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Summary Report

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Principals' Use of Teacher Effectiveness Data for Talent Management Decisions

This report summarizes findings from the Study of Principals' Use of Teacher Effectiveness Data for Talent Management Decisions, which was conducted by researchers at Peabody College of Education and Human Development at Vanderbilt University. Funding was provided by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The authors acknowledge their generous support for this project. The opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the sponsor.

Additional reports and information can be found at www.principaldatause.org.

On the website, readers can find in-depth papers on:

- Supporting principals to use teacher effectiveness data for talent management decisions;
- Principals' use of value-added and observation data;
- System redesign and support for principal data use;
- The changing role of principals as instructional leaders;
- Principals' use of teacher effectiveness data in teacher hiring; and
- Changing the landscape of teacher contract renewals with teacher effectiveness data.

Four case studies of exemplary principals using teacher effectiveness data for talent management decisions also are available on the website. The case studies include video and audio of the principals and their teachers and leadership teams, and they can be used for training and instructional purposes.

The website also provides access to tools and resources to support talent management decisionmaking, as well as links to all of the project reports. Included is a leaders' guide that is organized by specific talent management decisions, with examples of types of data that would be beneficial for various decisions in response to specific talent management needs. In addition, we provide calendars from study sites that include information regarding various talent management decision timeframes along with the availability of key teacher effectiveness data. These calendars serve the important purpose of showing "what is," while at the same time offering a description of "what could be."

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CONTENTS

Introduction	2
Methodology	3
General Findings on Principals' Data Use	4
Hiring	7
Teacher Assignment	9
Teacher Feedback, Support, and Professional Development	10
Teacher Contract Renewal and Nonrenewal	12
Data Systems	14
Building Supports for Principal Data Use	16
The Changing Roles of Principals	19
Conclusions	21

INTRODUCTION

There is growing recognition that schools need to be more strategic in how they manage their primary resource, teachers. Investment in measuring effective teaching—including value-added estimates, teacher observations, and student surveys¹—has increased the availability of data to make teacher talent management decisions.² These decisions include decisions about teacher recruitment, hiring, induction, assignment to classrooms and subjects, evaluation, feedback and support, professional development, leadership responsibilities, and retention.

This report describes how principals and central/home office staff in eight school systems across the country perceive the use of teacher effectiveness data for talent management decisions.³ In undertaking our study of these eight school systems, we sought to answer the following questions:

1. How do principals perceive the quality of data systems and data access that help them make talent management decisions?
2. How do principals use teacher effectiveness data for talent management decisions?
3. How can school systems support data use for talent management decisionmaking?
4. What training and supports do principals value to help them learn to use teacher effectiveness data?

This report presents findings on these questions across all of the systems, and it provides recommendations on how these systems and others can further develop and support data use.

Spotlight on New Teacher Feedback and Evaluation Systems

States, districts, and CMOs across the country are changing their teacher evaluation and feedback systems to include multiple measures of teacher performance, including:

- Classroom observation scores based on standardized evaluation rubrics that can include indicators for planning, instruction, professionalism, and classroom environment;
- Teacher value-added estimates or student growth percentile scores for teachers in tested grades/subjects;

- Student achievement measures, such as standardized tests or end-of-course exams;
- Student, peer, and parent feedback surveys; and
- Student learning objectives for a specific course or academic year.

These indicators usually are combined into a weighted overall evaluation composite score that rates teachers on a scale of effectiveness. These new teacher evaluation systems give central/home office personnel and school principals the opportunity to access multiple sources of data to inform talent management decisions.

1 See Measures of Effective Teaching project (2010). *Learning about Teaching: Initial Findings from the Measures of Effective Teaching Project*. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

2 On the importance of strategic human resource management in schools, see Curtis, R. (2010). Weaving the Pieces Together: A Framework for Managing Human Capital in Schools. In Curtis, R., & Wurtzel, J. (Eds.), *Teaching Talent: A Visionary Framework for Human Capital in Education*, pp. 171–195. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press. See also Odden, A. (2011). *Strategic Management of Human Capital in Education*. New York: Routledge Press.

3 The sites are Alliance College-Ready Public Schools (Los Angeles, CA), Baltimore City Public Schools, Denver Public Schools, Green Dot Public Schools (Los Angeles, CA), Hillsborough County Public Schools (Tampa, FL), Houston Independent School District, Memphis City Schools/Shelby County Schools, and Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools.

Methodology

Our study is based on the following methodology.



1. We selected six urban school districts and two charter management organizations (CMOs) for the first phase of our study during the 2012–13 school year. These eight systems have invested considerable efforts and expertise in developing data systems and teacher feedback and evaluation processes that involve multiple sources of teacher effectiveness data (e.g., teacher observation/appraisals, value-added or growth measures, and student surveys). We systematically sampled sites based on the amount of time and resources they devoted to creating data systems and implementing processes, policies, and procedures that allow central/home office staff and principals to access and use these teacher effectiveness data.



2. We conducted more than 100 semistructured interviews of central/home office personnel and principals in the systems. Key personnel in each system—including the superintendent/president, director of human resources, director of research and accountability, and director of curriculum and/or professional development—were interviewed to examine the types of teacher effectiveness data available to principals and the system’s expectations for data use for teacher talent management decisions.



3. We categorized every school within each system by grades served (e.g., elementary, middle, or high) and achievement level (e.g., low or high). In each district, we randomly selected principals from four elementary, three middle, and three high schools at each achievement level. (This process varied slightly for the CMOs because they serve only middle and high school students.) We conducted more than 80 semistructured interviews with these principals, building from the insights we gained from our interviews of central/home office personnel.



4. We developed an online survey for principals in six of the systems in the study. Because two of the districts and the two CMOs also were participating in a RAND/American Institutes for Research (AIR) evaluation of the Intensive Partnerships for Effective Teaching, RAND/AIR developed some of the items on those systems’ surveys and administered them in the spring of 2013 as part of their continued evaluation. In the spring and summer of 2013, we created an additional set of survey items based on our qualitative interviews.



