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Analysis Of Change Plans in Two Elementary School Districts For Teacher Evaluation Practices Following the New Illinois Performance Evaluation Reform Act of 2010 (PERA)

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ANALYSIS OF CHANGE PLANS IN TWO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICTS
FOR TEACHER EVALUATION PRACTICES FOLLOWING THE NEW ILLINOIS
PERFORMANCE EVALUATION REFORM ACT OF 2010 (PERA)

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NLU Digital Commons Document Origination Statement

This document was created as *one* part of the three-part dissertation requirement of the National Louis University (NLU) Educational Leadership (EDL) Doctoral Program. The National Louis Educational Leadership EdD is a professional practice degree program (Shulman et al., 2006).

For the dissertation requirement, doctoral candidates are required to plan, research, and implement three major projects, one each year, within their school or district with a focus on professional practice. The three projects are:

- Program Evaluation
- Change Leadership Plan
- Policy Advocacy Document

For the **Program Evaluation** candidates are required to identify and evaluate a program or practice within their school or district. The “program” can be a current initiative; a grant project; a common practice; or a movement. Focused on utilization, the evaluation can be formative, summative, or developmental (Patton, 2008). The candidate must demonstrate how the evaluation directly relates to student learning.

In the **Change Leadership Plan** candidates a plan that considers organizational possibilities for renewal. The plan for organizational change may be at the building or district level. It must be related to an area in need of improvement, and have a clear target in mind. The candidate must be able to identify noticeable and feasible differences that should exist as a result of the change plan (Wagner et al., 2006).

In the **Policy Advocacy Document** candidates develop and advocate for a policy at the local, state or national level using reflective practice and research as a means for supporting and promoting reforms in education. Policy advocacy dissertations use critical theory to address moral and ethical issues of policy formation and administrative decision making (i.e., what ought to be). The purpose is to develop reflective, humane and social critics, moral leaders, and competent professionals, guided by a critical practical rational model (Browder, 1995).

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ABSTRACT

This Change Plan paper is the second part of a three-part dissertation on the effect of new Illinois laws on teacher evaluation in suburban Chicago elementary districts. The Illinois Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA) of 2010, as modified by Senate Bill 7, was signed into law in June 2011 and contains provisions that take effect over several years. Beginning in 2012-2013, districts were required to move to a four-rating performance evaluation system and begin to use these rankings, instead of seniority, to make job-related decisions such as reductions-in-force (RIFs) and teacher recalls. I interviewed administrators and teachers in two of the three districts studied in the first part of my dissertation to investigate the processes that the two districts used to plan for and communicate upcoming change in their teacher evaluation plans. One of the districts (District A) sought to: (1) move to a four-level ratings system rather than the three-level system used previously; (2) implement a more thorough and detailed evaluation system that focuses on at least four areas of practice: instructional planning, classroom environment, instructional delivery, and professional development and professionalism, with a student growth component to be added in 2016; (3) make it easier to terminate the employment of "unsatisfactory" teachers or teachers who "need improvement"; (4) make it harder for teachers to receive consistently "excellent" ratings and thus differentiate "excellent" teachers from "proficient" ones; and (5) stay in compliance with all legal requirements. Based on interviews in District A and the other district, the Change Plan paper develops strategies that District A could use to make its changes as successful as possible, including actions to build consensus for change, moving slowly to achieve buy-in, and arranging processes to encourage more sharing of information.

PREFACE

In the change plan component of my dissertation, I continued to study the Illinois Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA) of 2010 and Senate Bill 7. I interviewed administrators and teachers in two of the three districts studied in my program evaluation. Specifically, I investigated the processes the two districts used to plan for and communicate upcoming change in their teacher evaluation plans. In particular, one of the districts sought to: (1) move to a four-level ratings system rather than the three-level system used previously; (2) implement a more thorough and detailed evaluation system that focuses on at least four areas of practice: instructional planning, classroom environment, instructional delivery, and professional development and professionalism, with a student growth component to be added in 2016; (3) make it easier to terminate the employment of "unsatisfactory" teachers or teachers who "need improvement"; (4) make it harder for teachers to receive consistently "excellent" ratings and thus differentiate "excellent" teachers from "proficient" ones; and (5) stay in compliance with all legal requirements. The other district aimed to meet the new legal requirements, but otherwise, it elected to preserve its existing system for now.

From these interviews for my change plan, I learned several leadership lessons that can be applied to future situations that I encounter as an administrator. First, I learned that a district must analyze carefully and build consensus around the need for change. Leaders must first take time to diagnose the system, including a group's culture, before implementing change. Specifically, they must work with others in the organization to figure out what to conserve and what to discard from past practices. A second strategy I learned that may increase support for change is to allow the change

process to move more slowly. By moving slowly, if possible, to build consensus over the need for the change and frame the issue thoughtfully, I can help people understand the need for change and inspire them to support the change. Third, leaders must carefully consider how to communicate needed change to their constituents. In an administrative position, I will need to give constituents time to become comfortable with the possibility of change, rather than be confronted all at once with the reality of change that has already occurred. I can also consider using non-administration voices to present the changes in order to add credibility for the need for change and for the specific changes being implemented. Finally, another good leadership tool is to develop a more systematic method for assessing teachers' attitudes and reactions to the change. In using these strategies, a leader has the potential not only to achieve the change she seeks, but also do so in a way that strengthens its culture and adds to her district's competencies for change.

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SECTION ONE - INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The Illinois Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA) of 2010 (Public Act 96-861), as modified by Senate Bill 7, was signed into law on June 13, 2011 by Governor Patrick Quinn. Although Illinois school districts will have a year or longer to comply with many provisions of this new law, a few provisions took effect during the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 school years.

During the 2011-2012 school year, Illinois school districts began to plan for the changes that would take effect the following year. By December 1, 2011, districts were required to convene a joint committee to consider certain modifications to the criteria for placing teachers in various groups based on their performance evaluations. The law required that this committee consist of members that the school board selects and members that the teachers' union selects. Pub. Act 97-008 (2011), § 5, adding 105 ILCS 5/24-12(c). All Illinois districts are required to move to a four-rating performance evaluation system. Districts are required to place teachers in four groups: non-tenured teachers without a performance rating (group one); teachers with either a "needs improvement" or "unsatisfactory" rating on one of the last two evaluations (group two); teachers with at least a rating of "proficient" on both of the last two evaluations (group three); and teachers with a rating of "excellent" on at least two of the three last evaluations, with the third evaluation being "proficient" (group four). Pub. Act 97-008 (2011), § 5, adding 105 ILCS 5/24-12(b).

In addition, beginning in 2012-2013, teacher reductions-in-force (RIFs) and teacher recall procedures must be changed from a seniority-based system to one based on

performance evaluations. Specifically, teachers then must be RIFed, or non-renewed, in order of group placement. Within group one, teachers may be released at the school district's discretion. Within the remaining three groups, teachers are released in order of average performance rating, with the lowest-rated teachers being RIFed first. Seniority is only considered in the case of tied ratings.

Through the program evaluation, change plan, and policy advocacy components of my doctoral program coursework, I am studying how these provisions of the new law affect teacher evaluation in suburban elementary school districts. I am interested in four principal questions. First, what processes did districts use during the 2011-2012 school year to plan for change? Second, what changes will be implemented during 2012-2013 in teacher evaluations in school districts (in form, process, and results), and how will those changes be communicated to staff? Third, how will teacher attitudes toward the evaluation process change? Fourth, how will attitudes and practices of principals change?

I am addressing these questions by gathering data from three suburban school districts. For the program evaluation component of my project, I collected data in fall 2011 on practices and perceptions of the prior teacher evaluation system, as well as awareness of and expectations relating to the changes that PERA (as modified by Senate Bill 7) will bring. For the change plan component of my project this year, I interviewed administrators and teachers in two of the three districts on the processes used to plan for and communicate change. Finally, while not part of this year's change plan, I will collect additional data in fall 2013 that to examine how the initial implementation of PERA (as

modified by Senate Bill 7) actually affected evaluation practices and attitudes; this data will then serve as the foundation for the policy advocacy stage of my project.

For Illinois districts, the consequences of successfully implementing the changes to teacher evaluation systems will be to: (1) move to a four-level ratings system rather than the three-level system many districts used previously; (2) implement a more thorough and detailed evaluation system that focuses on at least five areas of practice -- instructional planning, classroom environment, instructional delivery, professional development and professionalism, and ultimately student growth; (3) make it easier for districts to terminate the employment of "unsatisfactory" teachers or teachers who "need improvement"; (4) in some districts, make it harder for teachers to receive consistently "excellent" ratings and thus differentiate "excellent" teachers from "proficient" ones; and (5) stay in compliance with all legal requirements.

Rationale

The PERA law relates to the use of teacher evaluations for summative decisions relating to filling new and vacant positions, tenure, and reductions in force and recall procedures. As a result, a main purpose of my study relates to "accountability and compliance" (Patton, 2008, pp. 320-322). How do school districts ensure that new teacher evaluation procedures comply fully with all provisions of the new law? Compliance with all of the mandates of the new law will be important to my school district and other Illinois districts. At the same time, districts may want to maintain aspects of their current teacher evaluation system that are already working well. This especially may be true in suburban districts where administrators feel they already have a staff of mostly "excellent" teachers with few low-performing teachers to weed out. In

addition to the accountability purpose underlying my study, there is a formative purpose, as well. Districts will want to change their evaluation procedures in ways that are likely to improve classroom instruction and ultimately increase student achievement. These changes, in turn, will benefit the community at large because an increase in student achievement and growth is the expected effect, and the entire community reaps benefits when students are well-educated.

I am interested in this topic because it is a timely one that stems from a recent change in Illinois law. In addition, it reflects the current accountability movement in education, which will significantly shape the future of public school education. Many states across the country are seeking ways to restructure the processes through which teachers are mentored, evaluated, and compensated in order to increase student achievement.

My background in law also influences my interest in this topic. I graduated from Northwestern University School of Law with my J.D. in 1992, practiced law for three years (1992-1995), and taught on the law faculty at Northwestern as a clinical associate professor for eight and a half years (1995-2004) -- all before becoming a public school teacher in 2005. I also served on a suburban school board for four years (2003-2007). Collectively, these experiences have sharpened my interest in questions about how law and educational policy connect in ways that can be used to improve student learning.

Goals

A recent change in Illinois law will hold school districts accountable for complying with its new provisions relating to procedures for and use of teacher evaluations. The goal of my study is to investigate how administrators in suburban

elementary school districts will modify their current evaluation systems to comply with the new PERA law and how they will use the modified teacher evaluation systems to improve the quality of instruction in ways that increase student learning. During fall 2011, I collected baseline data about the perceived effectiveness of the evaluation procedures that three Illinois districts used prior to the passage of the new PERA law; these data will be compared to data collected in fall 2013 to assess the changes that result from PERA during the first year of its implementation.

For this year's change plan, I interviewed human resource directors, other administrators, union leaders, and teachers in two of the three school districts that I studied in fall 2011 in order to collect data on the processes used to plan for and communicate change in their teacher evaluation systems. During the 2011-2012 school year, school districts began to plan for the changes that would take effect during the 2012-2013 school year. My change plan analyzes the change process and methods of communication used by each district, identifies actions that were successful, and suggests some areas for improvement as other provisions of PERA and Senate Bill 7 continue to be implemented in subsequent years. Specifically, I analyze how well the change process and communication methods used by each district further the intended consequences for successfully initiating change. For example, is the new four-rating teacher evaluation system more detailed and thorough? Is it easier for the district to weed out low-performing teachers? Is it easier for the district to differentiate between exceptional and proficient teachers? Do district administrators feel the new system strikes an appropriate balance between its own accountability for implementing the new law and the formative

purposes that it wants its evaluation system to serve? Has the district communicated the new changes in a way likely to lead to greater teacher satisfaction with the new plan?

