

Educator Evaluation Communications Toolkit

Tools and resources to support States
in communicating about educator
evaluation systems

September 2013



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Introduction

Nationwide, public education is undergoing a massive transformation. New standards, assessments and heightened expectations for student achievement are being put in place in schools to give students the tools, skills and supports they need to graduate from high school ready for success in college and careers. For these reforms to take hold, another equally significant change needs to take place: State education agencies (SEAs) need to revamp traditional evaluation systems to provide every teacher and principal with the timely and actionable feedback, support and professional development necessary to help all students succeed.

States are in various stages of reforming how they evaluate their educators, all striving for a new system that can assess a range of abilities and practices over long periods of time and capture the full nature of an educator's performance. The strongest systems look at teaching in a more comprehensive way than evaluations have done in the past, taking into account the full range of skills needed to be effective.

This toolkit is designed to help States approach communication with educators, an important facet of the development and rollout of these new evaluation systems. Evaluation itself can be stressful, but States that clearly and thoughtfully communicate with their educators about a new system — what it is, how it works, how it's different from the old system and why the change was necessary — are more likely to abate criticism, the spread of misinformation and unnecessary concerns.

Research and experience clearly show that educators are more likely to mistrust a new evaluation system they don't understand, while one that is based in part on educator feedback and explained clearly along the way will cause less anxiety. Teachers generally feel positive about evaluations. While many teachers say that current evaluations are flawed, research shows that many believe that evaluations are improving and beginning to reflect their performance more accurately. In a recent survey of teachers, for example,

Rhode Island's "Message in a Box" toolkit provided districts with everything they needed to effectively communicate about the new evaluation system.

New York's EngageNY Website has become the go-to information source for educators on evaluations, Common Core and other key issues.

North Carolina has partnered with the State's two administrator associations to deliver training in person and online.

60 percent reported receiving helpful feedback on their last evaluation.¹

Teachers begin to be more concerned when student achievement becomes a larger portion of their evaluation. The majority of teachers find current tests to be an inaccurate representation of the performance of their students. Even so, 85 percent of teachers believe that student test scores should contribute at least "a moderate amount" to their evaluations.² Thus, student achievement is a hurdle, but by no means a deal breaker for teacher evaluations.

When asked to describe an ideal evaluation system, teachers largely agree on several points. First, they believe that evaluations should consist of multiple measures, such as student achievement results, classroom observations, peer reviews, reviews of classroom materials and assessments and surveys of students and parents.³

Teachers generally feel that a wider range of measurements will more accurately evaluate their

¹ Sarah Rosenberg and Elena Silva, "Trending Toward Reform." Education Sector, 2012 <http://www.educationsector.org/publications/trending-toward-reform-teachers-speak-unions-and-future-profession>.

² Scholastic and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, "Primary Sources." 2012 <http://www.scholastic.com/primarysources/download.asp>.

³ Internal survey work by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2012.

performance. Furthermore, teachers want evaluations to focus on professional development, rather than simply be used to rank teachers or make hiring and firing decisions. However, this does not mean that teachers feel evaluations should have no bearing at all on human capital decisions: Most teachers (92 percent) believe that evaluations should be tied to tenure and used to remove ineffective teachers.⁴

The Houston Independent School District focused closely on communications and outreach to educators when rolling out their evaluation system, even designating point people at each school to serve as “ambassadors” and distribute resources and announcements about the new program to their colleagues. Houston also held regular in-person information and training sessions and guaranteed a 24-hour turnaround for all questions submitted to the district.

Careful messaging is key when communicating about the purpose of new evaluation systems with educators. Teachers respond better when they understand why something is changing and what it is intended to accomplish. Some teachers will assume that the purpose of the new system is to rank or “sort” teachers; to quell that concern it should be carefully explained that the purpose is instead to improve student achievement through the evaluation, professional support and development of educators.⁵

Engagement is also critical, as long as it’s meaningful. Teach Plus, a Boston-based organization dedicated to providing a greater proportion of students with access to effective, experienced teachers, encourages States to engage teachers at every stage in the

⁴ Scholastic and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, “Primary Sources,” 2012. <http://www.scholastic.com/primarysources/download.asp>.

⁵ Internal survey work by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2012.

development of evaluations. If possible, this means working with teachers at the very outset to develop a joint statement of beliefs, which can help build trust moving forward. This also means collaborating with local teachers’ unions and doing as much as possible to gain their support, which can go a long way toward assuaging fears and combatting misinformation.

Although much of the actual communication with teachers and principals will happen at the district and school levels, leading States are providing supports, using strategies like these:

- **Create educator advisory councils** to help shape the evaluations, modeling the kind of involvement districts might also encourage.
- **Write the evaluation criteria clearly**, so the multiple measures are specific enough for everyone to understand what they are, and how and when they will be used.
- **Develop messages that are clear and compelling**, and explain the “why” of these new systems. Districts then can customize these messages for their own stakeholders without needing to start from scratch.
- Work creatively with local educational agencies (LEAs), trade associations, labor organizations and others to **distribute the messages far and wide**.
- **Create feedback loops** that enable educators to provide ongoing feedback on the new system, receive answers to their questions and understand how their feedback is or is not used.

This toolkit explores these and other strategies in greater detail, and is designed to provide States with resources and tools to communicate effectively with their educators. Much of the content in this toolkit was first presented at a meeting of the RSN’s Quality Evaluation Rollout Workgroup in December 2012, which focused on strategies for strategically communicating about evaluations. Other resources in this toolkit have been developed by experts in the field

and reflect their best thinking on this critical topic. The toolkit will continue to evolve over time as additional components are added, but currently includes the following elements:

1. **Getting Started:** Basic communication principles to frame your approach and a set of recommended strategies to use in building your plan
2. **Getting the Message Right:** Key considerations to weigh when developing messages around educator evaluation
3. **Communications Cheat-Sheet:** A one-pager with key points from the first two sections, designed to be used as an easy-reference tool
4. **Communicating about Value-Added Measures:** Recommended strategies for communicating about and building support for using weighted measures to assess student progress
5. **Educator Engagement Tool:** A resource for States and districts as they engage educators in developing and implementing new evaluation systems and other issues
6. **From Inform to Inspire:** A framework to help clarify the purpose of communications efforts
7. **Educator Engagement: What Works?** Commentary by Celine Coggins, CEO of Teach Plus, about what her staff have learned through their work with educators nationwide
8. **What Teachers Really Want to Know about Evaluations:** A first-person commentary by California educator Marciano Gutierrez about the top questions in the minds of the people most directly impacted by new evaluations
9. **Additional Resources**

We will continue to update and supplement these tools, and collect and post promising State practices on the Reform Support Network's Website (<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/communities/sce-cop.html>). Please submit your comments, advice, tools and artifacts to info@reformsupportnetwork.org.

Getting Started: Communications Principles and Approaches

Any strong communications effort has to start with a set of **non-negotiables**. Typically States start with basic principles that underscore the relevance and meaning of the work, and why it needs to be done. While action steps and recommended strategies will differ from topic to topic, States can adhere to these basic principles through the course of their work:

- **Make communications a priority.** Each State's new evaluation system will be complex, with nuances and potential impacts that could be easily misconstrued if not carefully explained. In allocating staff and resources for the system design, rollout and implementation, States might prioritize communications to give educators and the general public opportunities for feedback and concise, consistent and reliable information throughout the process.



- **Make communications a two-way street.** Educators are more likely to pay attention to details about a State's evaluation system when those details are delivered in ways that invite and encourage feedback, input and discussion. The Reform Support Network's "4I's" Framework⁶

provides one way to think about this. The framework encourages States to move their communication away from simply *informing* audiences and toward *inspiring* them to act by incorporating opportunities for *inquiry* and *involvement*.

In today's media-saturated world, people no longer get their information from a single source. Smart communicators use multiple vehicles and a range of strategies to reach and engage their different audiences. For communication about evaluations, States and districts might consider first trying to reach educators; parents and the general public are secondary audiences. To do so effectively, States are using the following strategies in developing their communications:

1. **Clarify your goals.** Never communicate just for the sake of communicating. Be clear on what you want to accomplish and what you want people *to do* as a result of receiving the information or participating in a discussion. For example, roll out details of the evaluation system as it is developed or when educator or public feedback is warranted, and explain how the responses will be used.
2. **Identify your audience(s) and speak to them.** Every audience has different needs. Consider what your educators need to know along the way and convey the information that responds to their needs, concerns and questions. Differentiate your messages to provide each group (superintendents, school boards, principals, teachers and so on) with the most relevant information they want and need.
3. **Keep it simple and brief.** All communication should be conveyed in a clear and concise way, presented in an easy-to-understand format and written to illustrate how the content relates to student achievement. Start every complex report with an executive summary (two pages is preferable) that queues up key findings and recommendations.

⁶ The "From Inform to Inspire" framework appears on the RSN Web-site. Find it at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/implementation-support-unit/tech-assist/resources.html#sce>.

4. **Share what's essential and helpful.** Intricate details about complex issues — such as value-added measures — can be overwhelming and obscure the bigger picture. Strive for transparency and answer questions when they are asked, but don't flood your audiences with needless details.
5. **Use real-world examples.** The core message of any communication about new evaluation systems should always involve the impact these changes will have on student achievement. Use teacher and principal testimonies, videos, imagery and social media to communicate the impact that new evaluation systems have already had and to build a level of comfort with the change.
6. **Use multiple vehicles.** Traditional outreach methods are no longer the only ways to reach multiple audiences. Consider ways to augment your communications strategy with social media, blogs, video and webinars. Some teachers respond well to electronic communications such as emails, newsletters, Web updates or online videos, while others prefer face-to-face contact such as town hall meetings, presentations or roundtable discussions. Consider developing a strategy that employs a mix of these options to reach the largest possible audience.
7. **Use multiple voices.** Teachers and principals tend to respond more positively to messages they hear from their colleagues or peers, such as fellow teachers or principals, than they do to information they get from a State education agency (SEA). States can develop tools and resources such as talking points and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) documents to support principal and teacher ambassadors who understand the new system and can communicate about it clearly and positively.
8. **Communicate early and often.** Don't let your educators read about details of the evaluation system in the newspaper. Provide them with a regular, reliable source of information that is relevant to them such as a Website or e-newsletter to ensure that they have access to pertinent information as it becomes available.
9. **Remember your team.** While States should prioritize reaching their educators, it's important to also keep internal SEA and district staff informed and engaged to ensure that every employee can speak about the new system in a consistent way.
10. **Buddy up.** Make use of like-minded partner organizations that are involved in the development of the new evaluation system. When unions, administrator associations and advocacy organizations add their voices, it can help to build the credibility of the work with educators and significantly expand the reach of the SEA's message.

Getting the Message Right

Changing teacher and principal evaluation systems is complex, and in many ways, controversial. Communicating about these systems thoughtfully and strategically is essential to a successful rollout and widespread support among teachers, principals, administrators and ultimately, the public.

Although local educational agencies and others closer “to the ground,” such as teachers’ and principals’ unions and administrators’ associations, may play a more prominent role in spreading the word about these new systems, State education agencies can still play a central role in framing the messages. The details might change from community to community, but the basic messages can remain the same.

Three districts that have been part of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation’s extensive efforts to build new, research-based evaluation and support systems have developed succinct and clear rationales focused on student success. These were among the many highlighted in a **communications toolkit** published by the Council of the Great City Schools based on the work of 11 organizations supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation:

- **Denver:** “Change can’t wait. Teachers and students deserve it now.”
- **Memphis:** “An effective teacher can advance a student—any student—one to two grade levels per year. We must ensure that each one of our students has access to an effective teacher in every classroom, every year. Their future depends on it.”
- **Pittsburgh:** “Great teachers do more than just raise grades. They change lives. In Pittsburgh and nationally, we are focusing on teacher effectiveness and emphasizing education as the key to our country’s future.”

The following messaging guidance comes from public opinion research⁷ about teachers’ attitudes and from the experience of school districts⁸ that have been working on these issues for the past few years.

It’s about the kids. When communicating about education reform, you need to show how each change will help students succeed. This aligns well with the purpose of new evaluation systems, which is to improve student achievement through evaluation and professional support and development of teachers.

Connect the dots. Be sure to tie teacher and principal evaluation changes to broader reforms underway in your State, and emphasize how they are all working together to improve student achievement. Explain how new evaluations are part of a broader strategy to improve educator quality (recruitment, induction, development, compensation, assignment, career pathways and so on). More broadly, explain why improving educator effectiveness is central to all of your work. For example, “Just as we are raising standards for students through the implementation of college- and career-ready standards, we also are clarifying our expectations for teachers so they have the knowledge and skills to help their students meet these standards. A quality evaluation system, tied to useful professional development, will make it more likely that every student is taught by an effective teacher every day, every year.”

Tie evaluation to supports. The primary reason for a quality evaluation system is to help teachers and principals become more effective, recognize those who are already highly effective and counsel out of

⁷ Winston Group, Peter Hart and Harris Interactive, “The Communications Implications from Education Opinion Research,” GMMB summary of work from the Winston Group, Peter Hart and Harris Interactive, 2012. http://www.ksaplus.com/content/gmmb_communications_implications.pptx.

⁸ Council of the Great City Schools, “Supporting Effective Teaching: Communications Resources for Implementing New Systems for Teacher Development and Evaluation” (Washington, D.C.: Council of Great City Schools, 2012). <http://www.cgcs.org/Page/265>. Much of the advice in this chapter echoes recommendations from this guide.

the profession the handful of teachers who do not belong in the classroom. Stress that the changes promote professional growth, and that their focus is on supporting educators, not sorting out the bad ones. Consider discussing “evaluation and support systems” rather than simply discussing “evaluation systems” in isolation. When doing so, point to clear evidence of improvements in professional development and supports.

Explain the basics. Have ready answers to basic questions about the new evaluation system:

- **What** are the key elements of the new system? What is different and better than the current system?
- **Who** is affected and how? How will teachers of non-tested subjects and grades be affected? Are principals also being evaluated in new ways?
- **When** do these changes take effect?
- And don't forget, **why**? What are the projected benefits for various stakeholders?

Explain the benefits. Teachers and principals will immediately wonder about how the new evaluation system will impact and benefit them. They will also wonder why their district or State is making this change. Answers should directly address the impacts, benefits, or both:

- **Teachers** will have a fair, accurate and high-quality performance evaluation, based on multiple measures, to inform their professional development and career decisions.
- **Principals** will have new, evidence-based tools to target professional development more precisely and help ensure instructional excellence in their classrooms. Principals, like teachers, will also have their own fair, accurate and high-quality performance evaluation to inform their professional development and career path.
- **Parents** will have greater confidence that their children are being taught by highly effective teachers no matter where they go to school, and that they will graduate with the knowledge and skills required to succeed in a complex, competitive world.

