

**Shared Responsibility for Teacher Quality: How Do Principals Respond
to Peer Assistance and Review?**

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Since the 1980s, educational observers have urged principals to become the *instructional leader* of their school (DeRoche, 1985; Murphy & Beck, 1994; Rosenholtz, 1989). This expectation has intensified over the past decade so that “the need to improve student learning” is now considered by many to be “the profession’s top priority” (Smith & Piele, 2006, p. 1). Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) is a program in which expert teachers – called consulting teachers (CTs) – assume the responsibility for evaluating and supporting teachers, previously the sole responsibility of the principal. From the principal’s perspective, does this shift in authority for overseeing teacher quality change their role as instructional leader? If so, how?

PAR programs exist in more than 20 districts nationwide, and some programs have operated for over two decades. Recently, PAR has received a great deal of attention as a very promising policy for improving teacher quality (Kerchner, Koppich, & Weeres, 1997; Goldstein 2007). Research on PAR programs is extremely limited, and little is known about its impact on the principal’s role (Goldstein, 2004). The data for this analysis come from a larger study of PAR programs in seven districts. As many of these programs were being implemented, principals often protested PAR, arguing that teacher evaluation is the principal’s right and responsibility and an essential tool in their role as instructional leader.

The findings reported in this paper are based on data from two districts – the Syracuse City School District (Syracuse, NY), which began its program in 2005 and the Cincinnati Public Schools (Cincinnati, OH), which began its program in 1986. This

analysis was designed to explore the following questions: How do principals respond to PAR? How do the views of principals in an early-stage program compare and contrast to those in a more established program? Overall, we found that the principals in this study became comfortable sharing responsibility for teacher evaluation over time. Ultimately, most principals in this study reported that PAR enhanced their ability to be instructional leaders.

Literature Context

Principals have long been considered key to a successful school. Ellwood P. Cubberley (1929), the first dean of Stanford University's School of Education wrote: "As is the principal, so is the school" (p. 294). This notion that the principal plays a crucial role in the quality of a school has persisted and grown throughout the nation's many reform movements (Murphy & Datnow, 2003), although responsibilities and expectations for principals have changed dramatically. From the early 1900s to the 1970s, principals were primarily responsible for ensuring smooth daily school operations (Knowles, 2003; Murphy & Beck, 1993). Today's principals have had many additional responsibilities layered onto their traditional duties – with *instructional leader* topping the list (Smith and Piele, 2006). Knowles (2003) explains:

The job was management, it was keeping the buses running on time, the kids safe and secure, the parents happy, the superintendent happy. Teaching and learning was for teachers to worry about. You had to be able to manage, be a good disciplinarian. And someone in the district had to like you. While management skills. . .and political savvy are undoubtedly qualities principals still need, improving teaching and learning has become the school leader's central concern, the essential benchmark for success. (p. 40)

Instructional leadership – in the form of a renewed focus on teacher supervision, first became the hallmark of the principal’s job description during the 1980s (Murphy & Beck, 1993). At this time in the nation’s history, public education was under constant criticism. The media, policymakers and business leaders sounded alarms that our country was falling behind economically as a result of poor results from our public schools. In 1983, the publication of the watershed report, *A Nation At Risk*, catalyzed a dramatic change in the goals of school systems, bringing an intense focus to high academic achievement for all students (Graham, 1993). Thus, principals became intent on ensuring the school’s academic success (Knowles, 2003). A critical component of their instructional leadership included supporting and evaluating teachers (Ellet, 1987; Murphy & Beck, 1993). Since the 1980s, state accountability laws and the federal No Child Left Behind Act (2001) further intensified this pressure with the introduction of new sanctions and rewards for principals whose schools failed or succeeded (Lashaway, 2006a). Thus, today a principal’s primary focus continues to be instructional leadership.

Researchers have consistently found that even though principals report instructional leadership as a top priority, they struggle to find enough time to execute it effectively (Copland, 2001). Principals have reported that student discipline, “putting out fires,” personnel issues, and other matters ultimately take precedence over teacher supervision (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). In this context, where many principals aspire to be instructional leaders, but often struggle to do so – how do they respond to PAR?

