Laboratories of Reform?
Human Resource Management Strategies in Illinois Charter Schools

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IERC Symposium

October 9, 2015

Introduction:
Human Resource Management in Schools

- Research shows teachers are the most important school resource

- Human resource management describes the strategies that schools use to recruit, support, retain, and reward teachers (and principals)

- Recent policy efforts at all levels (school, district, state, federal) have sought to improve HR management in schools
    - RttT
    - PERA and SB7

- Theory of action is that better HR systems can the improve learning climate (including teaching quality and retention), which will boost student achievement gains

HR Frameworks

Strategic Management of Human Capital		Apsen Institute		American Institutes for Research	Carnegie	TNTP
Acquisition	Recruitment	**Pathways into Teaching**	Preparation	**Preparation**	**Acquire**	Recruitment
	Selection		Certification			Selection
	Placement		Sourcing	**Recruitment**		Training/ certification
Development	Induction	**Induction and Tenure**	Induction	**Hiring**	**Develop**	Hiring/placement
	Mentoring		Training & Development	**Induction**		On-boarding
	Professional Development		Tenure	**Professional Development**		Professional Development
	Performance management	**Performance management, compensation, and rewards**	Performance management	**Performance Management**	**Evaluate**	Evaluation
Retention	Compensation		Compensation & Non-Monetary Rewards	**Compensation & Incentives**	**Sustain**	Working conditions
		Leadership development	Leadership development	**Working Conditions**		Compensation
						Retention/ dismissal

3

Introduction: Charter Schools

- Charter schools: publicly-funded schools of choice (i.e. no students are assigned to attend, generally open to all students in district, cannot charge tuition) that operate independent from the local school district and – in theory at least – are granted increased autonomy and flexibility from *some* regulations in exchange for increased accountability

- Charter schools in Illinois
    - 65 schools across 157 campuses
    - Located throughout the state, but mostly (90%) in Chicago
    - Can be unionized (around 30 unionized campuses in Illinois)
    - If Illinois charter schools were a single district, they would be the 2nd largest district in the state (~59,000 students)

- Why study HR management in charter schools?
    - Charters were originally intended to serve as "laboratories of reform" for all schools, and recent literature suggests that they are leveraging their flexibility and especially innovative around HR management

Background: Charter School Teachers

- Compared to teachers in traditional public schools (TPSs), charter school teachers are *generally*:
  – Less likely to be certified
  – From stronger academic backgrounds (more selective colleges, higher exam scores)
  – Less experienced
  – Paid less (even after accounting for lack of experience)

- It is unclear whether differences arise because charter schools prefer teachers with different characteristics or because that is who they are able to attract (or both)

- Teachers in charter schools typically work longer hours, have less job security, and higher teacher turnover than similarly situated TPSs

- … but charter school teachers generally report better working conditions than teachers in traditional public schools, especially with regard to:
  – Greater autonomy and more influence over school policies and practices
  – More support from administrators and colleagues

Research Questions

1) **How do Illinois charter schools practice HR management?**

   – Are there any differences in these practices by school characteristics (Chicago vs. non; HS vs. elementary/mid; network-affiliated vs. standalone; newer schools vs. more mature schools; unionized vs. non)

2) **What are common themes in HR practices across schools and across HR functions? Can we create a typology of HR strategies?**

   – Are there any differences in these strategies by school characteristics?

3) **What are the relationships between charter school HR strategies and school outcomes?**
   – Teacher retention
   – School learning conditions
   – Student achievement gains

Data & Methods

- Phone interviews and online surveys with Illinois charter school administrators during the 2013-14 school year
    - Questions informed by and organized around existing HR management frameworks across 7 key functions: recruitment, selection, orientation and mentoring, in-service professional development, evaluation, compensation, and retention

- 2013-14 data on teacher retention, learning conditions, and student achievement from ISBE and CPS

- Participants: 27 of 57 (47%) Illinois charter "schools" representing 60% of the state's charter school students
    - For the purposes of this study, "schools" = stand-alone schools OR multi-campus networks
    - Representative sample (see next slide)

Characteristics of Sample vs. Non-Sample Schools

School Characteristics	Sample	Non-Sample
% in Chicago (vs. rest of Illinois)	80%	77%
% Mature Schools (vs. schools less than 5 years old)	74%	60%
% Standalone (vs. network/CMO)	44%	70%
% High School (vs. Elementary/Mid)	44%	47%
Mean ISAT composite	41.4	43.2
Mean PSAE composite	24.5	25.6
Median student enrollment	597	457
% Low Income students	88%	84%
% ELL students	10%	5%
% Black students	59%	69%
% Hispanic students	26%	20%
Unionized	15%	13%
N	27	30

- None of these differences are statistically significant
  - But this does not necessarily mean that the all of the results are generalizable across all Illinois charter schools

Limitations & Caveats

- Limited sample

- Data provided by school administrators only
  - Interviews and surveys with teachers might reveal differing perceptions, or could provide additional support

- Respondents may have inadvertently omitted some HR practices due to the limitations of interview/survey format or time constraints
  - Mitigated somewhat allowing each respondent to review coded data to check for reliability and completeness
  - Many of our findings mirror results from prior studies

- These findings present only a point-in-time snapshot
  - HR practices have likely evolved since the time the data were collected (especially given the "nimbleness" of the charter sector as described in the literature).

- This study does not intend to compare HR management practices in charter schools with those in district schools.
  - Though some data from others' studies of non-charter schools are included for context, we did not interview or survey any non-charter school representatives for this study, and do not have any non-charter comparison group.