- **Students** will be more likely to have teachers who engage them, challenge them and prepare them as 21st-century graduates who have mastered core academic content, can effectively communicate and collaborate to solve complex problems, and are responsible, engaged citizens.
- **Citizens and taxpayers** will have greater confidence that their tax dollars are being spent effectively, that educators are being held accountable for their performance and rewarded for their excellence and, most importantly, that graduates of our public schools are prepared for 21st-century work and life.

Talk in terms of multiple measures. Emphasize to teachers and others that robust evaluations do not rely on a single score on a standardized reading or math test but on multiple measures of teaching effectiveness. Specifics will vary by State, but almost all States also are integrating classroom observations into their evaluations, and some are including student surveys as well.

Cite the evidence. Work over the past three years by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation⁹ suggests four patterns in education:

- There is a huge difference in learning gains between students taught by the top 25 percent of teachers and those taught by the bottom 25 percent.
- An evaluation system with multiple measures (student growth on State tests, classroom observations and student surveys) can accurately predict a teacher's effectiveness.
- These predictions hold up over time and with different groups of students.
- Multiple measures like these are far more accurate than current measures, particularly a teacher's seniority and degrees.

Stress how teachers were involved. Make sure the public knows these systems were developed *by educators for educators*. It works especially well to have educators as the visible champions for these

⁹ Measures of Effective Teaching project, www.metproject.org.

changes: principal to principal, teacher to teacher, superintendent to superintendent. Principals are especially credible with their teachers on these issues: To the extent feasible, find ways to turn them into ambassadors and champions of change.

Avoid jargon. This is especially important when talking with parents and other nonexperts. Terms like *pedagogy* and even *curriculum* are foreign to many lay audiences.

Watch the nuances. For example, frame the work in terms of “effective teaching” rather than “effective teachers” — the former is less personal. An “observation system” is not the same as an “evaluation system,” which includes observations as well as measures of student growth, student surveys and other measures.

Resources

- “Supporting Effective Teaching: Communications Resources for Implementing New Systems for Teacher Development and Evaluation,”¹⁰ a November 2012 guide produced with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Available at the Council of the Great City Schools.

¹⁰ Council of Great City Schools, “Supporting Effective Teaching” 2012, <http://www.cgcs.org/Page/265>.

- “Communications Implications from Education Opinion Research,”¹¹ written by GMMB and based on recent research conducted by The Winston Group, Peter Hart and Harris Interactive, offers advice on several topics: 1) Starting with issues of greatest interest to the public; 2) using message frames that work; 3) linking to other issues such as new college- and career-ready standards and technology; and 4) communicating with specific audiences (principals and superintendents, teachers, African-American and Latino parents and the general public).
- “Summary: Winston Group Effective Teaching Opinion Research”¹² is based on a national survey and focus groups in 2010 and 2011. It zeroes in on the views of teachers and key public audiences (African Americans, Latinos, married women with children and independent voters).
- “Primary Sources”¹³ consists of two in-depth surveys of teachers on a range of education issues, including teaching effectiveness, conducted in 2009 and 2011.

¹¹ “The Communications Implications from Education Opinion Research,” GMMB summary, 2012, http://www.ksaplus.com/content/gmmb_communications_implications.pptx.

¹² The Winston Group, “Public Opinion Research on Education Issues,” 2012, www.ksaplus.com/content/WinstonGroup_Public_Opinion_Research.docx.

¹³ Scholastic and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, “Primary Sources,” 2012, <http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/collection/primary-sources-2012>.

Communicating about Value-Added Data

As States develop and roll out more meaningful and accurate systems of teacher evaluation and support, explaining how a teacher's impact on student learning will be measured and factored into performance ratings has emerged as a particularly important communications challenge.

New teacher evaluation systems require student performance measures as one of multiple measures of teacher effectiveness. In many States, this student performance data is based on the results of students on comprehensive, statewide assessments. To compare student performance over time, States have turned to "value-added" models, which help capture student progress while also taking external factors such as socioeconomic status into account. While States continue to develop other ways to connect student and teacher performance, the value-added model is the one of the most comprehensive systems available to date.

"Value-added" models compare students' predicted and actual academic growth on standardized tests to assess how much their teachers have contributed to student learning. The concept is a new one, and represents a shift from past systems. Teacher evaluations traditionally have not been tied to student performance, and many educators and researchers are understandably anxious about this unfamiliar and unexplored territory. The concept is also complex, driven by complicated algorithms and formulas that are hard to understand and frequently not even made public for proprietary reasons.

Although value-added measurements remain imperfect and undoubtedly will improve with additional use, they are the most objective and one of the most sophisticated of the tools currently available to measure a teacher's impact on student learning because they incorporate multiple factors in the calculation.

What's the Problem?

It is difficult to communicate effectively about value-added measures (and measures of student learning

State education agencies have developed various tools to communicate about value-added data, as part of their broader efforts to explain changes in teacher evaluation and support systems. Among them:

- **Delaware: Explaining "Component V."** This summary explains how value-added scores will affect various teachers, plus a **two-page Q&A**, part of the State chief's periodic update emails to the field.
- **Florida: Student Growth Website.** The Website includes PowerPoints, an overview, more detailed white papers and technical reports and four explanatory videos.
- **New York: EngageNY.org.** This site has technical guides to "student growth scores" for teachers and principals, some including voiceover webinars.
- **North Carolina: Measuring Growth for Educator Effectiveness.** This detailed but well-organized, 31-page handbook describes how value-added data will work for various kinds of teachers. The State also has a strong **Website** on educator effectiveness with links to multiple explanations and resources.
- **Ohio: Student Growth Measures.** The Web portal includes a seven-page overview and five-page FAQs.
- **Rhode Island Growth Model.** This robust Website allows users to search by city, district and school for scatter-plot charts showing high and low growth, and proficiency scores. It also features a downloadable, explanatory trifold brochure and three-page FAQs.
- **Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System.** The Website includes various one-pagers, PowerPoints and links to a password-protected site for teachers.

in general) without first understanding teachers' concerns about their use in evaluations.

Value-added measures are hot-button issues in part because they embody the fears and anxieties that many teachers have about the current trajectory of education reform and the future of their profession. They're new, they're complex and they provide data

that connects teachers directly to how their students are performing. Many are concerned about what is perceived to be an unhealthy focus on standardized testing; the shift toward data-driven accountability in educational management; the seeming “mechanization” of teaching; and a general lack of control and input with respect to major decisions about the direction of teaching. Teachers don’t want to see their craft reduced to an algorithm — and they often perceive value-added models as doing exactly that.

These are all valid concerns, many of which can be allayed through clear, concise and purposeful communication and engagement to help educators understand exactly what value-added measures are, how they work and why their results paint a more complete picture of an educator’s overall performance.

Lessons Learned

Based on its work supporting teacher evaluation reform efforts in districts such as Houston and New York City and States such as Indiana and Rhode Island, TNTP (formerly The New Teacher Project) offers the following lessons for communicating about value-added data and other measures of student learning:

- **Hold realistic expectations.** It is unrealistic to expect teachers to embrace value-added data, but it is possible to ensure that they understand the basics and accept this measure as just one of many. Remember that value-added measures tend to be more useful to school and district leaders as a management tool than to teachers as an instructional tool.
- **Emphasize function within the larger evaluation system.** Emphasize that value-added measures are just one part of the puzzle. Focus on their unique role as an objective measure of student learning that can balance more subjective measures, like principal observations. Be definitive that value-added scores will *never* be the sole measure of a teacher’s performance.
- **Acknowledge shortcomings.** Be honest about the limitations of value-added data, and have a plan for addressing them. Glossing over challenges will only — rightfully — increase skepticism.
- **Anticipate and be prepared to respond to misinformation.** Concerns often stem from widely repeated misinformation about what value-added measures are and how they will be used. Know the myths, and dispel them quickly with succinct responses.
- **Stay out of the weeds.** Offer a detailed explanation to those who are interested, but stay focused on the big picture for everyone else. If you find yourself having a conversation about year-to-year instability or margins of error with a roomful of teachers, chances are most of them will not find the information either useful or helpful to their practice.
- **Plan for glitches.** Implementation will expose problems. Create and communicate an easy way for teachers to report issues or errors, and to know that their feedback has been heard.
- **Move quickly to implementation.** In the face of skepticism and pushback, it can be tempting to integrate student-growth measures incrementally or on a long timeline. However, it is difficult to communicate about value-added data and evaluation reform in the abstract; controversy and anxiety tend to die down once teachers and principals have a chance to experience the system in practice. This will allow them to see, among other things, that the vast majority of teachers earn average value-added scores that are unlikely to dramatically affect their overall performance ratings.

Focus on Key Themes and Messages

States and districts should proactively develop clear messages around broad themes to communicate about the use of value-added measures in educator evaluations. Leading districts and States have successfully used the following key messages to communicate about value-added measures in teacher evaluations:

- **We're all here to help students learn.** We can't truly evaluate a teacher's performance without considering how much his or her students are learning.
- **Of all the tools we can use to measure a teacher's impact on student learning, value-added measurement is the most sophisticated.** It allows us to account for factors outside a teacher's control, like student poverty level or class size, and more reliably predicts future performance than any other measure (for example, scores on licensing tests).
- **Value-added data aren't perfect, but they don't have to be perfect to be useful.** A value-added score is like a teacher's batting average: It doesn't tell the whole story and may fluctuate from year to year, but it's still a critical measure of success.
- **Teaching is complex and can't possibly be captured in a single measure.** That's why value-added results are always combined with other measures, like classroom observations, that help paint a more complete picture of educator performance. Value-added data are never the sole measure.

- **Students of teachers with high value-added ratings don't just do well on tests.** Research shows that students of top-rated teachers are less likely to become teenage parents and more likely to graduate from college, earn a higher salary, live in better neighborhoods and save more for retirement.¹⁴

Explain the "What"

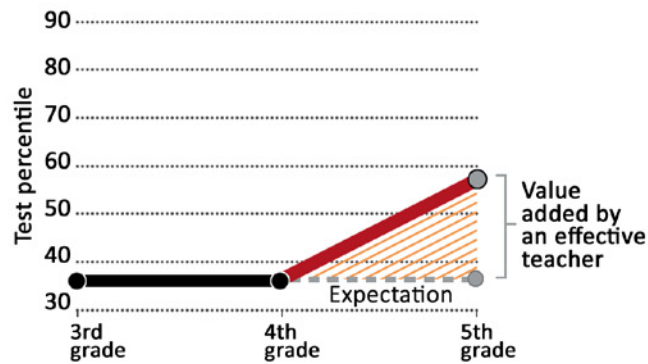
In helping educators, policymakers, parents and others understand the usefulness of value-added data, it's important to explain the what, the why and the how. In addition, States can expect resistance and prepare to overcome it. One way to do this is to proactively anticipate questions, and have answers ready for all audiences.

To begin, have a clear explanation of what value-added measurement is, what it is not and what it gives us, in a language that everyone can understand. Here are a few examples:

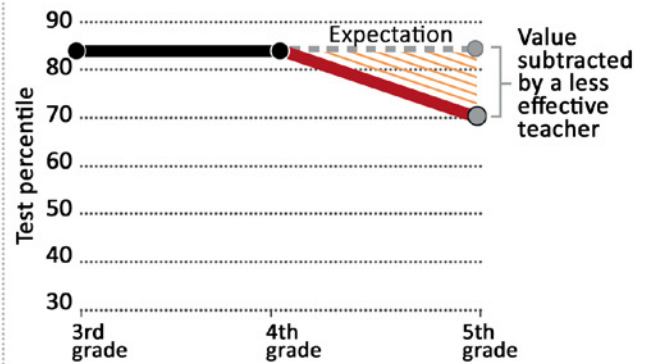
- **What it is:** Value-added analysis uses standardized test scores to determine a teacher's impact on student growth per year. Unlike other measures, it takes into account each student's starting point based on background and previous performance.
- **What it is not:** Value-added is not intended to be the only measure by which a teacher is evaluated, and is not intended to be used by teachers to improve their day-to-day instruction.
- **What it gives us:** Value-added allows us to better understand what impact each teacher has had.

¹⁴ Chetty, Raj, John Friedman and Jonah Rockoff. "The Long-Term Impacts of Teachers: Teacher Value-Added and Student Outcomes in Adulthood." National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper, 2011. http://obs.rc.fas.harvard.edu/chetty/value_added.pdf.

Student 1: Results exceed expectation



Student 2: Results fall short of expectation



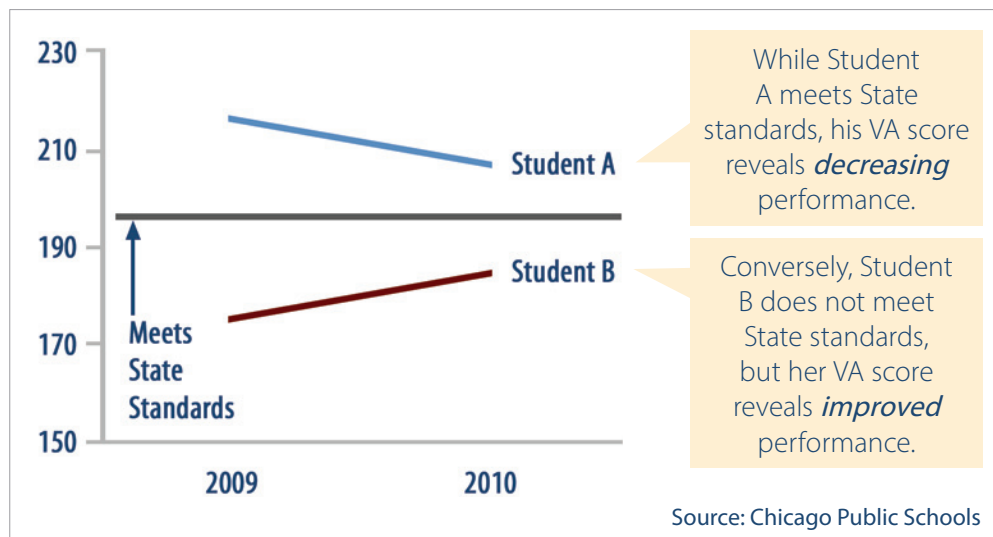
Sources: California Standards Tests, Los Angeles Unified School District, Times Reporting

Visuals can be very effective in communicating key points. The visual above from the *Los Angeles Times* offers a simple comparison of two fifth-grade teachers, one who “added value” to her students and one who did not.