Demographics

For this three-year project, I am studying teacher evaluation systems in three K-8 suburban school districts in the Chicago area. However, for this year's change plan, I gathered data in only two of those districts. District A is located in an affluent North Shore Chicago suburb. It has an enrollment of 3,360 students, a per pupil operating expenditure of \$13,122, an equalized assessed valuation (EAV) per pupil of \$615,591, and a pupil-staff ratio of 10.7 to 1. District A is 79.8% white, 10.2% Asian, 5.4% multiracial, and 4.1% Hispanic. Only one percent of District A's students are low income. District A has 330 teachers (287 FTE) with an average experience level of 10.8 years and average salary of \$69,738. 76.4% of District A's teachers hold a master's degree. The average salary for administrators in District A is \$147,444.

District B is a somewhat less affluent but still well-off school district located in a northwest suburb. It has an enrollment of 4,281 students, a per pupil operating expenditure of \$13,450, an EAV per pupil of \$530,239, and a pupil-staff ratio of 11.3 to 1. District B is 86.4% white, 7.7% Hispanic, 3.3% Asian, and 2.2% multiracial. Four percent of District B's students are low income. District B has 400 teachers (321 FTE) with an average experience level of 14 years and average salary of \$78,612. 79.8% of District B's teachers hold a master's degree. The average salary for administrators in District B is \$150,238.

These two districts, because they share many characteristics, should provide some useful comparisons in the areas of planning for and communicating change in teacher

evaluation systems. District A, the district in which I work, will be my primary focus because I have participated directly as a teacher-leader in the teacher evaluation change process in this district. However, by studying District B, I should be able to gain some insight that will allow me to better assess the changes in District A. District C's demographics differ substantially from those of the first two districts. District C is a larger, less well-funded, and more racially and economically diverse suburban district located in a far southwestern community. Although this district will remain a part of my larger study, it will not be included in this year's change plan.

SECTION TWO: ASSESSING THE 4 Cs

In creating my "As Is" and "To Be" charts, I took a systemic view of District A, the school district in which I teach, focusing on teacher evaluation but also considering related areas that encompassed hiring practices, professional development, and student placement. I applied the 4 C's framework described in Tony Wagner's *Change Leadership: A Practical Guide to Transforming Our Schools* (2006) to help ensure that I examined all areas of my district's practice.

Context

Our district stakeholders support a high level of student achievement and positive attitudes about the abilities of all students to learn. Most importantly, 95-99 percent of our students in all grade levels and in all subject areas meet or exceed state standards according to the 2011 Illinois District Report Card. Moreover, because we do not have much racial, ethnic, or cultural diversity, we do not have any significant achievement gaps between these groups. Thus, there is little in the "context" arena that can, or should, change in order to promote a significantly higher level of learning.

Conditions

As a well-funded district that recently passed a tax rate referendum, my district has many conditions that promote high levels of student achievement. We have abundant resources. For the most part, teachers are given the materials they need, plus a small discretionary budget to buy any additional unanticipated supplies for particular projects. The district is currently spending funds to renovate the buildings most in need of updated features, like new roofs, tile, carpeting, and expanded science labs in the junior high school.

The district has room to improve its "conditions" for learning by considering the ways in which the district sets new initiatives and uses data. Currently, many teachers feel overwhelmed by the number of initiatives they are responsible for advancing. They perceive that there is insufficient time to implement the ever-increasing number of initiatives, especially those that fall on the shoulders of general education classroom teachers. Many teachers feel what Reeves (2009) calls "initiative fatigue" (p. 14) and wish that administrators would reduce the number of new initiatives so that teachers could focus on implementing the few that are most closely aligned with improved student achievement and well-being. In addition, although the district collects a lot of data about student achievement, teachers are often uncertain about administrators' expectations for that data, which results in low accountability. If teachers do not know what standards they must achieve, they cannot do much to change their practices to promote student growth. Thus, thus many teachers wish that administrators would develop and communicate clear expectations about additional steps they should take to maximize student growth. By communicating clear expectations about the student growth they expect teachers to promote, administrators could more easily hold all teachers accountable for increasing student achievement.

Competencies

My district is fortunate to have well-educated and motivated staff. Teachers and other staff members already share a belief that all students can learn at high levels, and most of our students do. By clearly delineating district priorities for student growth, administrators can ensure that all teachers are instructing, motivating, and assessing students in similar ways. Most importantly, administrators need to spend more time in

classrooms to better understand the strengths, weaknesses, and needs of students and teachers. They need to prioritize the practice of making frequent walk-throughs into classrooms to better inform themselves of daily classroom practices. These walk-throughs, in turn, can help administrators plan more efficient staff meetings to address any concerns they have, design targeted professional development activities to meet the needs of each staff member, better match students and teachers during the placement process, and give more accurate, comprehensive, and tailored feedback to each teacher during the teacher evaluation process.

Culture

My district probably has the greatest potential to grow in the arena of "culture." The district expects teachers to collaborate daily with one another, but rarely do our administrators collaborate alongside teachers or even attend the meetings where teachers are collaborating with one another. In addition, our district offers a wide array of professional development options, but some teachers do not choose to participate in any of the offerings except for the sessions that are explicitly required on staff development days. Moreover, many of the district's younger teachers are still nervous they may lose their jobs for little or no reason. Two years ago, when the district was seeking a tax rate increase from the community, district administrators presented a long menu of cuts in both program and personnel that would result from a failed referendum. Although the referendum succeeded, hurt feelings still fester as a result of those proposed cuts. Finally, many teachers lament the frequent turnover of building level administrators at many district schools, especially the district's middle school. Many teachers do not feel respect for or respect from building administrators they have known for only a short time. It

takes time for teachers and administrators to develop trusting relationships, and with frequent turnover, those relationships have not had time to develop.

SECTION THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design Overview

My year-two change plan focuses on the process two school districts have used to plan for and communicate changes to their teacher evaluation systems in light of the recent change in Illinois law. The baseline data that I gathered in fall 2011 from interviews with human resource directors and surveys of administrators and teachers proved helpful for comparing the districts' pre-PERA and post-PERA teacher evaluation systems. In addition, interviews that I conducted during fall 2012 also provided useful data. I interviewed human resources directors, other administrators, union leaders, and teachers who were involved in planning for the changes to each district's teacher evaluation system. In addition, I collected revised evaluation forms and rubrics that the districts created and compared them to ones used in the previous school year. These data allowed me to describe qualitatively the change process used in each district and make some comparisons between the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 teacher evaluation systems and also between the change processes used by the two school districts.

Participants

Teacher evaluation involves numerous stakeholders, including the administrators who plan for and implement change, the teachers who contribute ideas to the change process and whom are mentored and evaluated, and the students who ultimately benefit from improvements in teacher evaluation. In addition, parents and other community members all have a stake in public education. As a result, school districts must be accountable to all of these constituencies as they plan to implement the changes required by the new law. For example, during the 2011-2012 school year, the school district in

which I teach formed a committee of central office administrators, principals, and teachers to develop and implement a change plan that complies with the new PERA law. The group focused on the provisions of the new law that take effect during the 2012-2013 school year. The board of education, which is accountable to parents and community members, also gave input into creating the change plan. Participants in my study include a wide network of stakeholders, but most directly human resource directors, administrators, and teachers in District A, the district in which I teach, and District B, the district in which I live and formerly served as a school board member.

My research questions focus on two key sub-topics that drive the selection of these participants. The first sub-topic is the planning process for complying with change in Illinois law. Interviews with human resource directors, other administrators, union leaders, and teachers who were involved in planning for the changes to the teacher evaluation system provided qualitative information that allowed me to explain and evaluate the planning process the two districts used. In addition, these interviews helped me address a second sub-topic: the method and perceived effectiveness of the ways in which the changes are communicated to staff.

Data Gathering Techniques

During fall 2012, I conducted interviews with human resources directors, other administrators, union leaders, and teachers who were involved in planning for the changes to each district's teacher evaluation system. Specifically, I gathered information about the process each district used to plan for the changes that take effect during the 2012-2013 school year and how each district communicated these changes to staff and other members of the community. I also asked each interviewee questions about how

effective he or she believes the new teacher evaluation system will be and about the concerns he or she may have about the changes.

Previously, to collect baseline data, I took the following actions in fall 2011:

1. Interviewed the human resources director of each district or another administrator to understand the change process that would be used during the 2011-2012 school year to plan for change to the district's teacher evaluation system, obtained blank evaluation forms used for 2011-12, and obtained counts of how many teachers were evaluated in each grouping (e.g., excellent, satisfactory, or unsatisfactory) in 2010-11. I also assessed their perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of their current evaluation system.
2. Administered a survey to teachers in the three districts regarding their attitudes toward and awareness of the current evaluation process and the changes planned for 2012-13 and beyond. In addition to the current evaluation process, this survey addressed expectations and perceptions of how PERA (as modified by Senate Bill 7) might change the current system.
3. Administered a survey to principals in the three districts regarding their attitudes toward and awareness of the current evaluation process and the changes planned for 2012-13 and beyond. The principals' survey also gathered some self-reported data on the principals' evaluation practices. As with the teacher survey, this survey addressed expectations and perceptions of how PERA (as modified by Senate Bill 7) might change the current system.

For this year's change plan, I collected qualitative data in fall 2012, which included the following:

1. Re-interviewed the human resources director and interviewed at least two other administrators in both District A and District B to learn about the process the districts actually used in 2011-12 to change their evaluation systems, work with their unions as required by the law, and communicate changes to staff. I also collected from the human resources directors any revised evaluation forms created in 2011-12. Additionally, I gathered data on their perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the new evaluation system that the district plans to use to comply with PERA's requirements.
2. Interviewed at least one union leader and two other teachers in District A and District B who were involved in planning for the changes to the teacher evaluation system that are being implemented in each district during 2012-2013. Finally, during fall 2013, I will collect another round of survey data that will allow me to use inferential statistics to compare teacher and administrator attitudes toward the pre-PERA and post-PERA teacher evaluation systems. Specifically, I will:
 1. Re-administer the teacher survey used in fall 2011.
 2. Re-administer the principal survey used in fall 2011.
 3. Obtain counts of how many teachers received each rating (excellent, proficient, needs improvement, or unsatisfactory) in 2012-13.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis for this year-two change plan focused on qualitative data and descriptive statistics. I used the information that I learned from the various stakeholders whom I interviewed -- human resources directors, other administrators, union leaders, and teachers -- to describe and analyze the effectiveness of the change process used in

District A and District B. In addition, I used the information that I learned from the interviews to describe and analyze the ways in which the changes were communicated to staff and community members.

Furthermore, the revised evaluation forms and rubrics that I collected provided additional evidence of the structure and components of the new evaluation systems. By comparing the revised forms to the previous evaluation forms that I collected last year, I was able to identify and explain more precisely the changes between the pre-PERA and post-PERA teacher evaluation systems. Finally, I compared data from District A and District B to look for themes, highlight similarities and differences between the two districts, and make suggestions for how District A might refine its approach to planning for future change.

SECTION FOUR: RELEVANT LITERATURE

It seems that nearly everyone today views public education as a broken system and has some general ideas for how to improve it. After all, everyone was a student at one point in his or her life, so it is a subject that seems intimately familiar to each of us. Moreover, many people believe that the teacher is the principal force determining the level of a student's achievement (Tucker & Stronge, 2005, pp. 1-5). Thus, not surprisingly, many of the suggestions that people have for improving public education lie in "fixing" its teachers. One prominent idea is that school districts can improve student achievement by getting rid of all of the "bad" teachers who are lurking in the system, unskilled and unmotivated yet protected by tenure. Accordingly, over the past few years, new ideas about how to improve teacher evaluation have been proposed. Educational reformers, aided by legislators and other government officials, have suggested (and in some states, mandated) that teachers should be evaluated based on higher teacher standards and improved student performance through a carefully-designed new teacher evaluation system (Donaldson, 2009, p. 1; Tucker & Stronge, 2005, pp. 12-13). Several states, including Illinois, have passed new legislation that will require school districts to completely overhaul the systems for teacher evaluation they have used in the past (Donaldson, 2009, p. 6). This literature review includes a brief history of teacher evaluation in America and a description of the model of teacher evaluation currently used by many suburban Chicago school districts, summarizing both the strengths and weaknesses that have been identified by educational researchers, school administrators, and teachers.

