



The Network for Public Education



Teachers Talk Back:

Educators on the Impact of Teacher Evaluation



2016



Introduction

Teachers choose the teaching profession because of their love of children and their desire to help them grow and blossom as learners. Across the nation, however, far too many educators are leaving the classroom. Headlines report teacher shortages in nearly every state. One factor reported in almost every story is the discouragement teachers feel from a reform movement that is increasing pressure to raise student test scores, while reducing support. This pressure dramatically increased with the inclusion of student test scores in teacher evaluations, with some states using them to account for as much as 50% of evaluation scores. When combined with frameworks, rubrics, and high-stake consequences, the nature of teacher evaluation has dramatically changed, and narratives from educators across the United States document that it has changed for the worse.

The Network for Public Education commissioned a study and survey in the fall of 2015 to learn more about the impact of teacher evaluation on the education profession. The survey asked educators about the impact of evaluation on their work, their students, and the culture of their schools. Over the course of a few weeks, 2,964 teachers and principals from 48 states responded. A team of teachers and administrators analyzed the data and reviewed the narratives told by practicing educators—voices seldom heard in policy discussions.

Here is what we learned:

- Teachers and principals believe that evaluations based on student test scores, especially Value Added Measures (VAM), are neither valid nor reliable measures of their work. They believe that VAM scores punish teachers who work with the most vulnerable students. Of the respondents, 83% indicated that the use of test scores in evaluations has had a negative impact on instruction, and 88% said that more time is spent on test prep than ever before. Evaluations based on frameworks

Across the nation...far too many educators are leaving the classroom. Headlines report teacher shortages in nearly every state.

and rubrics, such as those created by Danielson and Marzano, have resulted in wasting far too much time. This is damaging the very work evaluation is supposed to improve, as valuable time is diverted to engage in related compliance exercises and paperwork. Of the respondents, 84% reported a significant increase in teacher time spent on evaluations.

- The emphasis on improving test scores has overwhelmed every aspect of teachers' work, forcing them to spend precious collaborative time poring over student data rather than having conversations about students and instruction. Sixty-six percent of

Executive Summary

respondents reported a negative impact on relationships with their students as a result of the pressure to focus on test scores.

- Over half of the respondents (52.08%) reported witnessing evidence of bias against veteran educators. This supports evidence that evaluations are having a disparate impact, contributing to a decline in teachers of color, veteran teachers, and those serving students in poverty. A recent study (ASI, 2015) found that changes to evaluation practices have coincided with a precipitous drop in the number of black teachers in nine major cities.

- Teacher professional development tied to the evaluation process is having a stifling effect on teachers, by undermining their sense of autonomy, and limiting their capacity for real professional growth. 85% of respondents indicated that high quality professional development is not connected to their evaluations, and 84% reported a negative effect on conversations between teachers and supervisors. Collegial relationships have also been affected, with 81% of respondents reporting negative changes in conversations with colleagues.



Six Recommendations

1. The use of student test scores for evaluating teachers is fundamentally invalid and unreliable. It has a damaging effect on the relationships between teachers and students, and between teachers and administrators. It incentivizes “teaching to the test,” thereby narrowing the rich curriculum that our students deserve. **We recommend an immediate halt to the use of test scores as any part of teacher evaluation.**
2. Teacher collaboration, by definition, should be led by teachers and be an authentic component of their professional life. It is less effective when mandated and tightly managed from above. Teachers should have a voice in determining the focus of collaborative activities and guide the process. **We recommend that teacher collaboration not be tied to evaluation but instead be a teacher-led cooperative process that focuses on their students’ and their own professional learning.**
3. Teaching is complex work that cannot be captured by rubric scores or numbers. The implementation of numerical sorting schemes for teacher evaluation has led to the de-professionalization of teaching and discouragement within the profession. **We recommend that the observation process focus on improving instruction—resulting in reflection and dialogue between teacher and observer—the result should be a narrative, not a number.**
4. There is substantial evidence that new evaluation practices require teachers and administrators to spend significant amounts of time on completing forms and paperwork, with scant evidence of a positive impact on instruction or student outcomes. **We recommend that evaluations require less paperwork and documentation so that more time can be spent on reflection and improvement of instruction.**
5. There is evidence of a negative, disparate impact on teachers of color and veteran teachers in the current evaluation practices. This impact is exacerbating the current decline of teachers of color in the workforce. Evaluations must be designed to ensure that they are bias-free to encourage and support diversity in the profession. **We recommend an immediate review of the impact that evaluations have had on teachers of color and veteran teachers.**
6. Embedding teacher professional growth within the evaluative framework has proven to be counterproductive. Teacher professional growth is most effective when it is an authentic component of teacher and school improvement and not determined, or directed, by evaluation scores. **We recommend that teachers not be “scored” on professional development activities nor that professional development be dictated by evaluation scores rather than teacher needs.**

The use of student test scores for evaluating teachers is fundamentally invalid and unreliable.





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Educators on the
Impact of Teacher
Evaluation

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Changes to
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Overview

Teachers have become increasingly overwhelmed by the growing demands placed upon them, demands that often arise from outside of the profession. A 2015 collaborative survey conducted by the American Federation of Teachers and the Badass Teachers Association cited “workplace stress,” associated with increasing job demands, as significant concerns to the 30,000 educators who responded (AFT, 2015). Another recent survey of over 53,000 teachers in the state of Georgia found that nearly half are planning to leave the profession within five years. Many cited the inordinate emphasis on test scores in teacher evaluations as a primary reason for their dissatisfaction (Owens, 2015).

As school districts scramble to fill vacant teaching positions, they have been forced to hire long-term substitute teachers and uncertified instructors. Wisconsin considered legislation last year that would have authorized school districts to address the crisis by hiring non-licensed personnel to teach (Beck, 2015).

Students pay a price when teaching is in turmoil. The radical shifts in education policy have led to a high rate of turnover for teachers with a detrimental impact—especially on

low-income, bilingual, disabled, and at-risk youth (Ronfeldt & Loeb, 2012).

Since President Barack Obama took office in 2009, most states have implemented new teacher evaluation systems that include student academic performance. National Conference of State Legislators (NCSL, 2013) reports that more than two-thirds of states enacted legislation to qualify for incentives offered by the U.S. Department of Education

The radical shifts in education policy have led to a high rate of turnover for teachers with a detrimental impact—especially on low-income, bilingual, disabled, and at-risk youth.

that required that standardized test scores be a significant component of teacher evaluations in order to qualify for \$4.35 billion in competitive Race to the Top (RttT) grants, or a waiver from No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Forty-eight states and the District of Columbia applied for at least one round of RttT grants; 34 states and the District of Columbia received NCLB waivers (USED, 2015).