5. Online surveys were emailed to the principals between September and November 2013. The principals at the four sites participating in the RAND/AIR evaluation received a short-form survey that excluded the items already collected by RAND/AIR. Principals in two other districts received a long-form version that included all items. A total of 795 principals across the sites responded to these surveys, representing an overall response rate of 82 percent.

GENERAL FINDINGS ON PRINCIPALS' DATA USE

WHAT WE LEARNED

Observation systems drive principals' use of teacher effectiveness data. Principals have access to a variety of teacher effectiveness measures, as noted in Figure 1, but they rely most heavily on teacher observation data to make talent management decisions. They generally believe rubric-based observations generate the most valid data, providing specific, transparent, actionable information that enables them to pinpoint teacher support. Many see observation data as providing a bigger picture of the teacher's performance than value-added estimates. In turn, they use observation data to inform teacher feedback, individualized and large group professional development, and teacher remediation plans that also serve as the documentation for dismissal cases. School leaders applaud observation rubrics because they provide a clear, consistent definition of high-quality instruction.

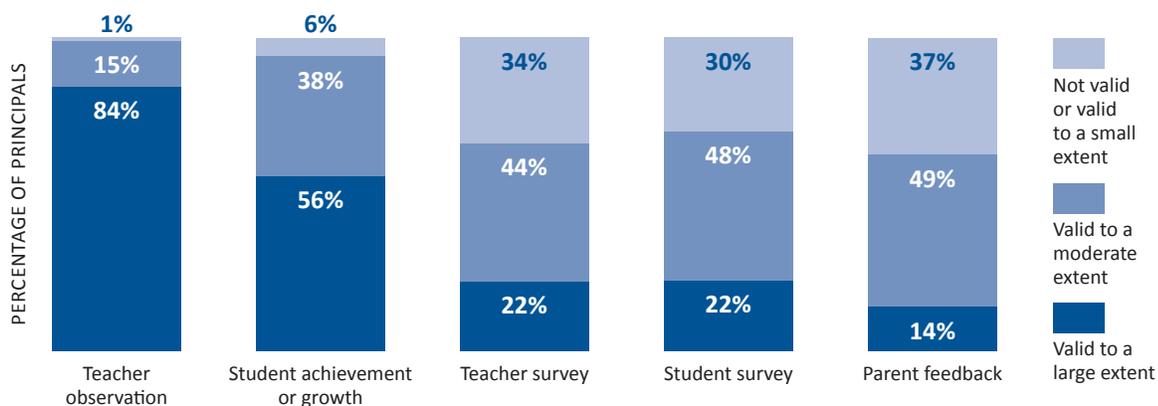
I use observation data more than I use anything else. ... It wouldn't be fair for me to use that value-added data to judge who [a teacher] is. What would be fairer is to use what he received in his observations because that's his actual teaching practice.

— Principal

Strong, ongoing calibration of observation scores seems to increase use of observation data. Systems in which principals can request calibration and co-observation in subjects where they lack expertise report greater use of observation data. Systems that train teachers on the use of the rubric report that calibration is a very strong form of professional development that creates buy-in and trust. Principals are more likely to use observation data for dismissal and personnel actions when they perceive a collaborative culture between schools and the central/home office.

Value-added measures are perceived as having many shortcomings. Principals are less likely to use value-added measures for talent management decisions, despite the availability of these data. They describe several challenges with the use of value-added measures: scores are not available in real time when decisions are made; scores do not exist for untested subjects; and students often are taught by multiple teachers, so it is difficult to attribute a value-added estimate to a particular teacher. Principals perceive that scores do not measure what teachers actually do to have an impact on students' learning and that the measures are not fine-grained and actionable. Similarly, lack of understanding about complicated statistical models negates comfort with the results and their interpretation.