History of Teacher Evaluation

Teacher evaluation has been at the forefront of public education for only a relatively short time in the history of American schooling. Until the late 1960s and 1970s, virtually no efforts were made to assess the effectiveness of teachers; it was assumed that any educated teacher could successfully impart knowledge to students who were less educated than he or she. Some researchers have characterized teacher supervisory practices during this time as "inspection" designed to ensure that a teacher's traits matched the characteristics that the school district desired, including physical attractiveness, voice projection, clear articulation, and good personality (Garth-Young, 2007, p. 13). Thus, teacher evaluation during this time was a cursory check that was used mostly to assess a teacher's basic level of competence for summative personnel decisions.

In the 1970s, Madeline Hunter of the University of California, Los Angeles identified a checklist of teaching practices that were thought to improve teaching. The Hunter model dominated views of teaching and teacher evaluation throughout the 1970s and 1980s and ensured that the focus of evaluation was rooted firmly in teacher behavior in the classroom rather than student outcomes. Specifically, the Hunter model emphasized teacher-centered, physically well-structured classrooms; it made no attempt directly to measure the impact that a teacher's behaviors had on student achievement. As a result, throughout the 1970s and 1980s, most local school districts used a checklist evaluation form that merely noted the presence of each of seven steps believed important for good lesson design, including anticipatory set, objective, direct instruction, modeling, checking for understanding, guided practice, and independent practice (Danielson & McGreal, 2000, pp. 13-14). Pritchett, Sparks, and Taylor-Johnson (2010) noted about the

Hunter teacher evaluation model that "[a]lthough seen as a lock-step model with little research to validate her claims of improved learning, sixteen states adopted the model and many school districts included it within their teacher evaluation models" (p. 54). Thus, for the most part during these two decades, an evaluator's attention remained securely focused on the teacher as the imparter of wisdom in the classroom and not on her students.

A political reform movement in the early 1980s brought teacher evaluation into the forefront of American political dialogue for the first time (Garth-Young, 2007, pp. 15-16). A 1983 report called "A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform" was released by the National Commission on Excellence in Education. In addition to highlighting the need for a more rigorous curriculum to keep American students competitive in an increasingly global economy, the report made recommendations geared toward improving teaching. Specifically, it recommended improvements in teacher education programs, increased teacher pay, and personnel decisions tied to an effective merit-based teacher evaluation system (NCEE, 1983; Donaldson, 2009, p. 4). As a result of this report, many states instituted a professional development requirement designed to promote educational reform (Garth-Young, 2007, p. 16).

Ideas about teacher evaluation also began to shift in the late 1980s and early 1990s as a result of research in the field of cognitive psychology. Rather than viewing students as merely repositories for knowledge, researchers realized that learning was a more complex process that required students to construct knowledge through more challenging lessons that involve problem solving, higher-order critical thinking, and collaboration (Danielson & McGreal, 2000, p. 14). Many reforms during this time

focused on setting rigorous curriculum standards as a way to improve student learning (Donaldson, 2009, p. 4). Moreover, in the late 1990s, educators began to understand that an evaluation of good teaching needed to move beyond a simple examination of teacher behaviors to take into account the effect those teaching practices have on student learning. In particular, educators began to understand that formative teacher evaluation systems designed to foster teacher growth and professional development could lead to higher student engagement and learning. In response to these concerns, Charlotte Danielson created a four-domain teacher evaluation model that many districts began to use during the past decade (Danielson & McGreal, 2000, p. 23; Danielson, 2007, pp. 3-4).

More recently, another federal educational reform, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), has exerted pressure to improve teaching by focusing on student outcomes. NCLB focuses on ensuring the presence of "highly qualified" teachers in all classrooms and requiring that professional development programs be provided to meet that goal (NCLB, 2001; Garth-Young, 2007, pp. 16-17). Researchers have noted that NCLB is having a profound effect on teacher evaluation in order to meet its accountability demands (Garth-Young, 2007, p. 26; Pritchett et al., 2010, p. 1).

Finally, the current administration's Race to the Top initiative with its accountability focus has begun to have a significant impact on teacher evaluation. As it has sought to raise accountability standards in education, Race to the Top has sparked debate over whether current state tenure laws, teacher evaluation, and professional development practices are well-suited to ensure that all students in the public education

system receive a high quality education (Pritchett et al., 2010, p. 1; The New Teacher Project, 2009).

Danielson Model of Teacher Evaluation

Introduced over a decade ago, Charlotte Danielson's model for teacher evaluation remains a key model that is currently used by many school districts today. Since it was created, "[s]chool [d]istricts across the country have begun incorporating Danielson's work into their teacher evaluation tools" (Pritchett et al., 2010, p. 59). In fact, it "is one of the most common systems" used by school districts across many states today (Donaldson, 2009, p. 5). Danielson's basic model instructs administrators to evaluate teachers in four separate domains: (1) planning and preparation; (2) the classroom environment; (3) instruction; and (4) professional responsibilities (Danielson & McGreal, 2000, p. 23; Danielson, 2007, pp. 3-4). The Danielson model emphasizes that although evaluation must play a role in summative decision-making, districts also should emphasize formative purposes in order to improve student learning. Teachers should receive constructive feedback, be taught to recognize outstanding practice, and be part of a staff development program that helps to accomplish these goals (Danielson & McGreal, 2000, p. 8). Danielson says that districts "can design evaluation systems in which educators can not only achieve the dual purposes of accountability and professional development, but can merge them" (Danielson & McGreal, 2000, p. 10).

Danielson's model for effective teacher evaluation contains three essential elements. First, it requires a coherent, shared definition of good teaching and clear evaluative criteria. Second, it requires evaluation techniques and procedures that accurately and consistently assess whether teachers are meeting its definition of good

teaching. Lastly, a successful evaluation system needs trained evaluators who make consistent and reliable judgments about teacher performance so that they can recommend appropriate professional development activities for each teacher (Danielson & McGreal, 2000, pp. 21-24). According to Danielson, administrators should examine multiple aspects of a teacher's practice and much evidence to ensure a reliable assessment. For instance, an administrator should assess classroom performance through both formal and informal observations, lesson plans, student work, communications with parent and community members, logs of professional development activities, student and parent feedback, and a teacher's own self assessment (Danielson & McGreal, 2000, pp. 46-54).

Another significant feature of the Danielson model is that evaluation procedures should be differentiated for different groups of teachers. In particular, novice teachers need more of an administrator's time than do successful, experienced teachers. Similarly, struggling tenured teachers need more time than their more successful colleagues do (Danielson & McGreal, 2000, pp. 78-80). Accordingly, Danielson's model provides three tracks. Track I recommends that an administrator spend more time mentoring beginning teachers in order both to help these novice teachers hone their practice and also ensure that the administrator can make accurate summative decisions regarding whom to retain (Danielson & McGreal, 2000, p. 81). Track II allocates less time to experienced teachers who already have established a track record of successful teaching. This track focuses on fostering professional growth opportunities to promote continued skills development through activities such as professional learning communities, action research, curriculum development, peer coaching, professional portfolios, and study groups (Danielson & McGreal, 2000, pp. 99-100, 107-110). The last track -- Track III -- focuses on the needs

of marginal teachers by providing more intensive assistance and clear standards for improvement for these teachers (Danielson & McGreal, 2000, p. 118).

In sum, the Danielson teacher evaluation model is a significant improvement over prior methods of evaluating teachers. For one, it recognizes that many different components go into good teaching. It encourages administrators to collect evidence of effective teaching in a number of different domains, including planning, parent communication, and professional development activities, which go well beyond the behaviors that can be seen during classroom observation of instruction. Moreover, to ensure reliability, it emphasizes the need for administrators to collect multiple pieces of evidence to show that a teacher has met district standards in each domain of good teaching. Finally, the Danielson model emphasizes formative purposes of evaluation that are designed to provide constructive feedback and ensure teacher growth. Evaluation is differentiated based on a teacher's level of experience, so each teacher can receive the targeted feedback that he or she needs to improve.

Problems with the Danielson Model

Although many researchers believe that the Danielson model of teacher evaluation is a major improvement over previous systems of teacher evaluation, several educational researchers and reformers have commented on some problems with the Danielson model (Donaldson, 2009, pp. 5-6; Tucker & Stronge, 2005, p. 25) and believe that the model, as it has been implemented by some districts, has not led to the huge strides of improvement that many predicted would follow from its use. This section summarizes some of those limitations and obstacles.

Concerns with an Administrator's Ability to Evaluate Effectively

Some researchers have placed the blame for the failure of current evaluation systems to improve student achievement on administrators' ineffectiveness. Tucker and Stronge (2005) highlight that teacher evaluation systems may have "limited validity based on the skill of the observer" (p. 7). Likewise, Donaldson (2009) notes that sometimes "administrators evaluate teachers of subjects or grades with which they are not familiar," which makes it difficult for them to evaluate a teacher's performance accurately (p. 11).

Adding on to the concerns with an administrator's skill or level of substantive knowledge, Pritchett, Sparks, and Taylor-Johnson (2010) comment that "principals are seldom in the classroom, rarely give constructive feedback, and that only 2.5-10 percent of a principal's time is spent in classrooms each day" (p. 7). The lack of time spent on effective evaluation, as well as observations of atypical lessons chosen by a teacher to showcase her best teaching, have provided an "isolated view" of what happens in the classroom, and untrained, overworked administrators may not be able to tell the difference between the lessons they observe and the teaching that regularly occurs in a classroom (Pritchett et al., 2010, p. 55).

Another researcher, Garth-Young (2007), citing prior research by Wise & Darling-Hammond (1984-1985), Boyd (1989) and Contreras (1999), explains that principals' classroom observations often are brief and rushed due to other responsibilities, which, in turn, leads to teachers' lack of confidence in the ability of teacher evaluation to improve instruction. "[M]ost evaluators do not have sufficient time to produce reliable and valid insights regarding teacher evaluations" (Garth-Young, 2007, pp. 47, 114). She also notes that some teachers view administrators as untrustworthy or biased and think they use the

evaluation process to "terminate people they dislike" (Garth-Young, 2007, p. 5).

According to Garth-Young (2007), "a lack of mutual trust from strained relationships between principals and teachers during the evaluation process" can greatly diminish the effectiveness of the process (p. 117).

Kersten and Israel (2005), in another study, state that even administrators view current evaluation practices as lacking effectiveness because they are limited in the time they can spend on evaluation, and their district's evaluation tool does not state clear, unambiguous goals and is not well-designed to help them provide meaningful feedback to teachers (p. 58). Garth-Young's follow-up survey in 2007 of Illinois middle school and junior high principals also supports Kersten and Israel's conclusions regarding the impediments to effective teacher evaluation that principals report they face. Thirty-five percent of principals cite "time constraints" as a significant obstacle, followed by twenty-four percent who indicate that "inadequate instrumentation" for evaluating teachers is a significant impediment (Garth-Young, 2007, p. 102). Garth-Young (2007) advocates that "quality evaluations may be possible if the amount of time to conduct evaluations and the number of teachers to be evaluated were within reasonable parameters" (p. 124).

