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TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CURRENT TEACHER EVALUATION PRACTICES AND THE IMPACT OF THE NEW ILLINOIS PERFORMANCE EVALUATION REFORM ACT OF 2010 (PERA)

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REFORM ACT OF 2010 (PERA)

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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 Program Evaluation paper is the first in 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 (Public Act 96-861), as modified by Senate Bill 7, was signed into law in June 2011 and contains provisions that take effect over several years. During the 2012-2013 school year, Illinois districts were required to move to a four-rating performance evaluation system and begin to use these ratings, instead of relying on seniority, to make job-related decisions. Pub. Act 97-008 (2011), § 5, adding 105 ILCS 5/24-12(b). I collected data in fall 2011 from three suburban school districts on practices and perceptions of their pre-PERA teacher evaluation systems, as well as awareness of and expectations relating to the changes that PERA and Senate Bill 7 would bring. The data from the program evaluation year of my project provided a baseline from which, in the third part of my dissertation, I would compare data obtained in the fall of 2013, the year after districts were required to adopt four-rating systems and use those ratings in making job-related decisions. In all three districts studied, most of the participants were comfortable with their current teacher evaluation systems. They viewed the systems as fair, and they believed they received (or gave, in the case of administrators) some useful feedback. But the current systems did not provide any real differentiation among teachers, and both administrators and teachers knew this. Teachers and administrators varied greatly in their awareness of coming change to the system. Key recommendations arising from the data included pro-active communication about upcoming change, adding more informal walk-throughs to the evaluation system, and increasing the number of evaluators.

PREFACE

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. Although a few provisions took effect during the first school year after its passage, other provisions were slated for adoption in subsequent years up through 2016. Accordingly, my three-year dissertation plan allowed me to study this topic "in real time" as Illinois districts were evaluating their current teacher evaluation programs, planning for upcoming changes to their teacher evaluation plans, and then beginning to implement those changes. Through the program evaluation, change plan, and policy advocacy components of my doctoral program coursework, I studied the effects of the new law on teacher evaluation in suburban elementary school districts. I was interested in four principal questions. First, what processes did districts use during the 2011-2012 school year to plan for change? Second, what changes were implemented during 2012-2013 in teacher evaluations in school districts, and how were those changes communicated to staff? Third, how did teacher attitudes toward the evaluation process change? Fourth, how did attitudes and practices of principals change? This study reflects the current accountability movement in education, which will significantly shape the future of public school education. 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.

One key leadership lesson I gained from the Program Evaluation component of my dissertation is the importance of pro-active communication. The baseline data uncovered significant differences among teachers, and even administrators, regarding the

coming changes to teacher evaluation systems that the new Illinois laws require. This suggests that there is a need for communication throughout the organization as soon as the impetus for change becomes apparent, whether this is due to passage of a new law or a decision of the board of education. While early communication may raise anxiety among some teachers initially, early communication can give teachers a sense that administrators are being open and are interested in teacher input. This, in turn, can increase buy-in for the changes that are eventually made.

The Program Evaluation portion of my dissertation also gave me a stronger appreciation for the use of data in decisionmaking. Through both interviews and surveys, I collected data that could guide me in implementing change, if I were in charge of revising the teacher evaluation system in a district. For example, the data showed that both teachers and administrators generally supported adding more informal walk-throughs to the teacher evaluation system. Without structured data collection, this might not have been apparent, as teacher union leadership sometimes is suspicious of walk-throughs. The program evaluation process, thus, arms me to examine a program in a focused way, rather than relying on unexamined impressions and casual conversations.

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SECTION ONE - INTRODUCTION

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 are expected to go into effect during the 2011-2012 school year.

Beginning in 2011-2012, teacher reductions-in-force (RIFs) and teacher recall procedures must be changed from a seniority-based system to one based on performance evaluations. Districts must 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 "satisfactory" or "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 "satisfactory" or "proficient" (group four). Pub. Act 97-008 (2011), § 5, adding 105 ILCS 5/24-12(b). Teachers then must be RIFed 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.

In addition, by December 1, 2011, districts are required to convene a joint committee to consider certain modifications to the criteria for placing teachers in the various groups. This committee must consist of members that the school board selects

and members that the teacher's union selects. Pub. Act 97-008 (2011), § 5, adding 105 ILCS 5/24-12(c).

I am studying how these provisions of the new law affect teacher evaluation in suburban elementary school districts. I am interested in three principal questions. First, what changes will occur during 2011-2012 in teacher evaluations in school districts (in form, process, or results)? Second, how will teacher attitudes toward the evaluation process change? Third, what changes will occur in the attitudes and practices of principals?

I will address these questions by examining three suburban school districts. For the program evaluation component of my project, I collected data in fall 2011 on current practices and perceptions of the current system, as well as awareness of and expectations relating to the changes that PERA (as modified by Senate Bill 7) will bring. While not part of this year's program evaluation, I will then collect additional data in fall 2013 that will allow me to examine how the initial implementation of PERA (as modified by Senate Bill 7) affects evaluation practices and attitudes.

<div align="center">Purpose</div>

The new 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. 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, a district likely will be concerned with balancing the implementation of newly-mandated procedures with maintaining aspects of its current teacher evaluation system that the district thinks 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.

<div align="center">Rationale</div>

I am interested in this topic because it is a timely one that stems from a new 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 inspires 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

My topic stems from a change in Illinois law that 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 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.

Research Questions

My primary research question is: How will the Illinois Performance Evaluation

Reform Act (PERA) of 2010 (Public Act 96-861), as modified by Senate Bill 7, affect

teacher evaluation in suburban elementary school districts in 2011-12?

My related, or secondary, questions are: (1) What process will school districts use

to plan for the changes required by the new law? Which stakeholder groups will be

involved in the process of planning for change, and what role will each group play? (2)

How will the change from seniority-based decision making to evaluation-based decision

making affect the ways in which administrators plan to evaluate teachers?

Once I have data from fall 2013, I will also be able to answer two other related

research questions. These are: (1) How will teachers' perceptions of the evaluation

process change as a result of the new procedures? (2) How will principals' perceptions

of the evaluation process change as a result of the new procedures?

SECTION TWO - REVIEW OF 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).

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).

<center>Danielson Model of Teacher Evaluation</center>

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). 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

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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 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

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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 that 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 under-

performing 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 2011-2012 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.

In short, 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. In order to measure the impact that the new Illinois law will have, however, it is

important first to understand teacher and administrator perceptions of the strengths and

weaknesses of the current evaluation system used by Illinois school districts. The

subsequent sections of this program evaluation will address this area.

SECTION THREE – METHODOLOGY

Research Design Overview

This program evaluation focuses on school districts' existing, pre-PERA procedures for teacher evaluations, teachers' and administrators' perceptions of this current system, teachers' and administrators' awareness of the changes required by PERA, and teachers' and administrators' perceptions of how PERA will change the teacher evaluation process. The tools I used for this program evaluation include interviews with human resources directors or other administrators and surveys of teachers and administrators. In addition, I collected blank evaluation forms and counts of how many teachers fall into various evaluation categories under the current system. Data collection for this program evaluation was completed in fall 2011.

Ultimately, to answer my primary research question, I will collect similar data in fall 2013. These data will allow me to use inferential statistics to compare the state of affairs in fall 2011 and fall 2013 to determine how PERA (as modified by Senate Bill 7) affects evaluation practices and attitudes of administrators and teachers in suburban districts.

Participants

Teacher evaluation involves numerous stakeholders, including the administrators who plan for and implement change, the teachers who 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

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implement the changes required by the new law. For example, the school district in

which I currently teach plans to form 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 will focus this fall on the few provisions of the new law that

take effect during the 2011-2012 school year. Using a wide network of stakeholders, I

collected data from human resource directors, administrators, and teachers in three

suburban elementary school districts. Specifically, I collected data in the district in which

I teach (District A), the district in which I live and in which I formerly served as a school

board member (District B), and one other district (District C).

My research questions focus on three key sub-topics that drive the selection of

these participants. One of these sub-topics is the current structure of the evaluation

system: what does the evaluation instrument look like, how are evaluations carried out,

and how are districts currently using the evaluation categories they have (i.e., how many

teachers fall into each category). I gathered this data from human resource directors or

other administrators. In particular, much of the exploration of this sub-topic comes from

interviewing human resource directors or other administrators, obtaining blank evaluation

forms, and obtaining counts of the number of teachers placed in each evaluation category.

A second sub-topic is perception of the current teacher evaluation system and

awareness of the changes that will occur. To address this sub-topic, I administered

surveys to teachers and administrators. In addition to providing the information I need

for the program evaluation this year, the surveys will allow comparison with attitudes and

awareness in fall 2013 to allow me to address the impact PERA has on teacher evaluation

in suburban school districts during the first year of implementation of the provisions that take effect during 2011-2012.

The final sub-topic is the planning process for complying with PERA (as modified by Senate Bill 7). This topic is both interesting in itself and connects to the aspect of the primary research question that looks at how changes in practice -- including the planning process used -- affect teacher and administrator attitudes toward teacher evaluation. Interviews with human resource directors or other administrators will provide qualitative information that will allow me to evaluate the planning process the studied districts use.

Data Gathering Techniques

I used a combination of surveys of teachers and principals, interviews with principals and other administrators, and actual teacher evaluations or summaries (from 2010-11 and 2011-12) as data for my study. There is a tension between collecting enough data to identify trends that are broadly representative and collecting an overwhelming amount of data requiring management and analysis (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 554). One way to avoid collecting too much data might be to engage in a single-district study. However, I did not do this because I am interested in the larger question regarding the new law's impact more generally on suburban elementary districts. To balance my desire for representative data against my need to collect only the amount of data that I can manage and evaluate in the established time frame, I collected data in three school districts. It is possible to study multiple districts effectively, because I used the same surveys for teachers and principals in all three districts and obtained copies of three

districts' blank evaluation forms and summaries of how many teachers fell into each evaluation category.

With all this in mind, I have collected the following data in fall 2011:

1. Interviewed the human resources director of each district or another administrator to understand changes that are planned for 2011-12, obtained blank evaluation forms used for 2010-11, 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 2011-12 and beyond. In addition to the current evaluation process, this survey addressed expectations and perceptions of how PERA (as modified by Senate Bill 7) may 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 2011-12 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) will change the current system.

While not part of this year's plan, I will collect additional data in fall 2012 and fall 2013, which will include:

4. Re-interview the human resources director or other administrator in each district to learn about the process the district actually used in 2011-12 to change its evaluation system and work with its union as required by the law. I also will assess their perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the new evaluation system that the district plans to use to comply with PERA's requirements.

5. Re-administer the teacher survey used in fall 2011. (I will need to consider whether to survey the exact same teachers again or survey a second group of teachers in each district.)

6. Re-administer the principal survey used in fall 2011. (I will need to consider whether to survey the exact same principals again or survey a second group of principals in each district.)

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis for this year-one program evaluation focused on qualitative data and descriptive statistics. I used interviews with human resource directors or other administrators and blank evaluation forms to build an expository description of current evaluation practices. Identification of themes allowed me to highlight similarities and differences among the districts I studied. The blank evaluation forms provided additional evidence of the structure and components of the current evaluation systems.

In addition, I addressed the ability of the current evaluation systems to differentiate among teachers by collecting information on how many teachers received each rating in each district. Because nearly all teachers in the three districts received "excellent" ratings, I did not attempt to calculate a mean evaluation rating. However, the Findings section below describes the number of teachers who fell into each category in each district.

Data on teacher and administrator perceptions of the current evaluation system and awareness of plans to change the system came from surveys of teachers and administrators. I relied on descriptive statistics to analyze these data. Ultimately, after the fall 2013 data collection, I will use inferential statistical methods to compare the fall 2011 and fall 2013 data sets. As with the counts of teachers in each evaluation category, my intent is not to test for differences between districts. However, in the case that sizable differences do arise, I may consider applying parametric procedures to determine if the results from different districts are significant.

SECTION FOUR - FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

Findings

School District Demographics

For this program evaluation, I studied teacher evaluation systems in three K-8 suburban school districts in the Chicago area. 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.

District C's demographics differ substantially from those of the first two districts. District C is a more economically-mixed suburban district located in a far southwestern

community. It has an enrollment of 17,691 students, a per pupil operating expenditure of $11,369, an EAV per pupil of $181,238, and a pupil-staff ratio of 13.7 to 1. District C is 38.7% Hispanic, 29.3% white, 21.6% African-American, 6.2% Asian, and 3.6% multiracial. Fifty-three percent of District C's students are low income. District C has 1063 FTE teachers with an average experience level of 10.3 years and average salary of $66,923. Sixty-five percent of District C's teachers hold a master's degree. The average salary for administrators in District C is $120,048.

Description of Teacher Evaluation Programs in the Three Studied Districts and Results of the Interviews with Human Resources Directors

For this program evaluation, I interviewed the human resources administrators in two school districts (Districts A and B) and an assistant principal in a third district (District C). A summary of each of these interviews follows:

District A's superintendent is in his fifth year leading the district, and its human resources director is in her fourth year. Although District A recently added ratings for pretenure teachers and made some minor changes to its pretenure teacher evaluation form in the 2010-2011 school year, it has not made any significant changes to its teacher evaluation system for at least seven years since the 2004-2005 school year.

Pretenure teachers are evaluated in each of the first four years, and tenured teachers are evaluated every other year. Pretenure teachers have no choice in the form or content of the formal evaluations they receive, although they may specify areas in which they want to receive feedback in post-observation conferences. Until the 2011-2012 school year, pretenure teachers received only narrative feedback without any performance ratings at all, but overall ratings were added this year.

