

Evaluating Evaluations:

Using Teacher Surveys to Strengthen Implementation

By Ross Wiener and Kasia Lundy





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Executive Summary

Substantial progress has been made in the last several years in establishing meaningful teacher evaluation systems in K12 education, creating the foundation for improving teacher performance. Evaluating teachers is necessary but not sufficient, however, to improve instruction toward the ultimate goal of increasing student achievement.

The evaluation reform movement will have failed if these more rigorous evaluations do not translate into system-wide improvements in teacher effectiveness within the next five years.

To convert evaluation information into more effective teaching, teachers, principals, and system leaders need to embrace a culture of ongoing, two-way feedback and a commitment to continuous improvement.

Surveys are a critical component of well-designed continuous improvement systems. Surveying teachers to find out how they are experiencing evaluations and what they are getting from them can provide a great deal of information to school, district, and state leadership about how well evaluation reform is being implemented.

But surveys are only useful if they lead to change in the status quo. Otherwise, they will be met with cynicism and distrust. Change should be expressed through specific actions that address issues raised by survey respondents, which in turn leads to higher employee satisfaction and engagement with reforms over time. While many states and districts already survey teachers, the results historically have not been used strategically to build employee engagement or create reciprocal accountability between principals and teachers. **Conducting surveys or posting the results isn't adequate, but it's where most school systems stop.**

Why Survey Teachers? Targeted, well-designed and well-executed surveys can greatly benefit evaluation system reforms currently under way. They can:

1. Capture stakeholder feedback in a relatively quick and cost-effective way
2. Increase teachers' engagement in the evaluation process
3. Allow teacher growth and development to be valued explicitly
4. Provide actionable data on evaluation system implementation
5. Promote a healthy school culture if used appropriately

How to Get the Most Out of Surveys in the Teacher Evaluation Process. We identify several practices that are critical to effectively surveying employees and utilizing the information to improve individual and organizational performance. We also provide case studies of how different organizations have implemented this “virtuous feedback cycle”:

1. Engage key stakeholders upfront
2. Decide what you want to know and what you can act on to create visible change
3. Leverage existing survey mechanisms within the district
4. Share results and resulting actions with key stakeholders
5. Report results at the school level and take action to address issues identified by stakeholders
6. Ask about effectiveness of solutions over time
7. Preserve anonymity to guarantee honesty

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Introduction

Our review of studies on the subject of employee feedback and engagement indicates that organizations with high levels of employee engagement have larger talent pools, lower turnover, and better financial performance.¹ High-performing private-sector companies like **Apple** and **Mercedes-Benz** embrace surveys and conduct all-employee surveys regularly to gather critical, front-line feedback. They then use this feedback to make organizational changes: at **Apple**, employee focus groups identify key themes and issues from the surveys, employee teams then help develop solutions, which they present to store management. Store managers implement selected solutions, and by the time the next survey comes around, they can see whether the solutions are having the desired effects.

While school systems are different from corporations in many ways, employee feedback is equally relevant and useful in the school setting. High-performing education systems like **Aspire Public Schools** embrace surveys as a way to gauge employee satisfaction on a variety of programmatic and organizational dimensions, and use this feedback to build specific actions into their annual plans.

Surveys can provide school systems a direct and efficient way to conduct a pulse-check on whether important reforms are meeting their intended goals. Surveys themselves do not solve problems, and survey data should not be used in isolation from other important information. However, gathering direct input from teachers on their experience provides detailed, actionable information on what is working, and what isn't, in new evaluation systems. Moreover, when teacher survey results are shared transparently and used to adjust practice, it sends a clear signal that teachers' input is valued and is needed to improve historically weak feedback and development practices. Acting

on such feedback is not easy, but doing so can yield significant improvements in the evaluation system over time.

In the longer term, some school systems might want to develop a single survey instrument, given once annually, to ask about all aspects of the employee experience, including evaluation and professional development experience. However, in the short term, given that rigorous evaluation and feedback systems are still in relative infancy, we recommend a laser-like focus on evaluation system implementation and therefore a survey that focuses specifically on the implementation and impact of the evaluation process and may be administered more frequently (e.g., 2-3 times a year).

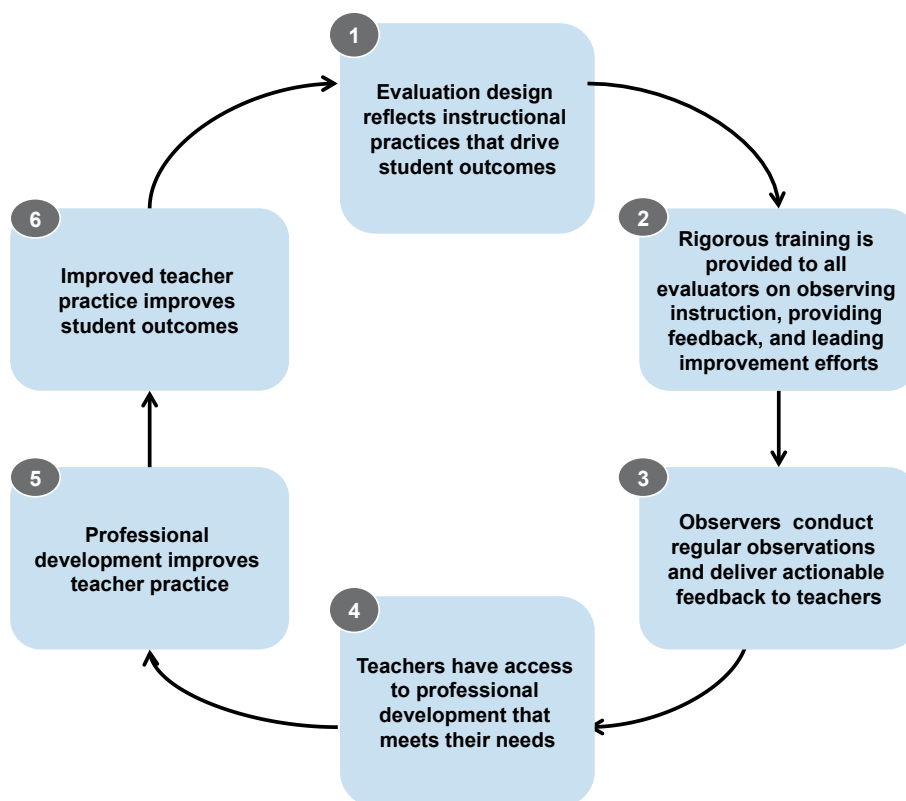
Evaluation Reform Theory of Action

There is a straightforward theory of action at play in teacher evaluations:

- Teachers have the most impact on student learning, yet they vary tremendously in their effectiveness.
- Schools and districts can evaluate teachers' effectiveness through a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods.
- Evaluating teachers provides information regarding teachers' strengths and gaps in their performance.
- If strengths are developed and gaps are addressed, teachers become more effective and students learn more.

Figure 1 below illustrates how a well-designed evaluation system can help districts not only put in place rigorous evaluations, but also help teachers and students improve as a result of the evaluation process.

Figure 1: Evaluation as Part of a Continuous Improvement Cycle



Supporting professional growth is not the sole purpose of evaluation, of course; employment and tenure decisions are directly affected, and there are additional implications for compensation, preparation, and recruitment. **But even under the most rigorous systems, the overwhelming majority of teachers fall in the middle of evaluation ratings, so the biggest prize lies in leveraging evaluations to improve performance of current teachers.**

While designing the mechanics of a fair and rigorous teacher evaluation system and developing related training (Steps 1-2) is painstaking work, using evaluation information to support improvement (Steps 3-5) requires ambitious change management that will challenge even the best principals and teachers. Part of the theory of action in emphasizing evaluations is that if principals and teachers have information on areas of strong and weak performance, strengths can be further developed and weaknesses can be addressed.