Model Misapplied

In addition to sharing concerns about an administrator's own effectiveness in evaluating teachers under the Danielson model, some researchers have commented that the evaluation model used in many districts is often misapplied. Although Danielson advocates that it is important for principals and teachers to have candid conversations about teaching, too often, even when principals assess teachers in all four of the Danielson quadrants, they still give feedback in a hierarchical, top-down manner that does not allow for the teacher to engage in any true self-reflection. This is especially true

if teachers are not required to engage in any journaling or written self-reflection as part of the evaluation process (Danielson & McGreal, 2000, pp. 47-48). Danielson and McGreal (2000) note that "[b]y requiring self-assessment, working in teams on a focus area, and reflecting on one's own practice through portfolio exercises, an evaluation system can promote professional learning in teachers" (p. 30). In addition, they note that having teachers work with principals to "establish professional growth goals" also is important (Danielson & McGreal, 2000, p. 30).

Garth-Young's 2007 survey of Illinois middle school and junior high principals echoes Danielson's emphasis on the importance of evaluators giving helpful feedback to teachers. Her study found that frequent and meaningful constructive feedback to teachers is the most important instructional leadership strategy to promote teacher growth. Thirty percent of the principals surveyed stated that effective feedback was the single most important strategy (Garth-Young, 2007, p. 103). She notes that "[s]uch self-reflection can yield not only better teachers but also more deeply satisfied teachers by providing them with a framework for collecting, documenting, and reflecting on their careers" (pp. 50-51). She further states that "[t]eachers can use the results of . . . formative assessments and counsel from administrators to improve classroom instruction" (p. 119).

Another study reaches similar conclusions. Pritchett, Sparks, and Taylor-Johnson (2010) note that "[t]eachers can . . . be reluctant to participate in post-observation sharing, more concerned about their 'score' or frustrated by their own lack of participation in the discussion, resulting in a lack of valuable discourse" (p. 56). Thus, when the teacher evaluation system does not allow teachers any chance to reflect honestly with their principal about their teaching practices, the opportunity for real growth is diminished.

Garth-Young (2007), citing Kersten and Israel (2005), also notes that many administrators recognize that goal setting with teachers, enhanced supervision, and enhanced communication with teachers are factors that greatly promote teacher growth, but are not always present when the current teacher evaluation model is applied. She advocates the "importance of [administrators] creating a growth-oriented climate that encourages feedback while building trusting relationships" with teachers as a key area for improvement (p. 124).

Equally important, the Danielson model is sometimes misapplied because school districts have not done a comprehensive job of integrating their teacher evaluation and professional development systems. Danielson and McGreal (2000) note that it is important that schools create an environment of learning that assumes that continuing professional learning is important and that "it is every teacher's responsibility to continue to grow professionally" (p. 29). They stress that this connection between teacher evaluation and professional development "does not happen automatically; not all systems contribute to the professional learning" of teachers (Danielson & McGreal, 2000, p. 61). Thus, districts must proactively design professional development systems that dovetail with teacher evaluation procedures in order to promote, monitor, and assess true growth. Garth-Young (2007), citing Conteras (1999), notes that "teachers may perceive professional development as empowering if they are actively involved in meaningful staff development activities" geared to their own needs (p. 120).

Model Too Narrow in Scope

Several researchers have commented that despite the Danielson teacher evaluation model's emphasis on teacher growth, the model is flawed because it is too narrow in scope. They have criticized the model because administrators still typically only assess a

small sample of a teacher's total work with students. For example, administrators may conduct only two-to-four formal observations annually (Tucker & Stronge, 2005, p. 7). Pritchett, Sparks, and Taylor-Johnson (2010) note that teachers often are frustrated by the small number of seemingly "walk-through" observations. The small number of observations suggests "a lack of scope for the depth of a teacher's knowledge and ability, a lack of consistency [], and a lack of reliability" (p. 62). Administrators and teachers alike recognize that the current evaluation model -- when it includes only two, three, or four observations per year -- provides only a snapshot of a teacher's effectiveness, and yet it is used to make important summative decisions.

Even more significantly, researchers have criticized the Danielson model because it has promoted too strong a focus on teacher behaviors rather than student learning. Pritchett, Sparks, and Taylor-Johnson (2010) note that classroom observations "focus on teaching rather than learning" (p. 62). Despite the emphasis of recent teacher evaluation systems on teacher growth, it has only been assumed -- rather than proven -- that increased student achievement will follow. They state that "educators acknowledge that appraisal systems should move toward an increased focus on student learning rather than an assumption of student achievement" (Pritchett et al., 2010, p. 55). Citing Iwanicki (2001), Pritchett and his colleagues emphasize that "both the teacher and the evaluator need to reflect on the curriculum and the standards taught, the relationship with students, and student learning as a result of both the teaching and the relationships" (Pritchett et al., 2010, p. 62).

Tucker and Stronge (2005), in their book *Linking Teacher Evaluation and Student Learning*, are also concerned by the weight that current teacher evaluation models give to

teacher behaviors rather than actual student learning. They note that "[d]espite [other] substantial drawbacks to the traditional evaluation process, the truly fundamental flaw in such an approach is the assumption that the presence of good practice during the observation equates to the academic success of students"; they argue that "[i]f student learning is our ultimate goal, then it should be measured directly and not extrapolated from limited observations" (Tucker & Stronge, 2005, p. 7). They stress the importance of including assessments of both the *act* of teaching and the *results* of teaching in a comprehensive teacher evaluation system. In sum, although the Danielson model recognizes that student achievement data should be a part of the evaluation process (Danielson & McGreal, 2000, p. 19.), this has not been the actual practice in most districts.

Formative Focus of the Danielson Model Tends to De-emphasize the Summative/Evaluative Purpose of Evaluation

Lastly, several commentators have criticized the current teacher evaluation systems used in most districts because they lead to rating inflation. Specifically, these studies have noted that most evaluators give teachers positive ratings. Between 1995 and 2005, only one in every 930 teachers (0.1 percent) in Illinois received an "unsatisfactory" rating, and over four years, nearly 100 percent of Chicago teachers were rated "satisfactory" or above (Donaldson, 2009, p. 9). Donaldson explains that this rating inflation is problematic because it is more difficult to fire unsuccessful teachers who receive "satisfactory" ratings that mask their incompetence. She notes that it is also harder to reward truly outstanding teachers, which may serve as a disincentive to them to continue to perform well if their efforts are not distinguished from those of underperforming colleagues. Accordingly, although the Danielson model may do a decent job

of providing formative feedback to teachers, it has been less effective in differentiating among teachers for summative, personnel-related purposes.

Recent Efforts to Reform Teacher Evaluation

Although the Danielson teacher evaluation model is viewed by many as an improvement over the systems of teacher evaluation it replaced, educational reformers in recent years have made the perceived inadequacies of current teacher evaluation models a major focus of their reform efforts (Tucker & Stronge, 2005, p. 25). As noted above, one major criticism of current teacher evaluation systems is rooted in its formative focus on promoting teacher growth rather than ensuring actual student achievement. One result of the current system's formative focus is that it does not differentiate well among teachers. Since most teachers receive similar evaluation ratings, school districts do not base job-related decisions, such as tenure, job reassignments, and firings on evaluations to any significant degree, but instead base those decisions on seniority alone (Donaldson, 2009; Tucker & Stronge, 2005).

Over the past few years, several new ideas about how to improve teacher evaluation have been proposed. For example, many school districts are now encouraging principal walk-throughs as an effective tool to gather more data on the day-to-day performance of teachers. These walk-throughs can be the starting point for administrators to have deeper conversations with teachers about what instructional practices are most likely to increase student achievement. The walk-throughs can stimulate teacher self-reflection and often lead to teachers setting new goals for improved performance (City, Elmore, Fiarman & Teitel, 2009). Gary Hopkins (2010), editor of *Education World*, says that walk-throughs generally are separate from a formal evaluation

process and are "used strictly as a means of engaging teachers in dialogue and reflection about teaching practices and school-wide goals." Principals can also use the data they collect on these ten-minute observations to drive school improvement plans in ways designed to promote greater consistency across classrooms and higher achievement for all students.

In addition, educational researcher Robert Marzano (2011) has refined his own teaching evaluation model in light of meta-analytic research that he and other professors have performed over the last few decades. His "causal teacher evaluation model" is based on controlled, experimental studies that establish a direct link from a teacher's use of certain instructional strategies, including note-taking, cooperative learning, and use of graphic organizers, to improvements in student achievement. Building on prior research, Marzano's recently-adapted teacher evaluation model suggests that administrators should structure their classroom observations to find evidence that teachers are using the specific strategies that prior research has proven lead to student success. If teachers are not, then administrators must provide specific, targeted feedback that makes teachers aware of the highly-effective strategies for increasing student achievement and holds them accountable for using these strategies.

Like Marzano, two professors of education from the University of Virginia, Pamela Tucker and James Stronge (2005), argue that "a reasonable consensus" now exists over what constitutes effective teaching and the specific instructional strategies that lead to student achievement. They say that "[w]ith state standards and federal legislation, such as No Child Left Behind, more explicitly defining accountability, the time has arrived for a systematic application of our research-based knowledge" about how to

achieve higher levels of student learning (p. 3). They note that studies show there may be a 42- to 52-percentile point difference for students placed in the classrooms of high-performing teachers for three years in a row compared to those assigned to the classrooms of low-performing teachers for three consecutive years (pp. 3-4). In addition, they note that it takes at least three years for students to undo the damage of one year with a low-performing teacher if they are placed with high-performing teachers for each of those subsequent years. They explain that "studies make it clear that not only does teacher quality matter when it comes to how much students learn, but also that, for better or worse, a teacher's effectiveness stays with students for years to come" (p. 5). Thus, according to Tucker and Stronge, it is imperative that school districts design teacher evaluation processes that both differentiate effectively between highly successful and unsuccessful teachers and use actual student gains on achievement tests and other student performance measures as part of their system of teacher evaluation. Specifically, school districts must develop "fair and reasonable means of assessing teacher success with students" and use "valid and reliable data on student learning to inform the teacher evaluation process" (p. 8).

Another educational researcher and policy analyst, Morgaen Donaldson, reaches similar conclusions in her article, "So Long, Lake Wobegon? Using Teacher Evaluation to Raise Teacher Quality" (2009). She reasons that the time is right for a major overhaul of teacher evaluation systems because "we now have developed more collective knowledge about good teaching and the infrastructure to support pedagogical change" (p. 2). In addition, charter schools, voucher programs, and the home-school movement all are putting significant pressure on public schools to become more accountable (p. 14).

Furthermore, teacher and administrator retirements have resulted in a younger generation of educators who are receptive to more rigorous and differentiated assessment (pp. 15-16). Like Tucker and Stronge (2005), Donaldson (2009) criticizes current teacher evaluation models, including Danielson's evaluation framework, because they are "more focused on teacher inputs than student outputs" (pp. 5-6). She advocates that school districts should use value-added analysis to estimate growth in student achievement in a specified time period. She states that "if the ultimate goal of teaching is student learning, evaluation should privilege that outcome" (p. 6).

A recent article from the Brookings Institution further explores the role that "value-added" data on student achievement can play in teacher evaluation (Glazerman, Loeb, Goldhager, Staiger, Raudenbush & Whitehurst, 2010). The authors of this study note that "[t]he vast majority of school districts presently employ teacher evaluation systems that result in all teachers receiving the same (top) rating" (p. 1). They advocate that districts must revise their teacher evaluation systems to meaningfully and reliably differentiate based on teacher effectiveness. They recommend that the way to do this is to "incorporate information on the value-added by individual teachers to the achievement of their students" (p. 2). Specifically, year-to-year changes in student achievement data should complement other measures, such as observations, parent feedback, and teacher self-reflections. They caution that it is important for administrators to examine "multiple years of value-added data in combination with other sources of information to increase reliability and validity" (p. 5).