Figure 1: Principal perceptions of validity of teacher effectiveness measures

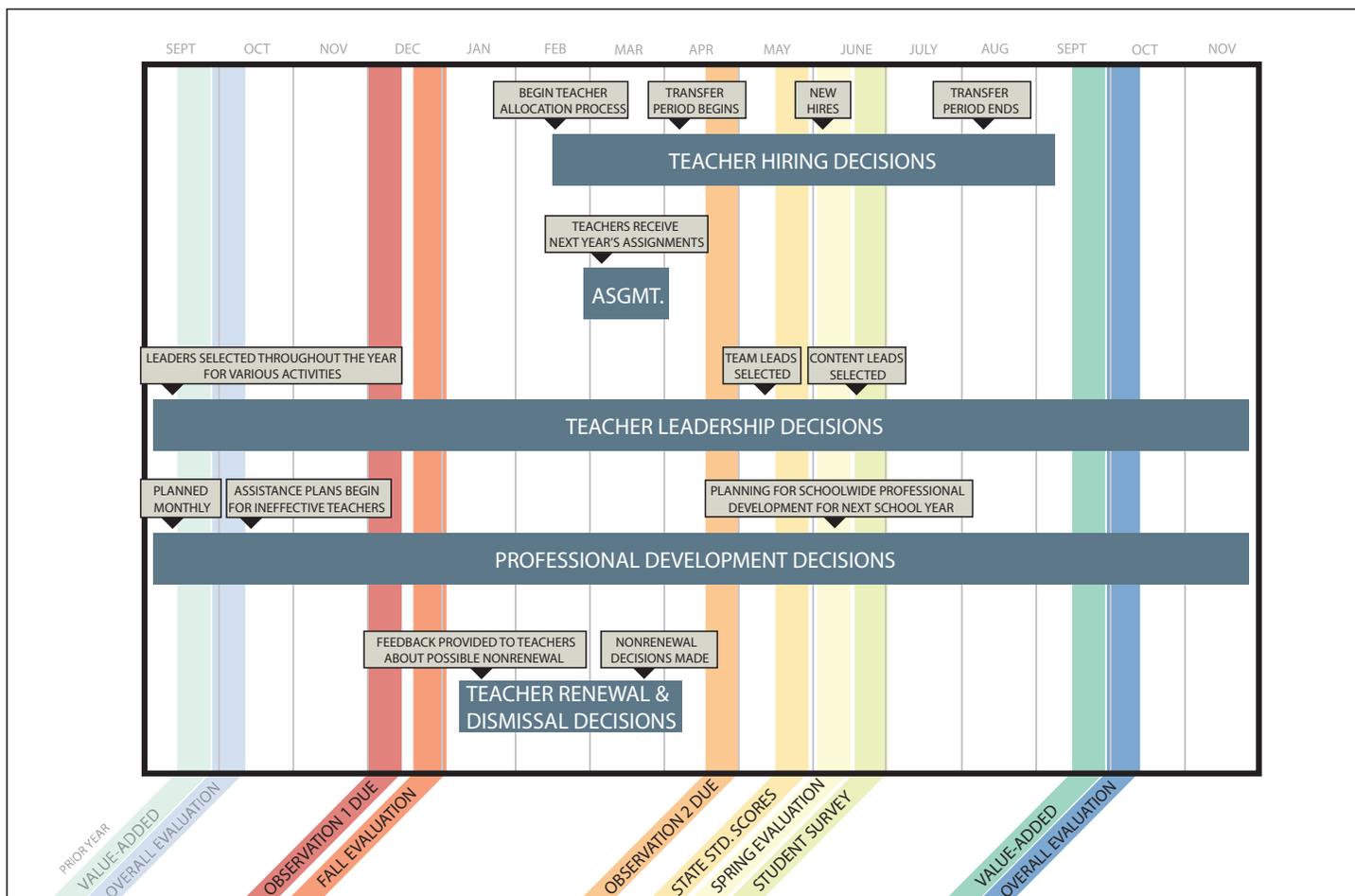


Principals rarely use student, teacher, or parent perception surveys. Principals often disregard these data because they perceive them as less valid, specific, and transparent than other teacher effectiveness measures.

The late timing with which teacher effectiveness data are made available is problematic. Principals frequently cite timing as a strong or moderate barrier in using teacher effectiveness data for talent management decisions. Specifically, principals often express frustration at not having state student achievement test scores, teacher value-added estimates, and overall teacher evaluation composite scores in time to make decisions about hiring, teacher assignment, and dismissal.

The lateness of data has the biggest impact on decisions about teacher assignment and renewal or dismissal. Spring observation scores, state standardized test scores, student survey results, teacher value-added estimates, and overall evaluation scores are released after assignment and renewal decisions are made. In addition, the transfer period often closes before principals have teacher value-added estimates and overall teacher evaluation composite scores. Even professional development decisions, which are ongoing, involve discrete decision points that are affected by the release of data. For instance, professional development planning for the next school year occurs in the summer, before student surveys, teacher value-added estimates, and evaluation composite scores are available. A calendar from one district shows how teacher effectiveness data often are made available after talent management decisions need to be made (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Sample timeline of talent management decision processes and teacher effectiveness data availability from one district



Principals rarely use past teacher evaluation measures. Principals can use past evaluation scores to trigger growth plans, target individualized professional development, or back up a case for dismissal; however, few principals make use of measures over multiple points in time.

“The district does provide data at different times for us and sometimes it’s not the timeliest... For example, in one principals’ meeting, we were given the [value-added] data of the school and the teachers [and the standardized test results]—but it was in January. We needed that back in August. So, it’s useful data but not timely data.”

— Principal

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Clarify expectations for data use, such as specifying data sources and years of data that can be used for each talent management decision.
- Hold principals accountable for using multiple forms of teacher effectiveness data for talent management decisions.
- Train principals on how to understand and use value-added estimates. Include the ways in which value-added measures are used in teacher compensation and evaluation for specific teachers across grade levels and tested and untested subjects.
- Institute opportunities for teacher evaluation, teacher peer calibration, co-observation, teacher training on the rubric, and assistance from the central/home office.
- Open discussions about how to reconcile and use multiple sources of data, especially when they do not agree. Clarify the roles of value-added estimates and observation scores and the extent to which, and under what circumstance, they may be inconsistent with one another.

HIRING

WHAT WE LEARNED

Few principals use multiple teacher effectiveness measures for hiring. Despite the proliferation of available teacher effectiveness data, most principals do not incorporate these measures into the hiring process. Some principals actively integrate new effectiveness measures, but these principals are in the minority in our sample. Common hiring practices include reference checks, demonstration lessons, interviews with the principal or a hiring committee, and reliance on the professional judgment of the principal.

Individual and system-level factors lead to variations in principals' use of data.

Individual principals—even within a single school system—vary in their awareness of available data that could point them to quality teacher candidates or of data sources for hiring. Three practices established by central/home offices lead to greater use of data during the hiring process:

- Robust procedures for candidate recruitment and screening;
- Clear expectations for principals about how they should make hiring decisions; and
- Processes for holding principals accountable for hiring, including using teacher effectiveness data to analyze hiring decisions.

Principals view achievement growth measures and professional judgment as most important when making hiring decisions. Principals view both new measures of teacher effectiveness and traditional hiring measures as very important to hiring decisions, although new measures are not always available. When these data are available, principals find prior achievement growth measures and their professional judgment of the teacher's effectiveness as most important for hiring; direct observation of instruction and recommendation by others are less important. Interestingly, principals in systems that establish more structured hiring processes tend to place more importance on the new teacher effectiveness measures than do principals in other systems.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Screen all applicants through the central/home office using a rubric aligned with the evaluation framework to ensure competency and fit with the mission of the district/CMO. Enable principals to focus their energy on applicants that meet a basic competency threshold to determine the best match for their particular school. Direct human resources personnel and principals to focus on aspects of teaching that are valued, supported, and rewarded by the school system.
- Ensure that internal transfer applicants' effectiveness data, including the overall composite and individual component scores, are readily available during the hiring process. Require external applicants to provide some evidence of effectiveness in their application.

