



Designing and Implementing “Next Generation” Teacher Evaluation Systems: Lessons Learned from Case Studies of Illinois Districts

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Motivation

- Illinois' Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA) requires that all districts adopt teacher evaluation systems that include both teacher performance and student growth
- Research suggests that well-designed teacher evaluation systems can be valid and can help improve teaching and learning.

Purpose of Study

- To compile and analyze key lessons learned in Illinois districts identified as leaders in teacher evaluation, in order to guide other districts as they design and implement "next generation" teacher evaluation systems under PERA.

Note: Districts participating in the study will be identified in the public report – due out in November—but not in today's presentation

Methodology

- **Environmental Scan (spring 2012)**
 - Nominated by experts from ISBE, CEC, PEAC, and Advance Illinois
 - 13 districts identified
 - Interview with superintendent or program leader to get an outline of key components
- **Case Studies (summer 2012)**
 - Selected 5 districts based on
 - Geographic and demographic diversity
 - Program components
 - Stage of implementation

Case Study Protocol

- **In-depth interviews with 4-6 subjects offering a range of perspectives in each site**
 - District administrators
 - Teachers/union representatives
 - Principals/evaluators

- **Questions around:**
 - Policy design
 - Implementation
 - Perceptions

Characteristics of our Case Study Districts & Their Evaluation Systems

■ District characteristics

- Range of sizes (> 30,000 to <1,000 students) and locales (1 urban, 2 suburban, 2 rural)
- Range of student populations (30%-70% FRL and 30%-95% white)

■ Evaluation system characteristics

- Various stages of implementation
- All used some form of the Danielson Framework for teacher performance measure
- Number and format of observations tended to hew to state minimum guidelines
- Only one included student growth in teacher evaluations

Overview

- **These systems are seen as a huge upgrade over the status quo**
- **But there were still some challenges...**
 1. Securing buy-in and understanding
 2. Using observations to improve instruction
 3. Building the capacity of evaluators
 4. Incorporating student growth
- *The rest of this presentation will focus on the specific challenges in these four areas – and strategies our districts used to overcome these obstacles*

1) Securing Buy-In & Understanding

- **Gather all perspectives:**
 - Balanced representation and diverse perspectives on design committee
 - Learning from facilitators, consultants, and other districts
 - Continue to gather input by monitoring implementation and regularly evaluating the policy, making changes as necessary

1) Securing Buy-In & Understanding

- **Effective communication requires transparency and consistent principal messaging:**
 - Transparency in design process
 - Ongoing training and communication
 - Quality of communication to teachers varied because it was highly dependent on principals
 - And principals have varying degrees of buy-in, understanding, and time
 - Consider consistent training with teacher-administrator teams
 - Pitfalls of voluntary/optional training sessions

1) Securing Buy-In & Understanding

- **Implement with a user-friendly timetable:**
 - Consider phasing in with low-stakes pilot
 - Don't start or change mid-year
 - Start planning/designing ASAP
- **Align teacher evaluation with other district priorities:**
 - Link to existing human resources systems (hiring, mentoring, etc.) or other initiatives
 - Teacher evaluation reform as the “glue that holds the rest together” and reinforces other initiatives

2) Using Observations to Improve Instruction

- **Teacher performance assessment *can* help improve instruction**
 - Clear, evidence-based observation standards, rubrics, and performance levels (e.g. the Danielson Framework) were viewed as especially helpful
 - Provide common vision and language for quality instruction *and* next steps for improvement
 - Hold teachers accountable for high expectations & evaluators accountable for performance management

2) Using Observations to Improve Instruction

- **Linking observations to professional development has been somewhat challenging:**
 - Teachers at all performance levels need (and want) feedback on how to improve
 - Challenges with giving (and receiving?) constructive criticism and instructional coaching
 - Identify high performers and what they're doing differently

3) Building Evaluator Capacity to Fulfill Potential

- **Ensure evaluators are well-trained & supported:**
 - *A lot* of training, but still concerns about validity and inter-rater reliability
 - More interaction with other evaluators
 - More observations...
- **Make time for more observations:**
 - Scheduling issues
 - Consider ways to lighten caseloads
 - Using multiple observers
 - Prioritization/Re-prioritization

3) Build Capacity by Streamlining

- **Make the process as streamlined and user-friendly as possible**
 - For teachers and for evaluators
 - Reduce paperwork and unnecessary burdens
 - Create templates
 - Use technology/internet

4) Incorporating Student Growth

- **Numerous concerns and unanswered questions:**
 - Assessments for “non-tested” subjects
 - Fairness and rigor across content areas and student populations
 - Understanding of assessments and growth models
 - Buy-in to using student growth for teacher evaluation
 - Small sample sizes
 - Attribution
 - Relationship between student growth and teacher performance measures
 - Curriculum narrowing and gaming the system
 - PERA requirements

4) Incorporating Student Growth

- **The final piece, the elephant in the room**
 - Required by PERA
 - Only one of our districts has experience (one other currently piloting)
 - Still a work in progress...

Addendum: Chicago Pilot 2008-2010

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- **Although these case studies were NOT Chicago, many of issues here same as CPS in 2008. A few examples of similarities:**
 - Teacher positive attitudes dependent on principal skill and buy-in
 - Logistics, time management, training, communication, monitoring and ongoing support
 - The degree to which principals could serve as instructional coaches.

Most Participants Positive

- **89% of principals in pilot agreed that:**
 - Quality of conversations with teachers had improved
 - Teachers agreed conferences led to conversations about instruction that were more reflective, based on shared language, evidence-based
- **November 2011 report on website discussed reliability and validity—but also implementation issues**
 - See *<http://ccsr.uchicago.edu>*

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