In step with the efforts of other educational reformers who seek to improve teacher evaluation, the National Education Association (NEA), a 3.2 million-member

teacher association, adopted its own policy statement on teacher evaluation and accountability at its July 2011 representative assembly (Otterman, 2011). The new policy advocates that "students and teachers deserve high quality evaluation systems that provide the tools teachers need to continuously tailor instruction, enhance practice and advance student learning" (NEA, 2011, p. 10). Specifically, the new NEA policy states that student achievement should be used as a factor to evaluate teachers (Powers, 2011). For the first time, NEA policy recognizes that teacher evaluation systems should assess, as one component of performance, "indicators of contribution to student learning and growth" that demonstrate a teacher's impact on student achievement, and it allows for the use of "high quality developmentally appropriate standardized tests that provide valid, reliable, timely, and meaningful information regarding student learning and growth" (NEA, 2011, pp. 10-11.) Although some union members worried that including student achievement data as one component of teacher evaluation might lead districts to emphasize student test scores over other measures, the NEA policy passed overwhelmingly, which many believe signals a willingness on the part of teachers to embrace novel methods to improve teacher evaluation systems (Otterman, 2011; Powers, 2011).

Legislative Response to Recent Education Reform Initiatives

Educational reformers have motivated state legislators and other government officials to suggest (and in some states, mandate) that teachers should be evaluated based on student performance through a carefully-designed new teacher evaluation system. Donaldson (2009) notes that "[m]any districts and states are now laying the groundwork to base teacher evaluation at least partially on a teacher's impact on her students'

achievement" (p. 6). She cites 10 states that -- as of 2009 -- had passed regulations supporting the use of student achievement data in teacher evaluation (Donaldson, 2009, p. 6).

Since then, additional states, including Illinois, have joined in this movement. These states, including Illinois, have passed new legislation that will require school districts to completely overhaul the systems for teacher evaluation they have used in the past. The Illinois Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA) of 2010 (Public Act 96-861), as modified by Senate Bill 7, which became law on June 13, 2011, is the driving force behind the changes that lie ahead for Illinois school districts. Beginning with the 2012-2013 school year, teacher reductions-in-force (RIFs) and teacher recall procedures must no longer be seniority-based, but rather based on teacher performance evaluations. Teachers must be placed in four groups: non-tenured teachers that lack a performance rating (group one); teachers with either a "needs improvement" or "unsatisfactory" rating on one of the two most recent evaluations (group two); teachers with at least a rating of "satisfactory" or "proficient" on both of the two most recent evaluations (group three); and teachers with a rating of "excellent" on at least two of the three most recent evaluations, with the third evaluation being "satisfactory" or "proficient" (group four). Pub. Act 97-008 (2011), § 5, adding 105 ILCS 5/24-12(b). In general, teachers then must be RIFed in order of group placement and average performance rating within each group, with the lowest-rated teachers being RIFed first. Only in the case of tied ratings is seniority considered. Subsequent changes to school districts' policies and procedures regarding reassignments to new positions, tenure, and dismissals will then take effect during later school years.

Recent Developments in Illinois Since Passage of the New Law

Although the subject of teacher evaluation remains a significant focus of national educational journals like *Kappan Magazine* (Kappan, 2012, pp. 8-13, 19-23), relatively few journal articles have been published in the past year that address Illinois' new teacher evaluation law explicitly. Much of what has been published is either critical of or at least cautionary about the new law's prospects for using teacher evaluation reform as a vehicle for improving student achievement. For example, *Scholastic Administrator* columnist Alexander Russo warns that it is easy for states to pass new legislation but much harder to implement it; he says that "the forces of inertia are stronger and more persistent than the energetic sprint of the legislative process and that the struggles of implementation are many." Russo cautions that "the hard work of making changes stick has begun" and believes that the results from PERA are not likely to be as dramatic, immediate, or transformative as expected (Russo, 2011, p. 18).

In an attempt to highlight misunderstandings about the new Illinois teacher evaluation law, 88 Chicago area educational researchers, including Norm Weston and other National Louis University colleagues, signed an open letter to Mayor Rahm Emmanuel and former Chicago Public Schools CEO Jean-Claude Brizard, urging them to move cautiously when implementing PERA, given the lack of "high-quality evidentiary support" for its likely effectiveness (CREATE, 2012). Specifically, the group highlighted concerns with school districts' readiness to identify measures of student growth that correlate well with teacher effectiveness. In addition, the educational researchers warned that most value-added models of teacher effectiveness do not produce stable ratings because student scores can fluctuate dramatically from one test session to another with

reasons that have little or nothing to do with a teacher's effectiveness. Moreover, there is no evidence that teacher evaluation systems that include changes in student test scores as a variable actually produce any gains in student achievement, which is a main goal of Illinois' new law. Finally, the group cautioned that students will be hurt by PERA's requirement that student growth be a significant factor in a teacher's evaluation because teachers may teach more to the test, avoid hard-to-teach students, and become more competitive -- rather than collaborative -- with one another.

A group of Illinois teachers called the Illinois New Millennium Initiative leveled criticisms similar to those in the letter of the educational researchers. In its article, *Classroom Experts' Recommendations for an Effective Educator Evaluation System* (2011), the consortium of teachers warned that to be effective, new teacher evaluation systems must rely on multiple measures of teacher performance and must be closely aligned with professional development models (pp. 4-6). They caution that Illinois school districts must take time to develop and validate meaningful assessments before including student growth as a factor in teacher evaluation (p. 4). These assessments must tease out the contributions that various teachers make to a student's progress, which is difficult to assess. The Illinois teachers in the New Millennium group also stressed the importance that issues like class size, supportive school culture, access to needed materials, and student mobility play in student achievement (p. 6).

Finally, a recent survey of Illinois principals sheds light on some of the challenges that school districts may face in implementing the new teacher evaluation law. The Illinois Education Research Council surveyed 877 Illinois principals during the 2010-2011 school year and issued a report on its study late last year (IERC, 2011). The IERC

report described a disconnect between principals and legislators on the importance of standardized test scores in measuring a school's success. Currently, principals do not rate standardized test scores or gains in student scores as a significant measure of the school's success (pp. 1-2). Moreover, the survey found that many principals do not feel confident in their effectiveness as an instructional leader, so they tend to delegate tasks in this area to other school leaders (p. 2). Furthermore, fewer than half of Illinois principals currently include student achievement growth data as a factor in a teacher's evaluation, and even when it is used, it accounts for less than 7% of the evaluation (p. 3). These survey results show that many Illinois principals' teacher evaluation practices are inconsistent with current educational policy reforms (White & Agarwal, 2011, p. 9). As a result, this data highlights the significant conceptual hurdles that must be cleared before PERA can be implemented effectively.

Illinois's new teacher evaluation law is reflective of the larger accountability movement that has taken hold across the United States and is ripe for study. It likely will require several years of study to measure the full impact that the new Illinois law will have. However, we can learn much by studying the ways in which Illinois school districts have planned, and continue to plan, to implement the changes that the new law requires. The subsequent sections of this change leadership project will address this area.

SECTION FIVE: DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

In the two districts I examined, I interviewed human resources directors, other administrators with responsibility for conducting teacher evaluations, the presidents of the teachers' unions, and teachers who were involved in planning for the changes to each district's teacher evaluation system. This section reports and interprets the data I obtained from those interviews.

District A

In District A, the administrators I interviewed included the assistant superintendent for human resources, two principals, and one assistant principal. I also interviewed both co-presidents of the teachers' union, one of whom was involved directly in the changes to the evaluation system and one who was not. I also interviewed three other teachers who served on the teacher evaluation committee.

Human Resources Director

During the 2011-2012 school year, District A's human resources director convened the Teacher Evaluation Ratings Committee, a committee of five administrators and nine teachers who planned the changes in the teacher evaluation system that the new Illinois law required. (I served as one of the teachers on this committee; however, all of the information in this Change Plan is derived from interviews and not first-hand observations from committee meetings.) Over the course of six meetings, this committee worked to align its teacher evaluation system and rubric with the framework outlined by Charlotte Danielson in her 2007 text, *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching* (Danielson, 2007, pp. 26-108). Both teachers and administrators offered ideas and insights as the committee worked to adapt the district's previous evaluation

system to a revised four-rating system with ratings of "excellent," "proficient," "needs improvement," and "unsatisfactory."

The assistant superintendent is proud of the collaborative process the district used and the high level of professional dialogue during the committee's deliberations. The committee met six times during the late fall and winter months to revise the district's current evaluation system. Specifically, it aligned the system with the four ratings of excellent, proficient, needs improvement, and unsatisfactory that are required by PERA, and it adopted the four Charlotte Danielson quadrants as the framework for the new evaluation model. The committee adopted the Danielson framework because it was research-based, and it was the model that most Illinois districts seemed to be adopting.

Pursuant to this model, the group decided that teachers will receive a rating of excellent, proficient, needs improvement, or unsatisfactory in each of Danielson's four quadrants: planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities. A majority of committee members agreed to implement a point system in which an "excellent" rating would be worth four points, a "proficient" rating would be worth three points, a "needs improvement" would be worth two points, and an "unsatisfactory" rating would be worth one point. In order to receive an overall "excellent" rating, a teacher must receive a score of 15 or higher, i.e. an "excellent" rating in at least three of the four Danielson domains with a "proficient" in no more than one domain. To achieve an overall "proficient" rating, the teacher must receive at least 11 points.

Following the committee's recommendation of the new plan, the assistant superintendent reviewed the plan with the administrative team and met with union

leadership to review contract language and adopt a new letter of agreement. Finally, the new teacher evaluation plan was formally adopted by the board of education at the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year. The new plan is being implemented during the 2012-2013 school year; all non-tenured teachers and about half of tenured teachers -- those currently in an evaluation year -- are being evaluated under the new plan.

Some planning for the new teacher evaluation system continues during the 2012-2013 school year. The assistant superintendent is working to develop special evaluation rubrics for speech-language teachers, school nurses, social workers, and curriculum coordinators because a teacher evaluation rubric does not align well with their responsibilities. She hopes to put these rubrics in place by the end of the year. In addition, she hopes to reconvene the Teacher Evaluation Ratings Committee in the spring of 2013 to discuss problems and pitfalls in the implementation of the new teacher evaluation system; she especially wants to assess the patterns of ratings across schools to see if the new teacher evaluation system is being implemented consistently across the district. Finally, the district has formed a Reduction in Force (RIF) Committee to sort teachers into the RIF categories required by PERA. The RIF committee has met once this year, but she thinks the RIF issue will best be explored as part of the contract negotiation process, which also has begun this year.

Legally, District A is not required to implement a measure of student growth as part of the teacher evaluation system until 2016, but principals have chosen student growth goals as a part of the administrator evaluation system this year. Most principals have set goals related to improving standardized test performance for the district's lowest-scoring kids. The assistant superintendent thinks it was smart of the legislature to require

changes to principal evaluation first because it sends the message that "we're all in this together" and forces principals to grapple with difficult issues first before teachers are held accountable. District A plans to take a "wait and see" approach on the issue of including student growth measures in teacher evaluation. It will wait to see how surrounding districts address the issue and then likely will adopt a similar plan.

As for the communication of the new teacher evaluation plan, the assistant superintendent stated that she worries more about communication than the substantive changes to the evaluation process because she is not positioned well to hear teachers' candid impressions. She has done her best to communicate the changes through optional Institute Day presentations, podcasts posted on the District's website, and by training administrators in how to explain the changes during building staff meetings. However, she is unsure about the "word on the street" and hopes others will inform her so that she can gauge the effectiveness of the communication to teachers about the new plan.

Administrators Performing Evaluations

An important topic during my conversations with three of District A's administrators was the 40-60 hours of online teacher evaluation training that Illinois required evaluators to complete this summer. All three administrators commented that despite many logistical difficulties, the online training helped them appreciate the differences between excellent and proficient teaching and ultimately made them stronger evaluators. As a result of this training, all three administrators anticipate that they will be rating fewer teachers as "excellent" this year because they have a deeper understanding of what excellent teaching looks like. One administrator also noted that the assistant superintendent has sent a message to building principals that the District expects to give

fewer "excellent" ratings; this administrator worries, however, that some administrators may be more comfortable following this recommendation than others.

