional needs could be addressed. Data from the October exit question revealed that 16 of the 20 SERTs felt recognition given to and received from colleagues was an aspect of rounding that was motivating. Collectively, rounding, and the actions taken due to it, may have attributed to teacher perception that the special services administrators had a genuine concern for their welfare.

Open-Ended Questionnaire

Within the category of communication, the data was reported by terms and phrases corresponding to open communication between administrator and special education teacher. For example, phrases such as “communicating openly and honestly” or “providing feedback” were collected under this category. The category of engagement was analyzed according to the five themes.

Communication.

SERTs. All 20 SERTs noted rounding as an avenue for communication. Eighteen of the SERTs revealed that rounding provided increased opportunity for communication and feedback among SERTs, CSTRLs, and the special services administrators. Additionally, all 20 indicated that through rounding, requests for materials moved from being teacher initiated to a combination of teacher and CSTRL initiated. All eight elementary SERTs indicated that they preferred the face to face meetings to receive updates and feedback on issues identified through rounding. Six of the eight indicated that they believed the communication from the special services

administrators was honest and open at meetings. Three SERTs noted that they liked how ideas were reviewed by the special services administrators in advance of department meetings. Contrarily, two of the eight SERTs did not feel communication was open and honest. One noted that department meetings were not long enough and felt rushed making it difficult to observe the special services administrators communicating, while the other indicated that the special services administrators have private meetings to review rounding log data and believed this was not an open and honest exchange.

At the middle school level, all eight indicated they most appreciated the department meetings as the forum for communication and feedback. Three indicated they felt the process had been efficient. All these SERTs perceived that communication was open and honest as one commented, “When the special education administrator is unable to accomplish something, she just shares it with us. Rounding made the lines of communication open because once our thoughts are recorded in the rounding log, we hear about them at the department meetings, even when our requests cannot be carried out.”

At the high school level, all four noted an improvement of communication within the department, with two identifying department meetings as the favored forum for communication and two commending the role of the CSTRL in two-way communication. Additionally, two of the four SERTs answered they believed communication was improving, with two indicating they had not made requests that required feedback. One teacher noted that communication was not just about status updates, but about giving compliments and recognizing one another’s accomplishments. Two of the four indicated they were very comfortable sharing their needs, and their input was valued.

Next, SERTs were asked whether they would recommend changes to the rounding process. Two of the 20 SERTs stated they would not change the rounding process. Eighteen commented that rounding should be made available to all of the special education teachers. Three of the eight elementary SERTs indicated that they often brought forth issues from the NRSETs too when they rounded with the CSTRL. Similarly, two middle school SERTs indicated that they felt like they had to be a voice for others. One high school SERTs stated, “Especially for new staff, rounding should be available, as they may need the monthly check-ins in their new position.” However, 18 of the SERTs indicated that the frequency for rounds should be reduced as the monthly intervals and common questions for meetings were redundant. Seven indicated that they preferred a round one or two times per year, whereas the remaining 11 felt the rounding process could be offered 3 to 4 times per year.

When asked about the role of the CSTRL in rounding, nine of the 20 perceived the CSTRL was effective as rounding leader. Six participants at the middle school and high school indicated that it was efficient to meet with the CSTRLs because they knew teacher schedules and were familiar with the building needs. Two middle school SERTs indicated that they found value in the CSTRL disseminating information between teacher and special services administrator. In addition, eleven felt that the CSTRL was a “middle man” to the administrator and would have preferred to have an option to round with a special services administrator. Two elementary SERTs noted that different personalities or experiences with CSTRLs may make for a less than favorable experience. A high school SERT remarked that having the option to have an administrator for one round a year may uncover different perspectives or needs.

Data may indicate that rounding provides a forum for improved two-way communication and feedback within the Department of Special Services as SERTs perceived needs were better addressed as they and CSTRs collaboratively recognized them and that CSTRs were integral to improved communication. However, most SERTs believed that fewer rounds could still address teacher requests. The data may also suggest that department meetings are the preferred forum for two-way communication.

NRSETs. To determine if rounding affected non-rounding special education teachers, 17 participated in an open-ended questionnaire in November 2017 of which eight were elementary, three were middle, and six were high school level teachers. When asked how the NRSETs had observed communication between special education teacher and special services administrator, all 17 noted that email communication was a routine venue while 13 of the 17 had also identified that they had observed communication between special education teachers at the department meetings. Two middle school NRSETs responded that they felt special services administrators were more involved and communicating more openly than they have in the past. Two elementary NRSETs referenced the special services administrators stopping by their classroom to say hello. When asked their preference on venues for communication, 14 of the 17 indicated they preferred face to face as these meetings made them feel the most valued. Two at the middle school noted the presence in their schools of both special services administrators in the past 8 months.

Next, all NRSETs responded that communication within the department had improved. For example, one high school teacher said, “Communication is available; I know I can reach out to the special services administrators if needed.” Fourteen of the 17

NRSETs indicated that they received timely feedback on requests brought forth to the special education administrators. Of the two who did not receive timely feedback, they made excuses for the situation and indicated that possibly the special services administrators were still working on the situation or approval was required from a different administrator.

All 17 commented that requests were self-generated, when needs were identified. One elementary NRSET stated, “I think we used to be more hesitant to ask for tools or improvements, but that has changed with the welcomed response of our special services administrators and team to supply the teachers with anything they need.” There were no instances where NRSETs identified the CST members as a venue to communicate professional requests.

Comparison of SERTs and NRSETs. Data from the open-ended questionnaire may demonstrate that rounding positively affected NRSETs as communication improved among SERTs, CSTRs, and special services administrators. Eighteen of the 20 SERTs identified benefits of rounding to include providing an additional forum for teachers to communicate requests and receive feedback on requests, and the majority of SERTs added that communication from the special services administrators was open and honest. NRSETs similarly noted that communication within the Department of Special Services was effective, where the majority identified email and department meetings as the venues for communication. Fourteen of the 17 NRSETs felt they received feedback on requests brought forth, and all of the NRSETs indicated that requests for resources were self-initiated. Thus, as a result of the rounding process, the meetings where the status of

requests were communicated and the staff were recognized may have increased communication and engagement in their jobs among all special education teachers.

CSTRs. All seven CSTRs perceived that all SERTs believed rounding improved communication between SERTs and special services administrators. Five of the seven CSTRs noted teachers had an increased comfort in sharing input on topics. Four attributed the new comfort level to the SERT perception that special services administrators were initiating their input and the SERTs were receiving feedback as a result. For example, two of the elementary CSTRs documented that SERTs were appreciative of the Director's support as the district began using standards-based report cards. Additionally, four of the seven CSTRs identified that SERTs were coming to the rounding session with handwritten notes, which they attributed to a greater comfort in sharing requests. Furthermore, in six of the seven responses, CSTRs felt the special services administrators were perceived as being honest and open when communicating with staff and all CSTRs noted that the preferred forum for communication and feedback was face to face at the monthly department meetings.

Next, all seven of the CSTRs reported a need for fewer rounds as the monthly frequency was unnecessary to gather input from the SERTs. One elementary CSTR stated, "Rounding could take place every other month. This would be sufficient since some months do not lend to conducting a round. The month of June especially, was a difficult time to conduct a round." Only one CSTR at the elementary level stated that she felt that rounding was stressful and overwhelming because the CSTRs were in the building all the time that the interaction during rounding felt less authentic. All seven also felt the staff would find value in the special services administrators offering the

choice of CSTRL or the special services administrators to conduct rounds. Furthermore, five of the seven felt the formal questions were a positive aspect of rounding as two CSTRLs at the elementary level commented that they may have felt artificial to the SERTs, but still believed they were valuable as they observed SERTs more willing to give input. One CSTRL at the high school level stated, “The formality eliminated nervousness in the process. The teachers knew what to expect with each round.”

Summary. Data reveals that teachers perceived that communication within the Department of Special Services had improved, and may be attributed to the implementation of rounding. Most SERTs and CSTRLs similarly noted that rounding provided a venue for two-way communication, and SERTs became more comfortable bringing forth requests in anticipation of being asked about their needs for the job. NRSETs, on the contrary, noted that requests for resources and the opportunity to discuss issues was always self-generated. Next, CSTRLs, SERTs, and NRSETs also indicated that there was an increased comfort in sharing particularly in face-to-face department meetings. NRSETs began to reach out to a SERT to ask that a request be made on their behalf revealing that rounding may have positively affected all special education teachers and possibly increasing their communication with special services administrators and increasing engagement in their jobs.

Rounding may have provided an added forum for communication between teachers and special services administrators, however, 18 of the SERTS and all 7 CSTRLs commented that the frequency for rounds could be reduced and still maintain improved communication within the department. Data, however, indicates that the frequency provided the opportunity for requests and recognition to be made with

consistency. This consistency of the rounding process was seen as beneficial by both CSTRs and SERTs.

Engagement. The open-ended questionnaire provided opportunity for the SERTs, NRSETs, and CSTRs to reflect on the five themes related to teacher engagement. The theme of genuine concern was reported independently as the questionnaire included specific questions about this theme, unlike the other qualitative sources.

Tools and resources.

SERTs. In 17 of the 20 open-ended responses, SERTs noted that rounding provided them with the tools and resources needed to do the job. At the elementary level, seven of the eight SERTs, at the middle level eight of the eight, and at the high school level, two of the four indicated that they were provided with the tools and resources when requested through rounding. Next, when teachers were asked if they noticed any difference as a result of rounding, all 20 indicated that rounding was a forum where they could make requests for tools and resources if needed, and that feedback was given to teachers through email or at department meetings. Two SERTs at the elementary level felt that while rounding provided the forum, teachers already were able to make requests for resources needed without the rounding process. Three of the eight middle school SERTs identified rounding as an efficient means to make requests, and five indicated that they were more willing to communicate because of the feedback from the special education administrators or CSTR. One stated, “Requests no longer falling on deaf ears,” and another reported, “Administrators are recognizing and responding to our needs.”

NRSETs. When asked questions related to tools and resources, 13 of the 17 NRSETs felt they were provided with the resources to do the job upon request, knew how to acquire them, and received feedback when requests were made. In three instances at the elementary level and one at the high school, NRSETs stated that they often purchased their own materials for their classroom. Fourteen felt the current venues to request resources and that feedback received through email or at department meetings was sufficient. Three NRSETs, one at each level, commented they would like to communicate requests through the rounding process, like their peers.

Comparison of SERTs and NRSETs. SERTs and NRSETs indicated that they had received the tools and resources to do the job and did receive feedback on requests at department meetings or through email. It is difficult to determine the effect of rounding on engagement through tools and resources as most teachers believed the system was already functioning well. However, some SERTs believe they were more willing to make requests because of rounding and a few NRSETs wanted to participate in it. Rounding provided a formalized way to address teacher requests which may more effectively address student needs and create a feeling of engagement with teachers.

CSTRs. All seven CSTRs identified rounding as a forum where faculty were making requests at an increasing rate over the course of the study. Five of the seven noted the SERTs were becoming comfortable with making requests because they were acknowledged, and addressed at department meetings or via email. One of the elementary CSTRs indicated that the Director of Special Services was responsive to needs, but a SERT also indicated that the forum appeared unnecessary due to the small population of special education teachers within the building. She stated that teachers

appeared bothered by having to report requests through a formal venue where the CSTRL was the connection between the SERT and the Director of Special Services. However, the CSTRL indicated that this did not prevent the SERTs from bringing forth requests during rounds. Another CSTRL at the elementary level indicated that some of the SERTs felt the frequency of rounds took away from other important responsibilities. While rounds were 8 minutes in length on average, the monthly meetings may have been redundant.

Recognition.

SERTs. All 20 SERTs noted that recognition was a positive component of the rounding process. Thirteen noted that recognition increased esteem, strengthened the team approach, or demonstrated a supportive climate within the Department of Special Services. When asked whether the SERT had been recognized or observed others receiving recognition, 19 of the 20 responded that they had, but preferences were mixed among the SERTs at all levels on how they like to receive recognition. At the elementary level, two of the eight indicated they prefer face to face recognition either at a department meeting or personally, four indicated a hand-written card from the director was preferred, and two indicated that email was nice because one was sent closer to when the actual compliment was given. At the middle school level, five of the eight liked email recognition while others preferred face to face or a personal card. One stated, “Email recognition is less uncomfortable! I do not like attention drawn to me.” At the high school, all four noted recognition had been given at department meetings. Only one of the four indicated a preference. He stated, “A shout out at the department meeting was nice. I liked the pat on the back and the specific example of why my Director recognized

me in front of my colleagues.” Finally, five of the 20 SERTs indicated they received feedback on their strengths. For example, one elementary SERT stated that when she received recognition, she learned how her behavior helped someone else. Also, one high school SERT indicated she learned strengths of colleagues which helped her identify who may be a good resource. Recognition may be a valuable component for increasing employee engagement.

NRSETs. Thirteen of the 17 NRSETs responded that they observed recognition at department meetings and believed it to be positive. Three identified they also received a personal note from the director. Furthermore, two indicated that recognition is meaningful because it communicates what the employee is doing well. When asked if they had a preference on how to be recognized, two indicated they received personal cards and felt that was a preferred method, 10 indicated face to face was preferred because it was more personal and revealed more emotion than an email. The remaining five indicated that any forum was appreciated. One high school NRSET indicated she kept the personal card she received and added, “I was also recognized by my Director on Twitter!”

Comparison of SERTs and NRSETs. All SERTs and most NRSETs found the recognition of staff a positive experience. However, only the SERTs had the opportunity to recognize others through the rounding process as many identified this aspect as one that strengthened the unity in the Department of Special Services. SERTs and NRSETs revealed different ways to be recognized which suggests that no one method was preferred but consideration needs to be given to individual preference for recognition.

Therefore, teacher perception of the effects of rounding may have increased engagement with all special education teachers as they saw the benefits of recognizing colleagues.

CSTRs. Six of the seven CSTRs felt recognition was a positive component of the rounding process. Four noted that staff received praise at department meetings, and seven noted the Director of Special Services sent recognition via email or personal notes. Six of the seven indicated that they preferred face to face recognition and one who does not like recognition indicated that if she were to be recognized she appreciated the personal message as a handwritten note. All seven noted that they observed recognition improve in the Department of Special Services. Consequently, the routine practice of staff recognition may have increased the level of engagement of special education teachers and staff within the Department of Special Services.

Genuine concern.

