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# AMERICA'S OPPORTUNITY: TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS AND EQUITY IN K-12 CLASSROOMS

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Considerations for  
Using Evaluation and Compensation to  
Enhance Teacher Effectiveness

CHAPTER **4**



Cortney Rowland, *Learning Point Associates*

## INTRODUCTION

Most people working in the teacher quality arena would agree that the highly qualified teacher provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as reauthorized by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, set the minimum threshold for what is expected of teachers; that is, they must have a bachelor's degree, state certification or licensure, and verified demonstration of content knowledge in the area being taught. To date, however, most states have not reached the goal of having 100 percent of classes taught by highly qualified teachers.

As states continue to work on promoting the teacher qualifications described above, however, the goal has been shifting toward building a highly *effective* teacher workforce and ensuring that all children have access to highly *effective* teachers. Language included in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (2009) charging states to improve teacher effectiveness and ensure the equitable distribution of teachers has encouraged this shift. The meaning of *effectiveness* has not been definitively established, however. As Sabrina Laine, Ph.D., director of the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (TQ Center), noted in *Education Week* (Sawchuck, 2009, p. 18): "People are not all saying the same thing when they talk about teacher effectiveness.... States need to start by defining 'effectiveness.'"

This chapter addresses key questions, current knowledge, and trends related to teacher evaluation and compensation, both of which can be powerful levers for enhancing teacher effectiveness. The sections at the end of the chapter illuminate the important issues being

discussed and offer examples of how to bolster evaluation and compensation to improve overall teacher effectiveness. These sections cover the following topics:

- An overview of Utah's efforts to reform educator compensation, primarily through instructional quality
- A description of the TQ Center's *Communication Framework for Measuring Teacher Quality and Effectiveness: Bringing Coherence to the Conversation* (Coggshall, 2007), which promotes productive dialogue about the measurement of teacher quality and effectiveness
- An overview of recent efforts by the state of Ohio to develop evidence-based teacher evaluation guidelines for its school districts

These sections also provide examples of how states and regions are addressing teacher effectiveness, particularly through evaluation and compensation, and offer an opportunity to examine how these examples might be applied in different contexts.

## DEFINING TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS

As this report was being written, the term *teacher effectiveness* had not been officially defined by the federal government (i.e., in the same way that *highly qualified teacher* was defined in NCLB). ESEA has not been reauthorized since 2002, and there is no indication that a reauthorized bill in the near future will contain such a definition. Absent this national guidance, *teacher effectiveness* must be defined at the state and local levels if these entities are to set goals for advancing

teacher effectiveness and developing strategies to meet those goals. Moreover, without a working definition of *teacher effectiveness*, there will be no way to measure outcomes and thus no way to determine if efforts are successful.

As a starting point, states and districts might consider using the five-point definition of *teacher effectiveness* offered by Goe, Bell, and Little (2008):

- “Effective teachers have high expectations for all students and help students learn, as measured by value-added or other test-based growth measures, or by alternative measures.
- “Effective teachers contribute to positive academic, attitudinal, and social outcomes for students, such as regular attendance, on-time promotion to the next grade, on-time graduation, self-efficacy, and cooperative behavior.
- “Effective teachers use diverse resources to plan and structure engaging learning opportunities; monitor student progress formatively, adapting instruction as needed; and evaluate learning using multiple sources of evidence.
- “Effective teachers contribute to the development of classrooms and schools that value diversity and civic-mindedness.
- “Effective teachers collaborate with other teachers, administrators, parents, and education professionals to ensure student success, particularly the success of students with special needs and those at high risk for failure.” (p. 8)

This definition includes criteria for measuring teachers’ performance in the classroom or school by their own behaviors and practices as well as by the performance of their students,

which is the ultimate goal. A subsequent section in this chapter (see page 135) describes Ohio’s efforts to develop teacher evaluation guidelines based on an adaptation of this five-point definition. Other states or districts might consider similarly anchoring their teacher evaluation guidelines or standards on a solid definition of *teacher effectiveness*.

A working definition of *teacher effectiveness* will take states only so far, however. After states know what they are working toward, they must set objectives for achieving those goals. The TQ Center’s *Communication Framework* (Coggshall, 2007) is a useful tool for addressing communication and goal clarification related to teacher effectiveness. More information about the framework is provided in the box below and later in this chapter (see page 133).



#### TQ CENTER RESOURCE

The *Communication Framework for Measuring Teacher Quality and Effectiveness: Bringing Coherence to the Conversation* (<http://www.tqsource.org/publications/NCCTQCommFramework.pdf>) provides a common framework that can be used by regional comprehensive center (RCC) staff, state education agency personnel, and local education agency personnel to promote effective dialogue about the measurement of teacher quality and effectiveness. The framework consists of the following four components: communication planning, goals clarification, teacher quality terms, and measurement tools and resources.

## EVALUATION AND COMPENSATION STRATEGIES

States and districts can use a variety of strategies to measure and enhance teacher effectiveness. Two of these strategies—evaluation and compensation—are discussed in this chapter. Discussions of evaluation and compensation to improve overall teacher effectiveness can be difficult and nuanced because both processes often are negotiated at the district level. The time is right, however, to talk candidly about their use in enhancing teacher effectiveness. The Obama administration has made it clear that improving the quality of U.S. teachers is a pillar of its education plan and that efforts such as compensation reform are needed to accomplish that goal (Office of the Press Secretary, 2009).

### Using Teacher Evaluation to Improve Teacher Effectiveness

One way that states and districts can move toward the goal of improving teacher effectiveness for all students is through the use of a high-quality teacher evaluation or performance management system that measures effectiveness, promotes professional growth, and improves instruction in order to raise student achievement. Several states and districts currently are revisiting their teacher evaluation systems in order to better assess teacher effectiveness and nurture those areas in which teachers have shown strengths as well as weaknesses.

