Working Paper: The Project on the Next Generation of Teachers

Seeking Balance Between Assessment and Support:

Teachers' Experiences of Teacher Evaluation in Six High-Poverty Urban Schools

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Abstract

State education agencies, school systems, and individual schools are investing significant time and money to reform teacher evaluation processes; however, few researchers have studied teachers' views or experiences of the evaluation process. In this study, I analyze data from six high poverty schools in one urban district where we interviewed 95 teachers and school administrators. I found considerable school-based variability in teachers' experiences and perceptions of evaluation. Teachers in this study agree with policy makers that evaluation processes have the potential to improve teaching quality and ultimately student learning. Teachers endorsed the use of evaluations to increase accountability in schools as long as the process also supported their professional growth.

However, in only one of six schools did teachers describe evaluation as a process that supported both accountability and development for teachers. In four schools, most teachers described evaluation as an exercise in bureaucratic compliance that had little impact on either holding teachers accountable for teaching standards or supporting professional growth for teachers. In the sixth school the administrators used evaluation to identify the least effective teachers and dismiss those who failed to improve by a specified time, generating an atmosphere of fear and distrust. Across the sample, teachers craved opportunities to receive detailed and useful feedback on their teaching practice as well as complementary support for improvement, and they criticized the evaluation process when these were lacking.

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Introduction

State education agencies, school systems, and individual schools are investing significant time and money to reform teacher evaluation processes. However, education policy analysts disagree about how best to utilize new evaluation tools in schools. Some analysts suggest that school leaders should use evaluations, first and foremost, to support professional growth for teachers (Almy & Education Trust, 2011; Curtis &Weiner, 2012). Others propose that school leaders use evaluations to identify the least effective teachers, ultimately "deselecting" or firing them if they do not improve (Hannaway, 2009; Hanushek, 2009), while rewarding and retaining the most effective teachers—the "irreplaceables" (New Teacher, 2012). To date, few researchers have studied teachers' views of the evaluation process and none has explored how teachers experience a growth-oriented versus an accountability-oriented approach to the evaluation process.

In this study, I aim to advance what is known about teachers' views of evaluations. I analyze data from six high poverty schools in one urban district. I focus on high-poverty schools because they are the organizations where the greatest problems are perceived to exist. Specifically, I address the following research questions:

1. *How do teachers in six high-poverty, urban schools describe the use of teacher evaluation in their school?*
2. *How do these teachers describe their own experience with teacher evaluation in their school?*
3. *What effect, if any, do these teachers believe teacher evaluation has on their own instructional practice and that of others in their school?*

Although Walker City School District (WCSD)[1], where this study was conducted, adopted one evaluation tool and implemented a single policy for teacher evaluations across the district, teachers' descriptions of their experiences reveal high degrees of variability among schools. Based on interviews with administrators and teachers in these schools, we found that school-level administrators used the evaluation process in different ways, and teachers' perceptions of the influence of the process varied as well. In four of the six schools (Angelou Elementary, Morrison Elementary, Stowe Middle School, and Whitman Academy High School), teachers described the evaluation process as a bureaucratic activity that failed to support increased accountability or growth for teachers in their school.

In the other two schools (Giovanni Elementary and Thoreau High School), the principals allocated much time and energy to the evaluation process in order to improve the quality of teaching in their school, but these principals viewed the purpose of evaluation quite differently. Consistent with "de-selection" (Hanushek, 2009), Thoreau administrators used the evaluation process to identify teachers who did not meet standards and moved to dismiss them if they did not improve. Most teachers interviewed at this school said that this approach increased their belief that teachers would be held responsible for meeting expectations but failed to support growth for most teachers. Moreover, they reported that the process contributed to a climate of fear and distrust. In contrast, the principal at Giovanni focused the teacher evaluation process on both assessing and supporting all teachers in order to improve their practice. This was consistent with the growth-oriented approach promoted by other policy analysts (e.g. Sartain, Stoelinga, Brown & Consortium on Chicago School Research, 2012; Almy & Education Trust, 2011; Donaldson & Peske, 2010). These teachers described the evaluation process as providing

[1] I use pseudonyms for the district, the schools, and their administrators.

assistance for their professional growth and contributing to high levels of accountability among teachers across the school.

As states and districts invest heavily in reforming their teacher evaluation processes, they face significant questions about how to design the programs. Education officials are under pressure from policy makers and the public to efficiently remove underperforming teachers. They also claim to want an evaluation system that supports development for all teachers. The success of one school in implementing the evaluation process suggests that it is possible though not the norm. In this study, teachers' responses to their school's evaluation processes provide critical insights regarding how, if at all, evaluation supports improvement for teachers and for schools. By focusing primarily on teachers' accounts, but also considering their administrators' views, I provide new perspective on the implementation of teacher evaluation.

In this paper, I first review the relevant literature on teacher evaluation in the United States and explain how this study advances this larger body of research. I then frame the study with background information about teacher evaluation in the district where these schools are located, WCSD. Next, I describe the research methodology and present findings. Finally, I discuss the implications of this study for future research, policy and practice.

Teacher Evaluation Processes in the United States

In my analysis, teacher evaluation refers to the formal process that a school uses to assess the performance of its teachers and, in some cases, to support their growth. The evaluation process can include multiple elements—observations and related conferences, self-assessment, peer observations, student performance data, student surveys, and portfolio review. The assessment component gauges teaching relative to an established set of standards and is often guided by a rubric, checklist or framework. Administrators can use the assessment to decide

whether to award permanent employment status (tenure) to teachers, dismiss them, and in some places, grant extra compensation. Evaluators can also use the evaluation process to help teachers improve by providing feedback about instructional practice, relevant suggestions for changing one's practice, ideas for professional development activities, including organizing peer observations, instructional coaching, follow-up observations and feedback or other supports for learning.

Past Failings and Hope for the Future of Teacher Evaluation

Most US school districts have failed to use evaluations to identify and respond to variations in teacher effectiveness (Donaldson, 2009; Toch & Rothman, 2008; Weschler et al., 2007; Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, & Keeling, 2009). In *The Widget Effect* of the New Teacher Project, Weisberg and colleagues (2009) reported that in a sample of 12 school districts across 4 states, 99 percent of teachers received a satisfactory rating and only 1 percent were judged to be unsatisfactory; yet 81percent of administrators and 57 percent of teachers reported that their school employed at least one tenured teacher who was performing poorly. Donaldson (2009) described American school districts as suffering from the "the Lake Wobegon effect" in that almost all teachers received positive ratings, despite the commonly held view among school staff that teachers within schools vary in their effectiveness.

Researchers and practitioners generally agree that teacher evaluations in the United States have largely been a "perfunctory compliance exercise that rates all teachers good or great and yields little useful information"(New Teacher, 2010). Furthermore, school districts rarely use teacher evaluations to dismiss teachers or inform decisions about awarding teachers tenure (Donaldson, 2011; Honowar, 2007; Tucker, 1997). In a Center for American Progress study of 30 principals in district and charter schools, many principals reported that evaluation rarely

accomplished the dual purposes of improving instruction and responding to poor teaching performance (Donaldson, 2011). These principals said they were constrained by a lack of time, insufficient opportunities to observe representative teaching practice, inadequate evaluation instruments and a school culture that did not supportive of the evaluation process.

Despite these findings, many policy makers and practitioners believe that evaluation is a promising way to reduce variability in teaching practices and increase teaching quality, particularly in high-poverty schools. Students in high-poverty schools are more likely than their peers in higher-income schools to have less effective and less experienced teachers (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Carroll, Reichardt, & Guarino, 2000; Clotfelter, Ladd, Vigdor, & Wheeler, 2007; Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2004; Ingersoll, 2001; Sanders & Rivers, 1996). Furthermore, some researchers report that having a "high-quality teacher" in elementary school can eliminate the "disadvantage of low socio-economic background" (Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005). Therefore, many policy makers and reformers believe that, if administrators improve the quality of teacher evaluations, they can raise the level of teaching practice in high-poverty schools by both helping teachers to develop and by dismissing unsatisfactory teachers who fail to improve.

Current Efforts to Improve Evaluations

Federal policy makers used Race to the Top and waivers from the requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (NCLB) to create large financial incentives for states and districts to reform their beleaguered teacher evaluation systems. States in turn, increased pressure on school systems to improve teacher evaluations in order to comply with the policy requirements. By 2011, thirty-two states and the District of Columbia had made significant changes to laws and regulations in order to improve teacher evaluations (National Council on Teacher Quality [NCTQ], 2011). In response, many districts placed teacher evaluation at the top

of their reform agenda.

In hopes of realizing the potential of evaluations, districts and schools turned their attention to finding effective tools for assessing teaching practices. Similarly, researchers studying teacher evaluation have focused primarily on the assessment component of the process, investigating the degree to which school leaders reliably and validly judge teaching practice (Papay, 2012). They have examined, and in some cases developed, new tools for measuring teachers' success in raising student achievement scores (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2013a; Grossman et al., 2010; Hill, Kapitula & Umlan, 2011; Kane, Taylor, Tyler & Wooten, 2011). Many researchers assume that, in order for teacher evaluations to support teachers' growth, the process must provide fair and reliable information about a teacher's practice relative to a detailed, standards-based framework for effective teaching (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2013b).

Finding effective evaluation instruments may be necessary but certainly is not sufficient to support improvements in teaching quality. The validity and reliability of an evaluation instrument is a function of the tool as well the evaluators using it (Bill and Melinda Gates, 2103a; Sartain et al., 2011). The Consortium on Chicago School Research studied a new evaluation tool piloted in the Chicago Public Schools and found ratings based on classroom observations by trained evaluators to be valid and reliable for measuring teaching practices (Sartain et al., 2011). Sartain and colleagues concluded that better evaluation tools could support school leaders in assessing teachers' instructional practices and engaging them in reflective conversations that could support improvement; however, they said that this potential was only realized when principals had strong knowledge of the instructional framework, well-developed skills for instructional coaching, and were highly engaged in the process. By exploring

implementation of evaluation and considering teachers' experiences of the process, Sartain and colleagues extended this line of research. It remains unclear what factors motivated principals to engage productively with the evaluation process rather than resist or perfunctorily comply with the policy.

O'Pry and Schumacher (2012) are also among the few researchers who have investigated how teachers experience the evaluation process. They studied new teachers in Houston Public Schools and report findings that are consistent with those of Sartain and colleagues (2011). O'Pry and Schumacher sought to understand novice teachers' perceptions of a standards-based performance appraisal system and to identify the factors that contributed to these perceptions. They surveyed 121 teachers and followed up with interviews of those teachers who, according to the survey results, had the most positive or most negative views of the evaluation. O'Pry and Schumacher concluded that teachers' perceptions of evaluation were determined less by the tool itself than the ways it was used. They also found that the value the principal placed on the evaluation process was one of the most consistent factors influencing teachers' perceptions of the process.

Many questions remain about whether and how teacher evaluations influence teaching practices and student learning. Taylor and Tyler's (2011) study in Cincinnati found that in one district using "multiple, highly-structured classroom observations" conducted by experienced peer evaluators and administrators, mid-career math teachers improved in their ability to raise student achievement. They found that the gains persisted and were even stronger in the years after the evaluation cycle was completed. Taylor and Tyler suggest that evaluations allow school leaders and peer evaluators the opportunity to provide their teachers with detailed feedback and the incentive to improve. However, they call for further research since this study does not

explain how the evaluation process yielded these results.