Beyond creating accurate performance ratings, the capability to (1) share this information with teachers in constructive ways; (2) design and access profes-

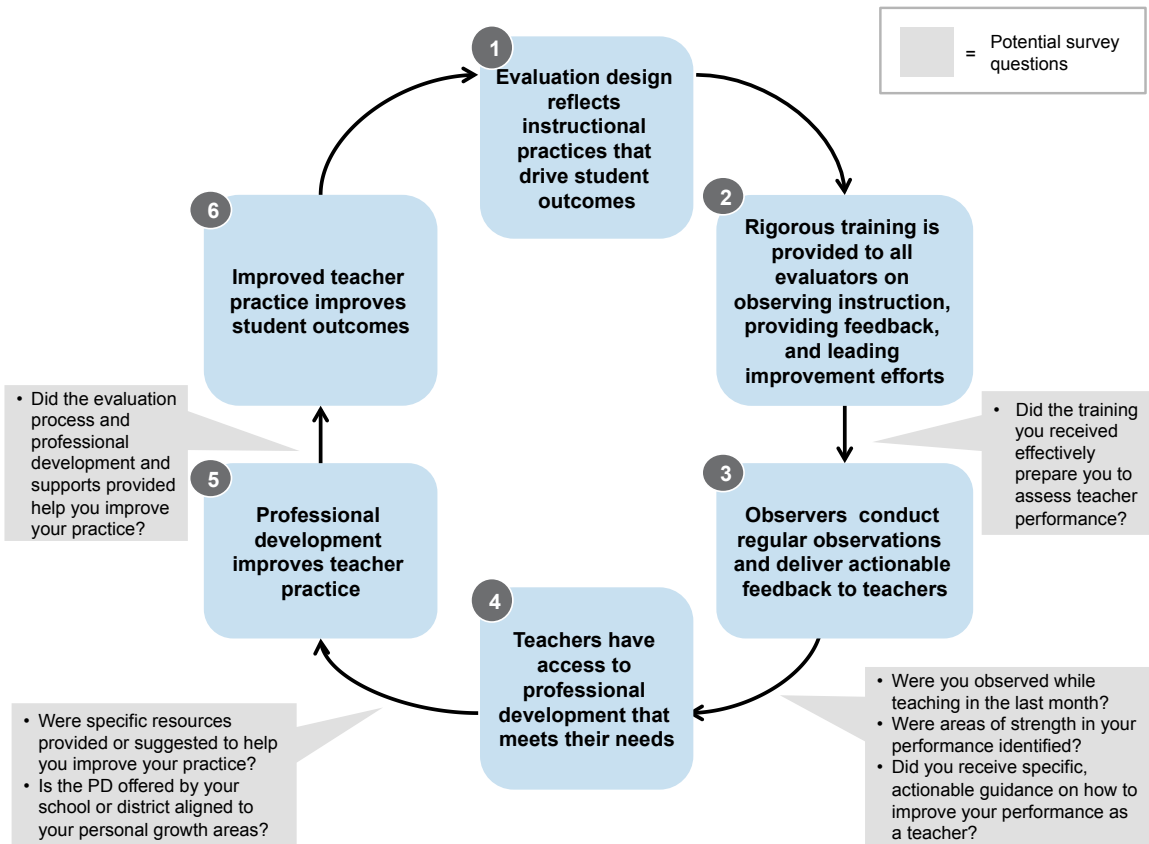
sional development that addresses areas of weaker performance; and (3) work with teachers over time to assess the efficacy of improvement efforts requires new skill sets and practices. To date, evaluations conducted in most school systems have been compliance exercises when they were done at all.

For evaluations to be “done right” – to create actual improvement in teacher effectiveness – intense training and coordination are needed, and also real transformation in the traditional culture of schools.

Despite these formidable challenges, or perhaps because of them, the formative aspects of evaluation have been insufficiently emphasized thus far in terms of energy and investment. **Systems need to find ways to prioritize these formative aspects or risk imposing a new evaluation compliance regime that fails to make anyone a better teacher.**

Figure 2 demonstrates how school systems can ask targeted questions at each step of the evaluation process to determine whether the formative goals of the evaluation process are being met and to identify the biggest pain points where solutions need to be developed.

Figure 2: How Surveys Fit Into the Evaluation Theory of Action



The encouraging news is that many school districts already administer school climate surveys, professional development surveys, or something similar, so the mechanisms are already in place to capture teacher feedback in a systematic way. Many past survey results have been ignored or met with apathy by administrators; this legacy may have left mistrust and doubt among teachers that needs to be overcome. If districts act on survey results in ways that are meaningful and transparent, they can build support among teachers, unions, and other stakeholder groups that have been skeptical of the focus on evaluations.

- **Aspire Public Schools** offer a promising approach. A high-performing network of 34 schools and 600 teachers that serves 12,000 predominantly low-income students of color in California, Aspire relies extensively on surveys and has developed strong processes for using the data to support a culture of continuous improvement. At the beginning of every school year, senior system leaders visit every school

to share the results of the prior year’s survey, analyze the results collaboratively at a whole-staff meeting, and establish action plans. Each school’s data is shown in relation to the overall system, providing context for the discussion. The data helps identify improvement areas for everyone – central office staff, principals, and teachers. In these “Close the Loop” meetings, senior system leaders engage entire school faculties, which sends a powerful signal about the importance of teacher voice and mutual accountability. (See case studies in appendix B.)

- **Traditional public school districts** are beginning to recognize the value of engaging their teachers to obtain this level of feedback. While we have found no examples of school districts that offer the entire “Close the Loop” feedback cycle deployed by Aspire, a handful of districts that were “early adopters” of teacher evaluation reform – among them, D.C. Public Schools, Hillsborough County Public Schools, Memphis City Schools, and New York City Department

of Education (See case studies in appendix B) – are beginning to incorporate parts of the feedback cycle, and have created survey questions designed to understand teachers’ perspective on the reforms they are implementing. To view some brief examples of their work, please click on the link.

- **States** can also be important influencers in this area. For example, the Tennessee Department of Education recently conducted a state wide Teacher Support Survey with all Level 1 teachers (i.e., those with the lowest performance rating) and randomly selected Level 2-5 teachers in the state to determine whether teachers are getting the support to which they are entitled and whether teachers are changing their practice as a result. Tennessee reported the survey results and findings publicly, raising implementation issues for attention.² In addition, some states administer statewide teacher surveys that ask teachers about their professional development needs as part of a broader teacher working conditions survey; the challenge for these states is to link the results of these surveys to improvements in design and implementation of teacher evaluations.

Districts that establish a culture of openness – by welcoming feedback, sharing survey results publicly, collaborating on action plans, and repeating the cycle to assess progress and identify new challenges – have the best chances of improving. When done well, surveys help turn data into action, reinforce the stated focus on teachers’ growth and development, and support continuous improvement at the individual, school, and system level.

What Are The Benefits of Using Surveys?

Many private sector organizations have, for years, embraced an “ask the end user” approach to improving products, services, and internal policies and processes. Schools can utilize a similar, survey-based approach to improving teacher evaluation and feedback systems.

1. Surveys capture stakeholder feedback in a relatively quick and cost-effective way

- The Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) study by the Gates Foundation³ revealed that students are accurate and reliable observers

of teachers; after all, they observe their teachers every day whereas evaluators drop in only periodically.

- Similarly, **teachers are most likely to be accurate and reliable in assessing principals’ performance, at least as it relates to teachers’ evaluations.** They can confirm if they are receiving feedback, and can assess the quality and actionability of feedback, guidance, and support they receive. This makes it more likely that evaluations will lead to improvements in teaching and learning.
- *Caveat:* While modifying or adding or a few questions to existing district surveys is relatively inexpensive, doing something about the issues identified through the survey can be quite resource and time intensive. This is where the system often breaks down for school districts. When feedback does not lead to continuous improvement of the system, mistrust and doubt start to grow.