Teacher Leadership – a Contradiction?

At the same time that pressure increased for principals to focus on teacher quality, equally forceful voices in education policy called for the creation of instructional leadership roles for “master teachers.” The Report of the Task Force on Teaching as a Profession (1986), *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century*, proposed the creation of roles for “Lead Teachers,” who were to “. . .provide active leadership in the redesign of the schools and in helping their colleagues to uphold high standards of learning and teaching” (p. 3). Over the past two decades, expectations for teacher leadership have evolved substantially. The early lead teacher roles from the 1980s and 1990s were designed to enhance teachers’ career opportunities and decentralize decision-making authority in schools (Mangin & Stolina, 2008; Smylie, 1997). Today, in response to NCLB and pressure on administrators to improve student achievement, there has been a proliferation of instructionally focused teacher leadership roles such as coaches, specialists, or master teachers (Murphy, 2005). PAR consulting teachers, another example of such roles, are designed to directly influence classroom instruction.

Teacher leadership roles have faced formidable challenges in implementation and principals play an important role in creating conditions for their success or failure. Studies have shown that teachers have not welcomed their teacher leader peers into their classrooms because such positions directly challenge the deeply entrenched norms of egalitarianism, autonomy and seniority that pervade teaching (York-Barr & Duke, 2004; Mangin, 2005; Donaldson, et al., 2008). Active support and guidance on the part of

principals have been shown to be critical for teacher leaders to influence instruction (York-Barr & Duke, 2004; Mangin, 2005).

Prior PAR Research

Only a handful of empirical studies have been conducted on PAR programs (Goldstein, 2004; Koppich, 2004; Koppich, Asher, & Kerchner, 2001). These studies each analyzed a single district in depth and offer important lessons that influenced our research. Several findings from these studies are relevant to the principals' responses to PAR. Koppich (2004) finds in her evaluation of the PAR program in Montgomery County, MD, that principals initially reacted to PAR with "reluctance." However, they ultimately came to see PAR "as a means to assist teachers. . ." and to help principals ". . .function more effectively" (p. 8). In the district Goldstein studied (2004), principals were initially uncertain about whether they supported the idea of having consulting teachers assume some of their responsibilities for teacher evaluation and support. Yet, after seeing the program in action, principals were "overwhelmingly positive about PAR" (Goldstein, 2004, p. 189). Despite principals' positive responses to PAR, Goldstein also found that after three years of implementation, principals remained seriously conflicted about relinquishing their authority for teacher evaluation to consulting teachers. In fact, policy changes over time in this district suggested that principals and other stakeholders were backing off from their original vision of peer review in which consulting teachers were to assume this role. This paper extends the line of work of these studies by exploring principals' responses to PAR in two additional districts.

Researchers who have studied non-PAR teacher leadership roles have noted that, unlike many other teacher leadership positions, PAR policy clearly defines the roles of consulting teachers and firmly establishes their authority (Goldstein, 2004; Donaldson et al., 2008). Donaldson et al. argue that these conditions may increase the likelihood that consulting teachers have a positive impact on instructional improvement. Thus, this examination of principals' responses to PAR not only furthers the research base on PAR, but also contributes to our understanding of effective instructional leadership by both teachers and principals.

Background on Peer Assessment and Review (PAR)

Peer Assessment and Review (PAR) is a teacher evaluation and mentoring program in which "expert" consulting teachers – rather than principals – take responsibility for evaluating and supporting novice and low performing veteran teachers. The first PAR program began in Toledo, OH in 1981. Currently, there are approximately 20-30 programs operating nationwide. These programs are governed by a joint labor-management PAR Panel that oversees all aspects of program administration. Consulting teachers (CTs), chosen by the Panel through a competitive process, are trained in coaching and evaluation. CTs utilize a cycle of observing, conferencing, and providing resources (such as model teaching, observations, and professional development) to determine whether a teacher meets the district's standards for continuing employment. Consulting teachers are usually full-time teachers who are released from classroom duties for several years to work in a number of schools district-wide. Some programs include only novice teachers while others have

an “Intervention” component in which CTs evaluate and support struggling veterans who have been referred to the program, usually by principals. Throughout the year, CTs report to the PAR Panel about the progress of the teachers with whom they work, and they ultimately make a recommendation to the Panel about whether to dismiss or rehire individual teachers. The Panel then makes a recommendation to the Superintendent who has the final decision.