Different Policy Perspectives for Teacher Evaluation

Education leaders disagree about how to best use new evaluation tools in schools. Some policy makers, researchers and reformers endorse an approach to evaluation that focuses chiefly on identifying under-performing teachers so that they can be dismissed (Hannaway, 2009; Hanushek, 2009; New Teacher, 2012). The New Teacher Project (2012) suggested that the best approach for improving teacher quality, especially in high-poverty, low performing schools, is to retain more "irreplaceables" (high performing teachers) and fewer consistently poor-performing teachers. The popular press also fueled the focus on the lowest performing teachers. The Newsweek cover on March 15, 2010 asserted, "The Key To Saving American Education: We Must Fire Bad Teachers." In the accompanying article, Thomas, Wingert, Conant, and Register (2010) contend that the decline of American public education is a "national embarrassment," which can be addressed by dismissing weak teachers. In both the academic and popular press, some authors staunchly recommend that evaluation systems serve primarily as an assessment and accountability tool.

In contrast, some researchers make the case that schools need to more equally balance the two purposes of evaluation, assessment of teaching practice and support for professional improvement (Papay, 2012; Toch & Rothman, 2008). Papay suggests that focusing on accountability affects too few teachers and therefore will not lead to significant improvements in teaching quality or student learning. Other researchers and reformers also emphasize the need to use evaluation as a tool for professional growth (e.g. Sartain et al., 2012; Almy & Education Trust, 2011; Donaldson & Peske, 2010). For example, in the Education Trust report, *Fair to Everyone: Building the Balanced Evaluations That Teachers and Students Deserve*, Almy and

colleagues (2011) propose that,

> performance evaluation is first and foremost a development tool for all teachers. It should have as its primary purpose identifying strengths and areas for growth in order to improve practice, whether a teacher is in her first year or her 14th. ... Systems that solely aim to identify the highest and lowest performing teachers will never effectively move the needle on student achievement (p. 3).

Toch and Rothman (2008) argue that comprehensive evaluations systems most go beyond measuring teaching practices and serve as "engines of improvement."

There is currently unprecedented momentum for improving teacher quality through teacher evaluation. State education agencies and school districts face policy and implementation decisions as they invest heavily in these reform efforts in pursuit of achieving the dual purposes of evaluation—accountability and growth for teachers. However, many questions remain: How are policies implemented in different school contexts? How do teachers respond to different approaches to evaluation? Teachers' perspectives can provide insight into how variations in implementation of evaluations policies affect their experiences of the process. Teachers can also provide insight into what role, if any, evaluation plays in improving teaching quality, both individually and across the school.

In this study, I focused on teachers' views of the evaluation systems in six high-poverty schools in Walker City School District, where school administrators were responsible for completing summative evaluations of teachers. I was interested in understanding how teachers experienced their school's evaluation process and what impact they perceived it to have both on them and on their school.

Background On Teacher Evaluation In Walker City School District

In 2005, as part of a system-level improvement strategy, WCSD leaders involved representative teachers, instructional coaches and school-level administrators in developing a standards-based framework for effective learning and teaching and an accompanying teacher evaluation tool. The local school board adopted its framework for effective learning and teaching in 2006 and the evaluation tool was incorporated into the collective bargaining agreement in 2006-2007 contract negotiations.

This evaluation system required school administrators to conduct classroom observations and assessments of new teachers annually and permanent teachers biannually (Walker City School District, 2006; Walker City School District, 2010). The number of visits and type of feedback were specified only in the case of teachers who were initially rated unsatisfactory. Teachers could be rated either as "meeting" or "failing to meet" expectations for each of eight dimensions of the learning and teaching framework. The dimensions ranged from "instructional planning and implementation" to "partnership with family and community." In addition, evaluators assigned each teacher an overall rating of "meeting" or "failing to meet" expectations.

Like many urban districts across the country, WCSD had been under significant pressure from the state education agency to improve its systems for evaluating teaching practices. However, data showed that developing the learning and teaching framework and evaluation tool was not sufficient. National consultants revealed that from 2007 to 2009 only half of the district's teachers were evaluated, even though administrators were expected to use the tool to evaluate all teachers at least once every other year.[2] Furthermore, one quarter of schools in the district had not submitted any completed evaluations to the central office in those two years.

[2] In order to preserve the anonymity of the school district the consultants' report is not cited in the reference list or in the text.

Administrators rated less than one percent of all teachers unsatisfactory. In response to this unfavorable publicity, central office administrators increased the pressure on school administrators to evaluate teachers and submit the related documents in a timely manner. Our data suggest that at the time of this study, in 2010-2011, administrators in all six schools were generally making an effort to comply with district policy and completing evaluations of most teachers.

The district's evaluation policy focused primarily on assessment and accountability rather than professional growth. Documents explaining the evaluation policy, the collective bargaining agreement (Walker City School District, 2006) and a superintendent's memo to school administrators (Walker City School District, 2010), concentrate on technical procedures for assessing teaching practice and for remediating or removing under-performing teachers. These documents state that evaluation should support professional growth: "True performance evaluation involves analysis of an employee's strengths and weaknesses, resulting in diagnosis and prescriptions which lead to desired professional growth" (Walker City School District, 2010, p. 1). However, the guidelines only describe support mechanisms in the case of teachers who fail to meet expectations. The contract states, "In any area where the responsible administrator or designee indicates a need for improvement, he or she will provide the teacher with a written prescription. The teacher may attach comments to the prescription" (Walker City School District, 2006, p. 90). The written policy suggests that system leaders expect school administrators to use the evaluation tool to assess all teachers so that they can identify, support and, if necessary, dismiss those who do not meet expectations. This approach to evaluation is consistent with Hanushek's (2009) and Hannaway's (2009) policy proposals for improving teaching quality by firing the least effective teachers. There is no mention in the written

documents of how a principal might use evaluation to support growth for those teachers who are already meeting expectations. Nonetheless, those principals who see potential for evaluation as a developmental tool for all teachers, can use it in ways that extend the policy.

In what follows, I present the study methods, including an explanation of the sample, data collection, and data analysis.

Study Methods

I conducted this study in collaboration with the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers (NGT), a research group directed by Professor Susan Moore Johnson. It builds on earlier quantitative work in which members of the Project examined the importance of a teacher's work environment in one state's schools and found that the social context of work – how a teacher views her principal, her colleagues, and her school's culture – was a strong predictor of her professional satisfaction, her career plans, and her students' achievement (Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012). The larger NGT qualitative study from which the current data are drawn, focused on understanding teachers' views of social working conditions—including organizational culture, school leadership, and collegial relationships—in high-poverty urban schools. We interviewed 95 teachers and administrators working in six high-poverty schools in one large urban school district. Our goal was to develop a rich understanding of how these schools addressed their challenges and how teachers described their experiences working in them. In this analysis, I focus on teachers' views of the evaluation process. Below, I describe our approach to sample selection, our interview process, and our data analysis methods.

Sample Selection

We focused on a large urban district on the East Coast, Walker City School District, which served almost 60,000 students in approximately 120 schools at the time of the study. The

student population was predominantly students of color with just over 10 percent of the population reporting that they are white. More than 70 percent of the students in WCSD qualified for free or reduced-price lunch.

Our sample selection within this district was guided by two key principles. First, we chose to focus on high-poverty schools. We identified high-poverty schools as those that fell above the district median in the proportion of students who qualified for federal free- and reduced-price lunch. Second, we selected a purposive sample of high-poverty schools that exhibited different levels of student achievement growth (a measure used by the state) and teacher satisfaction with the school's work environment, as reflected in their responses to a statewide survey. This selection process is described in Appendix A. Within this broader framework, we sought to select schools that varied on a range of other measures, including grade level and organization, location, student demographics, and the principal's race, gender, and administrative experience. In other words, we wanted to include schools that represented the broad range of high-poverty schools in the district.

Our final sample included six schools: two traditional elementary schools, one K-8 school, one middle school, and two high schools. The basic information about these schools during the 2010-11 school year is included in Table 1. All schools served larger proportions of low-income students relative to other schools in the district and would be labeled "high-poverty" schools according to the Institute of Education Sciences' criteria (>75 percent low-income). The schools also enrolled large proportions of minority students (>90 percent), although the specific demographic composition of schools varied considerably. Median student growth percentiles across the schools ranged from as low as the 20th and 35th percentiles in mathematics and English language arts to as high as the 65th and 60th percentiles respectively, but were generally clustered

around the 50th percentile.[3]

Teacher and Administrator Interviews

Six researchers designed this study and participated actively throughout data collection and analysis. Two- and three-person teams took responsibility for data collection at each site and the lead researcher participated in data collection at all six. Data collection occurred concurrently across the schools. Each researcher participated in conducting interviews at two or more schools, which informed cross-site analysis. We developed the interview protocols based on relevant literature and our own findings from prior research. (See Appendix B for sample protocols).

We first conducted a two-hour, semi-structured interview with the principal of each school in order to understand the general organization and features of the school, as well as the principal's view of the school's challenges and his or her vision of school leadership. We then interviewed a wide range of teachers and, where they were present, other administrators. In total, we interviewed 83 teachers and 12 administrators. We sought to interview a broadly representative sample of teachers within each school in order to capture the full range of experiences and opinions of each school's staff. We solicited teachers' participation in a variety of ways, including written requests sent to school email lists, flyers in teachers' mailboxes, principals' recommendations, and professional networking. We also relied on recommendations from teachers we interviewed about others in their school who might hold views different from their own. Interviews with teachers lasted 30 to 60 minutes and included questions about their

[3] Student growth percentiles are a measure of relative performance. Essentially, every student is measured against the distribution of students with a similar history of test score performance in previous years. The conditional performance of a student represents his growth percentile. The median growth percentile across all students at a school is the school's SGP for that year.

experiences with hiring, instruction, evaluation, discipline, the administration, and other factors of the school environment.

We present descriptive statistics on the experience, race, and gender of the teachers and administrators in our sample in Table 2. In each school, we were able to interview new teachers, mid-career teachers, and veteran teachers, teachers in different grades and subjects, teachers who were hired new to teaching and those who had transferred in from other schools in the district, and teachers with differing perspectives about their school. The racial composition of teachers and administrators included in our sample was broadly representative of the schools and the district as whole – 59 percent were white, 20 percent were African-American, 10 percent were Hispanic, 8 percent were Asian, and 3 percent were of mixed or other race.

Although interviews are the main source of data for this study, we also learned about the evaluation process from reading and analyzing various documents such as the teachers contract, memoranda from the district superintendent, and the evaluation instrument. Through our many visits and interviews, we successfully captured a range of views that provided us with a nuanced picture of each school. However, our purposive sampling of teachers and schools precludes us from generalizing about all teachers in any one of the schools we studied, the district, or beyond.

Data Analysis

As a first step in the data analysis, following each interview we wrote a structured, thematic summary (Maxwell, 2005) highlighting the views and information provided by every respondent on a standard set of topics. During the data collection process, we wrote memos capturing emerging themes at each school and, subsequently, across schools. We discussed and refined these memos during data collection in order to identify topics that warranted further attention in upcoming interviews. The thematic summaries and school-based memos enabled us

to examine broad similarities and differences across the schools.