2. Surveys can increase teachers’ engagement in the evaluation process

- Clarity as to how decisions are made and the ability to influence the decision-making process (e.g., through providing feedback that is not just heard, but also acted upon) are important drivers of employee engagement.⁴ Conversely, surveys that are poorly designed or executed, or surveys that do not result in any visible changes, can actually undermine engagement.
- Engaged teachers who believe their district is willing to learn from them and support them in meaningful ways are not only more likely to stay with the district, but also more likely to look for opportunities to improve their practice.
- **Giving teachers a voice in assessing the quality of feedback and supports they receive is likely to deepen teachers’ acceptance of evaluations.** This may be an especially important incentive for retaining talented teachers, who expect to be consulted and to play an active role in constructing a healthy and professional work environment.

3. Surveys allow teacher growth and development to be valued explicitly

- Teacher professional growth and development is commonly cited as a critical reason for estab-

lishing new evaluations, but **most of the focus in the field right now appears to be on the compliance aspect of evaluation.** Systems are collecting a lot of data to monitor observations (number of observations, range in ratings, correlation with other measures, etc.). This is legitimate administrative data that systems need to monitor whether the steps of the evaluation system are happening with fidelity to the design. **We are now at a critical inflection point. Using evaluation findings to enable teachers' growth and development needs to become an absolute priority equal to ensuring accuracy of observations.**

- Surveys articulate what is expected to happen during the evaluation and feedback process. **Given competing priorities and limited time, what gets measured gets done.** For instance, the New York City Department of Education asks teachers whether the evaluation system “helped them identify strengths and weaknesses in their instructional practice.” If teachers are asked whether strengths have been identified in addition to weaknesses, it creates the expectation that strengths will be identified. It is likely that leveraging strengths to mitigate weaknesses is an important aspect of improving performance. Systems that embrace this theory of change might want to ask specifically whether strengths have been identified. Likewise, if surveys ask whether feedback is connected to concrete improvement goals and development activities, it creates or reinforces an expectation that these aspects will be addressed and provides the basis for assessing quality of implementation.

4. Surveys are an important source of information on implementation issues

- District and state administrators can use surveys to obtain timely information on leading indicators (quality of implementation). Lagging indicators (student achievement) will not be able to tell districts anything about what worked or didn't work in the evaluation process.
- District staff can use survey data to address major pain points in implementation efforts:
 - For example, research from the Chicago Consortium and others documents that **many principals struggle to provide clear and actionable guidance to teach-**

ers.⁵ Since this guidance is essential to the efficacy of evaluations, it's vital to get information on how the feedback cycle is working so that schools needing additional attention and support are identified as soon as possible, and appropriate supports are provided to those principals who need them the most.

- In a related example, in **D.C. Public Schools (DCPS)**, a system that has undergone not only significant evaluation reform but also compensation reform, only 22% of high performers and only 33% of low performers report having at least one development area identified regarding their performance.⁶ For context, the initial *Widget Effect* study from TNTP revealed that 26% of all teachers reported having at least one improvement area identified in systems where no meaningful evaluation systems had been put in place. When the system is working properly, virtually every teacher should be aware of development areas. The relatively low percent of teachers in DCPS who report having at least one improvement area identified suggests that the implementation of IMPACT (DCPS' teacher evaluation system) may need more attention in this realm.

5. Surveys can promote a healthy school culture IF used appropriately

- Learning organizations aren't created by hope or exhortation alone; this work requires infrastructure and tools. As one example, **Mercedes-Benz USA** used an all-associate survey in 2006 to understand the most pressing issues facing the company after a failed merger. Using the survey results, Mercedes-Benz was able to achieve a remarkable bounce-back in employee engagement and total sales over the subsequent five years. (See Appendix B.)
- When systems put teachers' perspectives on the table, it becomes more likely that issues of school culture and leadership are acknowledged and addressed. Teacher surveys can create an opportunity for school leaders to model the type of openness to feedback and willingness to change that teachers are expected to embrace. For example, a top leader of **Aspire Public Schools** used a “Town Hall” meeting with school leaders and teachers to

share survey results that revealed lower satisfaction results with her work. The Aspire leader talked openly about the data, actions she took to improve, and what she had learned in the process. Actions like this model an open and robust continuous improvement approach: the willingness to take tough feedback and use it to make meaningful change for students, teachers, and school leaders.

- Making district leaders, principals, and evaluators – not just teachers – adopt a learning stance signals that everyone is responsible for improvement and balances the overriding focus on teacher accountability that has dominated conversations over the last few years. Holding school leaders accountable for improved results is an important part of this process.

Practical Tips for District and State Leadership: How to Get the Most Out of Surveys in Improving the Teacher Evaluation Process

In examining survey approaches of education organizations and leading private-sector companies, we identified several practices that are critical to effectively surveying employees and utilizing the information to improve individual and organizational performance. What stands out is that the organizations' processes for sharing and acting on survey data are as important as the collection of the underlying data itself. **Organizations that have been most successful in engaging their employees have made a real investment of time and resources into a whole range of internal practices**, including human resource solutions (mentorship, skill development, career development, compensation reform) and engagement mechanisms (ranging from surveys to focus groups to teams focused on solution design). None of these organizations collects the information for compliance or public reporting purposes; the information is a vital component of organizational learning, reciprocal accountability, and continuous improvement.

1. Engage Key Stakeholders Upfront

- Districts can take advantage of existing advisory panels or committees to gather input ahead of creating or launching an important survey. Many districts already have teacher

RECOMMENDED ACTION STEPS

1. Engage Key Stakeholders Upfront
2. Decide What You Want to Know and What You Can Act On
3. Leverage Existing Survey Mechanisms
4. Share Results and Intended Actions with Key Stakeholders
5. Report Results at the School Level and Take Action to Address Issues Identified by Stakeholders
6. Ask About Effectiveness of Solutions Over Time
7. Preserve Anonymity to Guarantee Honesty

and principal advisory panels that focus on issues of curriculum and instruction, and some have begun to create standing district-wide committees around teacher effectiveness issues. Also, if there are specific groups of teachers the district is trying to retain, they should be consulted in this process. Finally, this is a good engagement and collaboration opportunity with teacher unions and associations. **Whatever the engagement mechanism, make sure teachers have authentic opportunities to shape the work and aren't merely asked to watch a presentation about what's already planned.**

2. Decide What You Want to Know and What You Can Act On

- **Aspire Public Schools** used to include the following statement on its annual teacher survey: "I have a best friend at work." The organization hypothesized that friendships in the workplace contributed to teachers' level of engagement at work, which in turn influenced how well teachers performed and how likely they were to remain at Aspire. While the hypothesis is very likely true – this question is a common one on employee surveys – Aspire decided to remove the question because it was not an area that the leadership could address in any significant way.