Descriptions and Examples of HR Practices in Illinois Charter Schools

- Sourcing
- Recruitment process
- Selection criteria
- Hiring process
- Timelines
- Orientation and mentoring
- In-service PD
- Teacher evaluation
- Salaries
- Variable pay
- Retention strategies
- Career pathways

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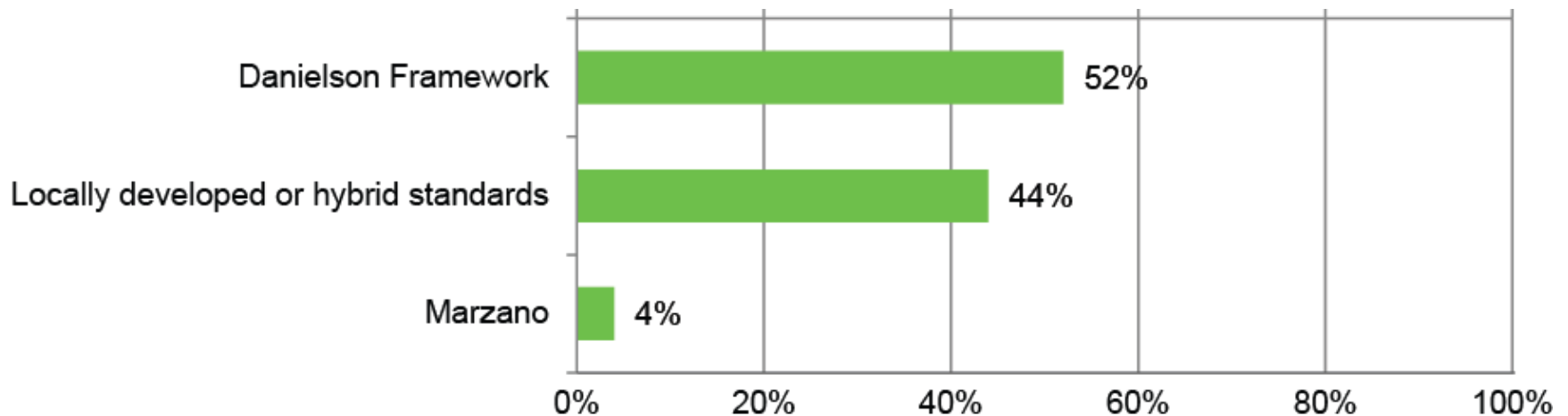- Career pathways

Evaluation Systems

- Typically devolved to school-, rather than network-, level

- Observations
  - Non-Danielson (home-grown/locally-developed) frameworks
  - Multiple observers
  - 3+ observations (including informal observations)

- Student growth
  - Used to direct PD, but not for evaluations
  - Not heavily weighed (relative to PERA requirements)

- Student and parent surveys, on-track indicators, self-evaluation *occasionally* included
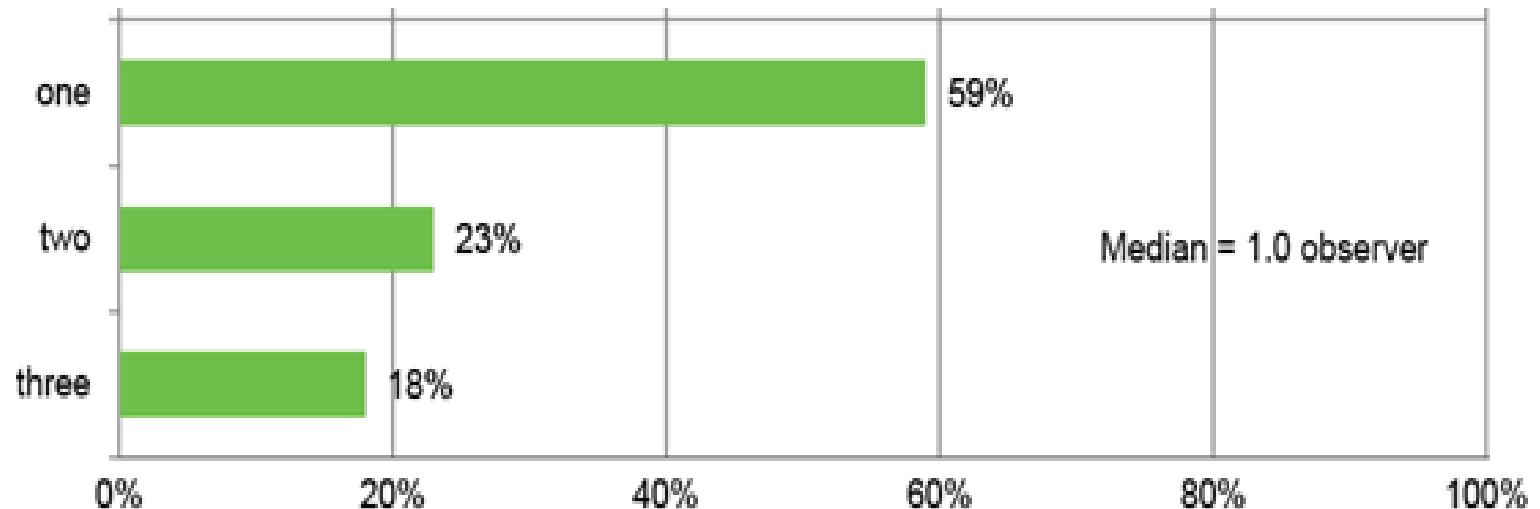 - Also often used to direct PD, but not for evaluations

Evaluation Process

- Not formulaic
  - Often difficult for leaders to estimate % weighting
  - May consider context, growth, extenuating circumstances, etc.

- Improving teacher evaluations viewed as important future step moving forward

- Viewed as formative more than summative – "an extension of coaching"
  - Low scores more likely to be met with intensive coaching than for retention decisions (at least at first)
  - Donaldson and Peske (2010) and Gross and DeArmond (2013) describe similar practices in the schools they studied:

    "Rather than engage with each other only around a formal evaluation schedule, leaders and colleagues in these schools used embedded development and evaluation to constantly work together to improve their practice."