In contrast, tenured teachers may choose among three summative evaluation forms for their evaluations. They may choose to receive: (1) narrative feedback with an overall rating of excellent, satisfactory, or unsatisfactory; (2) they may choose to receive ratings of excellent, satisfactory, or unsatisfactory in each of the four Danielson quadrants along with narrative feedback addressing each quadrant of performance; or (3) they may choose to receive numerical ratings and narrative feedback in each quadrant. However, as a practical matter, nearly every teacher chooses the first option. Pretenure teachers in their first two years receive three formal observations, and all other teachers are formally observed twice during an evaluation year.

Although District A administrators are encouraged to perform informal "walk-through" observations and include this data in teachers' summative evaluations, principals differ greatly from building to building in the number of walk-throughs they perform; during the 2010-2011 school year, some principals visited classrooms several times a week while others were virtually never in classrooms except for formal pre-scheduled observations. District A administrators look at lesson plans for the lessons they formally observe, but they typically do not look at teacher journals or classroom artifacts unless a teacher asks them to do so, which happens rarely -- maybe 1-5% of the time. Feedback from students and parents is not solicited as part of the formal evaluation process although administrators may refer to informal feedback or parent complaints in the summative evaluation. Student performance data is not used in the formal teacher evaluation process. Of the over 100 tenured teachers District A administrators evaluated

last year, nearly all received a rating of "excellent." Only fewer than five were rated as "satisfactory," and no teachers were rated as "unsatisfactory."

District A's human resources administrator identified four strengths and six weaknesses of its current evaluation system. For strengths, she noted the formal quality of a process that leads to summative documentation of employee performance; the required conversations that a principal and teacher have during pre- and post-observation meetings; the opportunity for true reflection by a teacher; and the potential to improve teaching through the formative feedback a teacher receives. As weaknesses, she identified the inflated ratings of a system where nearly every teacher is rated "excellent"; problems with subjectivity and lack of inter-rater reliability from one evaluator to the next; the non-tenured teacher evaluation's system lack of ratings prior to this year; a perception among teachers that the current system does not allow a teacher to struggle occasionally; the non-representative lessons that a teacher chooses for formal observations; and some teachers' reluctance to reflect honestly when they fear that anything they say many be noted as a negative factor in a summative evaluation.

To comply with the requirements of PERA and Senate Bill 7, District A has a three-phase plan. This year, it will convene a committee of administrators and teachers to work together to plan for the changes mandated by the new law. The Teacher Evaluation Committee will begin its work in November by aligning the district's current ratings of teachers with the four category system required by PERA. The committee will develop standards for what constitutes an "excellent" versus "proficient" teacher in a wide range of academic areas. In its second phase, district administrators will work with the

teachers' union to plan for how to use performance data instead of seniority for job-related decisions, such as RIFs. Finally, during the 2012-2013 school year or later, it will convene a student growth committee to tackle what its human resources director calls the "scariest piece" of the new legislation -- to develop a model for including student growth as a factor in its teacher evaluation system. District A will use a "wait and see" approach to the new legislation. Currently, it is waiting to see what requirements or suggestions the ISBE develops and then it will see what changes surrounding districts make. District A does not want to be a "front-runner" on this issue.

District B's assistant superintendent for human resources has been in her position for ten years and is planning to retire at the end of this year. The district superintendent is in his second year with District B after serving as a superintendent in another state for three years. District B adopted its current teacher evaluation system in 1999 and has not made any changes to it since the summer of 2002.

Similar to practices in District A, pretenure teachers in District B are evaluated in each of the first four years, and tenured teachers are evaluated every other year. District B uses three ratings: excellent, satisfactory, and not satisfactory. Pretenure teachers have no choice in the form or content of the formal evaluations they receive, although they may specify areas in which they want to receive feedback in post-observation conferences. Tenured teachers may choose from three diverse evaluation options. Option A is the standard evaluation system, which 70 percent of teachers choose. It bases a teacher's summative evaluation on just one formal evaluation; thus, tenured teachers who choose this option are formally observed only once every two years. Option B

involves teacher goal-setting for project-based growth. Under this option, teachers who have previously received "excellent" ratings under the standard evaluation model may choose to be evaluated based on goals they set for special projects they undertake as part of teams, departments, or professional learning communities. Only five percent of District B teachers choose this option. The last alternative, Option C, is a peer coaching model, where teachers are evaluated by their more experienced colleagues. Twenty-five percent of District B teachers choose this option. Formal classroom observations are only required for the standard teacher evaluation system, although the peer coaching option may include them; teachers choosing the project-based option are not formally observed in the classroom.

District B does not include informal walk-throughs as part of the teacher evaluation process. Although principals are often in the classroom and do conduct walk-throughs, they do not use any checklists, and these informal observations are not included in a principal's summative evaluation of a teacher. Last year, union representatives objected to the principals' desire to use checklists during walk-throughs, so the practice was not adopted. District B does not use any student performance data in its teacher evaluation system, although its human resources superintendent would like to do so. Teacher journals or classroom artifacts are only considered as part of the project-based evaluation option if relevant to the specific project that forms the basis for the evaluation. No surveys of parents or students are conducted as part of the formal teacher evaluation process. In the 2010-2011 school year, all of the over 200 teachers who were evaluated

received "excellent" ratings although some of these teachers received a "satisfactory" rating in one or two categories on the ratings form.

As strengths of the teacher evaluation system, the human resources superintendent identified two areas. She said the system was flexible and made all teachers "feel good" about performance because the ratings were so inflated. She also said that the choice between three options was a strength. The project-based option and peer-coaching option "give superstars a chance to shine." She once again identified the "feel good" nature of the system as a weakness. She said that District B's teacher evaluation system does not do a good job of differentiating between average teachers who meet district expectations and truly exemplary teachers who exceed expectations. The teacher evaluation system does not require teachers to "stretch" to improve their teaching. In addition, she believes the system is weakened by the fact that teachers only receive one formal observation every two years. Lastly, she said that some teachers choose one of the alternative evaluations systems for their whole career, and thus they do not receive meaningful feedback from administrators on how to improve classroom performance.

To comply with the new requirements of PERA and Senate Bill 7, District B will convene a committee of three administrators and three union representatives this year to consider how to change its evaluation content and procedures. Specifically, she hopes that after receiving clarification from the ISBE, the committee will develop an outline of the characteristics of teachers in each rating category for each subject area. In addition, the committee will examine the new law's requirements for reductions in force (RIFs) and consider how to bring District B's procedures for RIFs into compliance. She predicts that

the new law will pose significant record-keeping challenges and high stress because there are high stakes. Since RIFs and the filling of vacancies will no longer be based on seniority but rather on job performance, teachers will feel less security in their ability to keep a job or transfer to new positions. If people are let go, other districts will know that the decision was performance-based, and the decision may ruin someone's career. She predicts at least two to three years of confusion lie ahead.

District C is a substantially larger, more racially and socio-economically diverse district of 1800 certified teachers and 17,691 students. In this district, my interview was with an assistant principal of a middle school with 1300 students who had served in his position for seven years. District C's teacher evaluation system has not changed in five years since a few new minor indicators of teacher performance were added to the evaluation form.

As in District B, nontenured teachers in District C are formally observed twice every year while tenured teachers are only formally observed once every two years. Teachers in District C have no choice in evaluation format or content; administrators use one standard evaluation form for everyone. Administrators also perform five-minute informal "walk-through" observations three times a month that generally are not cited in a teacher's summative evaluation. Similarly, administrators do not rely on student performance data, teacher journals or classroom artifacts, or surveys of students or parents in crafting feedback on its summative evaluation form.

District C uses three different ratings, and unlike the other two districts, it places some teachers in each of those three ratings categories; 87% of District C's teachers are

rated as "excellent," 10% as "satisfactory," and 3% as "unsatisfactory." The assistant principal I interviewed cited the greater attention given to non-tenured teachers as a strength of the system. As a weakness, he cited the fact that the entire evaluation process for a tenured teacher depends on one observation with no hard data from ISAT, MAP testing, or other student performance data considered.

The District C board of education, superintendent, administrators, and union representatives have already begun discussing how to revise its teacher evaluation system to comply with the new Illinois law and is in the process of implementing some changes. Specifically, the district is implementing the Charlotte Danielson framework, rubric, and indicators, which it previously did not use. Other details will be worked out during the next contract negotiations in the 2012-2013 school year.

Participant Numbers and Demographic Data

I sent my survey to 820 potential respondents: 790 teachers and 30 administrators. Overall, 136 people responded to the teacher and administrator surveys. As expected, more teachers responded than administrators. In total, 120 teachers and 16 administrators responded. My overall response rate from teachers was 15%, and my overall response rate from administrators was 53%. Most survey respondents completed all of the questions. All of the 16 administrators completed all of the questions. For each question on the teacher survey, at least 101 teachers completed the question.

The number of respondents by district varied greatly. Of the 120 total teachers, 67 came from District A, the district in which I teach. I sent my survey to 330 District A teachers; 67 teachers completed the survey for a response rate of 20%. District B

provided 47 of the teacher responses. The superintendent in District B sent my survey to 400 teachers; 47 teachers completed the survey for a response rate of 12%. The administrator whom I interviewed in District C sent my survey to a subset of teachers in his district; he sent my survey to 60 teachers, six of whom completed the survey for a response rate of 10%. The fact that only six teachers in District C responded severely limited my ability to compare teachers' responses in that district to any of the other districts.

District A also provided the largest number of administrator responses, with the eight of ten District A administrators who responded comprising half of the administrator sample. Three of twelve administrators in District B responded, and five of eight administrators responded in District C. The response rates for administrators ranged from a high of 80% for District A to 63% for District C to a low of 25% for District B. The small sample sizes among administrators also make inter-district comparison of administrators difficult.

The survey asked different "background" or "demographic" questions of teachers and administrators. For teachers, the survey asked how many years the teacher had been teaching, both in total and in the teacher's current district. Teacher respondents had a mean experience of 13.4 years total and 9.9 years in their current districts. (See tables 2(a) and 2(b).) These averages varied by district. District B teachers had the greatest average seniority, at 15.8 years total and 11.6 years in the district. District A teachers had a lower average seniority, at 12.2 years total and 9.1 years in the district. Because of the

small sample size, District C average seniority is highly uncertain, but the sample averages were the lowest, at 8.5 years total and 6.3 years in the district.

The survey asked administrators about the number of teachers they are responsible for evaluating. The overall average was 29.3 teachers, with a wide range, from a minimum of five to a maximum of 82. The median administrator evaluates 24 teachers. These averages and medians varied substantially among districts. District B administrators evaluated the most teachers (average = 43.3; median = 45), followed by District C administrators (average = 36.4; median = 24) and then by District A administrators (average = 19.5; median = 20). (See Table 1(a).)

Attitudes Toward the Existing Evaluation System

The survey asked a number of questions of both administrators and teachers about their attitudes toward their districts' existing evaluation systems and the characteristics of those systems. Both administrators and teachers had fairly positive attitudes toward the current system, although teachers tended to see the system less positively than administrators.

The first two questions about the existing teacher evaluation system asked how well the existing system identifies teachers who are stronger than their peers and teachers who are weaker than most of their peers, but not weak enough to require remediation. The survey instrument allowed for responses to range between "strongly disagree" (coded with a point value of 1), "disagree" (point value = 2), "neutral" (point value = 3), "agree" (point value = 4), and "strongly agree" (point value = 5). Results are presented in Tables 3(a), 3(b), and 3(c). Exactly half of administrators agreed or strongly agreed that their

systems did a good job of recognizing teachers who are stronger than their peers. (25 percent were neutral on this question, and 25 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.) The average point value for administrators on this question was 3.25. Teachers had a less positive view, with only 35 percent agreeing or strongly agreeing (32 percent neutral, and 33 percent disagree/strongly disagree), and an average point value of 2.99.

Similar results applied on the question about whether the system did a good job of identifying teachers who were weaker than most of their peers, although both administrators and teachers were a bit less likely to agree than on the previous question. Results are presented in Tables 4(a), 4(b), and 4(c). Administrators had an average point value of 3.06 (44% agree/strongly agree, 19% neutral, and 37% disagree/strongly disagree). Teachers had an average point value of 2.73 (22% agree/strongly agree, 32% neutral, and 46% disagree/strongly disagree).

Administrators and teachers were much more likely to agree that their existing systems provided meaningful, formative suggestions for teacher growth. Here, too, however, administrators were more likely to agree than teachers. Administrators gave this question an average point value of 3.88 (81% agree/strongly agree, 13% neutral, and 6% disagree/strongly disagree). Teachers gave this question an average point value of 3.64 (70% agree/strongly agree, 14% neutral, 15% disagree/strongly disagree). See Tables 5(a), 5(b), and 5(c). The administrator survey asked the additional question of whether the teachers found the formative suggestions to be helpful. (In essence, the administrator survey asked administrators to predict the teachers' responses.) Administrators gave this question an average point value of 3.50 (50% agree/strongly

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agree, 38% neutral, 12% disagree/strongly disagree). As a result, the administrators'

assessment of teachers' views was relatively accurate, although slightly more negative

than teachers actually felt. See Table 7.

Administrators and teachers both were likely to feel that the existing evaluation

procedures were "fair." Both groups gave the question an average point value of 3.56,

with similar breakdowns between agree/strongly agree (63% of administrators and 62%

of teachers), neutral (25% of administrators and 28% of teachers), and disagree/strongly

disagree (12% of administrators and 10% of teachers). See Tables 6(a), 6(b), and 6(c).

Both administrators and teachers, on average, agreed that administrators had the

skill, training, and guidance to evaluate teachers accurately and fairly. (The administrator

survey asked administrators whether they were comfortable with the training and

guidance they had received. The teachers survey asked respondents whether they thought

their evaluators had the skill, training, and guidance they needed.) Administrators gave

this question an average point value of 3.56 (63% agree/strongly agree, 25% neutral, and

12% disagree/strongly disagree). Teachers gave slightly lower grades, with an average

point value of 3.30 (51% agree/strongly agree, 23% neutral, and 25% disagree/strongly

disagree). See Tables 8(a), 8(b), and 8(c).