Under the new teacher evaluation systems, a significant portion of evaluations are tied to multiple measures of student performance, as determined by the state or district,

including statewide standardized tests and interim assessments using complex Value-Added Model (VAM) formulas. The use of VAM has been highly controversial. According to statistician Henry Braun (2005), “These models require data that track individual students’ academic growth over several years and different subjects in order to estimate the contributions that teachers make to that growth. Despite the enthusiasm

these models have generated among many policymakers, several technical reviews of VAM have revealed a number of serious concerns.”

An additional component includes measures such as peer or principal

observations, student and/or parent surveys, and teacher attendance. VAM scores allegedly provide the quantitative, objective data needed to evaluate teachers and principals, and frameworks or rubrics are intended to “objectify” the observation process, which by its very nature, is subjective.

Fifty-six percent of our respondents report using one of two widely used evaluation frameworks. Of these respondents, 67% are in schools using the Danielson framework, while 33% are using the Marzano framework.

Overview



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The Use of Test
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Former U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan institutionalized the evaluation of teachers and principals tied to standardized test scores by issuing a mandate that scores be a significant part of teacher evaluations in order to win RttT grants or obtain ESEA waivers. The common method of doing so is the creation of VAM or growth score, designed to comparatively measure the influence of a teacher or principal on the standardized test scores of individual students. According to the 2015 National Council of Teacher Quality (NCTQ) State of the States report, 14 states and the District of Columbia required the use of evaluation results when deciding which teachers should be laid off, superseding consideration of experience or seniority (Doherty & Jacobs, 2013).

VAM establishes no baseline from which to compare projected growth; only a very limited number of individuals nationwide are able to replicate the algorithm for VAM making it nearly impossible to replicate a score or explain scores to employees and stakeholders. In addition, VAM is filled with ambiguity in the values and definitions assigned to teachers (AERA, 2015; ASA, 2014; Braun, 2005). The validity of VAM has been called into question for its lack of accuracy and consistency and its failure to fully account for the many factors that contribute to student academic progress including, poverty, bilingualism, and learning disabilities. Because teachers account

for only 10% of the variation in student performance, improvement strategies dependent on test score results are unlikely to succeed (Haertel, 2013).

Peer reviewed studies and the research community have questioned the validity and reliability of VAM. Recently, the American Educational Research Association (AERA, 2015) issued a strong statement cautioning against the use of VAM scores due to "wide agreement that unreliable or poor-quality data, incorrect attributions, lack of reliability or validity evidence associated with value-added scores, and unsupported

“Ranking teachers...can have unintended consequences that reduce quality.”

claims lead to misuses that harm students and educators.” An additional statement regarding the use of VAM was released by the American Statistical Association (ASA, 2014) which warned, “Ranking teachers by their VAM scores can have unintended consequences that reduce quality.”

Even if VAM or growth scores were remotely accurate, the unintended consequences on students remain, including narrowing the curriculum and teaching to the test. The class roster gains undue importance as some students with “growth” potential are more beneficial to teach, while others are less desirable due to criteria that limits growth, such as a learning disability, performing

at grade level, or above grade level including giftedness.

Presently, only eight states have either rejected the use of test scores in teacher evaluations, or temporarily suspended their use. An additional five states give them very limited or undefined value. Alarming, despite warnings against the use of VAM and growth scores, sixteen states either count test scores as 50% of a teacher’s and/or principal’s evaluation, or structure evaluations in such a way that a teacher or principal cannot be rated effective without reaching a certain threshold in their students’ scores (Doherty & Jacobs, 2015). Lawsuits have begun, including one brought by New York veteran teacher Sheri Lederman, who challenged New York’s APPR evaluation system (Strauss, 2015).

Our survey respondents reported that the use of student standardized test scores in teacher evaluation has predominantly had a negative effect on eight areas of the teaching profession: classroom instruction, instructional strategies, classroom time spent preparing for tests, self-reflection, anxiety related to evaluation, professional feedback, professional development, and collaboration with colleagues. In our survey, 61% of respondents noted that the use of student standardized test scores in teacher evaluations had a negative impact on their relationships with their colleagues citing reasons such as forced collaboration and competition.



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Collaboration and Data

The Use of Test Scores in Teacher Evaluation

The majority of the comments from the survey note that collaboration with colleagues is now carefully orchestrated by administration with a majority of time spent determining how to improve test scores. This top-down, forced model of collaboration does little to improve instruction. It narrows the curriculum, stifles teacher autonomy and makes it nearly impossible to make holistic decisions about students. It directly contradicts the research showing that most effective models of professional collaboration leverage the expertise within a school to build collegial communities (Leana, 2011).

Respondents wrote that meetings with administrators and other "experts" to discuss data have replaced teacher-led collaboration. One educator in Louisiana wrote,

"Collaboration with colleagues is not teacher-focused. Administrators decide what we 'collaborate.'"

An educator in Washington noted that the evaluation system tied to

student standardized test scores has forced collaboration that

"is solely focused on red tape requirements over improvement of practices."

When asked how the inclusion of student standardized test scores in teacher evaluation has affected classroom instruction, 88% of our respondents viewed its impact as negative. Comments repeatedly noted that teacher collaboration is driven by data analysis focused on test score improvement. Inquiry teams have changed from studying instructional practices to data mining, which is the process of collecting, sorting, and analyzing large amounts of data to determine trends or discover patterns. Teachers are no longer able to take the time

"to plan fun units that kids might enjoy," instead, *"depressing constant attention [is placed] on what kids can't do and how to make them do it" (New Mexico).*

One respondent in Michigan shared,

"More time is spent on data than actual collaboration of strategies. Professional development is usually irrelevant to teaching, [but is] relevant for data."

Another respondent in New Mexico commented,

"Most everything my peers and I do in terms of instruction, planning, collaboration, professional development, and reflection is driven by the need to improve student test scores, even to the detriment of student needs."



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The Use of Test Scores in Teacher Evaluation Competition Among Teachers

Seventy-two percent of respondents also reported that the use of standardized test scores in teacher evaluations had a negative impact on sharing instructional strategies. Reasons include the fear of job loss if they do not have top test scores. This is resulting in competition and the guarding of best practices and effective instructional strategies. A Tennessee educator wrote,

"Teaching success has become a zero-sum game; a victory for you in your test scores is a defeat for me."

Another in Washington noted,

"If I'm going to be compared to

my peers, then my inclination is to keep the best lessons and the best strategies to myself. Collaboration goes out the window."