- …But often linked to salary schedule and/or bonuses
 - Performance-based pay (where present) typically linked to multiple measures, such as teacher evaluation results

Which teacher performance rubric does your school use during classroom observations?
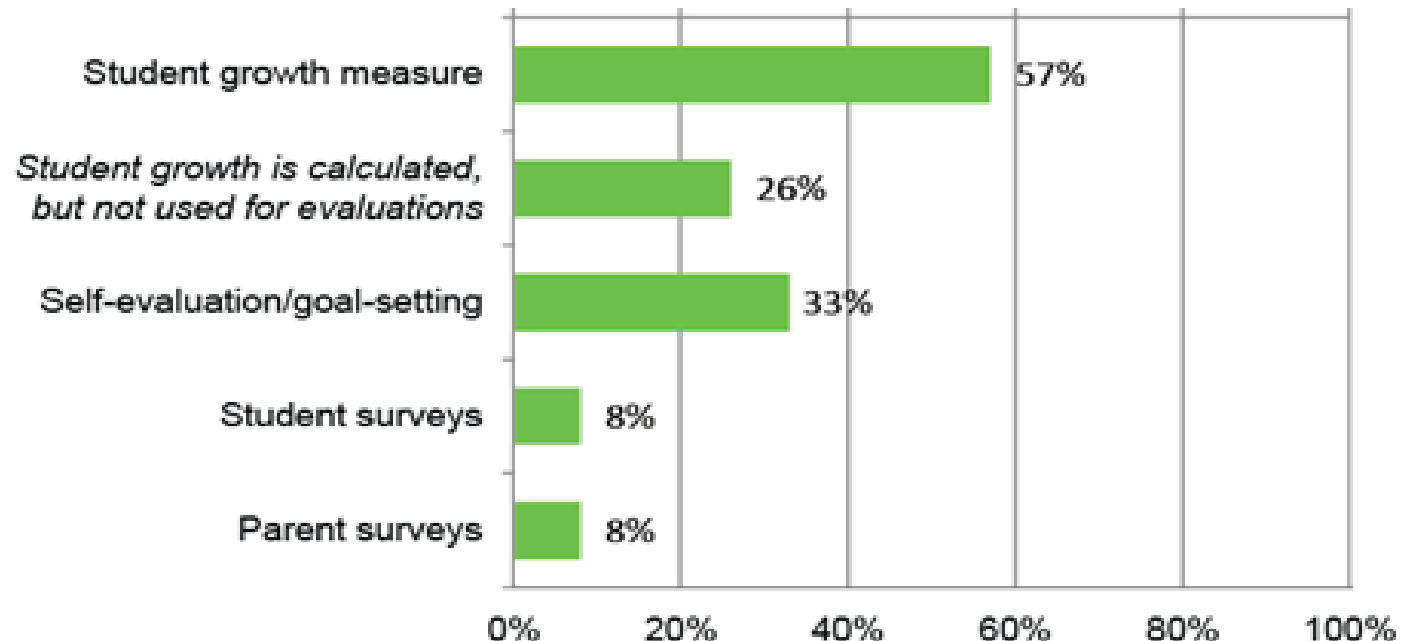
How many **<u>different</u>** observers rate each teacher's practice?

Chart showing percentages of teachers by number of different observers:
- one: 59%
- two: 23%
- three: 18%
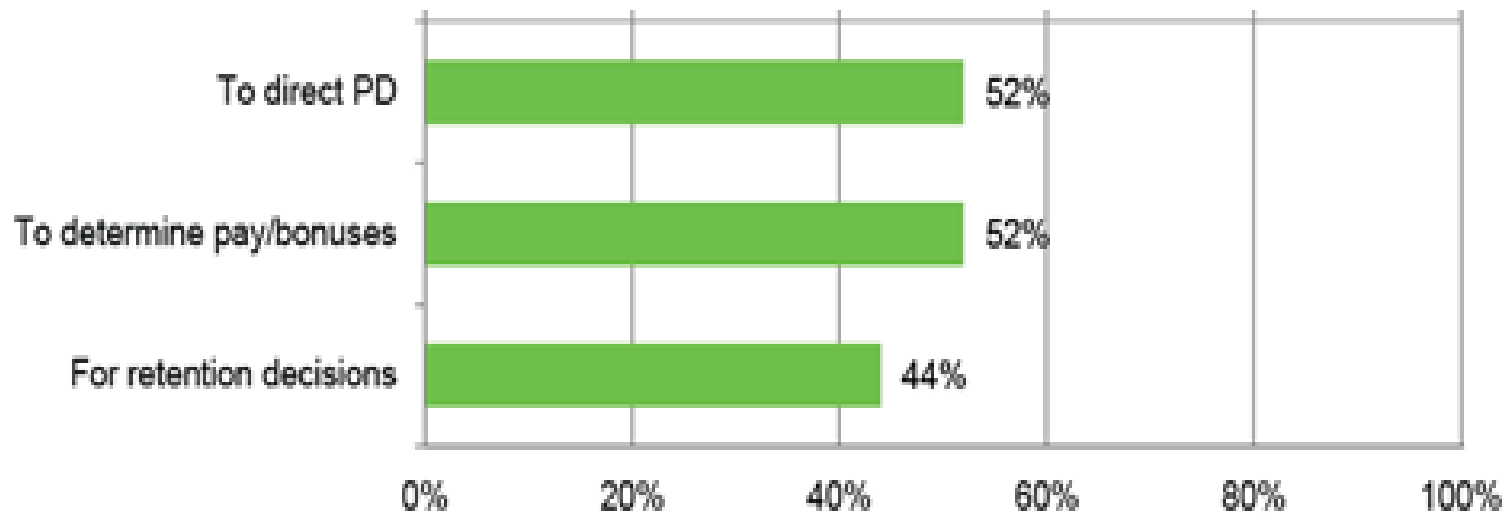
Median = 1.0 observer