“ Now that we have the whole [evaluation] rubric and data report, I require teachers to bring their [evaluation] data reports to the interview. And I also ask them to bring [value-added] data if they're teachers in such a grade. ... I ask teachers to bring their writing scores. And I ask the teachers to bring me a copy of their [students' state test] scores from the previous year so I can see what their track records are. ”

— Principal

“ I have not asked for [data on previous performance]. That would be one that we could possibly use because that would tell how well they’ve done with the group of students that they had previously. We haven’t used that, but that’s a good one.

— Principal

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- Require that all candidates undergo a mock lesson observation and a feedback session once they have been identified from the screened pool. Ensure that observation and feedback are evidence-based and aligned with the teacher evaluation system. This gives the school vital data on how candidates stack up against the evaluation framework and how they respond to feedback around that evaluation. From the candidate’s point of view, this process provides insight into the professional culture and expectations at the school.
- Maintain data obtained from the hiring process—including initial screening ratings, applicant preparation, demographics, and mock lesson ratings—and compare these data to outcomes (e.g., data on first few years of teacher effectiveness and retention) to ensure high-quality hiring processes. Offer support to principals who hire greater numbers of teachers with low effectiveness in their first years. Capitalize on the expertise of those who are effective in hiring outstanding teachers to mentor and train other principals.



TEACHER ASSIGNMENT

WHAT WE LEARNED

Some principals use data to place teachers where they can be most effective. Principals vary both in whether they think strategically about teacher assignments and in their use of teacher effectiveness data to inform teacher assignment decisions. Some principals strategically place teachers with students who need them the most. Many, however, do not view assignments strategically, do not think of data as informative in the assignment process, or feel constrained in their ability to effectively assign teachers.

Principals use data to move less effective teachers into untested classrooms. Many principals respond to the pressures of accountability systems that apply disproportionately to tested grades and subjects by moving less effective teachers into untested classrooms. These moves appear especially problematic in elementary schools, where reassignment of ineffective teachers away from tested classrooms is most easily accomplished by moving them to the early grades. Although these moves may benefit the school's test score performance in the short term, research on the importance of early learning for children's later schooling outcomes suggests that this strategy may have a negative impact on students' learning as they advance through school.

The late timing with which teacher effectiveness data become available impedes principals' use of these data for assignment purposes. Some principals do not have access to the full range of teacher effectiveness data before the end of the school year, when next year's assignment decisions need to be communicated to teachers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Clearly communicate to principals the importance of using data in the assignment process. Support principals in their data use for this purpose.
- Provide training and support that demonstrate the ways in which data can be used to help assign teachers to subjects, grades, and students.
- Monitor principals' assignments of teachers to discourage them from "hiding" low-performing teachers in untested grades (e.g., K–2 or 11–12).
- Train principals to look beyond a single year's body of evidence when assigning teachers and to consider prior years' evaluation, student achievement, and observation scores.

I'm going to be honest with you. I've worked in [multiple systems in this state], and your strongest teachers are always in grades three, four, five because they are your AYP grades. That's the elephant in the room. ... If you had a weak teacher that was not really meeting the needs of the kids, you put them in a lower grade.

— Principal

[High school assessments are not administered until mid-May for the general population. It's kind of difficult to make teaching assignments after that, after you get those results, because you don't get those results until the end of June. It's kind of difficult to make those types of assignments based on that data when you get that data so late, and the schedule pretty much has to be in working order, especially when the district's target this year is the end of June.

— Principal

TEACHER FEEDBACK, SUPPORT, AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

WHAT WE LEARNED

Observation data help principals have constructive teacher feedback conversations. Well-defined instructional frameworks and observation rubrics enable principals to engage teachers in targeted conversations that are based on objective evidence gathered during observations. The rubric provides a common language around clear expectations of good instruction. Many principals use documented teacher practice to target feedback to teachers, basing recommendations for professional growth on the rubric and observation data.

“ *In terms of supporting our teachers we have the [instructional framework], which is a pretty robust evaluation system for teachers. So what we do as administrators is look at that data to see where is it that our school is lacking. Which indicators in the [instructional framework] do we need to focus on as a school? So if it's a whole group, you know, if like 80% of our teachers are not understanding how to be successful in X, then it's a whole-school approach.* ”

— Principal

Many principals struggle to offer high-quality teacher professional development.

Although most principals use data to provide feedback to teachers, far fewer link quality support and professional development to teacher needs. Few data systems allow principals to track individual teachers and their entire staff based on specific indicators on the instructional framework; without such systems, principals are limited in their abilities to systematically track teacher performance, analyze observations across teachers and across time, and identify areas of greatest need. In a handful of integrated data systems, principals can store observation results, record recommended professional development, and track teachers' use of resources. However, even when data systems facilitate data use, principals often are impeded by a lack of time, financial resources, and adequate training around how to align professional development to teachers' needs.

Principals rely almost entirely on observation data for professional development decisions.

Principals primarily use observation data, as opposed to other teacher effectiveness measures, to identify teacher strengths and weaknesses. Some school systems facilitate this process by aligning teacher professional development opportunities with system-defined best instructional practices in connection with their observation rubrics. Others design bundles of support opportunities, all of which are directly aligned with specific indicators on the observation rubrics. The most robust of these systems ensures that each skillset is supported by multiple learning opportunities, such as suggested readings, online videos, and workshops offered by the district.

Principals offer teacher support at the school, district, and system levels. When principals do use data to recommend teacher support, many deploy resources within the school—such as master teachers, department heads, and instructional leadership team members—to coach, mentor, and model best practices. Others bring in district-level support personnel to serve as coaches, instructional leaders, and development specialists. Some recommend system-level supports that teachers can pursue outside of school.