Some districts use "stack ranking" in which a predetermined number of teachers can achieve top evaluations and scores. One educator in Tennessee noted that in such a system,

"You do not want to share your teaching strategies for someone to have better scores than you."

This culture of competition instead of collaboration is exacerbated in schools where merit pay programs are in place.

A teacher from Indiana stated,

"Collaboration - my scores vs. your scores for table scrap stipends. Kids are so stressed about tests. My evaluation really stressed me out the last two years—the table scrap stipend is very important to my family's finances since my salary has been frozen for six years."

Another respondent in Florida wrote,

"Collaboration is devalued since bonuses are tied to test scores, and teachers need [their own scores] to be better."

Seventy-two percent of respondents also reported that the use of standardized test scores in teacher evaluation had a negative impact on sharing instructional strategies.



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Frameworks:
Danielson and
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Overview

According to Charlotte Danielson, there are two goals for teacher evaluation: quality assurance and professional development. The Danielson Framework for Teaching seeks to provide specific, objective criteria to describe teaching behaviors in evaluations. The intent is to minimize the subjectivity that results from differences among evaluators. The model calls for extensive training of evaluators and a common understanding of the definition of good teaching (Danielson, 2010).

The Danielson Framework attempts to measure evidence of effective teaching, collaboration between teachers and evaluators, and self-directed professional inquiry. Student test score data is not an individual indicator in this model, but can be used as evidence or artifacts for indicators where appropriate (Danielson, 2008). The Danielson Model's Framework for Teaching consists of four domains: Planning and Preparation, Classroom Environment, Instruction, and Professional Responsibilities, with 22 components, and 76 smaller elements, each of which is rated (Danielson Group, 2013).

Although the Danielson Framework presents what appears to be a straightforward description of classroom teaching, teachers are finding it cumbersome and exhausting. An elementary teacher

from Michigan had this to say about her Danielson evaluation:

"...every move in the classroom needs to be documented and noted. Every conversation with a parent, photos, individualized student learning plans, every pretest and post-test needs to be analyzed, grouped and evidence of re-teaching must be documented. Teaching has become a profession of documenting. By the end of the year, I'm expected to turn in, what amounts to, a thesis study in data."

Rather than being used as a tool to help educators think about their work, the framework makes educators justify their practice and instructional choices.

Teachers cite other problems. Rather than being used as a tool to help educators think about their work, the framework makes educators justify their practice and instructional choices. Rather than promoting collegial conversations during which qualified instructional leaders coach educators to adjust and learn new strategies, the Framework supports an evaluation processes where if something is not documented, a teacher loses "credit." In this system, snapshots of instruction take on oversized importance as measurements of ability, devoid of context.

Marzano's Teacher Evaluation Model is billed as the first to correlate instructional strategies to student achievement. According to Learning Sciences International, which markets Marzano's model, it is "grounded on experimental/control studies that establish a direct causal link between elements of the model and student results" (Marzano, 2015). Marzano's model is organized into four domains: Classroom Strategies and Behaviors, Planning and Preparing, Reflecting on Teaching and Collegiality and Professionalism. The

four domains contain sixty elements that establish a knowledge base for teaching and a structure for the development of expertise. The Marzano method offers summative calculation tools for

scoring teacher evaluations that weigh value-added student data and other components, such as walk-thru observations and student surveys (Marzano, 2015).

A Florida teacher using the Marzano framework states,

"We have to learn the evaluation during meetings that could be better spent doing school-wide business. We have done walk-throughs of other classes to see what we can learn (meaning more time away from my students). I have to sift through 60 indicators with minimal information provided about each. A manual was

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Overview

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NOT provided other than the online reporting system that requires drilling down several layers to find the little bit of specific information provided. We have to respond to the feedback given by an administrator who did a one-minute walk through and thought they knew what was going on in the lesson but didn't. Then the surprise evaluations that count are also in need of significant response. We're required to write Marzano Scales for most expectations and then use time in lessons (when we should be teaching) to explain their continued use to the students. Writing each scale takes a significant amount of time and there are more than 100 expectations at every grade level."

These models, Danielson, Marzano and others, are having a profound effect on the working lives of teachers and administrators. If there were evidence that these and other shifts in evaluation practices were having

a positive effect on improving instructional practices, educators would embrace them. But such evidence does not exist. A Florida middle school teacher responded,

"Before this evaluation model, we would choose a class period to be observed in. Our admin would come in for 30 or so minutes and we would meet afterwards. Now we have to do a preconference to discuss what we will be teaching, how we will teach it, what indicators they will be looking for, etc. Then admin stays for the whole class. If we don't state the learning goal, do a scale, celebrate success correctly, and on and on... we get docked. It has created the lowest morale I have seen in my 19 years of teaching. When you hear teachers talk about their evaluations, you will hear them discuss how it is all a show on observation day. Many teachers write a script to make sure they say the right things. No one can show me the research that says that it helps students better remember

the material if I say the learning goal five times throughout the unit, or that the scale really does help students. I keep being referred to Marzano's books..."

In response to these observation models, researcher Helen Hazi (2014) writes,

"If instrument developers [e.g. Danielson and Marzano] were interested in teacher learning, then they would help teachers to generate knowledge about their practice and reflect on it. Instead, the marketers are helping teachers to learn the language of their instruments and to have conversations about them. The accountability focus of teacher evaluation appears destined to undermine any teacher improvement focus. Thus, our current path may make it difficult to do both – evaluate and improve teaching – effectively."



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The Effect of Teacher Evaluation on Classrooms and Communities

Suspicion of Bias in Teacher Evaluations

Although children of color are now a majority of public students, there is a relative lack of diversity among educators. As late as 2011, the percentage of public school teachers of color was less than 20% (Feistritz, 2011). A 2014 study, entitled "The State of Teacher Diversity in American Education," revealed that the number of black teachers in nine large American cities has significantly dropped during the past decade. Washington, D.C., which implemented the IMPACT teacher evaluation system, saw the proportion of black teachers decline by nearly 28 percent (ASI, 2015).