How many formal observations do teachers undergo as part of the evaluation process?
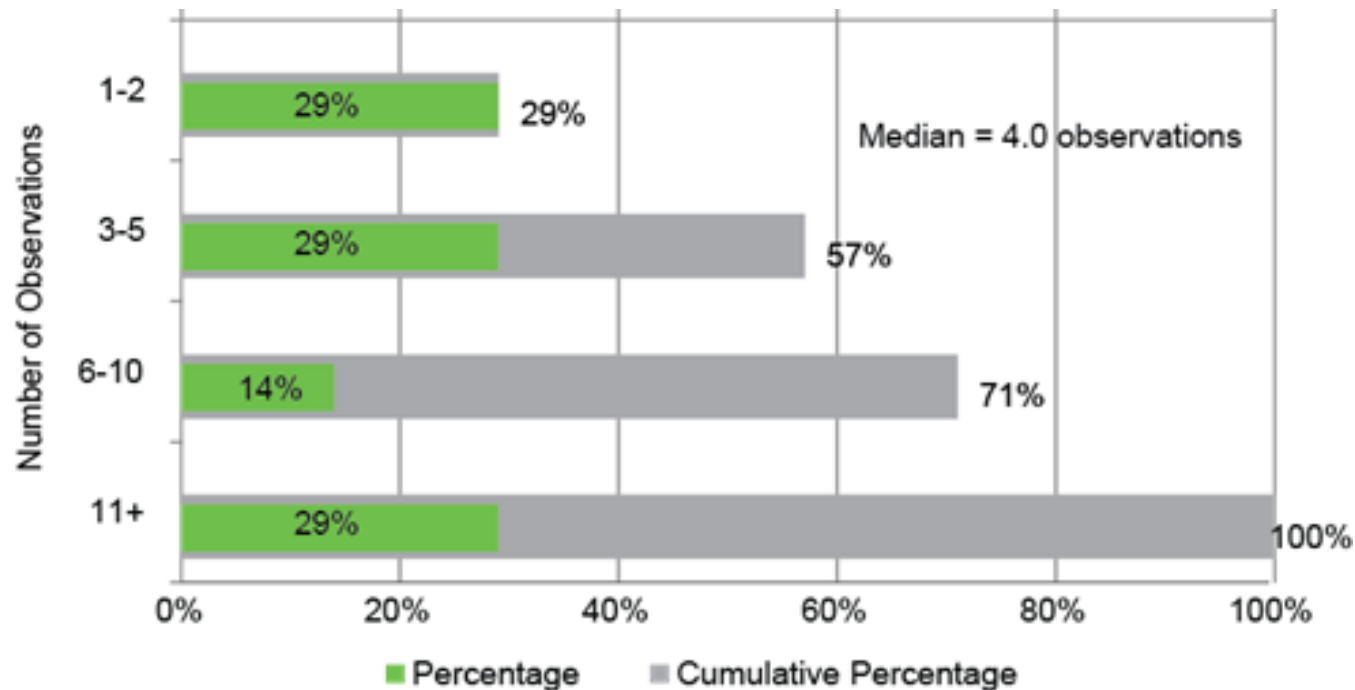
What data are included as part of teachers' formal evaluation ratings?

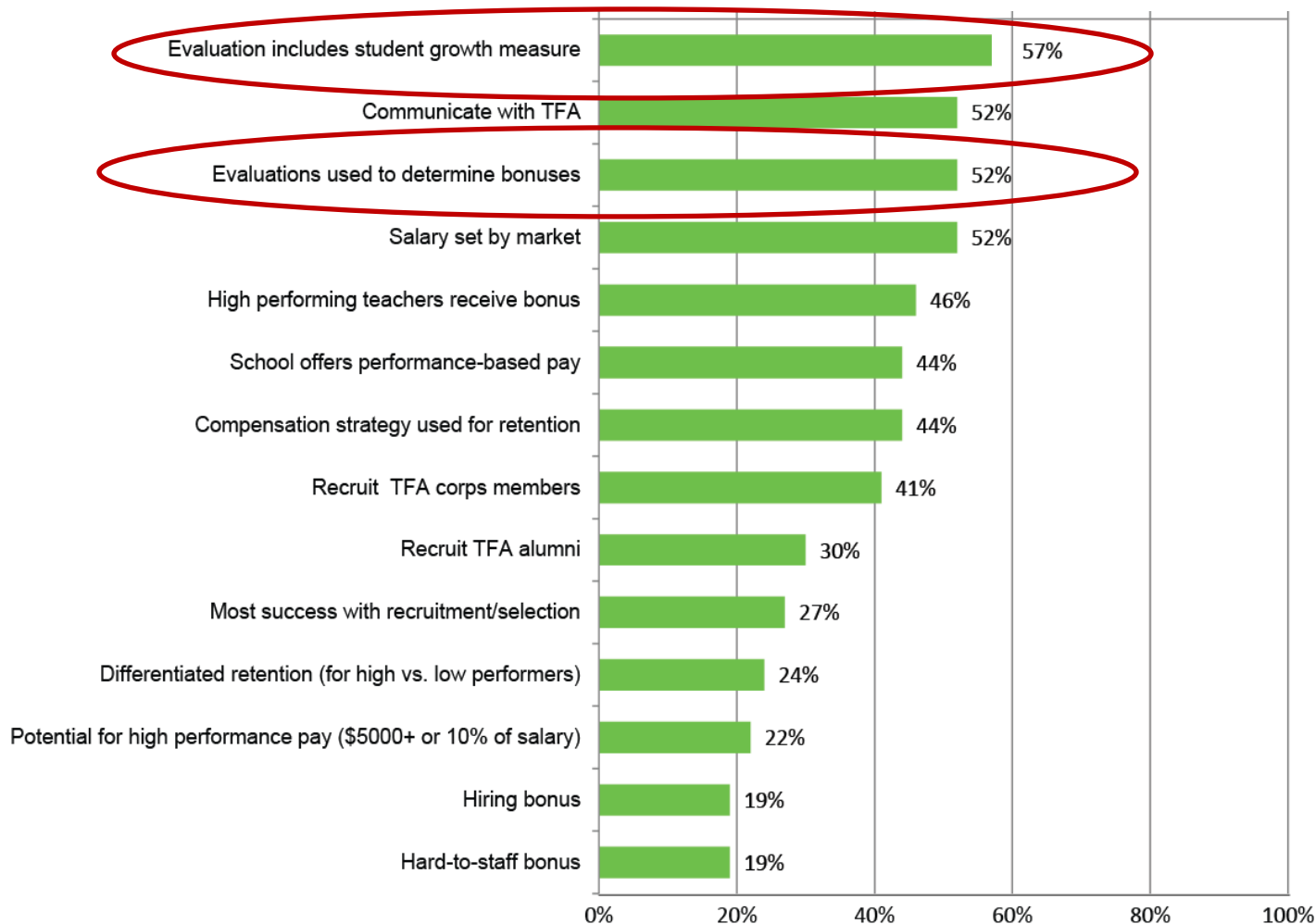# How are the results of teacher evaluations used at your school?