We coded interview transcripts for central concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and used a hybrid approach to developing codes (Miles & Huberman, 1984). For example, we started with a priori codes drawn from the literature about teachers' roles, working conditions, leadership, satisfaction, and retention (e.g., school climate, colleagues, induction and student characteristics). We then added codes that emerged from the data (e.g., demands on teachers, accountability, and order and discipline). (See Appendix C for a full list of codes and definitions.) Once we had developed a preliminary list of codes, team members coded a small sub-set of the transcripts, individually and together, in order to calibrate our understanding and use of the codes, as well as to refine the code list and definitions. We repeated this process twice in order to finalize the list of codes and to improve inter-rater reliability. We then coded each transcribed interview using the software, ATLAS-TI.

After coding all interviews, we engaged in an iterative and collaborative analytic process. In order to explore teachers' experiences and perceptions about evaluation processes, I developed data-analytic matrices (Miles & Huberman, 1984). For example, I created single-site matrices to explore each case separately and then created cross-site matrices to identify patterns in teachers' accounts of evaluation across schools (Miles & Huberman, 1984). (See Appendix D for an example of a cross-site data-analytic matrix.) Throughout, I was interested in understanding variation as it became apparent both within and across schools. As I developed tentative findings and explanations, I often returned to the data to review our coding and to test my explanations against the full range of interviews. Throughout the process, I checked my emerging conclusions to determine whether there were rival explanations or disconfirming data that I might have overlooked (Miles & Huberman, 1984).

Findings

Walker City School District was in its third year of implementing its new standards-based teacher evaluation tool at the time of this study. Teachers' and administrators' descriptions of the evaluation process reveal significant school-to-school variation in how it was used. Although teachers in four schools described a perfunctory, bureaucratic practice, teachers in the other two schools described the evaluation as an intense process that focused on either assessing or improving teacher quality, depending on the school. In what follows, I analyze how variation in implementation of evaluation at the school level affected teachers' experiences and views of the process. First, I present perspectives that were common to teachers from all six schools.

Teachers In All Schools Seek Accountability And Support

Across all six schools, most teachers said they wanted an evaluation system focusing on both assessment of teaching practice and support for improving practice. Where administrators attended to both purposes, teachers consistently expressed support for the evaluation process and where they did not, teachers expressed concern about one or both elements being underutilized or poorly used. Somewhat surprisingly, throughout the sample, many teachers reported that, not only did they want their peers to be held accountable for high-quality instruction, but also that they, themselves, wanted to be evaluated regularly and rigorously.

Teachers want their peers to be held accountable. Teachers and administrators in all six schools were concerned about meeting the learning needs of their students. They described some students who were significantly below grade level in several subjects and others who were struggling to learn English. They also reported on factors beyond school that they believed put their students at greater risk of failure than the students' counterparts in wealthier, suburban schools. They did not present these conditions as excuses, but rather as the real challenges they

were trying to help students overcome. Teachers explained that, given these demands, they could not afford to have under-performing teachers as their colleagues. Many teachers believed that the evaluation process had the potential to hold their peers accountable for reaching higher standards of teaching practice.

Many teachers across the schools saw evaluations as a means to identify and respond to some of their peers' ineffective teaching practices. A mid-career, elementary teacher explained,

> I think, overall, there needs to be a little bit more push, I would say, about like people who are doing their jobs and people that aren't. I mean we're in such a crisis of losing the school, we need to be a little bit harsher on looking at people and looking at classrooms and what they are doing.

A colleague agreed: "It got to a point where it was almost too much, and people weren't held accountable. You need to be comfortable, but you need to also be on your game." A high school teacher offered a similar perspective.

> There are some incredible teachers, and there are some people who have absolutely no business in the classroom…. It's slow, like it's not a thing you can do overnight; it takes time. But yes, I do feel like something's being done about it.

These teachers and many of their colleagues across schools saw the evaluation process as having the potential to hold teachers to a reasonable standard of teaching practice so that students' learning needs could be met.

Teachers also want support for their own growth. Many teachers also talked about the role that the evaluation process plays or might play in their own teaching experience. Some teachers said that they felt more professional when administrators held the faculty responsible for their work. A veteran teacher explained that she approved of her principal's emphasis on teacher

evaluations. "[The principal has] made an effort to make teachers and administrators more accountable, which I pride myself on. I believe I do my job and I think I do a good job and I work hard at it." Other teachers presented the same idea in reverse—they felt disrespected when administrators did not take the time to carefully evaluate their practice. An early-career teacher explained how the district's policy requires new teachers to be evaluated every year until they are granted permanent status (tenure) after their third year. This teacher described her response when she was not evaluated at all in her third year. "And a lot of people . . . said, 'Oh, that should make you feel good.'. . . It doesn't, though." This teacher's concern and frustration were echoed by other teachers who had not been evaluated consistently in recent years.

In addition, many teachers across the sample reported a desire to improve their practice and saw the evaluation process as potentially supporting their development. A mid-career, middle school teacher explained,

> Well, I want to be evaluated. Come into my room. You know here's a teacher that wants to be evaluated. And I feel like I do a good job, but I know I could do better so come evaluate me, give me feedback.

A high school teacher expressed a similar interest in learning from the teacher evaluation processes. "But you know I feel like the more, the merrier. Give me some ideas. Ideally if you're evaluating me…jot down a note and tell me what you thought, so I can learn from it." Many teachers across the six schools expressed the desire to receive substantive feedback and support within the evaluation process so that they could improve.

Teachers want a two-way dialogue that focuses on their growth. Teachers across the schools agreed on what they thought would best support their professional growth while also ensuring accountability. They wanted an evaluator with the expertise to understand and advise

them about their professional practice. In addition, teachers wanted evaluators to spend time observing in their classes and talking with them about their practice, rather than just delivering their judgment. In sum, teachers sought a process that supports their professional growth.

Teachers who believed that administrators did not spend enough time in their classroom questioned the validity of their evaluators' assessment, doubted that the appraisal reflected an understanding of their daily work, and complained that the evaluation process lacked credibility.

> It's a little weird, I mean, I've only been observed once, maybe twice, and she came in and sat down, she looked at the board, watched the instruction, watched the "do-now," and she was really only there for fifteen minutes and then she was gone. And that was really all it was, to be honest. But the next thing you know, [I receive] the evaluation.

By contrast, in schools where the administrators were regularly present in classrooms, teachers said that their supervisor understood their work. "He pops in all the time. He just comes in. . . . He would go into an area where [students] are and ask, 'What are you guys doing?' So he really gets a feel . . . what is going on in your classroom."

Many teachers believed that they would gain more from the evaluation if they played an active role in the process. They wanted an opportunity to discuss the feedback with their evaluator. An elementary teacher with more than 10 years of experience highlighted the missed opportunity:

> [I]t would be nice to … sit down for 15 minutes instead of when-you're-passing-in-the-hall kind of feedback. Or like later in the day just coming in and saying a couple of things and leaving. Having a dialogue would be helpful.

A middle school teacher explained what she saw as the potential benefit of an interactive evaluation process:

> [If the principal] would have talked to me and asked me what my problems are because I would have told her flat out what my weaknesses are, I would have told her what my challenges are, what I have a hard time with. And then it would have accurately reflected my work, and maybe I would have gotten a recommendation or advice or some help for them.

In addition to wanting to have a voice in their own evaluation, teachers across all schools valued timely, meaningful feedback about their practice. They objected when there was no feedback or when feedback was, as one said, "fluff." One teacher's comments about the evaluation process were similar to those of many. "[T]he feedback is very slow in coming. It comes to you late and then it's just not all that helpful. . . . It's just kind of vague." In contrast, those teachers who received specific, relevant feedback described how they integrated it into their practice.

> Absolutely, definitely very helpful. . . . [H]e suggested that I model more or give an example of what I want my outcome to look like . . . and I have started using that. And each year he will give me suggestions and usually I take them and it works well.

Across all six schools, many teachers wanted an evaluation process that not only held teachers accountable, but also supported their development. However, teachers' experiences with evaluation varied by school.

Perfunctory Implementation: Morrison, Angelou, Stowe and Whitman

At four of six schools—Morrison Elementary, Angelou Elementary, Stowe Middle School and Whitman Academy High School—teachers said their administrators generally complied procedurally with the district policy for evaluating teachers; however they experienced the evaluation process as peripheral to their work, as one said, "not helpful." Very few teachers

discussed ways that the evaluation was helpful to them. Despite the fact that these four schools differed in many respects, representing a wide range of schools in WCSD, the prevailing view was strikingly similar across schools. In fact, most teachers interviewed in these schools described evaluation as an empty requirement.

A focus on the technical elements of the process. When we asked administrators and teachers in these four schools about evaluation, most described the bureaucratic procedures of the evaluation rather than the substance, such as the feedback they received or the value of the process. For example, a new teacher at Stowe reported, "And [it said that] I met or exceeded everything and then I had to sign it. He gets a copy. I get a copy. And I guess they do that every year. So that was mine this year. That's all I know." A colleague with a few years of experience gave a similar, procedural account.

> They check the box, [to indicate if you] are meeting standards or not meeting [standards]. . . . and they all say "meets and exceeds," but I don't really know where that is on the realm of meeting or exceeding. And I think that the only comment that I got was that I need to put student work up, which I still probably don't have up. Um, but I would say that they let me know that I wasn't doing anything wrong, which is good, but it really didn't inform me how to improve, or where exactly I could improve.

A high school teacher from Whitman Academy also described the evaluation process as procedural and perfunctory.

> So you have a pre-observation meeting that she observes and then you have the post-observation meeting where you go over the evaluation. And if you agree you sign, and if you don't agree, you don't sign and you write a response.

An elementary teacher at Angelou explained the mandated process, as she understood it.

> There is an evaluation tool that the district has or the state has, I think now. ... So there is a criteria . . . the principal evaluates to see whether or not you have met those criteria, so there are like checks and "has met it," "has not met it," so that ... and then at the end, the principal normally calls you in and has a discussion about what he saw, what you would like to improve, what the expectations are for the next time.

Some teachers in these four schools described the evaluation process as an activity that is completed first and foremost in order to comply with district policy. A novice teacher at Whitman Academy explained why she believed her administrators evaluated the teachers.

> So yeah, it's more of a . . . process that they need to go through for [district] policies. . . . [M]aybe the first year. . . I got more out of it. But I don't really get much out of it anymore because I've figured the school out and this population of kids out.

An elementary teacher at Angelou explained how her principal responds to the district policy.

> So this is my ninth year. I've been evaluated twice. . . . I was supposed to be evaluated two years ago and my principal said, "I just forgot. I had to worry about the new people."

She said that her principal was required to hand in his evaluations by March, and he stopped evaluating after that date, since "if [the evaluation is] not in [to the district] by a certain time in March, [the evaluations] don't count or something like that."

When describing their experience with evaluation, most teachers at Morrison, Angelou, Stowe, and Whitman described the mechanics rather than the substance of the evaluation, suggesting that teachers and administrators were principally focused on complying with bureaucratic procedures rather than using the process to improve teaching practices.