PAR in Syracuse

The PAR program in Syracuse, NY, began in 2005 and is the “youngest” program in our larger study. The Syracuse City School District has approximately 22,000 students and 1,850 teachers. Unlike most other PAR programs, only novice teachers participate in this program.¹ CTs utilize performance standards from the *Model for Practitioner Evaluation* to evaluate teachers. Administrators, union representatives and district officials developed these standards through a collaborative process prior to the adoption of a PAR program. After completing the PAR program, teachers are evaluated annually by building administrators until they have achieved tenure. After achieving tenure, teachers either are evaluated by administrators or they may participate in an alternative evaluation program.

PAR in Cincinnati

¹ During our interviews we were informed that negotiations were underway for a pilot program involving struggling veteran teachers. At this time the PAR program allows veteran teachers to voluntarily enter PAR for assistance.

The PAR program in Cincinnati has been in place since 1985. The Cincinnati Public Schools have approximately 37,000 students and 2,350 teachers. This PAR program includes novice *and* veteran teachers. The standards used to evaluate teachers were developed beginning in 1997 during the development of the Teacher Evaluation System (TES). This system, based on the work of Charlotte Danielson, provides the foundation for all teacher evaluations, including those used in PAR. First-year teachers and some second-year teachers (those who do not meet standards in the first year) are evaluated by CTs in the PAR program. Throughout the remainder of their career, principals evaluate each teacher. In addition, teachers have a Comprehensive Evaluation by a Teacher Evaluator (TE) every 5 years.²

Methods

For this analysis, I utilized data from a larger, qualitative study of seven districts' PAR programs, conducted by the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers. We sought to learn how these districts had implemented PAR and what challenges they faced, to understand how their PAR programs worked and the tradeoffs involved in different decisions about program design, and to solicit stakeholders' views about the effectiveness of PAR in their district. We focused specifically on the role of the consulting teacher, the labor-management relationship at the district level, the effect of PAR on building principals, and the costs and benefits of PAR.

² Teacher evaluators (TE) are the same individuals who serve as CTs. When serving as a TE, however, these individuals only evaluate the teacher's practice – they do not offer support in this role.

We first selected a sample of seven districts that had implemented teacher Peer Assistance and Review (Toledo and Cincinnati, OH; Rochester and Syracuse, NY; Minneapolis, MN; San Juan, CA; and Montgomery County, MD). We identified possible participants through literature reviews, Internet searches, and informal networking. We restricted our sample to programs that integrated both assistance and review in their PAR program. We sought to choose a diverse sample of districts, with a range of geographic locations, district financial resources, labor-management relationship histories, and sizes. We purposefully included some districts, like Toledo and Cincinnati, that had long-standing PAR programs, and other districts, like Syracuse, with relatively new programs.

Between November 2007 and April 2008, two researchers conducted site visits of 2 to 3 days in each district. Over the course of each visit, we interviewed approximately 25 individuals, including key union and district officials, members of the PAR Panel, current and former Consulting Teachers, and principals. In all districts, we interviewed a key central office administrator and the teachers union president. We made a concerted effort to interview both advocates and opponents of PAR. Overall, we interviewed more than 155 individuals across the seven districts. In Appendix A, we include the study's general interview protocols, although we tailored them to each district and each role. We supplemented these interviews with relevant documents, including both the teachers and principals union contracts.

Shortly after each site visit, we created a thematic summary that captured salient aspects of the district's PAR program. We had the interviews transcribed verbatim and

coded them using both theoretical codes drawn from past research and open codes identified from the thematic summaries and the interviews. We also developed matrices to identify patterns in the data and to catalogue the similarities and differences between the programs.

