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# **Teacher Evaluation System Design and Implementation: Overcoming Barriers and Seizing Opportunities**

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## Adaptive or Technical Challenge?

“Indeed, the single most common source of leadership failure we’ve been able to identify...is that people, especially those in positions of authority, treat adaptive challenges like technical problems.”

—Heifetz, R. A., & Linsky, M. (2002), *Leadership on the line: Staying alive through the dangers of leading* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press), p. 14.

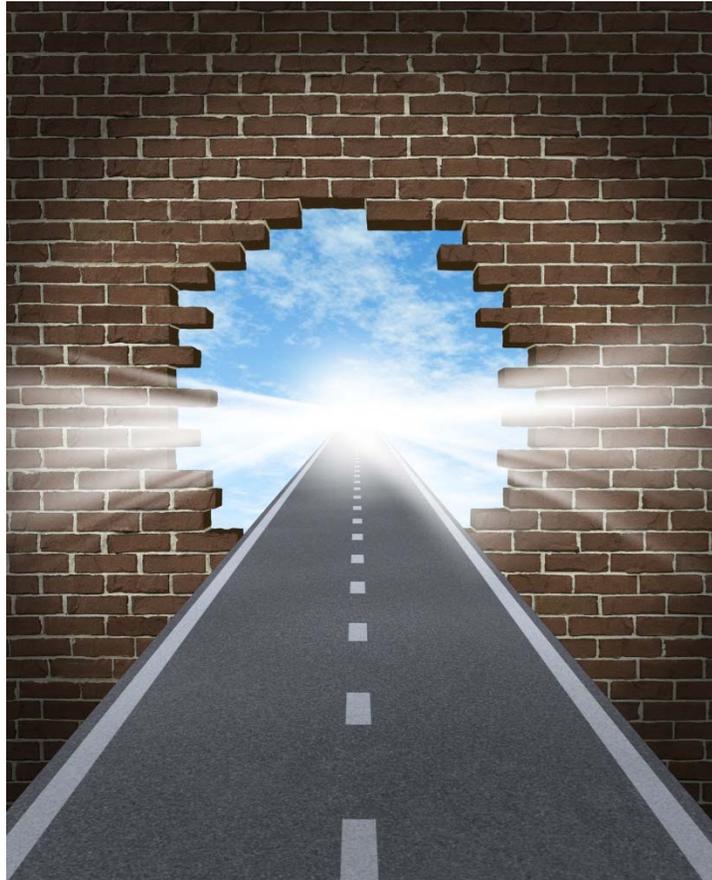
# Technical Versus Adaptive Challenges

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- Technical Challenges
  - Can be fixed by experts and by implementation of best practices.
  - Easy to identify and have solutions that can be implemented quickly.
- Adaptive Challenges
  - Require people to change their values, behaviors and attitudes.
  - People have to learn new ways of doing business.
  - Often difficult to identify.
  - People with the problem must do the work of solving it.
  - Often require experiments, innovations and new learning.
  - Can take longer to implement.

# The Promise of Teacher Evaluation

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- Improve the quality of teaching.
- Increase student achievement.
- Address public concerns about accountability.
- Improve the talent management process.

# Teacher Evaluation: Common Design and Implementation Challenges

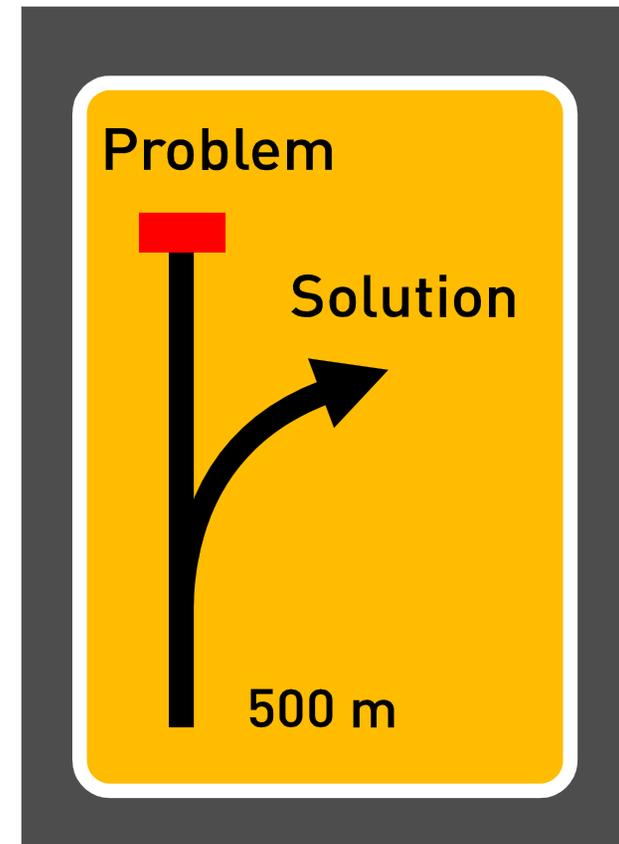
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# 10 Areas Where Challenges Occur

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1. Stakeholder Engagement and Buy-In
2. Communication
3. Knowledge Management
4. Training
5. Creating Professional Growth Systems
6. Using Evaluation Data
7. Alignment and Integration
8. Adapting to Changes in Context
9. Scaling Up
10. Sustainability



# 1—Stakeholder Engagement and Buy-In

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- Foundation of a successful effort to implement and sustain a robust educator evaluation system
- Coupled with communication, an often-cited reason of why reforms ultimately fail
- Beginning of creating a culture of trust and well-being

## 2—Communication

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- States and districts must develop strategic communication plans that outline *multiple ways* to reach educators, parents, the community, and other important stakeholders about the effort.
- Must be designed to specifically inform educators throughout the change process.
- There is a difference between legislation and guidance intended to operationalize legislation. There needs to be clear understanding and communication to school districts about this to avoid multiple interpretations and ultimately variance in design and implementation.