- Once districts decide on the purpose of the survey, they can tailor questions accordingly. **Surveys signal what the system values, so system leaders should make sure the questions produce information that is important and intended to be acted on.** In the area of teacher evaluations and teacher effectiveness, there are at least four potential topics on which districts could focus: fidelity of implementation, impact of evaluation on teachers, teachers' experience of support and development, and teachers' overall impression of the evaluation system.
 - For an example of what a teacher survey could address, please refer to Appendix A.
- ### 3. Leverage Existing Survey Mechanisms to the Extent Possible
- Many districts and schools today administer multiple surveys throughout the year (to varying degrees of effectiveness), including annual climate surveys as well as surveys around professional development, new teacher support, instructional reforms/pilots, departmental supports, and more.
 - **Where possible, districts should incorporate questions on evaluation and support into existing surveys or online processes,** such as an online PD sign-up or an online observation and evaluation system (to the extent they exist).
 - If past surveys haven't been used effectively or seen as important, consider an independent survey administration or other strategies to ensure a fresh start for surveys related to assessing teacher evaluation efforts.
- ### 4. Share Results and Resulting Actions with Key Stakeholders
- **Aspire Public Schools** uses "Close the Loop" meetings at the beginning of each school year to share results of the previous year's culminating survey and to engage staff on key topics. Over time, these meetings have evolved to include more time for discussion and problem-solving and less time spent on direct presentation. Aspire's "Close the Loop" process is now a real opportunity to engage in deeper conversation about the issues facing schools. This process helps build a transparent culture of continuous improvement and builds engagement throughout the system.
- **The Memphis City Schools System (MCS)** shares survey results with school-based Teacher Ambassadors and the union to update their peers. MCS also works with the organization Teach Plus to host networking events open to all teachers where they can look at results, continue to engage on key issues, and celebrate each other's work.
 - Senior executives at **Teach for America** regularly examine corps members' survey responses, and give each regional office an interactive dashboard that helps them explore the data on their own. Regional leaders are expected to analyze and respond to the survey results, and national staff ask about survey data and actions taken in response as a touchstone in regular discussions.
 - **Districts have a wide variety of options to communicate with their stakeholders, but should first create a clear strategy for communicating survey results to a broad range of stakeholders who have different needs.** Teachers need to see the results as a first step in demonstrating that the system takes survey findings seriously. Principals need to see the results and to learn how to analyze the results and engage others, including teachers, in establishing actions steps. Supervisors of principals need to use the data in supporting and managing principals' performance. Central office administrators, the superintendent, and the Board of Education need to examine the data for patterns, progress, and overall health of the system's culture. **The schedule for sharing data, convening stakeholders to analyze and plan, and exercising oversight from senior management should be established and communicated up front to guard against the results being neglected.**
- ### 5. Report Results at the School Level and Take Action to Address Issues Identified by Stakeholders
- Follow-through determines whether surveys have positive impact, but it has been a weak link in public education. If surveys are administered but the results never acknowledged publicly, or if results are published but no action is clearly connected to the process, then surveys can reinforce negative impressions of school systems as non-responsive, bureaucratic places to work.

- Local leaders need to be held accountable for responding to survey results. Processes for engaging employees, developing action plans, and following up to see whether progress was accomplished need to become part of the culture of the organization. Senior managers must model this openness themselves and must put these issues into supervisory discussions and performance evaluation ratings.

- At **Apple**, employee surveys are conducted every few months. After each survey administration, store managers review the data for their store. Managers involve employees in identifying solutions to the issues rather than delegating the effort to HR. Managers don't wait for analysis and recommendations from a central team; rather, it's the store manager's responsibility to act on the feedback in a timely manner so that the next survey (just a few months later) shows improved results. (See Appendix B)

- In **Memphis City Schools (MCS)**, district leaders have relied on surveys, focus groups, and working groups of teachers to improve the evaluation system from the beginning. A working group of teachers convert feedbacks from survey results and focus groups into specific recommendations for the district, which they present to the Board of Education for approval. (See Appendix B)

- Districts should disaggregate survey results by school, and use school-level results and subsequent actions taken by a school leader as key inputs in assessing the school leader's effectiveness.** Districts must encourage and empower school leaders to effect change and hold them accountable for doing so, while also ensuring that the right supports are in place to make them effective. Tracking principal responses to survey results should be an important responsibility for principal supervisors.
- While it is critical for school leaders to take ownership of issues identified at the school level, some issues cut across many schools and suggest responsibility at the system level.

For instance, if a teacher survey were to reveal a common pattern across the district in the quantity and quality of feedback being given to teachers, the district would likely need to ramp up its evaluator training and create meaningful accountability regarding quality of feedback provided by evaluators. Similarly, if teachers consistently identify a specific area of weak professional development, the district may need to come up with a system-wide approach to increasing and improving resources in this area.

- The "action orientation" is the most critical step for schools and districts to get right – if no action comes out of the survey process, not only will the evaluation system stagnate, but teachers will lose faith in feedback loops and disengage. Responsibilities and timelines for processing and publishing survey results and following up on action steps should be established by the district by the time surveys are launched to encourage persistence through cycles of feedback and continuous improvement.

6. Ask About Effectiveness of Solutions Over Time

- Asking employees consistent questions over time allows organizations to assess progress. **Uncommon Schools**, a nonprofit network of charter schools in New York, New Jersey, and Massachusetts, includes the following question on their annual survey: *"My school has worked to address the results of the survey from last year. (Strongly disagree to Strongly agree)."* With this one question, Uncommon signals to both teachers and school leaders the importance of addressing feedback to continuously improve the organization every year.
- In another organization, **a leader in software applications**, the HR department has developed and continuously improves a **"work health" survey**, which is filled out by every employee in the organization. The results are aggregated at the team and manager level, and are made publicly available. Managers can see whether their ratings have improved over time, and there is incentive to improve as the **results of the survey are part of the manager's year-end evaluation.**

- The concept of assessing progress over time is especially important in the context of teacher evaluations because there is a massive new investment in using evaluations as a lever for teacher and student improvement. It is vital to track whether teachers and others are perceiving improvements in successive implementation cycles of evaluation reform. Such a focus will go a long way toward building employee trust in the system and a commitment to making evaluation really work in schools. **In the end, continuous improvement of the system itself can communicate the system's values more persuasively than any policy directive.**

7. Preserve Anonymity to Guarantee Honesty

- Especially in the current environment around evaluations, anonymous surveys are much more likely to elicit candid responses without fear of individual repercussions. At least in the short to medium term, while this work is nascent, anonymity needs to be preserved to encourage honest feedback that can help shape the evaluation and development systems in productive ways.

Conclusion

Current evaluation efforts will be for naught unless teachers feel an ownership stake in the effort to define expectations, provide feedback, and continuously improve instruction. **Displacing deep-seated cultural norms** – e.g., compliance mentality; unwillingness to acknowledge distinctions in effectiveness; “this-too-shall-pass” neglect of new policy initiatives – with a culture of openness and continuous improvement **will only come about as a result of deliberate focus and strategic implementation.**

Surveys can create vital information quickly, reliably, and relatively inexpensively (an important attribute in an era of austerity). They provide a tangible vehicle for expressing values and priorities, and assessing leadership quality and organizational health, which is why they are used by so many high-performing organizations in the private, public, and education sectors.

Surveys respect teachers' voice, provide diagnostic information regarding principals and schools, and give system leaders an invaluable, authentic lens into front-line implementation. If used well and situated in cycles of inquiry and action, surveys can advance meaningful evaluations and support a healthier culture in schools.

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- 1 Q¹² *Meta-Analysis*, Gallup Consulting (2006); *Trends in Global Employee Engagement*, Aon Hewitt (2011); Harvard Business Review Blog Network, *Transform Your Employees into Passionate Advocates*, http://blogs.hbr.org/cs/2012/01/transform_your_employees_into.html; *Lessons from the Turnaround of Mercedes-Benz USA*, Great Places to Work Institute (2011)
 - 2 For information on Tennessee's survey regarding implementation and impact of new teacher evaluations, see: <http://team-tn.org/assets/misc/Teacher%20Support%20Survey.pdf>
 - 3 *Ensuring Fair and Reliable Measures of Effective Teaching: Culminating Findings from the MET Project's Three-Year Study*, Gates Foundation, January 2013
 - 4 *Trends in Global Employee Engagement*, Aon Hewitt (2011, 2012)
 - 5 See, *Rethinking Teacher Evaluation in Chicago*, Consortium for Chicago School Research, November 2011, pp.23-25; <http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/publications/rethinking-teacher-evaluation-chicago-lessons-learned-classroom-observations-principal>
 - 6 *Keeping Irreplaceables in D.C. Public Schools: Lessons in Smart Teacher Retention*, TNTP (2012)

Appendix A: Sample Teacher Survey

Below we propose key questions related to evaluation that district leadership could ask of teachers in a district-wide survey – we have labeled this as the “**Core Survey.**” We recognize that districts have different contexts, may be at different stages of evaluation system implementation, or may be interested in drilling deeper into specific aspects of implementation. Therefore, we also include some **Supplementary Questions** that could be added to the Core Survey, depending on the district’s individual needs. Neither the core questions nor the supplementary questions are meant to be exhaustive. Rather, they are good examples of questions we have seen after reviewing a broad array of district and school surveys. Districts should modify these, as needed, to fit their purposes.