SERTs. Of the 20 SERTs, 11 responded positively and indicated the rounding process impacted their feelings of whether the special education administrators had a genuine concern for them. For example, six of the eight elementary SERTs noted that this was demonstrated through receipt of the tools to support classroom instruction, three at the middle school level felt that having input made them feel valued and respected, and at the high school level, two responded they were supported by the special services administrators. Another noted, "Rounding has removed the no one cares environment where staff can be recognized, assisted, and brought together as a team." When asked whether SERTs noted an impact of genuine concern by the administrators across the district, the responses were vague. One stated, "I would think everyone is feeling a better sense of unity" and another stated, "Rounding follows through on our one team, one

purpose motto.” Finally, this researcher wanted to identify if the rounding process was respectful of the teacher’s time. Only two elementary SERTs felt rounding took up too much time at the department meetings, which made the remaining agenda feel rushed. The remaining 18 SERTs did not feel the rounds were too long as rounding log data revealed that the average duration of a rounding session was 8 minutes in length however, they indicated the frequency could be reduced and still provide ample opportunity for their input.

NRSETs. Eleven of the 17 NRSETs indicated they believed the special services administrators had a genuine concern for their welfare. Four indicated that requests for materials and trainings were heard, two stated that there was follow up on requests, and one indicated that the administrators checked in and asked about non-work related items. One NRSET at the high school stated, “There is a family-like department of support.” However, other responses were somewhat vague. Six of the 17 NRSETs responded that they were unsure. Of the six, two at the elementary level noted they did not feel they had an opportunity to be heard and one further stated, “I have to initiate it if I want to have input.” Two high school and one middle school NRSETs responded, “not really,” and one additional teacher at the high school and one at the elementary level indicated they felt rounding may make them feel differently. While many of the NRSETs did feel the special services administrators had a genuine concern, it was unclear the level of concern they perceived.

Comparison of SERTs and NRSETs. Many SERTs and NRSETs noted receipt of tools as an example of genuine concern by the special education administrators. However, SERTs believed the rounding process initiated by the Director of Special

Services provided them with the opportunity to have input on their job. NRSETs were less able to provide examples of genuine concern as they were not part of the rounding process. This may suggest that rounding created an improved relationship with the special services administrators because of the increased level of engagement where SERTs perceived the ability to do their job was valued.

CSTRs. Four of the seven commented that the follow up on issues and updates provided, especially at department meetings, demonstrated the administrator wanted to support the teachers. Two CSTRs felt the special services administrators thoughtfully considered requests and one noted a genuine concern was most often communicated through the face to face presence of the special services administrators at the department meetings. Six of the seven also noted that SERTs were receiving feedback. Two noted that the duration of rounds at times extended beyond the average length of 8 minutes, and they felt SERTs saw this as taking time away from their preparation periods. When reviewing the log data, the average rounds at the elementary level were 10 minutes, with two of the three buildings averaging 11 minutes in length, different than the middle and high school rounds which averaged closer to 8 minutes in length. The length of rounds was considerate of teacher time, and data from the CSTRL responses indicated that rounding demonstrated a genuine concern for SERT welfare as SERTs were given the opportunity to be heard and to receive feedback on requests efficiently.

Opportunity to be heard.

SERTs. Eighteen of the 20 SERTs identified that through rounding, they were provided with an increased opportunity to be heard. Teachers perceived feeling as though they were given consideration in their requests. In three instances, SERTs

commented on feeling trust in their administrator, and in one instance, a middle school SERT referenced that the special education administrators go to “bat” for the teachers and impact the climate of the work environment.

Next, at the elementary level, two of the eight indicated that rounding provided an opportunity to acquire grade level materials that were not ordered for the special education teachers. For example, one teacher indicated it was helpful to be able to go to the special education administrators for requests, rather than just the principal or vice principal. At the middle school level, four of the eight SERTs indicated that receiving feedback made them feel heard, two indicated that rounding documentation validated concerns. One of the two further stated, “Rounding quantifies the problem and concerns. The director told us that it has helped identify common issues among the teachers.” Rounding provided the SERTs with an opportunity to express issues and to also recognize their peers. On the contrary, one elementary SERT noted that rounding felt like something that must be done rather than for the purpose of providing teachers with a forum for input, and at the high school level, one SERT indicated that they were not provided input on an administrative change in the SERT’s assignment. Two of the eight elementary SERTs indicated that they did not feel their voice was valued at the building level. In one example, the teacher indicated, “We have faculty advisory meetings at the building, but I have never been asked if there were any concerns from the special education department.”

NRSETs. Twelve NRSETs believed they had the opportunity to be heard as seven noted that department meetings were the forum to provide input, and five noted they had input by being part of professional trainings. The remaining four, indicated their input

was shared through email or in face to face communication with the supervisor of special services. Five of the 17 NRSETs felt as though they did not have an opportunity to be heard. Two at the elementary level indicated that they do not feel there is a valuable opportunity to give input, and one explained that it can be difficult to have input because there is not always time to meet with an administrator. At the high school and the middle school level, two indicated that department meetings had not provided an adequate opportunity to have input.

Comparison of SERTs and NRSETs. Most SERTs and many NRSETs perceived they had an opportunity to be heard however, a few NRSETs did not think they were provided with time or a forum to voice concerns with special services administrators but rather relied upon school-based personnel or chance interface with the special services administrators to do so. This may suggest that the rounding process provided the setting to voice concerns, thus, increasing engagement as SERTs knew through the process that their concerns would be delivered to the special services administrators and would receive feedback as a result.

CSTRs. All seven CSTRs identified rounding as a forum for SERTS to be heard or to provide input. Five of the seven noted that teachers appeared to be more forthcoming with requests, and the remaining two identified an increased likelihood SERTS would offer input to the special services administrator. One CSTR stated, “The director had been instrumental in providing a change in the behaviorist’s schedule at the request of the teacher. This showed that requests are thoughtfully considered.” Next, all indicated that the face-to-face forums appeared to be preferred, however, five of the

seven felt rounding was valuable to the SERTs but the frequency of rounds could be reduced and still provide adequate opportunity for the SERTs to be heard.

Achieve to the highest potential.

SERTs. Eight of the 20 teachers felt that rounding assisted them in achieving their highest potential in their daily work. At the elementary level, two teachers indicated that the purchases made had a big impact in the classroom, while another SERT noted that she was re-energized in her work. The teacher attributed these feelings to the interface of a rounding leader with the personal presence of the special services administrators at department meetings. One middle school teacher stated, “Our special education world has been turned upside down in the best ways! The special education administrators and CSTRs understand special education.” Three additional middle school SERTs indicated that they were provided with the resources to do their job, receiving a classroom for hands-on activities, and receiving support with modified computers for a self-contained class. One high school SERT noted that the special services administrators and CSTR provided a safe place to communicate when the SERT had to change her classroom assignment. None of the SERTs, however, recognized the rounding process as a forum to receive feedback on their role as professional, but, had assisted them in achieving to their highest potential by providing them with the trainings and resources needed to perform in the classroom. However, one SERT at each of the levels referenced that through the aspect of recognition in the rounding process, they received feedback on skills which helped them to reflect and continue to pursue their highest potential in their job.

NRSETs. Of the 17 NRSETs, eight mentioned that it is through the observation and evaluation process where they receive feedback as ways to achieve to their highest

potential. Seven NRSETs noted the value of professional development for achieving to their highest potential. The teachers felt these had increased recently and that specific trainings such as ones on co-teaching, and others related to supplemental curriculums had supported their professional expertise. Five believed they would like to have more input on issues related to their job, while 12 indicated this was something that contributed to their ability to achieve to their highest level. Thirteen NRSETs felt that the special services administrators help them to achieve to their best potential by supplying the resources needed to do the job.

Comparison of SERTs and NRSETs. The effects of rounding on achieving the highest potential are less clear. Some SERTs agreed and attributed this sense to opportunities for two-way communication at department meetings. NRSETs believed professional development and feedback from the evaluation process were way the special services administrators enabled them to reach their highest potential. The data is unclear if reaching one's potential through rounding affected engagement.

CSTRs. All CSTRs believed rounding could assist with teachers reaching their highest potential as they commented that having opportunities to be heard had led to increased professional learning for the teachers. Six of the seven noted that having the tools and resources resulted in teachers feeling adequately prepared to do their jobs. This may be a result of the implementation of rounding as rounding provides the opportunity for two-way communication which leads to a shared trust between employee and supervisor. Thus, achieving one's potential may come from a myriad of situations within the rounding process in addition to those beyond the rounding process such as professional development and teacher evaluations.

Summary. Within the five subcategories, most SERTs believed that rounding provided an increased opportunity to make requests for the tools and resources to do the job, an opportunity to be heard, and an opportunity to give and receive recognition which may result in increased engagement. Eighteen of the 20 SERTs experienced rounding as a forum to request the tools and resources to do the job, and all 20 SERTs and all seven CSTRs found rounding to be a forum to ask for materials, and to receive feedback on such requests. However, NRSETs also believed that they received the tools needed to do the job and were already engaged in their work, but SERTs commented that they were more likely to make requests because of rounding. Therefore, rounding may have a greater impact on engagement because of the formalized system for requesting tools and resources.

Next, SERTs, CSTRs, and NRSETs indicated that recognition was a positive aspect of the rounding process and all expressed different preferences for receiving recognition. Recognition may be a component of rounding that increases employee engagement as it provides the opportunity to communicate that the employee is valued and appreciated by the special services administrator and colleagues. Most SERTs noted that rounding provided them the opportunity to be heard, and CSTRs noted similarly, they experienced SERTs attending the rounding session more comfortable and willing to provide input. NRSETs also believed they had a greater opportunity to be heard, particularly during department meetings or at professional trainings. This may suggest that with the implementation of rounding and the process of providing feedback at department meetings, all teachers were beneficiaries of the process. As a result, rounding may contribute to increased level of teacher engagement.

Less clear was the impact of rounding on genuine concern and highest potential. Many CSTRs and SERTs identified receiving feedback or being provided with the resources requested as genuine concern from special services administrators with the opportunity to achieve one's potential. NRSETs similarly noted being provided with resources, including professional development opportunities, yet mostly identified the observation and evaluation process and professional development as a means of achieving to one's highest potential. Thus, it is difficult to determine the effects of rounding on genuine concern and achieving potential as there are multiple ways within a school for this to occur.

Interviews and CSTR Focus Group

Interviews were conducted to provide conversational evidence of rounding and included three elementary SERTs, three middle school SERTs, and one high school SERT. Similarly, individual interviews were conducted between researcher and NRSETs with four interviews conducted at the elementary level, one at the middle level, and two at the high school level on November 20 and 21, 2017. CSTRs participated in a discussion forum on December 1, 2017, in a semi-structured format.

Communication.

SERTs. When asked about feedback, all seven SERTs identified rounding as a means to provide feedback back to teachers on requests brought forth through rounding. Four SERTs noted that rounding provided a "loop" with the teacher, CSTR, administrator, and back to the teacher. Next, six of seven responded that rounding made them more willing to communicate. Of those six, three stated that concerns were taken seriously by the special services administrators which increased the ease to speak. Three

SERTs noted that communication with the CSTRs had always been effective, however, the presence from administrators at department meetings made the SERTs feel that communication now included all members of the team. One stated, “I feel like the department has really come together as a team, a special education team.”

All seven of the teachers commented that rounding had a positive effect on communication within the department, and that rounding should be available for all certificated staff within the department. There were few differences among the three levels with the exception of the high school SERT who did not identify any resources or materials that were needed and the one elementary SERT who indicated that teachers who are already vocal may not require the venue. When asked what aspects they felt contributed most to communication within the department, all responded the department meetings. Next, all seven felt the frequency of rounding monthly was unnecessary and three indicated that meeting every other month or quarterly would be sufficient to ensure teacher input. Finally, four liked the CSTR as the rounding leader, while three would have preferred communicating with one of the special services administrators.

NRSETs. All seven NRSETs appeared satisfied with communication in the department and noted it occurred through email and at department meetings which they preferred. When asked if communication with the special services administrators was open and honest, four of the seven indicated yes, as teachers commented, “Communication is strong. I can always reach out if I need something.” This suggests that NRSETs were the ones to initiate communication or to make requests with the special services administrator whereas with rounding, SERTs were asked for input. Additionally, two NRSETs kept notes to remember to check on issues or requests brought

forth to the special services administrators whereas SERTs identified receiving follow up messages routinely at department meetings or through the rounding process.

CSTRs. The seven CSTRs observed rounding as supportive of communication among SERTs, CSTR, and special services administrator. Because of rounding, six felt teachers believed that special services administrators were open and honest. The high school CSTR did note that this forum made the teachers feel safe and not seen as complainers. The two elementary CSTRs believed teachers would address their needs with the CSTR without rounding in place, however, one believed the SERTs still appreciated the outlet to share their concerns. The CSTRs felt the strongest forum for open communication was the face to face meetings, where five believed it was due to the personal presence of the special services administrators discussing the SERT requests. They concurred with SERTs that the frequency of monthly rounds could be reduced with the same effect on communication within the department. In addition, the CSTRs noted that they believed the SERTs would prefer rounds with a special services administrator and often heard that they were considered a “middle man.” Finally, the CSTRs commented the formality of the questions should continue, perhaps with the addition of a question that may be related to a department goal. Thus, one major aspect of communication all indicated was the importance of the department meetings which provided updates and recognition that occurred during the rounding process.

Engagement. Interview data from the SERTs and NRSETs and the CSTR discussion forum findings were categorized by terms and phrases that align with the five themes for engagement. Similar to the open-ended questionnaire, the specificity of

questions within the interview allowed the researcher to report the theme of genuine concern independently from the remaining themes.

Tools and resources.

SERTs and NRSETs. All seven SERTs commented that rounding supported the process of communicating requests for the tools and resources needed to do their job. One SERT at the high school level indicated that while she had not brought requests forward, she now knew of the process and had observed special services administrators being responsive to teacher needs. At the elementary and middle school level, three SERTs noted the efficiency of the process, with one stating that the process improved communication within the department. Next, four SERTs identified the value of hearing the status of requests at department meetings and three identified email as the source for receiving feedback on requests. One middle school SERT explained that the responsiveness caused her to open up about resources needed for her job while contrarily, one elementary SERT noted that the forum was unnecessary to make requests for tools and resources. Data revealed that teachers perceived rounding was used to communicate needs.

All seven NRSETs felt they had adequate forums to request tools and resources, however, one still made her own purchases for classroom materials. When asked if they were receiving feedback on requests, two NRSETs indicated they had not always heard back because certain requests needed different levels of approval. Finally, all NRSETs noted email as the venue to communicate needs, and one elementary and one high school NRSET indicated they would like to be a part of the rounding process.