## 3—Knowledge Management

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- States and districts must consider how they ensure that all stakeholders understand the evaluation system, its components including teaching standards, the evaluation process, and how the results will be used and affect their work.

## 4—Training

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- At the heart of an evaluation system are personnel who can accurately assess teacher performance, communicate the results of that assessment to teachers, and help them plan for their professional growth.
- High quality training is essential to ensure validity so that decisions that result from evaluation processes will be both fair and defensible.
- Training serves to ensure that evaluators agree on 1) the evidence and 2) what the evidence means in terms of a score.
- Calibration among evaluators is ongoing training and should be done regularly to ensure that evaluators agree on the evidence and what it means.
- High-quality training builds trust!

## 5—Creating Professional Growth Systems

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- Evaluation systems should be based on a theory of how teachers grow throughout their careers.
- The theory of development should guide professional learning opportunities and supports necessary to improve teacher practice.
- Creating the systems relies on the ability to accurately assess *all* teachers across a continuum of performance and provide high-quality feedback.
- Evaluation instruments and processes should be aligned with state teaching standards, which outline the performance expectations for teachers.
- Professional growth opportunities should be job-embedded, collaborative, and sustained. The expectation is that growth happens over time. Opportunities for sharing and reflection around professional growth should also be built into the system.

## 6—Using Evaluation Data

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- Evaluation as a process to improve teaching and leadership practice relies on valid and reliable data that is accessible to educators.
- Some data is more useful than others for helping teachers to adjust instruction. Data that is closer to the classroom and to specific instruction will be most useful for changing teacher practice.
- Observations followed quickly by specific feedback about instructional practice may be most helpful to teachers.
- Evaluation data should be part of a larger talent management system or approach.

## 7—Alignment and Integration

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- Evaluation systems should not be layered on top of other initiatives but rather integrated and embedded into a larger system of educator talent development.
- Evaluation system should align with and connect to state- and districtwide priorities (e.g., college- and career-ready initiatives, teacher preparation).

## 8—Adapting to Changes in Context

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- Creating dynamic systems is key to adapting to changes in state or district leadership or state and federal legislation.
- Focus on codifying essential practices and elements and building broad support and political will to weather changes.

## 9—Scaling Up

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- At the state, district, and school levels, creating a plan to scale up the evaluation system should be thoughtful and strategic and should be developed early in the design phase.
- Implementing a continuous improvement plan is essential (e.g., pilot, test, revise) as you scale.
- Be thoughtful about collecting and analyzing pilot data. Develop a set of questions you want answered by the pilot data before you implement the pilot.
- Consider who should participate in the pilot.

# 10—Sustainability

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- Sustaining high-quality, robust educator evaluation systems is challenging in three ways:
  - Costs
  - Time
  - Teacher and principal beliefs about the value of the system and process

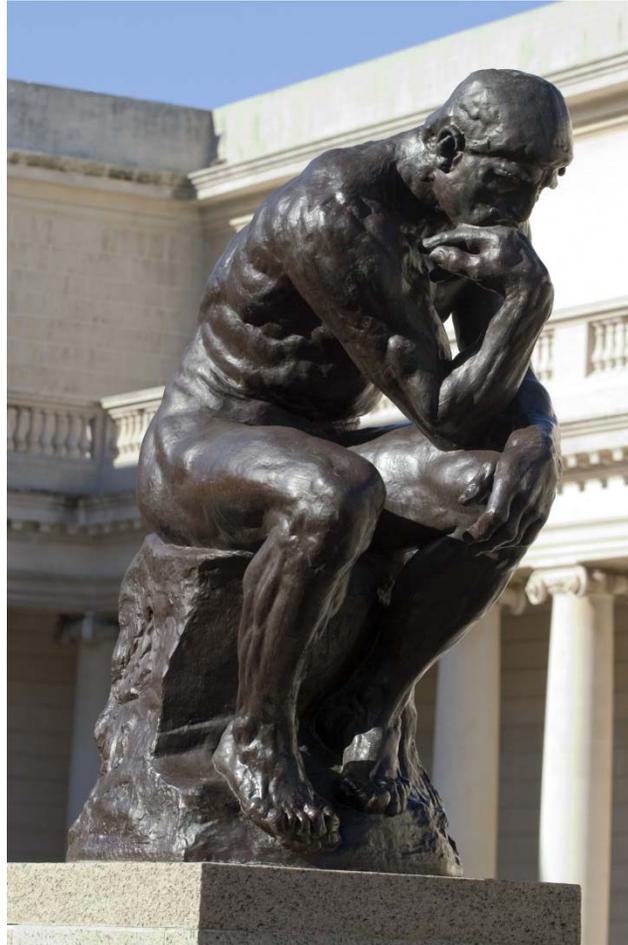
# Overcoming Barriers to Success

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- Don't reinvent the wheel. Rely on what others have done and learned, and modify it to fit your state and local context.
- Leverage your capacity with other state and national organizations.
- Adopt the mindset of “Get It Right” over “Get It Done.” Contemplate focusing on some primary purposes in the initial implementation years.
- Continuously build the political will and support you need to sustain this effort over time.
- Engage stakeholders throughout the design, implementation, and revision process.
- Focus on supports to build teacher and leader capacity to implement high leverage instructional principles.

# Questions?

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