The survey also asked administrators and teachers to provide, in a free-answer

format, two strengths and two weaknesses of their current evaluation systems. Results

are presented in Appendices A-1 and A-2. Because these answers were free-form, I have

not attempted to quantify the frequency of various responses. Nonetheless, some patterns

emerge from examining the responses. For example, several administrators noted the

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collaborative nature of the current evaluation system as a strength, and several also noted that the system was flexible. As weaknesses, several administrators noted that little is required of tenured teachers. One observed that "[i]t is not a meaningful process, rather hoops to jump through and boxes to check off."

Teachers gave numerous comments on strengths and weaknesses of the current system. As strengths of the system, many teachers cited teachers' ability to choose different evaluation formats (or the "flexibility"of evaluations). Teachers also praised the ability to set their own goals, the fact that feedback is generally narrative (rather than, presumably, numerical), and the fact that tenured teachers are only evaluated every other year. Many teachers said that a lack of "authentic" evaluations, specifically the infrequency of principals' visits to the classroom and the fact that teachers are able to choose their best lessons for evaluation, was a weakness of the system. Another commonly-cited weakness was the inability of the system to differentiate among teachers. Some teachers commented that the system was not good at identifying poor teachers, while others said the system gave too many "excellent" ratings. Other commonly-cited weaknesses were having different evaluators in different years (although some cited this as a strength), lack of valuable feedback (either because administrators had not been in the classroom for too long or because they are not familiar with the curriculum), and the ability of administrators to include "random comments" or "hearsay" in an evaluation to drum out a teacher they do not like.

The surveys asked administrators and teachers two questions about initiatives that might improve teacher evaluations. The first question listed several such initiatives, and asked which would "significantly help you deliver more differentiated evaluations" (in the administrator survey) or "significantly contribute to making evaluations more accurate and fair" (in the teacher survey). The initiatives offered were "none - the process works well now," "more formal observations," "informal observations or walk-throughs," "student performance or growth data," "how students or parents view teachers," "teacher journals or classroom artifacts," or "other." Respondents could choose multiple answers.

Results are presented in Tables 9(a), 9(b), and 9(c). Nearly all respondents believed at least some initiatives would help; in other words, very few selected "none - the process works well now." No administrators made that choice, and only 14% of teachers made that choice. Administrators and teachers had similar views of most choices. For example, 63 percent of administrators believed that informal observations or walk-throughs would significantly help, versus 66 percent of teachers. Administrators and teachers also had similar views of adding information on how students or parents view teachers (31% vs. 28%), and similar shares of each group selected "other" (19% vs. 17%). However, there were large differences between administrators and teachers on the value of student performance or growth data. Three-quarters of all administrators thought this initiative would significantly help, while only 7 percent of teachers thought so. In fact, student performance or growth data was both administrators' most-favored initiative and teachers' least-favored initiative. Administrators and teachers also differed, although

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to a lesser degree, on the efficacy of teacher journals or classroom artifacts; 44 percent of administrators thought this would significantly help, versus 27 percent of teachers.

The next survey question focused specifically on student performance or growth data. Results for this question are in Tables 10(a), 10(b), and 10(c). The differences between administrators and teachers in the previous question were matched by differences in this question. Thirty-one percent of administrators thought student performance or growth data would be "very helpful" and 63 percent thought such data would be "somewhat helpful." In contrast, only 5 percent of teachers thought these data would be "very helpful" and 27 percent answered "somewhat helpful." The differences continued with the less-favorable categories. Those administrators who did not answer "very helpful" or "somewhat helpful" were all "neutral" (6.3%), versus 35 percent of teachers answering "neutral," 16 percent answering "somewhat unhelpful," and 17 percent answering "very unhelpful." No administrators answered "somewhat unhelpful" or "very unhelpful." Overall, 94 percent of administrators thought student performance or growth data would be somewhat or very helpful, and 6 percent were neutral. Teachers were split approximately in thirds: 32 percent answered somewhat or very helpful, 35 percent were neutral, and 33 percent answered somewhat or very unhelpful.

Plans for Change

In investigating plans for change, the survey first asked administrators and teachers two free-answer questions. The first was what changes the respondent's district had made in the evaluation system over the past five years. The second was what changes the respondent's district were planning, if any. The two questions -- particularly

the second -- were intended to gauge the respondents' awareness of possible changes, without tipping the respondents off about PERA and Senate Bill 7 and the changes those laws would require.

Administrators generally cited few changes that their districts had made in the last five years. Results are presented in Appendix B-1. Administrators in District B did not cite any changes in the past five years. Some District A administrators noted minor changes in forms and rating scales for non-tenured teachers. District C administrators, however, observed that the evaluation form had been changed to reflect the Illinois Professional Teaching Standards and the Danielson model; three out of four administrators who answered this question in District C characterized these changes as "positive."

Similarly, except in District C, teachers cited few changes that their districts had made in the last five years. Results are presented in Appendix B-2. District A and District B teachers generally cited no changes, except for a few references to small changes (and some statements about possible upcoming changes). In contrast, District C teachers generally cited the new system the district is adopting, describing it as involving different forms, more frequent and informal observations, and "going toward teaching standards."

While administrators generally indicated some general sense of change in response to the question about upcoming plans, teachers were much less likely to be aware of any upcoming change at all. Results are presented in Appendix C-1 and Appendix C-2. All of the administrators in District A and District B who answered the

question noted changes either to incorporate student progress data or align the system to state requirements (with some specifically mentioning PERA or Senate Bill 7) or district goals. District C administrators also noted upcoming changes, but their comments were less consistent. In contrast, approximately half of District A and District B teachers were not aware of any plans to change the evaluation system in the coming few years. (In District A, 25 out of 56 teachers responding to the question answered "none," "I don't know," "I'm not sure," or a similar answer. In District B, 15 out of 29 teachers did the same.) District C teachers were much less likely to be unaware of any changes (1 out of 6 gave an answer of "N/A"). It was unclear, however, to what degree District C teachers were referring to upcoming changes or changes that had recently occurred in that district.

Following the free-form questions, the survey then asked administrators and teachers three questions aimed at awareness of any plans to change teacher evaluation systems and the process by which change would occur. The first question asked, if the respondent's district planned to make changes, how well-informed the respondent felt about those changes. The second and third questions asked about the degree to which respondents felt that they personally would be involved and whether teachers generally would be involved in formulating the changes to be made.

Administrators felt significantly more informed about upcoming changes than did teachers. (Results are presented in Tables 11(a), 11(b), and 11(c).) Fifty-six percent of administrators felt well-informed about upcoming changes, versus 14 percent of teachers. Similar numbers felt somewhat informed (44% of administrators and 48% of teachers).

Over a third of teachers (38%) felt that they were "not informed"; none of the administrators felt that they were not informed.

Significant differences in level of information also existed between districts. District B administrators and teachers felt least informed (33% of administrators well-informed, 5% of teachers). District C personnel felt most informed (80% of administrators well-informed, 50% of teachers).

Most administrators agreed that they expected to be involved in formulating changes to teacher evaluation systems. (Results are presented in Table 12(a).) Seventy-five percent of administrators agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, versus 12.5% neutral and 12.5% who disagreed or strongly disagreed. Differences also existed among districts on this question. All three District B administrators agreed or strongly agreed, as did 87.5% of District A administrators. (The other - 12.5% or one respondent - disagreed.) Only 40 percent of District C administrators agreed or strongly agreed; another 40 percent were neutral, and 20 percent (or one respondent) disagreed.

Teachers were much less likely to expect to be involved personally in formulating changes. (Results are presented in Table 12(b), and administrators and teachers are compared in Table 12(c).) Thirty-five percent of teachers agreed or strongly agreed, 41 percent were neutral, and 24 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. Differences existed among teachers. As with administrators, District B teachers were most likely to agree (46% agreed or strongly agreed), followed by District C (33%) and then District A (27%).

Both administrators and teachers were also asked to agree or disagree with the statement that teachers (generally) would be involved in formulating changes. (Results

are presented in Tables 13(a), 13(b), and 13(c).) Both administrators and teachers tended

to agree with this statement; 87.5 percent of administrators agreed or strongly agreed, and

80 percent of teachers agreed or strongly agreed. Differences among districts existed in

response to this question, but those differences were smaller than in response to the

previous questions. Among teachers, 85 percent in District B agreed or strongly agreed,

versus 78 percent in District A and 67 percent in District C. Among administrators, all

District B and District A administrators agreed or strongly agreed that teachers would be

involved, as did 60 percent of District C administrators. (The other 40 percent - two

respondents - disagreed.)

Other Comments

Finally, the survey gave respondents an opportunity to provide any other

comments. The comments provided appear in Appendix D-1 (administrators) and

Appendix D-2 (teachers).

<div align="center">Interpretation</div>

Given the weaknesses that teachers and administrators cited in their answers to the

free-form questions, both teachers and administrators gave surprisingly positive views of

the current evaluation system in answer to the questions that asked them to agree or

disagree with statements about the current system. Both teachers and administrators

tended to agree that the current evaluation system provided meaningful, formative

feedback, that they were fair, and that administrators had the requisite skills and

experience to evaluate teachers accurately and fairly. For all of these questions, both the

average teacher answer and average administrator answer was greater than 3

(representing a lean more toward "agree" than toward "disagree"). The average answer score was highest for the question about meaningful, formative feedback. Answers to only two questions were below or right around the score of 3 that represents neutral. These were the two questions that asked about the ability of the teacher evaluation system to differentiate among "average" teachers and stronger and weaker teachers. Administrators were still slightly positive in response to those questions, while teachers were slightly negative.

Despite these relatively positive ratings, teachers were less positive about the current state of teacher evaluation than administrators were. The average answer score among teachers was lower (i.e., less positive) than the average answer score was among administrators for every question about the current evaluation system, with one exception. The one exception was the question asking whether the current system is fair. In that case, both teachers and administrators had the same average answer score.

It appears that administrators and teachers see the current system as a generally "comfortable" system, even if many acknowledge that it does not differentiate among teachers well. Administrators and teachers were most likely to agree with statements that the evaluation system provided meaningful feedback and that it is "fair." The actual evaluation results in the three districts suggest a reason why participants in the current teacher evaluation system may feel comfortable with the current system. All three districts give all or nearly all of their teachers "excellent" ratings (although this is less the case in District C). District B, in fact, gave *every* teacher an "excellent" rating last year.

Given these results, it is not surprising that teachers and administrators believe the system is fair.

Two key interpretations come out of the data on preferences for change. First, both administrators and teachers tend to support more informal observations or walk-throughs (although some teachers, in their comments, believe that administrators should not use forms during walk-throughs that will be included in a teacher's personnel file). Second, administrators and teachers differ greatly in their views of the usefulness of student performance or growth data. Specifically, administrators rated student performance or growth data as most helpful among all of the various options provided for improving evaluations. Teachers, on the other hand, rated student performance or growth data as *least* helpful.

Few changes have occurred to the existing teacher evaluation system, except in District C, in the past several years. The human resource directors in Districts A and B indicated that their systems had been in place in their current form for a number of years. The perceptions of teachers and administrators, in response to the survey, were in accord, as survey respondents identified few changes in responding to the free-response question.

Although PERA and Senate Bill 7 will require significant changes to the teacher evaluation system, awareness of these coming changes is distributed unevenly. Administrators are generally aware that changes will be coming shortly to teacher evaluation systems, and nearly all administrators felt either well-informed or somewhat-informed about those changes. In contrast, about half of teachers are unaware of upcoming changes. Moreover, very few teachers feel well-informed about upcoming

changes. Most respondents predicted that their districts would have broad involvement in formulating upcoming changes. Most administrators expect to be involved themselves. Fewer teachers expect to be involved personally, but most teachers expect (and administrators agree) that teachers, in general, will be involved.

SECTION FIVE - IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Implications

In all three districts studied, most of the participants are comfortable with their current teacher evaluation systems. They view the systems as fair, and they believe they get (or give, in the case of administrators) some useful feedback. But the current systems do not provide any real differentiation among teachers, and both administrators and teachers know this. Nearly all teachers receive "excellent" ratings. (Indeed, in one district, literally every teacher received an "excellent" rating.) Of all the statements survey respondents were asked to agree or disagree with, respondents were most likely to disagree that the current system is able to identify particularly strong or particularly weak teachers.

This implication arising from this data comports with one of the main problems identified by the literature. Tucker and Stronge (2005) note that current teacher evaluation models do not effectively distinguish between exceptional and average teachers because so few data are often considered as part of the process. Moreover, Donaldson (2009) notes that since most teachers receive similarly high evaluation ratings, school districts base job-related decisions, such as tenure, job reassignments, and firings, on seniority rather than performance. As a result, teachers sometimes feel that being a truly "excellent" teacher does not really matter, and they may feel frustrated that they are not recognized or rewarded for their greater professional development efforts.

It is likely that the reforms put in place by PERA and Senate Bill 7 will result in greater differentiation among teachers. Even if the text of the statutes does not require

that a certain proportion of teachers be placed into a given ranking, the regulations from ISBE and the knowledge that RIFs and other personnel actions depend on the results of evaluations are likely to end the practice of giving all or nearly all teachers an identical, "excellent" rating. Moreover, once student performance data are incorporated into evaluations, those data are likely to add additional differentiation to the system.