SERTs identified the rounding process as a means to request tools and resources and to receive timely feedback. NRSETs also felt they could request tools and resources, yet appeared less satisfied with the feedback. This may have been a reason that some NRSETs wanted to participate in rounding as it provided a formalized system for feedback.

CSTRs. All seven CSTRs noted the rounding process provided a means to request items and that administrators were responsive to teacher needs. Six of the seven indicated that special services administrators demonstrated support for the teachers through rounding by providing the tools and resources requested or by following up on the status. Four of the seven stated that the rounding process was efficient and noted that if requests could not be fulfilled, the Director of Special Services shared the reason. As a result, five CSTRs commented that they felt SERTs were more willing to bring forth requests for tools and resources.

Recognition.

SERTs and NRSETs. All seven SERTs observed recognition being given within the Department of Special Services and each of the SERTs identified recognition as a positive component of the rounding process. One high school SERT stated, “At Department meetings, we recognize one another and it sets forth a feeling of professionalism.” When asked about the forums where recognition was observed, they all indicated that they occurred at department meetings. One SERT at the elementary level stated, “The best recognition I received was from a Child Study Team member from another building. I love that she took the time to tell me how my support at the start of the school year supported one of my students as they moved into the next grade level.” A

high school SERT commented that recognition was motivating to colleagues and that she witnessed this with an occupational therapist whom she chose to recognize. The SERT felt the occupational therapist was surprised by the recognition and thought that this had created an increased level of motivation. In one of the three interviews at the elementary level and one of the three at the middle school, SERTs noted the energy that results from recognition. When asked about their preference for recognition, two of the seven indicated any forum is appreciated, while three indicated they like the face to face forum. One stated, “The words are great, but the claps from the group as a whole make the praise at a department meeting even more motivating.”

Of the seven NRSETs six indicated that they had either been recognized or observed others being recognized and felt recognition was a positive aspect. Only one stated that attention was uncomfortable and preferred a handwritten card. The remaining preferred recognition at department meetings, emails or cards. SERTs and NRSETs observed recognition being given and received in various ways because of the rounding process and this may positively affect employee engagement.

CSTRs. The CSTRs noted that recognition was a positive component of rounding, yet commented that some teachers were uncomfortable with public recognition and preference on how to be recognized should be considered. When asked if rounding was necessary to give or receive recognition, only one elementary CSTRL indicated that recognition would occur without the rounding process. However, all CSTRs noted that recognition positively affected the climate within the Special Services Department, and one middle school CSTRL stated that there was an increased sense of collegiality and trust within the department.

Genuine concern.

SERTs and NRSETs. Six of the seven SERTs indicated that they felt the administrators genuinely cared for them. At the elementary level, two experienced an increased trust for the special services administrators. One SERT noted that she felt more supported and that the special services administrators were viewed as genuine during the department meetings where an equal exchange between teacher and special services administrator occurred. At the middle school level, all three SERTs mentioned that the special services administrators “took to heart” what the teachers were saying and their actions were showing it. One of the three teachers referenced the stoplight report, noting that this report clearly identified what was being addressed as a result of rounding.

Three of the seven NRSETs indicated they felt supported by their administrators and indicated that professional development is one aspect of their job in which they believed their needs were heard. One elementary NRSET explained that the special services administrators had a genuine concern as one administrator joined her at a preschool training, thus feeling professionally supported. Three of the seven NRSETs responded that the special services administrators made an attempt to fulfill the requests and this made them feel valued. One at the high school level indicated that she had requested articulation time with the school psychologist and one special services administrator provided a substitute so they could meet. Of the seven interviewed, five felt it may be helpful to have a set time to meet with a supervisor or CSTR and share requests or to provide input on their job. This may indicate the need for the rounding process in sustaining teacher belief in special education administrator concern.

SERTs and NRSETs believed the special services administrators demonstrated genuine concern for the teachers. However, many NRSETs wanted a forum where they had a set time to meet and share requests. This suggests that these teachers would benefit from the rounding process. SERTs stated that rounding provided teachers the opportunity to share their needs and administrators listened and responded which may lead to engagement in one's job.

CSTRs. All seven CSTRs believed that the special services administrators had created a climate where SERTs were supported. Three noted that SERTs really liked the updates at meetings as four commented the special services administrators demonstrated concern through two-way communication, answering questions, and documenting what teachers brought forth. They felt this was the most appropriate means to demonstrate warmth and care by the special services administrator.

Opportunity to be heard.

SERTs and NRSETs. In each of the seven interviews, the SERTs indicated that rounding provided an increased opportunity to be heard. At the elementary, middle, and high school levels, SERTs referenced the unique needs of special education students and how the rounding process gave them a voice where their specialized needs could be heard lessening isolation. For example, one SERT at the elementary level began a new self-contained classroom that required sensory space. The SERT commented on how valuable it was to have a set time to meet. Next, four SERTs stated a greater willingness to share openly. Additionally, when asked if they observed any difference with being able to provide input through rounding, three of the seven noted that they felt a great

level of trust among themselves and the special services administrators. They attributed this feeling to feedback received from special services administrators.

Of the NRSETs, four of the seven indicated they felt heard by the special services administrators. All noted that the department meetings were the forum for input, however, three commented there had not been adequate time at department meetings. Two indicated that scheduling individual time with a special services administrator was difficult so they often resorted to sending an email to schedule to meet. All three noted that when they reached out to an administrator, they were responsive.

SERTs commented that rounding provided a forum to provide input and to be heard at a consistent and scheduled time. NRSETs stated that while they had department meetings to voice their input, it often felt rushed. Therefore, rounding may provide the formalized structure for teachers to have input regularly, leading to increased engagement in the job and with the special services administrators.

*CSTR*Ls. All *CSTR*Ls indicated that rounding was a forum for teachers to be heard, and that the special education administrators had been effective with communicating the rounding issues at department meetings or through emails. Five of the seven *CSTR*Ls at the elementary and middle school levels identified rounding as a forum that increased teacher willingness to come forward with requests. Five also noted that teachers appeared more comfortable with the administrators, while two elementary *CSTR*Ls reiterated that teachers see the face to face meetings as the most appreciated forum for having an opportunity to be heard. Six noted that the need for tools and resources were fulfilled in a timely fashion and as a result, teachers felt heard and valued by the special services administrators. Finally, the *CSTR*Ls discussed the value of

opening rounding to all certificated staff within the department and suggested including all Child Study Team members and educational specialists such as the therapists. This may indicate that rounding was perceived to provide an effective venue for teachers to be heard.

Achieve to highest potential.

SERTs and NRSETs. In four of the seven interviews, SERTs identified that rounding contributed to achieving potential. At the elementary level, one SERT identified receiving the specialized resources to address the unique needs within the classroom. Two middle school SERTs commented upon the benefit of rounding in communicating scheduling requests. At the high school level, one SERT indicated she had difficulty with a co-teaching partner and through rounding she was able to express this concern and get the support needed from the CSTR and special education administrator. Additionally, three SERTs noted that recognition helped them to achieve to their highest potential. While achieving highest potential is difficult to measure, rounding may have provided the venue for teachers to receive the tools and resources needed to increase engagement and possibly increase achievement.

Of the seven interviewed, six NRSETs noted that it was through the observation and evaluation process that they received feedback on their professional skills to reflect and make improvements. One of the seven noted a positive letter of recognition where she learned what skills were valued by her colleagues. Additionally, when asked for any example of how they were supported to be effective teachers, three indicated that they appreciated the professional offerings for special education teachers and one indicated that it seemed to be increasing within the department. Four noted that tools and resources

had been provided when requested, and one indicated that the special services administrators advocated on behalf of the teachers. For example, one middle school teacher stated, “When the district purchased chrome books for all students, the Director worked with the teachers to make sure this was a viable tool for all students. It was through her that we were able to voice concern with not having touchscreens for students and she was able to acquire an alternate device for certain students.” This data may indicate that rounding provides a forum for teacher needs to be heard in order for them to achieve to the highest potential.

SERTs felt supported and able to achieve to their highest potential when their requests brought forth through rounding were provided. NRSETs identified the observation and evaluation process as the forum by which they received feedback to achieve to their highest potential. Rounding therefore, may provide an added forum for teachers to communicate requests for the supports needed to increase engagement and achieve their highest potential.

CSTRs. CSTRs indicated that having a venue to request materials improved student programs and professional learning opportunities for teachers. At the middle school, the two CSTRs referenced the increased communication among school administrators, special services administrators, and CSTRs which resulted in conducive scheduling for teachers who supported students in various settings. All three elementary CSTRs noted that rounding allowed the CSTR to work with the teacher and the administrator to identify materials needed and to help acquire them. At the high school level, the two CSTRs noted the value of specific recognition for teachers. CSTRs

perceived this information could support teachers in achieving their highest potential and would result in repetition of effective practices.

Summary

The Employee Engagement Survey identified that SERTS perceived they were communicating more effectively with special services administrators between June 2017 and November 2017 where the total mean scores increased from 3.82 to 4.3 and the t value of 2.605 and p value of $<.01$ indicated a statistical significance. However, as compared with SERTs, NRSETS had a mean score of 4.13 in November 2017 with a t value of 0.71 and p value was $>.05$, thus, not significant. NRSETs may have been beneficiaries of rounding through receiving tools and resources and recognition, thus, increasing their overall perception of communication and engagement. Next, data from the rounding logs and exit questions supported the survey, as SERTs noted that the rounding process provided a forum to request tools and resources, a venue to voice concerns, and the opportunity to recognize colleagues. The SERT open-ended questionnaire and interviews further corroborated these findings, identifying that rounding provided a formalized means to communicate requests between SERT and special services administrators. NRSETs also indicated in the open-ended questionnaire and interviews that they had the ability to make requests for resources and that administrators worked to support their needs, however, NRSETs needed to initiate such requests because there was no formal process. CSTRL data further revealed that there was a greater sense of open and honest communication between teacher and special education administrator resulting in improved two-way communications. Thus, rounding may have provided the forum for special services administrators to communicate

effectively with SERTs, resulting in SERTs experiencing greater trust for their special services administrators, and consequently increased perceived levels of engagement toward the job.

Additionally, teacher engagement scores improved for SERTs between June 2017 and November 2017 from a mean of 3.83 to 4.36 respectively. The t value of 2.78 and p value of $<.01$ revealed that SERTs were more engaged in their jobs at the conclusion of this study. As compared with SERTs, NRSET mean score data revealed a slightly lower level of engagement with a mean score of 4.18. While the mean scores were similar, the standard deviations of 0.56 and .086 for SERTs and NRSETs respectively suggest that the NRSETs scores had greater disparity when reporting engagement, however, the t value of 0.71 and p value of $>.05$ was not significant. This researcher suggests that the lack of significance between NRSET and SERT data could be due to the tangential effects of rounding where NRSETs received similar benefits as SERTs such as receiving the tools and resources needed for the job, and recognition from the administrator or colleagues.

Data from the qualitative sources indicated SERTs had the opportunity to be heard through the rounding process as they consistently received feedback. NRSETs contrarily, felt a forum was lacking, noting that the department meetings were often rushed and did not provide an opportunity for input from teachers and some indicated a scheduled time to meet would be beneficial. Next, SERTs and CSTRs identified recognition to be an aspect of rounding that had positively affected the SERT perception of feeling valued and supported. Furthermore, through the rounding log data, the researcher identified 78 instances where faculty were recognized in a variety of forums,

and of those 78 instances, 56 were the result of requests by SERTs to recognize a fellow colleague. This data suggests that recognition had become a routine practice within the Department of Special Services. Although NRSETs did not have the same opportunity to recognize their colleagues, the majority perceived recognition was a positive aspect that they had observed. SERTs, CSTRs, and NRSETs similarly noted varied preferences in which they preferred to be recognized such as letters, email, and department meetings. Such recognition may lead to a higher sense of commitment or engagement in one's job.

SERTs felt supported when provided with the resources requested or an update on the status of requests. While NRSETs believed they had special services administrative support, because they were not part of the rounding process, the department meetings did not sufficiently address their needs and wanted a scheduled time to provide input. The data may suggest that through rounding teachers perceived they had the opportunity to provide input thus making them feel supported and engaged in the job.

Providing the opportunity for input and fulfilling teacher requests for tools and resources may also equip teachers to achieve to their highest potential. SERTs identified receiving specialized resources as a result of rounding whereas NRSETs noted professional development and observation and evaluation supported their potential. Both SERTs and NRSETs identified recognition as a means to reach their highest potential with SERTs and through rounding were in the position to recognize colleagues. NRSETs could only receive the recognition but realized the benefits. Rounding may provide a formalized system to provide the tools to engage teachers and support achievement to the highest potential.

The rounding process coupled with information at department meetings may have provided enabled special education teachers and special services administrators with the forum to increase communication and engagement in the Department of Special Services.

What Aspects of Rounding Influenced Special Education Teacher Perception of Effective Communication With Special Services Administrators?

Aspects of effective communication were analyzed through the qualitative data sources of exit questions in May, June, and September 2017, the open-ended questionnaire and interviews for SERTs.

Exit Questions

In June 2017, 18 of the 20 SERTs responded that they received feedback on items brought forth during rounding, most often during the monthly department meetings. Additionally, responses to the exit questions in September 2017 indicated that 16 of the 20 SERTs had been recipients or had recognized a colleague being observed with the majority noting that recognition was most often communicated during monthly department meetings. Finally, some SERTs identified the use of written documentation during the round or the stoplight report as an added benefit and an indication that the special services administrators were listening. Therefore, exit questions revealed that SERTs experienced communication with CSTRs and special education administrators in a formalized way. Thus, adding exit questions to the end of a round may have resulted in increased communication within the Department of Special Services.

Open-Ended Questionnaire

SERTs. All 20 of the SERTs identified rounding as a forum for two-way communication and the majority noted that it provided an increased opportunity for

feedback between the SERTs and special services administrators. For example, all 20 SERTs indicated that they were asked what was needed to do the job, whereas without rounding, teachers needed to self-advocate for the resources needed. Thus, the pointed questions may have been a major aspect of rounding that SERTs perceived as effective in increasing communication. Most SERTs preferred face to face communication with the special services administrators for updates and, 14 felt administrators were communicating openly and honestly, often noting that even when a request could not be fulfilled, the Director of Special Services would share the status with the teachers. Eighteen of the 20 SERTs felt involvement of all certificated faculty would give the opportunity to have input to increase communication. However, the SERTs felt the frequency for rounds could be reduced from monthly to quarterly or bi-monthly rounds. Eighteen of the 20 SERTs indicated that they believed the recommended revision would provide adequate opportunity for two-way communication within the Department of Special Services. Data from this study, however, indicates that the constant communication during the rounds and the subsequent department meetings was the condition that may have increased communication.