Evaluation Differences by School Characteristics

- Chicago charter schools (n=21) were significantly more likely than non-Chicago (n=5) charters to:
  - Use multiple **observers** for teacher evaluation
  - Use more **observations** for teacher evaluation
  - Offer non-monetary rewards for high performing teachers

- Unionized charter schools (n=4) were significantly more likely than non-unionized charters (n= 23) to:
  - Use the Danielson Framework for teacher observations rather than locally-developed standards and rubrics
  - Include parent surveys in teacher evaluation scores
  - And significantly *less* likely to include self-evaluations in teacher evaluation
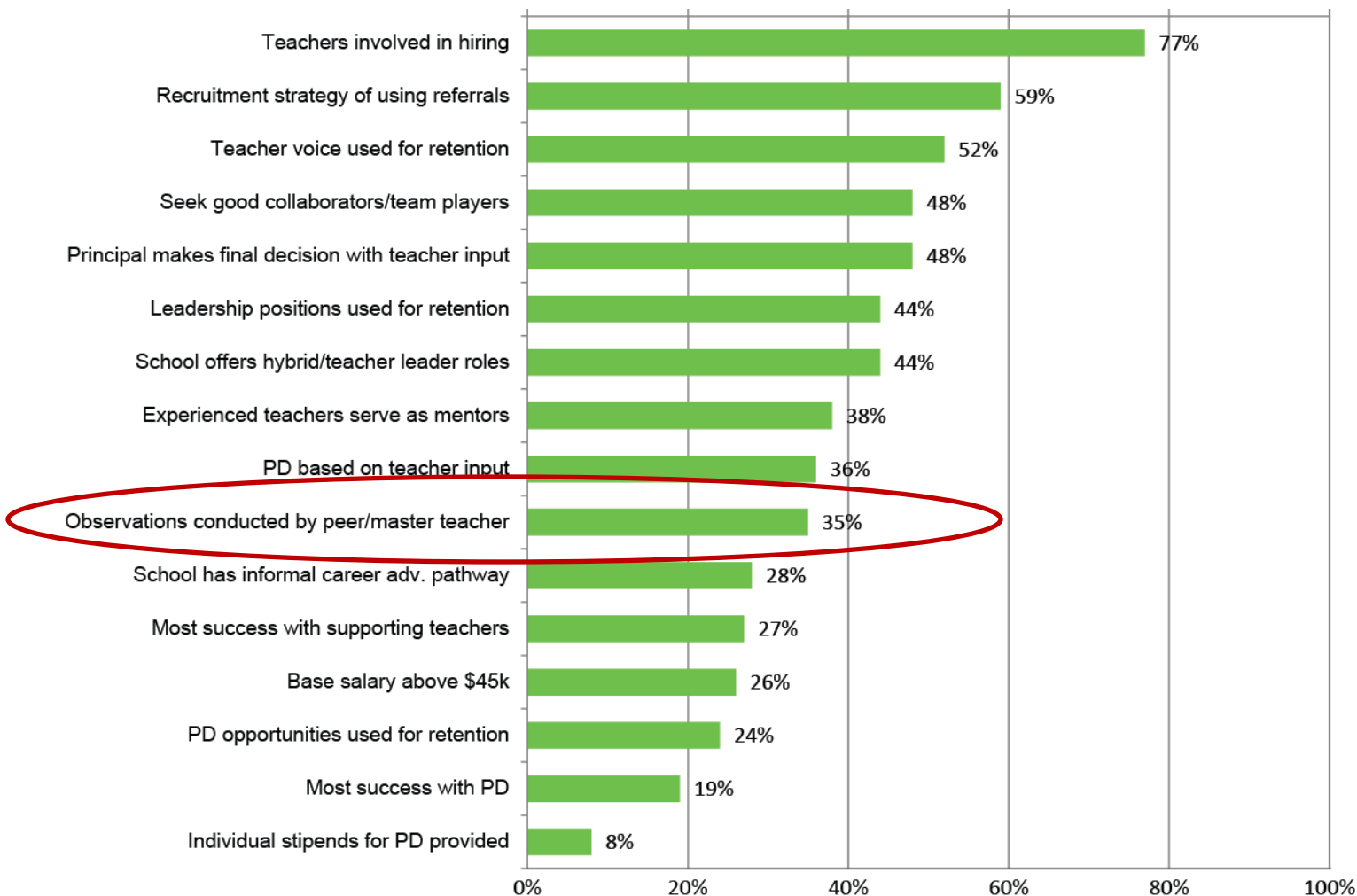
Cross-Cutting HR Strategies