Visuals can also help to explain that value-added measures recognize the progress of all students, even those who are still not meeting standards.

That is, as shown below, Student B progressed more than Student A, even though he still fell short of the standards while Student A exceeded them.

In addition, visuals can quickly show how value-added measures can work for students with different starting points. In the following image, both students did five points better than predicted, although their actual performance still differed by 15 points.



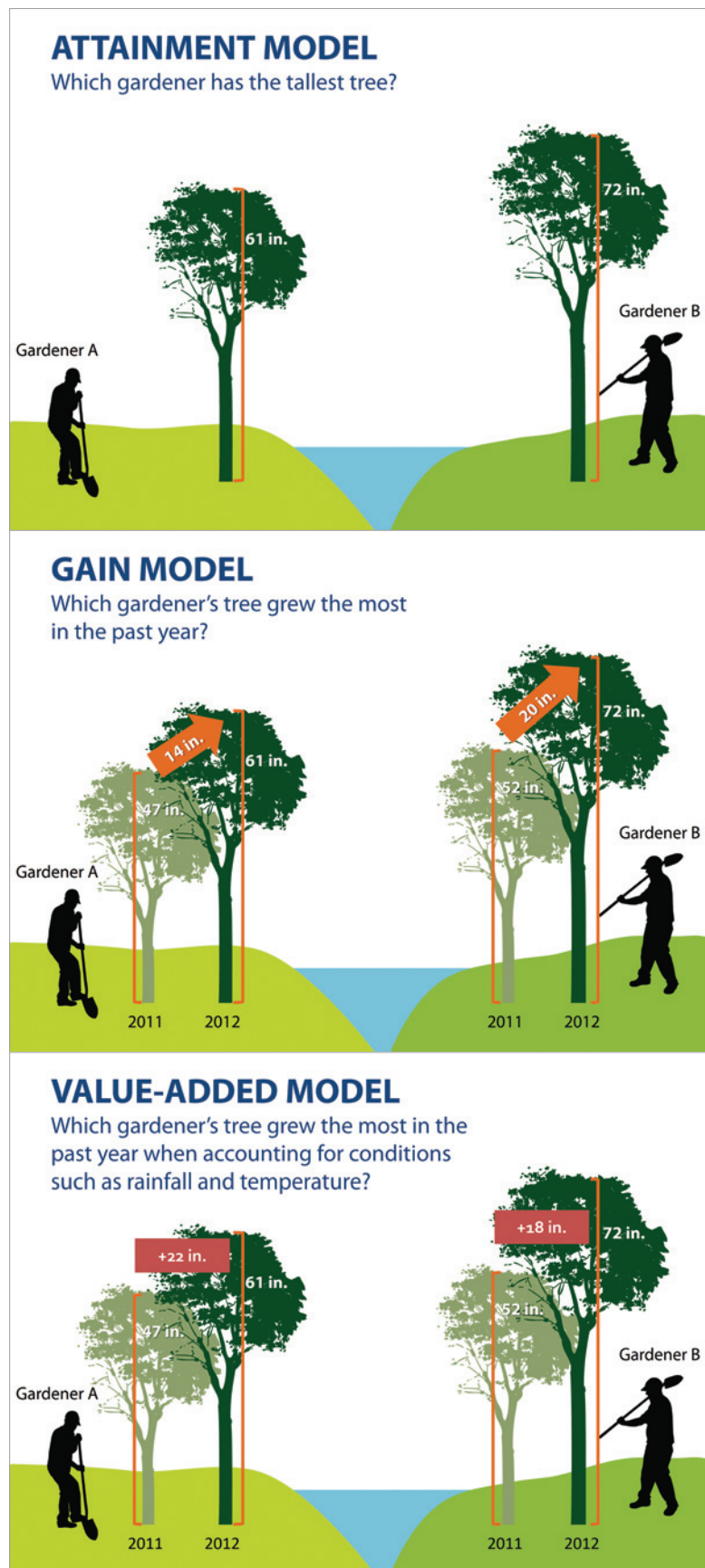
The well-known oak tree analogy, first developed by the nonprofit Battelle for Kids and simplified here by KSA-Plus Communications for the RSN, shows the difference between three models of measuring student performance.

In these examples, substitute the tree for the student and the gardener for the teacher. The first example — the “attainment model” — looks at a student’s score at any given time and makes it appear that Gardener B has been the most successful.

The second example — the “gain model” — looks at student/tree growth from one year to the next. In this model as well, Gardener B looks to have been more successful, growing his tree by 20 inches from 2011 to 2012, while Gardener A’s tree grew only 14 inches.

However, the third example — the “value-added model” — offers a more sophisticated look at the student/tree growth. It accounts for factors outside the control of the gardener/teacher, such as soil conditions, temperature and average rainfall (for students, comparable factors might include demographics and previous performance). Gardener B obviously would have an advantage if he’s working in a rainforest while Gardener A is working in the desert. Once these weights are taken into account, Gardener A added the most “value” — 22 inches vs. 18 inches.

More useful messaging resources from TNTP and the National School Boards Association can be found in Appendix A.

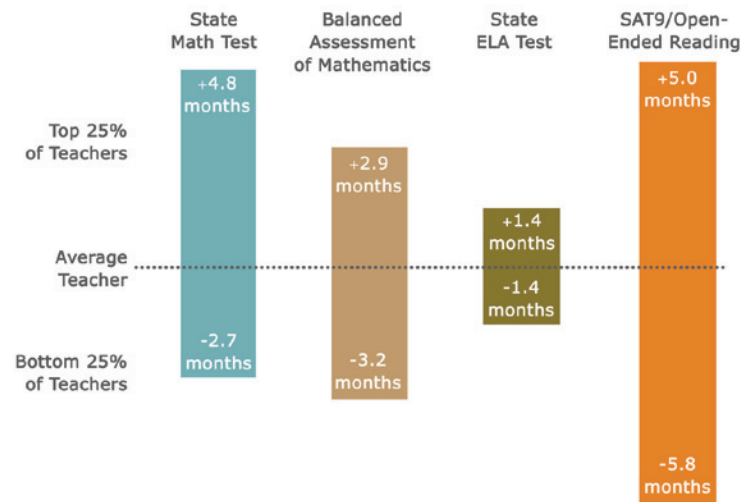


Explain the “Why”?

One common complaint is that value-added measures are neither valid nor reliable. While these indicators are not perfect, there is plenty of evidence to show that they are as good as — or better than — many other common performance measures. New research shows that they are more accurate than the two most commonly used measures of effective teaching — years of experience and graduate degrees.

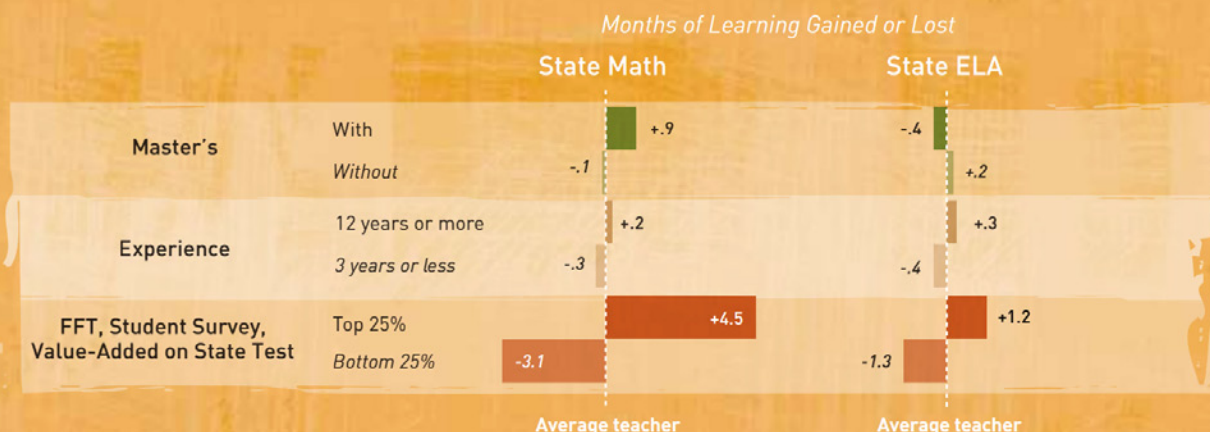
Good teaching matters, and some teachers are demonstrably more effective than others. For example, the Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) project, a multiyear review funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, documented that students with a teacher in the top 25 percent for effectiveness can learn up to 11 months more in a year than a student with a teacher in the bottom 25 percent. Such an evidence-based comparison would have been impossible without value-added scores.¹⁵

Students with Most Effective Teachers Learn More in a School Year



The MET project also showed that a combination of measures that include value-added performance gains on State tests, classroom observations and student surveys are better predictors of teaching effectiveness than seniority or degrees.¹⁶

Combined Measure Better Identified Effective Teaching on State Tests Than Master's or Experience



NOTES: Value-added estimated in student-level standard deviation units and converted to months of schooling using conversion factor of 0.25 standard deviations = 9 months of schooling. Teachers' value-added scores and scores of measures were from working with different groups of students. Combined measure was created with equal weights. Differences between the top and bottom 25 percent on the combined measure are significant at the 0.001 level. None of the differences for master's and experience is significant at the 0.05 level.

¹⁵ Measures of Effective Teaching project, www.metproject.org

¹⁶ Ibid.

Value-added measures are as accurate as many other common performance metrics. For example, drawing from a Brookings Institute report¹⁷, TNTP points out that a teacher's value-added score is comparable with many widely accepted measures of performance in other professions, such as baseball pitchers' earned-run averages, hitters' batting averages and university faculty ratings.¹⁸

Explain the "How"

For educator audiences in particular, it is important to be able to explain how to develop an accurate value-added measurement. Communities for Teaching Excellence, a nonprofit that has worked in several communities from Memphis to Los Angeles, recommends six key steps:

1. Select a measure of student achievement.
2. Collect individual achievement scores.
3. Determine individual growth.
4. Select the external factors.
5. Examine the effects of various external factors.
6. Calculate individual student growth relative to their comparison group.

Anticipate and Prepare for Resistance

You can expect opposition to the use of value-added scores, so States and districts should spend time preparing to respond to this resistance. One way to do this is to prepare a "Myths and Facts" document such as the one that TNTP prepared (see *Myths and Facts about Value-Added Analysis* in Appendix B) to respond directly to misinformation and quickly dispel myths.

Finally, it is important to remind skeptics about the high stakes for students. True, there is a risk that some teachers may be misidentified as ineffective when

they are not. But what about the long-term harm to students who are assigned to ineffective teachers year after year? A Brown Center brief framed the issue well:

*Much of the concern and cautions about the use of value-added have focused on the frequency of occurrence of false negatives, i.e., effective teachers who are identified as ineffective. But framing the problem in terms of false negatives places the focus almost entirely on the interests of the individual who is being evaluated rather than the students who are being served.*¹⁹

Or, as U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan often says, "Students only get one shot at an education. They can't wait for reform to materialize a decade from now."²⁰

Be Prepared for Questions

Finally, as when communicating about any issue, anticipate and proactively develop answers for key questions from parents, teachers, administrators, and others. Among those you can expect:

Basic Questions:

- Did my child make a year's worth of progress in a year?
- Is my child making progress toward State standards?
- How will this affect my job tenure and/or compensation?
- How can I be creative if student progress is based on test scores?
- What percentage of a teacher's evaluation will be based on value-added scores?
- How will we evaluate teachers who don't have value-added scores?

¹⁷ Brown Center on Education Policy at Brookings, "Evaluating Teachers: The Important Role of Value-Added." 2010, http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/reports/2010/11/17%20evaluating%20teachers/1117_evaluating_teachers.pdf.

¹⁸ TNTP. "Policy Pocket Guide." <http://thenewteacherproject.creatensend1.com/t/r/e/iljyyhl/l/r/>.

¹⁹ Brown Center on Education Policy at Brookings, "Evaluating Teachers: The Important Role of Value-Added." 2010, http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/reports/2010/11/17%20evaluating%20teachers/1117_evaluating_teachers.pdf.

²⁰ Duncan, Arne, "Remarks at the Fourth White House Tribal Nations Conference." December 5, 2012, <http://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/remarks-us-secretary-education-arne-duncan-fourth-white-house-tribal-nations-conferenc>.

Technical Questions:

- Are we able to connect teachers to student test scores?
- Is it possible to show progress with all groups of students?
- Who will design the value-added model?

Design Questions:

- What other measures (observation, portfolios, etcetera) will be used to evaluate teachers in concert with value-added scores?
- How will this affect multiyear tenure (for instance, two-year tenure) if the accuracy of value-added scores improves with three years' worth of data?

A more complete list of questions is available in Appendix C.

States and districts are appropriately focused on developing and implementing multiple measures of evaluating teaching effectiveness. Value-added measurements of student growth on tests are one such measure. While imperfect, these scores provide useful information that can offer constructive feedback and support to teachers. Better systems may yet be developed to connect student and teacher performance. In the meantime, however, clear communications can help clarify the strengths and weaknesses of value-added measurements, correct misunderstandings and alleviate fear about its potential misuse.

Engaging Educators

A Reform Support Network Guide for States and Districts

Overview of the Guide: Toward a New Grammar and Framework for Educator Engagement

A wave of reforms over the last several years has refocused the education community on the connection between teacher practice and student learning. In particular, States and school districts have tied teacher evaluation to student learning and other measures of effectiveness, such as student feedback and demonstrations of specific instructional practices.

Ambitious policy changes, sometimes characterized by divisive debate, and tight implementation timelines for new evaluation systems, however, have made it difficult for States and school districts to engage educators in these initiatives, leaving many feeling defensive about the reforms.

The case for engaging educators is simple and compelling. If students are to meet the expectations of college-and-career-ready standards and we are to close achievement gaps, it will be because committed educators—teachers, principals, district leaders and State leaders—empower themselves to work together to this end. Educator engagement is necessary for successful implementation of reform, but its purpose is greater: ultimately, educator engagement is the basis for advancing the profession in education and improving student performance.