Additionally, nine of the 20 SERTs felt the systematic approach for communication was valuable. Rounding provided teachers with a scheduled time, with consistent questions to regularly communicate. In the open-ended questionnaire for example, three of the eight elementary SERTs felt the outcomes for rounds allowed time for the administrators to review issues and report at department meetings. Similarly, five of the eight at the middle school level felt the systematic approach was efficient and resulted in timely feedback, thus positively affecting communication. Based upon

interviews, of the three questions in the rounding process, SERTs perceived the question regarding tools and resources seemed to be an aspect of rounding that may have increased communication.

Interviews

SERTs. In the interview sessions, all SERTs indicated that rounding was a means for communication within the Department of Special Services and for the special education administrators to be aware and provide feedback on SERT requests. Six of the seven SERTs felt rounding made them more willing to communicate, and many SERTs noted that communication seemed to be more inclusive within the department. All SERTs noted that rounding should be offered to all teachers and that the preferred forum for communication between special education administrators and teachers was face-to-face, such as at department meetings.

Summary

Rounding may have positively affected communication within the Department of Special Services. Data revealed the most influential aspects may be the consistency of the three questions, most notably the tools and resources to do the job, and the communication between special education teachers and special services administrators. This occurred at department meetings, and while this is not a formal aspect of rounding, it is where issues raised from rounds were most often addressed.

What Aspects of Rounding Influenced the Perception of Special Education Teacher Level of Engagement in Their Jobs?

Engagement was analyzed through review of rounding logs, the exit questions in September, October, and November 2017, the open-ended questionnaire, and interviews with SERTs.

Tools and Resources

Rounding log data revealed 34 instances where SERTs received feedback on items requested as something that was working well within the department. Whether the requests were materials such as supplemental resource kits, or systems requests such as master scheduling changes, the SERTs felt the question of tools needed and the response to requests to be helpful. Also, through exit question data, 18 of the 20 SERTs noted that rounding supported the requests for tools and resources. One exit question response stated, "Requests no longer fall on deaf ears." In another example, a SERT indicated that not all requests are granted, but all are considered. All 20 SERTs indicated in the questionnaire that rounding offered a forum to make requests and, in many instances, to receive what had been requested. Whether or not requests could be granted, all SERTs indicated that they had received or observed others receive feedback on requests made. Five SERTs in the questionnaire and three in the interviews identified the rounding process as an efficient means to make requests, and indicated that they were more forthcoming with requests due to receiving feedback from the special services administrators. Four indicated that they received feedback in a timely manner. Thus, the feedback received from the question regarding tools and resources was another aspect of rounding that may have affected engagement.

Recognition

During the course of the study, rounding logs noted 56 instances where SERTs had identified personnel deserving of recognition. This question in each round may have been an aspect of rounding that positively affected engagement. Faculty were providing praise to each other and this may have made teachers further engaged in their jobs. In addition, exit questions during the month of September 2017 indicated that the 16 of the 20 SERTs had either provided recognition to colleagues or received recognition through email, in department meetings, and some through a handwritten note from the Director of Special Services. All 20 SERTs identified recognition in the open-ended questionnaire as a positive component of rounding, where 13 noted an increased sense of team within the department and improved morale among the teachers. Additionally, SERTs commented that recognition provided teachers with feedback on what they did well and behaviors that were worthy of repeating. They commented that it motivated them to perform to their highest potential.

These data results reveal that recognition was an integral part of the rounding process through the question during a round and the acknowledgement of this benefit at department meetings or privately as some teachers preferred.

Opportunity to Be Heard

Evidenced through 25 rounding logs, the rounding forum afforded the opportunity for CSTRs to interact with SERTs on professional issues rather than just student concerns. In 23 instances teachers across the district were appreciative of feeling heard by the special services administrators as noted in the logs.

Teachers also noted their opportunity to be heard through responses in the November exit question as 14 agreed that they had input in their job to identify needs. In four instances, SERTs specifically indicated that rounding was an additional forum to be heard. Teachers continued to believe rounding gave them a voice which was supported in the open-ended questionnaire by 18 of the 20 SERTs. Additionally, many teachers noted the importance of having a voice due to the specialized requests for students with special needs. The seven interviews with SERTs indicated that rounding provided an increased opportunity to be heard. In many instances, SERTs referenced having specialized needs and having the opportunity to be heard reduced feelings of isolation. Four SERTs noted they were more willing to share input. Thus, because of the formalized structure of the rounding process, special education teachers knew they could regularly provide input to administrators which may have fostered engagement in their job.

Achieve to Highest Potential

Of the 120 rounding logs, very few teachers made reference to the impact of rounding on their ability to achieve to the highest potential. There was not a specific exit question about achieving to one's potential, however between June and November 2017, exit question responses revealed four instances where SERTs referenced rounding as the resource to help them achieve to their potential. Collectively, of the responses, SERTs noted an increased level of support from the special services administrators, which may affect teacher ability to achieve at the highest potential. Eight of the 20 SERTs indicated in the open-ended questionnaire and four of the seven interviewed, indicated that receiving materials that were requested, having an increased interface with the special

services administrators, and being offered the opportunity for input resulted in feeling a greater sense to reach their highest potential. Therefore, while teachers perceived increase support from the special services administrators, it is difficult to determine what aspect of rounding may have provided teachers with the opportunity to achieve their highest potential.

Summary

Of the five themes of engagement, the data reflects that the aspects of rounding that may have increased engagement was the rounding questions regarding tools and resources and recognition, and the structure of the rounding process that provided the opportunity to be heard. The remaining themes, a genuine concern for teachers and achieving to the highest potential, had limited data and it is difficult to determine the specific aspect of rounding that may have influenced these themes. In many instances, receiving the tools or an update on their status resulted in an increased comfort level on the part of the SERTs to communicate their requests more openly.

Next, qualitative data indicated that recognition was a positive aspect of rounding and supported a sense of unity and professionalism within the department, however, the structure in which recognition was given varied among the teachers. Finally, having the opportunity to be heard created a feeling of value for SERTs and a sense that their contribution to their work was meaningful. SERTs noted that all faculty should be granted the opportunity to be heard, and most frequently attributed the practice of rounding to providing the venue for input.

In What Ways Did Child Study Team Rounding Leaders (CSTRs) Have an Effect on Communication Between Special Education Rounding Teachers and Special Services Administrators and Special Education Teacher Level of Engagement?

The role of the CSTR in how SERTs perceived the effect on engagement and communication was analyzed through review of rounding logs, the exit question in June 2017, the open-ended questionnaire, interviews with SERTs, and the discussion forum with CSTRs.

Communication

In June, seven SERTs identified during rounds that the CSTR communicated the tools and resources needed to the special services administrator, and often provided feedback on the status of items brought forth. In the open-ended questionnaire, 18 of the 20 SERTs commented that the CSTR supported communication between SERT, CSTR, and the special services administrator. Additionally, all 20 did not have to initiate requests as the role of the CSTR during the rounding process was to regularly ask teachers of their needs. This automatically provides a structure for communication.

When asked about the CSTR serving as the rounding leader, nine of 20 indicated the CSTR was effective and two identified that they were valuable in bringing forth requests to the special services administrators. For example, the SERTs referenced the CSTR having the ability to schedule teachers for rounding based upon their schedule as they were familiar with the building. Eleven, however, felt the CSTR served as more of a middle man in the rounding process and would have preferred to choose a CSTR or a special services administrator to conduct the rounds. Some SERTs noted that personality conflicts further supported the recommendation for choice of rounding leader, and having

an administrator may uncover different needs. Four of the seven SERTs interviewed noted that rounding provided a “loop” between the teacher, CSTRl, and administrator, where feedback was brought back to teacher. Four of seven SERTs felt the role of the CSTRl as rounding leader was effective, and three indicated they would like to round with a special services administrator or have the choice of CSTRl or special services administrator. All however, noted that every teacher should have the opportunity to participate in rounding.

Similarly, the majority of the CSTRls in the discussion forum felt that the SERTs may prefer rounds with an administrator rather than with them. They did note that they felt SERTs were more willing to bring forth requests because they were receiving feedback. CSTRls commented that they observed SERTs being more forthcoming with issues and requests which may be due to an increased level of comfort in the process. CSTRls also indicated that all teachers, and educational specialists such as therapists, should have the opportunity for rounds. Through the rounding process, CSTRls provided the opportunity for SERTs to communicate regularly, thus, informing the special services administrators with information concerning their needs and possibly improving communication within the department.

Engagement

Data from the rounding logs revealed that a majority of SERTs noted that CSTRls supported their opportunity to be heard and in some instances including professional needs, rather than just student issues. Eighteen of the 20 SERTs indicated that they felt special services administrators were taking their requests seriously and as a

result, five SERTs noted they were more comfortable with making requests possibly due to CSTRL reporting data.

All CSTRLs in the discussion forum felt the department was functioning as a team, and rounding was providing two way communication which may have supported an increased engagement. All seven SERTs interviewed reported that CSTRLs provided teachers with a greater opportunity to be heard which resulted in teachers being more open to share requests. Three of the seven SERTs identified the value of being heard through rounding as they often felt isolated within their own buildings and had specialized requests for their roles. This regular connection with the CSTRL may have lessened that feeling of isolation. And, in a few instances, SERTs noted they appreciated the opportunity to recognize others and be recognized, which CSTRLs regularly asked in the rounding process.

Summary

The CSTRLs may have positively affected communication and engagement as they provided the consistent forum for teachers to provide the input and then reported that information to the special services administrators who then gave timely feedback to teachers. In some instances, SERTs felt the CSTRLs were valuable in the role of rounding leader, as they often were aware of issues brought forth and could provide support based upon their availability within the building.

CSTRLs served as a liaison to the administrators to communicate needs, recognize others, and provide a comfortable venue for teachers to be heard. Many SERTs and all CSTRLs reported a greater sense of unity within the department as a result of rounding. SERTs identified an appreciation of CSTRLs for supporting them through

acquiring feedback to their requests. Therefore, utilizing CSTRs as rounding leaders may increase SERTs perception of engagement within the workplace.

What Are the Differences Among Elementary, Middle and High School Level Special Education Teacher Perception of Rounding?

Communication: Open-Ended Questionnaire and Interviews

All SERTs in the open-ended questionnaire and interviews recognized rounding as an increased forum for communication and all identified that rounding created a forum where teacher requests were no longer initiated solely by the teacher. Similarly, the SERTs at each level preferred a face to face forum for communication with the exception of a few at the middle and high school level who had coaching responsibilities during meetings, and preferred email as the communication venue. In one elementary building, two teachers felt rounding may be unnecessary for communication as the CSTR was present daily if an issue arose. Nine of twelve of the middle and high school SERTs felt CSTRs were effective in the rounding leader role where six noted the CSTR familiarity with teacher schedules and building issues. The remaining three at the middle and high school levels, and eight at the elementary level, indicated they preferred choice in who conducted rounds. They also indicated that if given a choice for who conducted the rounds, this may yield a different perspective from the teachers and may eliminate any concern with personality issues. Next, in both data collection methods, all SERTs identified rounding as a forum for feedback, and four among the middle and high school teachers felt that rounding provided a “loop” where teachers communicated needs, CSTRs shared the needs with the special services administrators, and special services administrators provided an update.

All preferred the forum of department meetings for communication.

Consequently, data revealed very few differences among the three levels of special education teachers and any perceived changes in communication did not appear to be influenced by these levels.

Engagement: Open-Ended Questionnaire and Interviews

In the open-ended questionnaire, high school teachers had the least requests for tools and resources, while at the elementary and middle school levels, the frequency of requests were similar. At the elementary level, two of the eight SERTs felt the forum was unnecessary as teachers were already able to make requests without rounding. Six of the eight however, noted that they felt the forum initiated their requests and needs and thus, demonstrated that administrators had a genuine concern for their instructional needs. Five of the eight middle school teachers responded favorably to the efficiency of the rounding process to make requests, and among the 20 SERTs, five middle school SERTs indicated that they were more willing to communicate knowing they would receive feedback on their requests. At each level in the questionnaire and interviews, teachers noted that being provided with the tools or resources and professional development opportunities provided them the opportunity to achieve to their highest potential. Interviews identified no difference in elementary, middle or high school in requesting and receiving feedback on tools and resources. All SERTs felt recognition was a positive component of rounding, and at all levels, teachers expressed different preferences in how they would like to be recognized.

In both data collection methods, having the opportunity to be heard was seen as an aspect of rounding favorable at all levels, with the elementary teachers most often

noting a feeling of less isolation, and the middle school teachers noting the feedback on their input demonstrated genuine concern from the administrators. In only one isolated response at the elementary level and one at the high school level, did the SERTs indicate that rounding was not supportive of giving an opportunity to be heard. At each level, SERTs noted a greater level of trust among themselves and the special services administrator when they were able to give input and receive feedback. As with communication, the data revealed limited differences among the levels. Thus, teacher perception of engagement was not affected by the level at which they taught.

Summary

Data from this study may suggest that rounding appeared to influence communication within the Department of Special Services as SERTs commented that through this process they made requests and received feedback in a timely manner. This was done in a consistent and formalized manner. As indicated in the open-ended questionnaire and supported in interviews with SERTs, feedback provided during rounding and the presence of the special services administrators at department meetings, may have resulted in SERTs being more comfortable to make requests for resources or professional supports, thus, improving communication and engagement. NRSETs also recognized increased communication within the department, which may have been the indirect effect of rounding. NRSETs however, noted their requests were often self-initiated without a formal process. Supported by survey data, SERTs over the course of this study had increased means and decreased standard deviations, therefore revealing that rounding may have positively affected teacher perception of communication within the Department of Special Services. Similarly, the quantitative data reflected relatively

high scores for NRSETs, which when compared with the SERTs did not reveal a statistical significance perhaps due to the tangential effect that rounding had on communication within the entire department.

Rounding may also have influenced teacher engagement in the areas of tools and resources, recognition, and having the opportunity to be heard. These three areas of engagement had the greatest support within the qualitative data. SERTs perceived rounding to be an increased opportunity to give input and to make requests and as a result, SERTs were more forthcoming with requests. NRSETs, however, did not indicate an increased comfort to bring forth requests, and some indicated they made purchases on their own. SERTs and NRSETs noted the increased recognition within the department and SERTs, CSTRs, and NRSETs suggested that recognition should continue with consideration of teacher preference for receiving recognition.