A routine teachers endured but did not value. Many teachers in these four schools

viewed evaluation as inconsequential. When asked if the evaluation process was helpful, most teachers said no. A teacher at Stowe expressed the view of many when she said, "Not helpful, no. Honestly, not at all." A teacher at Whitman agreed. "It's not threatening, but to me it is not useful also." When asked if the feedback from her evaluation was helpful, a Morrison teacher in her fourth year of teaching explained, "I know I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing so I was like, 'whatever.'" An Angelou teacher with more than 5 years experience said, "I think it is just a measurement of a lot of things." Many teachers at these four schools said that the teacher evaluation system did not contribute positively to their professional experience.

Even teachers who responded more favorably to questions about the evaluation process described a routine that had little or no impact on their practice. For example, a veteran teacher at Stowe explained,

> usually they come in . . . they give you a heads-up and they give you a copy of the assessment tool they use in [the district]. . . And then they just come in, they observe, they write the evaluation. [The principal] is always so busy. She doesn't always get back to you with feedback. And so . . . read it, sign it, and then I think it is thorough, in terms of [being] full length.

Similarly, most teachers at Morrison Elementary described the evaluation process as inconsequential. When asked how her practice is evaluated a second-year teacher responded, "they'll just walk through and they'll look around and they'll be like, 'okay,' and they'll leave and then I'll get some sort of feedback later or not, one way or the other." Most colleagues responded with similar lack of interest in, or worry about, the process.

A Tool For Improving Teaching Quality: Thoreau And Giovanni

Thoreau High School and Giovanni Elementary provide stark contrast, in that

administrators there devoted significant time to teacher evaluation. In these schools, both teachers and administrators described the process as central to the principal's strategy for improving teaching quality and student learning. However, the administrators used the process in markedly different ways and their teachers' views varied significantly.

Thoreau: Evaluating all teachers in order to remove underperforming teachers. Thoreau High School was a comprehensive high school serving about 900 students, with approximately 70 teachers on the faculty. Principal Thomas, who had been a math instructional coach prior to assuming this position, worked with a team of six other administrators. Under Ms. Thomas's leadership, this administrative team had invested considerable time and resources in order to fully implement the district's teacher evaluation policy. Thoreau's administrators reportedly evaluated all teachers at least every other year, but most teachers we interviewed described the process as being focused on identifying and firing the least effective teachers.

At Thoreau, teachers responded with mixed emotions to the intense focus on evaluations. They expressed appreciation for the increased levels of accountability, but also described the anxiety and frustration that the evaluation process generated. The fact that the process might lead to severe consequences —dismissal—for a few teachers generated insecurity and fear among many, who otherwise might have worked to improve their practice.

Administrators' views: "A wake-up call." The administrators we interviewed at Thoreau spoke at great length about the evaluation process, which contrasted starkly with reports from school leaders at Stowe, Whitman, Angelou and Morrison, who only briefly described the procedures they used. Ms. Thomas, the principal, enthusiastically explained the scope of the effort at Thoreau,

So we've done a massive amount of evaluating. . . . We evaluated every teacher except

> for about 15. . . . so we're evaluating about 70 percent of the building because that's what you need to be doing in a two-year cycle.

One of the administrators, Ms. Ellis, was hired to oversee all work regarding supervision and evaluation of teachers, although Ms. Thomas remained highly involved in the process. The whole administrative team met bi-weekly about teacher evaluation, using this time to discuss a book about supervision and evaluation and to calibrate their observation and assessment practices. Ms. Ellis periodically videotaped observation debriefs so that the administrative team could critique and learn from these examples. Ellis and Thomas explained that they joined other administrators in debriefing observations with the teachers who received an unsatisfactory grade in one or more areas of the evaluation framework in order to ". . . basically go over their evaluation, tell them ...'this is really serious but we know you can improve and here is the support that we can offer you.'" The administrators worked together to standardize their supervision and evaluation practices. "So we work as a team while . . . sort of struggling with how to calibrate . . . who is really a 'does not meets' and how he can do it and also supporting it. It's very hard to give teachers 'does not meets'."

Throughout their lengthy explanations of the evaluation process, Thomas and Ellis focused squarely on the intended impact for the weakest teachers. Thomas explained,

> So those are the two teachers that . . . we needed to get out and I think what we're going to do with the other four or five that are really [weak]. . . . [T]hey'll probably all get 'meets' with 'does not meet' in two or three areas. But we're reserving the option to [give] them a 'does not meet' by the end of the year.

She explained that this was intended to be a "wake-up call" by warning them that they would be evaluated again in January "and that's how much time you have to get better." With respect to

evaluations, Ms. Thomas and Ms. Ellis' implicit theory of change apparently was that, if they used the teacher evaluation system to improve or remove the weakest teachers, then they would improve the overall quality of instruction at Thoreau.

Teachers appreciated increased accountability. Thoreau teachers' accounts were consistent with the administrators' descriptions of the evaluation process. Most said the process concentrated administrators' efforts on a small number of underperforming teachers, although they acknowledged that they, themselves, were also evaluated.

Many teachers were relieved that Ms. Thomas' administrative team was addressing the problem of incompetence. One said, "This sense that certain teachers are being evaluated out, which I believe is true and in many cases very justified. There had been a lot of teachers here who were horrific . . . and no one was doing anything about them." Another teacher commented,

> And so that was kind of the beginning of . . . weeding out the incompetents. That was the writing on the wall saying, 'Now is the time to either get your act together and figure it out or do something or whatever.' And that was kind of the start. So there is more accountability, more buy-in into the fact that at some point even in a large school, at some point you will get examined in a real way that makes a real difference.

Many teachers described the evaluation process as helping to achieve increased levels of accountability for teachers, which they appreciated.

Evaluation processes fuel fear and distrust. Most of Thoreau's teachers, who did not worry about losing their job, personally experienced the evaluation process as a bureaucratic requirement much like their peers at other schools did. A teacher at Thoreau reported, "I feel like evaluations in my case are because we need to have one in our file every two years and so every two years it'll happen." Many others echoed this sentiment, but these same teachers also

explained that for a small number of their peers the consequences were serious. "You know, it's seen more as, like, well it's either just routine paperwork or they're using it to get rid of a teacher that's not doing a good job." Many teachers criticized the fact that the administrators were using evaluation for different purposes—to comply with district policy and to dismiss underperforming teachers—depending on the teacher being evaluated. Notably, from their perspective, neither purpose focused on their improvement.

At the time of this study, three veteran teachers at Thoreau had been dismissed in the three years since their new principal arrived and several teachers were under close scrutiny. It is noteworthy that this is a relatively small number of teachers who experience evaluation as having consequences for them as teachers, given then significant investment of time required to evaluate all teachers. Many teachers described the feelings of distrust that the focus on dismissal generated. As one said, "some people feel targeted." One teacher's views were typical of many: "There is a lot of discussion about…the objective to evaluate certain people out; and there is a lot of tension with teachers who know they are not as good, or they are in the old guard." Fear among some grew out of the common belief that the administrators were intent on firing particular individuals. One said, "There was a real sense that they were out to get you. They had like a preconceived notion of who the not-so-good teachers were, and they kind of insensitively went after them, which kind of made other people say, 'Whoa.'" The rumors and distrust not only stemmed from who was currently "on the list," as one teacher said, but also the concern about who would be next. A colleague explained, "so those people got evaluated out and I feel like people felt like 'good, good, good, we are making progress, we don't have these people anymore.'" She continued on to describe how teachers believed the administrators were thinking about next steps with evaluation. "'[N]ow that they are gone, we can sort of start looking at the

next tier,' which I think then started to make people very nervous."

Another teacher described a growing climate of fear.

> There is sometimes that fret of "okay, who's going to be next?" And people were leaving and people were being asked to leave or, in a way, encouraged to leave in some way by what was happening, and so there was this discomfort and there wasn't a great deal of trust.

Although these teachers did not believe that they were at risk of being fired, they worried about the negative impact evaluation was having on the school climate.

Lack of attention to teachers' growth. Teachers also criticized the process for failing to support professional growth for most teachers. According to a veteran teacher, the integrity of the evaluation was compromised because there was no connection between assessment and support.

> I think that for teachers that are, like, harmful to kids, it's about time. I think that there's a lot of middle ground between a teacher who is awesome every day and a teacher who is harmful to kids and I don't think that the middle ground is utilized enough to help teachers become better teachers. …I don't think there's ever the follow through there. You know, how could we support you to become a better teacher here? And I think that there might be more credibility with the whole evaluation process if that middle ground were actually used to help teachers become better teachers.

Another teacher at Thoreau expressed an interest in learning from the evaluation process.

> [A]nytime you say, "evaluation," I feel like nobody's going to think, "oh, well, they're coming to support me and to make me do a better job." But, you know, ideally the process would be geared more towards that.

Many other teachers said that they wanted substantive feedback in the evaluation process and support so that they could improve.

Teachers at all stages of their career said they would be more open to the evaluative comments from an administrator if they were supported in their efforts to reach the expectations. One who had nearly 5 years of teaching experience thought that a focus on growth during the assessment process would quell some of the fears in the school.

> It seems like the evaluation is more of a judgment on how well you're teaching and not "Let's try to make everyone a better, let's make their school better educationally and let's make you a better teacher." And I think if that was … it might relieve fears a little bit.

In several cases teachers expressed concerns about violations of Elmore's (1997) principle of reciprocity. "If the formal authority of my role requires that I hold you accountable for some action or outcome, then I have an equal and complementary responsibility to assure that you have the capacity to do what I'm asking you to do" (p. 64). When asked about evaluations, a teacher with ten years of experience explained, "[They are] giving me straw to build a brick house and then come looking for the brick house." Her colleague expressed a similar view.

> I think to evaluate someone without ever having supervised them is ridiculous. You know. I think there's so much emphasis put on evaluation and very little on the supervision. … [Supervision is] not happening. …No one in 18 years has asked what I need. Don't evaluate me until you ask what I need to do this.

Both of these teachers objected to a lack of support for professional growth. They saw administrators focusing intensively on assessing teachers and imposing consequences for those who did not meet expectations without investing simultaneously in supporting teachers' growth.

Therefore, teachers and administrators at Thoreau consistently described a teacher

evaluation process that was used primarily to identify and, when necessary, to dismiss underperforming teachers. Although the stakes were high for a small number of teachers, most teachers found the process to be personally inconsequential. Interestingly, many teachers appreciated the increased levels of accountability, but also raised many concerns about the shortcomings of the process as it was implemented. Many Thoreau teachers who were not at risk of being dismissed believed that if evaluators paid greater attention to growth and support, the process would be more credible and effective for individuals and for the school as an organization. In addition, teachers described a growing climate of fear and distrust, which they attributed to the way the administrators at Thoreau approached evaluation.

Giovanni Elementary: Evaluating all teachers to support their growth. Giovanni Elementary School was a large elementary school with 45 teachers serving 450 students. Mr. Gilmore, the principal of Giovanni Elementary School, went beyond the district's expectations and integrated the evaluation process into his school improvement work, holding teachers responsible for high levels of professional practice and also supporting their development. This approach to teacher evaluation was akin to the growth-oriented approach suggested by reform groups such as the Aspen Institute (Sartain et al., 2012) and Education Trust (Almy & Education Trust, 2011). With great consistency across many interviews, the principal and teachers at Giovanni Elementary described evaluation as a process supporting growth for all teachers, no matter what their level of competence or years of experience were. Teachers frequently described evaluation with pairs of words such as "nerve-wracking" but "helpful." Several teachers offered examples of how the evaluations had influenced their professional practice. Teachers believed the evaluation process contributed to a school culture where teachers felt both accountable for their teaching practice and supported in reaching high expectations. The

experiences and views of teachers at Giovanni were in marked contrast to those of their peers at all other schools in the sample. This case illustrates how evaluation can serve accountability and growth purposes, even though it may rarely be used that way.