The following paragraphs provide helpful information. First, an overview of current knowledge about teacher evaluation systems is presented. Following it are characteristics of high-quality teacher evaluation systems, several key considerations of these systems, and a sampling of current practices and trends across districts and states.

### Overview of Teacher Evaluation Systems.

The TQ Center Research & Policy Brief titled *Improving Instruction Through Effective Teacher Evaluation: Options for States and Districts* (Mathers & Oliva, 2008) notes that *high-quality* teacher evaluation systems identify and measure instructional strategies, professional behaviors, and the delivery of content knowledge that enhances student learning. Unfortunately, most teacher evaluation systems do not address these fundamental goals (Toch & Rothman, 2008). Mathers and Oliva as well as Toch and Rothman agree that this situation is a serious misstep and that teacher evaluation is sorely underutilized as a tool for improving teacher effectiveness. In addition, both sets of authors agree that teacher evaluation systems optimize teacher effectiveness when formative and summative evaluations are used in tandem, resulting in ongoing information for improved teacher performance and targeted professional development (through formative evaluation) as well as evidence for making important decisions about salary, tenure, transfers, and dismissals (through summative evaluation).

The NCLB highly qualified teacher requirements characterized teacher quality as a set of inputs. As the focus shifts to teacher *effectiveness*, a concomitant shift to assessing *outputs* related to teacher performance through behaviors in the classroom and varying measures of student achievement also is needed (Gordon, Kane, & Staiger, 2006).



### TQ CENTER RESOURCE

*Improving Instruction Through Effective Teacher Evaluation: Options for States and Districts* (<http://www.tqsource.org/publications/February2008Brief.pdf>) is a TQ Research & Policy Brief that discusses the measures used in teacher evaluation and focuses on their strengths, limitations, and current use. It underscores aspects of evaluation policies currently aligned with best practices and illuminates areas in which policymakers can improve evaluation rules, regulations, and implementation—thereby improving teacher instruction and student performance.

#### **Characteristics of High-Quality Teacher Evaluation.**

Information about what constitutes a high-quality evaluation system is plentiful (e.g., Goe et al., 2008; Mathers & Oliva, 2008; Toch & Rothman, 2008). The following components are included:

- Evaluation systems should include opportunities for professional growth.
- Evaluation criteria should reflect specific teaching standards.
- Evaluation should occur more than once a year and should be conducted by multiple evaluators.
- Evaluations should use multiple measures.
- Evaluation instruments should include criteria that are measurable and that yield useful results for teachers' improvement.
- Evaluators should participate in training to ensure consistency in evaluation.

A high-quality evaluation system also may include the following:

- Opportunities to examine content-specific pedagogy
- Additional forms of evidence (e.g., artifacts)
- Degrees of differentiation, such as varying processes for new, experienced, and struggling teachers
- Positioning within a system that ensures quality of implementation through the following resources and efforts:
  - Timelines, requirements, and forms
  - Coaching and feedback
  - Minimizing of teaching burdens
  - Support from the top
  - Alignment with human capital management systems

A host of tools is available for conducting teacher evaluations, including classroom observations, portfolios, videotapes of teaching performances and classroom interactions, and student outcomes. Each tool has strengths and weaknesses. (Several TQ Center resources provide information about ways to measure teacher performance and the advantages and disadvantages associated with each. Web addresses for these resources are provided on page 124 in this chapter.) The discussion by Goe et al. (2008) about the importance of using *valid* methods for evaluating teachers is particularly notable. When teacher effectiveness is evaluated, the criterion used should measure exactly what it claims to measure. Furthermore, the measure should be valid for the intended purpose. For example, tools that are validated for assessing instructional performance might not be valid in a high-stakes situation related to salary or to hiring and firing.



### TQ CENTER RESOURCE

*Methods of Evaluating Teacher Effectiveness* ([http://www.tqsource.org/publications/RestoPractice\\_EvaluatingTeacherEffectiveness.pdf](http://www.tqsource.org/publications/RestoPractice_EvaluatingTeacherEffectiveness.pdf)) is a TQ Center Research-to-Practice Brief designed to help RCC staff and state policymakers as they consider evaluation methods to clarify policy, develop new strategies, identify effective teachers, or guide and support districts in selecting and using appropriate evaluation methods for various purposes.

#### **Key Considerations in Teacher Evaluation.**

Many states and districts understand the need for valid assessments of teacher effectiveness and recognize the characteristics of a high-quality teacher evaluation system. Guidance is widely available on what constitutes a high-quality teacher evaluation system and what measures are appropriate for use in certain evaluation situations. *Creating the conditions* for use of these measures within a comprehensive evaluation system requires additional considerations and potential system improvements, however. Attention must be paid to state and local contexts, stakeholder input, and the availability of resources, so developing such a system can be a challenge.

The following key questions should be considered by states when a teacher evaluation system is being developed, revised, or adapted:

- What is the state's role in teacher evaluation?

- What role do teachers unions play in the teacher evaluation process, and how can states collaborate with unions in defining common goals?
- How can states and districts ensure that evaluation is done well, considering the restraints of time, money, and other resources?

Use of a high-quality, comprehensive teacher evaluation system to improve overall teacher effectiveness is a promising method for helping states address teacher quality goals. Typically, teacher evaluation systems are negotiated at the district level, so states often do not have explicit, rigorous criteria or guidelines in place to promote or encourage the use of a high-quality evaluation system for identifying and improving teacher effectiveness.