Core Survey Questions

1. **OBSERVATION FREQUENCY:** How many times this year (or semester, if conducting the survey twice a year) have you been observed?
 - a. 0
 - b. 1
 - c. 2
 - d. 3
 - e. 4 or more times

2. **TIMELINESS OF FEEDBACK:** On average, how long after your observation did you receive feedback (verbal or written)?
 - a. Within 1-2 days
 - b. Within 1-2 weeks
 - c. Within a month
 - d. More than a month later
 - e. Did not usually or ever receive feedback

3. **DEVELOPMENT PLAN:** Do you have a professional growth/development plan that you developed with your evaluator and that guides your work?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

4. **DEVELOPMENT PLAN:** [If Q4 = Yes] Is your professional development plan a “living” document that is updated throughout the year and incorporates observation feedback?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

5. **QUALITY OF FEEDBACK:** To what extent do you agree with the following statements? On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 5 being “Strongly Agree.”
 - a. Post-observation feedback was credible (demonstrated observer’s knowledge of pedagogy and/or content area).
 - b. Post-observation feedback identified areas of strength in my performance.
 - c. Post-observation feedback identified areas of expected growth/areas in which I am expected to improve.

6. **RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS:** To what extent do you agree with the following statement? On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 5 being “Strongly Agree.”
- Specific resources were provided to help me learn and grow in the areas identified in my observation feedback.
 - The professional development and training I received throughout the year (or semester, depending on frequency of survey) was tailored to my specific needs/development areas.
7. **OVERALL PERCEPTIONS:** To what extent do you agree with the following statement? On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 5 being “Strongly Agree.”
- I know the criteria that are used to evaluate my performance as a teacher.
 - Overall, the annual observation and feedback cycle has helped me make improvements to my teaching practice and become a better teacher.
8. **OPEN-ENDED QUESTION:** What was the most helpful activity you participated in this year or support that you received that helped you address your areas of growth or think about instruction differently? [For example, this includes but is not limited to: school-based coach, peer coaching, a specific professional development event, etc.] What could improve the evaluations system?

Potential Supplementary Questions

SITUATION 1: A district is interested in understanding the level of confidence teachers have in the observation process, and whether additional training and norming of evaluators may be needed, or whether better matching of observers with content areas is needed.

Sample question: To what extent do you agree with the following statements? On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 5 being “Strongly Agree.”

- My observer(s) understand my content area well enough to accurately assess my performance.
- My observer(s) have been fair and objective.

SITUATION 2: A district wants to understand to what extent specific policies and guidelines around certain aspects of evaluation system implementation (e.g., mix of formal/informal, type and mix of observers) are being followed, district-wide and school by school.

Mix of formal vs. informal observations: Getting at this would require modifying questions 1-3 on the Core Survey, e.g.:

- How many times this year have you been formally observed? [Where Formal = announced observation, typically full period]
- How many times this year have been informally observed [Where Informal = unannounced observation, typically shorter in duration, could be a 15 minute walkthrough]

Number and mix of observers: Getting at this would mean adding questions such as:

- How many different observers conducted formal (informal) observations of your classroom practice this year? [1, 2, 3, more than 3]
- Who conducted the formal (informal) observations? Please check all that apply. [Principal, assistant principal, department chair, peer reviewer, school-based teacher leader, other – please provide role / title]

SITUATION 3: A district is interested in determining whether year-end evaluations are taking place as planned and whether they are effective relative to ongoing observation feedback throughout the year.

Sample questions: This may require adding questions such as:

- Have you had an end of year conversation with your primary evaluator? [Yes/No]
- To what extent do you agree with the following statements? On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 5 being “Strongly Agree.”
 - o The person who evaluated my performance evaluated me fairly and accurately.
 - o The person who evaluated my performance knew what my goals were for my students.
 - o The person who evaluated my performance knew how much growth and progress my students made this year.
 - o The end of year conversation provided good formative feedback to help me improve.

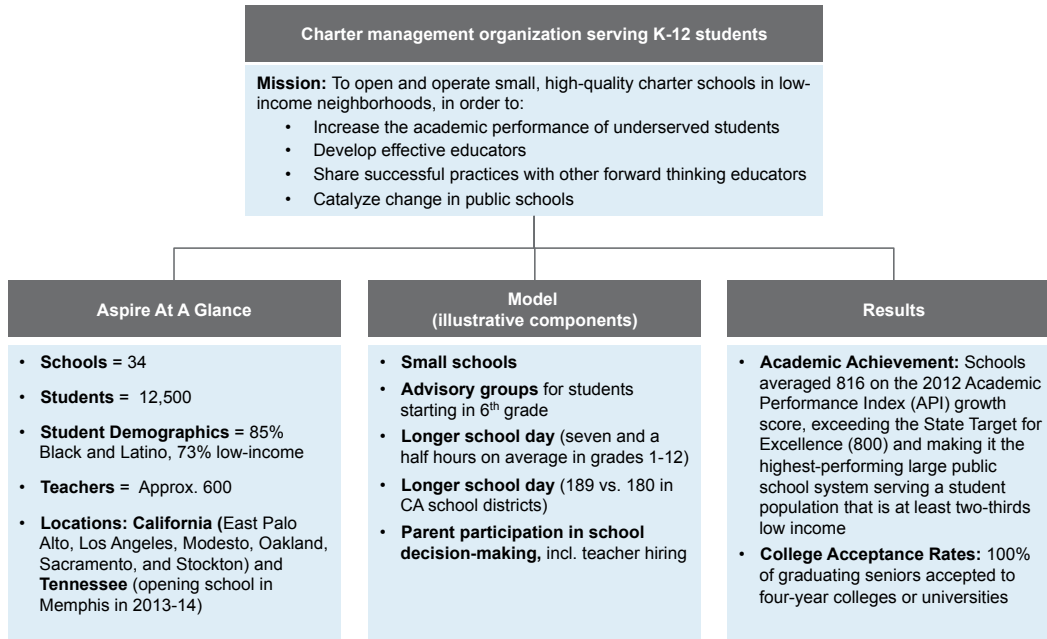
SITUATION 4: A district is implementing a multi-dimensional evaluation system with multiple measures (e.g., student growth data and student survey data) and is interested in learning whether teachers receive the quantitative data in a timely manner and whether they have appropriate supports to help them interpret and learn from the data.

Sample questions:

- Do you receive growth results or student survey results in a timely manner (e.g., before your year-end evaluation)? [Yes/No]
- If student growth data is prepared after the year-end evaluation deadline, do you receive it before the next school year begins? [Yes/No]
- Were specific resources provided (at the school level or at the district level) to help you interpret the student growth (or student survey) data and to help you make relevant adjustments to your practice? [Yes/No]

Appendix B

Case Study 1: Aspire Public Schools Aspire Public Schools Overview



Source: Aspire Public Schools

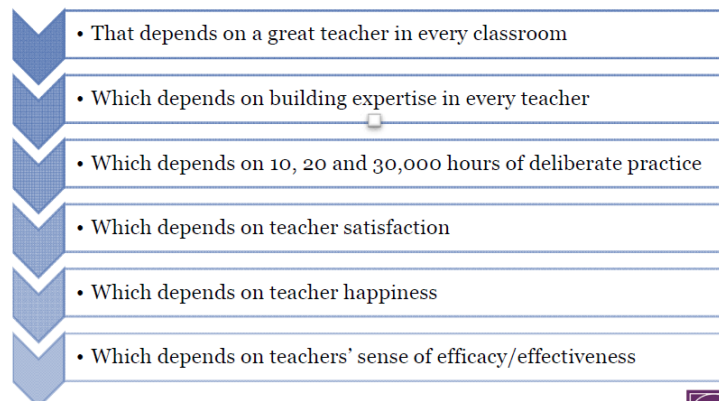
Case Study 1: Aspire Public Schools

Aspire values teacher satisfaction as it relates to individual and collective effectiveness that ultimately get students “to and through college”



Aspire Public Schools' Theory of Change

Our goal: get kids to and through college



So... what will help teachers feel and be effective??....