Mr. Gilmore had been principal of Giovanni Elementary School for eight years, after considerable experience as a literacy instructional coach. Teachers described Gilmore as highly focused on issues of instructional improvement. As part of the collaborative improvement efforts, Gilmore engaged in a comprehensive evaluation process with each teacher every other year. Notably, his description of the process matched teachers' accounts. He explained that his first priority was to use the evaluation process as a developmental tool. "We can talk to each other about teaching and learning … [W]hen I do evaluations with teachers … I'm not after anybody; I'm really after . . . how do we improve?"

In order to reach his vision of an integrated approach to professional growth, Gilmore had, over time, added components to the district's teacher evaluation process. He asked teachers to prepare lesson plans for the formal observations as well as a written self-assessment, which included professional goals and a record of professional development experiences. He also asked teachers to provide evidence of how they communicated with families, methods for using student data and their involvement in school-wide teacher leadership opportunities. Gilmore then met with teachers before and after the two formal classroom observations. Although teachers described the process as time-consuming and stressful, they also reported that it was very productive. Gilmore explained that the evaluation process was very demanding for him, but worthwhile because it required him to spend time in classrooms in order to support teachers' improvement.

Accountability: "He does have strict expectations." At Giovanni, teachers explained

that the evaluation process held them to high standards. Teachers described their school as a place where they and their students were expected to achieve, and the evaluation process was one means to communicate and reinforce those expectations. One explained:

> But Mr. [Gilmore] puts a lot of emphasis on evaluating you when you are a new teacher and coming into your room and giving you feedback on how you are doing. And I think through that, expectations are relayed to you . . . we all really care about the students and that there's a high expectation for all of them really coming up to a certain level of learning and achieving.

Another teacher described her reaction to the demands.

> I don't feel as nervous being in front of him because knowing that he is there to help you grow. I mean he does have strict expectations. . . . you do have fear. I do respect him, in terms of like that fear, but I don't fear him in the way that it's going to make my teaching go down. It's to help me support me teaching, so that's great. I think it is a great thing.

In her opinion, the pressure was productive because Gilmore's purpose was to support her growth.

At Giovanni Elementary School, evaluation was not an isolated process. Giovanni teachers explained that Gilmore worked with them on instructional improvement through many learning processes including sessions dedicated to Looking at Student Work, Lesson Study, and team planning. In this way, the principal communicated high expectations through a variety of professional practices in addition to evaluation. A teacher who had been working at Giovanni for four years recalled teachers helping her understand the evaluation process when she was new, "Because when I first had my [evaluation]… I was a little concerned. And, other teachers

[were] saying 'It's fine. …if he had major concerns about your instruction and like your methods and stuff, you would know.'" Teacher evaluation at Giovanni was an integrated element of professional learning.

Balancing support and accountability. At Giovanni, many teachers expressed appreciation for the ways that Gilmore balanced accountability and support in the evaluation process. A teacher with five years of experience explained that "[Mr. Gilmore] came in with the presence [suggesting] that 'I wasn't here to judge you necessarily but to see what you can improve.' And that makes a big difference for me." She went on to explain that he wasn't just looking to assign a grade to her performance but was also interested in helping her grow and might even join in and teach with her during the observation. "'How do you get there?' So he would show you and if you don't know, you know, he'll try to find ways to explain." Many teachers noted Gilmore's willingness to co-teach with his faculty members in order to provide direct instructional support in the classroom, particularly in literacy, his area of expertise. The fact that he might co-teach on an impromptu basis, even during a formal observation, convinced some teachers that he was truly committed to making their improvement the primary goal of the evaluation process. It also contributed to a belief among the teachers that Gilmore had relevant expertise to inform his feedback and support.

Many teachers spontaneously offered examples of elements of their teaching practice that they had worked on as a result of being formally evaluated by Gilmore. One teacher spoke of Gilmore's providing her with guidance about how teachers can model learning processes for students. Another reported that he taught her about methods to improve the quantity and quality of student talk in her classroom. Teachers at Giovanni explained that they worked continuously with colleagues and Gilmore to improve student learning. They described the evaluation process

as relevant, transparent and respectful.

Implementation challenges. Gilmore acknowledged two of the challenges he encountered in implementing the teacher evaluation system effectively—having enough time and having sufficient knowledge of both content and pedagogy to assess and support all teachers. In his view, although the time commitment was onerous, it was worthwhile because it supported his broader school wide improvement goals. However, as the only administrator in the school, he could not be the sole source of professional support for all teachers' growth and therefore, relied on others to help teachers improve. A special education teacher explained that, since Gilmore did not have the knowledge needed to support her growth, he often referred her to professional development opportunities outside of the school. Gilmore also referred teachers to particular colleagues for professional support. For example, a fifth year teacher recalled being evaluated as a new teacher at Giovanni. Gilmore followed up on the formal observations by recommending that she observe a colleague in the school to support her growth.

> And I am sure my first observation was like crash and burn. But he was very helpful in the sense of… instead of coming to me and then taking a negative tone, he said, "You know, I will give you time. You can go and watch the other teacher do her guided reading so you can see like how it looks and how it should flow."…[G]etting time to go watch her, somebody else who's got it. . . . And just have somebody come into your room for forty-five minutes. . . . So that definitely helped me for the first year, I feel like he is the most supportive, like always right there.

In this case and others, teachers suggested that Gilmore's expectations for their individual growth were linked to the goals that their grade level team was pursuing or school-

wide goals. Teachers said that evaluation was but one of many inter-connected opportunities for receiving feedback on their practice. Evaluation at Giovanni, according to teachers, was integrated into the other professional growth processes. By integrating the evaluation process into school-wide professional learning opportunities such as grade-level collaborative planning, he facilitated teachers learning from each other.

> And I think whenever he has an expectation he would always come back and check on you or he would check on the team to see if it has been met or is there something that you can - - we can do as a team. Or, you know, what kind of support he can give you.

Teachers at Giovanni consistently described the evaluation process as a tool to support improvement and to assess instructional practices for all teachers. Although many teachers found the process challenging and stressful, they described it as productive and supportive. They suggested that they had greater trust in the process and in the principal because he took responsibility for supporting teachers in reaching the expectations he set. This was in stark contrast with teachers' views at the other five schools where they described evaluation as either inconsequential or threatening.

Conclusions

Teachers in this study, who taught in six high-poverty schools of one large urban district, agree with policy makers that evaluation processes have the potential to improve teaching quality and ultimately student learning. Furthermore, teachers endorsed the use of evaluations to increase accountability in schools as long as the process also supported their professional growth. Across the sample, teachers craved opportunities to receive detailed and useful feedback on their teaching practice as well as complementary support for improvement, and they criticized the evaluation process when these were lacking.

Despite the intended implementation of a uniform teacher evaluation policy in Walker City School District, teachers described considerable school-based variability in their experience and perceptions of evaluation. In only one of six schools did teachers describe evaluation as a process that supported both accountability and development for teachers. In four schools (Angelou, Morrison, Whitman and Stowe), most teachers described evaluation as an exercise in bureaucratic compliance that had little impact on either holding teachers accountable for teaching standards or supporting professional growth for teachers. In the other two schools (Thoreau and Giovanni), the administrators invested significant resources in the evaluation process as a part of their school's improvement strategy. However, the two principals' expectations about how evaluation would lead to better teaching quality differed markedly as did teachers' experiences with the process used in their school.

At Thoreau High School, school administrators were diligently implementing the district's mandate for evaluation in ways that align with policy recommendations that emphasize accountability (Hannaway, 2009; Hanushek, 2009; New Teacher, 2012). Thoreau administrators used evaluation to identify the least effective teachers and dismiss those who failed to improve by a specified time. Although teachers interviewed at Thoreau generally appreciated increased levels of accountability for them and their peers, they criticized the evaluation process for generating an atmosphere of fear and distrust among teachers and administrators. These findings suggest that when school leaders focus primarily on dismissing the least effective teachers, there can be unintended detrimental effects on the professional climate within the school. Teachers at Thoreau wished for an approach to teacher evaluation, where all teachers would be expected to meet standards and develop their professional practice.

The case of Giovanni Elementary School serves as both a counterpoint and a proof-point

of what evaluation might be. Teachers reported that Principal Gilmore used evaluations to hold teachers accountable for meeting expectations and to support their professional improvement. Many described changes that they had made in their instructional practices in response to feedback and support in the evaluation process. Gilmore's approach to evaluation was akin to the growth-oriented focus promoted by many reformers (Almy & Education Trust, 2011; Curtis, Weiner & Aspen Institute, 2012). Teachers at Giovanni viewed it as a demanding but productive process, which was woven into the fabric of their ongoing efforts to improve instruction throughout the school.

Implications For Policy, Practice, and Research

Although school systems often pay lip service to the dual purposes of accountability and growth in evaluation, many prioritize accountability over growth, if they take evaluation seriously at all. This study suggests that teachers appreciate and respond positively when assessment is balanced with support for development for all teachers. The fact that this was achieved at only one school that we studied suggests how challenging it is to implement evaluation in a way that attends to individuals' growth and to teacher accountability. In most schools in this study, teachers believed the evaluation process did not support either of these goals effectively. It is notable that Gilmore, the one principal who succeeded in implementing evaluation as an improvement process, had significant experience as a teacher and literacy coach, which his teachers often noted and said they appreciated. Understanding the challenges that hamper productive teacher evaluation processes can help system leaders design and implement policies more effectively.

School-level Variation in Implementation

In many states and most school systems, including WCSD, school administrators are

responsible for supervising and evaluating the teachers in their school. Therefore, district policies rely heavily on the capacity of individual school leaders for implementation.

Policy context. In WCSD, most school leaders and teachers whom we interviewed explained evaluation as a procedural requirement, consistent with the tone of the district's written documents describing the process (Walker City School District, 2006; Walker City School District, 2010). It is unclear to what degree a district's formal policy reflects the system's existing professional culture or shapes the professional culture. A memo about evaluations from the WCSD superintendent to principals, briefly mentioned using evaluation to support professional growth, but this was overshadowed by extensive information about how to properly execute the process, and more specifically, how to address ineffective teaching practices (Walker City School District, 2010). This raises the question: What messages—both formal and informal—would school leaders need to receive from their district administrators to implement evaluation in the service of growth? And in what ways might those practices connect to others such as induction coaching, teacher collaboration, or professional development sessions?

It is possible that these school leaders were responding to the well-publicized urgings of policy analysts who prioritize accountability over growth in the evaluation process (Hannaway, 2009; Hanushek, 2009; New Teacher, 2012). Another explanation is that district and school leaders are attempting to maintain public credibility, responding to pressure from federal and state agencies as well as from the popular press (eg. Thomas et al., 2010) to fix the broken evaluation system. Dismissing ineffective teachers is a high-profile way to demonstrate that evaluations are being used, so the tendency to focus on under-performing teachers is in some respects understandable.