As part of their obligation to meet state-level teacher quality goals, however, states can provide a set of practical, evidence-based criteria for districts to use in developing, revising, and implementing a high-quality evaluation system. Mathers and Oliva (2008) have provided several policy options for states to consider when discussing their role in teacher evaluation systems. Furthermore, there are numerous examples of states and districts collaborating with teachers unions to meet goals related to improved teacher effectiveness through evaluation (Mathers & Oliva, 2008; Toch & Rothman, 2008).



### TQ CENTER RESOURCE

*A Practical Guide to Evaluating Teacher Effectiveness* (<http://www.tqsource.org/publications/practicalGuide.pdf>) is designed to provide guidance to states and districts as they consider which measures to use for the purpose of evaluating teacher effectiveness. It includes a definition of *teacher effectiveness*, a table indicating which evaluation methods are most suitable for different circumstances and goals, summaries of various measures, and a planning guide to use in designing an evaluation system.

It is important to note that districts and states with effective teacher evaluation systems often have invested significant time and resources in the effort. For example, some districts and states use professional development funds for teacher evaluation systems that include targeted components of professional growth.



### TQ CENTER RESOURCE

“From Planning to Action: Effectively Using Your Professional Development Resources” (<http://www.tqsource.org/issueforums/plantoAction/>) was a national issue forum hosted by the TQ Center in March 2008. Its purpose was to help RCCs and state education agencies increase their awareness and use of professional development resources. Presentations and other information from this meeting are available online.

**Examples of Systems for Evaluating Teacher Effectiveness.** States do not have to start from scratch when choosing valid, reliable methods for assessing teacher performance or collaborating with teachers unions on an evaluation model to improve teacher effectiveness. The following models can be used as references:

- Iowa provides districts with a model framework for designing local staff evaluation systems. The framework aligns with the state’s teaching standards (Iowa Department of Education, 2008).
- New Mexico has a tiered licensing system in which teachers are required to earn advanced levels of licensure to continue teaching (see College of Education, University of New Mexico, 2009). The state uses a comprehensive portfolio assessment to move teachers along the licensure process.
- Tennessee developed a performance assessment tool based on the *Framework for Evaluation and Professional Growth* (Division of Teaching and Learning, 2009). Principals discuss growth plans with teachers and conduct walk-throughs to determine whether teachers are improving in the domains outlined in the framework.
- Charlotte Danielson’s *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching* (Danielson, 2007) is a well-known, high-quality tool that many districts have used as the basis for their teacher evaluation systems. The framework consists of 22 components organized into four domains: planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities.

- Austin (Texas) Independent School District developed a framework for a student learning objectives approach to evaluating teacher effectiveness. Student learning objectives are student growth targets that teachers set at the beginning of the school year. At the end of the semester or school year, teachers are assessed on whether or not their students achieved these objectives (Austin Independent School District, 2009).



### TQ CENTER RESOURCE

Tips & Tools Key Issues contain strategies and resources to support RCC staff, state education agency personnel, and other education stakeholders as they address various aspects of educator quality. These searchable documents allow a user to focus on specific approaches or strategies related to educator quality through targeted resources and examples. The following Key Issues relate to educator evaluation and effectiveness:

- *Using Performance-Based Assessment to Identify and Support High-Quality Teachers* (<http://www.tqsource.org/publications/keyissue-June2008.pdf>)
- *Using Value-Added Models to Identify and Support Highly Effective Teachers* (<http://www2.tqsource.org/strategies/het/UsingValueAddedModels.pdf>)

## Using Teacher Compensation to Enhance Teacher Effectiveness

Many states and districts are considering alternative methods for paying teachers as a way of enhancing or rewarding teacher effectiveness. These emerging alternative compensation systems have affected teacher evaluation as well because states and districts have had to revisit their outdated or ineffective evaluation systems to support high-stakes compensation decisions. As Toch and Rothman (2008) point out, “Rewarding teachers on the basis of their performance requires a credible system of measuring the quality of teachers’ work—something that the vast majority of public schools don’t have” (p. 1).

Teachers themselves have mixed views toward performance-based compensation. Interestingly, a 2003 Public Agenda report noted that “teachers are receptive to giving extra pay to those who work harder or who work in the most challenging schools. But they balk at paying more to teachers based on test scores or the subject they teach” (Farkas, Johnson, & Duffett, 2003, p. 24).

Although a comprehensive discussion of *how* to reform teacher pay is beyond the scope of this chapter, the following paragraphs will broach the topic of how alternative compensation generally can be used to enhance teacher effectiveness. First, the common goals of alternative compensation systems are presented. Following these goals is a discussion of key considerations in reforming teacher compensation as well as several examples of alternative compensation systems.

### Goals of Alternative Compensation

**Systems.** Generally speaking, the jury is still out on whether alternative compensation systems, in and of themselves, can improve instruction and student achievement (Podgursky & Springer, 2006). However,

well-designed and comprehensive alternative compensation systems provide the opportunity to achieve the following goals:

- Improve the pool of teaching applicants.
- Create incentives for teachers to work in high-need schools and in subject areas where they are sorely needed.
- Improve teacher knowledge and skills.
- Encourage teachers to take on more responsibility or advance along a career ladder.

All of these opportunities create pathways for enhancing overall teacher effectiveness. For example, a school district or state might use compensation to recruit or retain teachers who have proven to be effective in hard-to-staff schools or in subject areas that are typically staffed with inexperienced, unqualified, and ineffective teachers—and thus pegged to low performance. In addition, a school district or state might establish an overall improvement system that aligns pay with professional development opportunities that teachers need in order to perform well and positively affect student performance. Although teacher pay reform certainly is not the only way to create these opportunities, it is indeed an important one that should not be overlooked. Furthermore, alternative pay programs have the best chance of improving teacher effectiveness when the incentives are part of a larger system of teacher support, including evaluation and performance management (Baber, 2007).