3

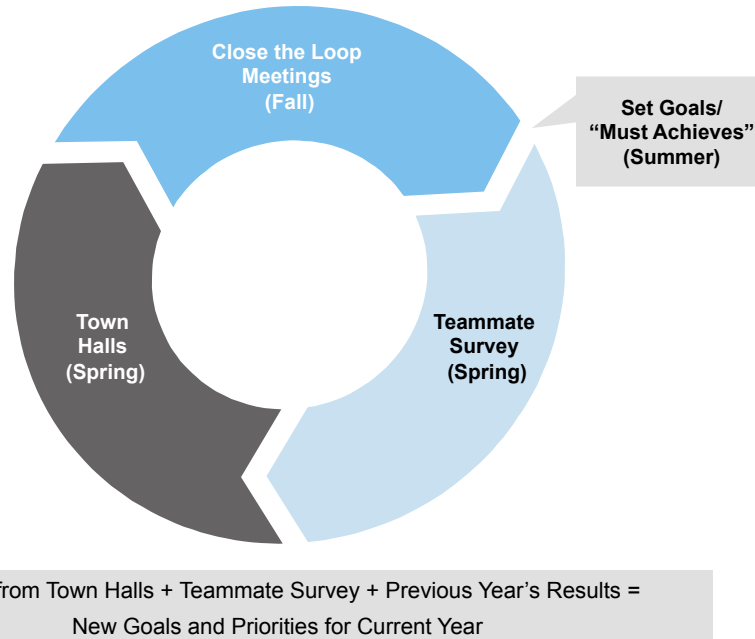
Source: TNTP website

Case Study 1: Aspire Public Schools

Aspire has instituted an annual Cycle of Inquiry that gives teachers (Teammates) an important voice in setting organizational priorities



Aspire's Cycle of Inquiry



Source: Aspire Public Schools

Case Study 1: Aspire Public Schools

Aspire is committed to sharing out and acting on results of feedback: the Cycle of Inquiry culminates in “Close the Loop” meetings



Aspire's Cycle of Inquiry: Continuous Improvement

Spring		Summer	Fall
Town Hall Meetings	Teammate Survey	Goal-setting	Close the Loop Meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aspire CEO conducts “town halls” to start a dialog about what’s happening in the organization Aspire pre-sends brief survey to teammates to solicit topics to address 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual survey helps leadership gauge strengths and weaknesses of the organization Data is shared with all principals and becomes part of their annual goal-setting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aspire leadership uses the summer to analyze survey results, create action plans, and set goals for the coming years, taking into account feedback obtained throughout the Cycle of Inquiry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Area superintendents and principals engage school staff with last year’s survey results to share out and “dig in more” Senior leadership sets the template for materials shared at the meeting, which ensures a unified message, but the template can be tailored to local (school) context, as needed

- Town Hall Meetings:** Typically 2-3 schools per town hall meeting. Number of attendees typically ranges from 30 to 50 per meeting
- Close the Loop Meetings:** Typically occur in September and October, and don’t begin until 3-4 weeks after school starts. Conducted on “Minimum Days” (each Aspire school has one “minimum day” a week that is used for teacher professional development in the afternoon. Meetings are open to all school staff. Attendance rate is about 85%

Source: Aspire Public Schools

Case Study 1: Aspire Public Schools

Aspire's annual "Teammate" survey helps gauge teacher satisfaction across key categories (Sample Questions)

Relevant to evaluation, coaching and professional development



Survey Sections						
Affiliation	School Site Culture	Coach & Site Teammate Ratings	Home Office Services	Data Use and the Cycle of Inquiry	Professional Growth and Development	Job Satisfaction
Sample Questions: Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I understand and embrace the vision and mission of our organization. I understand the goals of the organization beyond my school site. Organizational policies and decisions are communicated well. I would recommend employment at Aspire to my friends or family. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> My site's goals for student achievement are clear and well-defined. Academic interventions at my site support our lowest performing students. Our policies/practices support high academic achievement and an expectation that college is for all students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall, this coach helped me become a better teacher. This coach has helped me become more reflective about my teaching practice. The principal frequently visits my classroom to observe the quality of my teaching. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall, how would you rate your satisfaction with the service from Human Resources? Finance? IT? Special Education? After-School Programs? (etc.) What specific suggestions do you have for ways your school (and/or the Home or Regional Office) could more effectively support you? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I believe that using data has helped me raise the achievement level of my students I am comfortable creating assessments to target specific standards for my grade level and/or subject area. Overall, I feel comfortable with the "cycle of inquiry" and using data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I know what is expected of me at work. In the last six months, someone at work has talked to me about my progress. Overall, I am satisfied with the amount and quality of the training and professional development that I have received this year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I plan to work at Aspire for 5 more years. My compensation is adequate. My workload is sustainable. This job is compatible with having children. At some point this year, I have considered leaving Aspire.

Source: 2010-11 Aspire Public Schools Teammate Survey

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Case Study 1: Aspire Public Schools

"Close the Loop" Sample Meeting Agenda (60-90 minutes long)



1	Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why are we here? (E.g., to close the loop on all the feedback gathered throughout the year, to share draft organization-wide goals which were informed by the feedback, and to invite additional reactions / input from staff)
2	Celebrate Strengths and Successes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aspire starts by celebrating <u>organization-wide successes</u> of the year before. This is a place where local context can be added (e.g., for Aspire's area superintendents to share the <u>local</u> successes of that region specifically)
3	Share Clarified Vision / Mission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aspire shares with its staff its evolving vision and mission statement
4	Report out on Prior Year's "Must Achieves"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aspire shares how well it achieved on the previous year's annual goals
5	Share Key Themes: Teammate Surveys and Town Halls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aspire shares out key themes from Town Halls and how the organization is addressing those issues, both in the short and long term. Aspire also shares out Teammate survey results, at the organization and regional level. Finally, staff members are also provided with a link where staff members can access all of the data from the survey
6	Share 2012-13 Must Achieves and a BIG Goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aspire shares its goals for the coming year
7	Q&A Period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting leader ends the presentation portion of the meeting on a celebratory note (e.g., award announcements), reminds staff that "the management team has an open door policy" and lists their cell phone numbers, and opens up the meeting for questions

Source: Patheon Interview with Aspire Public Schools (December 2012)

6

Case Study: Apple

Apple surveys its employees every three to four months in an effort to get the best thinking on how to improve customer experience



Background

- About 30,000 of Apple's 43,000 employees work in Apple Stores

Actions Targeted at Building a Strong Customer Experience

- Starts with employee training, but continues with ongoing "professional development" embedded into the daily operations of the store. This professional development occurs through employee participation in the Net Promoter for People program:
 - Apple Retail surveys its employees every three to four months to determine how the company can make each store a better place to work (Net Promoter for People or NPP program)
 - Employees review the store's NPP results, discuss them to ensure accurate interpretation, and identify the issues most vital to that store's success
 - Store leaders then recruit teams of employees to consider each high-priority issue and develop alternative solutions, which the teams then present to leaders over subsequent weeks
 - Managers don't wait for analysis and recommendations from a central team; rather, they know that it's their responsibility to act on the feedback they received in a timely manner so that the next survey (just a few months later) shows improved results.
 - Each store adopts the best solutions, communicates back to the team ("you said-we did"), and then evaluates the results through subsequent NPP surveys

Results

- According to the research firm RetailSails, in 2011 Apple's 327 stores sold \$16 billion in merchandise worldwide
- Each Apple Store employee brought in \$473,000 on average, far exceeding the revenue per employee benchmark of \$206,000 across other electronics and appliance stores