- Looked across schools and across functions to view HR as a *system*, rather than isolated components

- Identify four broad themes that describe HR management strategies in Illinois charter schools:
    1. Incentivist reforms
    2. Teacher support and empowerment
    3. Information-rich decision-making
    4. Mission-driven practices

- Developed composite scores from the coded survey and interview responses
    - Theoretically and statistically coherent
    - School composite score represents the % its practices that were classified into that theme

- All but three of the schools in the study used each of these four strategies, to some degree or another
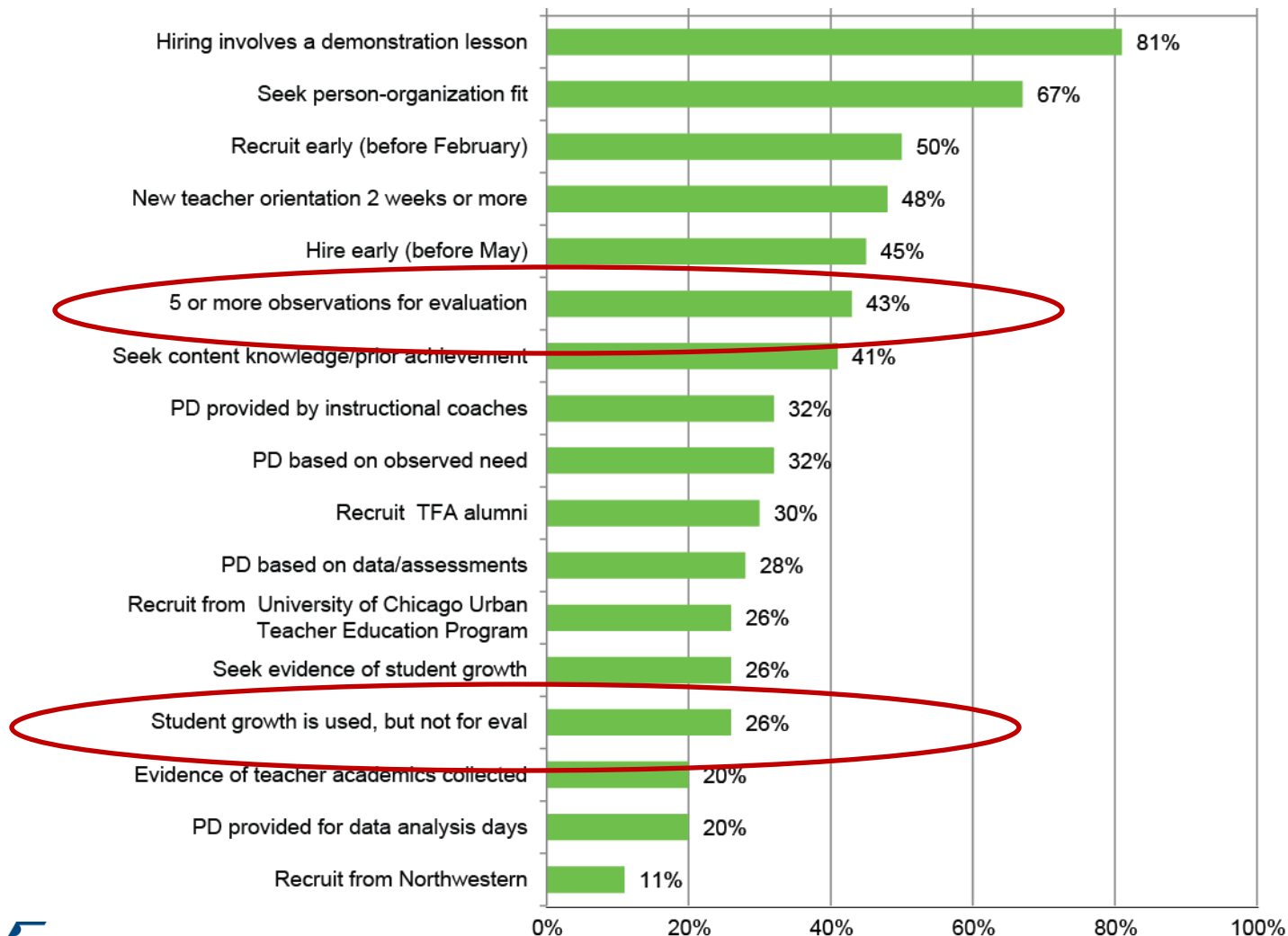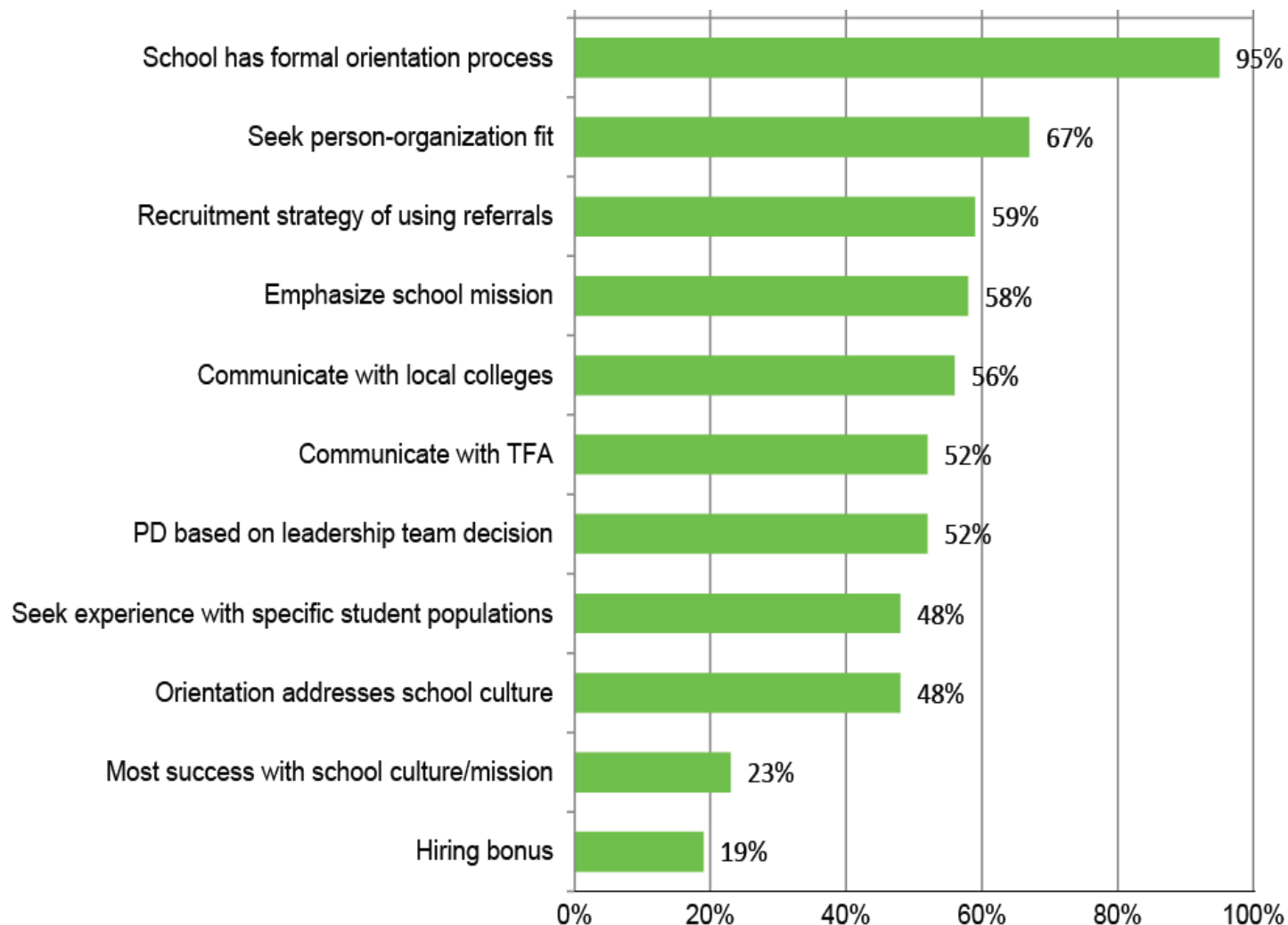
Incentivist Reform Practices