**Key Considerations in Reforming Teacher Compensation.** Although implementing pay reform can be controversial, states are in a unique position to use compensation as a springboard for other policy changes related to enhancing teacher effectiveness (Goldhaber, 2009). States that are thinking about implementing an alternative compensation system at any level should consider the following questions:

- What behavior, activities, or outcomes is the compensation reform intended to address?
- How will teachers be evaluated, and is that evaluation system in place?
- Is participation mandatory or voluntary?
- Will awards be individual or school based?
- What stakeholders need to be involved, and how should they be involved?
- What is the state's role?
- How can the state work with teachers unions?
- How can the state determine whether a pay reform system works?

Currently, 33 federally funded Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grantees are experimenting with different types of alternative compensation programs (Center for Educator Compensation Reform, 2009). These grantees have been implementing their programs for at least three years, and they have learned much about the challenges and the key programmatic components of success. For example, their experiences show that performance pay plans should be aligned with broader district goals and school improvement plans and should be fully integrated within the core operations of the organization. Also, some grantees have found program implementation challenging without data systems capable of accurately and reliably linking information among human resources, payroll, and student record and assessment domains. Last, grantees have found that professional development is key to supporting program goals and the identified needs of individual, grade-level, and subject-area teachers.

The Center for Educator Compensation Reform is a federally funded center that supports TIF grantees through technical assistance, monitoring, and content

development and dissemination through its website (<http://cecr.ed.gov>). The website offers a checklist that identifies the major components of an alternative compensation system as well as the planning, design, and implementation steps that govern who should be involved in developing such a system, how decisions should be made, where necessary resources can be obtained, and when major project milestones should be completed (Center for Educator Compensation Reform, 2007).

**Examples of Alternative Compensation Systems.** Similar to the strategies and practices for teacher evaluation provided earlier in this chapter, examples of alternative compensation systems provide districts and states with illustrations of best practices and lessons learned. The following models and resources can be used as references during the design and implementation stages of an alternative compensation system to enhance teacher effectiveness:

- The Professional Compensation System for Teachers (ProComp) program, developed by Denver Public Schools (n.d.), supplements the traditional salary schedule with additional pay for teacher knowledge and skills, satisfactory evaluations, fostering of student growth, and employment in hard-to-staff areas. Under ProComp, teachers receive a 3 percent salary increase every three years if they receive a satisfactory rating on their evaluations. The evaluation tool was developed collaboratively by teachers, administrators, and other educators.
- Several districts and states use the Teacher Advancement Program (see National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, 2009), a national model for alternative compensation based on four areas, one of which is standards-based accountability. With this tool, teachers are

evaluated in the classroom on multiple measures at multiple points, using evaluators who have received extensive training.

- The Quality Compensation (Q Comp) program, developed by the Minnesota Department of Education (2008) is a state-level, pay-for-performance program that includes an evaluation system and allows for district flexibility.
- The Center for Educator Compensation Reform (2008) provides a national map that includes a profile of most of the district-level and state-level alternative compensation programs around the country as well as those under way in charter schools. CECR map profiles provide a variety of information, including access to information about how the programs evaluate educators for compensation purposes.

## TYING IT ALL TOGETHER

Teacher evaluation and compensation can be powerful levers for identifying, enhancing, and rewarding teacher effectiveness. Strategic thinking about compensation and how to best identify and reward effective teachers can support efforts to staff classrooms with the professionals whom American students so urgently need for success in the 21st century.

To recruit and retain highly effective teachers, especially in classrooms that need them most, a system of professional growth and opportunities for advancement should be supported by a high-quality evaluation system and reflected in compensation. Without fair, efficient, rigorous, and meaningful evaluation systems, teacher effectiveness is compromised. Compensation reform also must be rooted in these systems if it is to produce the desired results.

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## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FROM THE TQ CENTER

### *A Practical Guide to Evaluating Teacher Effectiveness*

<http://www.tqsource.org/publications/practicalGuide.pdf>

This publication provides guidance to states and districts as they consider which measures to use for the purpose of evaluating teacher effectiveness. It includes a definition of teacher effectiveness, a table indicating which evaluation methods are most suitable for different circumstances and goals, summaries of various measures, and a planning guide to use in designing an evaluation system.

### *Approaches to Evaluating Teacher Effectiveness: A Research Synthesis*

<http://www.tqsource.org/publications/EvaluatingTeachEffectiveness.pdf>

This research synthesis examines how teacher effectiveness is currently measured. Practical guidance for evaluating teacher effectiveness extends beyond teachers' contributions to student achievement gains and includes their impact on classrooms, schools, and colleagues as well as their contributions to other important outcomes for students.

### *Improving Instruction Through Effective Teacher Evaluation: Options for States and Districts*

<http://www.tqsource.org/publications/February2008Brief.pdf>

This TQ Research & Policy Brief discusses the measures currently used in teacher evaluation and focuses on their strengths and limitations. It underscores aspects of evaluation policies that currently are aligned with best practices and illuminates areas in which policymakers can enhance evaluation rules, regulations, and implementation, thereby improving teacher instruction and student performance.

### *Methods of Evaluating Teacher Effectiveness*

[http://www.tqsource.org/publications/RestoPractice\\_EvaluatingTeacherEffectiveness.pdf](http://www.tqsource.org/publications/RestoPractice_EvaluatingTeacherEffectiveness.pdf)

This Research-to-Practice Brief is intended to help RCC staff and state policymakers as they consider evaluation methods to clarify policy, develop new strategies, identify effective teachers, or guide and support districts in selecting and using appropriate evaluation methods for various purposes.