Even before the changes that result from PERA and Senate Bill 7, however, an opportunity appears to exist to increase the use of walk-throughs and other informal or unscheduled observations. A majority of both administrators and teachers surveyed agreed that informal observations, such as walk-throughs, would be helpful additions to the evaluation system. In addition, a number of teachers identified the lack of these opportunities as a weakness of their current systems. These observations by teachers and administrators in this study align with recommendations in the literature that walk-throughs can be an effective way for administrators to gather data about actual day-to-day classroom instruction and provide formative feedback to teachers on how to improve student learning (City, Elmore, Fiarman & Teitel, 2009; Gary Hopkins, 2010). Walk-throughs may also help administrators better distinguish between exceptional and average teachers, resulting in increased teacher confidence in the teacher evaluation system.

With all of this change on the horizon, districts nonetheless have a significant task ahead of them in informing teachers about the changes to come in teacher evaluation practices (except in District C, where a significant change in evaluation practices, to the Danielson model, is already underway). An opportunity may exist to inform teachers in such a way that teachers believe they can have a role in shaping the changes that occur so

that the resulting change is seen as positive and reflecting best practice, rather than as negative and reflecting political interference.

<center>Recommendations</center>

To reduce confusion and anxiety associated with new teacher evaluation practices, districts should be pro-active in communicating with teachers about how PERA and Senate Bill 7 will affect teacher evaluation practices. This communication should go beyond the committees that districts are required to set up, to include substantive information, such as "frequently-asked questions" about the laws, what they require, and what they do not require. One "take-away" message for these communications might be that districts have significant flexibility, even under education reform, to design the evaluation process and ultimately to determine what type of student performance or growth data is used in evaluations. Districts will be more likely to have a positive experience with the upcoming changes if they make the redesign of the evaluation process a collaborative process. If the changes result from a collaborative process, both teachers and administrators would be more likely to believe that the resulting system represents best practices and is fair. Otherwise, districts run a risk that teachers will see the changes to teacher evaluations as representing "political interference" in education and that they will see the resulting forms and systems as arbitrary and reflecting random variation in student performance, rather than real differences in teacher strength.

Another recommendation for districts is to explore ways to add walk-throughs and other informal observation opportunities into their evaluation systems. Even though neither PERA nor Senate Bill 7 require these practices, there was broad consensus in the

teacher and administrator surveys that these would be helpful additions to the evaluation process. These practices already exist, to some degree, in all three districts I studied. However, in some districts, teachers' unions have attempted to keep these practices out of the "official" evaluation process. Once discussions on implementing PERA and Senate Bill 7 are fully underway, unions may re-think this position, particularly if it appears that walk-throughs are a more fair and authentic way of assessing teacher performance than student performance data or the results of a single, "formal" observation.

Finally, to ensure a more effective evaluation system, districts either may need to spend money to decrease the ratio of teachers to evaluators or make more widespread use of teachers as "peer" evaluators. Many administrators and teachers who responded to the survey saw lack of time as a barrier to more effective evaluations. In particular, a number of teachers commented that they do not see their principals in their classrooms except for during formal, scheduled observations. With all of the demands on administrators' time, it may be unrealistic to expect administrators to spend more time observing teacher performance if the current ratio of teachers to administrators remains the same. Several researchers reason that quality evaluations are possible if the amount of time to conduct evaluations and the number of teachers to be evaluated by each administrator are "within reasonable parameters" (Garth-Young, 2007, p. 124).

Unfortunately, the recommendation that districts add administrators to reduce the number of evaluations assigned to each administrator may be difficult to implement in the current economic and political environment. An alternative to hiring additional administrators would be to more frequently include teachers as peer evaluators in a

manner similar to District B. However, unlike District B's current program, which substitutes a single administrative observation of a tenured teacher with a limited number of peer observations, a strong program of peer evaluation might involve having both an administrator and a peer observe a teacher at different times during the year. More widespread use of peer evaluators would not only reduce the observation burden on administrators, it would also build additional capacity in districts for evaluating teaching. It is unclear, however, whether PERA and Senate Bill 7 will allow more widespread use of peer evaluation, as the resulting system will require "trained" evaluators. If one must be an administrator in order to be trained, this will make peer evaluation difficult as more than a supplement to a still largely administrator-driven evaluation process.

Whether it is through hiring additional administrators or making broader use of peer evaluators, districts will be well-served to find ways to ensure that evaluators have time to develop a richer impression of the teachers they are evaluating. Providing a richer impression of teachers being evaluated may do more to raise the level of teacher performance than relying on student performance data, at least in the eyes of respondents to the survey.

<center>Next Steps</center>

The fall 2011 data collection has allowed me to develop a baseline picture of current teacher evaluation systems used in three suburban school districts, along with some initial data on awareness and perceptions of (near) future changes to those systems. Once I have data from fall 2013, I also will be able to answer two additional research questions. These are: (1) How will teachers' perceptions of the evaluation process

change as a result of the new procedures? (2) How will principals' perceptions of the evaluation process change as a result of the new procedures?

I plan to collect additional data in fall 2012 and fall 2013, which will include, in fall 2012, second interviews with the human resources director or other administrator in each district to learn about the process the district actually used in 2011-12 to change its evaluation system and work with its union as required by the law. In addition, I will assess their perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the new evaluation system that the district plans to use to comply with PERA's requirements. In addition, in fall 2013, I plan to re-administer the teacher and administrator surveys used in fall 2011.

Following the fall 2013 data collection, I will be able to use inferential statistical methods to compare the fall 2011 and fall 2013 data sets. In making this comparison, my intent is not to test for differences between districts. However, in the case that sizable differences do arise, I may consider applying parametric procedures to determine if the results from different districts are significant. In any case, I plan to apply parametric procedures to determine the significance of any differences between the data collected in fall 2011 and fall 2013.

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TABLES AND APPENDICES

Table 1

How many teachers are you responsible for evaluating?
(Administrators, by district)

	District A	District B	District C	Overall
Count	8	3	5	16
Average	19.50	43.33	36.40	29.25
St Dev	8.14	17.56	29.67	20.35
Min	5	25	11	5
Median	20	45	24	24

Table 2(a)

How many years have you been teaching?
(Teachers, by district)

	District A	District B	District C	Overall
Count	67	47	6	120
Average	12.16	15.81	8.50	13.41
St Dev	7.58	7.21	4.85	7.57
Min	0.00	3.00	1.00	0.00
Median				
Max	34.00	31.00	15.00	34.00

Table 2(b)

How many years have you been teaching in this District?
(Teachers, by district)

	District A	District B	District C	Overall
Count	67	47	6	120
Average	9.09	11.62	6.33	9.94
St Dev	5.80	7.21	4.18	5.76
Min	0.00	1.00	1.00	0.00
Median				
Max	24.00	28.00	12.00	28.00

Table 3(a)

Our evaluation system does a good job of recognizing teachers who are stronger than their peers.
(Administrators, by district)

	District A	District B	District C	Overall
Count	8	3	5	16
Agree / strongly agree	50.0%	33.3%	60.0%	50.0%
Neutral	25.0%	33.3%	20.0%	25.0%
Disagree / strongly disagree	25.0%	33.3%	20.0%	25.0%
Average	3.25	3.00	3.40	3.25

Table 3(b)

Our evaluation system does a good job of recognizing teachers who are stronger than their peers.
(Teachers, by district)

	District A	District B	District C	Overall
Count	64	41	6	111
Agree / strongly agree	32.8%	36.6%	50.0%	35.1%
Neutral	26.6%	36.6%	50.0%	31.5%
Disagree / strongly disagree	40.7%	26.9%	--	33.4%
Average	2.86	3.12	3.50	2.99

Table 3(c)

Our evaluation system does a good job of recognizing teachers who are stronger than their peers.
(Administrators and teachers)

	Administrators	Teachers
Count	16	111
Agree / strongly agree	50.0%	35.1%
Neutral	25.0%	31.5%
Disagree / strongly disagree	25.0%	33.4%
Average	3.25	2.99

Table 4(a)

Our evaluation system does a good job of identifying teachers who are weaker than most of their peers but not weak enough to require remediation.
(Administrators, by district)

	District A	District B	District C	Overall
Count	8	3	5	16
Agree / strongly agree	50.0%	33.3%	40.0%	43.8%
Neutral	12.5%	--	40.0%	18.8%
Disagree / strongly disagree	37.5%	66.7%	20.0%	37.5%
Average	3.13	2.67	3.20	3.06

Table 4(b)

Our evaluation system does a good job of identifying teachers who are weaker than most of their peers but not weak enough to require remediation.
(Teachers, by district)

	District A	District B	District C	Overall
Count	64	41	6	111
Agree / strongly agree	17.2%	24.4%	50.0%	21.6%
Neutral	31.3%	34.1%	33.3%	32.4%
Disagree / strongly disagree	51.6%	41.5%	16.7%	45.9%
Average	2.64	2.78	3.33	2.73

Table 4(c)

Our evaluation system does a good job of identifying teachers who are weaker than most of their peers but not weak enough to require remediation.
(Administrators and teachers)

	Administrators	Teachers
Count	16	111
Agree / strongly agree	43.8%	21.6%
Neutral	18.8%	32.4%
Disagree / strongly disagree	37.5%	45.9%
Average	3.06	2.73

Table 5(a)

Our evaluation system allows us to provide meaningful, formative suggestions for teacher growth.
(Administrators, by district)

	District A	District B	District C	Overall
Count	8	3	5	16
Agree / strongly agree	100.0%	66.7%	60.0%	81.3%
Neutral	--	33.3%	20.0%	12.5%
Disagree / strongly disagree	--	--	20.0%	6.3%
Average	4.00	4.00	3.60	3.88

Table 5(b)

Our evaluation system allows us to provide meaningful, formative suggestions for teacher growth.
(Teachers, by district)

	District A	District B	District C	Overall
Count	64	41	6	111
Agree / strongly agree	67.2%	75.6%	66.7%	70.3%
Neutral	14.1%	12.2%	33.3%	14.4%
Disagree / strongly disagree	18.8%	12.2%	--	15.3%
Average	3.50	3.83	3.83	3.64

Table 5(c)

Our evaluation system allows us to provide meaningful, formative suggestions for teacher growth.
(Administrators and teachers)

	Administrators	Teachers
Count	16	111
Agree / strongly agree	81.3%	70.3%
Neutral	12.5%	14.4%
Disagree / strongly disagree	6.3%	15.3%
Average	3.88	3.64

Table 6(a)

Our teachers feel the summative ratings our evaluation system produces are fair.
(Administrators, by district)

	District A	District B	District C	Overall
Count	8	3	5	16
Agree / strongly agree	62.5%	66.7%	60.0%	62.6%
Neutral	25.0%	33.3%	20.0%	25.0%
Disagree / strongly disagree	12.5%	--	20.0%	12.5%
Average	3.50	3.67	3.60	3.56

Table 6(b)

Our teachers feel the summative ratings our evaluation system produces are fair.
(Teachers, by district)

	District A	District B	District C	Overall
Count	64	40	6	110
Agree / strongly agree	54.7%	67.5%	100.0%	61.9%
Neutral	34.4%	22.5%	--	28.2%
Disagree / strongly disagree	11.0%	10.0%	--	10.0%
Average	3.45	3.68	4.00	3.56

Table 6(c)

Our teachers feel the summative ratings our evaluation system produces are fair.
(Administrators and teachers)

	Administrators	Teachers
Count	16	110
Agree / strongly agree	62.6%	61.9%
Neutral	25.0%	28.2%
Disagree / strongly disagree	12.5%	10.0%
Average	3.56	3.56

Table 7

Our teachers find the formative suggestions in their evaluations to be helpful.
(Administrators, by district)

	District A	District B	District C	Overall
Count	8	3	5	16
Agree / strongly agree	50.0%	33.3%	60.0%	50.0%
Neutral	25.0%	66.7%	40.0%	37.5%
Disagree / strongly disagree	25.0%	--	--	12.5%
Average	3.38	3.67	3.60	3.50

Table 8(a)

I am comfortable with the training and guidance I have received to evaluate teachers accurately and fairly.
(Administrators, by district)

	District A	District B	District C	Overall
Count	8	3	5	16
Agree / strongly agree	62.5%	100.0%	40.0%	62.6%
Neutral	37.5%	--	20.0%	25.0%
Disagree / strongly disagree	--	--	40.0%	12.5%
Average	3.75	4.00	3.00	3.56

Table 8(b)

Our evaluators have the skill, training, and guidance to evaluate teachers accurately and fairly.
(Teachers, by district)

	District A	District B	District C	Overall
Count	64	41	6	111
Agree / strongly agree	43.8%	63.4%	50.0%	51.4%
Neutral	28.1%	14.6%	33.3%	23.4%
Disagree / strongly disagree	28.2%	19.5%	16.7%	25.2%
Average	3.20	3.44	3.33	3.30

Table 8(c)

I am comfortable with the training and guidance I have received to evaluate teachers accurately and fairly / Our evaluators have the skill, training, and guidance to evaluate teachers accurately and fairly.
(Administrators and teachers)

	Administrators	Teachers
Count	16	111
Agree / strongly agree	62.6%	51.4%
Neutral	25.0%	23.4%
Disagree / strongly disagree	12.5%	25.2%
Average	3.56	3.30

Table 9(a)

Which of the following changes would significantly help you deliver more differentiated evaluations to your teachers?
(Administrators, by district)

	District A	District B	District C	Overall
Count	8	3	5	16
None – the process works well now	--	--	--	--
More formal observations	12.5%	33.3%	60.0%	31.3%
Informal observations or walk-throughs	62.5%	100.0%	40.0%	62.5%
Student performance or growth data	75.0%	66.7%	80.0%	75.0%
How students or parents view teachers	50.0%	33.3%	--	31.3%
Teacher journals or classroom artifacts	75.0%	33.3%	--	43.8%
Other	12.5%	33.3%	20.0%	18.8%

The one "other" answer in District A was "lesson plans." The one "other" answer is District B was "time." The one "other" answer is District C was "evaluations that allow for growth and don't expect perfection in order to be considered a quality teacher."