In addition, the findings may suggest that school administrators frequently are limited as

evaluators by a lack of time, knowledge, and / or skills. Also, the degree to which the school leader views the process as a developmental endeavor influences his or her approach to implementation. There are several possible explanations as to why most school administrators in this study were unable to address either or both purposes of using evaluation to assess and hold teachers accountable for meeting standards of practice and support them in improving.

Time. School administrators often are expected to evaluate more than 20 teachers in a year. This is just one of their many responsibilities as the instructional and managerial leader of the school. Nonetheless, teachers in this study and other studies (Donaldson, 2012) say that in order for an evaluation to be productive, their evaluator needs to spend ample time observing their classes as well as devote time to analyzing the observational data and then conferring with the teachers about their instructional practice. As in WCSD, evaluation policies typically call for evaluators to provide written reports to teachers and to their district central office. The time demands for principals are often unrealistic. Several school administrators in this study commented on the time burden of completing evaluations.

However, the differences across schools in how evaluation was implemented cannot be explained simply by a shortage of time. The principals in this study all faced similar demands on their time with respect to evaluation. The larger schools in the sample had more administrators, who shared in the evaluation responsibilities. Gilmore, who had no assistants, was able to complete the task on his own.

Knowledge. Teachers in this study and others (Donaldson, 2009; Donaldson, 2012; Sartain et al., 2011) report that their evaluators need to have two types of relevant knowledge in order to validly assess their practice, provide valuable feedback, and support individual teachers' growth. They need to know both the content of the subject being taught and the pedagogical

reasoning specific to that content, which Shulman (1987) described as "pedagogical content knowledge." For example, in order to evaluate an algebra teachers' instructional practice, an evaluator needs to know both algebra content and how algebra should be taught—mathematical knowledge for teaching (Ball, Thames & Phelps, 2008). Giovanni teachers explained that, although Principal Gilmore evaluated them, he often deferred to his math coach to lead the work of supporting their math instruction. It seems obvious that school administrators are unlikely to possess the wide range of knowledge required to supervise a large and diverse cadre of teachers within a school, particularly at the secondary level. For, example, although Principal Thomas had extensive knowledge and experience in mathematics as a former instructional coach, her supervisory responsibilities included teachers of students with severe special needs as well as those who taught English, science, art and foreign languages, for which she did not have particular expertise.

Skills. In order for evaluators to effectively assess teachers and support their professional growth, they also need a specialized set of skills. An evaluator must be able to observe carefully in the classroom and analyze teaching and learning relative to the evaluation tool. Evaluators need to be able to validly and reliably assess teaching practice. Although a detailed assessment can provide a teacher with information about her instructional practices relative to a standard, this feedback, in itself, provides no guidance about how to improve. In this sample, some teachers described the assessment aspect of the evaluation as thorough, but many complained that the feedback about how they might improve was shallow if provided at all.

The improvement process requires coaching and support that goes well beyond objective assessment. If district administrators expect principals to use evaluation as a growth tool, they must help evaluators develop their skills for coaching teachers on how to improve their

instructional practices (Sartain et al., 2011). Sartain and colleagues found that many evaluators do not know how to ask teachers questions that foster reflection and discussion during post-observation conferences. Skillful coaches engage teachers in explaining their own instructional approach, analyzing student learning and exploring alternative strategies. In this study, while most teachers at Giovanni described evaluation as including support—coaching, modeling, collaborative planning and related professional growth activities—very few teachers at the other five schools spoke of assistance for improvement as part of their experience.

Another way that evaluators support teachers' professional growth is by integrating teacher evaluation into other school improvement efforts. An evaluation might provide teachers with detailed feedback about their own instructional practice, while professional activities such as collaborative team planning can provide the teachers support for subsequent improvement. In five of the six schools in this study, evaluation was seen as an ancillary process, unrelated to efforts to improve the school. The principals in these five schools may not have known how to weave the elements of an evaluation process into the fabric of improvement practices, as Gilmore did at Giovanni. Such integrated practices, although potentially very valuable, are uncommon in schools. In WCSD, not only was there no ongoing support for school leaders as evaluators, there was no explicit, systemic plan for preparing them to integrate evaluation with other improvement practices. Therefore, it is not surprising that most of the principals in this study chose to invest minimal energy and resources—just enough to comply with the district's expectations or, in the case of Thoreau, enough to dismiss a very weak teacher. It is notable that, given scarce resources and competing demands, teachers in this sample reported that four out of six of the principals chose to focus their improvement efforts on initiatives other than evaluation.

Developmental view of evaluation. This study suggests that leadership development

must go beyond helping principals gain the relevant content and pedagogical knowledge to validly and reliably assess teachers. It must also support principals in learning how to assist teachers in improving their practice and how to connect teachers' experiences in evaluation with learning in other practices such as data inquiry cycles, team planning and other professional development sessions. In this study, teachers' and principals' accounts suggest that Principal Gilmore at Giovanni was the only administrator in the sample who prioritized professional growth in his approach to evaluation. Other researchers have found that the degree to which a school leader values the evaluation process affects teachers' experience with that process (O'Pry & Schumacher, 2012; Sartain et al., 2011). If school systems expect principals to effectively use evaluations as a component of their school's improvement work, they will need to support principals in using the process to support development. Future research is warranted to understand what training, systems, structures and policies support school leaders in viewing and using evaluation as a developmental tool.

Drawing on Other Professionals in the System

Although principals undoubtedly play a significant role in conducting, managing, and integrating teacher evaluation, other members of school and district teams have skills and knowledge that could contribute positively to this process. In some schools, such as Thoreau, principals share their responsibilities for evaluation with a team of administrators. Such an approach can help to address the shortage of time or specialized expertise, but it may create new challenges, such as calibrating assessments with others and providing comparable supervision to all teachers.

Some other districts have implemented programs that capitalize on the knowledge of highly skilled teachers from within and outside the system. For example, in Peer Assistance and

Review [PAR] programs highly skilled teachers are trained and supported as consulting teachers, who supervise and evaluate other teachers (Johnson & Fiarman, 2012). Programs such as PAR, which capitalize on the varied skills and knowledge of expert teachers, can reduce the untenable demands for time and specialized knowledge that school administrators experience, create growth opportunities for teacher leaders, increase the retention rate for novice teachers and increase the dismissal rate for underperforming teachers (Goldstein, 2005; Goldstein, 2007; Humphrey, Koppich, Bland, & Bosetti, 2011; Papay & Johnson, 2012;).

Several districts have developed new models for evaluation in which highly skilled teachers work together with administrators to observe and provide feedback to other teachers. In Washington D.C., the IMPACT model uses "master educators"—subject-based expert practitioners—to conduct two observations while administrators conduct three separate observations in a school year ("An Overview of IMPACT," 2013). The "master educators" and the administrators both provide teachers with feedback and support for growth through post-observation conferences and written reports. New Haven, CT public schools recently adopted a different model, TEVAL, in which "validators"—former teachers with demonstrated success in the classroom and who are currently external to the district—observe teachers who are likely to receive either the highest or lowest of five levels on the rating scale ("TEVAL," 2013). This observation by a former teacher with content-specific expertise is used to ensure fairness and accuracy in the process. In other districts, administrative evaluators work across schools, supporting school principals by assessing and supervising teachers. Such models attend to the problems of time, knowledge and skills by tapping qualified professionals beyond the principal to assist in the evaluation process. However, these approaches present challenges of integrating evaluation into other improvement processes and calibrating the assessment and support

provided to teachers.

Evaluation policies tend to overlook the potential contributions of expert teachers already in the ranks of schools. As school systems improve their evaluation systems in pursuit of increased student learning, school and district leaders may want to consider how to share the responsibilities for teacher evaluation across teams of administrators and teachers who have attained leadership roles or been certified as "accomplished teachers" by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Such arrangements would allow schools to move beyond evaluation systems in which teachers are passive recipients of a diagnosis and prescription for improvement, to policies and practices that engage teachers in helping to develop, implement and review evaluation processes in their school system.

Policy makers, practitioners and researchers would likely agree that the purpose of teacher evaluation is to improve teaching quality so that student learning improves, particularly in schools serving high-poverty populations. However, there is scant evidence that evaluation, in isolation, will lead to substantial improvements in teaching quality. District and school leaders can support improvement by implementing a multi-faceted, integrated approach to development, which incorporates evaluation as one source of feedback and support. If principals are to engage with evaluation as an opportunity to develop their teachers, then district, state and federal policymakers must convey that the purpose of evaluation extends well beyond dismissing ineffective teachers and they must provide the time and training to make that possible. Policy makers, practitioners and those who prepare principals also need to allocate resources so that future administrators can develop the attitudes, priorities, skills and knowledge needed to implement a robust evaluation process, which assesses teachers' practice, holds them

accountable for achieving professional standards, and supports all teachers' improvement. Only then will teachers receive the kind of assessment and assistance that they and their students deserve.

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· These references are incomplete and use the district pseudonym in order to preserve the anonymity of the district in this study.

Table 1. Selected characteristics of the six sample schools.

School Name	School Level	Principal Name	Enrollment	% Low-Income Students	% Minority Students	Student Growth Percentile: English Language Arts	Student Growth Percentile: Mathematics	Teachers Interviewed	Admin. Interviewed	% of All Teachers Interviewed
Angelou	Elem.	Mr. Andrews	700	90%	95%	35	50	10	1	18%
Giovanni	Elem.	Mr. Gilmore	450	95%	90%	55	60	13	1	29%
Morrison	Elem./ Middle	Ms. Maxwell	400	95%	95%	45	20	14	2	52%
Stowe	Middle	Ms. Sterling	700	90%	95%	45	45	15	3	30%
Thoreau	High	Ms. Thomas	900	80%	95%	50	55	20	2	29%
Whitman Academy	High	Ms. Wheeler	250	85%	95%	60	65	11	3	46%

NOTE: We rounded 2010/11 school data and did not break out specific racial/ethnic groups in order to protect school confidentiality.

Table 2: Selected characteristics of interviewed teachers and administrators

	Teachers	**Administrators**	**Full Sample**
Female	78%	58%	76%
White	61%	42%	59%
African American	18%	33%	20%
Hispanic	8%	17%	9%
Asian	10%	0%	8%
Multi-Racial	2%	8%	3%
Experience (years)	12.3	16.6	12.8
0-3 years	14%	8%	14%
4-10 years	46%	33%	44%
11-25 years	25%	42%	27%
25 plus years	14%	17%	15%
n	83	12	95

Note: Experience is defined as total number of years as a classroom teacher and administrator.

Appendix A

We began by identifying high poverty schools as those that fell above the district median in the proportion of students who qualified for federal free and reduced price lunch using data from the 2007/08 school year. Because the proportion of students who apply for federal lunch subsidies decreases as students' age, we stratified by school level and calculated median rates across the district of 80 percent (elementary), 82 percent (middle school), and 64 percent (high school). We then calculated an average measure of each school's working conditions from a survey developed by Eric Hirsch of the New Teacher Center and administered statewide in 2008 [see Johnson, Kraft, and Papay (2012) for more details].