### *Communication Framework for Measuring Teacher Quality and Effectiveness: Bringing Coherence to the Conversation*

<http://www.tqsource.org/publications/NCCTQCommFramework.pdf>

This framework was developed to promote effective dialogue about the measurement of teacher quality and effectiveness.

### *Paying for Teachers' Performance—Strategies and Conditions for Success*

<http://www.tqsource.org/webcasts/payforteach/index.php>

This webcast examines the policy, research, and practice of performance-based compensation, specifically focusing on valid, reliable, and ethical ways to evaluate teachers' instructional performance. Experts discuss the promise and pitfalls of value-added and other statistical measures of student achievement growth as well as teaching portfolios and professional administrator evaluations.

## Case Study: Utah

Laura Goe, Ph.D., *ETS*

Marie Mancuso and Paul Koehler, Ph.D., *Southwest Comprehensive Center*

### INTRODUCTION

Many teachers are now meeting the “highly qualified” requirements of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, but *highly qualified* does not always mean *highly effective*. In fact, research has shown that teacher qualifications alone are not strong predictors of effective teaching, as measured by students’ academic gains (for reviews, see Goe, 2007; Rice, 2003; Wayne & Youngs, 2003; Wilson & Floden, 2003). Logical next steps for many states include defining *teacher effectiveness* and then determining whether teachers are effective.

Measures of teacher effectiveness have become increasingly important as the idea of offering monetary bonuses, incentives, or salary bumps to the best teachers has grown in popularity. The belief that these incentives may convince the most effective teachers not to leave the profession for more lucrative opportunities has contributed to that popularity. Because there is no clear consensus in policy, practice, or research circles about the definition of *teacher effectiveness*, determining fair, equitable, and valid ways of measuring effectiveness is a frequently debated topic. It was into this debate that Utah was recently thrust—ready or not. Utah’s experience with pay-for-performance systems illustrates how a state can undertake an important task for which few clear roadmaps exist.

### UTAH’S PLAN TO REWARD EFFECTIVE TEACHERS

In 2007, the Utah Legislature and the Utah State Board of Education began considering policies to establish differentiated compensation as one mechanism for retaining highly effective teachers. In March 2008, the Utah Legislature voted into law Senate Bill 281, a one-time

### SOUTHWEST COMPREHENSIVE CENTER

The Southwest Comprehensive Center at WestEd serves the states of Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah. It is one of 16 RCCs funded by the U.S. Department of Education to help build the capacity of state education agencies to implement the current provisions of ESEA and support districts and schools in efforts to improve student outcomes. The Southwest Comprehensive Center focuses on technical assistance for state assessment and accountability systems, state systems of support for district improvement and school improvement, high-quality teachers, high school improvement, and integration of technology.

\$20 million appropriation for the 2008–09 school year for districts to implement a performance-based pay program.

The legislation lacked clear guidelines, however. Utah has no statewide system for evaluating teachers; instead, teacher evaluation is negotiated at the local level. Utah districts had to develop a performance-based pay program based on their current teacher evaluation system or develop a new one—all within a short time frame: Completed plans for implementing the performance-based pay program had to be submitted to the Utah State Office of Education by June 30, 2008. From the state’s perspective, the \$20 million effort was an opportunity for the locally developed performance-based pay programs to inform the development of a state-level framework.

In response to the need for guidelines and criteria, the Utah State Board of Education explored different options for evaluating teacher effectiveness. The goal was to provide districts with a framework for alternative compensation that rewarded instructional quality (among other features), while the districts would determine how to measure teacher performance and exactly how to reward it. The Utah State Board of Education convened a Differentiated Compensation Work Group, consisting of 20 representatives from key stakeholder groups who were tasked with devising a compensation program for the board's consideration. Meanwhile, the Utah Legislature's Education Committee met to consider differentiated compensation that could result in new statutory requirements.

The Utah State Board of Education provided the following guiding principles for the work group:

- To be inclusive
- To build consensus but have the courage to build something meaningful
- To be independent; to build a state framework with room for local detail
- To improve student achievement by improving the quality of instruction
- To develop a differentiated pay-for-performance system that rewards quality instruction
- To evaluate *teaching* (not *teachers*)
- To make student achievement an element (but not the only one) on which differentiated pay is based

Work group sessions unfolded in two phases. The first phase focused primarily on inputs: information gathering from experts and from research and current practices in other states. The second phase focused on outputs: drafting a framework and seeking feedback from stakeholders.

## ASSISTANCE FROM THE COMPREHENSIVE CENTERS

The Utah State Board of Education approached the Southwest Comprehensive Center about providing assistance for the first phase of the task: gathering information to help inform the work group's discussions and ultimately its decision making. It was agreed that the Southwest Comprehensive Center would provide the following services:

- Assist in planning ongoing work group meetings.
- Conduct premeeting and postmeeting conference calls to assess progress.
- Identify prereadings on identified topics prior to each work group session.
- Assist in documenting the process.
- Review materials and documents.
- Develop and implement an outreach plan for stakeholder groups.
- Assist in conducting outreach activities.
- Provide ongoing consultation on processes and procedures.

After agreeing to provide assistance, the Southwest Comprehensive Center called upon the TQ Center for help in guiding the Utah State Board of Education as it investigated options for evaluating teacher effectiveness. The Southwest Comprehensive Center and the TQ Center had previously worked together to assist Utah in crafting some aspects of its highly qualified teacher state plan, which ultimately was approved by the U.S. Department of Education. This prior successful collaboration gave the TQ Center a high degree of credibility in the state, setting the stage for subsequent technical assistance.