It is possible that the new teacher evaluation systems may be shaping the demographics of the teaching force in ways that do not serve the best interests of students, especially students of color and high-needs students. This decline in teachers of color has a damaging effect on students of all races. Professor Terrenda Corisa White of the University of Colorado notes, "Research on the impact of teachers of color includes not only their 'humanistic commitments' to work in hard-to-staff schools or their presence as role models for students of color. Teachers of color also model diverse practices that broaden our conception and understanding of classroom pedagogy, student

learning, and educational equity. Despite the current emphasis on test score production and technocratic definitions of teacher quality, successful educators of color have taught us the value of culturally responsive teaching, which includes 'warm demanders' who do not divorce rigor and achievement from the cultivation of relationships with students that are grounded in a value for students' socio-emotional and cultural experiences in and out of schools. Indeed teachers of color are part and parcel of the on-going development of critical

It is possible that the new teacher evaluation systems may be shaping the demographics of the teaching force in ways that do not serve the best interests of students, especially students of color and high-needs students.

teaching practices and innovative approaches to pedagogy, such as hip-hop pedagogy and the inclusion of youth-based multi-modal literacies. These practices can improve levels of student engagement for all students, not only for students of color." (Ferlazzo, 2015)

A 2015 study by Sparks and Malkus discussed how black and Latino teachers are experiencing diminished levels of autonomy. The authors believe that experience to be a contributing factor to the decline in the numbers of minority educators.

Our survey asked educators whether they observed evidence of bias in teacher evaluations based on race, gender, age, veteran status, and novice status. Although less than a quarter of respondents answered "yes" when asked if they observed bias based on gender (24% responding "yes") or race (20% responding "yes"), when we disaggregated responses by the race of the responder, there were stark differences. Although 17% of white educators reported racial bias in evaluations, over 41% of

black and 30% of Latino/a educators reported such bias. Additionally, nearly half the respondents (47%) reported having observed age bias.

Some respondents noted the overlap of multiple categories

in terms of disparate treatment.

"I have received racial comments and insignificant criticism for the most minute things just to justify a low rating, despite the fact that my test scores were high." New York

"Minority teachers and veterans are most negatively impacted. Seems as if focus is on getting rid of these groups rather than being supportive." Rhode Island

Boston's revamped teacher evaluation system provides additional evidence of disparate impact by

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race. According to the Boston Globe, the Boston Teachers Union raised questions about the fairness of their new teacher evaluation system in 2013, finding that “black teachers were three times more likely than white teachers to be placed on a ‘directed growth plan’ or an ‘improvement plan,’ a move that can lead to termination if an evaluator determines a teacher has failed to overcome shortcomings in the classroom” (Vaznis 2013). Although 5.9% of Boston’s black teachers and 2.8% of Latino teachers were placed on directed growth plans in 2012, only 1.8% of white teachers have been identified as needing such remediation.

Concerns have also been raised in California due to disproportionate representation of teachers of color and veteran teachers among those referred to the Peer Assistance Review (PAR) program.

Finally, the Chicago Consortium for School Research’ most recent study of the REACH evaluation system in the Chicago Public Schools points to possible bias against both educators of color and educators who serve in schools with the highest percentages of students in poverty and color (Jiang & Spote 2016). A review from Chicago Teacher Union researcher Carol Caref states, “... the lower evaluation scores given to black teachers in particular may or may not represent their teaching abilities, and may instead be due to observer bias or school climate, but low scores are

driving many to leave the system, voluntarily or otherwise. Further, CPS does not appear to value their importance in the classroom. In many schools, in fact, the opposite is true, and black teachers, especially those at the top of the pay scale, are targeted for dismissal. It should be noted that Latino teachers and other teachers of color are also receiving lower evaluation scores.” (Caref, 2016)

A majority of respondents (52%) believed that veteran teachers (defined as six years or more teaching experience) were treated unfairly when evaluated. Over 1,000 respondents elaborated on their response. Their answers included the following:

“Administrators seem to be targeting veteran teachers!” Ohio

“Older teachers are getting pressure to get out. Very subtle. But it exists.” Indiana

“The veteran teachers seem to have the most trouble with the new model.” Michigan

The responses of surveyed teachers raise important questions regarding the objectivity of the evaluation systems. Respondents express concerns of bias and evidence of disparate impact on some groups. If such bias exists, this could result in disadvantages to students of color due to the denial of access to educators with whom they identify.

In surveying the research, we found insufficient scholarship in this area. To identify and mitigate any effects caused by bias in teacher evaluations, further investigation and research are needed. We must better understand how possible biases affect the evaluation process, and the role of teacher placement and context.



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The Effect of Teacher Evaluation on Classrooms and Communities

Teaching to the Tests

Diverse communities are also impacted by changes in curriculum and instruction that have accompanied the shift in teacher evaluation. Many survey responses detailed frustrations of teachers expected to use scripted curricula and/or expected to teach directly to the test. Teachable moments are viewed as wasted time if they do not improve test scores, even when these moments are often the lessons most meaningful to students. In communities where test scores are low, test prep may be emphasized at the cost of art, music and even academic subjects like social studies and science. If the school or district has a discipline and test prep climate—where students

are highly regulated—teachers have less autonomy to meet their student needs or interests.

An administrator in Pennsylvania wrote,

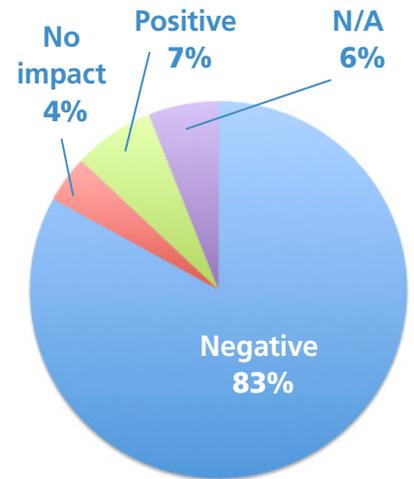
"There seems to be more stress that standards must be met and achieved by April 1 than in the past. Everything has to be accomplished by then in order to review for the upcoming testing program. Kids are being tested to death!!"

A retired elementary teacher in Pennsylvania expressed the frustration many other educators feel,

"We have to teach to the test because if we don't we could lose our jobs."

I have students who can successfully mark a correct answer but can't write correct sentences."

THE IMPACT OF TEST SCORES
IN EVALUATIONS
ON INSTRUCTION



Anxiety and Testing

A disturbing number of respondents commented that they and many of their colleagues are taking medications for anxiety. There were also comments on growing numbers of students needing medical attention and anxiety medication as a result of stress at school. A veteran elementary Special Education teacher in Tennessee shared,

"Everyone feels like losers. The testing system was designed to pick winners and losers."

A veteran high school teacher in Connecticut wrote,

"Students today are so stressed out because of high stakes testing. They

don't get to play outside as much, and they are evaluated constantly. They are just kids. They need to act like kids. Of course a third grade student isn't college or career ready! I would hate to meet an 8 year old who is."