Principals use data to provide both individual and school-level professional development. Some principals use teacher observation data to identify areas where supports are needed at the department and whole-school levels. This is less common than the targeting of individualized supports, and it occurs most frequently in school systems that have technological infrastructures that allow principals to query observations by indicator. By doing so, principals identify areas of the teaching framework in which large numbers of their staff demonstrate a need for help.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop data systems that enable principals to store, access, and analyze observations.
- Ensure that principals can track teachers' participation in professional development opportunities.
- Develop teacher professional development resources that align with specific indicators on the instructional framework or rubric. Ensure that principals are aware of the full range of district-provided supports.
- Offer opportunities for principals to use data from their own school to design schoolwide professional development plans. Ensure that the focus is on high-quality professional development approaches and opportunities for teachers.
- Monitor teachers' use of professional development resources, ask participants for feedback, and track professional growth over time.
- Train and support principals to have honest, clear, and sometimes difficult conversations about teacher performance. Provide ongoing training on how to provide teacher feedback that can be seen as an opportunity for growth, not a "gotcha."

“ *An example of what we're doing, [what] we did with principals this summer was we had a session on creating your professional development plan for your school. ... [Principals] brought in their teacher summary reports, their student achievement data, and we did an actual hands-on workshop where they mapped out what would [professional development] look like for a year in a school having all these observation summaries at our fingertips.* **”**

— Central office staff member

TEACHER CONTRACT RENEWAL AND NONRENEWAL

WHAT WE LEARNED

The measure principals consider most closely when contemplating nonrenewal/dismissal decisions is observation data. Principals use teacher observation data to identify areas of needed support, place teachers on performance improvement plans, and provide a body of evidence that can be used in teacher contract decisions. In a few school systems, principals also use other measures, including value-added estimates and standardized state test scores, but these measures are used to a lesser degree and only in connection with observation data. Principals also readily acknowledge that their own professional judgment is one of the main factors in their dismissal decisions.

“ In the past, if [principals] recommended a teacher for non-re-election, they may not have had the data to prove it or the documentation... and there was this blame game that, even if I do try to make a [talent management] decision, the district is going to overturn it. We had to get them to understand why the district was overturning it. ... I think [principals] understand the data and how to use the data... but it's just understanding how to support those teachers and how to document that support and trust[ing] that the district is going to support your decision.

— Central office staff member



The late timing with which teacher effectiveness data become available impedes principals' use of these data for contract decisions. Principals rely heavily on teacher classroom observations, as they often are the only information they have on teacher performance. Value-added measures, stakeholder feedback surveys, student test scores, and overall evaluation composite scores are often only available after contract decisions are made.

An inability to gather enough documentation and lack of time to do so are challenges. One-third of principal survey respondents indicate that these are strong factors in deciding to renew the contract of a teacher who previously had been considered for nonrenewal. This seems particularly true of tenured or nonprobationary teachers, where the burden of evidence is greater. In this regard, nearly 70 percent of principals report an inability to gather enough evidence for dismissal as a factor or a strong factor in the renewal of teacher contracts.

A lack of central/home office support is a major barrier to dismissal. More than 60 percent of survey respondents report a lack of support from the central/home office in upholding their recommendations for dismissal as a factor or a strong factor in their decisions to renew teacher contracts. Lack of trust and miscommunication between principals and central/home office leaders is another important reason principals do not pursue teacher dismissal.

Most principals fail to rely on multiple years of teacher effectiveness data. Although multiple years of teacher effectiveness data either are available already or could be made available to some principals when making these decisions, the majority of principals only consider information within a single school year.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Train principals on what constitutes effective documentation, how to avoid potential pitfalls in the process, and where to find resources to help them sort through evidence as they create the file for dismissal.
- Support principals in gathering the appropriate documentation that will hold up to official grievance processes. Streamline principals' efforts in gathering a body of evidence for teacher dismissal by providing direct support with the process.
- Train principals to use multiple years of teacher effectiveness data in making renewal decisions.

Spotlight on Principal Support

In one district, the central office deploys area superintendents to meet with principals throughout the year to discuss teachers falling below a specific overall observation cut-score and supports them in implementing plans of assistance. In another, the

district has a file review process where the principal, an HR representative, and an outside lawyer meet together before the renewal deadline to discuss teachers who are on assistance plans and to assess whether the principal has enough evidence needed for dismissal.



DATA SYSTEMS

WHAT WE LEARNED

Large amounts of time and money are being invested in new data warehouses and dashboards. These data systems are designed to enable principals to use data for talent management decisionmaking. While school leaders tend to be strongly committed to harnessing the benefits of these data, data system initiatives largely have not met their promise.

“*Right now if I want certain things I have to go here to it get it for this, print or save because it’s probably a PDF or Excel document, then go from here to get that one, and then make something else or copy and paste it. If I get it all in the Excel, [I] copy and paste it onto one of them and then sort, and then I have that one person’s information in one location versus separate ones. It’s hard to get a combined report, especially by teacher.*”

— Principal

Data dashboards are organized by data elements, rather than talent management decisions. The focus of data dashboards often is student outcome data, and talent management data are not well integrated. In fact, many data systems are patched together, making it cumbersome for principals to use them. A better way to organize a data system would be to use talent management decision areas as the categories. For example, if principals want to use observation data to help them assign teachers to a particular grade or subject, they might be able to click on an “Assignment” tab and then access the data through questions relevant to teacher assignment (e.g., who is eligible for assignment to a particular grade or who has a particular subject area expertise). When principals select specific questions within a talent management domain, the data would organize themselves in such a way as to provide clear answers.

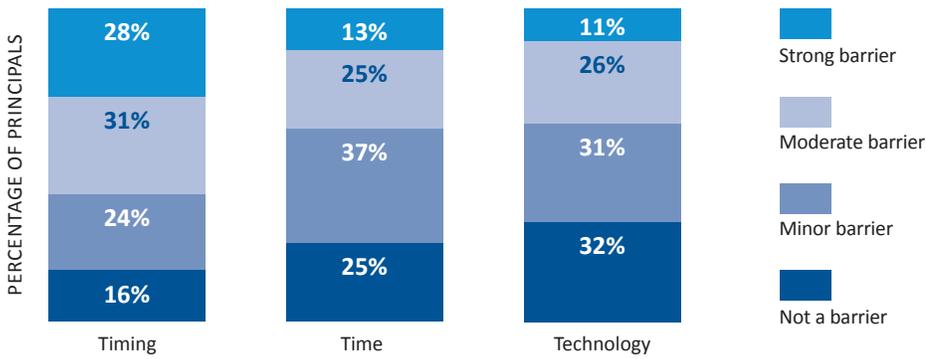
Most data systems fail to provide easy organization, manipulation, and analysis of data. Data systems for recording teacher observation notes, scripts, and evidence often are not integrated with other personnel data and do not support analysis for finding patterns across teachers, grade levels, subjects, or years. Many principals design their own spreadsheets and data systems, often by cutting and pasting from multiple reports. Principals note frustrations with multiple logins in numerous data systems; lack of access to real-time data in a centralized location; having to sift through too much data; and an inability to find the right data or reports.