The TQ Center, in partnership with the Southwest Comprehensive Center, provided the following services to the work group:

- Provision of expert presenters on identified topics at each work group session
- Participation in premeeting and postmeeting conference calls to help plan sessions and to debrief progress
- Recommendations of prereadings on identified topics prior to each work group session
- Identification of relevant research and practices
- The advantages and limitations of growth and value-added models and data requirements for using them
- Issues and cautions to consider when designing a measure of teacher effectiveness, along with research-based suggestions for developing a system for evaluating teacher effectiveness

During the succeeding weeks, the Southwest Comprehensive Center coordinated additional topics and presenters for the work group. Because differential teacher compensation is a controversial issue, additional expertise was needed to appropriately address the stakeholders' concerns and garner their support. The work group engaged the topic of differentiated pay in a manner that allowed discussion and thorough examination of all facets of the development and implementation of a new plan for teacher compensation. Nevertheless, the focus remained on improving the quality of instruction and exploring ways to effectively measure it.

### Technical Assistance

TQ Center expert presentations focused on the following topics:

- An overview of state pay-for-performance programs, including their histories, goals, types of incentives, and teacher pay reform efforts in eight states
- Ways of defining “highly effective teachers” and measures to evaluate classroom teaching, including classroom observations and student growth on standardized tests

#### GUIDELINES FOR USING CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS TO EVALUATE TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS

- There are no shortcuts to *reliable, valid* teacher evaluations.
  - Validity is threatened by poorly trained raters and by those who observe only once.
- The fewer indicators used, the greater the potential for errors.
  - The observation instrument should capture rich details of the teaching and learning cycle taking place in the classroom.
- The teacher evaluation system should be designed to *drive* effective instruction, not just measure it.
  - The system should measure what is important and valued by teachers, administrators, parents, and other stakeholders.
- The teacher evaluation system should include other outcomes in addition to scores from observations.
  - Evidence of student learning and information on the teacher's contributions to the school (e.g., as a teacher leader, as part of a teacher learning community, as a peer observer) also should be included.

## LESSONS LEARNED

### Designing a Successful Compensation Reform System: Lessons Learned

Compensation reform is not new. Many districts and states have experimented with it, with varying degrees of success. From these efforts, experts have identified those components that are important to have in place. One essential component for a successful differentiated pay system is buy-in from key stakeholders—teachers, bargaining units, school administrators, and the families they serve. That buy-in comes in large part from having a transparent system with high “face validity” (i.e., the system makes sense to stakeholders). Experience also has shown that allowing teachers to opt out of participation is important. Providing professional development to help teachers improve in the subject areas in which they are being evaluated is also critical.

### Evaluating Teacher Effectiveness: Lessons Learned

In early conversations with members of the work group, it was apparent that relatively simple, straightforward solutions would be preferred. Why was a lengthy observation protocol needed to evaluate classroom teaching? Would just a few indicators do the job as well? The group learned a great deal about validity and reliability and their relationship to the length and number of the observations and the number of indicators. Moreover, they learned that their current state testing system was not ideal in terms of conducting value-added analyses. Although the complexity of evaluating teacher effectiveness seemed somewhat daunting, the group learned that the higher the stakes involved, the more crucial it was to ensure that all teachers receive the same fair and valid evaluation of their teaching performance and contributions to student learning.

#### USING VALUE-ADDED MODELS TO DETERMINE TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS

What value-added models *can* tell us about teacher effectiveness:

- They can identify teachers whose students are performing better or worse than expected.
  - This identification allows for accountability at the level of the classroom, not just the school.
- They can indicate that students are learning what is measured by the test.

What value-added models *cannot* tell us about teacher effectiveness:

- They cannot specify *why* a particular teacher’s students have higher scores than expected.
  - Perhaps the teacher is focusing instruction narrowly on test content.
  - Perhaps the teacher is offering a rich, engaging curriculum that fosters deep student learning.
- Although they can measure *classroom* effects, they cannot measure *teacher* effects.
  - It is still not clear how much of a student’s growth is attributable solely to the teacher’s efforts and how much is due to peer effects, the availability of resources, school culture, and other influences.

### The Technical Assistance Process: Lessons Learned

Openness to finding and listening to experts was key to the success of the Differentiated Compensation Work Group. The members' willingness to seek early assistance from the Comprehensive Center system put them in an excellent position to quickly plan for and conduct an ambitious agenda that would allow the state to make informed decisions. Having a good working relationship in place with both the regional and national comprehensive centers enabled Utah to know whom to contact and to be confident that the state would receive timely and useful assistance. The federally funded Comprehensive Center system also is an extremely cost-effective

means of bringing expert knowledge and considerable resources and experience to bear on a particular issue. This system frees state funds for other aspects of a comprehensive solution.

### EPILOGUE: THE PILOT PROGRAM

In late 2008, in order to balance the state budget, Utah rescinded the money supporting the pay-for-performance efforts, even though several districts already had developed programs. A \$300,000 pilot program replaced the \$20 million effort. Even though the full performance-based pay program was not carried through, the state learned a great deal about developing a feasible pay-for-performance option.

### STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING A TEACHER COMPENSATION REFORM PLAN

On May 12, 2008, Robert Stonehill, Ph.D., chief program officer at Learning Point Associates, made a presentation to the Differentiated Compensation Work Group (Utah State Board of Education, 2008). In the presentation, titled "Differentiated Teacher Pay: Current Models and Lessons Learned," Dr. Stonehill mentioned the following strategies for developing a teacher compensation reform plan:

- Establish teacher (and teachers union) buy-in early and often.
- Consistently and transparently describe the intended outcomes.
- Identify and communicate compensation options; allow teachers to opt out.
- Combine pay incentives with leadership reforms and professional development so that performance pay is not a stand-alone program.
- Identify and secure long-term funding streams; supplemental funding often is required.
- Although the research is unclear about the optimal size of bonuses, ensure that they are large enough to matter to teachers.
- Develop fair and transparent measures of teacher performance.
- Use a variety of strategies that include, to a varying extent, all teachers (i.e., those in assessed and nonassessed subjects), other school personnel, and administrators.
- Consider student outcomes, teacher performance, and differentiated teacher responsibilities.
- Evaluate the program to demonstrate its effectiveness and return on investment.

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## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### Prereadings for Presentations

The following prereadings for the Differentiated Compensation Work Group presentations were selected by the TQ Center and Southwest Comprehensive Center staff.

- Center for Educator Compensation Reform. (2008). *Innovative ideas in educator compensation reform: Educator and community support*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved September 3, 2009, from <http://www.cecr.ed.gov/guides/edCommSupport.cfm>
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### TQ Center Resources

- Research Syntheses
  - *Approaches to Evaluating Teacher Effectiveness: A Research Synthesis*  
<http://www.tqsource.org/publications/EvaluatingTeachEffectiveness.pdf>
  - *The Link Between Teacher Quality and Student Outcomes: A Research Synthesis*  
<http://www.tqsource.org/publications/LinkBetweenTQandStudentOutcomes.pdf>
- TQ Research & Policy Briefs
  - *Teacher Quality and Student Achievement: Making the Most of Recent Research*  
<http://www.tqsource.org/publications/March2008Brief.pdf>
  - *Improving Instruction Through Effective Teacher Evaluation: Options for States and Districts*  
<http://www.tqsource.org/publications/February2008Brief.pdf>

- Tips & Tools Key Issues
  - *Using Performance-Based Assessment to Identify and Support High-Quality Teachers*  
<http://www.tqsource.org/publications/keyIssue-June2008.pdf>
  - *Using Value-Added Models to Identify and Support Highly Effective Teachers*  
<http://www2.tqsource.org/strategies/het/UsingValueAddedModels.pdf>
- Webcast
  - *Paying for Teachers' Performance—Strategies and Conditions for Success*  
<http://www.tqsource.org/webcasts/payforteach/index.php>

### Research From Other Organizations

- *Performance-Pay for Teachers: Designing a System That Students Deserve*  
<http://www.teachingquality.org/pdfs/TSreport.pdf>
- *Alternative Teacher Compensation* (ERIC Digest No. 142)  
[http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content\\_storage\\_01/0000019b/80/16/92/16.pdf](http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/16/92/16.pdf)
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### Websites

- Denver Public Schools' Teacher ProComp Program  
<http://denverprocomp.dpsk12.org/>  
This website describes Denver's teacher compensation program.
- Center for Educator Compensation Reform  
<http://cecr.ed.gov>  
The organization supports federal Teacher Incentive Fund grantees in their implementation effort and publishes guidance online.
- National Center on Performance Incentives  
<http://www.performanceincentives.org>  
This website provides research on the use of financial incentives for teachers to inform policy and practice.
- Consortium for Policy Research in Education  
<http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/cpre/>  
This consortium provides research on school finance, including evaluations of pay-for-performance programs.
- Educator Compensation Institute  
<http://www.edcomp.org/>  
Intended as a clearinghouse for information on educator compensation, this organization offers weekly and monthly bulletins containing news and events focused on educator compensation.

## INTRODUCTION

Everyone, in every occupation, wants to be judged fairly and accurately—especially when those judgments have high-stakes consequences. Teachers are no different. They want their job performance to be assessed in a valid and transparent manner. They want to know they are being judged based on what is important to them, their students, and their community and that those judgments, in fact, reflect reality. They also want to have a good understanding of the kind of performance they should be striving for—what will get them an “A.” When such assessments are a significant part of the decisions that impact teachers’ economic stability (e.g., their salary or job security) or the quality of their work life (e.g., their classroom or school assignment), teachers and their legislative and union representatives will work very hard to ensure that the teacher evaluation process—including its designers and implementers—is fair, just, and of high quality.

Teachers (as well as those concerned with teacher quality) may worry that evaluation systems based only on classroom observations are too subjective or biased. A second worry is that more objective measures of performance such as value-added measures of student achievement may be too narrow, too complex, and perhaps even flawed gauges of what teachers contribute to their students’ learning. When these very real concerns are coupled with leaders’ communication missteps, unproductive controversy can erupt, confounding efforts to improve the current system of teacher evaluation. Acknowledging the need for a shared terminology, the TQ Center decided to develop a tool to enhance communication between teachers, administrators, local education agencies, state education agencies, and other stakeholders.

## NEED FOR SHARED TERMINOLOGY

A foundation of productive and open communication is to ensure that everyone involved has a common understanding of the words used to describe the dimensions of teacher quality and effectiveness. One person’s *qualified* teacher is another person’s *effective* teacher, even though the two words can mean very different things. Further, the same word can take on different meanings in different contexts. To remedy this situation, the TQ Center developed the *Communication Framework for Measuring Teacher Quality and Effectiveness* (Coggshall, 2007). This framework describes the terms used in the conversation about teacher quality and effectiveness and provides guidance on building a common understanding of those terms.

## USING THE COMMUNICATION FRAMEWORK

The *Communication Framework* can be used effectively in three steps. First, users should first familiarize themselves with the framework and take stock of their goals, including their reasons for wanting to measure teacher quality or effectiveness. Users should then identify the stakeholders whose buy-in is needed in order to improve teacher evaluation systems and determine when the design and communication goals have been accomplished. Communication Tool 1 in Appendix B of the framework can help with this process.