Effective educator engagement is difficult to pull off even without the stress of reform. Often, States, school districts and reform-minded foundations and nonprofits use underdeveloped

engagement strategies. As a result, teachers perceive that they are being asked for their involvement to lend credibility rather than expertise. In other cases, key decisions have in fact been made by policy makers, and the practitioners are left trying to figure out how to execute policies they might not understand or find suspicious.

Unions are also critical organizations when engaging educators. Leaders in SEAs, LEAs and other reform organizations are frequently uncertain how unions work and how to collaborate with them. On the one hand, unions have experience and capacity dedicated to engaging their members. Because unions are recognized by many teachers in the field as the only democratic organization that interacts with them, they can bring a degree of trust and credibility to the reform conversation. On the other hand, some perceive union support for reforms to be limited or qualified, and that their methods for educator engagement are not always designed to support implementing reform. As a result, leaders in other organizations are often uncertain about how to partner with organizations that are potential assets in the ongoing project of engaging educators.

Faced with these challenges, leaders fall back on the most common language in the field of educator engagement. Think about all the times we have heard the expressions, “We need teachers to buy into our reform agenda,” or “We want teachers to get on board.” As the language implies, we have made teachers the objects or instruments of our activities, not the subjects and authors of them. In order to really improve student performance and close achievement gaps, we literally have to change the grammar of educator engagement, moving teachers from the objects of our sentences to the subjects. Teachers themselves must affirm the vital role they play in developing, implementing and refining major education reform initiatives such as Race to the Top.

To this end, we are proposing a framework for educator engagement that views engagement from the perspective of a teacher. Looking from that viewpoint, we then propose new roles that State and local education agencies (SEAs and LEAs) and State and local union affiliates can play to support their engagement.

Although this publication focuses on using the framework to engage teachers specifically, States, school districts and unions readily can apply the framework to other groups of educators, including building- and district-level administrators. Likewise, although the framework can be applied to any reform initiative, the focus of this discussion will be engaging teachers in evaluation reforms. The publication begins with an explanation of the framework, followed by specific strategies, including using feedback loops, that States, school districts and unions can employ to implement it.

A New Framework for Engaging Educators

The framework recognizes a progression of four domains of educator engagement. Each domain establishes the teacher as an active subject, the primary actor in a sentence that begins, “**I know**,” “**I apply**,” “**I participate**” and “**I lead**.” Each domain expects levels of mastery and involvement. Each domain involves different habits of mind. If we are to expect educator engagement to become a force that drives the improvement of student achievement, we must intentionally engage educators across all four of the domains.

Here are examples of how the four domains play out in a teacher’s work as an engaged participant in the implementation of a teacher evaluation system:

I Know. I know how the evaluation system in my district works. I also know the rationale for the changes in policy. I understand the observational framework used to assess my performance and I understand how

it intersects with student growth measures. I know that my school district will make a final determination about my performance by combining my observation score with two other ratings, one for my students’ growth and another for their feedback. I understand the rating system and how my rating informs career milestone decisions, ranging from advancement to dismissal for ineffective performance. I know to whom I can turn for support in order to improve. In short, the evaluation system is a set of clear signals I use to guide the improvement of my performance.

I Apply. I apply what I know about the evaluation system to improve my practice and get better results with the students I teach. I think through the expectations of the observation rubrics and apply those expectations to the design of my lesson plans. I also use information from other measures, such as measures of student growth, to set expectations for my students, and to decide how to differentiate instruction. I use feedback from observers and consider my strengths and weaknesses as a practitioner. Moreover, I use that feedback to prioritize different opportunities for professional development. I also use that feedback to collaborate with my instructional coach and team members to identify new instructional strategies. I use student data and other forms of feedback to assess my own performance and consider what to do to continue improving the results I get with my students.

I Participate. I participate in the development, implementation and refinement of my district’s teacher evaluation system at both the practical and policy levels. At my school, I work with leaders and colleagues to set shared expectations for how evaluations will be conducted. I collaborate with coaches and team members to review the observation rubric so we can understand what it means for us. I work with my coach and colleagues to interpret student data to inform instructional decisions. As my district determines how to apply State guidelines, I respond to surveys and participate in focus groups.



Moreover, as a member of my union, I participate in union-management collaborative sessions to calibrate video teaching samples using the observation rubric, and I work with union and district leadership to reflect on how the new system will change the way my colleagues and I will use our time in my school. I am also a member of a communication team that visits nonpilot schools to explain the new evaluation system to my colleagues, presenting facts, answering questions and offering my opinion.

I Lead. I lead my colleagues to improve their performance and to improve the evaluation system as we go forward. I am recognized as an excellent practitioner, whose classroom performance and student growth results stand out. At my school, my principal and colleagues seek me out for my expertise. I open my classroom as a demonstration site, and I am called on to deliver model lessons. I mentor new teachers and support other teachers as they develop. I create novel approaches to district curricula that are appropriate for the students in my school and share them with my colleagues across the district. I sit on joint labor/management committees at my school and make sure that new programs, like the teacher evaluation system, meet high expectations and produce good results for students and teachers. At the district level, I collaborate with leaders from other schools, the union and district administration to improve the faculty's understanding of how to improve the evaluation system. I serve on joint union/management committees that integrate the expectations for college-and-career-ready standards with those of the evaluation system, or that use data to align expectations across grades and content areas. I help revise policy through collective bargaining or other processes to make sure it is good for students, teachers and other educators. With other leaders, I visit schools around my district and help others know, apply, participate and lead. I make sure that things are done with teachers, not to them. I like to get out front and lead, pushing for reforms before they are pushed on us.

Effective efforts to engage teachers will consider how teachers and leaders will develop the habits of mind described in all four domains, not as tools of the purposes of reform, but as the active authors of reform in the work they do in various classroom, school and district roles. States, school districts and teacher unions should consider fostering engagement in all domains to ensure that teacher-leaders are knowledgeable partners; co-creators; crew—not passengers; responsible parties and subjects—not objects—of sentences.

In what follows, we unpack each of these four domains. We remain focused on teacher engagement in the development, implementation and refinement of teacher evaluation systems. For each domain we ask the same question: What can SEAS, LEAs and unions do to foster engagement? And we answer by offering clear and actionable strategies and citing specific examples of those strategies from the field. We also include feedback loops, or specific strategies used to assess the effectiveness of educator engagement.



I Know

Knowledge is the foundation on which all of the other domains are built. If teachers do not “know” the evaluation system, they will not use it as the guide for their own improvement, and they will not be able to participate in or lead its implementation at even the most basic of levels. Therefore, developing knowledge is the base on which SEA, LEA and union teacher engagement strategies are built, and SEAs, LEAs and unions are all responsible for building knowledge. When successfully engaged in this domain, teachers make use of tools and strategies that provide access to information. At the same time, they guard against misinformation, which undermines both practice and the aspirations of reform initiatives. Feedback loops in this domain check for understanding and correct misperceptions.

Supporting Knowledge Development

Get the Word Out

The sheer number of educators in a given State or district, coupled with limited State and district communications staff and resources, makes it difficult to communicate with educators and to monitor the effectiveness of the communication strategies they employ. Guidebooks, frequently asked questions (FAQs), publications promoting facts and addressing myths (designed to address misinformation and misinterpretation), websites, newsletters and emails can be effective tools for disseminating information about new evaluation systems. Regional information sessions employing train-the-trainer models, add-on sessions at pre-existing trainings or convenings and webinars can also be effective delivery options. Op-eds, letters to the editor, blast messages, social media, press releases and regular briefings reinforce communications aimed at in-house audiences.

States and school districts across the country have been particularly inventive at implementing strategies to ensure that teachers are aware of significant changes in evaluation policy. For instance, Tennessee established an online rapid response system to provide immediate answers to questions about the State's new evaluation system. At its peak, the system received approximately 75 questions a day, each of which State staff responded to within 2 days. The State also issued an FAQ email every week that included answers to questions asked three or more times in a week through the rapid response system. The publication also highlighted best practices around evaluation reforms.

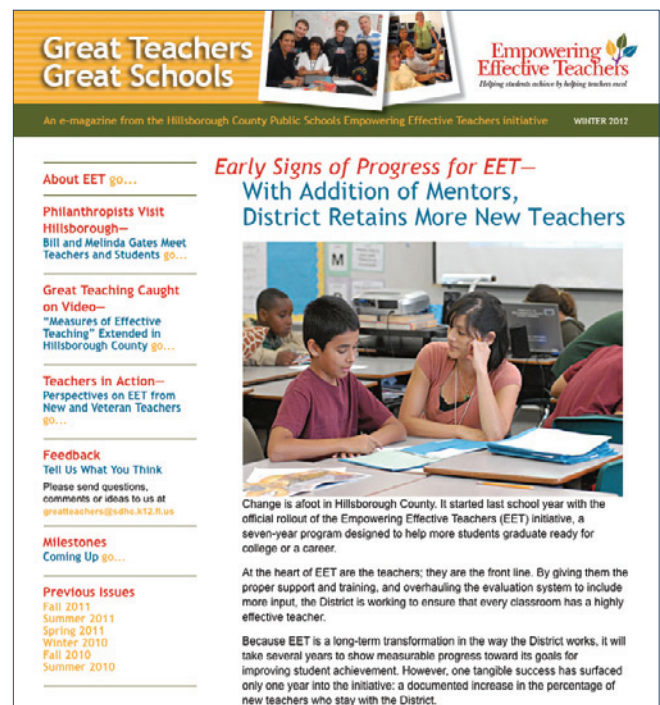
The District of Columbia developed individual guidebooks for each of the 19 categories of educators identified in the District's IMPACT evaluation system.

"You can never communicate enough, and you can never be overprepared."

MaryEllen Elia, Superintendent
Hillsborough County Public Schools

The guidebooks clearly explain how student growth is incorporated into the system, what the components of the system are, how they fit together and what educators can expect at each stage of the evaluation. The guidebooks are written from the educator's point of view in a question and answer format that reads honestly and informatively. They also include curricular and instructional resources for educators.¹ Rhode Island's *Guide to Evaluating Building Administrators and Teachers* includes timelines for educators that indicate the phases of the evaluation throughout the school year, checklists for developing student learning objectives, a glossary of terms, a quick reference table to help explain the system and useful tools for observers and educators.²

Florida's Hillsborough County Public Schools revamped its website to relay information about the new evaluation system. The site includes podcasts entitled "The Things You Need to Know" that are delivered by the superintendent (in both long and short forms), updates, FAQs and links to press coverage. The district also developed an "Empowering Effective Teachers" e-zine that provides basic information on the system in a reader-friendly format.³



Hillsborough County Public Schools "Empowering Effective Teachers" e-zine

Hillsborough left nothing to chance, employing multiple delivery methods in addition to its website as it rolled out its new evaluation system to great effect.

Communicating through these diverse channels represented an expenditure of time and resources, but the multiple methods of delivery were critical for securing engagement, feedback and, ultimately, support. They ensured that teachers had plenty of options and opportunities for obtaining information, getting training in the new evaluation process as well as making their voices heard.⁴

The Role of Unions in Building Knowledge

State and local union affiliates are often better situated than State departments and school district central offices to communicate directly with teachers, providing a trusted voice to sift through a complex and ever-evolving process. Their involvement can be integral to successful development and implementation of these new systems and signals to teachers that “we are all in this together.” Unions can be particularly effective in countering misinformation that emerges at the building level.

There are numerous examples of State and local union affiliates taking on the responsibility of building the knowledge base of teachers and collaborating with SEAs and LEAs to do so. The Illinois Department of Education embraced this approach by reaching out to two unions—the Illinois Education Association and the Illinois Federation of Teachers—to involve leaders in early discussions around the evaluation system, well before decisions had been made. This message of joint creation resonates with teachers’ union leaders and can position them to readily engage their members in reform efforts. The Illinois Education Association, for example, implemented extensive outreach to its staff and members to inform them of the new evaluation laws and clear up misinformation about the new system.⁵

Similarly, during the development and implementation of their groundbreaking teacher compensation system between 1999 and 2005, the Denver Classroom Teachers’ Association and Denver Public Schools deployed union members to schools to meet with

teachers and discuss the new compensation system before teachers voted to adopt it. They learned through this deployment that often the best way to build knowledge in the teaching corps is to provide opportunities for face-to-face, teacher-to-teacher communication. In the spring of 2011, as the district and the union developed and implemented a new teacher evaluation system, the partners had to advance from a handful of early adopter schools to an expanded pilot of nearly every school in the district. They needed to ask teachers to affirm the pilot at the school level, holding elections to determine whether schools would participate, but they knew that teachers in schools that had not employed the new evaluation system did not have the knowledge to cast an informed vote. To address this gap in knowledge, the association identified a cadre of teacher leaders from pilot schools and the district released a union leader—an elementary school music teacher—full-time to meet with faculties in nonpilot schools in advance of the vote. The team and the full-time release director of this communication effort presented information on the various components of the evaluation system and how it had worked for them during the first pilot year, and answered questions. The end result was that in the second year, 92 percent of district schools participated in the pilot.⁶

Get the Language Right

Teachers are not policymakers, philanthropists, chambers of commerce or editorial boards. Messaging about evaluation that works for those stakeholders won’t work for teachers. Leading communications with the notion that the new evaluation system will allow school districts to fire poor performers will create an instant communications barrier. To build deep knowledge of the evaluation system among teachers, the focus of communications about the new system should not be on sorting and firing; it should be on supporting and inspiring excellent practice. It should be about improving instruction and increasing student achievement. When preparing communications for teachers, States, school districts and unions need to pay close attention to language and even consider testing the message with educators. Some districts and unions have paid close attention to the matter of word choice.

Throughout the development and implementation of the Pittsburgh Research-based Inclusive System of Evaluation, for instance, district leaders recognized that many educators held the view that evaluation was based on a “gotcha” mentality, as suggested by one district administrator. District leaders worked with the teachers’ union to build and disseminate messaging around evaluations as tools for growth. They recognized the importance of this messaging from the beginning, as well as the need for a culture change around evaluation.⁷

In addition, working in collaboration with the Illinois State Board of Education, the Illinois Education Association chose to present the new evaluation system in terms of student learning. They talked with teachers about how the new system would help them identify what was going on in their classrooms and see whether student learning was occurring at the levels it should be, as opposed to using accountability or the sorting language that is often a part of these discussions.⁸

Teachers also understand when States and districts engage in “happy talk” in an attempt to mask the real challenges that major reforms present. Denver Public Schools recognized the need for honest communications around the rollout and piloting of its new evaluation system and chose what a district leader called a “keep-it-real” communications strategy. District leaders deliberately avoided language that would imply that the new evaluation system was the best possible thing to happen to educators. Instead, they acknowledged the challenges that the new system presented and honestly communicated to stakeholders the ongoing need for refinement.⁹

Establish Feedback Loops: Assess Existing Perceptions, Test for Understanding and Revise Communications

Feedback loops are strategies for evaluating the effectiveness of educator engagement approaches. They include techniques such as surveys or focus groups for assessing what educators have heard. They also include other methods of determining the success of engagement activities like systematically looking for changes in practice—demonstrated mastery of instructional techniques or creation of

instructional tools aligned to new expectations. Finally, they consider whether engagement strategies themselves are successful, looking, for instance, at whether teachers go to a website and use the tools it offers when they plan or teach. System leaders should use information from feedback loops to inform the continuous improvement of their engagement activities in the same way that we expect teachers to use feedback and student performance information to make adjustments to their classroom practice.