Table 9(b)

Which of the following changes, if any, would significantly contribute to making evaluations more accurate and fair?
(Teachers, by district)

	District A	District B	District C	Overall
Count	63	41	6	110
None – the process works well now	7.9%	22.0%	16.7%	13.6%
More formal observations	6.3%	14.6%	16.7%	10.0%
Informal observations or walk-throughs	74.6%	56.1%	50.0%	66.4%
Student performance or growth data	4.8%	12.2%	--	7.3%
How students or parents view teachers	33.3%	19.5%	33.3%	28.2%
Teacher journals or classroom artifacts	27.0%	26.8%	33.3%	27.3%
Other	20.6%	12.2%	16.7%	17.3%

Table 9(c)

Which of the following changes would significantly help you deliver more differentiated evaluations to your teachers?
(Administrators and teachers)

	Administrators	Teachers
Count	16	110
None – the process works well now	--	13.6%
More formal observations	31.3%	10.0%
Informal observations or walk-throughs	62.5%	66.4%
Student performance or growth data	75.0%	7.3%
How students or parents view teachers	31.3%	28.2%
Teacher journals or classroom artifacts	43.8%	27.3%
Other	18.8%	17.3%

Table 10(a)

How helpful would data on student performance or growth be in assigning fair and accurate ratings to teachers?
(Administrators, by district)

	District A	District B	District C	Overall
Count	8	3	5	16
Very helpful	25.0%	33.3%	40.0%	31.3%
Somewhat helpful	75.0%	66.7%	40.0%	62.5%
Neither	--	--	20.0%	6.3%
Somewhat unhelpful	--	--	--	--
Very unhelpful	--	--	--	--
Helpful	100.0%	100.0%	80.0%	93.8%
Neither	--	--	20.0%	6.3%
Unhelpful	--	--	--	--

Table 10(b)

How helpful would data on student performance or growth be in assigning fair and accurate ratings to teachers?
(Teachers, by district)

	District A	District B	District C	Overall
Count	63	40	6	109
Very helpful	3.2%	2.5%	50.0%	5.5%
Somewhat helpful	30.2%	20.0%	33.3%	26.6%
Neither	33.3%	40.0%	16.7%	34.9%
Somewhat unhelpful	20.6%	10.0%	--	15.6%
Very unhelpful	12.7%	27.5%	--	17.4%
Helpful	33.4%	22.5%	83.3%	32.1%
Neither	33.3%	40.0%	16.7%	34.9%
Unhelpful	33.3%	37.5%	--	33.0%

Table 10(c)

How helpful would data on student performance or growth be in assigning fair and accurate ratings to teachers?
(Administrators and teachers)

	Administrators	Teachers
Count	16	109
Very helpful	31.3%	5.5%
Somewhat helpful	62.5%	26.6%
Neither	6.3%	34.9%
Somewhat unhelpful	--	15.6%
Very unhelpful	--	17.4%
Helpful	93.8%	32.1%
Neither	6.3%	34.9%
Unhelpful	--	33.0%

Table 11(a)

If your district plans to make changes, how well-informed do you feel about those possible changes?
(Administrators, by district)

	District A	District B	District C	Overall
Count	8	3	5	16
Well-informed	50.0%	33.3%	80.0%	56.3%
Somewhat informed	50.0%	66.7%	20.0%	43.8%
Not informed	--	--	--	--

Table 11(b)

If your district plans to make changes, how well-informed do you feel about those possible changes?
(Teachers, by district)

	District A	District B	District C	Overall
Count	58	37	6	101
Well-informed	15.5%	5.4%	50.0%	13.9%
Somewhat informed	48.3%	48.6%	50.0%	48.5%
Not informed	36.2%	45.9%	--	37.6%

Table 11(c)

If your district plans to make changes, how well-informed do you feel about those possible changes?
(Administrators and teachers)

	Administrators	Teachers
Count	16	101
Well-informed	56.3%	13.9%
Somewhat informed	43.8%	48.5%
Not informed	--	37.6%

Table 12(a)

I expect to be involved in formulating those changes.
(Administrators, by district)

	District A	District B	District C	Overall
Count	8	3	5	16
Strongly agree	50.0%	66.7%	40.0%	50.0%
Agree	37.5%	33.3%	--	25.0%
Neutral	--	--	40.0%	12.5%
Disagree	12.5%	--	20.0%	12.5%
Strongly disagree	--	--	--	--
Agree	87.5%	100.0%	40.0%	75.0%
Neutral	--	---	40.0%	12.5%
Disagree	12.5%	---	20.0%	12.5%

Table 12(b)

I expect that I will be involved in formulating those changes.
(Teachers, by district)

	District A	District B	District C	Overall
Count	59	41	6	106
Strongly agree	3.4%	12.2%	16.7%	7.5%
Agree	23.7%	34.1%	16.7%	27.4%
Neutral	39.0%	46.3%	33.3%	41.5%
Disagree	18.6%	2.4%	16.7%	12.3%
Strongly disagree	15.3%	4.9%	16.7%	11.3%
Agree	27.1%	46.3%	33.3%	34.9%
Neutral	39.0%	46.3%	33.3%	41.5%
Disagree	33.9%	7.3%	33.3%	23.6%

Table 12(c)

I expect to be involved in formulating those changes.
(Administrators and teachers)

	Administrators	Teachers
Count	16	106
Strongly agree	50.0%	7.5%
Agree	25.0%	27.4%
Neutral	12.5%	41.5%
Disagree	12.5%	12.3%
Strongly disagree	--	11.3%
Agree	75.0%	34.9%
Neutral	12.5%	41.5%
Disagree	12.5%	23.6%

Table 13(a)

I expect teachers in my district will be involved in formulating these changes.
(Administrators, by district)

	District A	District B	District C	Overall
Count	8	3	5	16
Strongly agree	50.0%	100.0%	20.0%	50.0%
Agree	50.0%	--	40.0%	37.5%
Neutral	--	--	--	--
Disagree	--	--	40.0%	12.5%
Strongly disagree	--	--	--	--
Agree	100.0%	100.0%	60.0%	87.5%
Neutral	--	--	--	--
Disagree	--	--	40.0%	12.5%

Table 13(b)

I expect teachers to be involved in formulating these changes.
(Teachers, by district)

	District A	District B	District C	Overall
Count	60	41	6	107
Strongly agree	20.0%	56.1%	16.7%	33.6%
Agree	58.3%	29.3%	50.0%	46.7%
Neutral	8.3%	12.2%	16.7%	10.3%
Disagree	8.3%	--	16.7%	5.6%
Strongly disagree	5.0%	2.4%	--	3.7%
Agree	78.3%	85.4%	66.7%	80.3%
Neutral	8.3%	12.2%	16.7%	10.3%
Disagree	13.3%	2.4%	16.7%	9.3%

Table 13(c)

I expect teachers in my district will be involved in formulating these changes.
(Administrators and teachers)

	Administrators	Teachers
Count	16	107
Strongly agree	50.0%	33.6%
Agree	37.5%	46.7%
Neutral	--	10.3%
Disagree	12.5%	5.6%
Strongly disagree	--	3.7%
Agree	87.5%	80.3%
Neutral	--	10.3%
Disagree	12.5%	9.3%

Appendix A-1

Administrators – What are two strengths and two weaknesses of your district's evaluation system?

District A

Strengths - the opportunity to give feedback in narrative form, and goal setting. Weaknesses - the lack of a structure for conducting informal walk-throughs, lack of rubrics for evaluating staff
Strengths: - holding pre and post conferences for each observation - self-reflection component is nice for the teachers and informative for me as an administrator Weaknesses: - no goal setting for pre-tenured staff, moreover goal meetings could be improved - need more focus like Smart Goals
Strengths - it's collaborative and teachers can target areas of development and set goals Weaknesses - it lacks some key questions such as how does data impact your teaching and how do you reflect upon the lesson taught?
Strength: Domains used capture many areas that are critical for a teacher in our district. Strength: Differentiation is doable through the system (first year to experienced teacher). Weakness: Not the easiest to apply to non-teachers (i.e. social workers) Weakness: For tenured teachers during "informal" years, there is very little required.
1. The system is manageable. 2. It is in compliance with the law. 1. It does not differentiate for the unique needs of some staff- i.e. special education teachers. 2. It is not a meaningful process, rather hoops to jump through and boxes to check off.
Strengths - process with pre-observ conf, observation, and post-observ conference; self-reflection for non-tenure teachers weaknesses - time line that evaluations must be complete by beginning of March; goal setting for tenure teachers
Strengths: Allows for good conversation about teaching techniques, curriculum implementation, etc. Assures a longer "presence" in the classrooms. Weaknesses: By the nature of the actual paper evaluations, tenured staff receive more written feedback than nontenured. If a tenured teacher has great faults, the system takes years to evaluate them out of a position.

District B

strengths: the tool is flexible and leaves room for personalizing it for your needs. weaknesses: the tool is vague and subjective.
Strength - tenure staff reflect and determine goals to grow as a teacher, collaborative process Weakness - hard to rate the level of impact a staff member's goal has had on instruction at times. If you identify a goal for a tenure teacher they do not have to address it
Strengths: 1. Collaborative approach to goal setting and evaluation 2. Four potential options of evaluation with one structured plan and three alternative options for tenured teachers. This allows strong, highly qualified teachers to expand their goal setting and collaboratively share their skills in a peer model. Weaknesses: 1.Time (It is not the model, it is the job and finding adequate time to do it well) 2. There should be more

observation time, both structured and unstructured, done by evaluators.

District C

Strengths - allows for appropriate feedback, flexible enough to address a multitude of issues Weakness - lacks definition of what is excellent v satisfactory, only address traditional classroom teacher does not work well for coteachers or related service.
Aligned with Danielson Reflection piece added   State minimum requirements Not on going
Directors from the Administrative Center are now involved in the process. I have less staff to evaluate. Weaknesses are that the evaluation tool keeps changing and tenured staff gets evaluated every other year.
Strengths: Open ended domains, timelines.   Weaknesses: Amount of time to complete the process. The union

Teachers - What are two strengths of your district's evaluation system?

District A

The system is organized.   Teachers receive direct feedback.
Somewhat uniform process Time with administration for individual feedback
It offers choices of various plans to the person being evaluated.
Easy to fill out forms
good question - i am pretty neutral with this stuff
Frequency (3X/yr) We are encouraged to take risks in our lessons
Feedback is in narrative form as opposed to check boxes.
Principals are actually in the classroom to observe.   Opportunity to meet before an after observation.
1) teacher evaluation IS NOT tied to student standardized testing performance 2) once tenured, teachers set goals for themselves to reach
Time to meet with administrator and set goals. A fresh set of eyes on my instruction to help me improve.
That you have a pre-conference with your administrator prior to your administrator evaluating your lesson, you meet with them after to go over what was put in your evaluation. It's nice that you have meeting with your evaluator after all of your observations are done for the year, so that the administrator can go over your summative evaluation with you.
Connecting to students Creating interactive lessons
building student relationships   utilizing various resources to build lessons
It supports giving teachers timely feedback. It allows for teacher choice regarding area of focus.
1. It offers an opportunity for the teachers to dialogue with the administrators about their teaching style.   2. It gives the teacher time to reflect on their teaching.
Teachers are encouraged to make their own goals, as opposed using district goals.
The narrative we get from the principals, I can't think of any others.
I like the every other year format. I like the follow up meeting and input I receive during my evaluation year.
The strength of the administrator in evaluating The ability to help create goals together with administrator.
The evaluation system is very limited. We are only evaluated a few times in the year.
Frequent communication between administrators and staff on your performance, and it provides an excellent opportunity to stop and assess your performance. This doesn't necessarily happen for me on non-evaluation cycle years.
It provides me with feedback throughout the year so that I can improve on weaknesses. It allows me the opportunity for my administration to see me in action.
They do not happen every year   Teachers are given an opportunity to add input to the narrative, if necessary
-variety of administrators (principal, assistant principal, etc) who evaluate you brings

different perspectives and suggestions -detailed feedback provided by narrative component
It evaluates teachers on more than just classroom performance.   Pre/post observations are a great way to direct the feedback toward areas for growth.
1) A chance to meet with administrators and discuss our teaching abilities on a personal level.   2) I like that I get to choose when the administrator comes to observe in my classroom so that the lesson really shows my strengths as an educator.
1. Employees set professional goals. 2. Teachers are observed by an administrator.
-Predictable schedule, expectations, and forms -Good communication from evaluator
* required pre and post observation conferences * teacher input in summative evaluation
1) goal setting, observation, evaluation- tiered process   2) Educators allowed to self evaluate
multiple times to be observed
* Constructive criticism & suggestions * Quick turn-around with communication
Effective descriptions and expectations of guidelines. Appropriate constructive feedback.
Clarity of process/timeline Well delineated areas of observation
1.Prompt and constructive feedback with principal 2.Able to set own goals
-feedback almost immediately -a time for the administrator to come into the room to see you teaching
1. Teachers have autonomy in developing their personal goals. 2. Personal professional conversations with one's administrator is part of the evaluation process.
1. Gives constructive criticism 2. The pre and post meetings give extra discussion time
discussion with the administrator (pre-meeting and post-meeting to discuss) freedom to decide what is going to be observed
Pre observation meeting and post observation meeting
1. Structured system - clear expectations of when I will be evaluated. 2. I like the goal-setting emphasis for tenured teachers.
*Provides meaningful positive feedback *Evaluators remember what it was like to be in the classroom.
Variety of evaluations We can ask for a different evaluator
1.) Somewhat laid back in the fact that I have never felt uncomfortable sitting and talking with my admin or having them in my classroom. 2.) Manageable at 2-3 times a year.
1. Our evaluation system allows us teachers to fine tune our weaknesses. For example, I can tell my administrator to focus on X in my lesson so I can improve upon it. It's a great tool for self-reflection.
1. Teacher can set own goals. 2. Tenured teachers are evaluated regularly as well as non-tenured.
--The Union does a great job of protecting the teacher evaluations   --The schedule of Preob, Ob, and PostOb
It allows for self-reflection and goal setting by the teachers.   Non-tenured teachers are