Second, users should work with a planning team to choose a communication strategy, including how they will assess outcomes. Discussions on how to use or adapt the communication tools in Appendix B of the framework during the design and implementation stages can guide the development or reform of teacher evaluation systems. Users also should determine how

they will ensure that participants have a common understanding of the dimensions of teacher quality.

Third, the framework can be used as a reference during the change process that results from the teacher evaluation. Participants can refer to the definitions of key measurement terms, such as *validity*, *reliability*, *comprehensiveness*, *credibility*, and *utility*, in Appendix A of the framework. Additional TQ Center resources for this important work are listed in Appendix C of the framework as well as on the TQ Center website (<http://www.tqsource.org/>).

Teachers should be involved in all steps of the evaluation process, and their questions and concerns should be considered and responded to. Such open and productive communication builds a necessary resource: trust. In contrast, poor communication has too often led to poor design or a lack of trust that has scuttled efforts to improve evaluation practices, especially when those evaluations have been tied to teacher compensation. The TQ Center's *Communication Framework* is a useful tool for building trust, enhancing communication, and creating processes for improving the quality of teaching.

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# Ohio's Teacher Evaluation Guidelines

Cortney Rowland, *Learning Point Associates*

## INTRODUCTION

In August 2008, Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Midwest and the TQ Center joined forces to support the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) in an effort to develop state-level teacher evaluation guidelines. A legal mandate (Ohio Revised Code 3319.112) had charged the state with creating evidence-based teacher evaluation guidelines that align with the state's ongoing efforts to improve teacher effectiveness and human capital management. In Ohio, improving teacher quality is considered a systemic effort that addresses all stages of the career continuum, including recruitment, retention, and teacher evaluation or performance management. To that end, Ohio used this legal charge as a chance to work with stakeholders across the state to improve overall teacher quality and address this important component of a human capital management system.

## GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATING TEACHER PERFORMANCE

Processes for addressing teacher evaluation systems differ widely by state, depending in part on whether the state has a collective bargaining agreement. Ohio requires collective bargaining, meaning that teacher evaluation systems are subject to collective bargaining at the local level. Therefore, at the outset of this process, the state engaged local union officials to help create a set of meaningful guidelines that would be useful for districts. The goal for the state was to develop guidelines that responded to the legal mandate, were evidence-based, and were feasible to put into practice. On the other hand, the guidelines also had to be flexible enough that a local education agency could customize them to its specific context.

### REL MIDWEST

REL Midwest at Learning Point Associates is one of 10 regional educational laboratories funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences. It serves the educational needs of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin. The TQ Center frequently joins forces with REL Midwest to provide targeted assistance to those states.

REL Midwest and the TQ Center met with ODE staff to plan a series of meetings that would convene a range of stakeholders. Three meetings were planned—with a “writing team” made up of teachers; school, district, and state administrators; grade and content-area specialists; and several union representatives. The group's charge was to develop not only the state-level guidelines but also an annotated bibliography of useful research for districts to access as well as a list of teacher evaluation exemplars used in other districts and states.

Before any district or state can develop guidelines for evaluating teacher performance, two very important questions must be answered:

- What is the definition of *teacher effectiveness*?
- What is the purpose of teacher evaluation?

ODE staff and the writing team discussed and developed consensus on these questions at the initial meeting. To address the first question, the group adapted the five-part definition offered by Goe, Bell and Little (2008) to the state's context. Responses to

the second question varied and were broad in scope, partly because the use or purpose of teacher evaluation tends to vary across districts in any particular state. For example, teacher evaluation may be used for salary purposes, opportunities for professional growth, or summative accountability purposes. Generally speaking, the group agreed that Ohio teacher evaluation should be used primarily as an opportunity for professional growth but that some level of accountability would have to be incorporated in each district's evaluation system.

Over the course of the three meetings, the following important themes emerged to inform the final guidelines:

- Teacher evaluation should be used as a tool to improve instruction and provide professional growth, not as a “gotcha.”
- Multiple measures for collecting evidence of teacher performance are vital.
- Teacher evaluation should be “leveled”; for example, a new teacher should not be evaluated in the same way that a veteran teacher is evaluated.

For more information about the revision of teacher evaluation guidelines in Ohio, view ODE's *Teacher Evaluation Resources* webpage (<http://education.ohio.gov/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEDetail.aspx?page=3&TopicRelationID=523&ContentID=66859&Content=71813>). The state also is considering ways to disseminate the information and provide districts with tools and resources for implementation.



## NEW TQ CENTER RESOURCE

Although states and districts generally strive to institute high-quality teacher evaluation systems, the process for getting there can be a challenge. To that end, TQ Center staff have collected information from several districts (Chicago Public Schools, Denver Public Schools, and New York City Department of Education) and states (Minnesota Department of Education, Ohio State Board of Education, and South Carolina Department of Education) about criteria for developing, adapting, and implementing teacher evaluation systems. This information addresses the following questions:

- What was the impetus for change?
- Why did you decide to make changes to your teacher evaluation system?
- What were your goals for the new system that were not being met by the old system?
- What steps did you take as you made these changes?
- What challenges did you face?
- How did you respond to these challenges?
- What lessons can you share with other states and districts interested in making changes to their teacher evaluation policies?

The collected information appears in a new TQ Research & Policy Brief titled *Determining Processes That Build Sustainable Teacher Accountability Systems*. It is available online (<http://www.tqsource.org/publications/October2009Brief.pdf>).

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