When developing teacher knowledge and understanding of evaluation systems, States and school districts should consider assessing teachers’ perceptions at the beginning of the evaluation development stage so they can address any misinformation or absence of understanding that a survey might reveal. They might pursue the same tactic as they move from pilot to full implementation, as the teachers in nonpilot schools may not know a thing about how the new system will differ from the old one. Teachers in nonpilot schools might even be fearful, suspicious and negative about the proposed changes, so communications should be nuanced, honest and forthcoming from the start. Hillsborough County Public Schools implemented a survey at the start of the evaluation development phase to determine attitudes toward evaluation, and then used the results to inform priorities.¹⁰

Finally, States and districts can improve their strategies in the knowledge domain by tracking and reviewing their progress toward ensuring that all teachers know what they need to know about the new evaluation system as it unfolds. By cataloging messages that have already been disseminated and assessing educators’ perceptions of the system, States and districts can evaluate and revise their communications delivery processes and messages. Again, Hillsborough County Public Schools conducted anonymous surveys—“pulse checks”—to understand the degree to which educators comprehended the evaluation system. The surveys included questions on whether and how much information had been relayed to them and how beneficial it was. Results from the study, which included 3,600 teacher responses, suggested an increase in teacher understanding of the new system.¹¹



I Apply

Application is the domain that has the most immediate bearing on improving student performance.

Teacher evaluation systems are the important set of signals that SEAs and LEAs send to teachers to tell them how to do well at their jobs. Application is the habit of mind teachers use to follow those signals, to put them to practical use in their classrooms. As with the other domains, SEAs, LEAs and unions share responsibility for supporting application. When fostering application, SEAs, LEAs, unions and other organizations should think about the support structures that need to be in place so teachers can follow through on the feedback they get from their evaluations. Feedback loops in this domain should focus on changes in instructional practice, teacher satisfaction and the use of LEA/SEA and union-developed supports.

Supporting Application

Provide Teacher Supports

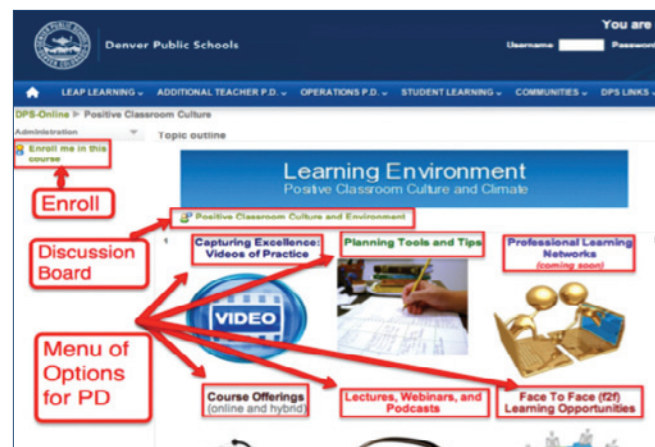
States and especially districts are responsible for ensuring high-quality instruction in their classrooms. To that end, they are responsible for making available to educators resources and tools that are aligned to the evaluation systems because, without them, it would be very difficult for teachers to apply what they learn from their evaluations. Examples of tools include model lesson plans aligned to learning standards for students, instructional coaching and other professional development activities aligned to observation frameworks, interim assessments so that teachers can monitor student learning, exemplar student learning objectives and assessments and videos of high-quality instruction, to name a few. With these tools—videos on differentiation, for instance—a teacher can make the decision to model her own practice after the effective instruction she watched in the privacy of her home or classroom.

We want to highlight here one very promising district practice in support of teacher application that acknowledges district responsibility for creating opportunities for teachers to apply what they learn

from their evaluations and teachers' responsibility for their own learning so that they can improve instruction and student outcomes. A very welcome development—and one that could also be implemented at the State level—scores of districts have created or are creating online professional development portals, single sources for all the above-mentioned tools and resources and many more.

Online portals, such as the one in use in Denver Public Schools, align supports directly to an educator's area for improvement as identified in the evaluation. Instead of simply relaying the conclusion that a teacher is, for instance, struggling in developing a positive classroom culture, Denver can provide direct assistance so that the teacher can address this area of growth.

The following screenshot shows the Denver portal, which includes a discussion board on the topic, videos of effective practice, planning tools and tips, course offerings and more—all pertaining to developing a positive classroom culture. The same options are available for each indicator in the district's evaluation system.



Denver Public Schools' Professional Development Portal

While States and districts may not have the capacity or resources to create such sophisticated portals, tools such as videos can still live online. For instance, the District of Columbia Public Schools has filmed more than 100 videos of teachers demonstrating effective teaching, covering each standard in their framework. Each video clip was vetted by District master educators to ensure alignment to the standards, and the videos

are available to all educators in the District through its online portal. The District is in the process of developing a data and professional development platform for streamlined access to supports aligned to the evaluation system.¹² Employing a similar tactic on a smaller scale, the Hillsborough County Teachers Association, through its union-run, teacher-driven Center for Technology in Education, has given cameras to teachers participating in a professional learning community so they can film their own teaching. They then use the videos with their colleagues to align their instruction to the Hillsborough observation framework.¹³

Feedback Loops: Assess for Change in Instructional Practice

At the end of the day, evaluation reform is about helping teachers improve their practice and get better results with the students they serve. States and districts can inform their support strategies by looking for the number of teachers in each district who are applying specific practices in their classrooms. By studying variance among schools, States and districts can offer supports not only to teachers, but also to instructional leaders. Alternatively, districts, States and unions can collect additional data on teacher satisfaction with evaluator feedback and the number of formal and informal feedback opportunities and other activities that support teachers to determine whether districts and schools are adequately assisting teachers as they apply what they learn from their evaluations to their practice.



I Participate

Participation is a collaborative habit of mind. Teachers who demonstrate this state of mind work together with colleagues to put reforms

such as teacher evaluation systems into practice. This is not a simple task. It is one of adaptation and refinement as educators make sense of new systems in their school and classroom contexts. Together, they develop the practical details that policymakers can never imagine as they pass laws or bargain rules. Work in the participation domain takes the form of design teams, study groups and committees focused on practice and policy development and refinement. Its product is a more thorough common understanding of the work of reform. In the context

of teacher evaluation, perhaps the best example of participation is the work that teachers and leaders do together to calibrate performance levels or identify appropriate measures of student learning. Participation requires a commitment from leaders in SEAs, LEAs and unions to carefully allocate a scarce resource—time—so that participating teachers and leaders are using it well together. Feedback loops in this domain look for evidence of people working together and making changes in collective practice, assess the difference that collaboration makes and use feedback from teams to replicate strong practice on a system wide basis.

Supporting Participation

Provide Multiple Opportunities for Educators to Participate in Feedback Loops

One thing that States, districts and unions need for successful implementation is feedback, the most basic and simple form of teacher engagement as it relates to participation. Without it, they won't know if the system is working or how to make it better.

If they are able to secure email addresses for teachers, both States and school districts can promote participation by creating and executing quick online surveys designed to collect feedback on issues ranging from how many times teachers were actually observed, to the perceived quality of the feedback, to whether they are receiving support to apply what they are learning about their instruction through the evaluation system. Unions can help by issuing similar

What is a Teacher Voice Group?

Over the past few years, teachers, former teachers and nonprofit leaders have started what have come to be known as “teacher voice groups,” nonprofits devoted to helping teachers inform public policy as it relates to the teaching profession. These groups include Teach Plus, the Center for Teaching Quality's New Millennial Initiative, Educators for Excellence, Teachers United and Hope Street Group, among others. Many teacher voice groups operate in Race to the Top grantee States.

surveys to their members and providing results to their school districts. Better yet, union and school districts can collaborate on the development and dissemination of survey tools to create a common source of information and minimize the number of surveys requested of educators in the field.

Other, more personalized, tactics are also available to States, districts and their unions. They can partner with teacher voice groups and other organizations to gather feedback on key issues. For example, the Illinois State Board of Education worked with Teach Plus, a teacher voice group, to implement teacher feedback forums across the State. Board staff attended each forum, and participants heard about evaluation options and rated them, which provided invaluable feedback during the development process.

Other States and districts have partnered with teacher voice groups to gather ongoing feedback on evaluation, from development through the implementation stages. For example, the Center for Teaching Quality's New Millennium Initiative, launched in 2009 and operating in several cities, provides an online portal for teachers to discuss and contribute solutions to a variety of challenges, including evaluation, presented by teacher effectiveness reforms. The Hillsborough County New Millennium Initiative pairs effective teachers with district and union leaders in an online community to examine and share thoughts on the new evaluation system.¹⁴ Hope Street Group has partnered with several States to provide a monitored online feedback process that allows teachers to respond to specific concerns and challenges in the development and implementation of new systems.¹⁵ And Teach Plus surveyed more than 1,400 educators in Illinois to garner feedback on the State's new system.

However, there is nothing more disengaging than for feedback to be ignored by those collecting it. Collecting feedback can be an enormous undertaking for States and districts already taxed by the day-to-day management of programs, so they may want to look at various options for sifting through the information, such as appointing facilitators (who could also be educators) for online feedback groups or engaging an organization to manage the feedback.

Following up with educators who have provided feedback is crucial—but is often neglected, given the abundance of feedback and the capacity at the State or district level. States and districts can start with thank-you emails, but ideally should eventually provide a summary of the feedback, which would include how the feedback informed or could inform decision making. States can employ teacher voice groups to assist with this time-consuming but essential task.

A case study of Hillsborough County Public Schools' evaluation development and implementation processes emphasizes the importance of providing multiple opportunities for feedback:

The ability to address and resolve problems quickly was paramount in gaining buy-in from stakeholders. Effective problem-solving—resolving challenges as they arise in such a way that they do not occur again—enhanced the credibility of leadership and the new evaluation system, while giving all participants greater confidence and trust in the process and outcomes. It also ensured that problems did not become systemic and entrenched.¹⁶

Beyond this important but more basic opportunity for teachers to engage lie two important high-yield opportunities for participation that States and districts can make available to teachers: oversight committees and communication teams.

Communication Teams

There is no more powerful form of communication than peer-to-peer interaction. Written communications placed into teachers' boxes often find their way into the circular file and even emails, when piled up with others, have a habit of getting lost. To that end, SEAs, LEAs and unions—especially LEAs and their local union affiliates—should consider developing communication teacher SWAT teams that can be deployed at key junctures of the development, implementation and redesign of evaluation systems. This can be done through the provision of release time or the use of stipends. Denver Public Schools and the Denver Classroom Teachers Association are expert practitioners of the art of teacher-to-teacher communication, deploying it in two major change

initiatives, one for teacher compensation and the other for teacher evaluation. As we discussed earlier, the union and the school district in Denver deployed teams of teachers from first-round pilot schools and a full-time release union leader to nonpilot schools to inform teachers about the new evaluation system in advance of a vote that would determine whether individual schools would participate in the second year of the pilot. Ninety-two percent of district schools voted to join the pilot, results that demonstrate how effective the strategy was. Other States and districts have highlighted educators on panels and in presentations at regional forums and institutes.

Identifying Teachers for Additional Roles and Responsibilities

Identifying cadres of teachers who want to be more involved in the development, implementation and refinement of the new system is an important and conscious step that SEAs, LEAs and unions should take to promote participation. Some States and districts have been successful at working with teachers' unions to identify educators and union leaders who want to be more involved. Tapping into existing networks of educators—such as National Board Certified teachers, Teach for America cohorts, State Teachers of the Year, Tntp Teaching Fellows, members of teacher voice organization and others—can be a good first step. Cultivating leadership teams of teachers from pilot schools can be another. Or States and school districts can simply identify participants on a case-by-case basis, depending on the opportunity for participation.

Those opportunities are limited only by our imagination and what teachers have the skills to do or can be trained to do. Real, substantive and authentic opportunities for participation are already unfolding in Race to the Top grantee States and their LEAs, where teachers are or soon will be conducting evaluations as certified evaluators, training colleagues on components of the new evaluation system and working on collaborative teams charged with developing assessments for nontested grades and subjects, as well as tools and guidance documents for the implementation of student learning objectives. These are real opportunities for joint creation, substantial and important responsibilities and signs that teachers haven't just "bought-in" but are truly engaged.



I Lead

Leadership is the highest order of educator engagement. It comes when educators take ownership of reforms not as external mandates, but as the basis for improving student performance and advancing their profession. SEAs, LEAs, unions and other organizations foster leadership because, without it, reform is not sustainable. Like participation, leadership is a collaborative habit of mind, focused on working with others to develop, implement and improve initiatives such as new evaluation systems. It is distinctive, however, in two ways: first, it makes a point of identifying excellent practice. Teacher leaders are good at their work and recognized by their colleagues for their effectiveness. Second, it is the means for creating shared ownership for results.

Teacher leaders can play a role at the school, district and even State levels to develop others so they can get results and improve their practice. They are the teachers policy leaders go to in order to make sure that laws and rules are well conceived and that they do not run awry when implemented. They are also the teachers instructional leaders turn to when they are counting on ways to make sense of data trends in schools, or to support faculties in developing new ways to reach their communities' students. They help adapt and innovate and are full participants in the continuous improvement of reforms. Some choose their unions as the institutions from which they will lead; others choose the schoolhouse, the district or all three. Fostering leadership, therefore, requires the ability to identify successful practitioners and place them in roles where they can reach other members of the faculty, teachers across schools and colleagues in their unions. Although there are strategies that SEAs, LEAs and unions can use to promote teacher leadership, ultimately it is the teacher's responsibility to pursue and accept the challenges that go along with this endeavor. That pursuit starts with an understanding that teachers themselves are responsible for their profession, that with their partners in State and district offices, union halls and teacher voice groups, they can co-own efforts to strengthen it—in this case by participating in the development, implementation and refinement of evaluation systems

that are more closely aligned to the demands of the 21st century and the goals of school systems, the most important of which is to advance student learning.