Similarly, although all three administrators agree that some staff members are nervous about the new evaluation process, they feel that they have strong enough relationships with the teachers they supervise to guide those teachers through the uncertainties of the first year of the new evaluation system in a way that promotes teacher growth. All three administrators like that the new evaluation system requires more teacher self-reflection and more administrator-teacher dialogue. One administrator commented that in the past, she gave written feedback before oral feedback, but the new system requires that the teacher and administrator talk about an observation first before she gives any written feedback; she thinks that this change in format will "facilitate richer conversations," which will, in turn, help teachers grow. Another administrator commented that she has always conducted post-observation conferences before giving feedback, so she thinks District A's new teacher evaluation format will only enhance what she has always done. Furthermore, one administrator said that she particularly likes the District's choice to use the Danielson framework because it allows her to tease out evidence of a teacher's Domain 1 understanding of her students during the reflective pre-observation conference, and she now has a place to record a teacher's Domain 4 professional achievements that are not directly observable in an observation.

All three administrators think that the Teacher Evaluation Ratings Committee planned effectively for the changes that are being implemented this year. They all agree that the change process allowed both administrator and teacher voices to be heard. One administrator complimented the assistant superintendent for breaking down the process

into manageable steps and setting clear agendas for each meeting. She noted that at the same time the joint committee of administrators and teachers were meeting, the administrative team met to study the Danielson framework; the administrators "analyzed the model, tore it apart, and put it back together," which she says was important for "creating ownership" of the model and giving administrators an "adjustment period" to conform to the new framework.

Although the administrators believed that teacher voices were heard in the committee, they noted that teacher members of the committee were not encouraged to share the committee's work with other teachers until the committee's work was complete. As a result, the administrators said, many teachers who were not on the committee were not aware of the committee's work. One administrator added that District A's administration might have done a better job explaining the new teacher evaluation system to staff last year rather than waiting to divulge many of the details to staff at the beginning of this year. She feels the earlier communication might have prevented some of the concerns expressed by union representatives last year. She also would have liked to be the primary source of communication to her staff rather than having staff members learn details piecemeal from other sources. The other two administrators expressed a different view, stating that they thought the District effectively front-loaded the new teacher evaluation plan by making information available to staff last year at both Institute Day presentations and building staff meetings. One commented that it is important when planning for change to "say the same thing many times," and she feels the District did this effectively.

The three administrators are divided in their expectations as to how much administrative time the new teacher evaluation system will take: one thinks she will need to increase the time spent on teacher evaluation by fifty percent, one anticipates a thirty-percent increase in time, and the last expects only a slight increase. One administrator anticipates that she will spend three and a half forty-minute periods on each observation of each teacher. The District requires three observations of non-tenured teachers in the first two years of practice and two for all other teachers, and she is responsible for evaluating between twenty and thirty teachers each year. In addition, she must spend about an hour per teacher on summative reports and conferences in the spring. In short, she will spend nearly four solid weeks of the school year solely on teacher evaluation, which, she says, feels "overwhelming" with all of the other responsibilities also on her plate.

Teachers' Union Co-Presidents

Both union co-presidents were uncertain about the effectiveness of the new teacher evaluation system, saying that it was "too early to tell" until the new system has gone "full cycle." One hoped that it would increase teacher reflection with its more detailed, intense rubric and that it might spark more teachers to seek professional development to meet higher expectations. The other noted that teachers are now more involved in the evaluation process because they now are collecting and presenting evidence of their own performance.

Regarding the change process itself, one union co-president thought that committee members "wanted more discussion, but this wasn't encouraged." The co-president also noted that the assistant superintendent drafted documents relating to the

new teacher evaluation plan between committee meetings and presented them to the group rather than having the group draft documents together.

Both union co-presidents expressed concerns with the level and quality of communication about the changes to staff. They note that some teachers were more "in the loop" than others, and one gave the communication a score of "C+." They report that teachers are feeling uncertain about the new evaluation system, and they say they are hearing that teachers believe that administrators are looking to prove that teachers deserve "proficient" ratings, rather than "excellent" ratings. This, the union co-presidents said, results in artificial, stiff, and formulaic conversations rather than genuine dialogue. The union presidents worry that staff previously rated as "excellent" will have a hard time accepting "proficient" ratings, especially if they believe that administrators are applying an informal quota system that hold them to a smaller number of "excellent" ratings than in previous years.

Other Teachers

Three teachers involved in planning for the changes to District A's teacher evaluation system expressed some similar views to those of the union co-presidents, but there was a bit more diversity in opinion. One teacher thought the Teacher Evaluation Ratings Committee worked together very collaboratively and effectively, but two other members expressed some dissatisfaction with the change process. One thought that the assistant superintendent had already decided what she wanted the new teacher evaluation system to look like, and this teacher was disappointed that the group just adopted the Danielson rubric without making changes. She wished that the group could have met a few more times to create a model lesson and compile model evidence for each of

Danielson's domains in order to better help teachers understand what administrators would expect under the new system.

Another teacher liked that teachers were recruited for the committee from different buildings and departments, and she liked that the assistant superintendent took time to educate everyone about the Danielson model and to let teachers and administrators discuss the model in small groups. However, she was disappointed that the idea of allowing teachers to set their own goals (the achievement of which would be part of the evaluation) was scrapped during a brief discussion when at least one member of the committee was out of the room. Like the other teacher, she also thought that the assistant superintendent had made decisions before the teachers even came to meetings, so she does not believe that the committee engaged in true collective decision-making. She states, "Teachers had an opportunity to be heard, but it didn't necessarily matter what they said."

When asked about the effectiveness of the implementation of the new evaluation process this year, one teacher thought the podcasts were effective because they were available to all teachers, but she thinks the administration erred in planning Institute Day sessions that many teachers could not attend due to other required sessions. She also worries that administrators are not implementing the new teacher evaluation process consistently across all buildings, which is causing unnecessary worry. She says that many teachers believe administrators are actively looking for evidence to justify lower ratings, and they worry they will be deemed "proficient" without getting any real feedback that will help them improve their practice before the summative rating at the end of the year. In support of this view, she quoted the assistant superintendent's mantra,

which was expressed multiple times during Teacher Evaluation Ratings Committee meetings that under the new teacher evaluation plan, "excellence is a place you may visit, but don't expect to live there." Still, she notes that she sees evidence that teachers are approaching evaluation in a more reflective manner, and they are becoming more involved in the school community in order to increase their scores in the "professionalism" domain. Thus, she concludes the new teacher evaluation system has "both pluses and minuses."

Data Interpretation

All of the interviewees had a moderate to strong understanding of the changes in the teacher evaluation process. This, of course, is not surprising, as all of the interviewees either participated in the Teacher Evaluation Ratings Committee or held a union leadership post. The interviewees varied in the feelings about the effectiveness of the change plan and how well it was communicated, based on their roles within the District. This variation followed the adage of "where you stand depends on where you sit." Administrators thought both that the process was positive and that it was communicated well. In contrast, teachers -- even those who were involved in the Teacher Evaluation Ratings Committee -- were less inclined to think that the changes were universally positive. They also felt less positive about the way those changes were communicated. Teachers' attitudes ranged from a "wait and see" approach, to a belief that the administration had pre-defined views that were not fully subject to debate within the committee, to a worry that administrators were looking for evidence to justify a district plan to give mostly "proficient" ratings.

District B

In District B, I interviewed the assistant superintendent for human resources and two building principals who evaluate staff. In addition, I interviewed the president of the teachers' union and two other teachers who were involved in the committee that planned changes in the teacher evaluation system.

Human Resources Director

The assistant superintendent of human resources in District B assumed his position at the start of the 2012-2013 school year after serving as a building principal in District B for a few years. As a building principal last year, he served on District B's joint Teacher Evaluation Ratings and RIF Committee, a group of three administrators and three teachers who met to plan the changes required by the new Illinois law. The committee began meeting in December 2011 and met several times during the winter months to convert the district's teacher evaluation plan to the four ratings required by PERA and write definitions for each rating. The committee then sorted teachers into the four PERA RIF categories. Finally, at the end of last year, the new ratings and definitions were presented to the teacher's union and the administrative council. Following approval by both of these groups, the former assistant superintendent of human resources, who retired at the end of last year, and the union president presented the changes in the teacher evaluation plan to the staff in several schools last spring. The new written plan was distributed to teachers in August, and both the new ratings and new RIF categories are being implemented during the 2012-2013 school year.

Unlike District A, District B has not adopted the Danielson or any other framework for evaluation; it made only the most minimal changes required by the new Illinois law. The assistant superintendent does not anticipate any changes in the number

of teachers who will be rated "excellent" this year compared to previous years. He said, "We had mostly excellent teachers before Illinois changed the law, and it is our belief that we still do." He told his administrators that they "should not seek to change the world overnight"; they should just "apply the status quo this year" unless they see that someone is really struggling, in which case it is important to begin to document that. Thus, he is not instructing his evaluators to be more critical of teachers this year but rather to continue to assess teachers through the same lens they have used previously. In fact, District B is still allowing teachers to choose to be evaluated under one of two alternate assessment plans; these alternate assessment plans require teachers to set individual goals and/or collaborate with other teachers to improve instruction. He has informed staff choosing these alternate assessment plans that the new Illinois law now requires classroom observations, but little else will change this year.

He does, however, think that there may be a slight shift in some administrators' ratings due to the statewide online training that his principals completed over the summer. He recognizes that the training tried to demonstrate the differences between excellent and proficient teachers, which may influence some District B administrators' evaluations. The assistant superintendent shared that he was disappointed in several aspects of the online training. First, he wishes that his evaluators could have watched and discussed the training videos together. He calls this a "missed opportunity to promote consistency" across evaluators within the district. Moreover, he wishes that he could have invited teacher-leaders to view and discuss the videos with administrators. He thinks this would have promoted an even greater understanding of the changes required by PERA and even more importantly, would have resulted in improved instruction as those teacher-leaders

shared what they learned with other teachers. Ultimately, he would like to give teacher-leaders a role in the evaluation process, so he wishes these teachers could have participated in the online training.

District B's assistant superintendent says that the next step for his district will be to develop the student growth measures that it must include in teachers' evaluations starting in 2016. He wants to develop practical examples of student growth measures and present them to teachers early. He said, "People get frantic about change, so it's important to be proactive to get the message out ahead of the change." He anticipates that evaluators' time commitment for evaluation may go up slightly this year, but he anticipates a much more significant increase when the student growth piece is added. Looking ahead, he is concerned about including student growth in teacher evaluation because it may result in an increase in the amount or changes to the timing of standardized testing. To be considered in evaluations, student growth must occur from fall to February or March, which is a short time to see any real growth. The district previously has only done standardized testing at the beginning and end of the year, so between now and 2016, it will need to consider whether to change the timing of standardized testing or whether there are ways to comply with the timing requirement of evaluations without setting a new schedule for standardized testing.

Administrators Performing Evaluations

The two District B principals with whom I spoke echoed the same philosophy as their assistant superintendent. One principal said that his staff is the "most veteran and talented staff I've ever worked with, so why would I not give these teachers an 'excellent' rating? They have earned it." The other principal said that the number of "excellent" ratings he gives may drop slightly because the online training gave him a better

understanding of excellent teaching; he stressed, however, that any change will be "small." He is concerned that if he gives a teacher a "proficient" rating and another principal gives a similar teacher in a different building an "excellent" rating, his teacher will be the one to lose her job. Both principals think that the state-mandated summer online training made them better evaluators because they now know how to have more reflective conversations with staff, but nonetheless they do not see the overall pattern of ratings changing much.

