Results from the 2010 Illinois Principals Survey: Teacher Hiring & Evaluation

Brad White, Illinois Education Research Council
Kathleen Brown, IERC
Erika Hunt, Illinois State University
Brenda Klostermann, IERC

IERC Symposium, June 7-8, 2011, Bloomington, IL
The IERC Principals Project

• Context:
  • Recent research finding principals have a significant (though largely indirect) impact on student outcomes, and that tenure in school (among other things) is associated with student achievement gains
  • New policies in Illinois (new principal certification and evaluation programs) and nationally (school-based accountability, RttT, School Improvement grants)

• Series of IERC studies on public school principals in Illinois:
  1. Distribution of Principal Characteristics
  2. Principal Turnover
  3. Survey on principal practices and preferences
  4. Principal effects
Methodology

• Survey items – modeled on Stanford’s School Leadership Research project and other recent research – addressed:
  • Job satisfaction & work preferences
  • Professional priorities & practices
  • Teacher hiring & evaluation

• Electronic surveys sent to all Illinois public school principals (+ sample of Illinois private school principals) in November 2010

• Responses from 916 principals
  • 877 from public schools
  • Approx. one in five public school principals participated
  • Not generalizable (not random, Chicago under-represented)
Finding #1:

Teacher Hiring: Relationships, soft skills, and first-hand experience are more valued than data from screening instruments or information about prospective teachers’ academic backgrounds or past teaching performance.
Which characteristics are most important in hiring a prospective teacher?

- Ability to work well with others: 20.3%
- General pedagogical skill: 20.3%
- Work ethic: 19.1%
- Teaching philosophy: 19.1%
- Level of caring and compassion: 16.1%
- Communication skills: 15.6%
- Evidence of student growth: 11.9%
- Leadership traits: 11.2%
- Academic ability: 11.2%
- Flexibility to teach a wide range of grades/subjects: 6.7%
- Creativity: 5.0%
- Ability to teach a specific subject, program, or type of student: 5.0%
- Quality of teacher education program: 4.3%
- Demographic characteristics: 2.7%
- Most Important
Which tools are most useful in assessing the quality of a prospective teacher at your school?

- Substance of Responses During the Interview
- Rapport During the Interview
- Recommendations or Evaluations
- Resume (i.e., Degrees, Colleges, Teaching Experience, etc.) 27.9%
- Demonstration Lessons 23.3%
- Work Experience Outside of Teaching
- Portfolios or Lesson Plans
- Screening Instruments 7.8%
How useful do you find the following portions of a prospective teacher’s resume?

- Certification Type: Most Useful
- Specific Schools/Districts Where Previously Employed
- Student Teaching Experience at Your School
- College Majors
- College Grades
- Whether The Teacher Has an Advanced Degree or Not: 17.6%
- Certification Pathway (Traditional or Alternative): 15.9%
- Colleges Attended
Finding #2:

Teacher Evaluation: Many systems do not include any measures of student achievement and, where they are included, they don’t count for much. Instead, classroom observations and other measures of teaching practice are viewed as considerably more useful.
Which of the following elements do you include in evaluations of tenured teachers?

- Instructional Quality
- Classroom Management
- Planning and Preparation
- Professional Development and Professionalism
- Student Achievement Gains in Teacher's Class (48.5%)
- Achievement Level in Teacher's Class (41.5%)
- Whole School Achievement (39.2%)
- Other

% Using Element
When you are evaluating tenured teachers in your school, what proportion of the evaluation derives from each of the following elements?

- Whole School Achievement: 3.5%
- Achievement Level in Teacher’s Class: 4.1%
- Student Achievement Gains in Teacher’s Class: 6.6%
- Total: 14.2%
How useful are each of the following tools in evaluating the performance of tenured teachers at your school?
Finding #3: Despite frequent criticisms, there are some promising features of the teacher evaluation systems currently used by Illinois principals.
Which of the following describes the classroom observation format that is most important in your evaluation of tenured teachers?

- 48.2% Formal classroom observations using a standardized and shared rubric with specific, behavioral descriptions of multiple performance levels (such as, but not limited to, the Danielson framework or the Teacher Advancement Program)
On average, how often do tenured teachers in your school undergo a full evaluation?

- Once Every Two to Three Years: 89.6%
- Once Every Year: 9.7%
How many performance categories does your teacher evaluation system have?

- Five or More Categories: 11.4%
- Four Categories: 26.3%
On average, what proportion of ALL your teachers’ evaluation fall into each of the following performance categories?

The Widget Effect:
- Highest: 85%
- Middle: 14%
- Lowest: 1%

IERC Survey:
- Highest Performance Category: 55.3%
- Middle Category(ies): 41.0%
- Lowest Performance Category: 3.7%
In what ways do you use the results of teacher evaluations at your school? (Check all that apply.)

- To guide professional development choices, help improve weaknesses, or for other formative purposes
- To make tenure decisions
- To make changes in work responsibilities or job assignments
- For making decisions about layoffs, displacement, or reductions in force
- To counsel teachers out of your school
- To counsel teachers out of the profession
- To determine financial bonuses or salary changes
Implications

• Room for improvement in policy and principals’ pre-service and in-service education to help make teacher hiring and evaluation more strategic and more valid
  • use of more research-based criteria
  • alignment between hiring, evaluation, and other systems

• A lot of work to be done (in some areas) to meet PERA requirements
  • especially with regard to the role of student growth
Questions or comments?

Brad White, Senior Researcher
Illinois Education Research Council
brawhit@siue.edu
618-650-2240