How to Support Leadership

Identify Excellent Practitioners and Give Them Opportunities to Lead

SEAs, LEAs and unions are all in a position to identify high-performing teachers and then provide them opportunities to lead instructional reforms as well as policy development and implementation. These leading practitioners can lead work or study groups focused on a particular domain of an observation framework or on the development of assessments that can be used for student learning objectives. They can jointly lead State or school district evaluation advisory committees.

Development and Oversight Committees

Several States, including Colorado, Illinois and Tennessee, launched evaluation advisory committees charged with developing recommendations for the new evaluation system. The committees included teachers and union leaders. The purpose of leadership bodies like these is to gather the advice of leading practitioners to inform the development, implementation and improvement of policy. There is no reason why school districts cannot have similar advisory groups that are a collaboration between districts, teachers and their unions. States and districts can also consider a separate Educator Advisory Panel or committee made up entirely of educators who would gather and give feedback, make recommendations and report back to other educators, giving the evaluation system a teacher face, not just an administrative one. One strength of such committees is that they unite diverse views. It is important to keep this in mind when convening them. There are different ways of doing business on school faculty committees, union work groups, legislative panels and philanthropic advisory boards. It is important to help leaders in representative roles adjust to new leadership contexts if collaborative engagement activities like this are to succeed.

Pay Attention to Culture

If we expect teachers to lead the development and improvement of policy, school districts and States must establish a culture that accommodates disagreement but does not accept the status quo. Race to the Top States and School districts are beyond the point of arguing about whether they should use student growth measures to evaluate teachers. However, they are not beyond the point of discussing how to measure student growth in nontested grades and subjects, for instance. Here there can be rigorous discussion of different options; teachers and others can weigh in on whether it's best to use school wide growth measures, school wide district-generated assessments or student learning objectives. State and district leaders can encourage this kind of engagement. They can appoint teachers to the leadership teams that will inform or make decisions. Through this engagement, they can cultivate collective ownership of critical decisions.

Hillsborough County, for example, has become expert at this practice. During the development of its evaluation system, the district asked a number of teacher leaders from within the union to populate its teacher evaluation committee (about 50 percent of the members were teachers). That group debated, among other topics, whether to use peer observers in their evaluation system and, if so, how much those evaluations would count toward a teacher's overall summative rating. After the discussion, the committee determined that peer evaluations should count just as much as the evaluations conducted by administrators—30 percent.¹⁷ By accommodating debate and discussion, States and districts demonstrate that they care about what teacher-leaders—and other members of the group—think and have to offer.

Encourage Labor-Management Leadership Collaborations and Know How State and Local Union Affiliates Conduct Business

States and LEAs should encourage unions to get out front and lead, to advocate for reform and effective implementation with their members, as detailed in this publication in States such as Illinois and in districts such as the Pittsburgh Public Schools. States and school districts need to understand, however, that unions are democratic organizations that foster debate and that support for a major initiative cannot be requested on a Tuesday and delivered by Friday. Union leadership needs to have the time to work issues through a process, likely through the union's executive council and then its board. Knowledge of this process will become particularly important again as States and their LEAs begin aligning their evaluation systems to compensation and career milestone decisions.

Reach Out to and Foster the Development of Teacher Voice Groups

Many of the nation's teacher voice groups have been particularly helpful to States and school districts in gathering feedback about the design and implementation of teacher evaluations. Some have also been effective advocates of policy reforms aligned to the goals of State Race to the Top scopes of work. Educators 4 Excellence, for instance, advocates for higher starting salaries for teachers, a professional compensation system that rewards excellent teachers, rethinking tenure as a significant milestone that is achieved on the basis of evaluation and eliminating the practice of last-in, first-out for teacher layoffs. Teach Plus, which operates chapters in California, Illinois, Indiana, Massachusetts, Tennessee and Washington, D.C., advocates for strong teacher policy, often through policy papers developed by Teaching Fellows. Teach Plus fellows in Indianapolis and Boston produced a policy paper advocating for evaluation systems that train evaluators effectively, include peer evaluators and identify high performers for leadership and targeted retention. In Colorado, teachers from the New Millennial Initiative network continue to advocate for district-based professional development programs that support teacher

development that is aligned to Colorado's evaluation system. Like unions, teacher voice groups can help organize teachers to advance policies aligned to State reform initiatives.

Additional Thoughts on Teacher and SEA/LEA Responsibilities for Fostering Leadership and Assessing the Quantity and Quality of Teacher Leadership Through Feedback Loops

Ultimately, though SEAs and LEAs can create opportunities for the very best educators to lead and to reach out to unions and teacher voice groups to encourage their leadership, teachers and teacher unions must choose leadership with the mindset that they too are responsible for the success or failure of teacher evaluation and other Race to the Top reform initiatives. SEAs, LEAs and unions, however, must ensure that the feedback loops they create to monitor engagement in the other domains include questions that allow them to determine the extent to which teachers have become leaders in their systems and how they are expressing that leadership. In particular, schools, districts and unions can use that information to determine whether they need to do more to provide leadership opportunities for excellent practitioners.

Applying the Lessons of This Guide to Other Educators and Reforms

This guide describes a variety of strategies to help States, school districts and unions lay the groundwork for teachers to engage in evaluation reforms. With diligence and attention to detail, they can develop and roll out effective educator engagement strategies that result in the vast majority of teachers reaching the “I know” and “I apply” domains and a significant percentage attaining the “I participate” and “I lead” habits of mind. This creates a substantial body of teachers who, as the subject of the engagement sentence, have made a **choice** to become engaged.

Effective educator engagement is challenging. It takes time and effort to rethink policy reforms from the perspective of the practitioner expected to enact them. If done correctly, transparently and authentically, however, the outcome will be powerful: improved teacher practice and student achievement. In the field of teacher evaluation, engaging educators changes the conversation. Instead of focusing on sorting and firing, evaluation now focuses on supporting excellent teaching and inspiring professionals to work together to meet the expectations of college-and-career-ready standards.

Effective educator engagement has the same transformative potential for other groups of educators and other reforms. Ultimately, if we are to change the conversation, we must apply the example offered in this guide across the field—with educators in different roles across the vast, sometimes very decentralized systems in our States, and across the many reform initiatives underway.

For example, States and school districts can apply the engagement framework and the examples we used to populate it to other classes of educators as well. Principals, superintendents and other central office personnel need to know, apply, participate and lead—and SEAs and LEAs must lay the groundwork for the development of the habits of mind attendant to these domains. Like teachers, principals and central administrators will **know** about how evaluation reforms work if SEAs and LEAs communicate with

them effectively. Like teachers, they will **apply** what they learn about their performance from their evaluations to their ongoing practice if school districts and their supervisors give them the tools to do so. They can **participate** in the development, implementation and refinement of educator evaluation systems at the levels of practice and policy, serving as members of the school’s student learning objective work group, for instance, or as members of the district’s evaluation advisory committee. And they can **lead** by directing school-based efforts to align college-and-career-ready standards to teacher evaluation and as members of State administrative associations by advocating for State policy that allows teachers to become certified evaluators.

We can also apply the framework to other initiatives, such as the rollout of college-and-career-ready standards. For instance, teachers need to **know** about the major instructional shifts that the new standards present and, as a result, SEAs and LEAs need to communicate effectively to teachers what they are. Teachers will need to **apply** their knowledge about these instructional shifts to their practice, which districts and States can support with materials they develop and make available through online venues. Many teachers will **participate** in the successful implementation of the new standards by coaching their colleagues, serving on curriculum development committees and providing feedback to their districts on how their schools are implementing the instructional shifts. Finally, some teachers will **lead** by taking the initiative to explain to parents, community members and even legislators why these instructional shifts are important and establishing and leading school-based work groups designed to support implementation.

Regardless of the educator or initiative, our point moving forward is simple and compelling. If we are to meet the goals of reform—improved student performance and closed achievement gaps—we must engage those whom we expect to do the work. They are thoughtful professionals who, given knowledge, the right tools and opportunities to participate and lead, will successfully accomplish the set of ambitious goals established by their States.

Endnotes

1. District of Columbia Public Schools website, www.dcps.dc.gov.
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3. *Case Study: Leading Change in Hillsborough County Public Schools, The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2011*.
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5. Interview with Audrey Soglin, Executive Director, Illinois Education Association, March 2012.
6. Interviews with Henry Roman, President, Denver Classroom Teachers Association, Jennifer Stern, Executive Director, Teacher Performance Management, and Amy Skinner, LEAP Communications Manager, Denver Public Schools, March 2012.
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11. *Case Study: Leading Change in Hillsborough County Public Schools, The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2011*.
12. District of Columbia Public Schools Reality PD website, accessed via <http://dcps.dc.gov/DCPS/About+DCPS/Career+Opportunities/Teach+in+Our+Schools>.
13. Interview with Sabrina Gates, Peer Evaluator, Hillsborough County Public Schools, April 12, 2012.
14. Center for Teaching Quality website, <http://www.teachingquality.org/nmi/hillsboroughco>.
15. Hope Street Group website, <http://hopestreetgroup.org/index.jspa>.
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From “Inform” to “Inspire”

A Framework for Communications and Engagement

As Race to the Top grantees make far-reaching reforms, shift policies and heighten expectations, communicating with and engaging a wide range of key audiences have grown in importance. Building widespread understanding and support is crucial to the successful implementation and sustainability of proposed State reforms. Engaging educators in this work is essential, but State education agencies (SEAs) have a responsibility to reach out to their many other stakeholders as well.

The Reform Support Network (RSN) encourages SEAs to assess their current efforts to communicate with and engage key audiences and look for ways to sharpen approaches, build capacity and extend reach. The Stakeholder Communications and Engagement Community of Practice (SCE CoP) is developing resources to encourage State leaders to strengthen their work in several areas. To start with, the CoP is helping States craft a **strategy** with specific goals, define internal and external **audiences**, and create clear and compelling **messages**. Those messages, in turn, will require a variety of **tactics** — from face-to-face meetings to social media — to reach their audiences. States can expand their reach by working in **coalitions** and with partners. In the process, States might need to build staff **capacity** to do this work. Finally, the CoP is urging States to **measure** everything and use their data to adjust course as needed.

The communications and engagement framework in Figure 1 provides a way for SEAs to think about and implement these priorities.

This framework recognizes that SEAs will, at a minimum, **Inform** key audiences about their work and changes in key practices, expectations and systems. However, these efforts will be more responsive, less reactive and likely to be more successful when audiences’ unique needs are considered and State leaders listen to feedback closely and respond to questions (**Inquire**). In some cases, SEAs will want to actively **Involve** key audiences in the work as active co-creators of policies and programs. Ultimately, the most powerful results will occur when State leaders **Inspire** others to act and lead, based on what they have learned and the policies and programs they have helped develop.

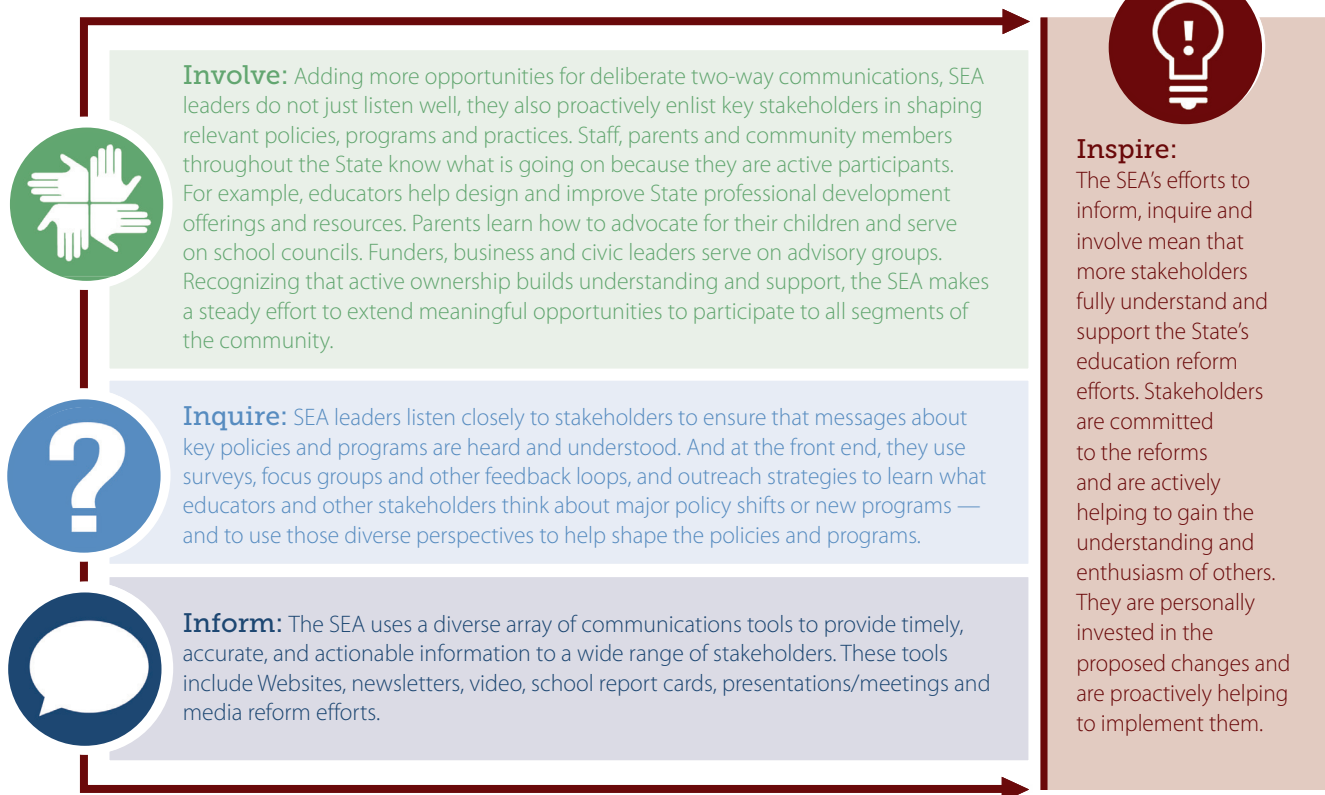


Figure 1. Communications and Engagement Framework for SEAs

Connecting the Dots

The concepts discussed in this framework overlap significantly with **Engaging Educators: A Reform Support Network Guide for States and Districts**, published in December 2012. That guide focused on the need to engage one key set of stakeholders: teachers and other educators. This framework deals with multiple stakeholders, including educators. And its four action steps are described from the perspective of the SEA: that is, how the SEA can inform, inquire, involve and inspire various stakeholders, including educators. Our inform and involve steps particularly align with the many engagement concepts discussed in more depth in **Engaging Educators**, such as using feedback loops, joining communications teams and assuming school leadership roles.

