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Administrator Feedback to Teachers

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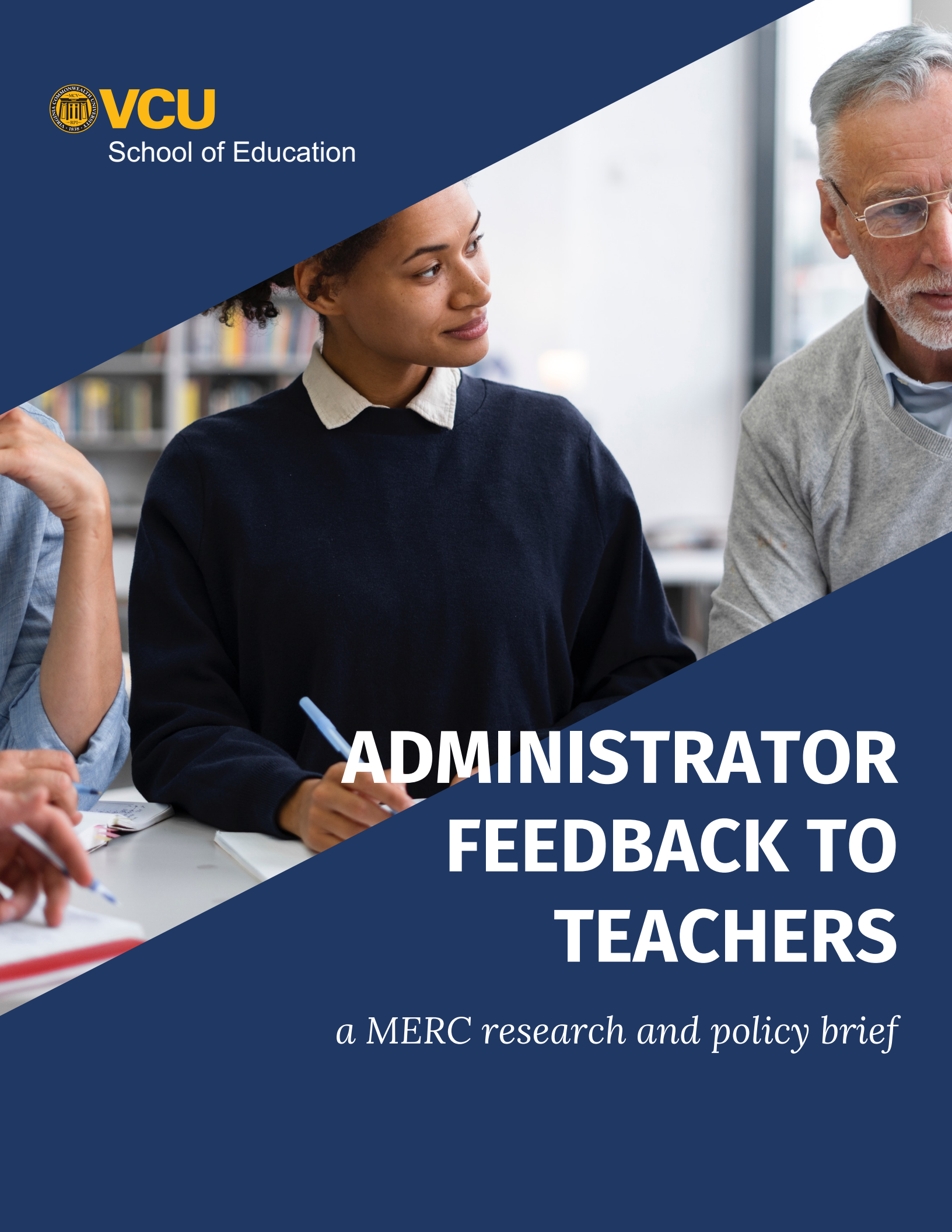
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ADMINISTRATOR FEEDBACK TO TEACHERS

a MERC research and policy brief

ADMINISTRATOR FEEDBACK TO TEACHERS

A MERC RESEARCH AND POLICY BRIEF

Regina Frazier, Candace Wilkerson, Jacquie Cioffi, Patrick Simmons, Makeba D'Abreu, Thea Racelis, Amanda Simmons, Melissa Yancey, Deanna Fierro, David Naff
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When administrators provide feedback to their teacher colleagues, it can impact many aspects of the working environment. Research and legal mandates demonstrate that performance feedback is important and improves practice, which is essential in increasing teacher retention.¹ Furthermore, developing teacher instructional practice through constructive feedback (USDOE, 2009, p.9, as cited in Wieczorek) and professional development,² improving overall engagement and job satisfaction,³ and the most desired outcomes of improved academic results are goals of feedback from school administrators.