For the analysis reported in this paper, we chose to use Syracuse and Cincinnati because they provided a contrast in the length of time the program had been in existence. Syracuse, as the “newest” site gave us the opportunity to see how principals reacted to the introduction of PAR in its first 2+ years of implementation. Cincinnati, one of the longest-standing programs in the country, provided a contrast, enabling us to see how principals in a well-established program viewed PAR.

Findings

Principals in this study were initially skeptical of PAR, but over time, they came to value the program. Principals that we met reported that CTs were able to provide teachers more effective supervision than they, themselves, could offer. Despite the fact that PAR reduced the principal’s direct role in teacher supervision, the principals we interviewed said they continued to exercise instructional leadership in their school through collaboration with CTs. The manner in which principals and CTs worked together differed for the early-stage program and the more established program – with principals in the early-stage program working more closely with CTs. Even though PAR offered principals in Cincinnati assistance in dealing with low-performing tenured teachers, stakeholders in this study reported that principals did not use this process as

extensively as they could have. Overall, many of these principals felt that the CTs' work enabled them to carry out their jobs more effectively.

Initial Resistance Quickly Turned To Praise

The principals that we interviewed in Syracuse were initially skeptical of PAR and resisted its implementation. Their skepticism and opposition were apparent in the grievance filed by their union, the principals' descriptions of their early impressions of the program, as well as actions individual principals took protesting the work of the CTs.

Initial organized resistance. After six years of planning, the PAR program in Syracuse was set to begin in the fall of 2005. In September, just as the school year began, the Syracuse Association of Administrators and Supervisors (SAAS) filed a grievance with the district, contesting the implementation of PAR. The grievance stated that the PAR program was in violation of their contract: "Evaluation and management of classroom teachers . . . is the sole responsibility of the school principal. . . ." It requested that the PAR program "be terminated immediately" (J.D. Cannon, personal communication, Sept 19, 2005). A principal defended the union's position:

[PAR] . . . does infringe on our contract . . . The fact that our contract stipulates that we are the sole person who has the ability to terminate a first year teacher based on performance. So, it infringes on our manager rights wherein now, you're going to have PAR consultants who take that right out of our contract.
(Syracuse Principal 2)

As a result of the grievance, the start of the program was delayed until the teachers union, administrators union and district negotiated a resolution. While management rights were an issue for SAAS, the union's opposition was also driven by frustration

that their leaders were not involved in the initial development of the program.

Ultimately, a three-way Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) reassured principals that their management rights were intact and enabled the program to begin in December of 2005.

Individual principals expressed skepticism. Even after SAAS resolved its conflict over the program, individual principals continued to have reservations about PAR. In our interviews, all but one of the principals in Syracuse described initially feeling apprehensive because they feared that CTs might protect their fellow union members rather than evaluate them rigorously and fairly. One principal said: “At first I thought maybe [PAR] was the union trying to, you know, save people. . .” (Syracuse Principal 5). Similarly, a district administrator said that many principals expressed their reservations to her, wondering whether the CTs would be able to be objective or whether they would actually be “puppets of the union” (Syracuse Administrator 1).

We heard from numerous stakeholders that this initial uncertainty about whether CTs were “union puppets” was driven by two issues. First, when the program began, the union provided offices and clerical support for the Panel and the CTs. Several respondents suggested that this contributed to this perception that CTs would bring a union perspective to the role. Several stakeholders mentioned needing to “. . . get them out of the STA building. . .” to help eliminate this concern (Syracuse Administrator 1). Second, the early view of some principals was that CTs were hand-picked by the union leadership. According to principals and other respondents, this sentiment came about because in the first year many teachers who were active in the

union applied for the CT position. This occurred, at least in part, because the union president was the driving force behind bringing PAR to Syracuse. Therefore, teachers who were engaged in the union were the first to know about the program. These contextual factors contributed to principals' early concerns that the CTs' union loyalty would prevent them from evaluating their peers objectively.