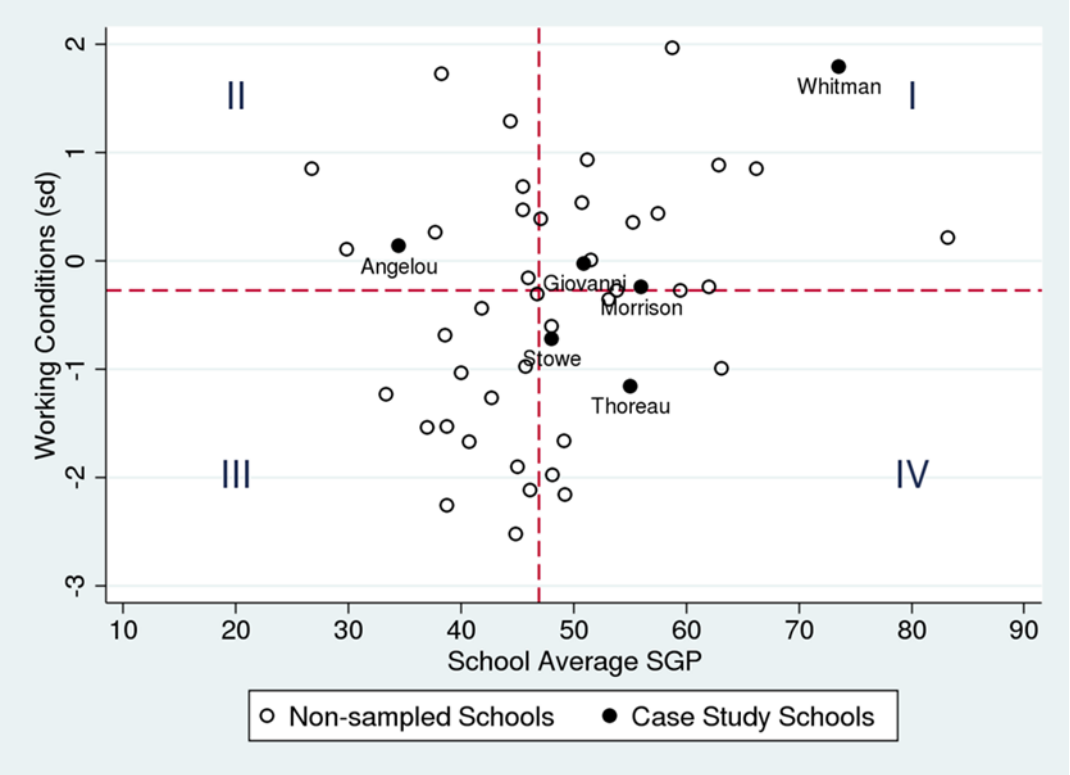
We also examined student achievement, focusing on a measure of student test score growth used by the state, the Student Growth Percentile. We averaged these SGP measures across two academic years, 2007/08 and 2008/09 in both mathematics and English language arts in the figures presented in the appendix. In the top panel of Figure A1, we present a plot of the high-poverty schools in the district, arrayed by their average SGP in mathematics and English language arts (horizontal axis) and their average working conditions measure (vertical axis). For ease of interpretation, we placed horizontal and vertical lines at the median value of working conditions and SGP within our sample of high-poverty schools in the district. These lines divide the sample into four quadrants: high-growth schools with strong work environments (QI), low-growth schools with strong work environments (QII), low-growth schools with weak work environments (QIII), and high-growth schools with weak work environments (QIV).

This analysis informed our selection, as we sought schools in different quadrants and with different values on each of these measures. However, we did not adhere strictly to these data for several reasons. First, our measure of the working conditions in a school was only a

proxy for the current school context given that we initiated this study several years after the survey had been administered. Second, as described in the text, we sought schools that varied on a range of other measures.

Finally, we struggled to include low-performing schools with poor working conditions because the district was closing or reconstituting some of these schools. Several of the schools in Quadrant III had been closed by the time our study began. We attempted to recruit one school in this quadrant, but the principal declined to participate and the school was subsequently closed. All other schools that we recruited agreed to participate in the study.

Figure A1. Average school-level working conditions by school average Student Growth Percentile in all low-income schools in the district, with case study schools identified.



Appendix B

Teacher Interview Protocol

Background: How long have you been teaching? How long have you been teaching in this district? at this school?

1. **School overview:** Please tell me a bit about your school—how it is organized, the students it serves, whether it has a particular focus—anything that seems important to you.

2. **Teaching assignment:** What grade or subject do your teach?

3. **Overall view of school:** If another teacher would ask you, "What's it like to teach at _____?" How might you respond? What are the advantages and disadvantages of being a teacher here?

4. **Why teach here?:** How did you decide to teach here? Did you choose to teach here? If so, why? What other choices did you have? Do you plan to stay? (If not: Will you stay in teaching? Go to another school? Do something else?) Do other teachers plan to stay?

    - Why do you think teachers want to stay at this school?
    - OR Why do you think teachers don't want to stay at this school?
    - Does the school have a reputation among teachers?

5. **Principal's role:** Please describe the role of the principal in your school. (How does he/she use time? Visible to teachers and students? Instructional expertise?) How does the principal help support or drive student achievement? How does the principal/admin support teachers?

6. **School order:** Would you say that this school is an orderly place for teaching and learning? Is there a behavior or discipline program for all students?

7. **Colleagues:** How often do you talk or meet with your colleagues? What do you do?

    - Is there a fixed time for collaboration among teachers? If so, how do you use it? Do the teachers decide how the time is used?

8. **Student Achievement**: What approaches do you and others in the school use to increase student learning and achievement?

    - Does the school monitor individual progress across grades? How formal is this process? Can you give me an example?

    - How is individual student progress monitored (within classes and across school)?

- How often are students tested?
- Do you think the school's approach works?

9. **Curriculum:** Do you use a standardized curriculum? All subjects? How do you decide what to teach from week to week or day to day?

10. **Governance:** Do teachers have a role in governance at your school? (If a governance team functions, what does it do? Do teachers take that team seriously? Who is appointed and how?)

11. **Hiring and Assignment:** Could you describe how teachers are hired and assigned to classes?

    - Who participates in hiring?
    - Does your grade level include a mix of new and veteran teachers?

12. **Support:** What kind of support do new teachers get when they come to the school? What kind of ongoing support is available to you as a teacher? Coaches?

13. **Parents:** In what ways are parents involved with the teachers at your school?

14. **Evaluation:** How is your teaching evaluated? Is it helpful to you?

15. **Union and Contract:** What role does the teachers contract or the union play in your school?

16. **Recommendations for improvement:** What recommendations would you make for improving your school?

17. **More:** Do you have any additional comments?

Principal Interview Protocol

1. Please provide an overview of your school (size, programs, faculty size, students served).

2. How long have you been the principal? What other roles have you had as an educator?

3. What would you say are the strengths and weaknesses of your school?

4. What approaches do you and others in the school use to increase student learning and achievement?

5. How would you describe the experience profile of the teachers at your school? (New

teachers, early career teachers, second-stage teachers, veteran teachers)

6. Over the past five years, approximately how many teachers left each year? Is teacher turnover an issue here? If so, could you describe it?

   - Who leaves? Who stays?
   - Why do teachers leave your school? Do you dismiss any or encourage them to leave? If so, why?
   - Where do they go?
   - Why do they stay?

7. Do you have strategies for retaining teachers in the school? How well do you think they work? Do prospective teachers ask what the school will do to support them?

We have some questions about the policies and practices that affect teachers:

8. How do you go about **hiring** teachers at your school?

9. How do you **assign** teachers to particular classes or grades?

10. What kind of **induction** is available for new teachers?

11. Do your teachers **collaborate or work in teams**? If so, please describe how that works.

12. How do you ensure that the school is an **orderly place for learning and teaching**?

13. How would you describe the relationship between **teachers and parents?**

14. Do teachers play a role in **school governance**? If so, please describe.

15. Do any teachers have **specialized roles**, for example, as instructional coaches?

16. In what ways does the **teachers contract and union priorities** affect your school? Are there any contract provisions that teachers generally agree they won't enforce for the good of the school?

17. How do you **supervise and evaluate** teachers? Are teachers dismissed here? Do you ask for support from the Central Office in this?

18. Are there any additional comments that you would like to make?

Appendix C

Complete list of codes and definitions

Code Name in ATLAS-TI	**Code Name**	**Code Description**
PROBACK	Professional Background	Past work history
WHYTCH	Why teach?	Personal sense of purpose
WHYSCHL	Why chose school	Why teach at this particular school?
TCHASSGNMT	Teaching Assignment	How teacher spends their time at school
SCHLOV	School Overview	Facts about the school
STCHAR	Student Characteristics	Descriptions of students and their neighborhoods
TCHST	Teacher and Student Interactions	Non-instructional interactions among teachers and students inside and outside the classroom.
NEIGH	Neighborhood	Descriptions of the local surroundings of the school
SCHLCULT	School Culture	Expressions of school-wide norms & values including kids, teachers and parents
ORDER	Order and Discipline	Safety, systems, expectations and rules, and enforcement,
RESFAC	Resources and Facilities	Material and human resources
FUND	Funding	Budgetary issues
ADLEAD	Administrative leadership	Descriptions of administrators' style, vision, agenda, priorities, purposes, etc
ADTCH	Admin and Teachers	Relationship between administrators and teachers
ADST	Admin and Students	Relationship between administrators and students
ADROLE	Administrative Roles	Specific responsibilities and job descriptions
PRINC	Principal	All things related to the principal
COL	Character of Colleagues	Commentary on colleagues and their characteristics
TEAM	Teams	Deliberate, structured groups working together
PROCULT	Interaction among adults	Colleagues and norms of working together formally and informally
PD	Professional Development	Formal learning activities for teachers
COACH	Coaching	Formal instructional coaches, but NOT induction
CURRPED	Curriculum and Pedagogy	What and how you teach
PAR	Parents	Perceptions of parents/ families + Teacher and admin connections to parents / families
DEMAND	Teacher Responsibility/Demands	Time and obligations that go above and beyond
ACCT	Accountability	Related to external accountability

MON	Monitoring Student Achievement	Teachers' use of assessments and instructional strategies to monitor achievement
EVAL	Evaluation	Related to teacher evaluation
TL	Teacher Leadership	Teacher opportunities as brokers of influence (formal and informal)
UNION	Union and Contract	Related to the union and the contract
HIRE	Hiring	Related to teacher hiring, including teacher's experience of being hired.
INDUCT	Induction	Programs and supports (formal and informal) for new teachers
SCHLTURN	School-wide Turnover	Why other people stay or leave; both causes and frequencies
INDIVTURN	Individual Turnover	Teachers' personal plans to stay or leave
DISTINFL	District Influence	District mandates, relationship to district

Appendix D

Teachers' views on feedback from the evaluation process

This matrix is an example of how I organized data after coding in order to analyze facets of the evaluation process across schools. These quotations, which are drawn from the code "Eval," were selected from a much larger group at each school. They are intended to illustrate the range of teachers' views about the feedback they received as part of the formal evaluation process. My description and analysis presented in this article are based on an analysis of the full set of data for all codes at these schools.