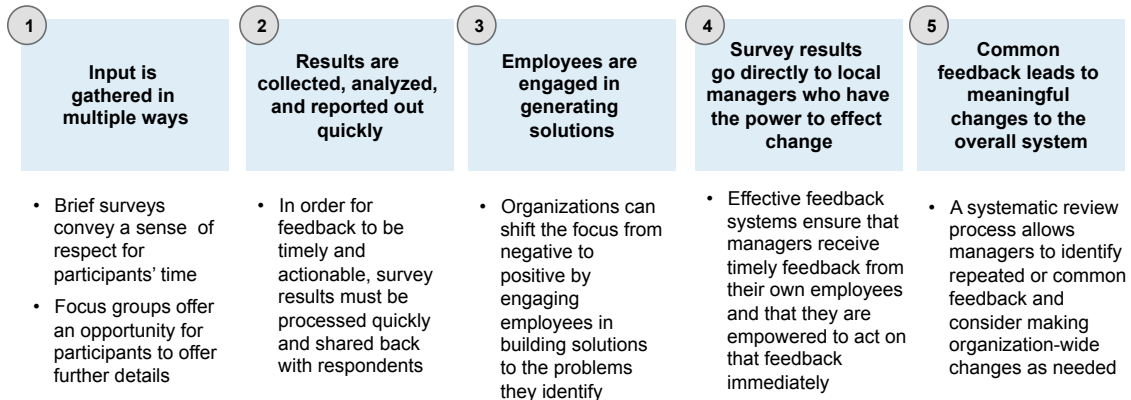
Source: New York Times article, *Apple's Retail Army, Long on Loyalty but Short on Pay*, June 23, 2012; Harvard Business Review, 2011

Case Study: Apple

Apple's employee survey approach points to a number of best practices



Best Practices for Soliciting and Acting on Employee Feedback



Source: Harvard Business Review, 2011



Case Study: Mercedes-Benz USA

Mercedes-Benz USA used an employee survey to spark its 2006-2011 turnaround

Company Background

- Mercedes-Benz USA (MBUSA) is the sales and marketing arm of the German car maker, based in Montvale, NJ
- 1,600 Associates support over 350 independently owned and operated dealerships in the US
- They are responsible for ~20% of total worldwide sales

Situation

- In 2006, after a failed merger with Chrysler, the company faced a number of challenges, including:
 - Weakened relationships with customers and car dealers
 - Need to cut costs internally due to the economic recession
 - Low Associate satisfaction and engagement

Actions

- MBUSA launched an all-Associate survey to understand the most pressing issues facing the company
- Using the survey results, MBUSA leadership Identified three areas for focused improvement: (1) Leadership effectiveness, (2) Associate satisfaction, and (3) Associate engagement
- MBUSA then mapped specific actions and initiatives to each area of focus (e.g. for leadership effectiveness, they launched a 360-feedback program and expanded training) and measured progress on these areas every year

Results

- As of 2011, despite the economic downturn, Associate engagement had never been higher (20% increase between 2006 and 2011). Over the same five year period, sales increased significantly, approaching peak pre-recession levels

Source: Great Place to Work Institute, 2011



Case Study: D.C. Public Schools (DCPS)

DCPS used teacher feedback from multiple sources to make key changes to IMPACT, the evaluation system

Background

Schools = ~ 125	Students = ~ 46,000	Teachers = ~ 3,600
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- DCPS first introduced its new evaluation system, **IMPACT**, in 2009. IMPACT ratings for teachers are based on four components: (1) **Student Achievement** (student growth on assessments), (2) **Instructional Expertise** (five observations, four formal and one informal, each year), (3) **Collaboration**, and (4) **Professionalism**. IMPACT evaluations result in **five ratings**: Highly Effective, Effective, Developing, Minimally Effective, and Ineffective.

Situation

- **Quality of Observations and Feedback:** Of the five observations per year, three are conducted by school administration, and two are conducted by independent, expert practitioners called master educators. Survey results revealed that teachers' experiences with IMPACT varied dramatically based on the quality of their interaction with evaluators, which was inconsistent across the district
- **Evaluation Component Relative Weights:** For the first three years of IMPACT, individual value-added (IVA) results made up 50% of evaluation (student achievement) for teachers of tested subjects. Teachers emphasized that the value-added calculation was too complex and confusing, and results came back too late to be meaningful

Actions

- **Quality of Observations and Feedback:** DCPS created a team of 7 people focused on evaluator training and norming activities. DCPS is also currently building a sophisticated online portal for evaluators with self-guided training modules, videos, and more
- **Evaluation Component Relative Weights:** As of fall 2012, individual value-added (where measured) now makes up only 35% of teachers' IMPACT evaluation scores, while 15% comes from Teacher-Assessed Student Achievement Data (TAS)

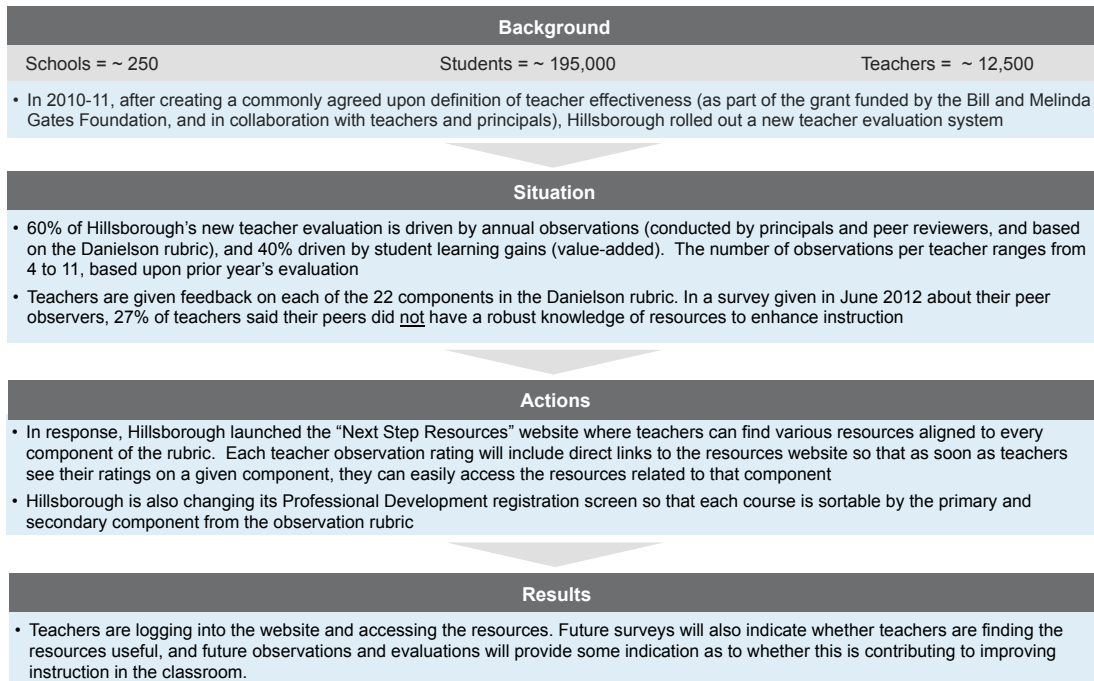
Results

- By investing resources in training activities, DCPS is ensuring that every teacher in the district is more likely to receive a rigorous observation with high-quality, actionable feedback. By incorporating principal-approved TAS goals into evaluation ratings, DCPS enables teachers to set personal goals they find important and relevant, and to track and reflect on personal progress over the course of the year