Furthermore, principals' discontent with the program was also evident in a survey conducted by the administrators' union (SAAS) at the end of the first year of the program. The survey data indicated that many principals were skeptical of the program and that a lack of communication on the part of the CTs was a contributing factor. A district administrator knowledgeable about the survey said: ". . . [T]he biggest complaint after the first year was, you know, this person's in my building and I didn't even know about it. I don't know what they're doing with the teacher" (Syracuse Administrator 2).

Some principals contested the CTs' recommendations. Under the Syracuse PAR policy, if principals disagreed with a CT's employment recommendation, they had the opportunity to attend a Panel meeting and present their view. If the Panel sided with the CT, the principal could appeal the decision to the Superintendent. The Superintendent reported that in the first year of the program, some principals tried to circumvent this process by going directly to the Superintendent and not attending the PAR Panel meeting. The Superintendent described how he declined their requests: "I said 'no, you had your chance to go the panel.'"

In the second year of the program, two principals challenged the employment recommendations CTs made for three teachers at a PAR Panel meeting. The Panel upheld the CTs' recommendations, however, the Superintendent ultimately overturned two of those decisions in support of the principal. These decisions created controversy, but they also showed that there were ways for principals to influence the process. It is important to note, however, that those two cases represented a small portion of the 72 intern cases considered that year.

Most principals came to support PAR. By the third year of the program, a survey of principals conducted by their union showed that more than half of the principals reported valuing the program, a substantial increase from the first year. Furthermore, some principals that had been the most vocal opponents of the program were now requesting that CTs work with their teachers. The general sense of the key stakeholders that we interviewed was that the tide had turned, and by the third year, most principals were on board with PAR in the district. The teachers union president said: "Most principals have come to accept most of the consultants most of the time. I think that is the best we can hope for at this point in time."

Study respondents attributed these principals' change of heart to several factors. Numerous stakeholders said that it took a year or two of experiencing the program for principals to truly understand the process and the goals of the program. Second, seeing the quality of the work of the CTs helped many principals recognize the benefits that PAR brought to their teachers and schools. One Panel member said: ". . .[T]hey had to see . . .the support that the interns were getting and read the evaluations" (Panel

Member 3). Finally, in the second year of the program, new communication requirements for the CT and principal were put into place to help principals integrate their work with that of the program.

The teachers union, administrators union and the district negotiated a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in the second year of the program which required the CTs and principals to: 1) meet together with the intern to establish goals for the year; 2) have a discussion before the first and final reports to the Panel, and 3) jointly determine areas of focus, should any concerns be identified. In addition to these required meetings, CTs were expected to leave an official, brightly colored card for the principal when they were working in the school. These steps ensured that the principals would be apprised of the CTs' work. Many study participants said that these measures helped principals to understand and value the program.

Given that the PAR program in Cincinnati began over 24 years ago, we did not attempt to collect data about the principals' initial responses to the program, since those would likely be incomplete and inexact. Nonetheless, the current Superintendent, who had been in the district when the program began, noted that, like their Syracuse counterparts, principals were initially "threatened and intimidated" by PAR. She said "I will tell you, as I grew to appreciate the concept, I think it is probably one of the best models around, having been in both worlds." And twenty-four years later, the principals that we interviewed in Cincinnati did not express resistance or skepticism about having CTs conduct teacher evaluations. One possible explanation is that once PAR had become institutionalized, principals appreciate its value, or at least had

accepted it. Another possibility is that the Teacher Evaluation System (TES) in Cincinnati, which also includes teacher leaders as evaluators, may have contributed to creating a broader culture in which these kinds of leadership roles for teachers are the norm. The next section describes how principals in both Syracuse and Cincinnati talked about the advantages of the program.

Principals Reported Valuing the Program

The principals that we interviewed in Syracuse and Cincinnati described greatly valuing PAR after seeing the program and the CTs in action. These principals said that 1) CTs had more time and ample expertise to support and evaluate teachers, 2) CTs were in a better position, as peers, to provide feedback to teachers, 3) PAR helped principals maintain strong relationships with teachers in their schools; and 4) PAR allowed principals to attend to other aspects of their role.