Doing a good job of **informing**, **inquiring** and **involving** makes it more likely that audiences will be **inspired** to action.



Doing a good job of informing, inquiring and involving makes it more likely that audiences will be inspired to action. The RSN defines each of these four strategic actions as described above.

There is no sharp dividing line between and among these strategic actions. Depending on the issue, State education agencies are likely to regularly do some combination of *informing*, *inquiring* and *involving* activities; when done well, the result should be well-informed, supportive and inspired audiences.

This framework does not necessarily suggest a continuum that progresses from good to better to best. In some cases, providing sound and timely *information* is all that is required. And doing an excellent job of consistently *informing* audiences is a major accomplishment in itself. However, we believe that finding ways to add an *inquiry* or *involvement* component to the work will make it more likely that SEAs' information will be heard — and acted on.

Providing additional opportunities for inquiry and involvement will require a real commitment from the SEA to meaningfully engage stakeholders — that is, supplementing one-way communications with more two-way engagement opportunities that invite stakeholder input from educators and others and have higher potential for creating shared commitment for state reforms. This kind of culture shift will require more collaborative leadership — and the active leadership of the chief and his/her executive team.

This framework and related resources are designed to provide a starting point for those important conversations. Additional details are available at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/implementation-support-unit/tech-assist/stakeholder-communications-engagement.html>.

Educator Engagement: What Works?

The RSN has a comprehensive Educator Engagement Guide (see page 19) which provides a clear framework for engaging educators and other practitioners. The following was written by the leaders of Teach Plus, and reflects their thinking based on their experience in the field. Although not explicit, there is an alignment between the strategies presented by Teach Plus and the domains of educator engagement described in the RSN Educator Engagement framework.

By Celine Coggins and Alice Johnson Cain, Teach Plus

Teach Plus, a national nonprofit that improves the achievement of urban children by ensuring that a greater proportion of students have access to excellent, experienced teachers, has found that teachers are eager to expand their impact as leaders in their schools and communities by shaping policies that affect their students.

Through the work we have done with thousands of teachers across the country on issues from teacher evaluation reform to new unionism to Common Core implementation, we have learned that two things are essential to understand before trying to build teacher engagement. First, without building trust at the outset, teacher engagement efforts are doomed to fail. Second, successful teacher engagement requires building a “virtuous cycle” in which teachers are listened to and heard, prompting increased engagement that leads to additional opportunities for impact.

Teachers respond when they know they are being listened to and heard. They crave authenticity in their involvement and will remain involved only if they are trusted and treated as the professionals they are. But if they are simply asked to rubber stamp others’ ideas without providing input, they are not likely to continue their involvement.

Based on our experience, we have learned that the following seven approaches to communication are necessary to effectively **build trust** and **launch a virtuous circle of teacher engagement**:

1. First, do no harm.
2. Ask “real” questions of teachers and make concrete adjustments based on their input.
3. Have a follow-up communications plan.
4. Focus on school leaders.
5. Make engagement visible.
6. Find good stories and tools to reach educators.
7. Recognize complexities, especially for teacher evaluation reform.

First, do no harm.

Teachers want to feel respected for the important work they do. In recent years, however, some have felt that major policy changes have been imposed on them by policymakers who may not fully understand the realities that teachers and their students face. When approached in a thoughtful way, however, this problem can be avoided.

When the Chicago Public Schools negotiated their new evaluation system, for example, Teach Plus teaching policy fellows were at the negotiating table to make concrete suggestions that informed which assessments were adopted as part of the student growth measure. Statewide, in partnership with the Illinois State Board of Education, Teach Plus gathered feedback from more than 2,300 educators and successfully advocated for this feedback, which led to the minimum student-growth requirement being phased in over time.

Even well-intentioned engagement efforts can backfire, however. For example, teachers of untested grades and subjects in an early Race to the Top State were unhappy when they learned that their evaluations would be based in large part on how students they had never taught fared on tests of other subjects. In some cases, their evaluations would even be based on the performance of students they had never met. Needless to say, the teachers were unhappy with what they perceived as unfair evaluation criteria, and their disillusionment was damaging to the advancement of the State’s goals in revising its evaluation system. The State is currently remedying this problem so its teacher evaluations will be —

appropriately — linked to students they have actually taught, but the problem could have been avoided in the first place if teachers had been engaged in a meaningful way early in the development of the new evaluation system.

Ask “real” questions of teachers and make concrete adjustments based on their input.

When teachers show up, it is to gain information and provide actionable feedback. If that’s not what you want, don’t waste their time. Teachers need a formal process to give regular feedback to leaders and to see that changes are being made. They want the space to support the overall goal of the system, but also to criticize and help find solutions to the elements that aren’t working.

This approach was used well in Memphis, Tennessee. When the Memphis City Schools began the process of implementing a new teacher evaluation system, the district asked teachers for meaningful input on key aspects of the decision, including which observation rubric to adopt. After researching numerous evaluation rubrics, the district narrowed its top choices to three. It then asked teachers to pilot the rubrics and recommend which one to use as well as how to weight the observation and the other components of the system. The teachers rose to the occasion and provided helpful feedback, and the district adopted their recommendations.

Have a follow-up communications plan.

One of the most common complaints among teachers who make time to meet with policymakers and share their expertise is the lack of follow-up. It is imperative that teachers be told about the impact of their engagement and how their input is used. Even if their ideas are not adopted, they will appreciate knowing what was adopted and why those choices were made. And when something is modified based on teacher feedback, it is essential that this be communicated back to them. When the communication loop occurs, participating teachers stay involved; when the communication loop is missing, teachers are reluctant to reengage.

Teachers in Los Angeles who prepared a memo for leaders and did not get a response were discouraged and reluctant to provide feedback the next time they were asked. On the other hand, when teaching policy fellows in Washington, D.C., submitted a memo to district leaders on how to best support first-year teachers, the district sent an email thanking them for their feedback and scheduled a follow-up meeting to further explore the teachers’ ideas. This resulted in the teachers engaging with the district in other ways.

Focus on school leaders.

Teachers’ views will be informed primarily by interactions with their own principals, so it is important to do everything you can to set up principals and other school leaders for success. For example, our colleagues at TNTP who worked in Houston found that the district was challenged by the need to keep 11,000 full-time teachers informed about their Effective Teachers Initiative and new appraisal and development system. The challenge was illustrated by a Houston teacher who stated, “I don’t really read the emails I get from the district. I figure that if it’s important, my principal or someone else on campus will forward it to me.”

The district solved this problem by creating campus representatives, designated communications point people (generally teachers) who are responsible for distributing important resources and announcements about Effective Teaching Initiative-related priorities to their colleagues. Key criteria for this role include the following:

- Trusted staff member selected by the principal
- Clearly defined (and limited) responsibilities
- In-person information/training sessions three times per year
- Biweekly email updates with resources and reminders
- Guaranteed 24-hour turnaround for answers to questions

Make engagement visible.

Teachers can be powerful messengers to other teachers, to their unions and to the media. Highlight and thank teachers and leaders who provide feedback or are part of pilot efforts, and publicize changes that are made based on educator input.

For example, in Los Angeles, a Teach Plus teaching policy fellow helped lead a group of teachers who made recommendations to the school district for evaluation reform. He was then asked to provide an expert briefing of the group's findings to the mayor. The publicity about the event allowed him and his fellow teachers to reach the larger community with their ideas. It also benefited the mayor, who was credited with reaching out to teachers.

In Washington, D.C., when the district rolled out the Leadership Initiative for Teachers (LIFT), its new career ladder system, leaders asked Teach Plus teaching policy fellows for feedback on their efforts to communicate with teachers about the new system. The fellows were asked to weigh in on sections of the guidebook that would accompany LIFT's rollout. The feedback was useful and the district thanked the fellows for their assistance in the guidebook.

Find good stories and tools to reach educators.

Communications to teachers should always start with why it matters. Anecdotes that illustrate ways that a new initiative is working well — if not perfectly — for teachers and schools can be powerful tools. In Indianapolis, Indiana, it was the personal stories of outstanding and highly regarded teachers being laid off that led to successful efforts to change “last in, first out” policies. School visits can be an excellent source of stories and are an important way of demonstrating personal interest in teachers’ and school leaders’ perspectives.

In addition to stories, there are many other types of communication tools and vehicles that can be used to reach teachers. In Chicago, Teach Plus has partnered with the State and district to develop a Website (www.commoncoreil.org) focused on Common

Core implementation. Teach Plus is also working with Chicago to create teacher-led professional development in collaboration with the Chicago Teachers Union that will reach more than 1,600 teachers and conduct a quarterly district survey on Common Core implementation.

The following tools have proven helpful in engaging educators effectively:

- Clearly defined goals and parameters for engagement
- A staff member dedicated to coordinating outreach and communications
- Template materials for district leaders, principals and teachers
- A Website for resources, FAQs, updates, success stories, etcetera.
- An email list that can grow over time
- A system for soliciting and responding to ideas, questions and concerns

Recognize complexities, especially for teacher evaluation reform.

When it comes to evaluations, generational differences play a big role in the appetite for reform. A recent Teach Plus survey of more than 1,000 teachers found that more than two-thirds (71 percent) of teachers with less than 10 years of experience agree that student learning gains should be part of their evaluations, as compared to less than half (41 percent) of teachers with more than 10 years of experience. Furthermore, 51 percent of teachers with less than 10 years of experience and 23 percent of teachers with more than 10 years of experience agree that student learning gains should account for 20 percent or more of their evaluations.

In Indiana, after the State passed comprehensive evaluation reform, many districts struggled with implementation. The numerous changes and “false starts” led teachers to put in writing principles for implementing new evaluation systems, with district

leaders as the intended audience.²¹ The teachers' ideas were so well received that the Indiana Department of Education distributed their recommendations as part of its statewide training on the new evaluation rubric. Their recommendations included:

- Evaluations, including observations, must be linked to meaningful professional development and teachers should be told clearly how evaluations will affect their careers.
- The basics of the system must be laid out in advance, ideally at the start of the school year.
- The assessments that will be used must be identified in advance of the start of the school year and must include the student growth that occurs in that teacher's classroom.
- Evaluators should be trained to ensure inter-rater reliability, and teachers should know how evaluators were selected.

²¹ See http://www.teachplus.org/uploads/Documents/1342037005_Six%20Principles%20of%20Teacher%20Evaluation.pdf.

Many teachers see engagement beyond the classroom as an extension of their work in the classroom and — to that end — will provide useful, actionable feedback when asked. To create a cycle of teacher engagement that is effective for everyone involved, however, teachers must be treated as professionals and shown evidence that they are being heard and that their ideas are given full and fair consideration.

The mission of Teach Plus is to improve outcomes for urban children by ensuring that a greater proportion of students have access to effective, experienced teachers. The organization engages a broad base of demonstrably effective teachers in three national leadership programs: Teaching Policy Fellows, Turnaround Teacher Teams, and a network that includes more than 11,000 teachers across the country. To date, more than 500 teachers have participated in Teach Plus' Teaching Policy Fellows Program, which includes intensive training and curriculum for teachers who want to change public policy. Teaching Policy Fellows have become effective advocates for change at the local, State and Federal levels.

What Teachers Really Want to Know about Evaluations

By Marciano Gutierrez

Although States are each in different stages in the development and implementation of their evaluation systems, the importance and payoff of effectively communicating with teachers is the same across the country. As a classroom teacher and teacher ambassador fellow with the U.S. Department of Education, I have spoken with hundreds of my fellow teachers to determine exactly what they want to know about these new systems. While the specifics differ, classroom teachers agree that they want answers to eight essential questions:

1. How did teachers help shape the design and implementation of the evaluation system?

Like members of any other profession, teachers value the opinions and experiences of their peers. As is the case with doctors and the American Medical Association or lawyers with the American Bar, education professionals take comfort in knowing that their fellow practitioners have played an active role in the development of policies which will influence their profession. For education policy to be widely accepted as valid, relevant and fair, educators must know that respected teachers were actively involved in its development. States should be sure to indicate how educators were used as authentic thought partners, and what particular facets of the evaluation are the direct results of teacher input. For their confidence in the system to last, teacher engagement cannot be a one-time experiment; it must continue as the evaluation system is refined. Teachers want to learn about the system from their peers, so States would be wise to enlist a cadre of classroom teachers to discuss the new evaluation with their colleagues and gather ongoing input from teachers to continually improve the system.

2. How will feedback be collected, reviewed, and utilized to improve the evaluation over time?

Effective teachers regularly reflect upon their instruction to identify necessary adjustments to improve their practice. Like instruction, the evaluation should be continuously improved based

on the feedback and reflection of practitioners who have been evaluated. Teachers want to know how feedback will be solicited from the field and how that feedback will be incorporated to improve the evaluation. More than a series of sporadic, isolated attempts, teachers want to know that there is a systemic approach that will allow for regular feedback and revision of the evaluation.

Practitioners also want to know about the outlets available to ask technical questions, as well as how to provide comments or share specific concerns. Teachers appreciate having a singular and responsive point of contact to share such concerns and questions, such as a dedicated email address that provides relevant and timely responses.

3. How is the evaluation going to work?

Teachers want specific details about the evaluation, including the precise components and their associated weights, frequency and types of observations, timelines with key observation dates and deadlines, as well as other pertinent information. Similar to how content should be delivered in multiple ways to students, teachers appreciate the opportunity to learn about the evaluation through multiple means. These methods can include in-person presentations from district and school administrators, brief bulleted overviews that provide key information, “frequently asked questions” documents, and more comprehensive resources that are well organized and easy to digest and navigate.

4. How will this new evaluation system positively impact my practice?

Rather than just being told that new evaluations will help inform and improve their instruction, teachers want to know precisely how this system will help them develop their practice. What components or processes of the new evaluation will help them better reflect on and improve their craft? How will their areas of strength and weakness be identified? What supports are in place to provide them with relevant, targeted and differentiated professional development? Authentic answers to these questions will help teachers understand the benefits of the new evaluation system to their practice and to their students.