formally observed 2-3x per year.
Setting goals keeps us reflective and accountable. Having the opportunity to meet with an administrator before and after a lesson helps with planning and reflection.
organized feedback in a timely manner
It is open ended and flexible.
1. Pre-observation and Post Observation meetings with evaluator.   2. Ability to build a good relationship with evaluator
Lesson planing   behavior management
-pre and post discussions -same evaluator who can then see improvement as well as understand style and personality of teacher
It provides opportunity for reflection on how a lesson on how things could have been done differently. The pre/post observation allow the teacher to explain the dynamics of the classroom which can have a huge impact on how the lesson goes and plays out.
teacher and administrator input setting goals
Flexibility, it allows us to choose and expand upon a lesson of our choice. Opportunity to sit down with an administrator and discuss what is going right, and what could be improved upon.
teacher has element of choice as to which lessons will be observed teacher is part of goal-setting process
-Meeting with evaluator before teaching lessons to explain the context of lesson and set up experience. -
I have never felt that an administrator was trying to "get me". It has always been a positive experience even before I was tenured.
1. Teachers need to set goals - it's important to have teachers do this   2. Teachers have an opportunity to gain "an outsider's perspective" on instruction, class management, etc.
1. It keeps teachers accountable to be observed. 2. Pre Obs, Obs, and Post Obs gives teachers and administrators an opportunity to communicate more effectively about teaching.
--forces administrators to provide feedback
I like the narrative portion, in that it allows administrators to talk more about what they've seen in the classroom, rather than just having to "check a box" or "pick a number" on a rating scale. I also like that the teacher/administrator mutually agree upon lessons to observe, as I think it allows the teacher to have a say, and allows him/her to be observed in a situation where he/she feels "at their best".
Evaluators Process of evaluations

District B

1. classroom management 2. communication
the principal and assistant principal take turns evaluating so there is more than one perspective of your performance   evaluations keep you on your toes
emphasizes the positive geared toward teacher goals (Teachers are asked what they would like the observer to focus on during the observation.)

alternate evaluations
1. The system was created collaboratively with teachers involved. 2. It provides opportunity for authentic evaluation.
the feedback   peer evaluation
Choices in evaluation process. Feedback from administrators.
options for different evaluations   encourages one to look at their own self
1. Optional evaluation types after reaching tenure w/excellent evaluations. 2. Opportunity to collaborate with school administration.
1. Teachers can prepare for evaluation 2. Tenured teachers given option of alternative assessment
after tenure is achieved there is opportunity for different types of evaluation, e.g., setting goals, self-evaluation, peer coaching, etc.
Consistent and timely
We have diverse evaluation methods. We are able to select a professional goal and focus each year.
Options for evaluation and flexibility on what is evaluated.
There are flexible options for staff to use for evaluation, including peer evaluation and goal setting. Both are reflective processes and are shared with the principal.
I can choose what type of evaluation to use for my evaluation.
Self-reflection
observation and feedback from principal goal setting option
Evaluations are all based on the same criteria.   Administrators (4 in my years here) are all knowledgeable about the criteria and offer valuable insights based on their observations.
I have a say in how and when I'm evaluated. Goal oriented.
Allows teachers to individualize their goals based on their needs. Positive feedback from your peers and administrators.
-After you are tenured, you have options to do alternative evaluations. -Facilitates personal interaction between you and your administrator
We have choices of evaluation procedures. We have time with the administration.
Great feedback, and appropriate expectations.
goals set up prior to being evaluated opportunity to ask for feedback
1. Rotating assistant principal & principal every year for the evaluations 2. The evaluators usually give a good amount of positive feedback & constructive criticism or different ways of thinking about things & completing things in the classroom
Provides teachers with an "alternative system" of evaluation once tenured so the teacher can enhance an area of teaching with the assistance of the administrator.
It is intended on being individualized It is only 1 time in two years
-observation -feedback
We have choices about the format of our evaluation and we have a say in our goals.
There are optional methods of evaluation, besides supervisor observations.
Evaluation is completed every other year.   Different options to choose the way you would like to be evaluated for tenure teachers.

Diverse choices for evaluation Always get feedback, both positive and constructive
1. I receive direct feedback from the principal and assistant principal.   2. They help me structure goals for myself each year.
The evaluators are supportive and helpful. Goals help identify and guide improvement.
Choice Collaboration with colleagues
-Many options to choose from for evaluation. -Evaluation is done every other year.
options in methods of evaluation. chances to see other teachers teach when using the peer evaluation format.
1. options 2. only once after tenure
Collaborative Innovative
alternative methods of evaluation able to comment on evaluators observations
Tenured teachers have alternative eval. options which foster creativity and professional development.
focused on helping teachers develop their craft focused on creating the best possible classroom, school and community climate
choice of evaluation type -- (when tenured)   clearly spelled out criteria/timeline
Collectively bargained. Range of options.
Alternative eval options such as goal setting Very structured expectations as far as when things are supposed to happen.

District C

timely feedback constructive criticism
Provides objective data Gives another perspective
The data collection that has been done has been accurate.   Post observations interviews have been helpful.
1. they use the same form for all teacher evaluations 2. before, during, and after meetings are scheduled ahead of time
Great Feedback Know what they are looking for
timely pre and post conferences positive feedback and suggestions

Teachers - What are two weaknesses of your district's evaluation system?

District A

Poor teachers are kept in the system. There is no informal observation first for the admin to get to know the class.
Those observing have not always had classroom teaching experience. One size fits all
It is too rigid in format.
Different evaluator every year with different expectations
feed back is pretty generic
I am almost always in a team-teaching situation when I am being observed.   In specials, we are typically observed by someone who does not have a specials background.
Administration constantly changing so one's evaluator is always changing.
There are only two observations.   Kind of ominous final product that goes in personal file.
1) feedback for improvement is given, but there aren't any formalized supports to help a teacher develop in the areas identified 2) evaluation time frames and amount of evaluations an administrator needs to complete is very time consuming for them. May not allow them to be available to address other concerns due to being swamped with evaluations.
Listing things that were seen 1-time events with the implication that it is an ongoing problem.   Feedback needs to be more well-rounded. We should get feedback input from peers, students, and others who interact with us more often than the 1-2 times per year that our administrator drops by.
One weakness is that a single administrator is assigned too many teachers to observe/evaluate, so there are many scheduling conflicts with finding times for the pre & post conferences. as well as the actual observations of lessons.   Another weakness would be that although the administrator critiques your lesson, they don't really give valuable feedback (I think that's because they have not been classroom teachers for such a long time, they forget or get a little "rusty"). I would like to see administrators help teachers more through the evaluation process, so that it is more of a professional learning experience for teachers, rather than viewed as administrative "technicality" that has to be completed within a particular time window. Perhaps administrators could offer resources to the teachers at the post conference for ways to enhance their instruction, and then actually FOLLOW up with that teacher.
Curriculum knowledge Assessments
organization   consistency with management
It is too concentrated in the school year just for more "paper work" reasons.
1. At times, former principals have added in what other teachers have said about the person they are evaluating and that teacher is often caught off-guard about the random comment.   2. It makes for a pressure-cooker type of environment if the only two times the administrator is in your class is for an evaluation.
Since all evaluations have to be completed by March, there sometimes isn't a lot of time

for growth between observations.   All observations are done by the same administrator every year. Perhaps there could be a rotation system from year to year so you receive different feedback from many administrators over the years.
They happen only at the beginning of the year, they are done by January and I have to set a goal, just to set a goal.
I feel that it should be a pop in not set up time to be evaluated, It would be a more true evaluation.
The weakness of the administrator in evaluating. The lack of understanding of the curriculum of individual subject areas.
It doesn't matter if you are a good or bad teacher. If the administration wants you out for any reason, then they will lie in your evaluation to get you out. Students should have some say in a teacher's evaluation. Parents should also have a say. Our administrators have too much power over teacher evaluations.
The teacher evaluation system is used with psychologists so many aspects of the evaluation are not relevant to our duties. Perhaps this is a weakness only for psych evals but I don't take goal setting seriously.
It does not feel like an authentic evaluation, I would prefer someone to pop in, I have nothing to hide. I feel like three evaluations does not give the evaluator enough of a glimpse into who I am as an educator.
Comments are not personalized or individualized regarding our teaching accomplishments/goals, but rather are a "form letter" type style with little depth or specific details given; similar comments appear time and again   Some administrators are not experienced as teachers themselves to effectively evaluate classroom teaching, ie our use of integrated curriculum and/or creative lesson planning
Evaluators are too busy and only evaluate teachers when they have to; there isn't enough time to just stop in and see teachers on a day-to-day. It's hard to get realistic feedback as a result.
1) I do not feel like the administrators really know who I am as a teacher since they are only in my classroom 2 times a year, every other year.   2) I feel like some teachers receive recognition for the different activities/committees they participate in while others do not. It would be great if our teacher evaluation system would allow our administrators to really get to know us as teachers and for them to be able to recognize what we contribute to our school.
1. Administrators are allowed to make generalizations based on hearsay and put them in the narrative portion of the evaluations. 2. Individual administrators have large numbers of evaluations to do each year and can't devote time to really working to develop teacher strengths and give new teachers adequate support.
-Lack of real feedback that could help me become a better teacher -Easy to always do my 'best' lesson and not be truly evaluated on what I really do in my classroom
* the form is quite lengthy * not much guidance when it comes to making goals for the year
1) Does not reach the heart of the issue of teachers who should not be teaching.   2) Not much follow through on needs for improvement
time consuming for the principal to make so many observations

* Administered by an evaluator who has never been a gen-ed teacher * The wording often alludes to problems or room for growth that are insignificant or don't exist
Administration does not have content knowledge background. Evaluations take place too early in the school year.
Poorly designed for related service professionals. My observer has very limited availability
1. Lessons feel "staged" and not indicative to everyday routine 2. Principal never visits classroom unless doing a formal observation. Thus, all feedback is based on only being in classroom twice in a given year.
-only getting formally observed a few times each year -being "judged" on those few times
1. It doesn't seem to affect any lasting or permanent change; teachers see it as a "hoop to jump through." 2. Administrators seem to view it as something to "check off their to-do list" rather than an opportunity for truly helping their staff members improve their craft.
1. Only happens a few times a year 2. Only happens in certain classes
lack of suggestions for improvement from administration not true reflection of the job
Poor feedback from administer who is observing
1. Evaluator not familiar with content and not helpful with comments
*Sometimes the areas for growth and improvement given to a teacher are a stretch meant to ensure that something critical is said. Often, it isn't relevant or accurate. *The pre-observation form is a bit clunky as in not user-friendly.
A lot of pressure Changes in HR - much more "by the book."
1.) Some years, those 2-3 visits were the only times an admin stepped in my classroom and on my tenured non-formal years, I didn't see them at all! 2.) While the positive feedback is nice, more constructive criticism would be beneficial.
1. The teachers are able to select their lesson. It allows the teacher to fully prepare, beyond what they normally do, and any weaknesses can be easily hidden. It's not a true evaluation. It's merely a pre-selected snapshot. 2. The use evaluation reports result in "cookie-cutter" responses by administration. Most of my evaluations read exactly the same as the previous years.
1. Scheduling is sometimes tough. 2.   Inconsistency in format.
--There is rarely constructive criticism, our former administrator would give criticism that was connected with SIP that he put on EVERYONE'S room for improvement list no matter what you did in your lesson   --I think there should be some unannounced visits because some teachers perform well on evaluations even when they make poor educational decisions on a regular basis
Tenured teachers are not observed every year.   Many teachers earn the highest rating, even though their job performance varies greatly.
Not enough observations throughout the year. Why does it have to be exclusively administrators evaluating us? Why not incorporate informal peer evaluations as well?
It is very subjective and easily manipulated if the teacher is not doing what is expected.
1. Form for summative is confusing/vague 2. Evaluator does not always have knowledge in area (special ed for example) to be able to give valuable constructive

criticism/ideas
organization   time management
-doesn't benefit non tenure teacher over a tenure teacher in case of job availability -
It's only a snapshot of the teacher. They don't get to experience what they do in the classroom on a daily basis. One lesson that has gone wrong can have a huge impact on your overall evaluation.
I am not evaluated by someone in my department. I am an LBS and my principal and asst. principal are not special educators
I don't like the descriptors of Satisfactory or Excellent. It can still be very subjective, rather than objective.
weak teachers can put on a "dog and pony show" since visits are unannounced if principal and teacher have personality clash, may be somewhat subjective
-Evaluation is generally based only off of 2 or 3 planned lessons -Teachers who are "stuck in a rut" continue to stay that way
I rarely get specific feedback for instructional changes. I am not sure how comfortable many of our administrators are with actually teaching in the classroom
1. No observations are unannounced... so it can just be a dog and pony show.   2. Perhaps don't trust the evaluator or value his/her opinion.
1. Observation results are not always done in a timely manner. 2. Observations can be very subjective.
--not relevant for my role in the building/district --i don't think the pre-tenure process allows for very rich goal-setting or is very directive
Too many teachers are probably rated at the highest level, when that should be reserved for the top of the top. Am not sure how I feel about superintendents rating certain teachers, as I think there's a perception from the teachers that the person rating them might not be the best given that the administrator isn't in the classroom on an ongoing basis, and might not be present in the building often enough to see the teacher's overall contributions to the building.
Feedback Timeliness