Although neither of the principals I interviewed served on the District B's Teacher Evaluation Ratings and RIF Committee themselves, both view the change process used by District B as effective. Both note that the former assistant superintendent of human resources did a good job keeping administrators informed, and the changes were communicated to all staff at the end of last year during building meetings. They thought it was smart for the assistant superintendent and union president to communicate the changes together because doing so led to greater teacher understanding and acceptance of the changes. One principal said that the changes were "well-received" by staff with only a few expressing any concern. Even these teachers, the principal said, were not alarmed about losing jobs; they are more nervous about the upcoming inclusion of student growth data than about any change occurring this year. The other principal said the hardest thing about the change process was finding teachers willing to serve on the committee, especially because the task of sorting teachers into RIF categories can affect colleagues' jobs. He said he has received few questions from staff members because the perception is that nearly everything about teacher evaluation is the same. He does not think the

prospect of being evaluated on student growth concerns most of his teachers because they are not yet aware that this requirement is coming.

Teachers' Union President

District B's union president had a similarly positive perspective on both the ways in which the district planned for change in the teacher evaluation system and the ways it communicated these changes to staff. She said, "The law is constantly changing, so it's good to stay ahead of the game." She believes that the district already had a strong evaluation system in place so the changes needed to comply with PERA were minimal and "pretty painless." She said that she and the other teacher members of the committee reported frequently to the union's governing board so that there were no surprises when the changes were presented to the full teacher membership at the end of the year.

She perceives little anxiety among teachers over the changes, but she expects teachers may ask more questions when the RIF procedures kick in at the end of the year. She also thinks there may be worry as 2016 -- and the use of student growth measures in evaluation -- approaches. She does not think teachers are worried this year because she has been assured by both the former and current assistant superintendents that the balance of "excellent" and "proficient" ratings will remain the same as in past years. She hopes that the new law may have positive effects for the small number of teachers who may be placed in the new "needs improvement" category; she hopes they will be able to get support without official remediation procedures kicking in.

Other Teachers

Both of the other teachers on District B's Teacher Evaluation Ratings and RIF Committee also think that the District successfully planned and communicated changes in teacher evaluation to staff. One teacher thought the change process was so smooth that

she expressed surprise that anyone even would study this topic for a dissertation. In her view, the district only "tweaked" the already strong teacher evaluation system it already had in place, adding in a "needs improvement" rating that few, if any, teachers will receive, anyway. She thought the former assistant superintendent and union president did a great job communicating the changes last year at building meetings. She says she has heard no teachers talk about this issue either positively or negatively and sees it as "a non-issue" in the district, although she notes that she may simply not be aware of conversations because this is a non-evaluation year for her.

The second teacher described District B as "very strategic" in announcing the changes to all staff at the end of the last year. She stressed that all staff heard the news at the same time, and all had advance notice of the changes that the District was required to implement this year. She complimented both the former assistant superintendent and the union president for working together so effectively to communicate changes to staff. As a result, she says that most teachers are feeling calm about the changes; she estimates that only five percent of the district's teachers feel any anxiety, but she notes that these are "forward-thinking people" who are concerned about how difficult it will be implement fair student growth measures in 2016, especially in non-core subjects like art and music. She says the union plans to meet with the assistant superintendent in the spring to begin considering questions about what kinds of student achievement data should be used in teacher evaluation.

Data Interpretation

By all accounts from both administrators and teachers alike, District B has taken a different approach to making changes in its teacher evaluation system than the approach taken by District A. After the passage of PERA, District A seized an opportunity to study

and adopt the Danielson model of effective teaching, and it also adopted a ratings point system tied to the Danielson model. In contrast, District B made only the most minimal changes required by the state; it added the "needs improvement" category and sorted teachers into the four legally-mandated RIF categories. Neither administrators nor teachers in District B expect these changes to impact teacher evaluation significantly during the current school year.

Moreover, the impact that the new teacher evaluation plans will have in the two districts varies significantly. In adopting the Danielson model and tying numerical ratings to the model, District A set a high standard for an "excellent" rating; a teacher needs to be rated "excellent" in three of four domains and "proficient" in the fourth domain in order to receive an overall "excellent" rating. Teachers in District A heard a consistent message from the assistant superintendent of human resources that fewer teachers would receive "excellent" ratings under the new evaluation system and that "proficient" would become the usual rating. Teachers and even some administrators reported that these changes were creating anxiety among teachers, who do not feel the changes were communicated as effectively as they might have been. Conversely, in District B neither administrators nor teachers expected the overall patterns of ratings to change significantly. As a result, teachers there were mostly calm and felt informed about the changes.

SECTION SIX: A VISION OF SUCCESS (TO BE)

As detailed in my "As Is" and "To Be" charts, along with my "Strategies and Actions" chart (all in Appendix A), District A should focus on better aligning its hiring, professional development, student placement, and teacher evaluation practices in order to improve student achievement. My change plan focuses specifically on my district's efforts to change its teacher evaluation system during the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 school years, but administrators would be wise to also consider ways to improve hiring, professional development, and student placement, as well.

Context

As discussed in Section Two above, our district stakeholders support a high level of student achievement and positive attitudes about the abilities of all students to learn, and 95-99 percent of our students in all grade levels and in all subject areas meet or exceed state standards. Because we do not have much racial, ethnic, or cultural diversity, we do not have any significant achievement gaps between these groups. Thus, there is little in the "context" arena that can, or should, change in order to promote a higher level of learning. Administrators would be smart to continue to capitalize on this largely favorable context to attract and recruit top teaching candidates for employment in our district. If the best and brightest applicants are placed in teaching positions as veteran staff retires, then administrators should over time have more confidence in its teaching team. Accordingly, the district will experience few problems in the area of teacher evaluation and should be willing to rate more teachers as "excellent" under the new teacher evaluation system.

Conditions

As explained in Section Two, my district has many conditions that promote high levels of student achievement. We have abundant financial resources due to a recent successful tax rate referendum. Teachers are given the materials and physical spaces they need in order to teach effectively. The district currently is renovating the buildings most in need of updated features, so the district has mostly positive "conditions" for learning already in place.

Two main ways in which the district can improve its "conditions" for learning relate to the ways in which the district sets new initiatives and uses data. As described above, many teachers, especially classroom teachers, feel overwhelmed by the number of initiatives they are responsible for advancing and are experiencing what Reeves calls "initiative fatigue" (Reeves, 2009, p. 14). By postponing some of these initiatives and designing more targeted professional development training, administrators should work to eliminate the problem of initiative fatigue that is prevalent in our district.

In addition, although the district collects a lot of data about student achievement, many teachers feel uncertain about administrators' expectations for that data, which results in low accountability. If teachers do not know what standards they must achieve, they cannot do much to change their practices to increase student achievement. Thus, many teachers want administrators to develop and communicate clear expectations about ways to maximize student growth. By communicating clear expectations about the student growth they expect teachers to promote, administrators can more easily hold all teachers accountable for increasing student achievement. In 2016, Illinois school districts are required to include student growth data as a part of a teacher's evaluation. Thus, the

school district should begin now to discuss this issue with teachers and build consensus over what student growth measurements and benchmarks make the most sense in each of the subjects they teach.

Competencies

District A has a well-educated and motivated staff that already believes that all students can learn at high levels, and most of its students do. By clearly developing district priorities for student growth prior to 2016 when this provision of the new teacher evaluation law kicks in, administrators can ensure that all teachers are instructing, motivating, and assessing students in similar ways. Administrators need to spend more time in classrooms now to better understand the strengths, weaknesses, and needs of students and teachers. As noted above, they need to prioritize the practice of making frequent walk-throughs into classrooms to better inform themselves of daily classroom practices. These walk-throughs, in turn, can help administrators plan more efficient staff meetings to address any concerns they have, design targeted professional development activities to meet the needs of each staff member, better match students and teachers during the placement process, and give more accurate, comprehensive, and tailored feedback to each teacher during the teacher evaluation process.

Culture

As described above, my district probably has the greatest potential to grow in the arena of "culture." Administrators rarely collaborate alongside teachers or attend meetings that involve teacher collaboration. Some teachers choose not to participate in any optional professional development offerings, participating only in required sessions on staff development days. Teachers are also nervous about losing their jobs for arbitrary

reasons, and the changes to the teacher evaluation system have increased that nervousness. Finally, frequent administrative turnover has meant that administrators often have not had time to develop trusting relationships with teachers.

With its largely positive context, well-resourced conditions, and strong foundation in the area of teacher competencies, my district should focus on improving its "culture" in a number of ways. Some specific ideas include: (1) deepening the already high level of teacher collaboration and co-teaching by encouraging administrators to participate alongside teachers in professional development sessions; (2) designing professional development programs that require *all* teachers to participate in sessions that will help them develop and expand skills to meaningfully promote student growth; and (3) communicating clearly, early, and often about any programming changes or changes in professional expectations, like the upcoming changes to the teacher evaluation system, so that teachers will feel less uncertain and anxious about change. Maintaining a more stable and consistent administrative team will help further these goals. These enhancements to the district "culture" would allow trusting relationships to grow in ways that would help build consensus for future change.

SECTION SEVEN: STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS FOR CHANGE

As District A continues to update its teacher evaluation process over the next few years, or as District A contemplates other changes, there are several strategies it might consider in order to enact change in a way that reflects the context, conditions, competencies, and culture of the district (Wagner, 2006, p. 98). By considering these strategies, District A can maximize the chance that it succeeds not only in implementing the specific change it wants to undertake, but also in building stakeholder support and buy-in for the change.

One strategy is to analyze carefully and build consensus around the need for change in the first place. Ronald Heifetz, Alexander Grashow, and Marty Linsky, in their book *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership* (2009), warn that too often leaders do not take time first to diagnose the system, including a group's culture, before implementing change (p. 57). Specifically, they recommend that a leader must work with others in the organization to figure out what to "conserve" and what to "discard" from past practices and work together to invent "new ways the build from the best of the past" while also considering the "human dimensions of the changes" (p. 69). In the case of teacher evaluations, there was no question that District A, like all Illinois school districts, had to make some changes in response to Senate Bill 7 and PERA. Specifically, districts had to add a fourth category to their evaluations, they had to sequence RIFs according to the evaluation results, and administrators had to take online training that was based on the Danielson model. But, as District B's response to the legislation shows, districts were not required to go beyond these relatively minor changes to make deeper changes to their philosophy and approach to teacher evaluations. In District B, the interviews showed a

broad consensus against making more than the statutorily-required changes at this point in time. District A decided to go further, adopting the Danielson framework explicitly and changing the philosophy of assigning teachers summative ratings so that fewer teachers would receive "excellent" evaluations. This is certainly a reasonable response to the legislation, but the interviews in District A did not reveal that the district deliberated in any focused way about whether this was the best approach. Rather, several committee members commented that this approach seemed to have been determined by the assistant superintendent of human resources before the committee even began its work. In addition, little conversation among stakeholders seems to have occurred in District A before deciding to take this approach. District A might build greater teacher buy-in if it used its committee to discuss whether change beyond the legally-required minimum was necessary or desirable.

