



NATIONAL COMPREHENSIVE CENTER
FOR **TEACHER QUALITY**

State evaluation systems: Implementation challenges

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The goal of teacher evaluation

*The **ultimate** goal of all teacher evaluation should be...*

**TO IMPROVE
TEACHING AND
LEARNING**

Reform, not just compliance

- Much of the conversation around implementing rigorous teacher and principal evaluation systems focuses on compliance and meeting requirements
- When discussing implementation, the focus should be less on compliance and more on genuine reform—*how to ensure that the work we're doing will actually contribute to improving teaching and learning*

Think of teacher and principal evaluation as a reform

- In this presentation, we will consider state and federal policies and what we can learn from them about implementation strategies
- Then we will consider what we know about the implementation of school reform, teaching, and evaluation generally, looking for lessons on how to implement systems that may contribute to actually *improving teaching and learning*

From ESEA Flexibility “Fact Sheet”

- Evaluating and Supporting Teacher and Principal Effectiveness: Each State that receives the ESEA flexibility will set basic guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems. The State and its districts will develop these systems with input from teachers and principals and will assess their performance based on multiple valid measures, including student progress over time and multiple measures of professional practice, and will use these systems to provide clear feedback to teachers on how to improve instruction.
 - Issued Sept 23, 2011
 - 11 states have applied as of mid-January, including Colorado. 39 more states will apply next year.

States provide basic guidelines

- *“Each State that receives the ESEA flexibility will set basic guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems.”*
- Takeaway: At a minimum, states should
 - Provide guidelines for teacher & principal evaluations
 - Provide guidelines for support systems (i.e., improving teaching and learning)

Input from teachers and principals

- *“The State and its districts will develop these systems with input from teachers and principals...”*
 - Takeaway: Representatives from these key groups should be at the table providing input into how the systems should function
 - Better design (based on input from practitioners)
 - Greater likelihood that processes will be implemented with fidelity
 - Increases validity of results (buy-in, active participation in evaluation)
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Assessing teacher and principal performance

- “...and will assess their performance based on multiple valid measures, including student progress over time and multiple measures of professional practice, ...”
- Takeaway: Multiple measures are key to triangulating indicators of teacher and principal effectiveness to ensure the most accurate ratings as well as to improve performance
 - However, “valid measures” have yet to be established *in practice*
 - So piloting and examining data from pilots is important

Providing feedback to teachers

- *“...and will use these systems to provide clear feedback to teachers on how to improve instruction.”*
- Takeaway: It is not enough to evaluate educators to get an effectiveness rating. The evaluation process should also serve as a mechanism to provide principals and teachers with actionable information that can be used to improve teachers' instructional practice
 - Bottom line: Improving instruction should result in improved student learning outcomes

State's role and capacity

- **"State review and approval of district evaluations may not be an adequate approach to ensuring quality and rigor.** State approval sounds like a good idea in states that leave it to districts to design a performance-based teacher evaluation system. But it may not be realistic given state capacity. These states may do better to provide specific tools, models and detailed frameworks for conducting and scoring teacher evaluations. States that have left districts to their own devices without any oversight are even more worrisome. There is a good reason to be skeptical that all districts in such states will have the capacity and will to implement strong evaluation systems on their own." (National Council on Teacher Quality, 2011, p. iii)

My inspiration from the NCTQ report

- Districts have widely varying capacity to design and implement teacher and principal evaluation systems that meeting appropriate standards of quality and rigor
- It may not be enough to “offer” a state model for adoption
 - May also require more active state guidance as well as state oversight
 - Simply offering guidance documents, forms, and tools may not be sufficient for low-capacity districts

Strategies: State support for low-capacity districts

- Rural districts, particularly isolated “frontier” districts, need a different kind of support
 - Shared challenges can generate innovative solutions
 - State assistance in forming regional consortiums to exchange and share resources and people
 - Coaches, data analysts, professional development offerings
 - Web-based or virtual teaching, coaching and coursework: Skype, Facetime, real-time conferencing, sites to exchange information, request assistance from other districts
 - States may be able to host web sites and provide technical and implementation guidance to district consortiums

Strategies: Teacher and principal evaluation in low-capacity districts

- External evaluators may need to be brought in for very small, isolated districts
 - For example, a district where the superintendent is also the principal, the history teacher, and the bus driver
 - May also be needed when evaluators' objectivity is impacted by factors such as fear of losing teachers or damaging long-term relationships in the community
 - Evaluators could be “exchanged” across districts within a specific region (“you evaluate mine, and I’ll evaluate yours”)
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What we know about implementing large-scale reforms

- “[R]ecent efforts to improve instructional practice at scale focus more on the number of adopters and the structural characteristics of reform than they do on fundamental changes in the instructional core--the relationships between teachers and students and the organizational practices that support those relationships. The difficulty of making changes at this level is the principal constraint on the large-scale adoption of promising new practices.” (Elmore, 2004, pgs 7-8)