Finally, rounding provided teachers with a formalized structure for two-way communication, where they observed the special services administrators communicating openly. Through rounding, teachers were able to voice requests, provide input on their job, and receive feedback in a timely and efficient manner. All NRSETs, SERTs, and CSTRs felt rounding should be available to all teachers so that each teacher has the opportunity to be heard. Rounding may have increased teacher perception of communication and engagement as teachers may have felt valued and more committed to the job.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This researcher studied the implementation of a formalized system of rounding (Studer, 2003, 2008) within one Department of Special Services to determine if it affected special education teacher perception of communication within the department, and the level of special education teacher perception of engagement within the workplace. Rounding was formally introduced to the special education teachers in January 2017 at a department meeting and teachers were given the opportunity to participate in this study. Of the 48 special education teachers in the district, 37 volunteered for this study, and 20 were randomly selected to participate in rounding.

This researcher studied SERTs to identify whether rounding influenced their perception of communication with the special education administrators and engagement in the job. This data was compared with NRSETs to determine if there was a difference between rounding participants and those who were not participating. The CSTRs as the rounding leaders participated in this study to determine the effect of non-supervisory leaders on communication within the Department of Special Services and the impact on teacher engagement. A mixed methodology approach (Beaudry & Miller, 2016) was employed to analyze SERT, NRSET, and CSTRL participant data.

Research suggests that a mutual regard between teacher and administrator is a strong indicator of teacher engagement (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009; Bradberry & Greaves, 2012; Gallup, 1999). Studies have identified that through two-way communication between administrator and teacher, a trusting relationship ensues, resulting in motivated, committed, and engaged teachers (Deering, 2004; Lowe, 2012;

Mishra et al., 2014; Robison, 2012). When engaged, employees are more likely to act in the interest of the organization (Nink & Welte, 2011). To engage faculty, administrators must implement a formalized system of communication where the administrator communicates openly and routinely with teachers. This may be even more important for special education teachers, who often feel isolated in their role, and overwhelmed by the unique needs of students within the classroom (Boshamer, 2008). Instruction often requires specialized techniques and resources so they are able to do their job effectively. Administrative support is needed for this to occur. Rounding is an example of a formalized system of communication where two way communication between administrator and teacher occurs regularly (Studer, 2003). As the director of special education teachers, this researcher implemented the practice of rounding to establish a formalized communication structure to increase teacher engagement. The goal was to support these teachers by providing resources to positively affect instructional practices.

Key Findings

Do Special Education Teachers Who Participated in the Formalized Rounding Model Perceive That They Are More Engaged in Their Teaching and Communicating More Effectively with Special Services Administrators?

Over the course of this study, data revealed that SERTs perceived that they were communicating more effectively with special services administrators possibly resulting in more engagement in their teaching. The Employee Engagement Survey revealed an increase of mean scores for SERTs on the total scale and on the sub scales of communication and engagement (see Table 7). In the qualitative data SERTs and CSTRs reported that rounding was a structured system for communication to request

tools and resources, to receive feedback on such requests, and to offer recognition to their colleagues. Additionally, the data suggests the rounding forum may have increased the willingness of SERTs to be forthcoming with input, as they felt heard and valued by the special services administrators. NRSETs observed the rounding participants acquiring the tools requested and receiving feedback, however, they commented that their requests were initiated by themselves and at times did not receive feedback. Consequently, NRSETs made requests through a SERT which may indicate that NRSETs perceived the structure of rounding was an effective avenue for communication with special services administrators.

Robison (2012) conducted a study at an orthopedic plant in New Jersey, where less than half of the 800 employees indicated that they were engaged in the job. As a course of action, Stryker leadership focused on implementing a system where employees could be heard and two-way communication could be improved. As employee engagement scores increased, the researcher attributed it to the leadership investing time in listening to the ideas of the employees and acting upon their input. Similarly, in this study the implementation of a formalized system of communication may have contributed to SERTs feeling heard and, thus, valued by the special services administrators.

Communication. A formalized system of communication requires that the administrator follow through on issues and requests which can improve teacher engagement as trust develops (Crouch et al., 2014; Fullan, 2011). In this study, SERTs identified feedback provided to teachers was helpful in being heard and created the sense that they were valued by the special services administrator. NRSETs, on the contrary,

indicated that feedback was not always timely, and in some instances they needed to keep record of requests made to the administrators. This data affirms the literature which indicates that when employees believe they are provided with information in a timely and relevant manner, they feel a greater sense of belonging and become more trusting of their supervisor (Carroll, 2006; Mishra et al., 2014; Thomas, Zolin, & Hartman, 2009; Welch & Jackson, 2007). This finding may indicate that two-way communication between administrator and teacher motivates teachers in their job and positively impacts the likelihood that teachers will align their behavior with the goals of the organization. Therefore, all administrators may need to adopt the belief that communication with timely feedback is an aspect of leadership that strengthens relationships with the faculty and may support the achievement of organizational goals.

When administrators recognize the benefit of face to face communication with the faculty, they demonstrate that they value open communication and interaction (Mishra et al., 2014). The majority of SERTs noted in the qualitative data that a face to face forum such as a department meeting was preferred for communication, rather than email or memorandum. Administrators may want to consider opportunities beyond routine department meetings to interface with all teachers. For example, they may attend common planning time meetings or professional learning community sessions periodically. They may also consider facilitating voluntary ad-hoc committees where teachers may select to contribute their expertise or concerns. For example, an ad-hoc committee focused on educational partnership may include participation of general education and special education teachers who co-teach together in the inclusion setting. It may also include therapists who work with many educators to support the specialized

needs of learners in the special education and general education classrooms. The committee would offer opportunity for a larger population of faculty to interface resulting in building administrators responding openly about issues thus, fostering two-way communication. Furthermore, the literature suggests that leaders should take caution with determining how to deliver messages in the right forum and at the right time (Gallup, 1999). SERTs and CSTRs perceived the department meetings to be the venue where special services administrators were most often observed demonstrating genuine concern for the teachers. As the faculty interacts with the administrators, this partnership may increase collaboration where trust is established therefore increasing engagement among the teachers (Baker, 2010).

Two-way communication between administrator and teacher may provide information to the leader that is linked to organizational goals such as increased employee engagement or student achievement (Gallup, 1999; Studer, 2003). For this reason, when Studer (2003) established rounding with employees, he began with a structured format where leaders met routinely with employees and asked questions that could inform the leadership on issues within the organization that affected the employees. For example, as CEO of Holy Cross hospital, Studer rounded on nursing staff in all units to learn of the common issues and identify and recognize the things that were working well. Similarly, in education, a district superintendent may institute rounding for all school leaders and routinely review input from all teachers and the connection to attainment of district goals. Instead of one department establishing a climate for two-way communication, a deliberate effort from all school leaders to listen and give teachers input may increase student performance and teacher engagement (Kafele, 2015). This

systematic leadership practice of rounding provided SERTs with the opportunity to routinely offer input on issues, make requests, and in turn, the SERTs commented that the special services administrator could be trusted. CSTRs conducted the monthly rounds consisting of common questions with the SERTs. Qualitative data indicated that SERTs perceived rounding was efficient and should be offered to all certificated faculty, with most requesting the option to include the special services administrators in rounding, rather than solely the CSTR. This finding may suggest that the structure of formalized rounds creates a perception of value among the teachers where input is initiated by the special services administrator and routinely receiving feedback becomes the norm. This two-way communication supports the literature which found employees want someone to talk with them routinely about their responsibilities and progress (Gallup, 1999).

Data in this study supports the continued practice of rounding so that this practice becomes “hardwired” (Studer, 2004) and implemented with consistency and systematically (Studer & Pilcher, 2015). As indicated in district level research, such as in Janesville School District in Wisconsin (S. Sperry, personal communication, August 4, 2017), the use of rounding may produce an increased culture of two-way communication, trust, and shared commitment among the faculty. This increase in communication through the practice of rounding, may lead to a culture of employee engagement.

Engagement. The process of rounding with special education teachers may provide the special education administrators with an understanding of program needs and reduce the feelings of isolation among special education teachers as it allows the special education administrators the opportunity to demonstrate they are listening to requests and teacher input by providing feedback. In this way, teachers may have a greater sense of

belonging and commitment to the profession as they sense the administrator values them and their work (“Increasing employee engagement,” 2015; Mishra et al., 2014; Ruck & Welch, 2011). To determine the level of engagement, six themes were analyzed (see Table 6) with three: having the tools and resources to do the job, employee engagement, and having the opportunity to be heard, most frequently identified in this study.

Tools and resources. In a study conducted on 10,000 employees in 16 Ontario hospitals, having adequate resources and tools to do one’s job was noted as one of the top ten attributes that affect employee engagement (Lowe, 2012). In this study, the rounding leader provided the forum to initiate the needs of the SERTs by inquiring whether they had the tools and resources to do the job. For example, in the open-ended questionnaire SERTs and CSTRs indicated that teachers were able to request items or to ask for professional trainings on teaching strategies for the inclusive setting. The structure of rounding where SERTs anticipated a monthly meeting and where they knew they would be asked if they had any professional needs, may have increased engagement in their work as they could readily prepare such requests. As special services administrators responded to their needs, SERTs may have felt more confident in their classroom knowing they had the resources to effectively teach. NRSETs, however, did not have a scheduled time to meet and often self-initiated requests for their resources. Additionally, at times, NRSETs made personal purchases for their classroom, and while this deserves acknowledgement, such individual actions do not lead to organizational goals. Therefore, this district may want to implement a structure such as rounding, where all educators have the opportunity to make requests that support instructional needs to achieve district goals. As a result, the faculty will have a structured forum for two-way communication

which may indicate to the teacher that they are valued and that the administrator is committed to teacher and student needs. This finding is supported by the study conducted at Delnor Community Hospital (Deering, 2004), where rounding on the nursing staff was found to increase employee satisfaction. Nurses became equipped with resources such as warm blankets for the patients and as a result, nurses were better prepared with the tools and resources to care for the patients. Rounding, in any field, communicates to the employee a shared commitment and ownership on the part of the supervisor which may strengthen the relationship of trust and engagement (Deao, 2016; Scott, 2003). In this study, having the structured forum where teacher requests were acknowledged and timely feedback provided may have impacted the level of engagement among the special education teachers.

Recognition. Mone and London (2009) identified positive reinforcement to be an aspect that affects employee engagement as employees feel validated and secure about their place in the company. Recognition is an aspect of rounding that demonstrates the administrator cares and values the teacher (Cunningham, 2015), and additionally communicates that the administrator wants to make the work environment a better place (Gallup, 1999; Hotko, 2004). In this process, rounding leaders ask if there are any staff deserving of recognition and, as a result, administrators recognize employees by sending handwritten notes or emails, or giving recognition in person, such as at department meetings (Baker, 2010; Studer, 2003). In this way, teachers feel appreciated for their work and sense a positive climate throughout the work place. Data identified that recognition was perceived as a positive aspect of the rounding process as SERTs and NRSETs stated that it was a welcomed addition to the Department of Special Services,

and contributed to the professionalism among the faculty. Recognition also can impact a teacher's ability to achieve to their highest potential. Teachers learn of their value to the organizational goals and become motivated to contribute to ownership of those goals. Research indicates that reward and recognition demonstrate an employee is valued by the supervisor, and when given with specific detail, communicates the behaviors or actions that are worthy of being repeated (Stavrenos & Crouch, 2004; Studer, 2008). When recognition becomes a routine component of rounding, it trains the supervisor and faculty to celebrate successes with the detail needed to increase the likelihood that the behaviors will be repeated. In this study, recognition was perceived to be an important aspect of rounding which may have increased teacher commitment to their work. Therefore, recognition is an attribute that should be included in the communication system for all school, department, and district leaders as it strengthens engagement and unity among the faculty and shared commitment within an organization.

Opportunity to be heard. Providing employees with the opportunity for input may be beneficial to the employee and supervisor. For the employee, providing input makes them feel secure in their workplace (Baker, 2010; Mishra et al., 2014). The data within this study suggests that asking for input from SERTs allowed teachers to feel included and an integral part of the department. Input from employees is valuable to supervisors as well, as it provides the supervisor with an awareness of issues that need to be addressed and aspects that are working well within the organization (Baker, 2010; Cunningham, 2015). The supervisor is observed as approachable when communication occurs regularly, and employees become more willing to partake in the collaborative culture (Baker, 2010). Data from CSTRs and SERTs indicated a perception of greater

willingness to provide input because they felt that special education administrators acknowledged requests at department meetings or through email communication. Rounding provided a medium for communication and initiated teacher involvement in identifying organizational strengths and areas for improvement. In a school district, rounding may provide administrators with the issues experienced throughout the district, and offer the opportunity for proactive rather than reactive intervention (Cunningham, 2015; Spaulding et al., 2010). This researcher found that rounding emphasized and fostered a dialogue between SERT, CSTRL, and administrator, where administrators could directly receive information from CSTRLs and then directly respond to SERTs improving the relationship among all constituents. Based upon SERT and CSTRL concerns and input, this researcher was able to implement action plans and provide an update on the status to the teachers. If implemented district-wide, administrators would increase the efficient manner by which they respond to organizational issues as the process for communication would become formalized and institutionalized.

The rounding process puts employee needs first (Crouch et al., 2014) and through rounding, requests can be made such as the need for specialized instructional resources. When administrators are aware of employee needs, they can demonstrate they value teacher roles in the classroom and teachers gain greater trust for the leader (Togna, 2013). This demonstrates to teachers that the administrator values a climate of support for teachers to provide quality instruction (Spaulding et al., 2010). The qualitative data reflects the impact of rounding on all teachers and their level of engagement, as even those who did not participate received the tangential effect of being recognized and provided with tools and resources requested by SERTs. The district may want to institute

rounding beyond the special education teachers where all faculty can experience that their input is valued and contribute to meaningful and purposeful work. Covey (2004) and Senge (1994) purport that success within an organization is connected to the commitment of employees and leaders to purposeful and worthwhile work. In this study, rounding increased the perception of interpersonal communication between SERT and special services administrator where SERTs provided input on their job, and special services administrators, CSTRLs, and SERTs instituted the practice of recognition, possibly contributing to increased engagement for unity within the Department of Special Services.

What Aspects of Rounding Influenced Special Education Teacher Perception of Effective Communication With Special Services Administrators?