There were many comments made by teachers longing to help their students but feeling the pressure to continue with test prep and testing. One Florida teacher stated,

"Teachers often feel driven by tests and evaluations instead of the real reason we do what we do. The evaluation system has been created to benefit students but it feels as if it has had the opposite effect. Morale

is way down, stress and anxiety is way up. Further, as much as I love teaching, I am seriously considering leaving the profession after this year. The amount of time and stress involved is taking a toll on my health."

The final MetLife Survey of the American Teacher was 2012. In that year, only 39% of teachers described themselves as "very satisfied" with their job, a 23 point decline from 2008. Half of the teachers surveyed indicated they were under "great stress" several times a week (MetLife, 2013).



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Less Time to Build Relationships

One of the most critical elements of teaching is a teacher's ability to have positive relationships with their students. The scheduling needed to accommodate test preparation and testing does not allow time for teachers to get to know their students well. Teachers reported having less time to learn how students' personal lives are affecting their learning. A newer elementary school teacher in Nevada wrote,

"There is no time for conversations."

A veteran school psychologist in Michigan wrote,

"Every aspect of the evaluation process is detrimental, polluting, corrupting, and toxic to every relationship that exists in a school. The relationship between administration and teachers is infested by fear. The relationship between teacher and student is fraught with caution. The relationship between teachers and parents is often times dishonest. The relationship between teacher and teacher has been decimated by everything that is despicable about self preservation."

Two-thirds of survey respondents reported effects on their relationships with students as a result of changes in teacher evaluation. An Indiana teacher reports,

"Creativity has left our classrooms. Free thinking students are frowned

upon and no longer celebrated."

Another Indiana high school teacher wrote,

"Students are stressed because of testing. They are unable to critically think [since] they use their time memorizing material for a test. Teachers are unable to bring those [critical thinking] skills and creativity into the classroom."

Twenty-eight percent reported that there have been no changes to conversations between teachers and

Teachers report that deteriorating relationships between many teachers and students is due to fear of the impact of test scores on teacher evaluation.

students as a result of the use student standardized test scores in teacher evaluations. Those respondents felt obligated to protect their students. Several made comments similar to this veteran high school teacher in Nevada,

"I say no impact on student conversations because we are trying to shield them from the nonsense we are being told."

A veteran K-2 classroom teacher at a charter school in North Carolina wrote,

"Teachers do everything we can to keep the negativity and stress away from small children. Completely

counterproductive."

Teachers report that deteriorating relationships between many teachers and students is due to fear of the impact of test scores on teacher evaluation. A veteran elementary science teacher in Washington summed it up,

"It [evaluation] has created a toxic environment. It's a source of great stress and that stress trickles down to the students."

Our survey revealed significant shifts in the use of time as a result of the new evaluation practices. Two-thirds of respondents said that prior to 2009, teachers spent 0 to 1 hour a month on evaluation-related activities. About 84% of respondents report a significant increase in the amount of teacher time spent. When asked how much time teachers currently spend, 75% of teachers reported that they spend four hours or more per month on activities related to evaluation, with over 27% reporting they spend 8-9 hours a month.

If this were time spent on what educators consider meaningful work, there would be few objections. But this is not the case. A Cleveland teacher wrote,

"In the past the principal would evaluate you once a year. Now you

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Less Time to Build Relationships

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get an evaluative piece five times a year. I don't have a problem with my admins coming in to evaluate me. Sadly, my principal is in my room LESS now because she is buried in paperwork. This year, it is so bad; she doesn't even know my students. She has always known all 500 kids by name."

A teacher in Indiana reports,

"The lesson plans ALONE for these lessons require 1.5-2 hours. Typically, I spend an entire week preparing. Afterwards, the reflection part of the post observation also requires two hours. As an elementary teacher in a school with over 75% free and reduced lunch population, I typically work far more than the traditional 40 hours per week, probably closer to 55. However, during the observation cycle (pre and post), I put in easily 60-65 hours. The saddest part is that it takes away from the energy and

time I have for lessons that address my students immediate needs. In no way do these observations reflect the impact—or the quality—of REAL instruction (and student connections) that once made me an award-winning educator. It is a tragedy."

These responses were echoed by hundreds of others with similar concerns.

An overwhelming number of responding teachers stated that how they relate to students has been altered by the evaluation system.

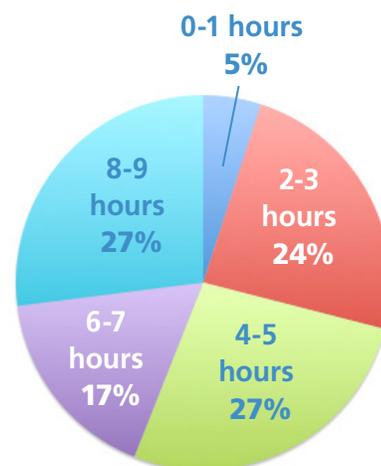
One New York teacher states that her administration is

"putting so much emphasis on test scores, which causes so many things to be left by the wayside - enjoyable literature, interesting projects, time to explore and question, and most of all, showing students that learning is fun."

A DC teacher adds,

"under the new system, teachers are often forced to use dry, outdated texts designed to prepare students for tests that are written in a way that is not only difficult for students, but experienced teachers as well." A Tennessee teacher shares being directed, "to focus only on the students who were capable of reaching their predicted growth score."

TEACHER HOURS PER MONTH SPENT ON THEIR EVALUATIONS



Less Time with Parents and the Community

Teacher relationships with parents have also been impacted by the current evaluation system. According to survey responses, low standardized test scores often confuse parents. Some parents encourage their children not to take the tests too seriously to prevent anxiety. Either of these attitudes present challenges for

educators, requiring them to address parental misperceptions and student apathy and frustrations with testing.

Media feeds the dissension and distrust. One veteran teacher in Connecticut states that she

"has never been treated more poorly by public perception"

than since the implementation of this new system. Another New York teacher wrote that her

"community is at odds: half of them standing in defense of teachers and the other half believing the media's assertions that teachers are overpaid for what they do."



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The Effect of Teacher Evaluation on Classrooms and Communities

Administrators' Discomfort with Evaluations

Evaluations as check lists

The supervision of instruction is one of the most important professional duties of the principalship--her primary responsibility is to be the instructional leader of the school. Dr. Madeline Hunter was a recognized authority on instructional improvement during the 20th century. She often spoke of the role of the school leader in improving instruction through clinical supervision.