Principals would like ongoing access to data in a centralized, integrated location. The commitment of districts and CMOs to implementing multiple measures of teacher effectiveness is noteworthy, but it also results in principals who are overwhelmed by the amount of data available for analysis. Principals have access to many different types of data, but these data are not always provided in easy-to-use formats, nor do principals always feel that they know which data are most useful or important for the different kinds of decisions they have to make. Many feel they do not have sufficient time to figure out the best ways to manipulate data and would benefit from simplified processes for data access, analysis, and manipulation. They desire extended access to data at home (see Figure 3) as one way to address these challenges. Of larger importance is their preference for more centralized data systems and added support to make sense of multiple data sources.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Organize information by talent management areas and key talent management decisions, not by data elements. Include enhanced search terms by talent management areas.
- Develop secure logins so principals can access data systems remotely.
- Develop sample data reports for each talent management area. Highlight key elements for each decision.

Figure 3: Principals' perceptions of barriers to data use



BUILDING SUPPORTS FOR PRINCIPAL DATA USE

WHAT WE LEARNED

Principals need support around the use of teacher effectiveness data for talent management decisions. In general, systems provide two types of supports: centralized positions—either newly created roles or redefinitions of existing roles—that have significant responsibilities related to supporting principals; and implementation of principal training or professional development.

“*In February when we were doing staffing, my [human resources partner and] I sat down with my budget partner and my instructional superintendent, and we went through a series of lists of staff that either had to do with their probationary status, renews, nonrenews, reductions. ... Now the [human resources] partner actually pulls up the data and says, ‘Okay, do you want to grant nonprobationary status to teacher A? In looking at what you scored and the peer observer [scored], they’re still scoring pretty low instructionally. What’s your decision on granting them nonprobationary status when it seems from the data that they tend to be struggling?’ And then from that, my instructional superintendent says, ‘Do we need to do another observation on the individual? You and I will go in together, or I can go in and help support.’*”

— Principal

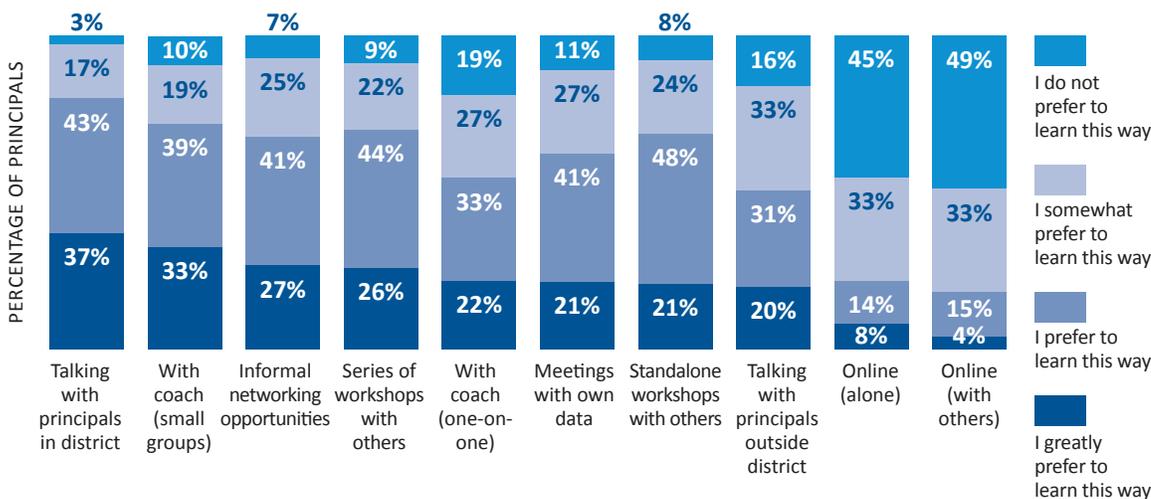
Many systems hire and train central/home office personnel to focus explicitly on principal support. In some systems, principal supervisor roles are redefined to include greater emphasis on instructional leadership and principal coaching, either instead of or in addition to their traditional supervision, evaluation, and operations functions. Principals generally describe this change as beneficial, particularly when their directors play an active coaching and development role; however, some principals are still making the transition to viewing this person as a resource.

Principals are often uncertain of where to turn for help with questions around data sources. Uncertainty tends to occur even when there are central/home office staff specifically meant to support principals. Factors that contribute to this uncertainty include turnover, limited day-to-day interactions between principals and central/home office staff, and the need for principals to consult multiple data systems and central/home office divisions to find answers.

Some systems create principal support teams. Often, each professional on a principal support team (which can be centralized or can support a cluster of principals) focuses on a particular area, such as hiring or technology. Principals view these professionals as extremely helpful and call upon them to assist with data access, interpretation, and talent management decisionmaking. Support specialists in human resources, where they exist, are especially helpful to principals; they call on human resources partners for help with screening and hiring teachers, putting low-performing teachers on support plans, and initiating nonrenewal or dismissal processes.