Teacher Empowerment

Information-Rich Decision-Making

Hiring involves a demonstration lesson	81%
Seek person-organization fit	67%
Recruit early (before February)	50%
New teacher orientation 2 weeks or more	48%
Hire early (before May)	45%
5 or more observations for evaluation	43%
Seek content knowledge/prior achievement	41%
PD provided by instructional coaches	32%
PD based on observed need	32%
Recruit TFA alumni	30%
PD based on data/assessments	28%
Recruit from University of Chicago Urban Teacher Education Program	26%
Seek evidence of student growth	26%
Student growth is used, but not for eval	26%
Evidence of teacher academics collected	20%
PD provided for data analysis days	20%
Recruit from Northwestern	11%

Mission-Driven HR

Category	Percentage
School has formal orientation process	95%
Seek person-organization fit	67%
Recruitment strategy of using referrals	59%
Emphasize school mission	58%
Communicate with local colleges	56%
Communicate with TFA	52%
PD based on leadership team decision	52%
Seek experience with specific student populations	48%
Orientation addresses school culture	48%
Most success with school culture/mission	23%
Hiring bonus	19%

Differences in HR Strategies by School Type

- Relative to network- and CMO-affiliated schools, standalone (single site) schools use significantly *fewer* incentivist practices and significantly *more* teacher empowerment practices

- Newer charter schools (those that had been in operation for less than 5 years) use significantly lower proportions of incentivist practices (3%) than their more mature counterparts (12%)

HR Practices and School Outcomes

HR Practices & Teacher Retention

	Model 1: 2014 Teacher Retention		Model 2: 2014 Teacher Retention	
	(R Square = .149)		(R Square = .515)	
	β	p	β	p
% Mission-Driven	-0.26	0.42	-0.21	0.41
% Info Rich	-0.05	0.88	0.62	0.10
% Empowerment	0.17	0.61	0.49	0.11
% Incentivist	0.10	0.75	0.35	0.21
FRL 2014	-0.11	0.75	0.25	0.42
Chicago			-1.06	0.02*

* Significant at the .05 level.