The aspects of rounding that most often influenced special education teacher perception of effective communication included receiving feedback on requests in a timely and efficient manner, the interface between special education teachers and special services administrators at department meetings, and the structured questions of the rounding process. This finding is supported by the literature that indicates feedback from an administrator on requests made or issues noted result in the faculty feeling valued and experiencing an increased trust for the leader (“Increasing employee engagement,” 2015; Togna, 2013). In addition, exit questions and department meetings while not formally part of the rounding process provided the feedback and communication between SERTs and special services administrators. Furthermore, administrators who invest in developing relationships with teachers by learning about and responding to their needs, create a climate where faculty feel connected to the organization (Deao, 2016; Scouller,

2011). To acquire the commitment of faculty, communication between teacher and administrator must occur regularly (Fullan, 2011). The qualitative data in this study revealed that SERTs perceived they no longer needed to self-advocate for resources, or to keep track of requests brought forward to special education administrators. Instead, they experienced special services administrators providing feedback routinely which helped improve communication between special education teacher and special services administrator. As communication between administrator and teacher improved, a collaborative partnership may have developed as SERTs reported they felt more like a special education team. This supports the literature where collaborative partnerships between administrator and employee result in shared ownership toward common goals (Baker, 2010; Fullan, 2011). Additionally, SERTs and CSTRs in this study indicated they were able to observe administrators listening and responding to their needs. This may indicate that when teachers perceive the supervisor listening, they may sense a vested and shared commitment to the goals of the district. If instituted at the district level, this partnership between administrators and teachers created because of rounding may strengthen relationships and increase commitment with the organization. Finally, the structure of rounding, where common questions were asked monthly in an individual forum, was seen to create a safe opportunity for SERTs to provide input and to receive feedback, which resulted in SERTs being more comfortable to continue with offering input. Communication at all levels is the basis of developing relationships between administrator and employee, and shared commitment to the goals of the organization (Scott, 2003).

What Aspects of Rounding Influenced the Perception of Special Education Teacher Level of Engagement in Their Jobs?

Qualitative data such as the rounding logs revealed that teachers made requests for tools and resources, and received updates from the special services administrator or CSTRL on those requests. Whether the requests were materials or systems requests, the SERTs commented that the special services administrators provided the tools and resources that were needed, and when they could not, they communicated the status to the teachers. This supports the notion that when the supervisor is observed inquiring about the tools needed, it communicates that the supervisor values the work of the employee (Mishra et al., 2014). This researcher suggests that two-way communication include all administrators and faculty in a school district and as a result, may increase teacher engagement to ultimately address student needs. Mishra et al. (2014) found that open and honest communication led to increased trust and job engagement, and Lowe (2012), demonstrated that providing adequate tools to do the job influenced employee engagement. Similar to Studer (2003) and the effect of rounding on hospital employees and patients, educational leaders should implement a system that ensures educators have the needed tools to effectively support learning in the classroom setting. As a result of administrators demonstrating a commitment to learning, district teachers are equipped in the classroom, and supervisors and teachers relationships are strengthened (Carrig & Wright, 2006; Swarnalatha & Prasanna, 2013). Furthermore, the faculty may become engaged and committed to their work, contributing extra efforts to support the goals of an organization (Nink & Welte, 2011; Saks, 2006).

Through rounding, SERTs were able to offer input on colleagues who they felt were deserving of recognition. Through the course of this study, recognition was perceived as a norm, where during individual rounds and at department meetings, recognition was given to faculty as they commented how acknowledging collegial strengths helped them improve their instruction and created a positive climate within the Department of Special Services. This supports the literature which indicates that recognition as a routine practice within an organization communicates the supervisor nurtures a culture where employees are valued (Stavrenos & Crouch, 2004). In this study, the rounding question of recognition was one area identified as a positive aspect where many perceived it contributed to the feeling of belonging to a synergized team of educators. Therefore, the district leaders may want to incorporate recognition routinely throughout all departments and grade levels in respective communication venues to cultivate common goals district wide and to realize the collective strengths of faculty.

The rounding question about tools and resources was another aspect that provided an opportunity for SERTs to be heard, which may have contributed to a collaborative culture among all members of the Department of Special Services and to the goals within the organization. For example, as a result of rounding, the special services administrators learned that SERTs were not often provided with supplemental curriculum resources for the classrooms, or opportunities to have input at the building level on instructional needs. SERTs had commented that they often felt isolated in their work. Thus, if rounding is implemented district wide, special education teachers would not be seen as a separate department but committed and engaged in all aspects of the school and with the learning of all children.

In What Ways Did Child Study Team Rounding Leaders (CSTRs) Have an Effect on Communication Between Special Education Rounding Teachers and Special Services Administrators and Special Education Teacher Level of Engagement?

Communication. SERTs perceived the CSTR as effective in communicating to the special education administrators the tools and resources needed and the feedback on the status of requests. While commented by many SERTs as a “middle man” to the special education administrators, the CSTR may have had a positive effect on communication within the department. CSTRs implemented rounding systematically, completed the written documentation in the rounding log, and assisted the special services administrators with sharing the status of requests, through reviewing the spotlight report at department meetings. This provided evidence that teacher input was addressed and that there was a “feedback loop” among SERTs, CSTRs, and special services administrators. The literature findings indicated the importance of specific questions, feedback, and rounding routinely (Gallup, 1999; Studer, 2003) and the goal of building relationships with employees through face to face communication (Gallup, 1999; Mishra et al., 2014). District level administrators may want to consider rounding with building level administrators and building level administrators with special education and general education supervisors so the feedback loop occurs throughout the district.

Engagement. CSTRs served as a liaison to the Director of Special Services and as a result, many SERTs and all CSTRs reported a greater sense of unity within the department because of rounding. Supported by the literature, rounding provides employees with input on their job and a sense that their contribution matters to the

supervisor (Fullan, 2011). CSTRs as rounding leaders perceived value in giving special education teachers the opportunity to be heard and consideration to their specialized requests. The literature indicates a formalized communication venue may help to address the unique needs of the special education teachers and furthermore may demonstrate the administrator cares about the programming needs for students with disabilities (Pennington et al., 2016). Utilizing CSTRs as rounding leaders may increase SERT perceptions of partnership within the workplace, and trust for the administrators, resulting in a stronger commitment to their work. Employees want a relationship with their supervisor, and if the rounding leader is the supervisor, or represent the supervisor as with CSTRs, this may increase the employee perception that the supervisor cares for them (Baker, 2010; Bradberry & Greaves, 2012). Through this study, the researcher found that some of the SERTs wanted to round with a special education administrator which may imply that rounding in this way, where the special education administrator meets personally with the teacher, may further strengthen the relationship between teacher and special services administrator. The special education administrators should give consideration to this request and possibly share the responsibility of rounding with the CSTRs.

What Are the Differences Among Elementary, Middle, and High School Level Special Education Teacher Perception of Rounding?

There was limited data to indicate differences among elementary, middle, and high school level teachers and their perception of rounding. This may indicate that high levels of communication needs to occur at all levels within a district between employees and leaders. Thus, the systematic forum for communication needs to permeate an entire

organization and while resources may be different among the different grade levels, the structure to communicate these needs should be formalized throughout the entire organization (Deao, 2016; Scouller, 2011; Studer, 2003). Therefore, district administrators may consider implementing rounding with all faculty and staff including those within non-instructional departments such as maintenance or transportation to yield similar benefits of strengthened communication and engagement. Rounding may not have yielded differences at the elementary, middle, or high school teaching faculty because all needed to be heard and needed to receive tools and resources to effectively do their job. Participants indicated that all special education teachers should be involved in rounding. This researcher found that the requests and needs of teachers at the levels of elementary, middle, or high school differed, however the same formalized structure of rounding to communicate such requests was necessary (Thomas et al., 2009). Therefore, it may be suggested that this rounding structure is needed for teachers at all levels and increases perception of teacher communication and engagement.

Implications

This researcher identified that data from the study revealed that teacher perception of rounding increased communication within the Department of Special Services and engagement among the SERTs. Engagement and communication were analyzed through the themes of open communication, tools and resource, recognition, genuine concern for teacher welfare, having the opportunity to be heard, and achievement to the highest potential (see Table 6). As a result, this researcher suggests recommendations for special education teachers, the Department of Special Services, the district, and the field of education. The recommendations also may be of interest to all administrators and

educators seeking to improve communication and engagement within their respective departments.

For the Special Education Teachers

Special education teachers should consider implementing the practice of rounding with students in the classroom setting. In this way, teachers may become aware of the differentiated needs and preferences of learners, and the perception of students on things such as their struggles and accomplishments. Student input may give additional credence to teacher requests brought forth to the special education administrators. Additionally, rounding may enhance the classroom climate by providing students with an opportunity to have input on classroom activities and the recognition of fellow classmates.

Communication may ensue as students regularly meet with their teachers and receive the tools needed to become more engaged in their learning.

For the Department of Special Services

1. Rounding should become formalized for all certificated faculty members within the Department of Special Services, giving a voice to all special education teachers, Child Study Team members, and related service providers. In this way, effective communication and engagement may be enhanced across the department district-wide. NRSETs, for example, expressed an interest and SERTs noted that they were bringing forth requests for NRSETs during rounding. The director should identify how to offer rounding among the five buildings within the district, with consideration to educator contract, master schedule, and shared responsibility for the rounding practice with special services administrators and child study team members. Through

discussion with the Supervisor of Special Services and CSTRs, a preference card will be developed and shared with all certificated faculty members to provide choice in time of day for rounds, and the preferred method of recognition. An assignment of certificated staff will be created for each rounding leader to ensure the number of faculty members is manageable and that those who wish to round with a special services administrator will have the opportunity incorporated into the schedule.

2. Rounding participants expressed interest in having special education administrators round in addition to CSTRs. This may yield a different perspective from teachers and may additionally affect the level of trust from special education teachers for special services administrators. Rounding leaders will be assigned with consideration of the faculty member preference to round with a CSTR, special services administrator, or combination of both CSTR and special services administrator. If the faculty member selects to round with a combination of the both CSTR and special services administrator, the rounding schedule will include a rotation to acknowledge the faculty member preference.
3. Rounding leaders require on-going professional training and therefore, training should be provided routinely. For example, as SERTs utilized the rounding forum to answer the common questions, at times they would discuss tangential topics extending the rounds beyond the average 8 minutes. Rounding leaders who are non-supervisory should be trained in positive techniques to control peripheral communication, while still offering ample

time to contribute their input. While teachers do not require formal training in the rounding process, they do require an overview of the process and benefit of the forum. Additionally, the results from the data sources used to measure communication and engagement should be reviewed with the teachers and rounding leaders to identify opportunities for growth and to celebrate areas that are working well. In this way, the staff observes the administrator communicating honestly and similarly, seeking the input of the department members. The use of professional development days may be an opportunity for such training and screencasts created by the director may be developed to offer training and rounding updates that can be viewed as needed for the rounding leaders.

4. Rounding participants indicated preferences for recognition from the special services administrator. Because recognition was identified as a substantial contributor to employee engagement, consideration should be given to providing faculty with the way in which they like to be recognized. Some districts, for example, provide a preference card for each employee (Cunningham, 2015). The director could seek employee preferences and utilize the preference card when offering recognition to the respective employee. Additionally, when given in public, recognition provides the faculty with the behaviors that are positively seen among colleagues and administrators and may result in an increase of the desirable behaviors among the faculty. Public recognition may also inform the faculty of the professional

expertise among their peers and increase the likelihood that they utilize one another as resources.

5. The data suggests that the formalized process inclusive of meeting every 4-6 weeks with a common set of questions, increased the perception of communication and engagement for SERTs. Rounds therefore, would be mandatory for all certificated faculty, and training may need to occur to ensure rounding leaders have strategies to keep rounding between 8-10 minutes in length. Additionally, training would include the importance of supervisors providing timely feedback in an effort to increase the faculty perception of the value of routine rounding meetings. In this way, teachers may feel rounding is respectful of their time and contributes to their likelihood of achievement to their highest potential.

For the District Studied

1. Data from the study revealed an increase in the perception of communication and engagement as a result of rounding on all levels of teachers. Research has shown the practice of rounding is valuable for any organization (Deao, 2016; Gallup, 1999; Studer, 2003). Within this study, rounding provided the Director of Special Services and Supervisor of Special Services with input on the department's strengths and areas of opportunity. Similar to NRSETs who brought forth their requests to the special services administrators through the SERTs, all faculty and staff should have the opportunity to make requests and provide input. The Director of Special Services should consider expanding rounding to the building administrators so the process can affect

communication school wide and district wide creating trust between a larger population of teachers and administrators. This can be achieved by offering the opportunity to principals and supervisors during a building administrative meeting, and providing the data to support the benefit of shared administrative rounding leadership on the perception of faculty engagement and communication. Additionally, this would require professional development for all rounding leaders to ensure efficacy in the practice of rounding. Similar to the recommendation to include building principals in rounding, central office leaders such as the business administrator or assistant superintendent, may want to institute rounding with departments for whom they supervise to yield similar outcomes of strengthened communication and employee commitment to the work.

2. The district administrators may consider implementing rounding as a component of the formalized mentoring program for new employees. Data from the study indicated that the rounding process may be especially valuable for new employees who may perceive issues not otherwise noted from veteran staff. In this way, mentor teachers may be able to conduct rounds and provide new teacher with a routine forum to make requests, give input, and reflect. This may lead to a feeling of support and stronger commitment to the district.
3. The district administrators may also consider rounding as a component within the observation and evaluation process. For example, teachers in districts that have adopted criteria where high performing teachers may partake in alternate evaluation measures, they may be provided the option to serve as a rounding

leader. Or, teachers identified as in need of improvement, may utilize the rounding forum to include a specific question related to the provisions put in place to support the teacher and to ensure that they are working to improve their performance. For example, if a teacher is in need of improvement in the area of classroom management, the rounding process can include a specific question about classroom management. The administrator listens and responds to the teacher input, ensuring the teacher has the support needed to do the job. Utilizing rounding in this way may result in the teacher feeling valued as the administrator responds to the request, and thus, has a stronger commitment to the job.

4. This study offered monthly training to rounding leaders in the form of coaching and formalized training. The training assisted the rounding leaders in rounding systematically, with the opportunity to discuss issues that arose, and the ability to identify patterns and common requests. If rounding is instituted on a district level, for example, to instructional supervisors, or department leaders such as the Director of Guidance, training for rounding leaders would need to be offered and budgetary allocations would need to be available for implementation with fidelity. This could be accomplished through turn-key training offered by the special services administrators or through a formal contract of services with Studer Education. If the district chooses to contract, the appropriate allocation of funding would need to be included in the district budget.

For the Field of Education

1. As certifications programs are developed for educational leaders, consideration should be given to include the exploration of rounding as a program to increase teacher and staff communication. Future educational leaders will be able to enter the leadership role with an understanding that the array of managerial responsibilities within the job must be managed and not at the expense of two-way communication with the faculty.
2. Educational field leaders can learn from other customer service organizations, such as the healthcare industry. For example, this researcher explored rounding which originated from the field of healthcare. Educational leaders may institute similar practices from other industries to increase student outcomes in the classroom.