My inspiration from Elmore's thoughts about large-scale reform efforts

- Focusing too much on the structures of the reform (compliance, rules, requirements) may get in the way of changing instruction and the organization in schools that supports it
- Real change, like improved teaching and learning, occurs at the classroom level—and large-scale reform often fails to penetrate to the classroom

Teaching and its predicaments

- "With a few exceptions...the guidance and regulation that might support any particular conception of quality [teaching] practice are weakly developed and little elaborated, if at all. Those who offer advice are much more adept at announcing what should be done than at describing how it might be done, what it would take to do it well, and how we would know if it had been done well." (Cohen, 2011, pgs. 58-59)

My inspiration from Cohen's theories about teaching

- We need to be more clear about what good teaching is (may vary from place to place)
- Advice often consists of telling you what should be done, but not how to do it
- ***What would it take to do it [evaluating teaching] well?***
- ***How would we know it had been done well?***

The miracle cure

- "It's not that the proposed remedies are bad, per se, but that they are pretty slim pickings given the enumerated challenges...When a fresh idea does happen to come along, it is all too often oversold as a miracle cure rather than a useful tool." (Hess, 2010, pg. 11)

My inspiration from Rick Hess

- The proposed remedies are often good
- But the challenges to implementing them successfully are daunting
 - Inadequate resources to do the work well
 - Make a plan that includes incremental steps and repurposing existing processes and personnel
 - Insufficient research on which measures to use and how to use them
 - Decide what is truly important and measure it well
- Implementation is an ongoing process

Repetitive change syndrome

- "The symptoms? Initiative overload, change-related chaos, and widespread employee anxiety, cynicism, and burnout. The results? Not only do relentless tidal shifts of change create pain at almost every level of the company and make organizational change harder to manage, more costly to implement, and more likely to fail, but they also impinge on routine operations and render firms inwardly focused on managing change rather than outwardly focused on the customers these changes should serve." (Abrahamson, 2004, pages 2-3)
- My inspiration: Too much focus on managing “relentless tidal shifts of change” takes away from the business of teaching and learning

Creative recombination

- The alternative to repetitive change, creative recombination involves considering what already exists in the system, how its can be revised, and how current resources and elements can be recombined into new configurations. (paraphrasing from Abrahamson, 2004)
- Takeaway: Look at, and build upon, what works in the system rather than scrapping the whole system and starting over

A little creative recombination

- Do a “crosswalk” between your current teacher and principal evaluation systems and the mandated or ideal version
 - **Example:** Are teachers already measuring their students’ learning growth? How, and with what assessments? Can this information be captured systematically and purposefully to show growth over time?
 - **Example:** Are teachers already being observed? Can current observers be better trained to ensure reliability and validity of observation scores?
 - **Example:** Are principals already being evaluated? How? What would need to be added to the current evaluation system to meet state requirements?

Moneyball: It's everywhere!

- You can find references to Moneyball health care, investing, teacher hiring and placement (ASBJ), and how colleges can improve students' experiences (Chronicle of Higher Ed)
- Latest catchword for data-driven decision making
- NPR: “a very creative and unusual use of statistical analysis” that forever changed baseball
- Takeaway: Combining data from multiple sources, including unexpected ones, can improve chances of success for individuals and “the team”
 - Think Scott Hatteberg

It's not enough to have the data

- "Although many factors shape a school's ability to turn data-driven instruction from educational theory to concrete reality, none are as fundamentally important as effective leadership and teacher training. If school leaders and teachers are not taught to use data in their schools and classrooms, then they--as too many before them--will fail." (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2010, pg. xxiv)

My inspiration from Bambrick-Santoyo's recommendations

- If we are to improve teaching and learning, data must be collected and analyzed
- Most principals and teachers have little or no training in systematic data collection and analysis
- It is crucial that we include in evaluation systems training that will help principals and teachers *understand their students' learning and their contribution to it*

Transforming practice (Fullan)

- "The key to this transformation [of practice] lies in the smart use of data to drive instruction. Currently, many school systems collect data and feed it back to districts and schools. Much of this feedback is rudimentary and surface level. Where deeper feedback occurs, teachers are not helped to know what to do with it. Even if the data are better analyzed, teachers do not know how to translate the information into powerful, focused instruction in response to individual students' needs. " (Fullan et al, 2011, pg xvi)

My inspiration from Fullan's thoughts about transforming practice

- Data should be driving instruction
 - Student work, assessment results, and other information that tells teachers what students know and what they don't know
- Data is already being collected
 - Yes, we can use data for evaluation, but to improve teaching and learning, teachers need help in understanding how to use that data
- Data may already be analyzed
 - But teachers need help in relating data to practice

Before you implement, ask yourself...

- How will this component of the teacher and principal evaluation system impact teaching and learning in classrooms and schools?
- How will this component look different in low-capacity vs. high-capacity schools?
- How will reporting on this component be done (to provide actionable information to teachers, principals, schools, districts, teacher preparation programs, and the state)?
- How will we know if this component is working as we intended?

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