- HR practices (at least as measured here) have no consistent, systematic relationship to teacher retention (as measured here)

HR Practices & "Essential" School Learning Conditions

	5Essentials: Ambitious Instruction (R-Square = .157)		5Essentials: Effective Leaders (R-Square = .297)		5Essentials: Collaborative Teachers (R-Square = .215)	
	β	p	β	p	β	p
% Mission-Driven	0.36	0.20	0.14	0.56	0.27	0.32
% Information-Rich	-0.11	0.69	-0.46	0.08	-0.26	0.33
% Teacher Empowerment	0.10	0.72	0.36	0.18	0.34	0.25
% Incentivist	-0.07	0.80	0.16	0.55	0.12	0.67

- The HR practice measures have no statistically significant impact on any of the three "essential" learning conditions used in this study (ambitious instruction, effective leaders, or collaborative teachers)

HR Practices &
Narrower School Learning Conditions

	5Es Teacher Influence		5Es School Commitment		5Es Academic Press		5Es New Teacher Socialization		5Es Teacher Collaboration	
	(R Square = .570)		(R Square = .409)		(R Square = .335)		(R Square = .325)		(R Square = .163)	
	β	p	β	p	β	p	β	p	β	p
% Mission-Driven	0.27	.18	-0.04	.86	-0.01	.98	0.21	.39	0.24	.38
% Info Rich	-0.30	.16	-0.06*	.03	0.01	.95	-0.36	.18	-0.09	.77
% Empowerment	0.60*	.01	0.23	.37	-0.63*	.03	0.35	.20	0.18	.56
% Incentivist	0.49	.05	0.09	.73	-0.14	.62	0.21	.47	0.32	.33

* $p < .05$.

- Teacher empowerment practices were **positively** and significantly related to the 5Es teacher influence measure, but **negatively** associated with the 5Es measure of academic press

- Information-rich decision-making was inversely related with the 5Es school commitment measure

Student Achievement Measures

- Numerous achievement measures assessments were available for these analyses, but none were ideal in terms of both coverage and design
    - No single assessment was administered to all schools in the study
    - Little to no correlation between NWEA RIT growth and other assessments

Correlations amongst 2014 reading assessment results

	ISAT Scale Avg	PSAE Scale Avg.	Standardized Combined	ISBE All Tests Composite	ISAT Growth	NWEA Avg. RIT Growth	EPAS Combined Scale Growth	IERC Residual
ISAT Scale Avg (n=16)	—							
PSAE Scale Avg. (n=11)	.76*	—						
Standardized Combined (n=19)	.90**	.95**	—					
ISBE All Tests Composite (n=23)	.93**	.90**	.97**	—				
ISAT Growth (n-15)	.87**	.78*	.80**	.80**	—			
NWEA Avg. RIT Growth (n=14)	.12	.26	.39	.36	-.013	—		
EPAS Combined Scale Growth (n=11)	.23	.77*	.43	.40	.43	.22	—	
IERC Residual (n=19)	.51	.66*	.61**	.63**	.65**	.11	.77*	—

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed); ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

- We model the relationship between HR practices and achievement growth using a variety of assessments and statistical models

HR Practices & Student Achievement Gains (part 1 of 2)

	Model 1: 2014 IERC Combined Reading		Model 2: 2014 IERC Combined Math		Model 3: 2014 ISBE All Tests Composite	
	(R Square = .871)		(R Square = .885)		(R Square = .937)	
	β	p	β	p	β	p
% Mission-Driven	-0.08	0.49	0.09	0.45	-0.02	0.81
% Info Rich	-0.03	0.84	-0.10	0.46	0.08	0.33
% Empowerment	-0.11	0.38	-0.09	0.46	-0.02	0.81
% Incentivist	0.11	0.41	0.23	0.12	0.11	0.18
FRL 2014	0.03	0.84	-0.08	-0.49	-0.05	0.54
2013 Pre-Test	0.90*	0.00	0.86*	0.00	0.90*	0.00

* Significant at the .05 level.

- No statistically significant relationship between HR practices and ISAT or PSAE scale scores after controlling for poverty and prior test results

HR Practices & Student Achievement Gains (part 2 of 2)

	Model 4: 2014 IERC Reading Residual (R Square = .231)		Model 5: 2014 IERC Math Residual (R Square = .379)		Model 6:NWEA RIT Growth Reading (R Square = .453)		Model 7: NWEA RIT Growth Math (R Square = .378)	
	β	p	β	p	β	p	β	p
% Mission-Driven	-0.04	0.87	0.22	0.33	-0.52	0.11	-0.44	0.19
% Info Rich	0.10	0.71	-0.27	0.24	0.08	0.81	0.23	0.49
% Empowerment	-0.10	0.72	-0.11	0.66	-0.31	0.36	-0.11	0.75
% Incentivist	0.39	0.17	0.52*	0.05	-0.43	0.27	0.01	0.97
FRL 2014					0.41	0.18	0.30	0.34

* $p<.05$.

- Statistically significant relationship between incentivist practices and math gains (relative to the state as a whole)
  - Coefficient for % Incentivist Practices is consistently large and positive in models using state tests, but not on those using NWEA

- Taken together, these results suggest that incentivist practices may have some positive association with math achievement gains, but this is largely dependent on how school achievement is being measured
  - There is little evidence from these analyses that any of the other set of HR practices consistently affects school achievement gains

Discussion

- The findings from this study indicate that HR management in Illinois charter schools is more complex and varied than this common perception would suggest.
  - Some charters are utilizing their flexibility
  - Many missions → many definitions of "mission-driven" practices
  - Different HR practices from new generation of charter schools – moving away from incentivist practices

- Illinois needs better data systems
  - PARCC and LDS should help
  - Will facilitate more (and better) research on the impact of HR (and other) organization practices statewide

- Principals need HR management skills
  - Plus time and autonomy to exercise them

- Many HR practices from the charter school sector – particularly around teacher support, empowerment, and leadership opportunities – address perceived weaknesses in the teaching profession
  - Driven by strategy or by necessity?
  - We need data on teachers' perceptions
  - More research needed, but likely something to learn

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