Source: D.C. Public Schools

Case Study: Hillsborough County Public Schools

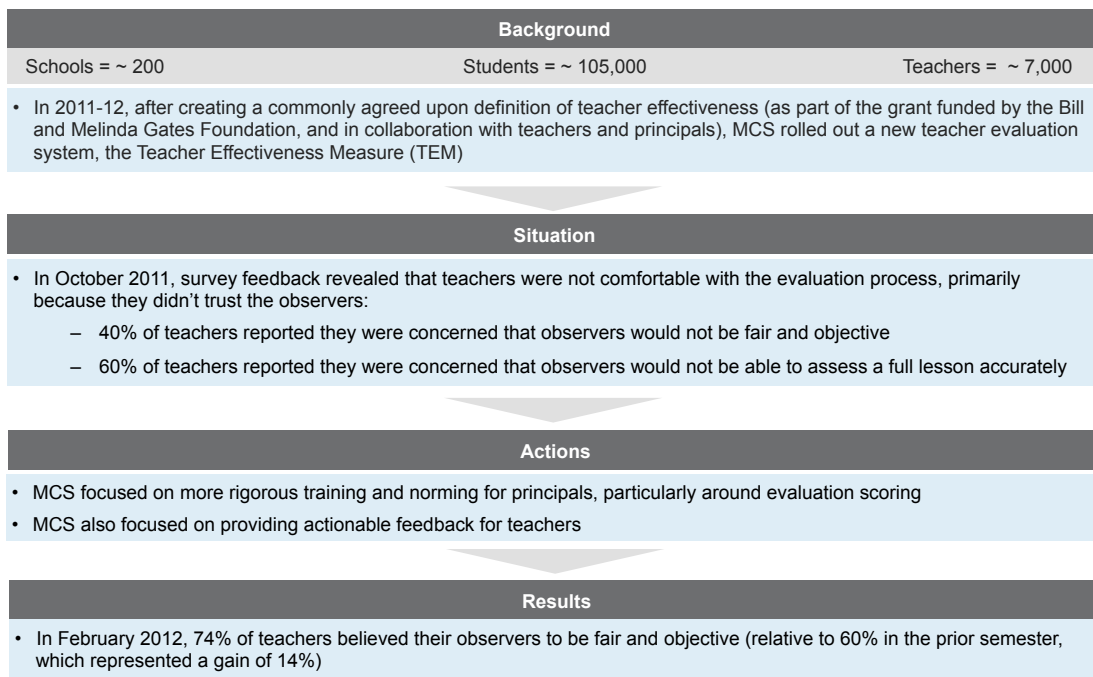
Hillsborough responded to issue raised in teacher survey by improving teacher access to resources aligned to the 22 evaluation rubrics



Source: Hillsborough County Public Schools

Case Study: Memphis City Schools (MCS)

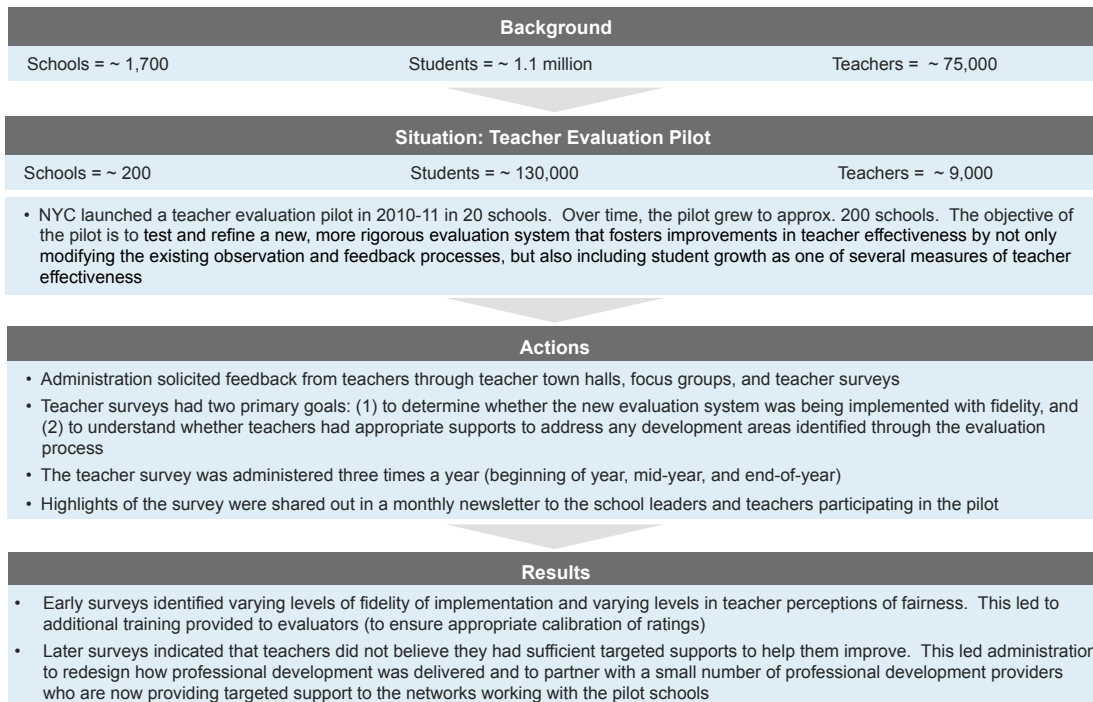
MCS used teacher survey feedback to double-down on evaluator training, resulting in increased teacher confidence levels in the system



Source: Memphis City Schools

Case Study: New York City Department of Education

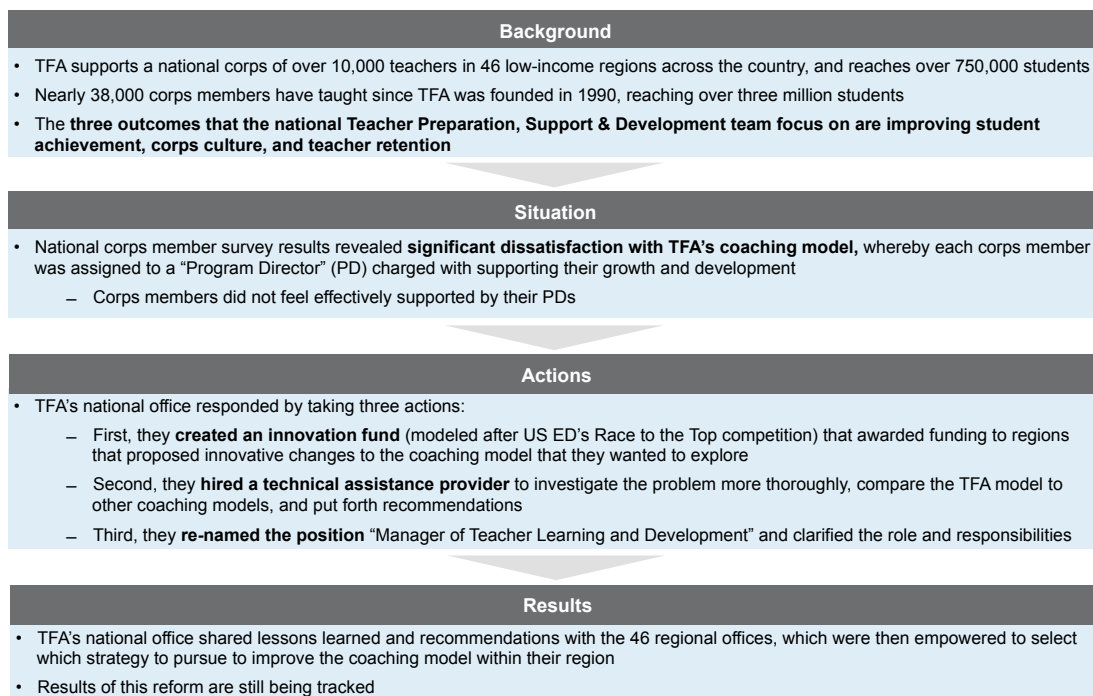
NYC DOE has used teacher survey findings to improve the execution of the new evaluation system and to provide more targeted supports to teachers



Source: New York City Department of Education

Case Study: Teach for America (TFA)

TFA used survey feedback to improve its coaching model for corps members



Source: Teach for America



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