District B

1. differentiation
poor performers can "put on a good show" for evaluators for the period then go back to their usual self performance should not be based on student scores. There are too many variables to consider ie. the level of the students and the most important fact for every human being is we all learn at different rates
While some would disagree, it is too "set-up." Anyone can look good when they get to pick the exact date and time. Because it is so formal, it is not natural.
some administrators don't know how to evaluate properly because they have forgotten what's it's like to work with kids and/or they have no clue about your job
1. There should be more options for the alternative evaluations.
in areas of non classroom teachers, such as therapists, principals know little of what to look for   difficulty administrators have in dismissing incompetent teachers

Purpose of evaluation is not evident. Are teachers evaluated so the district has evidence that an administrator has been in their classrooms or is the purpose to help teachers improve their craft?
can be abused
1. Have not always had evaluations completed by administration. 2. Now that our evaluations will be somewhat student progress determined.
1. No way to get rid of a tenured teacher who is doing a bad job 2. No unexpected "drop-ins" to evaluate teachers when not expecting it
One day teacher evaluation is not representative of teacher quality or effectiveness
The time frame is unpredictable. We are often evaluated by people who are unfamiliar with our expertise.
Senate Bill 7 will wipe out both strengths.
It can be daunting to know how to do this..sometimes it is hard to schedule peer evaluation time. If the principal is not familiar with the process; there can be difficulties.
I'd like more administration in seeing me teach more often.
Evaluating administrator does not have the background knowledge about my field of teaching.
Confusing system in terms of timing and type of evaluations
They are based on one observation after the first two years. In another district we had three separate observations for one evaluation (there were two each year in the first two years as is here.) The administrator got a better idea of the teacher's work with three observations. I can't think of a second weakness at the moment.
Bi-annual event. Comes up too quickly.   Extra meetings to go over evaluations in an already crammed schedule.
-With the traditional evaluation of untenured staff, there are only two formal evaluation times during the year. I think there should be more structured interaction to discuss teaching strengths/weaknesses. -After tenure, it is every-other year but I feel that some staff need to be evaluated every year to ensure top quality performance.
Some of the choices are not necessarily productive. The end of the process always seems rushed.
Only one class evaluated. No rubric.
too formalized write-ups too generic
1. The evaluations have nothing to do with our tenure or whether or not we get "RIF'd" at the end of the year 2. The evaluations often seem much more formal than they would be if you were to come in to see the room on a random day.
Not enough meeting time with evaluator
It is only 1 time in 2 years Administration makes it global and not very individualized
-pre observation meetings -time
Sometimes need more direction about a goal to set and different evaluators expect more or less from the teacher.
It's hard to find the time to write up the report if choosing an optional means of evaluation like goal setting or peer evaluation.
The process is not explained very well. Teachers could receive more detailed

information regarding this.
Only occurs once every three years? I'm not sure one evaluation truly shows the teacher's ability
1. I teach music, so it is sometimes challenging to receive feedback from an expert in my field.   2. Evaluations occur 1-2 times a year as a new teach in the district, but especially as a first and second year teacher, I could have used a lot more feedback than those two visits each year.
Number of times to meet and discuss progress towards goals are limited. Veteran teachers are not held accountable to current practices.
Some options give little feedback to your teaching from administrators.   Some options are too time consuming.
-Evaluation options unclear and hard to understand. -Some are more time consuming than others.
tenured teachers might not get observed by administration if a teacher prefers other methods of evaluation.
1. just a snapshot 2. not necessarily reality
One shot wonder effect Doesn't have a lot meaning
if I choose alt. evaluation and get that project done, other issues may not be addressed. limited to very few observations
New administration in the past three years has made eval confusing and for many, very negative.
a 30 minute or hour snapshot doesn't show the stages of learning. there are a lot of hours of preparation and planning that go into the lessons and while teachers try to plan for the unexpected it is also important to be able to modify lessons and cater to the needs of the class in any given moment. These are not always factored into the evaluation process
some principals do not adhere to the "rules"   when doing an observation eval, you always put on your "best show
Principals are poorly trained to do it. Disconnect between what prescribed and what is done.
There are so many evaluations done in the years leading to tenure. Other than that, I like our system.

District C

evaluations have traditionally been based on one classroom visit only 1 follow-up meeting
Subjectivity of the evaluator Not seeing the whole picture--can't evaluate everything
The system depends on infrequent summative evaluations.   Very general feedback.
administrator was not on time for my actual observation (accountability) we are not allowed to formally evaluate our administrators
Not sure they understand the curriculum Do not provide suggestions
consistency between evaluators focus of observations

Appendix B-1

Administrators – Has your district made changes to the evaluation system in the last five years? What were they? Were those changes positive or negative?

District A

not sure
We recently added a rating scale to the nontenured summative evaluation form.
I too new to know
not sure
Changes are currently in progress
No significant changes have been made.
Consistent observation form - positive
Yes, the pretenure evaluation changed. I think the changes were positive.

District B

Has not changed the system.
No
No

District C

Yes, positive change to reflect Illinois Professional Teaching Standards.
Yes positive new evaluation form
New indicators put in place this year--too new to judge.
yes, Danielson, positive

Appendix B-2

Teachers – Has your district made changes to the evaluation system in the last five years? What were they? Were those changes positive or negative?

District A

n/a
The paperwork has changed
I don't think they have made any changes in the last five years,
Not sure
i am not sure - it think every year depending on your years of service, the process is different
Not sure.
not sure
We changed our system to 5 points, I think?
I have no idea! Yikes!
I don't know.
No
I don't know.
No
Not for teachers. But we have eliminated the administrative evaluation system.
No
It seems like it has become more formal and standardized, which is positive.
I have not been in the district long enough to adequately answer this question.
I an unaware of any changes
None that I know of.
I believe there are changes happening this year. I believe that we are moving to a teacher evaluation system that rates teachers as excellent, satisfactory or unsatisfactory.
I believe changes have been made to the system for non-tenured teachers, but as I tenured teacher, I was not directly affected.
No - they are talking about making changes with the new state laws, but no changes have been made recently
I don't believe so but am not sure.
Expecting changes in evaluation based on student performance
not for tenured teachers
I have had different evaluators each year and each "ran" the process differently. I can't really say that the district has changed the system - more-so just the administrators change.
No changes that I am aware of.
NO
I am not aware of any changes within the past 5 years.
I honestly don't know
Some minor changes that went unnoticed
Yes

Not that I am aware of.
I don't really know. I don't care to be involved with the process very much.
No changes that I know of?
I have no idea. To be honest, our district is absolutely horrible at communicating changes to us. For example, we have no idea what is happening on our 10/10 pro dev day. There is a BoE report that says PD will be changing, but how many teachers actually read that (aside from me).
Not sure. It has been inconsistent.
I don't know
I have only been employed in the district for the past three years. Since then, there haven't been any changes. However, changes are being planned for upcoming school years.
Honestly, I'm not sure if there have been changes.
?
I don't think so.
Yes, they've made changes to how the evaluation forms are written up.
not sure
There have been a few changes. I don't know yet if they are positive or negative.
I think our form was revised somewhat, not exactly sure of specific changes.
Not sure!
Not that I know of.
Not sure.
No.
don't have enough time here to comment
Unsure
No

District B

no
Not that I know of.
They did add one new option on the alternative evaluation.
not that I have seen
Not to my knowledge.
No changes that I know of
not that i am aware
No.
Senate Bill 7 has changed our evaluation.
No changes
Not that I am aware of.
no
No, not that I am aware of.
Not that I am aware of
Not that I'm aware of

None
No
No
I don't think they have
peer evaluations
Perhaps giving us more choice in the types of evaluations.
I don't know.
I am not aware of any changes made.
There are more choices as to how to be evaluated (individual, peer evaluation, self evaluation. . .) This is a positive change.
None that I am aware of... [My new principal] has been a very involved principal and makes an effort to walk-through classrooms and give feedback which is much appreciated.
I'm not sure as I have only been here two years. With the new principal, I feel that the evaluation system will improve.
no
no
No
not that I know of
No.
None so far. Changes are coming though.

District C

Yes. Different paperwork to be completed beforehand, different evaluative tool- positive
We are going to a new form, but I haven't seen it yet. It is going toward the teaching standards.
The evaluation system is being changed to include more frequent and informal evaluations.
yes, more informal evals (walk throughs) positive when used appropriately (filling out a form and keeping it for records is not appropriate, goes against contract)
N/A
Changes are occurring this year.

Administrators – What are your district's plans, if any, for changing the teacher evaluation system over the next few years?

District A

We will be including some sort of data on student progress and growth. How that will look is still unclear.
We have discussed ways to use student performance - especially in the area of making "gains". We are brainstorming ideas now and have plans to improve the system in the future.
They will align our system with the state requirements
aligning the expectations with the strategic plan's CONNECTED goals
To comply with PERA, we are moving towards a system (eventually) that captures student progress/growth.
We will be changing the evaluation plans so that they are in legal compliance.
Will follow the state guidance to include student achievement data in evaluations
It is certain based on the new laws to evaluate teachers based on student performance.

District B

Will be changing beginning next year.
We will be reviewing the plan to meet the change in the law as established by Senate Bill 7.
I believe there are plans for review and revision in the next year.

District C

They plan to develop a consistent rubric for evaluation of teachers.
Moving to the state required form and adding another indicator
Contract is up for renegotiation after this year.
Danielson framework was adopted

Teachers – What are your district's plans, if any, for changing the teacher evaluation system over the next few years?

District A

I am not sure if there are any plans.
I have heard that the rating categories might change and that student performance might play a role in teacher evaluation.
There is a new system from the state of IL that will be upcoming in [this district].
not sure
no idea
To base it more on student achievement.
not sure
Changing the rating scale. Changing pre-tenure assessment tool.
Don't know.
I have no idea! Yikes!
To adapt a four standard rating system instead of three.
There is an evaluation committee being formed, but it does not sound like there will be significant changes.
I don't know
To follow the new rules outlined by the state of IL.
New state goals upcoming
The district intends to make seniority based on performance instead of years in the district. Therefore teachers will be competing against each other for a job. I'm not going to help any of my colleagues because they might get a better evaluation and move ahead of me on the seniority list. A fifth year teacher can have seniority over a 30 year teacher now. Then the district will fire the 30 year teacher instead of the 5 year teacher to save money. Administrators will intentionally give older teachers a lower evaluation to allow the district to RIF older teachers and save money.
Don't know.
I know that the plan is to use student progress as part of the evaluation system.
Not sure
I believe that student growth and performance may become a factor in evaluating teachers.
It's going to change to suit the newer tenure and retention laws.
Not sure.
Given state legislation and national trends, I imagine that our district will comply with new guidelines for teacher evaluations.
I know it will include student growth somehow, but they hadn't decided how at the last meeting I went to
we have a mentoring program, but I don't know if this is related
Same as above.
NA

This year non-tenured teachers will receive ratings for the first time.
I do not know.
I am unaware of any plans
Yes, per new state guidelines.
-state changes in non tenured evaluations
I am not aware of any upcoming changes.
I think they are changing it to be based on students' progress
I think they want to link teacher evaluation to student performance
I don't know
None as far as I know.
I don't know
I don't know.
The state law is going to mandate changes to our evaluation system. We have to have a 4-tiered ranking system and student scores will be incorporated (or a district-based assessment will be used in lieu of ISAT scores).
I believe we are going to follow the state plan for changing how teachers are being evaluated.
I don't really know, but I heard through the gossip mill that they are going to start tracking student progress and using that to evaluate teachers.
Part of teachers' ratings will be based on student performance and/or growth. The rating scale for teachers will be changed, which will allow for non-tenured teachers with a higher rating to maintain a job over a tenured teacher with a lower rating.
Not sure.
?
I don't know.
trying to align with state evaluation changes
Not sure.
know there are changes in the works to incorporate test scores but I'm not sure how this will effect special education
I don't know.
They intend to use student performance as a piece of teacher evaluation.
We will be going to the 4 levels of competency model mandated by the state.
To be in accordance with IL state law and federal law.
They are waiting to see what the state decides and model our structure off that.
don't know
They will be changing to be aligned with the state's new evaluation system.

District B

don't know
None that I know of.
I do not know.
complying with the new mandate
Plans are underway. Teachers will collaborate with some administrators to rewrite our

system of evaluation.
None that I know of
there is talk of relating evaluations to student progress
The district is currently meeting with a representative group to redefine the evaluation process.
Students' test score part of our evaluation. From a three tier to a four tier evaluation.
I think we are changing the rating system from 3 to a 4 tiered rating.
To tie it in some way to student achievement
to comply with state and federal guidelines, when mandated.
I'm not sure.
None that I am aware of
Test scores used to evaluate Special Education Teachers like myself are not an appropriate tool.
I do not know of any changes
I have not heard if there are any plans for changing the teacher evaluation system.
I haven't heard
I don't know.
Do not know.
I do not know.
I do not see the district making plans. State forces though seem to want more teacher accountability and CPS use new measurements to evaluate its teachers. Many of which seem not fair.
none
talk during the negotiations of the new contract to tie them to student progress somehow
I know there is talk of changes but I don't know what they will be
?
It's always a topic for each new negotiation period.
To be bargained based on PERA.
Have to get in line with state expectations that tie part to tests. I'm very unhappy about this.

District C

more informal visits throughout the school year district office employees partaking in observations
I believe it will be focused on the core curriculum, learning targets, and state standards.
The changes will have to be in accordance with the new State of Illinois legislation. It is unclear exactly what that will look like.
see above
N/A
inter-rater reliability informal walk-throughs

Administrators – Other comments

District A

Teacher evaluation is definitely an area of growth for us. I feel strongly that both administrators and teachers should be involved and invested in the new process.
I think that the walk-throughs and unscheduled observations often give more information than the planned observations.