This research brief by the [Metropolitan Educational Research Consortium](#) explores peer reviewed-educational research focusing on administrator feedback to teachers as well as school board policies from the [MERC region](#). It addresses four questions: 1) What is the purpose of administrators providing feedback to teachers? 2) How do administrators typically provide feedback to teachers? 3) How do teachers typically receive feedback from administrators? and 4) What are research-based strategies for administrators to provide productive feedback to teachers? It concludes with recommendations for school administrators who provide feedback to instructional staff.

What is the purpose of administrators providing feedback to teachers?

Teachers seek feedback to gain tools to improve their practice.⁴ Administrators provide feedback for various reasons, including focusing on attaining positive student academic outcomes.⁵ In addition, specific administrator feedback can help improve teacher morale, job satisfaction, motivation, and rigorous instructional efficacy.⁶ When administrators fulfill the role of instructional coach, novice teachers can increase their capacity to manage their social-emotional well-being.⁷ Through administrator feedback, educators examine ways to improve their teaching skills, and administrators can cultivate evaluation feedback to guide

¹ Ford et al. (2018)

² Wieczorek et al., 2019

³ Ford et al. (2018)

⁴ Ford et al. (2018)

⁵ Kim & Lowery (2021)

⁶ Ford et al. (2018)

⁷ Kraft et al. (2018)

professional development.⁸ Evaluations can be a cause of stress in the instructional environment, yet outcomes of providing positive teacher feedback can include teachers perceiving that it directly improves their teaching and job satisfaction.⁹

School board policies in the MERC region focus on how teacher feedback can impact student outcomes. For example, policies from two divisions state that feedback intends to:

- optimize student learning and growth;
- contribute to the achievement of the goals and objectives of the division's educational plan;
- improve the quality of instruction by ensuring accountability for classroom performance and teacher effectiveness;
- provide a basis for leadership improvement through productive performance appraisal and professional growth;
- implement a performance evaluation system that promotes a positive working environment and continuous communication between the employee and the evaluator that promotes continuous professional growth, leadership effectiveness, improvement of overall job performance, and improved student outcomes; and
- promote self-growth, instructional effectiveness, and improvement of overall professional performance.

How do administrators typically provide feedback to teachers?

Teacher feedback on student learning is communicated through evaluation components, and they take many forms:¹⁰

- Formal classroom observation,
- Feedback based on informal peer classroom observation,
- Student achievement measures

The way that administrators typically share feedback with teachers also often takes different formats:¹¹

- Individual verbal communication,
- Recorded verbal and written feedback notes
- Observation field notes
- Group discussions

⁸ Kettler & Reddy (2019)

⁹ Ford et al. (2018)

¹⁰ Tuma et al. (2018)

¹¹ Guskey & Link (2022)

Direct feedback has become a routine part of the administrator-teacher relationship, widely seen as a formative and developmental part of instructional leadership.¹² It can also be linked to supervision and evaluation, leading to principals collecting and interpreting instructional performance indicators to determine a teacher's effectiveness.¹³ According to [Weiczoerek and colleagues \(2019\)](#), administrator feedback typically includes the following steps:

- **Preplanning conferences:** a meeting between a teacher and administrator to discuss the focus and goals of the observation
- **Classroom observations:** an administrator observes a teacher's lesson and takes notes.
- **Conversation and collaborative reflection:** the administrator and teacher collaborate on observation findings
- **Planning for instructional action:** an administrator and teacher use collaborative reflection to determine their actions

[Mireles-Rios & Becchio \(2018\)](#) describe a similar process for evaluation, stating that administrators use scripted, externally mandated procedures to determine if a teacher is satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

According to school board policies in the MERC region, evaluations occur regularly, and expectations are outlined in division policy manuals with written evaluation results, dated and signed by collaborative parties and stored in employee personnel files. Through formal and informal observations, administrators collect data to support the professional characteristics of assessment of student learning.¹⁴ Administrators collect additional data such as student academic progress results and, in addition to regular observation, evidence that instruction is aligned with the school's curriculum and recommendations for appropriate professional development experiences.