Another strategy that may increase support for change is to allow the change process to move more slowly. Ronald Heifetz and his co-authors counsel that it is important to consider the "ripeness of an issue" before marching forward with change. Specifically, leaders must analyze whether there is an "urgency" across the entire system that will make people ready to embrace change (p. 126). If not, they warn that leaders should move more slowly to first build consensus over the need for the change and to frame the issue thoughtfully in order to help people understand the need for change and to strike an emotional "chord in people" that inspires them to support the change (p. 128). Although one way to read District B's minimalist response to PERA and Senate Bill 7 is to conclude that the district disagreed with the need to change, the interviews also suggest another interpretation. The assistant superintendent for human resources appears to see a

need for greater change in the evaluation process, but the district has moved more slowly in pursuing that change both because of the transition in the human resources position and because the upcoming 2016 deadline will provide a second opportunity to overhaul teacher evaluations. By extending the change process, District B may have an opportunity to make the ultimate change seem less momentous, less surprising, and less disturbing than if the same change is presented and adopted quickly. Moreover, the longer change process also gives a chance for some problems with the existing evaluation process to become more evident. For example, one principal in District B noted that he is concerned about rating his teachers "proficient" if other principals are continuing the traditional practice of giving mostly "excellent" ratings. As stakeholders in the district begin to focus on these problems, they may begin to appreciate the need to make further changes in the evaluation system. This builds support for the eventual change. District A may want to consider a strategy of starting with incremental change and letting that incremental change suggest further changes that need to occur next. Pursuant to Heifetz's view, District A might be better served by moving more slowly and starting where its teachers are in their understanding of the issue, rather than where administrators want them to be (p. 128).

A final trio of strategies focuses on communication between administrators and rank-and-file teachers within the district. Heifetz and his co-authors suggest that leaders should use the networks already established within the organization to "forge alliances with people who will support your efforts" and "integrate and defuse opposition"; they call this "acting politically" (p. 133). First, District A may be better served by encouraging its committees to share information as the committee works through the plan

for change, rather than waiting for everything to be decided before informing the broader teacher community. This would give teachers more time to become comfortable with the possibility of change, rather than be confronted all at once with the reality of change that has already occurred. Second, District A might develop a more systematic method for assessing teachers' attitudes, reactions, and knowledge about the changes in teacher evaluation. Finally, District A might gain greater buy-in by arranging to have the change plan communicated by more than just administration voices. For instance, several stakeholders in District B appreciated that the final changes to the evaluation system were presented to the faculty by both the assistant superintendent for human resources and the teachers' union president. Having non-administration voices present the changes potentially provides additional credibility for the need for change and for the specific changes being implemented. Heifetz explains that "[c]onnections with unlikely allies could make a strong impression on those who oppose your change initiative or have not yet decided how they feel about it" (p. 137).

If District A is able to use some of these strategies, either in making further changes to teacher evaluations or undertaking other types of change, it has the potential not only to achieve the change it seeks, but also do so in a way that strengthens District A's culture and adds to the district's competencies for change.

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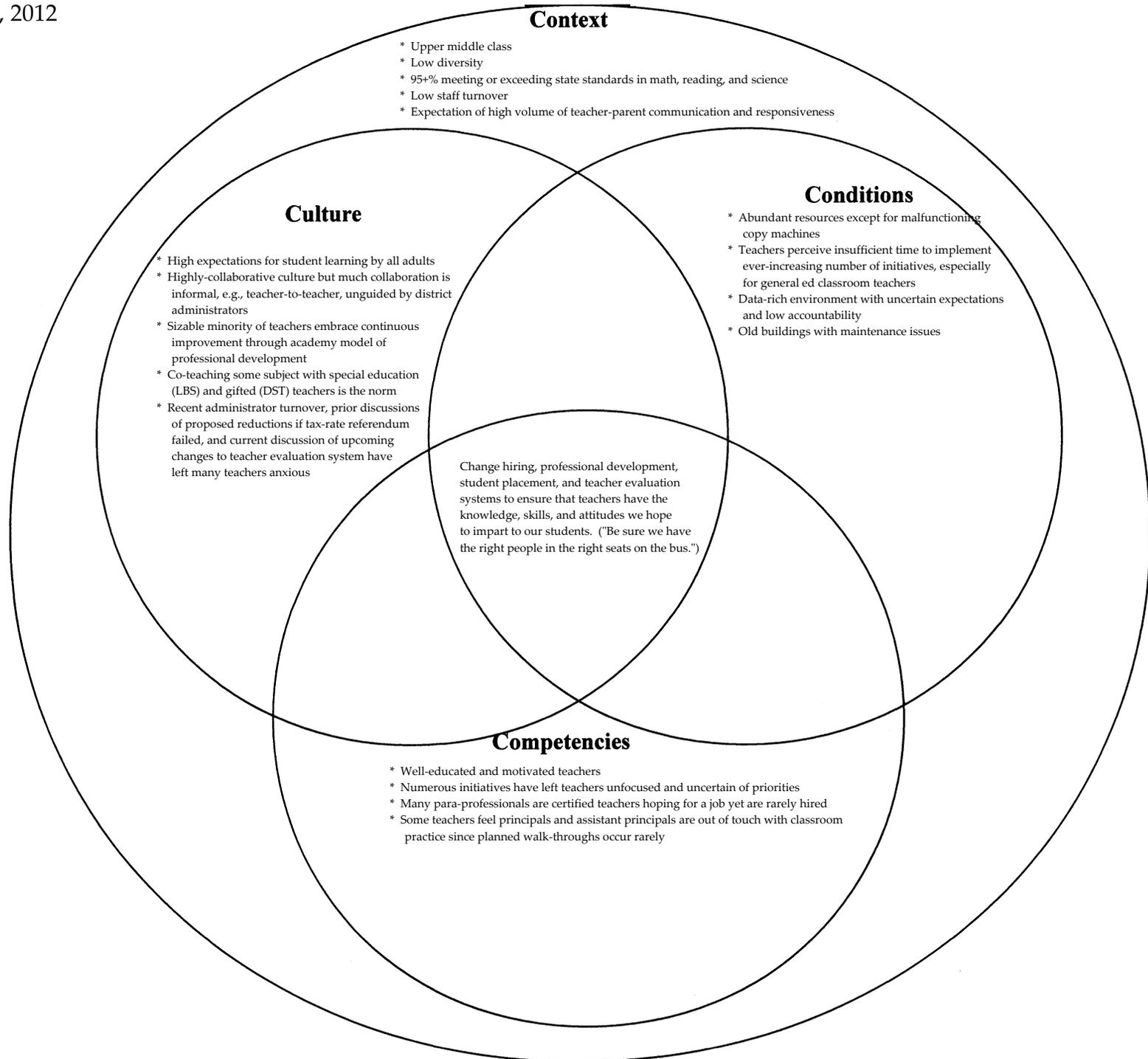
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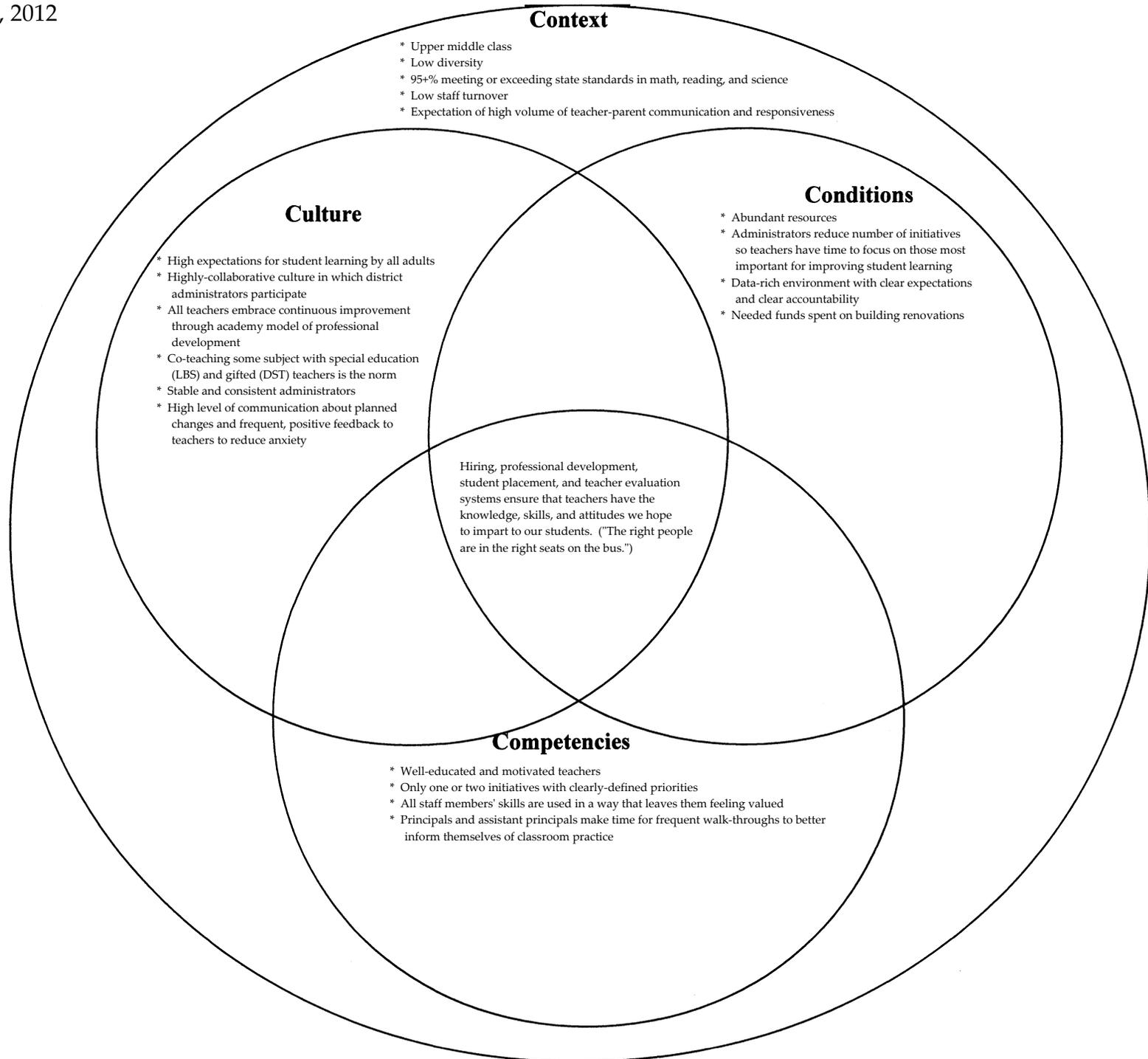
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APPENDIX

"As Is" Chart



"To Be" Chart



STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS CHART

<u>Strategy</u>	<u>Action</u>
Identify and hire teachers who have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes we hope to impart to students.	<p>Ensure that everyone participating on interview teams understands the qualities for which we are looking.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview teams need training to ensure consistency. • Interview form needs to include the right questions to elicit meaningful information about the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of teacher candidates.
Tailor professional development to promote the knowledge, skills, and attitudes best aligned with student growth.	<p>Organize professional development around a menu of professional learning communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide meaningful, communal opportunities to ensure effectiveness of professional development. • Provide choices of community to join, and align the choices to match the knowledge, skills, and attitudes best aligned with student growth. • Develop an expectation that principals will participate in learning communities, both for their own improvement and to model effective professional development. • Allocate sufficient time for meaningful collaboration.
Create better alignment between skills of teachers and needs of students.	<p>Develop a system of assigning students to classrooms that takes into account the characteristics of learners and the various strengths of different teachers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather more detailed information from teachers about the learning styles and needs of their students. • Promote matching of learning styles/needs with teacher strengths as a principal goal of placement of students into classrooms.
Strengthen teacher evaluation processes to promote and reward the knowledge, skills, and attitudes best aligned with student growth.	<p>Develop a more robust teacher evaluation process that gives reliable and meaningful feedback on multiple domains of teaching designed to help teachers improve their practice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise the evaluation form to include multiple teaching domains and to provide clear rubrics that guide the evaluation of each domain. • Provide training to evaluators to understand the domains and give consistent ratings in each domain. • Provide training in the new evaluation process to teachers so that they can model their own growth consistent with expectations. • Incorporate reliable student growth data, while avoiding drawing conclusions from limited data. • Increase the number of informal observations, including walk-throughs.

Big Assumption: Teachers in my district have little opportunity to lead meaningful change.

Actionable Test: Speak with my new assistant principal to explore opportunities to lead change.