District B

Evaluations and teacher goal setting are the most important role of the instructional leader. Our job is to develop and support our teachers and assure they are doing the best job possible to meet the needs while also providing challenge for all students. We need to make sure they have the proper materials and training to do so and foster their development and desire to improve their craft.   I believe in a collaborative model between teacher and evaluator that is transparent and goal oriented. Increasing frequency of observations and review would be a significant improvement, but would also be a difficult thing to accomplish.

District C

(None.)

Teachers – Other comments

District A

Evaluating for "non" classroom teachers is difficult and I question how this will evolve with the new upcoming laws.
I love teaching and being in the classroom. Unfortunately, the rest of the teaching profession sucks. It sucks the life out of teachers. Just get the administrators and politicians out of schools. Make the teachers accountable to students and parents. Let the students and parents evaluate teachers. They know who's good and who's bad.
Hard to say whether evaluation results are fair or not, as I only know my results. I don't know if teachers have left the school due to poor evals or for other reasons. I don't know if teachers have changed their practices due to their evaluations.
I feel that I feel best evaluated by someone who has been in my field before evaluating. Someone who is unfamiliar with my job and my caseload may not be able to adequately see my strengths and weaknesses.
For question 4, I marked "disagree" for the first two statements. It's not so much that I do not agree with what the statements say, but rather, that I did not realize that such comparisons were taking place.
I don't feel it is fair to rate teachers on student growth since the classes are not equally balanced. Some teams have the gifted cluster while others are assigned to work with the ELL, Life Skills and other populations that require additional support. I also don't feel like the IEP students are always divided in a way where each team can be compared. If administrators are going to rate teachers according to their students growth then the classes need to be more similar in regards to identified & unidentified students with needs.
I love walk-throughs - I think they are a GREAT way to see what is really happening in different classrooms day to day
As I said, I've had three different administrators evaluate me in three years. This can be a little unnerving. I understand that it provides me with different perspectives, but it also inhibits the evaluator from seeing growth over a long-range period. In addition, each evaluator looks for different things and has different expectations of the teacher he/she evaluates. Each year, I find myself worrying "What if this administrator doesn't like how I teach like last year's did?" Last, as a non-tenured teacher, I'm concerned how the newly-implemented scoring system will affect the rehire of non-tenureds. How much emphasis will be placed on that single word and not the big picture?
Evaluation is so complex I'm not convinced that there is a single standard or structure for evaluating all teachers. Making objective decisions about a subjective task like teaching effectiveness seems to be an exercise in failure. The variables for measurement are too numerous to apply to the business model used in accounting and sales effectiveness.
Most of our teachers are strong. We have a few who never should have received tenure, and I am not sure why they did.
i am not informed or take interest in these issues as some other teachers do

District B

Basing teacher evals on student performance is ridiculous since many kids are below level in the first place; have family issues that impact; just don't care and answer C to everything; there are tons of factors that go into student progress and test scores are not the best form of judging the student's progress or the teacher's performance
the union may have an opportunity to provide input , but I do not know how open the district administrators or BOE would be to soliciting comments from any/all teachers.
Student performance should not be a factor in evaluating teachers for the purpose of job retention. Teachers should evaluate student performance so they can ascertain what students are learning and if a different approach is required/needed.
Because I am a music teacher, I am concerned with the idea that student performance will be tied to teacher evaluations. There is currently no reliable assessment of musical achievement.
The state of Illinois has changed our evaluations and we don't know what is going on.
As a specials (encore) teacher, I am concerned at the elementary level especially about how the district intends to tie evaluation to student achievement. And yet, I feel that my subject (music) is just as important to a child's education as his/her core classes.
Evaluations should not be based on test scores or student growth. Children are all different, therefore from year to year, the amount of growth is different as is you methods for teaching.
Politicians should not make educational decisions. School administration officials are better qualified.
I wrote that observation is both a strength and a weakness. I feel that to have a fair assessment, one needs to be assessed more often and across multiple settings. I don't think a true evaluation can be made one time every other year.
I think that this is a very interesting topic, and hope that you can share your findings with our district's administration.
If teacher evaluations/pay are tied to student performance there will be less collaboration amongst teachers and possible unethical behavior. Also, will any teacher want the special needs children? Will they be willing to share their most creative lessons?
Links between teacher performance reviews and so-called student growth measures are a political, not an educational proposal.

District C

This year we are going under union contracts and a lot will be on the table such as day length, middle school concept, and RTI. This will be reflective in our evaluations. We are also starting walkthroughs by the district and building administration to help us in our instruction. Right now, I have not formed an opinion on that process, because it is so new. I do believe the walkthroughs will be mostly objective; however, I believe an administrator's bias could affect the snapshot of the classroom.
Just as the district is going to 90/10 for student evaluation, I am expecting the new

evaluation system to follow a similar pattern. I'm skeptical that such a   system will be good for students or teachers.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTORS
FALL 2011

Administration procedures: I will review the purpose of the interview, which is to explore current practices and plans for change in teacher evaluations. I will inform interviewees that the interview session will last for about one hour, depending on the nature of the responses and the follow-up questions. Each interview question will be open-ended.

1. How many years have you served as the human resources administrator for your district?

2. How many certified teachers are in your district?

3. Please describe your current evaluation process.

    a. Is every teacher evaluated every year? If not, how often are teachers evaluated?

    b. Do teachers have choices in the format or content of evaluation they receive? What are those? About how many teachers select each option?

    c. Are formal observations involved in all evaluations? How many?

    d. Do evaluators perform informal observations or walk-throughs? Are they allowed to use those observations/walk-throughs in evaluations? If so, do they typically do so?

    e. Are student performance data used in the evaluation process? If so, how?

    f. Do evaluators look at teacher journals or classroom artifacts? Are they allowed to use those items in evaluations? If so, do they typically do so?

    g. Are surveys of students or parents used in the evaluation process? If so, how?

    h. Does every teacher receive a summative rating on each evaluation year? How many ratings does your district use? What are they?

    i. How many teachers were evaluated last year (2010-11)? How many do you expect to evaluate this year (2011-12)?

    j. Last year, how many teachers received each rating?

4. What are the strengths and weaknesses of your district's current evaluation system?

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

5. Please tell me about recent and expected future changes in your district's evaluation system.

   a. Has your district made changes to the evaluation system in the last five years? What were they?

   b. What are your district's plans, if any, for changing the teacher evaluation system over the next few years?

   c. How does your district plan to implement new state law requirements for changes in evaluation format or procedure (e.g., using student performance data)? What is your district's expected time frame for making these changes? What processes (e.g., committees, negotiations, etc.) does your district plan to use?

   d. How does your district plan to implement new state law requirements to base RIF decisions on teacher evaluations? What is your district's expected time frame for making these changes? What processes (e.g., committees, negotiations, etc.) does your district plan to use?

   e. How does your district plan to implement new state law requirements to base vacancy decisions on teacher evaluations? What is your district's expected time frame for making these changes? What processes (e.g., committees, negotiations, etc.) does your district plan to use?

   f. How does your district plan to implement new state law requirements to base attainment of tenure on teacher evaluations? What is your district's expected time frame for making these changes? What processes (e.g., committees, negotiations, etc.) does your district plan to use?

6. Please feel free to add any comments or additional explanations you would like to give.

Appendix F

SURVEY QUESTIONS FOR ADMINISTRATORS
FALL 2011

I plan to set up this survey on SurveyMonkey. This document lists the questions and answer options I will provide, but the actual formatting will differ due to the requirements of SurveyMonkey's website.

Thank you for participating in my research study. Data collected from this survey will remain anonymous and be used solely for my dissertation research.

    1. How many teachers are you responsible for evaluating?

        _____

    2. What are two strengths and two weaknesses of your district's current evaluation system?

      a. Strengths:

      b. Weaknesses:

    3. Please tell how you feel about the following statements regarding your district's current evaluation system:

      a. Our evaluation system does a good job of recognizing teachers who are stronger than their peers.

          ___ Strongly agree

          ___ Agree

          ___ Neutral

___ Disagree

___ Strongly disagree

b. Our evaluation system does a good job of identifying teachers who are weaker than most of their peers but not weak enough to require remediation.

    ___ Strongly agree

    ___ Agree

    ___ Neutral

    ___ Disagree

    ___ Strongly disagree

c. Our evaluation system allows us to provide meaningful, formative suggestions for teacher growth.

    ___ Strongly agree

    ___ Agree

    ___ Neutral

    ___ Disagree

    ___ Strongly disagree

d. Our teachers feel the summative ratings our evaluation system produces are fair.

    ___ Strongly agree

    ___ Agree

    ___ Neutral

    ___ Disagree

    ___ Strongly disagree

e. Our teachers find the formative suggestions in their evaluations to be helpful.

    ___ Strongly agree

___ Agree

___ Neutral

___ Disagree

___ Strongly disagree

    f. I am comfortable with the training and guidance I have received to evaluate teachers accurately and fairly.

        ___ Strongly agree

        ___ Agree

        ___ Neutral

        ___ Disagree

        ___ Strongly disagree

4. Which of the following changes, if any, would significantly help you deliver more differentiated evaluations to your teachers? (Check all that apply.)

        ___ None - the process works well now

        ___ More formal observations each year

        ___ More opportunities for informal observations or walk-throughs

        ___ Reports on average student performance or growth in each classroom

        ___ Greater knowledge of how students or parents view teachers

        ___ More opportunity to view teacher journals or classroom artifacts

        ___ Other - please explain:

5. How helpful would data on student performance or growth be in assigning fair and accurate ratings to teachers?

        ___ Very helpful

        ___ Somewhat helpful

___ Neither helpful or unhelpful

___ Somewhat unhelpful

___ Very unhelpful

6. Please tell me about recent and expected future changes in your district's evaluation system.

   a. Has your district made changes to the evaluation system in the last five years? What were they? Were those changes positive or negative?

   b. What are your district's plans, if any, for changing the teacher evaluation system over the next few years?

   c. If your district plans to make changes, how well informed do you feel about those possible changes?

      ___ Well informed

      ___ Somewhat informed

      ___ Not informed

   d. I expect to be involved in formulating those changes.

      ___ Strongly agree

      ___ Agree

      ___ Neutral

      ___ Disagree

      ___ Strongly disagree

e. I expect teachers in my district will be involved in formulating these changes.

    ___ Strongly agree

    ___ Agree

    ___ Neutral

    ___ Disagree

    ___ Strongly disagree

7. Please feel free to add any comments or additional explanations you would like to give.

8. Would you be willing to be contacted later with follow-up questions?

    ___ Yes   ___ No

    If so, please type name and contact information in the box.

<u>**Appendix G**</u>

SURVEY QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS
FALL 2011

I plan to set up this survey on SurveyMonkey. This document lists the questions and answer options I will provide, but the actual formatting will differ due to the requirements of SurveyMonkey's website.

Thank you for participating in my research study. Data collected from this survey will remain anonymous and be used solely for my dissertation research.

1. How many years have you been teaching? _____ How many years in this district? _____

2. What are two strengths and two weaknesses of your district's current evaluation system?

   a. Strengths:

   b. Weaknesses:

3. Please tell how you feel about the following statements regarding your district's current evaluation system:

   a. Our evaluation system does a good job of recognizing teachers who are stronger than their peers.

      ___ Strongly agree

      ___ Agree

___ Neutral

___ Disagree

___ Strongly disagree

b. Our evaluation system does a good job of identifying teachers who are weaker than most of their peers but not weak enough to require remediation.

      ___ Strongly agree

      ___ Agree

      ___ Neutral

      ___ Disagree

      ___ Strongly disagree

c. Our evaluation system allows us to receive meaningful, formative suggestions for teacher growth.

      ___ Strongly agree

      ___ Agree

      ___ Neutral

      ___ Disagree

      ___ Strongly disagree

d. The summative ratings (e.g., excellent, satisfactory, etc.) our evaluation system produces are fair.

      ___ Strongly agree

      ___ Agree

      ___ Neutral

      ___ Disagree

      ___ Strongly disagree

e. Our evaluators have the skill, training, and guidance they need to evaluate teachers accurately and fairly.

    ___ Strongly agree

    ___ Agree

    ___ Neutral

    ___ Disagree

    ___ Strongly disagree

4. Which of the following changes, if any, would significantly contribute to making evaluations more accurate and fair? (Check all that apply.)

    ___ None - the process works well now

    ___ More formal observations each year

    ___ More opportunities for informal observations or walk-throughs

    ___ Reports on average student performance or growth in each classroom

    ___ Greater knowledge of how students or parents view teachers

    ___ More opportunity to view teacher journals or classroom artifacts

    ___ Other - please explain:

5. How helpful would data on student performance or growth be in assigning fair and accurate ratings to teachers?

    ___ Very helpful

    ___ Somewhat helpful

    ___ Neither helpful or unhelpful

    ___ Somewhat unhelpful

    ___ Very unhelpful

6. Please tell me about recent and expected future changes in your district's evaluation system.

   a. Has your district made changes to the evaluation system in the last five years? What were they? Were those changes positive or negative?

   b. What are your district's plans, if any, for changing the teacher evaluation system over the next few years?

   c. If your district plans to make changes, how well informed do you feel about those possible changes?

      ___ Well informed

      ___ Somewhat informed

      ___ Not informed

   d. I expect teachers to be involved in formulating those changes.

      ___ Strongly agree

      ___ Agree

      ___ Neutral

      ___ Disagree

      ___ Strongly disagree

   e. I expect that I will be involved in formulating those changes.

      ___ Strongly agree

      ___ Agree

___ Neutral

___ Disagree

___ Strongly disagree

7. Please feel free to add any comments or additional explanations you would like to give.

8. Would you be willing to be contacted later with follow-up questions?

___ Yes   ___ No

If so, please type name and contact information in the box.