Recommendations for Further Research

Rounding is relatively new in the field of education beginning less than a decade ago (Studer & Pilcher, 2015) and limited studies have been conducted to identify the effects of rounding in educational organizations. The following recommendations for future research should be considered:

1. This researcher implemented rounding in one district. Therefore, the NRSETs perceived that they received the tangential effect of rounding from the SERTs within the building. Future research could be conducted where rounding is implemented district-wide with all special education teachers and compared to a district of similar demographics where rounding is not implemented. A larger sample size may add credence to the effects of rounding on

communication and engagement within a school district. Furthermore, to reduce potential bias, the supervisor of either district should have no part in the study.

2. The data from the SERTs and CSTRs indicated that the perceived effects of rounding may be due to the relationship between rounding leader and teacher. A future study may explore whether personality of teachers and rounding leaders affects the implementation of rounding. While studies indicate that employees want someone to talk to regularly about their responsibilities (Gallup, 1999), in order to engage the employee, they need to feel trust and if a mutual rapport cannot be established, the leader may be challenged to acquire the behaviors associated with employee engagement within the organization (Nink & Welte, 2011).
3. As students with disabilities are more often educated in their home school, special education teachers need to have the support of the supervisor (Boshamer, 2008). A future study may explore the effects of rounding when special services administrators and building administrators share responsibility for fulfilling requests and communication for all teachers within the building.
4. There is no research on the impact of rounding on student outcomes. As the goal of the teachers is to improve student learning, a study may be conducted to explore if rounding impacts student achievement. Similar to the study at Delnor Community Hospital where rounding on employees yielded greater

patient satisfaction (Deao, 2016; Deering, 2014), rounding on teachers may have effects on student outcomes.

Summary

This study explored one district's attempt to increase communication and special education teacher engagement within the Department of Special Services. Engagement is characterized by being involved, dedicated, and ardent in one's work (Nink & Welte, 2011; Saks, 2006) and in special education, engaged teachers are critical in their effect on instructional delivery in the classroom. This researcher studied 20 special education teachers and seven CSTRs among five schools in one district as they participated in a formalized system of rounding.

Findings were triangulated from the quantitative Employee Engagement Survey (Gallup, 1999) and qualitative data from rounding logs, exit questions, open-ended questionnaires, and interviews. As a result of the data analysis, this researcher found SERT perception of communication increased with special services administrators due to the rounding process. Perception of engagement levels also increased when compared across two points in time utilizing the Employee Engagement Survey and was notable in the categories of tools and resources, recognition, and the opportunity to be heard in qualitative data. SERTs perceived that requests were taken seriously by the special education administrators and they felt a greater sense of trust. As a result, SERTs noted a greater willingness to communicate their needs and the feedback received may have increased their level of engagement.

Additionally, all participants identified an increase in the opportunity for recognition of one another, and many noted a positive effect on the department's climate.

All participants collectively felt recognition was a positive attribute within the Department of Special Services and rounding provided this opportunity.

Next, the research findings indicated that special education teachers perceived that the CSTRL was effective in supporting two-way communication between special education teacher and special education administrator, and contributed to increased engagement levels for teachers through the formalized process of rounding. Research revealed requests for choice in rounding leader, but all commented upon the role of the CSTRL as integral in the process. While NRSETs revealed similar levels of engagement and a positive perception of communication within the Department of Special Services, this may have been a result of the tangential effects of rounding as they benefited from the requests and input by the SERTs. Data, however, was limited with the differences among the elementary, middle, or high school teacher rounding participants.

As a result of this study, special services department administrators may want to consider the implementation of a formalized rounding model to strengthen communication and increase teacher engagement. The structured, formalized system provides a forum for open communication between special education teachers and special services administrators which may lead to increased communication and engagement central to the common goals within the organization.

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Appendix A

Consent Forms

Informed Consent

Title: Implementing a Formalized Rounding Model: A Study of Special Education Teacher Communication and Engagement in the Department of Special Services

Principal Investigator: Danielle A. Hamblin, Director of Special Services

Purpose

The purpose of the study is to identify the effects of employee rounding on special education teachers' level of engagement in the profession and perception of communication between administrators of special services and the special education teachers. Rounding ultimately fosters a culture of support for staff and the opportunity for leaders to build relationships (Studer, 2003). Formalized rounding is being implemented to provide an information system where leaders are able to identify employee needs, make process improvements and recognize and celebrate those whose behaviors that warrant repeating (Pilcher & Studer, 2015). The purpose of this study is to increase communication between special services administrators and special education teachers, and employee engagement within the profession.

Description of the Project

The research project is a case study. Child Study Team rounding leaders will be assigned special education teachers in their respective building to conduct rounds monthly. These three questions will be asked during each round to determine: What is working well within the role of the teacher?, What support is needed?, Are any faculty deserving of recognition?. Rounds last no longer than 8-10 minutes each month and are intended to increase effective communication between special education teachers and special services administrators and increase the level of teacher engagement within the Department of Special Services.

Selection of Participants

All special education teachers are invited to participate in the study, with the exception of those who will not be present for the duration of the study (i.e. long term substitutes, retirees). Of the faculty who agree to participate, some will be randomly selected to serve as a participant in the rounding process or as a non-participant in rounds. All Child Study Team members are invited to participate as rounding leaders and those who are interested will be trained to be a rounding leader. There is no foreseeable risks to voluntary participation in the study with the exception of serving in the non-participant group where they will not receive the rounding benefits of anticipated effective communication and employee engagement. Confidentiality will be maintained and participants will not be identified in any way. Additionally, if at any time a participant would like to withdraw from participation in the study, he/she may do so without penalty of any sort.

General Experimental Procedures

The information collected from various measurements will be used in the dissertation study. Data collection will include the following: surveys, questionnaires, interviews with special education teachers and rounding leaders, and exit questions at the

conclusion of rounding sessions. The Employee Engagement Survey will be administered in June 2017 and finally in November 2017. Data will also be collected during the one on one rounds which will be summarized into a rounding log on Google Forms. Information from rounding logs that require action will be summarized in a spotlight report and shared with participants to communicate the status of requests (i.e. requests for specialized equipment, scheduling challenges, new leveled readers). Participation includes a commitment to meeting one on one with a CST rounding leader on a monthly basis. Participation will require 8-10 minutes monthly outside of student contact time. Participation also includes permission for the researcher to access archival data in the form of rounding logs that began prior to the study's approval and occurring as early as February 2017.

Foreseeable Risks

There is no foreseeable risks to voluntary participation in the study with the exception of serving in the non-participants group where they will not receive the rounding benefits of anticipated effective communication and employee engagement.

Benefits

The findings of this study will be shared with the district specific to the study's questions. It is expected that formalized rounding will be implemented across the Department of Special Services as a result of the implementation study, offering enhanced communication between special education teachers and special services administrators and employee engagement in the profession.

Confidentiality Statement

All data and information collected during the study will be kept confidential. Data will be collected and coded to protect the confidentiality of the participants and will be shared electronically with permissions-only access among the rounding leaders and special services administrators. Participants should understand that Caldwell University's Institutional Review Board, The Office of the Vice President of Academic Affairs, and the Office for Human Research Protections may review records and data generated by the study to assure proper conduct of the study and compliance with federal guidelines.

Disclaimer/Withdrawal

1. The participants may withdraw from the study at any time.
2. The participant has the right to withhold permission from the researcher to use any data collected even if the participant completes participation in the study.
3. Upon request, the researcher will provide the participants with a written summary of the project's findings.
4. No part of the research will contain specific names of teachers, students or institutions.
5. All lead administrators in the participants' current school and/or district or institution are aware of this study.

Institutional Contact / Rights as a Research Subject

If I have any questions about my rights as a research subject, I may contact Dr. Kenneth Reeve, Chair of the Institution Review Board at kreeve@caldwell.edu.

Final Statement and Signature

This statement has been explained to me, I have read the consent form, and I agree to participate. I have been provided with a copy of the consent form.

Participant's Signature

Printed Name

Date

Permissions to Adapt Employee Engagement Items

Danielle,

Please accept this email to reiterate my message of February 7, 2017 to communicate our review and approval of the use of the Studer EducationSM Employee Engagement items as you have selected and adapted them. These items were selected from our valid and reliable survey that measures the degree to which a leader fosters an environment to support high levels of employee engagement. You are welcome to share the reliability study on the survey items as needed.

Thank you for your contributions to educational research,

Melissa

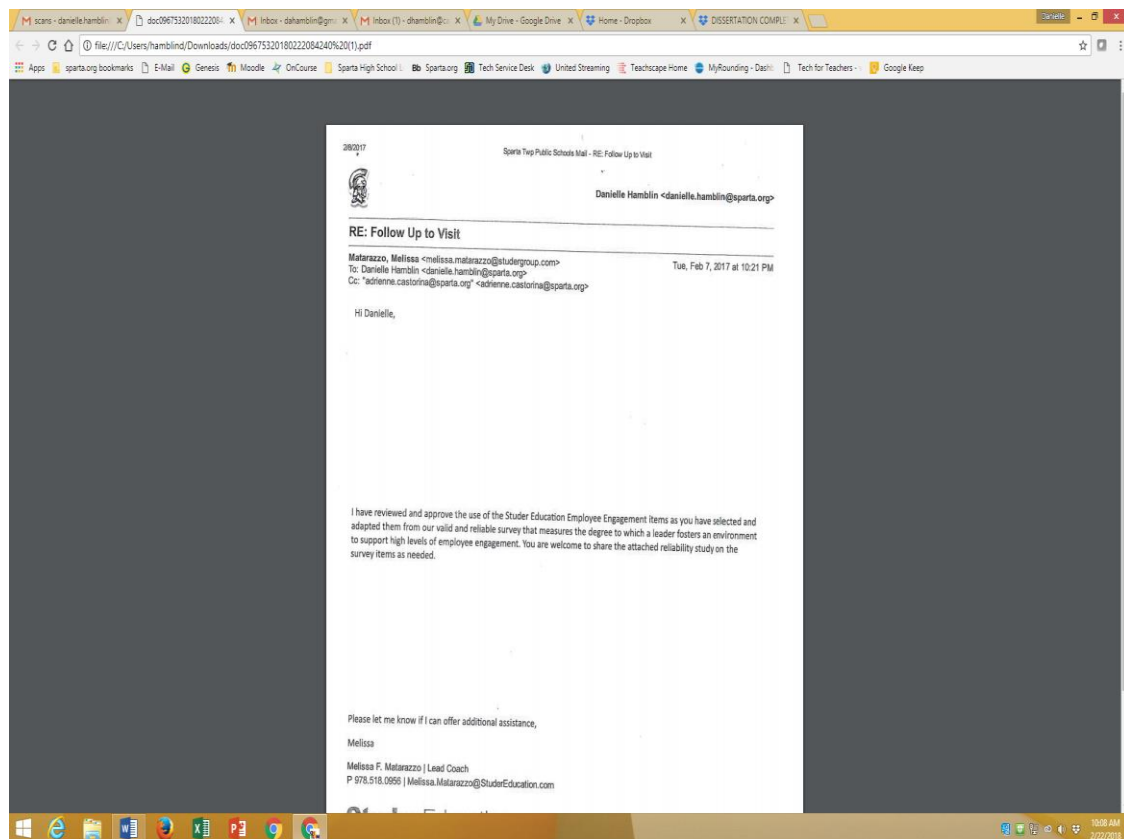
2/23/18

Melissa F. Matarazzo, Ed.D.

Lead Coach

[978.518.0956](tel:978.518.0956)

Melissa.Matarazzo@studereducation.com



Appendix B

Data Sources:

**Quantitative and Qualitative Instruments,
Employee Engagement Survey,
Rounding Log Exit Questions,
Open-Ended Questionnaires,
Interviews, and
CSTRL Focus Group Questions**

Special Services Employee Engagement for Leadership Feedback Survey
(Copyright 2012, Studer Education) The purpose of this survey is to evaluate how well the special services department administration provides the communication system and support needed for you to do your job. Please answer each question using the scale provided to evaluate your experience at the time of the survey. This survey is anonymous.

Choose the response that best describes your experience.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Mixed Feelings	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The Special Services administration provides me with the resources to do my job.	⑤	④	③	②	①
The Special Services administrators provide feedback on my strengths as an employee.	⑤	④	③	②	①
Special Services administrative - led staff meetings make efficient use of time and are productive.	⑤	④	③	②	①
Special Services administrators recognize good performance.	⑤	④	③	②	①
Special Services administrators demonstrates a genuine concern for my welfare.	⑤	④	③	②	①
Special Services administrators make the best use of available funds.	⑤	④	③	②	①
Special Services administrators consider my input on the decisions that affect my job.	⑤	④	③	②	①
Special Services administrators utilize different forums to communicate (i.e. staff meetings, rounds).	⑤	④	③	②	①
Special Services administrators provide the support needed to accomplish my work objectives.	⑤	④	③	②	①
Special Services administrators have communicated the status of items I have brought to their attention.	⑤	④	③	②	①
Special Services administrators engage in honest, two-way communication with employees.	⑤	④	③	②	①
Special Services administrators create opportunities for employees to share and exchange ideas.	⑤	④	③	②	①
Special Services administrators value open and honest communication.	⑤	④	③	②	①

Special Services administrators communicate the right message in the right way at the right time for the right reasons.	⑤	④	③	②	①
Special Services administrators follow through with commitments made.	⑤	④	③	②	①
Special Services administrators provide an environment where I can achieve to my highest potential.	⑤	④	③	②	①

Exit Questions

May: Do you understand the process of rounding? What areas are you still unclear on?

June: Since the onset of rounding, in what ways has items you have brought forward been communicated back to you?

September: Have you and/or your colleagues receive recognition from special services administrators? In what ways do you like to be recognized?

October: In what ways have your requests for resources, tools/materials, process improvements been addressed through the rounding process?

November: Has your input on decisions that affect your job increased as a result of the rounding process?