Hunter stressed that the supervision of teaching through the observation process, was designed first and foremost, to help the teacher reflect on her practice and improve. She counseled principals and administrators to focus on only one or two aspects of the lesson during the post observation conference. She also saw the supervision of instruction as different from teacher evaluation, which is an institutional function. Hunter's greatest disappointment was that some administrators took her principles of effective instruction and attempted to turn them into a checklist. She said in 1991, "I have come out loud and clear that anybody who uses a checklist in observing a lesson does not understand teaching. There is nothing you should expect to see in every lesson. If somebody

told me I had to do all these things in every lesson, I'd say, 'I do not; I know better.' There is no such thing as a 'Madeline Hunter' lesson. There's an effective lesson or an ineffective lesson, but not a Madeline Hunter lesson." (Gursky, 1991).

The mechanical implementation of frameworks is nothing new, but because the new frameworks are more complex, the checklists have become longer. Noting that observations have become a checklist was well-articulated by this Florida educator,

The conversation between teacher and administrator has become focused on making sure all the bases have been covered rather than effective teaching practices.

"I think that the current evaluation system is very time-consuming and stressful for both teachers and administrators. It feels like a lot of busy work and hoop jumping and detracts from the work of educating students. Its forced implementation in our state is creating the opposite of what Charlotte Danielson envisioned. It's becoming a check off list of artifacts and evidence. The conversation between teacher and administrator has become focused on making sure all the bases have been covered rather than effective teaching practices."

Principals' objections to the use of test scores in teacher evaluations

In 2011, principals in New York State were so concerned about the inclusion of test scores in teacher evaluations that they wrote an open letter articulating their concerns and the research on which those concerns were based. The paper, which was sent to both the Board of Regents and the entire New York legislature, contained the signatures of over one third of the principals in the state (Feeney & Burriss, 2011). All of the unintended consequences

that the New York principals predicted have come to pass. Survey respondents wrote about how the pressure to get higher tests scores interferes

with their relationships with colleagues, parents, students, and their administrators. Our survey also found that the relationship between principals and teachers, which should be built on trust and respect, has been damaged by the new evaluation systems. Eighty-four percent of respondents said that the new evaluation system in their state had negatively changed the conversations about instruction between their supervisors and themselves.

Although a few respondents commented that the new evaluations had improved teacher/supervisor

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conversations, most comments reflected increasing mistrust, tension and deterioration in the relationship between teachers and administrators. One Texas teacher said that administrators

"no longer offer encouragement that might be later seen as conflict with forced evaluations."

The political climate that surrounds evaluation makes it worse. According to a Rhode Island teacher,

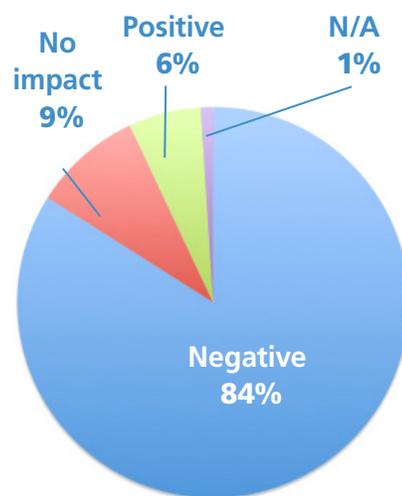
"I had a two month battle with my principal over the evaluation score he assigned to me. All of my data indicated I was 'highly effective' but he insisted on rating me 'effective'... the Rhode Island commissioner was pressuring superintendents to pressure school administrators to lower the number of highly effective teachers."

It is difficult to imagine how the relationships between teachers and principals can be sustained or re-built if the present evaluation systems continue to erode this important professional relationship that is vital to teachers' professional growth.

The cost in principals' time has been tremendous. A report from the Consortium on Chicago School Research found that it takes a principal about 6 hours per formal observation in the Chicago evaluation system, which translates to 120 hours per elementary administrator and 168 hours per high school administrator per year on average (Sporte, et.al, 2013). In addition to time spent, there is a monetary cost as well, which becomes significant when, as is often the case, budgets are cut. A recent article by Chicago Teachers Union researcher Carol Caref (2015) indicates, "It is difficult to identify and quantify all evaluation

expenditures, but in just this year, CPS spent at least \$3 million on personnel devoted to REACH and on teacher evaluation-related vendors."

THE EFFECT ON TEACHER/
PRINCIPAL RELATIONSHIPS



Overview

Current models of teacher evaluation assume that professional growth for individual teachers is maximized when placed within the context of an evaluative framework. Linda Darling-Hammond (2014) wrote,

“Support for teacher learning and evaluation needs to be part of an integrated whole that promotes

effectiveness during every stage of a teacher’s career. Such a system must ensure that teacher evaluation is connected to—not isolated from—preparation and induction programs, daily professional practice, and a productive instructional context.”

There is evidence, however, that closely tying professional

development to the evaluation process is actually hampering growth, reducing teacher capacity, and turning professional development into a punitive response due to an often-mechanical evaluation process.

Strengthening Teacher Growth

In order to understand how driving professional development by the evaluative process has negative consequences, it is necessary to look at the conditions that are optimal for teacher growth. Teaching is highly skilled, intellectually challenging work. A skilled teacher makes thousands of decisions a day, employs dozens of strategies to assess student needs, orchestrates productive group work, provides opportunities for feedback, taps prior knowledge, and inspires students to engage. The growth of these skills, talents, and knowledge is a continuous process throughout a teacher’s career. To optimize growth, we must consider the key drivers of human motivation. Daniel Pink (2009) writes that we are most

motivated when we have autonomy—a sense that we are responsible for guiding our own path. Humans are also motivated to pursue mastery—we want to get better. And, we seek a higher sense of purpose in our work.

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Another study reveals a significant decline in teacher autonomy over the past decade with especially sharp declines for teachers working in low-income schools (Sparks & Malkus, 2015). When schools are functioning at a high level, we see teachers in charge of their own growth. They do not need to be coerced into

professional learning by the threat of a poor evaluation.

High-level functioning occurs in schools like New Highland Academy in Oakland, where teachers use an inquiry process to define questions

about their practice to investigate. Teacher Aija Simmons offers this explanation of the process,

“The Answers’ are what we all problematize. [That is] because what “the

answer” is for me in this moment might not be the answer two years from now. So the good thing about inquiry is that I’m constantly understanding that there’s a new question, this is a new group of students, it might work better than the last thing but I’m continuing to probe myself, so that I’m pushing myself

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Teacher Evaluation and Professional Growth

Strengthening Teacher Growth

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to deeper understandings about how my students learn, and I'm coming back to the question. I have had several inquiry projects that I've looked at over the course of multiple years, but I use them as professional developments. People have the same question that you have, and as you come together, and you begin to think more and share your ideas of inquiry, and get more tools, we're moving ourselves forward."