Principals desire improved professional development and training. Systems vary in their approaches to principal professional development and training, but across the board, this is an area where principals request greater focus. Even in one of the systems in which principals have monthly daylong intensive professional development sessions that often cover data use issues, principals describe the need for more training, such as sessions that actively engage principals in small groups with their own data, job-embedded learning based on actual decisions they are confronting, and working with peer mentors who are skilled in data analysis and application. Several systems make use of web-based training modules for assisting principals with data access, manipulation, and usage; although principals can access and refer to these modules for help at the

Figure 4: Principals' training preferences



moment they are needed, they generally prefer in-person training to online learning, as noted in Figure 4. They desire small group discussions with other principals in their district or network, supported by a data coach.

Principal professional development is not always aligned with situations that principals face. Professional development often is disconnected from teacher talent management areas and uses mock data. Principals find the most value in opportunities that allow them to practice with their own school’s data, work through actual data and decisionmaking scenarios, and draw on help from their principal peers.

Principals desire more training on difficult feedback conversations. Several systems offer training on “crucial” or “fierce” conversations with teachers, and principals who participate in these trainings overwhelmingly describe them as useful and even central to making the best use of teacher effectiveness data for improving the quality of teaching in their schools. Many principals express an interest in additional training around these types of conversations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

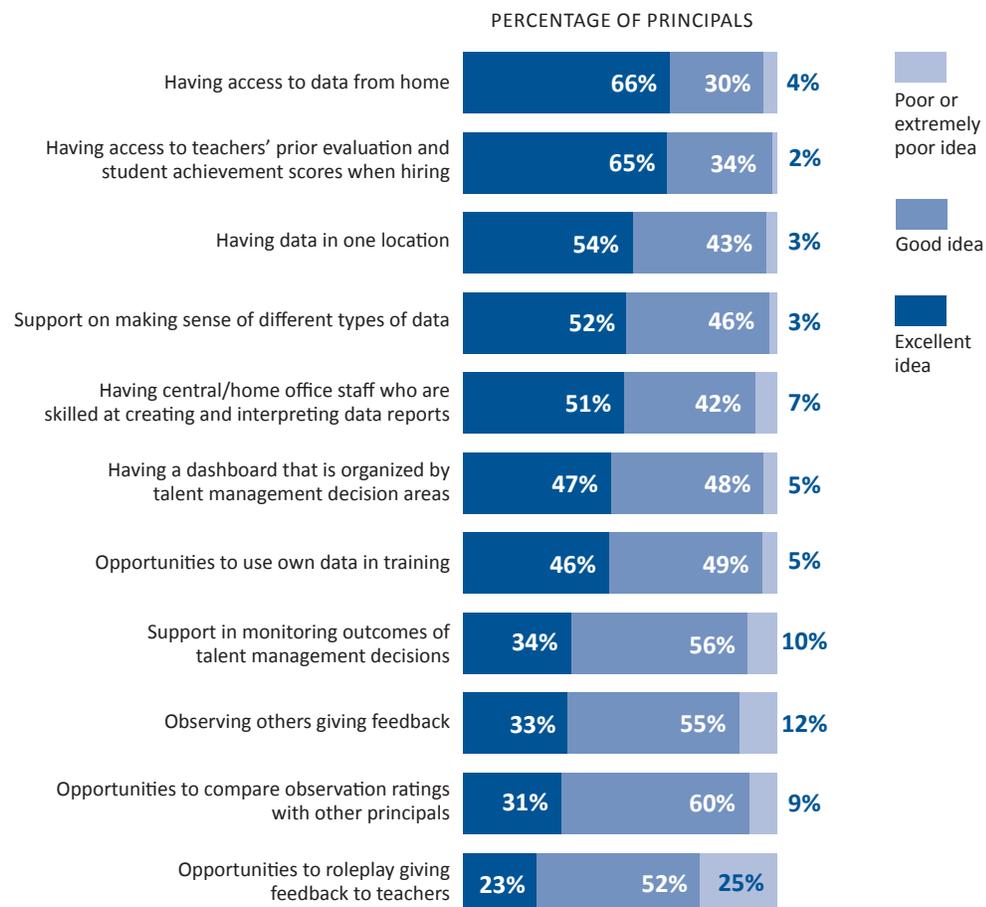
- Prioritize ongoing training and support around principals’ use of data for talent management decisionmaking. Build a culture around using teacher effectiveness data for talent management decisions, not just for instructional decisions.
- Create resources, trainings, and tools for principals to learn how to use teacher effectiveness data based on actual scenarios and real cases from within the system. Design trainings to be applied, interactive, and job-embedded. Allow principals to wrestle with their own (rather than mock) data in an environment where knowledgeable users can guide them. Provide professional development resources that align with principals’ data use and talent management decisionmaking needs, such as difficult conversations with experienced teachers or teachers who teach subjects outside the principals’ expertise. Differentiate training and materials to account for varying skills and learning styles.

“ After collecting the data, I would say that lessons learned [include that] principals need a whole lot of support to get it done, because they can tend to be fairly silent about what they’re struggling with because they want to be successful. They’re really not that interested in having anyone know that they don’t quite get it yet. And so that needs to be a much larger role of the supervisors and coaches for the principal [and] of the instructional leadership directors, versus leaving it to the team that’s just responsible for training the principals. That was a huge lesson for us.

— Home office staff member ”

- Provide professional development for new central/home office roles, and clarify and communicate role expectations.
- Provide training and support, aligned with the findings displayed in Figure 5, on how principals can analyze data strategically and make sense of many different types of data. Support principals in reconciling potentially conflicting data and identifying key data for action to help them make focused, strategic decisions. Provide opportunities for principals to share best practices with each other and collaborate around using these data for talent management decisions.
- Harness expertise of principals who have mastered data systems to train less skilled users in small groups, using their own data to tackle real issues.
- Support principals in identifying which kinds of data are most relevant for different talent management decision areas. Align reporting of that information to a calendar of talent management decisionmaking so that principals can access up-to-date information at the time decisions are made. Gather feedback on the data formats or displays that are most useful, and design data reports accordingly. Provide ongoing guidance not only on data access and manipulation (within the dashboard or elsewhere) but also on which data or reports are most useful for talent management decisions, including training opportunities in which principals can practice using their own data.