Angelou	Giovanni	Morrison	Stowe	Thoreau	Whitman
T: The principal evaluates to see whether or not you have met those criteria, so there are like checks and has met it, has not met it, so that… and then at the end, the principal normally calls you in and has a discussion about what he saw, what you would like to improve, what the expectations are for the next time - hopefully you can… INT: Have you found that experience to be helpful in improving, or is it more kind of just a measurement of are things okay? T: I think it is just a measurement of a lot of things so [supervisors] provide feedback for us which is always really helpful. They do a really good job and take a lot of care in writing those reports up. INT: And after his popping in, does he ever say things to you about how things are going? T: He hasn't, I think, from what I understood, he has said things to other persons, but not to particularly me. So, That's good! So, I mean if there is an issue he would say,. . . "I saw this or xyz is going on, why is this happening?"	T: Very helpful. I mean just sort of things like you know last year, He suggested that I model more or give an example of what I want my outcome to look like. A completed version or of a completed model and I have started using that. And each year he will give me suggestions and usually I take them and it works well. T: [The principal] puts a lot of emphasis on evaluating you when you are a new teacher and coming into your room and giving you feedback on how you are doing. And I think through that, expectations are relayed to you, like this is what we expect INT: Do you get any valuable feedback? T: Oh, yeah, yeah. We will actually read his comments. He'll sit down and read what he wrote. He'll read it aloud. So yeah, so you know, everything he's ever told me, it has been very useful. I'm still trying to give the kids the training to talk. All the kids do turn and talk to each other about what they are doing. The other	T: Exactly. And I actually would then follow up and ask them if we could meet and talk, kind of to call it a bluff a little bit, but also because I feel that's what's supposed to happen after evaluations. I kind of got run around for a while and we never actually met and talked, and then around May I was given a very thick packet that was -- it was something like my annual evaluation complete -- I don't even know. And so it said some things by strand of professional frameworks and I never signed it. So I never officially agreed or disagreed with it. It was never followed up, I would just kind of leave it. T: I have had informal, [the acting-principal] has come through, [the principal] has come through my class but we don't have meetings afterwards or too much feedback. INT: And would you feel like feedback would be helpful for you? T: Yes of course. I mean there're some feedback but it would be nice to have even if it's a form, more than sit down for 15 minutes instead of when you're passing in the hall kind	T: … they're usually there for like five minutes, ten minutes, five minutes, twenty minutes, twenty minutes, ten minutes. And then they write things down and, you know, they let you know these are the things that are their concerns. So they get a snapshot of what's the large picture. So the evaluation to me is a way of them trying to understand what goes on in class. . . INT: Is it helpful to you? T: No. Uh-uh. No, it's not. They haven't done anything for me. But the reason why it's not helpful for me because I'm a master teacher. I mean because I take my job skills seriously, so I'm not a slacker. You know, I still have pride in what I do. So I don't want to sound arrogant or pompous. I'm not saying that - it could be helpful, but I like my curriculum, I like what I do, I enjoy teaching, so, and I already know my areas of weaknesses and my areas of strengths. And the things that I'm weak on, I kind of know what I need to work on. So you writing it down is just a reminder of what I need to work on.	T: So they follow -- there's like a protocol that [the district] uses and it's usually -- it's pretty thorough feedback. It's all generally pretty positive and I feel like in talking to the other people it's either positive or it's negative. I feel like it could be used more, like, as a support system. You know, it's seen more as, like, well it's either just routine paperwork or they're using it to get rid of a teacher that's not doing a good job. T: But you know I feel like the more the merrier, give me some ideas. Ideally if you're evaluating me, like drop me a note. Jot down a note and tell me what you thought so I can learn from it. T: Yes. So when [the principal] comes in she'll fill out a little half sheet or [the AP], the administrator in charge I think she's in charge of curriculum supervision I don't know. But she always leaves a half sheet with feedback. And --. INT: Is that helpful? T: Yes it is. INT: So it's actually -- it's	I knew I had stuff to work on. And she highlighted the things I was aware of. So I didn't really find it threatening. I had been through a whole evaluation process through graduate school and that was so intense that this kind of felt like not so bad compared to all of that. But I didn't particularly find it helpful." T: It's not threatening, but it's also to me not useful. The feedback I got at the end of last year was . . . pretty ridiculous. I was advised -- and maybe it was because she knew she needed to put some sort of constructive criticism in there and she couldn't come up with anything else. But she put that I need to incorporate more culture, such as maybe on Fridays, have chips and salsa. And I was like, that's not culture. That's not incorporating culture. . . . So yeah, it's more of a, you know, process that they need to go through for [district] policies. . . . I mean maybe the first year I felt I got more out of it. But I don't really get much out of it anymore INT: Do you ever find it

T: Usually, if you're a first year teacher, a second year not permanent teacher, they are required to observe you two to three times. Usually formally you'll get a letter. But teachers that have been here, it's every other year. It's every other year. And they'll come in you know for a lesson and observe you. And usually you get feedback.
INT: Is it feedback where you would change things in response to it?
T: Now I remember one feedback I got. This is when I was not a permanent teacher. And it was an assessment. And she said okay, I noticed you were taking notes. Now what are you going to do with that? What are you going to do with those notes? It was just like that. It wasn't anything negative or anything like that. It was just asking you okay, now what are you going to do with that information that you got from this lesson? What are you going to do? So it seems like that.

kids just turn and talk.
INT: At each other.
T: Yes. So that's been helpful. And a few of the things he's told me over the years, I haven't had any, like, real criticism, so it's been very positive. The few comments he's given me have been constructive and I try to incorporate them.

INT: And you feel that he's able to give you good feedback even if your subject matter or your class focus is so different?
T: . . . And he can see stuff like working relationship that I have with my parents, you know that my classroom isn't a complete disaster, you know what I mean, we have current work on the board, things like that. That I've got a lesson prepared that I'm keeping, he can see those sorts of things, like if I was implementing things incorrectly then I would probably have to have someone more specialized in the field for some really good feedback.

T: So he's not one of those that would say something and just leave you and let you do it on your own. In fact like when he would come in and observe you he would join in and jump in and teach with you and so I find that a refreshing thing to see, like, I don't see a lot of principals that would actually do the teaching. Because they would tell you what they want but they might not show you what they want so you have no - - how do you get there? So he would show you and if you

of feedback. Or like later in the day just coming in and saying a couple of things and leaving, having a dialogue would be helpful.

T: Usually it's an observation and then it's a meeting afterwards.
INT: Okay and what do you talk about in those meetings?
T: Mostly your strengths, what you could do to better yourself as a teacher, what you should have done in this case because a lot of times having somebody else see, another pair of eyes, is good

T: And so they would come in, sit in for a few minutes informally and then they spent --the acting principal I mean, assistant spent one entire lesson period before the evaluation period was over they watched one of my entire classes from start to end so when the kids came up from their recess they were already sitting there waiting and they had already made some observations about things that I had in my room, was my desk neat and is this a good working condition for me, is it accessible to the students, what's my organization like, do I have language objectives, is my lesson matching those objectives and actually building up to them. And they would write me a note afterwards which I have one here, they keep -- I, whenever they wrote me a note I would staple it and so they give me suggestions and they give me some feedback and the date.

INT: How is your teaching evaluated and is it helpful to you?
T: No it's not. I think I've -- I've been here five years I think I've only been evaluated twice and the principal came into my room for maybe 15 minutes and then left. There was no interaction with her. I think once she had me to submit, a binder to her that was rubrics and conference notes, that was about it.

T: The principal... come[s] in to evaluate you, and I was evaluated two out of the three years. They (even come) see me. And a lot of people kind of said, like, "Oh, that should make you feel good." I'm like, "It doesn't, though." Because you don't get any feedback in the room. The only feedback that I got was my first year, and that was through my first-year teacher resident who I absolutely love and still call her to this day at least once a month to ask a question.

INT: So when you were evaluated, was it helpful?
T: Somewhat. I mean I think it was nice to know somebody cared what I was doing in my room, you know, other than just seeing a score next to my name for the MCAS. You know. Somewhat. More helpful when the assistant principal was doing it because I think she had more time. Because at least she gave a couple suggestions of things I could work on maybe. But before it was just, "You're

not just fluff, it's real?
T: Right yes, that is helpful. Yes, that is helpful. It doesn't happen very often but it is very helpful.

T: She observed me a few years ago and interrupted my lesson and told the kids I was wrong - which I was not - I was leaving out a little twist that totally confused them when she brought it up; I mean that was two years ago and I still haven't forgotten it. I would say that she respects me very much in the school and I'm very involved,

helpful? Do you get any feedback that useful?
T: I haven't in a while. I think the process is set up so that it should be. But people just get so crazy busy around here that some of that gets lost.

T: Teachers were not happy with the evaluation process. We get informal feedback all the time you know from the kids and from each other. This year we did some peer observation - where you got to observe other teachers. You get a feedback from a lot of different ways and in staff meetings someone will stand up and [the director of instruction] will get up and say you know everybody just don't forget your objectives on the board, things like that. Everyone sort of said when they do actually have a formal evaluation; the feedback is very slow in coming. It comes to you very late and then it's just not all that helpful.
INT: Because it's too general or too specific, it's too small or too big?
T: I think it's probably . . . It's just kind of vague. I mean the way -- and I can' say who's fault it is because the evaluation form they use is that you either you know don't meet expectations or you exceed expectations and it's on this set of six or seven dimensions of effective teaching that the superintendent has set out. And because it is the only record of your teaching that actually goes into your file I do feel as if it is not meant to be like a friendly reflective tool because

	don't know, you know, he'll try to find ways to explain. So that's been really helpful for me. T: So it kind of helps you - - felt like where - - he helped you find points to improve on instead of putting you down in your teaching. And so that's more supportive than - - it's really good critical - - criticism instead of just negative stuff so that's been helpful.	T: Yes, they'll just walk through and they'll look around and they'll be like, okay and we'll leave and then I'll get some sort of feedback later or not, one way or the other. T: And then last year, I had an awful para so [the principal] would come in and she came to observe him but in the mean time she also took her chance opportunity to evaluate me too. INT: And did you find those that feedback helpful? T: Yeah, sure. I know I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing so I was like whatever.	doing fine." T: Not helpful, no. Honestly, not at all. They check the box, are you "meeting standards" or "not meeting." It is "not meeting" or "meets or exceeds," and they all say "meets and exceeds," but I don't really know where that is on the realm of meeting or exceeding. And, I think that the only comment that I got was that I need to put student work up, which I still probably don't have up. Um, but I would say that, they let me know that I wasn't doing anything wrong, which is good, but it really didn't inform me how to improve, or where exactly I could improve. T: usually they come in, . . . they give you a heads up and they give you a copy of the assessment tool they use. And then they just come in, they observe, they write the evaluation. [The principal] is always so busy. She doesn't always get back to you with feedback. And so just the date, read it, sign it. T: Well I want to be evaluated. Come into my room." You know here's a teacher that wants to be evaluated. And I feel like I do a good job but I know I could do better so come evaluate me, give me feedback. T: Its observation, they come into the classroom, they also give you -- if there's areas of need, they give you a		why would you want to say to a teacher like you don't meet this expectation. I don't I don't know it's the only formal thing that goes in so I would love more informal feedback from, maybe not even from administrators but from other teachers who could in and say why did you do this?

			prescription then you have to follow the prescription or do whatever you're told that needs to be done, you get a chance to try to do it. But I mean I don't think the evaluation instrument, I've never had really like a bad evaluation so I just know that you're going to get evaluated, just every other year you're going to be evaluated. So get nervous but get ready. T: We go through a whole evaluation process yes, where there is observation, the whole thing. INT: And is it helpful? T: They give us back on how to improve different areas and yes it is helpful. Some teachers will say no, but I say yes. I find it helpful.		