With support from the Mills Teacher Scholars program, and some state funding, these teachers have strengthened their practice, and improved learning for their students. Although their principal supports this work, she does not manage nor mandate it, and it is not measured it as part of their evaluation process (Cody, 2012).

When teachers are given autonomy to develop as professionals, they choose a variety of paths to do so. Some embrace a Critical Friends process. Others choose to engage in Lesson Study, or conduct some form of teacher research (Lewis and Perry, 2008). This work is enhanced when done collaboratively, and the schools where this occurs are far more likely to develop a vibrant culture of learning that—unlike a rating on an evaluation—has an ongoing positive impact on the growth and development of teachers' instructional skills. Elaine Allensworth (2012) of the Chicago Consortium on School Research explains,

"One key element in teacher retention is teachers' perceptions of their colleagues as collaborators. Teachers are more likely to stay in a school if they see themselves as part of a team that is working together toward making their school better, supported by school leadership. Teachers are also more likely to stay in schools where they feel they have in influence over their work environment and they trust their principal as an instructional leader."

Allensworth (2012) continues,

"These are the same elements of schools that are most predictive of improvements in student learning; schools that show the largest improvements in student learning over time are those where teachers work collectively on improving instruction, and where school leadership is inclusive and focused on instruction."

This work, at its best, requires teachers to take steps they may perceive as risky. Teachers share their weak areas with one another, and attempt new, untried strategies. They must challenge one another, and themselves, to discover ways to improve their work with students. The process is nonlinear and far more complex than assigning a "rating" to an educator. It is difficult work and it is only possible in schools and districts where collaborative culture is nurtured and protected. The potential impact offers great benefits to students. As a result, it is well worth the time and effort to develop such cultures in our schools.





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Evaluation that Sabotages Teacher Growth

Although teachers and administrators are capable of creating a culture that supports reflection and nurtures collaboration, current evaluation processes are getting in the way. Our respondents described the inordinate amount of time and energy devoted to what many consider to be a meaningless process that attempts to standardize teaching. In response to our survey question regarding the impact evaluations have on teacher time, a respondent from Wisconsin wrote,

"I am the most frustrated by the 'one size fits all' approach to reflection, goal setting, progress monitoring, and providing 'evidence.' I think the process should mirror good teaching and learning...this process does not meet my needs as a learner. While I continue to grow professionally, the teacher evaluation process has NOTHING to do with it. The only thing it does is remind me how important it is to design meaningful and purposeful instruction for my students because narrow, one sized fits all work is soul sucking. It takes me a lot of TIME to figure out how to put my art of teaching into confining 'boxes.'"

Teachers also report a decrease in collegial interactions, which previously were strengthened through professional development sessions. A teacher from Massachusetts wrote,

"Our professional development days are no longer about sharing ideas within our teams or disciplines. We now spend almost every profes-

sional development meeting or day (approximately 4 times a month) completing paperwork to justify our lesson plans, unit plans, MCAS prep, and Teachpoint data. In the past five years, only three times did we actually work on curriculum for our students."

A Florida middle school teacher reports,

"With increased requirements to generate data, write multiple reports, and attend collaborative "learning" committees, real collaboration, authentic reflections, and monitoring and reteaching have been necessarily discarded."

The emphasis on assigning and justifying ratings has left little time, resources, or expertise to plant and nourish cultures in schools that give teachers the autonomy to chart their own professional growth. Instead, principals are asked to use observations to make diagnoses of teacher weaknesses, and then teachers are prescribed trainings as if they were sick patients getting doses of medicine rather than the ongoing, non-threatening, in-the-moment, coaching necessary

to grow professionally. With the new evaluation systems, teacher behavior is monitored to make sure the medicine worked and the prescriptions are followed. This removes professional growth from the teachers' control, and turns it into something managed from above, with the constant threat of termination attached. This undermines motivation, and turns "professional growth" into an exercise of pleasing the principal.

Ultimately, the evaluation process should be decoupled from teacher professional development. Although it is the role of an observer to provide clear feedback to teachers, that feedback should not manage the details of an individual's professional growth. When evaluators identify teachers who are in serious need of help, then an improvement plan or referral to a program such as Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) is a more appropriate response. But teachers who are meeting their obligation to provide a safe and healthy learning environment for students should have a strong role in driving their own professional growth, within the context of school and collegial needs.





Teachers Talk Back: Educators on the Impact of Teacher Evaluation

Conclusion

The nearly three thousand teachers who responded to our survey were almost unanimous in their appraisal of the negative impact of recent changes to teacher evaluation systems. While these systems were supposedly put in place to identify and remove “bad teachers” from schools, they are having wide-reaching negative effects. Whether the indicator is teacher morale, time for meaningful collaboration, or feedback

from administrators, there is ample evidence that an immediate course correction is necessary.

Teacher shortages are occurring across the nation. If we are to address a looming crisis—particularly the decreasing number of teachers of color in our classrooms—we must listen to the voices of those living these policies everyday.

A particular focus must be placed on successful professional growth. Building strong learning communities of teachers will do much more for our students than expensive, time-consuming, endless framework-driven administrator observations and evaluation systems tied to standardized student test scores.

Six Recommendations

1. The use of student test scores for evaluating teachers is fundamentally invalid and unreliable. It has a damaging effect on the relationships between teachers and students, and between teachers and administrators. It incentivizes “teaching to the test,” thereby narrowing the rich curriculum that our students deserve. **We recommend an immediate halt to the use of test scores as any part of teacher evaluation.**
2. Teacher collaboration, by definition, should be led by teachers and be an authentic component of their professional life. It is less effective when mandated and tightly managed from above. Teachers should have a voice in determining the focus of collaborative activities and guide the process. **We recommend that teacher collaboration not be tied to evaluation but instead be a teacher-led cooperative process that focuses on their students’ and their own professional learning.**
3. Teaching is complex work that cannot be captured by rubric scores or numbers. The implementation of numerical sorting schemes for teacher evaluation has led to the de-professionalization of teaching and discouragement within the profession. **We recommend that the observation process focus on improving instruction—resulting in reflection and dialogue between teacher and observer—the result should be a narrative, not a number.**
4. There is substantial evidence that new evaluation practices require teachers and administrators to spend significant amounts of time on completing forms and paperwork, with scant evidence of a positive impact on instruction or student outcomes. **We recommend that evaluations require less paperwork and documentation so that more time can be spent on reflection and improvement of instruction.**
5. There is evidence of a negative, disparate impact on teachers of color and veteran teachers in the current evaluation practices. This impact is exacerbating the current decline of teachers of color in the workforce. Evaluations must be designed to ensure that they are bias-free to encourage and support diversity in the profession. **We recommend an immediate review of the impact that evaluations have had on teachers of color and veteran teachers.**
6. Embedding teacher professional growth within the evaluative framework has proven to be counterproductive. Teacher professional growth is most effective when it is an authentic component of teacher and school improvement and not determined, or directed, by evaluation scores. **We recommend that teachers not be “scored” on professional development activities nor that professional development be dictated by evaluation scores rather than teacher needs.**