Figure 5: Principals’ perceptions of ideas to help them develop their skills in using teacher effectiveness data for making talent management decisions



THE CHANGING ROLES OF PRINCIPALS

WHAT WE LEARNED

In systems that have invested in rigorous teacher evaluation and feedback systems, principals' instructional leadership roles are changing. Teacher observations provide principals with rich new sources of data to inform decisions; principals greatly value observation data, but their roles in collecting and making use of these data are changing how principals work and relate to their teachers. New evaluation and feedback systems affect many principals' instructional leadership roles in the following ways:

- **Principals must provide regular, structured feedback to teachers.** Principals are spending more time in classrooms, and this time investment permits them to provide specific, targeted teacher feedback that connects with the instructional rubric. The frequency of feedback and its connection to specific, observed instructional routines stand in stark contrast to principals' more traditional role around instruction, which often is limited to brief classroom walkthroughs and little, if any, teacher feedback.
- **There are overwhelming demands on principals' time.** Principals repeatedly describe the time burden of preparing for and conducting observations, scripting notes, and holding follow-up meetings—on top of meeting all of the traditional expectations of the job. Many find the additional tasks very difficult to manage and have to take work home, extend their hours into the evenings and weekends, or delegate work to others. According to one principal, “it’s almost like it takes two people”—a sentiment that many principals echo and that calls into question the sustainability of these new principal roles.
- **Principals are struggling with the lower visibility that comes with observation duties.** Principals recognize the paradox of spending more time with teachers and students yet being less visible than ever. Principals worry that they are missing out on higher visibility tasks, such as important school events and activities, and that they know less about what is going on in their schools as a result.
- **Principals feel a loss of informal, ongoing interactions.** Principals in several school systems note a change in their relationships with teachers, particularly around trust. Some teachers no longer invite principals into their classrooms, approach them about problems, or ask for advice for fear they are being constantly evaluated. Principals also lament the loss of informal interactions with students, such as in the lunchroom or school hallways.

Spotlight on System Redesign

The availability of teacher effectiveness data and new teacher evaluation and feedback systems require school systems to organize their operations around school support. Collection and use of teacher effectiveness data cannot happen in a vacuum, and systems recognize the need to create structures to support principals and teachers in that process.

Notable examples include the following:

- The creation of human resources partners or other roles to assist principals with using available measures to make effective decisions;
- The reorientation of principal supervisor roles specifically toward principal coaching and support; and
- The creation of data specialists for school clusters or regions to serve as resources on data access and use.

- **New evaluation systems present ongoing tensions around principal accountability and autonomy.**

As new and more sophisticated decision tools are available to principals, system leaders are raising expectations about the decisions principals make using those tools. Central/home office leaders describe means of holding principals accountable for those decisions, both formally and informally, to support principals in making decisions that are aligned with district or CMO goals. At the same time, principals describe feeling held accountable for decisions—in teacher hiring, for example—that are, in fact, constrained by system-level structures, such as requirements to take on surplus teachers or ineffective recruiting to bring high-quality applicants to the system. They also emphasize the importance of their own professional judgment in making decisions that are best for their school communities overall, including on dimensions that may not be easily captured by available data.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Distribute leadership tasks more widely. School administrators, teacher leaders, and district staff can take on a variety of leadership tasks to provide principals with more time to observe teachers and use teacher effectiveness data for talent management decisions.
- Involve multiple leaders in teacher observations, including teacher leaders, district staff, and school-level administrators. Using multiple observers will not only lessen the time burden placed on principals but also provide a more holistic picture of teachers' effectiveness.
- Differentiate teacher observations so that all teachers are not required to be observed every year. Teachers who routinely demonstrate high levels of effectiveness may not need to be observed as frequently as struggling teachers. Consider a focus on some areas of the rubric, rather than the complete rubric, for some teachers. This type of differentiation will lessen the time demands on the principal and also allow for more targeted support to teachers who need it.
- Implement time management systems for principals and train them on how to use such systems.

CONCLUSIONS

Taken together, our findings suggest four areas for further development to enhance principals' use of teacher effectiveness data for talent management decisions.

- **Time.** Principals recognize that teacher observations yield valuable effectiveness data but also require a significant investment of time—for planning, conducting, recording, follow-up, and analysis. As principals attempt to balance these responsibilities with the work of deciphering complex data reports, they find that their time is at a premium. Distributing leadership and administrative tasks, enabling remote access to data systems, and ensuring that those data systems are intuitive and simple to use can help principals manage demands on their time.
- **Timing.** The value of teacher effectiveness data is limited when they are released too late to play a role in principals' talent management decisions—especially those related to teacher assignments and contracts. To counter this issue, principals must learn to look at data from multiple years, and systems need to synchronize the availability of teacher effectiveness data with the timing of principals' talent management decisions.
- **Training.** To meet new expectations for data use, principals and central/home office staff need ongoing support and training to develop their abilities. Principals believe they would benefit from more opportunities to collaborate face-to-face with other principals and data coaches while using their own data to deal with real decisions.
- **Technology.** Data systems in many sites suffer from convoluted structures that require principals to spend too much time searching for data (or that prevent them from accessing the system altogether). Districts and CMOs should prioritize the development of a centralized, easy-to-navigate system that allows principals to track their teacher effectiveness data and analyze the relationship between the data and key talent management areas.

Teacher effectiveness data hold the power to make principals more successful in their day-to-day activities as school leaders. By helping them harness this power and connect it to their decisionmaking processes, school systems can improve the effectiveness of their teachers and the quality of the learning in their classrooms.

Spotlight on School and System Improvement Measures

The availability of teacher effectiveness data creates new opportunities for school systems to use data to hold principals accountable for talent management decisions. Some examples of areas for which principal accountability measures could be developed include the following:

- Progression of newly hired teachers toward ratings of effective in their first three years in the school;
- Assignment of most-effective teachers to students with greatest needs;
- Alignment between teachers' areas of need and the professional development principals target to them;
- Retention of highly effective teachers; and
- Improvement or nonrenewal of less effective teachers.



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