How do teachers typically receive feedback from administrators?

[Owens and Hudson \(2021\)](#) explained the COVID-19 global pandemic changed how teachers receive feedback from school administrators. Traditional face-to-face learning environments allowed administrators to sit during lectures and provide feedback. Additionally, face-to-face allowed both parties to express themselves with body language, facial expressions, and other essential communication cues to help receive and understand feedback. Administrators could incorporate the teachers' emotional responses to planning for an intervention that addresses performance or a guide for post-conference discussions. However, a [2022 study by Ansyari](#) found that teachers prefer administrator feedback online rather than face-to-face. According to the [National Council on Teacher Quality](#), 16 state

¹² [Berkovich & Eyal \(2021\)](#)

¹³ [Wieczorek et al. \(2019\)](#)

¹⁴ [Tuytens et al. \(2018\)](#)

policies require written and in-person feedback during teacher evaluation, 19 states require either written or in-person feedback, eight states require feedback with no specification on delivery, and eight states do not require feedback. These policies encourage administrator evaluators to focus on lesson plans, alignment to the standards, and other means of measurable student achievement in teacher feedback. Additionally, administrator feedback tends to be better received by teachers when it:¹⁵

- Promotes teacher autonomy through relevant dialogue
- Develops clear and specific goals for teachers
- Creates a support system in which they may utilize feedback constructively to improve their professional practices and job satisfaction.

Teachers also tend to perceive feedback as beneficial when it comes from peers or experienced mentors,¹⁶ is non-threatening,¹⁷ and offers practical strategies for supporting instruction.¹⁸ Also, administrators may have more favorable views of their feedback exchanges than the teachers who are being evaluated.¹⁹ However, research suggests that providing specific and collaborative feedback can have a positive impact on classroom practices, administrator leadership development, and student achievement.²⁰

What are research-based strategies for administrators to provide productive feedback to teachers?

Professionals learn best when they are given numerous chances to practice the crucial skills required for effective instruction. Teachers are given feedback on their work, and when they are assisted in reviewing and enhancing instruction.²¹ When providing feedback, there are a number of effective strategies that administrators can use:

- **Evaluation distribution** throughout the school year and among administrators helps measure and develop teacher quality while reducing the administrative burden for evaluation output.²²
- **Multiple observations** are necessary for performance evaluation, while a single evaluation can indicate progress.²³
- The **emotional tone of feedback** is important for how teachers receive it and incorporate it into their practice.²⁴ Feedback that has a negative tone is associated

¹⁵ Kraft & Christian (2022); Ford et al. (2018)

¹⁶ Keiler et al. (2020)

¹⁷ Guskey & Link (2022)

¹⁸ Guskey & Link (2022)

¹⁹ Reddy et al. (2018)

²⁰ Song et al. (2021)

²¹ McLeskey (2017)

²² Galey-Horn (2017)

²³ Kettler & Reddy (2019)

²⁴ Berkovich & Eyal (2021)

with negative perceptions of leadership, decreased communication, lower usage of coping strategies, and ultimately teacher burnout.

- **Using an instructional coach** increases the likelihood that the evaluation process is collaborative and that the feedback is safe, legitimate, and useful for development.²⁵ It is also important to address barriers for coaches by creating tools that make it easier for evaluators to complete observation cycles and give teachers more insightful, data-based feedback.²⁶ Administrators should collaboratively communicate with instructional coaches about their work and role in providing feedback to teachers.²⁷
- **Standardized teaching practice rubrics** provide principals with research-based evidence indicators to support data collection during observations, allowing administrators to substantiate and provide explanations.²⁸
- **It is helpful when administrators have similar content knowledge** of the teachers they are evaluating when providing feedback.²⁹
- **Offering specific feedback** from administrators helps increase its perceived value by teachers.³⁰ Feedback should focus on implementing specific practices³¹ and tasks that promote learning.³² This can help create an alliance between the evaluator and teacher where the teacher does not feel that their teaching practices are being judged.³³
- **Collaborative dialogue** is a conversation where two or more individuals actively participate cooperatively and constructively to exchange ideas, solve problems, or reach a common understanding. When specific feedback is combined with collaborative dialogue, this can encourage teacher reflection on their teaching practices.³⁴ Collaborative dialogue includes specific feedback on observed teaching practices and encourages creativity, innovation, and a sense of collective ownership over the outcomes of the conversation.³⁵
- **Incorporating input from students** regarding how they feel about their learning can offer helpful evidence supporting feedback provided by school administrators to teachers.³⁶ Teachers want to know if the students understand the lessons and are engaged with the class.³⁷