Open-Ended Questionnaire for SERTs, NRSETs, and CSTRs

1. Through the rounding process, how has the special services administration responded to requests for resources or tools to do your job? CSTR: *Through the rounding process, how has the special services administration responded to requests for resources or tools needed for teachers to do their job?* NRSET: *How has the special services administration responded to request for resources or tools needed to do your job?*
2. In what ways has the rounding process affected your willingness to communicate your resources, tools, systems/process improvement needs? How has this been helpful? Not helpful? CSTR: *In what ways has the rounding process affected the teachers' willingness to communicate resources, tools, systems/process improvement needs?* NRSET: *How do you communicate your need for tools, systems/process improvements?*
3. As a result of rounding, in what ways have special services administrators communicated the status of items brought forward to your attention? CSTRs: *Through the rounding process, in what ways have special services administrators communicated the status of items that you have brought to their attention as a CSTR?* NRSET: *How does special services administrators communicate the status of items you brought forth?*
4. Are the administrators following through on commitments made to you? Provide an example that was meaningful to you. (Same for NRSET) CSTRs: *Are the administrators following through on commitments made to teachers? Provide an example that you believe is meaningful.*
5. When items brought to the administrators' attention through the rounding process are not able to be accomplished at this time, how has the special services administrator communicated this to you? Has this approach been honest and open? Has it been helpful? CSTRs: *When items brought to the administrators' attention through the rounding process are not able to be accomplished at this time, how has the special services administrator communicated this to the teachers? Has this approach been honest and open?* NRSET - *How does ss administrators communicate that your requests cannot be fulfilled? Was it helpful?*
6. Has the rounding process in any way provided you with feedback on your strengths as an employee? If so, please provide an example. Has this been helpful? Has it not been helpful? CSTRs: *Has the rounding process provided the opportunity for special services administrators to provide special education teachers with feedback on their strengths? Can you think of an example?* NRSETs: *Have you received feedback on your strengths as an employee? Can you provide an example? Is this helpful and if so, in what way?*
7. Reflect on the department meetings through the course of the year and the implementation of rounding agenda items such as recognition and status of issues

- updates. (CSTRs: *Same question only... substitute “your” for “teachers”*) NRSET: same question only remove phrase (of rounding agenda items such as recognition and status of issues updates). Where have you been given the opportunity to share and exchange ideas?
8. How has the special services administrators recognized good performance through the rounding process? (CSTRs: exact same question). NRSET: *How have you seen SSA recognize performance?*
 9. Have you been recognized by the special services administrator(s) or have you nominated someone to be recognized as a result of the rounding process? (CSTRs: exact same question only substitute “faculty” in place of “you”) NRSET: *Have you been recognized by the SSA?*
 10. What type of recognition have you received through the rounding process and which do you think is the most meaningful to you? Why? (CSTRs: exact same questions only substitute “faculty” instead of “you”) NRSET: *What type of recognition have you received? What type is most meaningful to you and why?*
 11. Through the rounding process, how do you know if the special services administrators have a genuine concern for your welfare as a special educator? Have you seen evidence of this through rounding? (CSTRs: *How do you know if the special services administrators have a genuine concern for the welfare of the special education teachers through the rounding process? Have you seen evidence of this through rounding?*) NRSET: *How do you know if the special services administrators have a genuine concern for your welfare as a special educator? Have you seen evidence of this?*

Open-Ended Questionnaire for SERTs, NRSETs, and CSTRs Cont’d.

12. Has the rounding process clarified how special services administrators are attributing the department monies? Have you had to purchase your own tools/resources while involved in the rounding process? Has rounding affected your decision to make private purchases for your classroom? (CSTRs: same question) NRSET: *Have you observed the SSA use of department monies? Do you need to purchase your own tools/resources?*
13. Does rounding assist with knowing how to request the tools and resources needed to do your job? (CSTRs: same question) no question for NRSETs
14. In what ways do you feel rounding has contributed to you having input in decisions that affect your job? CSTRs: *In what ways do you feel the teachers have a voice in decisions that affect their job?* NRSET: *In what ways have you been able to provide input on decisions that affect your job?*

15. As a result of the rounding process, do you feel your contributions are valued by SSA? (CSTRs: *Do you think their contributions are valued by the special services administrators?*) NRSET: Do you feel your contributions are valued by SSA?
16. Through the rounding process, how have you observed the special services administrators communicating with special education teachers? (CSTRs: same question) NRSET: *How have you observed SSAs communicating with special education teachers?*
17. With rounding in place, what communication forums do you feel have been meaningful to you? (CSTRs: *What communication forms do you feel have been meaningful to the special education teachers?*) NRSETs: What communication forums do you feel have been meaningful to you?
18. Through the rounding process, do you feel the right message is communicated in the right way at the right time by the special services administrators? Provide an example. (CSTRs: same question) NRSETs: *Do you feel SSAs communicate the right message in the right way at the right time?*
19. As a result of the rounding process, are special services administrators providing the support needed for you to accomplish your work objectives? (CSTRs: *Are special services administrators providing the support needed for special education teachers to accomplish their work objectives?*) NRSETs: Are special services administrators providing the support needed for you to accomplish your work objectives?
20. Has rounding played a role in providing you the support needed and if so, how? (CSTRs: *Has rounding played a role in providing special education teachers the support needed and if so, how?*) no question for NRSETs
21. Has the rounding process been respectful of your time? In what ways has it been worthwhile? (CSTRs: *Has the rounding process been respectful of the special education teachers' time? In what ways has it been worthwhile?*)
22. If you could change the rounding process, what would you recommend and why? (CSTRs: same question)
23. Should all special education teachers be involved in the rounding process? Why or why not? (CSTRs: same questions)
24. In what ways can you see rounding effecting the special services department across the district? (CSTRs: same question)
25. Provide examples through involvement in the rounding process, of how the special services administrators affect the climate of your work environment and allow you to achieve to your highest potential. (CSTRs: *Provide examples of how the special services administrators affect the climate of the special services work environment.*)

Provide an example of how the special services administrators allow teachers to achieve to their highest potential.) NRSETs: Provide examples through involvement of how the special services administrators affect the climate of your work environment and allow you to achieve to your highest potential?

Rounding Participants' Interview Questions

1. Describe what the rounding process was like from your experience.
2. What has been the advantages of participating in rounding?
3. What has been the disadvantages of participating in rounding?
4. Was rounding meaningful to you in your professional work and if so, can you provide an example of how?
5. Could you provide any examples of how rounding may have an effect on your ability to achieve your highest potential in the classroom?
6. Was there an effect on your access to the resources needed to do your job? Can you provide any examples?
7. Have you seen rounding impact needs on a larger scale, at the building or district level perhaps?
8. In what ways if any, did rounding affect the feeling about the importance of your role as a special education teacher?
9. What did you observe about communication between special education teachers, The Director and Supervisor of Special Services while involved in the rounding process?
10. Do you feel rounding influenced your willingness to communicate openly with special services administrators?
11. Was there any effect on the communication between teachers and special services administrators as a result of participating in rounding and if so, can you provide an example?
12. What did you observe about the rounding leaders' role in affecting communication within the department?
13. What about addressing your needs?
14. Providing you with a forum for contribution in your work?
15. Do you feel the implementation of building-based rounding leaders is an effective way to flow information up to the special services administration and back down to the special education teachers? Why or why not?
16. Do you envision any value in modifying the rounding process and if so, in what way?
17. What aspects of the rounding process were most helpful in communication between administrators and teachers? What affect did having consistency of questions have on your rounding experience?
18. What aspects of the rounding process were most helpful in making you feel valued as an employee and committed to your role as a special education teacher?
19. What about at the elementary, middle or high school levels, should there be consideration to any modification of rounding?

Is there anything else you would like to share at this time?

Non-Rounding Participants' Interview Questions

1. Describe what motivates you to perform to your highest potential each day.
2. What has been your experience with communication within the SS department administrators?
3. Provide some examples of what you feel is needed from your SSA for you to achieve your highest potential in the classroom.
4. Do you feel you have a means to get the tools and resources needed to do your job currently?)
5. Have you seen any building or district level changes within the department of special services since February 2017?
6. In what ways do you feel you have input on things related to your job?
7. Do you feel other colleagues have a different perception? Why or why not?
8. Have you observed any difference in communication between the special services department teachers, administrators and CST?
9. In what ways are you able to communicate to special services administrators?
10. What has been the advantages or disadvantages?
11. In what ways can communication within the special services department be strengthened?
12. How can you improve communication with your special services administrators (SSA)?
13. Do you envision any value in modifying the rounding process and if so, in what way? Would you like to participate in the rounding process? Why/why not? What do you find to be the most helpful communication forum with SSA?
14. In what ways are you able to report to SSAs what is working well, what issues you are facing in your work?
15. Do you think there is a difference with your communication with SSAs because you are Elementary or middle or hs?

Is there anything else you would like to share at this time?

CSTRs Focus Group Questions

1. Describe the rounding experience from your perspective as a CSTR.
2. What advantage/disadvantage did you note for teacher participants?
3. Do you see rounding as advantageous for teacher's professional roles? What about for CSTRs?
 - ~ In what ways can rounding effect teacher ability to achieve their highest potential? Would rounding be beneficial for educational specialists or other professionals?
 - ~ How did rounding effect teacher's access to resources? Is there any example that you can share?
4. Have you seen rounding impact needs on a larger scale, at the building or district level perhaps?
5. Do you feel rounding contributed to teacher's perception of feeling valued? Like their contribution matters?
6. Have you observed any difference in communication between the special services department teachers, administrators and CST?
 - ~ Was there any effect on teacher willingness to communicate openly with special services administrators as a result of rounding?
7. Was there an effect on the communication between teachers and special services administrators as a result of participating in rounding and if so, can you provide an example?
8. What did you observe about the rounding leaders' role in affecting communication within the department?
 - ~ What about addressing teachers' needs or providing a forum for contribution to their work?
 - ~ Do you feel the implementation of building-based rounding leaders is an effective way to flow information up to the special services administration and back down to the special education teachers? Why or why not?
9. Do you envision any value in modifying the rounding process and if so, in what way?
 - ~What aspects of the rounding process were most helpful in communication between administrators and teachers?
 - ~What affect did having consistency of questions have on your rounding experience?
 - ~What aspects do you think were most helpful in making teachers feel valued and committed to their role?
 - ~What about at the elementary, middle or high school levels, should there be consideration to any modification of rounding?
10. Is there anything else you would like to share at this time?

Appendix C

Competency Checklist

LEADER ROUNDING ON EMPLOYEES- COMPETENCY CHECKLIST

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Note: Competency Checklist to be used to validate leader's skill in rounding on employees.

Leader**Name:** _____ **Location:** _____

STRENGTHS ✓	ESSENTIAL SKILLS	IMPROVEMENT NEEDED ✓	COACHING PRIORITY
	Leader prepared for round (log, items to discuss/focus, etc.)		3
	Relationship building/personal connections made		1
	What is working well is harvested		2
	Recognition harvested for colleagues (e.g. "Who can I recognize for going above and beyond [for our students/family members/team/etc.] and why?")		1
	Tools and equipment needs identified and discussed as needed		1
	Systems to improve discussed including involvement re: ideas to fix		1
	Leader's emotions reflect the appropriateness of the teacher's communication		2
	Body language open and receptive (eye contact and body language receptive/expression of listening and concern)		2
	Documents on rounding log: completion of spotlight/recognition documented		3

STRENGTHS ✓	NEXT STEPS	IMPROVEMENT NEEDED ✓	COACHING PRIORITY
	A. What did you learn about this employee?		2
	B. What must you do with this information? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Who will you reward and recognize based on rounding?</i> ▪ <i>What are barriers/issues, etc. you need to resolve?</i> ▪ <i>Is there anything to add to the Stoplight Report?</i> 		1
	Uses stoplight report, updated monthly, to close the communication loop back with employees during monthly staff meeting <i>(Stoplight Report review as a standing agenda item)</i>		1

EVALUATION SUMMARY	
<input type="checkbox"/> Competent	Evaluator Comments: <input type="checkbox"/> Repeat Skills Assessment
<input type="checkbox"/> Expert at skill	
<input type="checkbox"/> Mentor for others	

**Priority levels: 1 = first coaching priority; 2 = second coaching priority; 3 = third coaching priority

Evaluator: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix D

Inspiration from Faculty

Faculty messages that served as an inspiration through the Dissertation Journey...

- ❖ In my career as an SLP, I have worn many hats and have worked for a variety of administrators. Hopefully you will remain in our district for the next 10 years so I can end my career with a stellar administrator!! - Ginny K., April 2017
- ❖ Thank you for the card and the kind words! Although I've been working in this district for 9 years, it really has been fairly recently that I've felt like I am on a "team." This I credit to your leadership and genuine interest in others. Know that your efforts are felt and appreciated! - Pam B., May 2017
- ❖ Great seeing you and catching up. Thank you so much for your support and trust. It makes working rewarding, challenging and fun. One Team, One Purpose! - Bari B., May 2017
- ❖ Thanks for being there and supporting us. The meeting had a very different tone than previous meetings and I believe your presence assisted greatly with that. - Maria T., June 2017
- ❖ I just wanted to say thank you for the card I received in the mail yesterday! It's not every day that someone takes the time to write out and send a note, and I truly appreciate it! It made my day when I got home after a long first day of Camp Invention! Thank you so much for taking the time to think of me. Looking forward to ESY! - Heather F., June 2017
- ❖ Just wanted to say it was great seeing you at EdTechFest yesterday. I just wanted to reach out and say it meant so much that you came to watch my session. I really appreciated the support. - Katie N., August 2017
- ❖ Thank you for being a part of my happiness and success. - Monica W., September 2017.
- ❖ Thanks for hearing me out yesterday and thanks for checking in on the start of my year! - Larissa E., September 2017.
- ❖ I wanted to say thank you both for listening and addressing our concerns. We are very lucky to have you as leaders. It is nice to feel respected, appreciated, and valued. Thank you for always expressing this to me. I appreciate you taking my feedback into consideration. It truly means a lot to me as an educator. - Katie D., September 2017.
- ❖ I like the feedback in the department meetings. I like the fact that you are there and discussing what is going on. I like to hear about previous concerns and even if issues are not resolved, it is helpful to have you talk about these issues. I do get

more out of our department meetings as a result of this. - Dorothy L., October 2017.

- ❖ I just wanted to give you a HUGE thank you. I received in an email that Education City was able to be purchased this school year. My class will be SO excited!! Nov. 1 was when our trial was supposed to end so they literally wanted to be on it all day to try to get their fill before we didn't have it anymore. I can't wait to share the news with them. I will make certain to share the codes and such with the self-contained teachers as well because I think their classes can benefit from it as well. - Kristi D., November 2017.
- ❖ We all appreciate the extra time you put in to recognizing your staff. Thanks for all you do! - Katie D., December 2017.
- ❖ I so appreciated your email from last week. It made my day. - Sue G., December 2017.
- ❖ You are always very approachable and available. You have truly done so much in so little time for the Special Services Department!!!! - Wendy H., December 2017.
- ❖ I really feel like our teachers and team members are feeling heard and valued this year more than ever. - Adrienne C., December 2017.
- ❖ Your qualities as the leader of the department are very contagious and motivating. Thank you for being you and deciding to work in this district! - Joanne W., January 2018.