5. Who is going to evaluate me?

Teachers want to know that the person who will conduct the observation has at least the same degree of subject and grade-level knowledge as the person being observed. As with medicine, specialists look to others in their direct field for professional feedback and growth. An ophthalmologist would likely not be able to understand the intricacies and work of a podiatrist and therefore would be less likely to provide an optimal evaluation with actionable feedback. If there is a true dedication to professional growth, teachers want to know that those charged with evaluating areas of strength and need have an intimate understanding of the subject and grade that will be observed. Some States have addressed this need by employing a team of independent evaluators, who have been identified as excellent teachers from a variety of subject areas. Although this has been an expensive endeavor, it is an investment in the professional growth of teachers and provides practitioners peace of mind.

6. How do I know the evaluation system will be implemented with fidelity to the intended goals?

There is a concern amongst the teaching community that though the evaluation may be exceptional on paper, it may not be implemented as designed. Furthermore, the potentially significant consequences tied to the results of the new evaluation fuel this anxiety. The success of implementing the evaluation largely depends on the skills, training and capacity of the evaluators. Teachers want to know how these evaluators have been trained and normed as to properly conduct observations and provide helpful feedback. Teachers also want to know what assurances are in place to hold the evaluators accountable for their responsibilities of implementing the evaluation with fidelity. Understanding that schools can be highly political workplaces and that evaluations have significant consequences, teachers want to know that they are safeguarded from any potential malfeasance, ineptitude or blatant mistakes of the evaluator.

7. How committed is the State to transparency and honesty about the evaluation?

Transparency about the system is vital to increase

support of the evaluation among teachers. For example, teachers often have been told that the new evaluation is primarily meant to help teachers improve their practice, not simply to inform human capital decisions. Teachers are somewhat skeptical of this assertion and therefore want to see data, collected over time, which supports this claim, such as the teacher evaluation performance distribution in their school and/or districts. More importantly, teachers want to know the percentage of teachers that improve their practice and move into higher evaluation performance categories and what types of targeted professional development helped make this possible. Without this information, the claims that evaluations are meant to help grow professional practice are unsubstantiated.

To further promote transparency, teachers also want States and districts to be honest about shortcomings of the evaluation as they are identified along the way. Rather than defending a flawed system, honesty about mistakes or glitches and a plan of action to address such issues will help teachers feel more confident about the integrity of the system.

8. How much does my principal know about the evaluation?

In addition to their peers, teachers look to their principal as a primary source of reliable information. Therefore, it is imperative that principals have a deep understanding of the evaluation system, how it works and the timeline for implementation. Accordingly, it would be wise for States to develop communication pipelines that utilize principals as the primary outlet of information to teachers. As one teacher shared, "I may overlook an email from my district and even from my State, but if my principal shares it, I know it is important and deserves my full attention."

Marciano Gutierrez is a 2012 U.S. Department of Education teaching ambassador fellow, on loan from Alta Vista High School in Mountain View, California. He would like to thank fellow teachers from the Hope Street Group and Teach Plus, as well as teachers from across the country who provided input that helped shape this brief.

Additional Resources

Battelle for Kids. "Selecting Growth Measures: A Guide for Education Leaders."

http://static.battelleforkids.org/images/edgrowth/11_11_11_Growth_guide_web.pdf

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Measures of Effective Teaching Project. www.metproject.org

Brown Center for Education Policy at Brookings. "Evaluating Teachers: The Important Role of Value-Added."

http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/reports/2010/11/17%20evaluating%20teachers/1117_evaluating_teachers.pdf

Education Sector. "Trending Toward Reform." <http://www.educationsector.org/publications/trending-toward-reform-teachers-speak-unions-and-future-profession>

Education Sector. "Waiting to Be Won Over." <http://www.educationsector.org/publications>

Education Week. "Value-Added: It's Not Perfect, But It Makes Sense."

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2010/12/15/15whitehurst.h30.html>

NSBA Center for Public Education. "Building a Better Evaluation System." <http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/Main-Menu/Staffingstudents/Building-A-Better-Evaluation-System>

Scholastic and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. "Primary Sources."

<http://www.scholastic.com/primarysources/download.asp>

Strategic Data Project. "Value-Added Measures: How and Why the Strategic Data Project Uses Them to Study Teacher Effectiveness." <http://www.gse.harvard.edu/cepr-resources/files/news-events/sdp-va-memo.pdf>

The New York Times. "Big Study Links Good Teachers to Lasting Gains." <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/06/education/big-study-links-good-teachers-to-lasting-gain.html?pagewanted=all>

TNTP. "Myths and Facts about Value-Added Analysis."

<http://tntp.org/ideas-and-innovations/view/myths-and-facts-about-value-added-analysis>

TNTP. "Policy Pocket Guide." <http://thenewteacherproject.createsend1.com/t/r/e/iljyyhl/l/r>

Appendix A. Communications Cheat Sheet

This section is meant to serve as a summary of the content contained in “Getting Started: Communications Principles and Approaches” and “Getting the Message Right: Advice on Messaging about Educator Evaluation.” This page can be printed out and kept nearby as a reference for SEA staff communicating with educators about new evaluation systems.

Basic Principles

- Make communications a priority.
- Make communications a two-way street.

10 Overall Communication Strategies

1. Clarify your goals.
2. Identify your audience(s) and speak to them.
3. Keep it simple and brief.
4. Share what’s necessary and helpful.
5. Use real-world examples.
6. Use multiple vehicles.
7. Use multiple voices.
8. Communicate early and often.
9. Remember your team.
10. Buddy up.

10 Strategies to Communicate with Teachers About Evaluation

1. Remember it’s about the kids.
2. Connect the dots.
3. Tie evaluation to supports.
4. Explain the basics.
5. Explain the benefits.
6. Talk in terms of multiple measures.
7. Use the research.
8. Stress how teachers were involved.
9. Avoid jargon.
10. Watch the nuances.

Appendix B. TNTP Myths and Facts²²

MYTHS	FACTS
<i>"Value-added isn't fair to teachers who work in high-need schools, where students tend to lag far behind academically"</i>	Value-added [measurement] controls for students' past academic performance and demographic factors. ²³ It considers the progress students make over the course of the year instead of a single score on a single day, and it accounts for factors like a student's poverty level or class size. That means teachers get the credit they deserve for helping all their students improve — even those who start the year far behind grade level — and aren't penalized for the effects of factors beyond their control.
<i>"Value added scores are too volatile from year to year to be trusted."</i>	Value-added scores are about as stable as batting averages in baseball and other widely accepted performance measures. ²⁴ It's true that a teacher's value-added score could change from year to year. Teachers aren't equally effective with every class, and any measure has some degree of uncertainty. However, teachers who earn very high value-added scores early in their career rarely go on to earn low scores later, and vice versa. ²⁵ No single measure of performance is reliable in isolation, but value-added [measurement] provides objective information to support or act as a check against classroom observations.
<i>"There's no research behind value-added [data]."</i>	Value-added data are the product of nearly three decades of research by leading academics and economists. Their use by school districts dates back to the early 1990s. ²⁶ Many researchers have specifically endorsed including value-added data in teacher evaluations. For example, six leading experts from Stanford, Dartmouth and the University of Chicago wrote last year that "value-added [measurement] has an important role to play in teacher evaluation systems." ²⁷
<i>"Using value-added [data] means that teachers will be evaluated based solely on standardized test scores."</i>	Evaluations that include value-added [data] also use other measures of teacher performance, such as classroom observations. Like a baseball player's batting average, value-added [measurement] is a telling detail, but it doesn't tell the whole story — no single measure can. That's why no States or school districts evaluate teachers based solely on value-added scores. ²⁸ Every evaluation system that includes value-added [data] also uses other measures.
<i>"Value-added [data] is useless because it's imperfect – it has a margin of error."</i>	Measures of teacher performance don't have to be perfect to be useful. No measure of teacher performance is perfect, and value-added measurement is no exception. However, it provides crucial information on how well teachers are doing at their most important job: helping students learn. Used alongside classroom observations and other indicators, it can paint a much clearer picture of teacher performance than most current evaluation systems, which rate 99 percent of teachers "satisfactory" regardless of how much their students learn. ²⁹

²² TNTP, November 2011. http://tntp.org/assets/documents/TNTP_FactSheet_ValueAdded_2011.pdf

²³ Dale Ballou, William Sanders and Paul Wright (2004). "Controlling for Student background in Value-Added Assessment of Teachers" *Journal of Educational and Behavioral Statistics*.

²⁴ Steven Glazerman, Dan Goldhaber, Susana Loeb, et al. (2010). "Evaluating Teachers: The Important Role of Value-Added," Brookings Institute.

²⁵ Daniela McCaffrey, Jim Sass, J. R. Lockwood and Kata Mihaly (2009). "The Intertemporal Variability of Teacher Effect Estimates," National Center on Performance Incentives.

²⁶ William Sanders and Sandra Horn (1998). "Research Findings from the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) Database: Implications for Educational Evaluation and Research," University of Tennessee Value-Added Research and Assessment Center, *Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education*.

²⁷ Glazerman et al. (2010). *Evaluating Teachers: The Important Role of Value-Added*.

²⁸ National Council on Teacher Quality (2010). "State of the States."

²⁹ Daniel Weisberg, Susan Sexton, Jennifer Mulhern, and David Keeling (2009) "The Widget Effect: Our National Failure to Acknowledge and Act on Differences in Teacher Effectiveness," The New Teacher Project.

Appendix C. FAQ about Value-Added Data

Parents ask...

- Did my child make a year's worth of progress in a year?
- Is my child making progress toward meeting State standards?
- Is my child growing as much in mathematics as in reading?
- Did my child grow as much this year as last year?

Teachers ask...

- Did my students make a year's worth of progress in a year?
- Did my students make progress toward meeting State standards?
- Do I have students with unusually low growth who need special attention?
- How can I be creative if student progress is based on test scores?
- How will the scores be used? Will they affect my job security? My compensation?

Administrators ask...

- Did the students in our district/school make a year's worth of progress in all content areas?
- Are our students making progress toward meeting State standards?
- Does this school/program show as much growth as that one?
- Can I measure student growth even for students who do not change proficiency categories?
- Can I pool results from different grades to draw summary conclusions?

Policy questions

- Why do we want to use value-added results?
- Why is measuring both achievement and progress important?
- How will the results of the teacher evaluation be used?
- Who will have access to the value-added data?
- How will it be disseminated?
- How will the evaluation help improve a teacher's performance?
- How will the evaluation help to improve personnel decisions?
- Will principal and superintendent evaluations include value-added scores?
- Does value-added analysis require additional testing?
- Can you measure the progress of schools and students with high mobility rates?
- Do the people affected understand and support value added data?

Design questions

- What percent of a teacher's evaluation will be based on value-added scores?
- What measures will be used to evaluate teachers without value-added scores?
- What other measures (observation, portfolios, et cetera) will be used to evaluate teachers?
- How will this affect multiyear tenure (for instance, two-year tenure) if the accuracy of value-added scores improves with three years' worth of data?
- How will the evaluation account for team teaching, or will it?
- Should value-added scores be averaged over multiple years?
- Should the value-added model compare teachers within a single school or compare teachers across the district?
- How will the value-added model account for differences in student populations and resources across schools?

Technical questions:

- Are we able to connect teachers to student test scores?
- Is it possible to show progress with all groups of students — special education, gifted and low performing?
- Who will design our model?
- Where can we look for sound advice?
- What other data can we include in the value-added model?
- How will the value-added model account for missing student data?

Sources: Battelle for Kids, Center for Public Education

Appendix D. Tools to Plan Communications and Engagement

Differentiating Among Stakeholders: SAMPLE

This template can be used to differentiate among different stakeholders and to identify what they need to know, by when and how best to communicate with them.

<i>Stakeholders</i>	<i>What they need to know</i>	<i>When they need to know it</i>	<i>Methods for communicating, most effective messengers</i>	<i>What we need to learn from them</i>	<i>How we can gather this information</i>
<i>Teachers</i>	<i>Details of the evaluation system</i> <i>How it will impact their work</i> <i>How much time it will take out of their day</i>	<i>As soon as possible</i>	<i>Webinars</i> <i>FAQ documents</i> <i>In-person meetings</i> <i>Newsletters</i> <i>Emails</i>	<i>Their understanding of the system</i> <i>Their sense of the fairness of the system</i> <i>Their experience with different observers and with their evaluator</i> <i>The extent to which they experience the system as an accountability, versus a growth and development, mechanism; the extent to which they are getting support to grow and develop</i>	<i>Surveys</i> <i>Focus groups</i> <i>Advisory committees</i> <i>Informal discussion</i> <i>Work groups</i> <i>Peer consultations</i> <i>Written feedback</i>

Differentiating Among Stakeholders: TEMPLATE

This template can be used to differentiate between different stakeholders and to identify what they need to know, by when and how best to communicate with them.

<i>Stakeholders</i>	<i>What they need to know</i>	<i>When they need to know it</i>	<i>Methods for communicating, most effective messengers</i>	<i>What we need to learn from them</i>	<i>How we can gather this information</i>

Action Planning: SAMPLE

This template can be used to develop action plans to communicate specific messages to individual stakeholder groups.

Stakeholder group	<i>Teachers</i>			
Purpose(s)	<i>Help classroom teachers understand how the new evaluation system will help them to improve instruction</i>			
Messages	Vehicles for communications	Owner/Team	Timeline	Immediate next step
The State's new evaluation system is designed to provide educators with the timely and relevant feedback they need to highlight their areas of strength and identify areas where they need to improve.	<i>Face-to-face meetings with principals</i> <i>Written materials</i>	<i>Principal</i> <i>Assistant principal</i>	<i>Should be reinforced whenever possible prior to evaluation rollout</i>	<i>Schedule individual meetings with teachers to discuss prior to evaluation rollout</i>

Action Planning: TEMPLATE

This template can be used to develop action plans to communicate specific messages to individual stakeholder groups.

Stakeholder group				
Purpose(s)				
Messages	Vehicles for communications	Owner/Team	Timeline	Immediate next step

Framework for Engaging Educators

I know	I apply	I participate	I lead
I know how the evaluation system works.	I apply what I know about the evaluation system and what it teaches me about my instruction to improve my practice.	I participate in the development, implementation and refinement of the evaluation system at the level of practice and policy.	I lead my colleagues to improve their performance and the evaluation system.
Examples:	Examples:	Examples:	Examples:

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