School board policies in MERC divisions include a common vision to promote instructional effectiveness and improve overall professional performance through formal appraisal

²⁵ Ford et al. (2018)

²⁶ Kunemund et al. (2022)

²⁷ Galey-Horn (2017)

²⁸ Wiezcorek et al. (2019)

²⁹ Quebec Fuentes & Jimerson (2020)

³⁰ Smith et al. (2020)

³¹ Kunemund et al. (2022)

³² Kraft & Christian (2022)

³³ Kunemund et al. (2022)

³⁴ Smith et al. (2020)

³⁵ Smith et al. (2020)

³⁶ Guskey & Link (2022)

³⁷ Guskey & Link (2022)

coupled with consistent feedback from administrators or supervisors. They specifically address administrative feedback by outlining policies, rubrics, and timelines for performance evaluation. Additionally, they often reflect strategies articulated in research:

- Proponents of **evaluation distribution** in school board policies mention the frequency of teacher evaluations for professional and probationary teachers throughout the school year. As an example of multiple evaluation opportunities, one MERC division requires evaluations to include an evaluation of cultural competency, and another explicitly outlines the frequency of formal and informal observations throughout an academic year.
- They often require that employees conduct **reflective self assessments** in addition to the feedback that they receive from administrators and supervisors to help promote ownership of the evaluation process and commitment to identified goals and growth areas.
- School board policies encourage **collaborative dialogue** between employees and administrators in setting goals for the year that will be evaluated, particularly in relation to student learning.
- Rubrics promote the provision of **specific feedback** to employees based on clear criteria discussed during **preplanning conferences** with administrators prior to beginning the processes of observation and evaluation.
- As a follow-up to the feedback process, school board policies often articulate the need for **providing appropriate professional development** related to identified growth areas.

What are key takeaways and recommendations for how administrators provide feedback to teachers?

Administrators are well-positioned to provide feedback to teachers to support their professional growth, ensure quality education, align goals, provide support and mentoring, evaluate performance, and foster a collaborative culture throughout an academic setting. The following are key takeaways and recommendations based on the research and policies summarized in this brief:

1. Administrators should **keep in mind that teachers are to be treated as professionals**, including in feedback scenarios. Through feedback, administrators can contribute to develop effective and impactful educators while promoting overall excellence in teaching and learning.
2. Administrators should **consider leveraging instructional coaches in the teacher feedback process**, both as partners in providing observations and feedback as well as in helping teachers put specific strategies and recommendations into practice.
3. As much as possible, **evaluation should be formative**, meaning it should provide supportive feedback that is intended to help teachers improve their instructional practice. The prioritization of formative evaluation, which includes a supportive and

improvement-oriented feedback process, advances teacher attitudes toward the legitimacy of this professional development process.³⁸

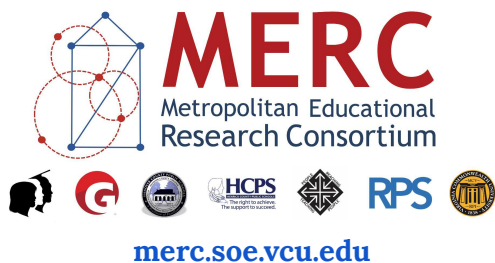
4. Emotional exhaustion, limited control, and increased teacher turnover are factors impacting the decline in the desire to pursue the teaching profession.³⁹ Thus, administrators must also consider emotional stress and burnout in the teaching profession. With this in mind, **written feedback should be reflective and written from a strengths-based perspective** and aligned with the [Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers](#).
5. When administrators provide feedback to teachers, it should be **specific, constructive, collaborative, and timely**. This can facilitate mutual commitment to goals identified in the processes of observation and evaluation. It should also connect teachers to professional development opportunities to address growth areas that emerge through the evaluative process.
6. Similar to how administrators provide feedback to teachers on a recurring basis, **teachers should have regular opportunities to provide feedback** to their administrators. This feedback should also be specific, constructive, collaborative, and formative.

³⁸ Ford et al. (2018)

³⁹ Shackleton et al. (2019); Owens & Hudson (2021)



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