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

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Purpose of Study

- Analyze key lessons learned in Illinois districts identified as leaders in teacher evaluation
- Inform other districts as they design and implement "next generation“ teacher evaluation systems under PERA.
Methodology: Case Studies

- Spring-summer 2012
- Five Illinois districts identified as “ahead of the curve”
  - Sought diversity in terms of geography, demographics, program components, and stage of implementation
  - Interviews with 4-6 key decision-makers in each district
Characteristics of the Evaluation Systems

- Various stages of implementation
- All used some form of the Danielson Framework for teacher performance measure
- Only one included student growth in teacher evaluations
Overview

- These systems were seen as a huge upgrade over the status quo
- But there were still some challenges...
  1. Securing understanding and buy-in
  2. Using observations to improve instruction
  3. Building the capacity of evaluators
  4. Incorporating student growth

- The rest of this presentation will focus on the specific challenges in these four areas – and examples of strategies and suggestions from the case study districts from the case study districts
Challenge #1: Cultivating Buy-In & Understanding

- Buy-in was problematic, especially in first year
  - Distrust between teachers and administration
  - Anxiety surrounding PERA

- District training typically did not include teachers
  - Implementation dependent upon principal understanding and buy-in
Cultivating Buy-In & Understanding

- **Strategy:** Start soon and implement gradually
  - Consider phasing in with low-stakes pilot
  - Try not to start/change mid-year
  - Takes a lot of time – start planning ASAP

- **Other strategies:**
  - Gather all perspectives
  - Train teachers early, consistently, and continuously
  - Develop a shared vision of quality instruction
  - Align teacher evaluation with other district priorities and initiatives
Challenge #2: Using Observations to Improve Instruction

- Systems good at pinpointing weaknesses, less successful transforming these into strengths
- Concerns with the accuracy and usefulness of evaluation ratings
- Meeting the needs of teachers at all levels
- Concern that PERA/SB 7 might shift focus away from formative elements
Using Observations to Improve Instruction

- **Strategy:** Link observations to professional development
  - Reinforce view of evaluation and PD as a cycle
  - Use evaluation ratings to direct PD
  - Don’t just merely identify weaknesses and poor performers – leverage best practices

- **Other Strategy:** Conduct more frequent classroom observations
Challenge #3: Reducing the Burden on Principals

- Ultimate impact highly dependent upon principals and their implementation
- Principals have many new responsibilities in these new evaluation systems
  - More (and more thorough) classroom observations and conferences than in the past
- Competing responsibilities make it difficult to prioritize teacher evaluation
Reducing the Burden on Principals

- **Strategy: Use Multiple Observers**
  - Some used APs or other evaluators
  - Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) in Niles
    - Two full-time peer consulting teachers
    - Eight to twelve observations each year
  - Can reduce burden on principals, increase the number of observations, *and* support teachers

- **Other Strategy: Streamline the system wherever possible**
Challenge #4: Incorporating Student Growth in to Teacher Evaluation

- Only Evanston had done this
- Numerous concerns and unanswered questions:
  - Fairness and rigor across all subjects and students
  - Finding valid and reliable assessments for all subjects
  - Understanding growth models and PERA requirements
  - Buy-in, attribution, small sample sizes, etc.
- But, the case study districts generally accept that it’s coming and want to focus on strategies and supports to help get it right
  - Multiple measures (PERA requirements)
  - Training on understanding and using assessment data
CCSR Chicago Studies
Chicago Excellence in Teaching Pilot (EITP) 2008-2010

- Found observation ratings positively related to student value-add
- Most participants positive, but many of the same challenges as in case study districts:
  - Lack of teacher knowledge a barrier to trust in the system—need centralized communication
  - Teacher positive attitudes often dependent on principal skill and buy-in
  - Principals often struggled with logistics, time management
  - Principals wanted more support in their ‘new’ role as instructional coach
Chicago Implementation 2012-2013

- Chicago implementing PERA in all schools—focus this year on non-tenured teachers

- Observation ratings: at least 75% of total

- Two kinds of student growth as per PERA mandate:
  - Performance tasks 2 times/year—elementary: all grades/subjects, high school: all core subjects
  - NWEA MAP grades 3-8; non tested grades assigned school level literacy growth

- Implementation issues similar to downstate and EITP

- Implementation report out late summer
Moving Forward

- Teacher evaluation reform is a work in progress and many unanswered questions remain
  - Communication and teacher understanding
  - Principals’ role (gatekeeper, coach) with limited time
  - Possible lack of ratings consistency
  - Differentiated supports for teachers at all levels
  - Incorporating student growth

- These early districts informed by external organizations and out-of-state districts – next generation should be able to rely more on each other’s experiences
  - Make time to talk with each other
Questions or Comments?

Resources:

• *Designing and Implementing the Next Generation of Teacher Evaluation Systems* (November 2012)

• *Rethinking Teacher Evaluation in Chicago* (November 2011)
  http://ccsr/uchicago.edu/publications

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