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Biographies

Teachers Talk Back: Educators on the Impact of Teacher Evaluation Biographies

Writing Team



Xian Franzinger Barrett teaches writing and social action to 7th and 8th grade students at Brighton Park Elementary in Chicago, Illinois. Participating in the Japanese Exchange and Teaching Program (JET) provided him with several master teachers from which he learned, The second you think that you are smarter than a room full of kids, you are not going to be able to help them; Don't judge yourself on the 'best' student in the class—how are you doing with the kids who in general don't like school; If you want to be the best teacher in the world, pursue the toughest teaching environment and don't make excuses; and most importantly, Before the students lose interest in your instruction, ask them what they are passionate about and work with that—their learning belongs to them. Xian is a founding member of the Chicago Teacher's Union's Caucus of Rank and File Educators (CORE) and works hard to promote a union based in real democratic processes.



Carol Burris is the Executive Director of the Network for Public Education. She is a Fellow of the National Education Policy Center and co-director of the Schools of Opportunity Program. Carol served as principal of South Side High School in Rockville Centre NY from 2000 to 2015. She was a teacher

of Spanish at both the middle and high school levels. She received her doctorate from Teachers College in 2003. In 2010, she was recognized by New York School Administrators Association as Outstanding Educator of the Year, and in 2013 was recognized by NASSP as the New York State High School Principal of the Year. Carol has co-authored two books on educational equity, and her third book, *On the Same Track: How Schools can Join the 21st Century Struggle against Re-Segregation*, is available from Beacon Press. Carol is a frequent guest blogger for the Answersheet of the Washington Post.



Anthony Cody worked for 24 years in the schools of Oakland, California, 18 years as a math and science teacher. His blog is Living in Dialogue, and he is a co-founder of the Network for Public Education. He now lives in Mendocino County and does workshops with teachers focused on Project Based Learning. Anthony is author of *The Educator And The Oligarch: A Teacher Challenges The Gates Foundation*.



Amanda Koonlaba, Ed. S., is a National Board-certified teacher who specializes in Arts Integration. She is an active member of the Mississippi Association of Educators and has eleven years of classroom experience. Amanda writes about arts

integration and the whole child for ASCD Inservice and Arts and Activities Magazine, where she serves on the Editorial Board. She also writes about issues impacting public education and the teaching profession at Living in Dialogue and the Mississippi Education Blog. She is experienced at analyzing policy and often serves on advisory panels at the state, and national level. Amanda is a graduate of both Mississippi State University and Arkansas State University.



Jessica S. Martinez is a classroom teacher with 14 years experience in the Albuquerque Public School District in Albuquerque, NM. She has devoted her career to the education of low-income, dual language, and inner city youth. She has a wide variety of classroom teaching experience, having taught Special Education courses in all core content areas, as well as English/Language Arts in the General Education setting for grades 9-12. Jessica is also an education activist who has organized community forums, served as an advisor on education issues to state legislators, and worked to create equitable education opportunities for all students. She has collaborated on the writing of local union and legislative memorials, and Op-Eds on a variety of topics related to public policy in New Mexico. Jessica holds a Bachelor's Degree in English from the University of New Mexico and a Master's Degree in Multicultural Special Education from the College of Santa Fe.



Teachers Talk Back:
Educators on the
Impact of Teacher
Evaluation

Biographies

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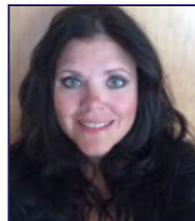


Tiffany McKelvy is a former high school teacher who spent more than four years teaching at-risk, inner city youth in Washington, DC. Her experience spans both the public and charter sectors. She has taught 9th and 10th grade English and has trained extensively to effectively teach SAT Prep to her 11th graders. She holds a BA in English Education from Stony Brook University and is currently working towards a Master's Degree in Social Work from the Catholic University of America. She firmly believes in the importance of educating the whole child, which means developing and implementing programs/curriculum that address not only their academic, but also their socioemotional needs.



John Louis Meeks, Jr. teaches middle school social studies in Duval County, Florida. The University of North Florida graduate and Air Force veteran has been in the classroom since 2002. Meeks is an active member of the Florida Education Association and the Florida Council for the Social Studies. Meeks has served in advisory roles on the state and local level, participating in panels responsible for curriculum design, assessment review, textbook adoption, and student progression. He has also facilitated professional development and mentoring for beginning teachers. Meeks' writing on education issues has been published in The Florida

Times-Union and Folio Weekly.



Lee-Ann Nolan teaches fifth grade math and science in Tipton County, Tennessee, just outside of Memphis. She is a 20 year veteran teacher with a BA in K-8 Elementary Education and a Master's Degree in Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction. She is an active member of Tennessee Education Association. Lee-Ann is part of the Badass Teachers Leadership Team and spends most of her time advocating for students, teachers, and public education.

Project Facilitator



Elaine Romero, MA Education Leadership, has been an educator for near 20 years. A New Mexico land grant heir, she recognizes public education as essential for building democratic systems by an informed society. She is an instructional coach who is always heartened by the brilliance achieved when educators come together to collaborate and problem-solve. She has experience in education policy and is completing a Doctorate in Education Leadership.

Support Team



Jennifer (Jen) Johnson taught History at Lincoln Park High School in Chicago Public Schools

for 10 years and is now working as the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) Quest Center Facilitator for Teacher Evaluation. She is originally from Grand Rapids, Michigan and is the daughter and granddaughter of teachers. Jen believes that teacher unions should play a critical role in fighting for larger issues of social justice and for equitably funded public schools. She misses the classroom and her students, but is grateful to be able to, in her current role, help the CTU transform conversations and organizing among educators about teacher evaluation into a collaborative campaign focused on the mantra "Share. Advocate. Mentor."



Troy Anthony LaRaviere is a Chicago Public Schools (CPS) graduate, a CPS principal, and parent of a CPS student. He leads one of the highest performing neighborhood schools in Chicago, and relentlessly defends public education. Troy was the first Chicago principals to speak openly about the destructive school policies of Chicago's mayor. He has published research on test score data that revealed public schools produced significantly more student academic growth than charter schools. His work was featured recently on WGN television in The Principal's Principles.