CTs had ample time for thorough evaluation and support of teachers. Syracuse and Cincinnati principals that we interviewed all described being extremely pleased with the amount of time that CTs had available to spend with new teachers: “Knowing the job I have to do here, the support that my first year teachers are getting is a hundred times what I would be able to give. . .” (Syracuse Principal 3). Furthermore, in Syracuse and Cincinnati, CTs visited teachers’ classrooms anywhere from 14-30+ times per year. This stands in stark contrast to the 2-3 visits annually from a principal under many traditional systems.

CTs were expert evaluators and mentors. Most principals in this study heralded the work of the consulting teachers as instructional coaches and as evaluators. A principal in Syracuse described the results he saw from the CTs' work with new teachers:

[T]eachers were quitting and jumping to the suburbs. But I think with PAR they are really learning how to teach urban kids and they are really excited about it because their skills are so well developed so early on in their career.

(Syracuse Principal 5)

Similarly, a Cincinnati principal said: "I think the CTs are very well coached and very well trained and they do an excellent job. . ." (Cincinnati Principal 3). Both programs strove to select CTs who were "master" teachers who could successfully transfer these skills in their roles as evaluators and mentors. Principals in this study reported that most CTs fit this description.

CTs' peer status meant they were well-positioned to deliver feedback. Many of the principals that we interviewed in both districts said that teachers seemed to accept feedback from CTs more readily than from an administrator:

. . . I think my first-year teachers have felt really comfortable with the consultant teachers, enough to really ask questions. You know [questions] that they might not ask me. Or ask for advice, or listen, and take the feedback.

(Syracuse Principal 3)

A Cincinnati principal noted a similar trend "because if you have a peer saying to you, 'Hey there are some problems and here is what they are,' it might be better received" (Cincinnati Principal 1). These comments illustrated how the principals that we spoke with in both districts thought that CTs were in a better position than they were to offer feedback.

PAR helped principals maintain strong relationships with teachers in their buildings. In Cincinnati, principals that we met appreciated that the PAR program alleviated tensions that result when a principal moves to dismiss a teacher through the regular process. Several principals said that having a CT, along with the PAR Panel, make the final decision about a teacher's employment meant that the other teachers in the building were less likely to become resentful towards the principal:

. . . I really think that gives us a good, almost like a good out, because it is peers. I just think there would be more turmoil, more grievances, more union involvement if that piece was missing, because if I say, you know, 'you need to be terminated, I did these evaluations' there would be a struggle
(Cincinnati Principal 1)

Another Cincinnati principal told us that he often explained to teachers in his school that he was not the final judge of their colleague's fate: "An independent party will come in after documentation and see if [she's] seeing the same thing" (Cincinnati Principal 3). According to these administrators, the PAR program enabled them to identify a teacher for potential dismissal without creating extensive turmoil and interpersonal issues with other professionals in the building.

PAR freed principals to focus on other aspects of their job. All principals in this study reported that the PAR program allowed them to conduct other aspects of their role more effectively. Working through a dismissal process with an underperforming teacher can absorb an extraordinary amount of a principal's time and energy. Similarly, supporting new teachers requires constant attention and time. These principals said that PAR gave them peace of mind that these critical instructional leadership responsibilities were being taken care of while the principal tended to other areas:

I think [PAR] really supports my role as a principal. I think that it allows me to get help for teachers . . . who may desperately need it. . . . And it really helps me go on with the rest of my job because I'm not really focused on that one person. . . . So I think it's a great thing. (Cincinnati Principal 5)

While some principals appreciated various aspects of PAR and the CTs' work more than others, all of those we interviewed recognized that PAR reduced their general workload by providing support to teachers.

Principals Continued as Instructional Leaders

The principals we interviewed in these two PAR programs appeared to continue to play a critical role as instructional leader, despite the fact that the program shifted some responsibility for teacher supervision to CTs. While principals in Syracuse and Cincinnati no longer evaluated novice teachers, principals continued to evaluate these teachers in subsequent years before they were awarded tenure.³ Thus, principals continued to have a substantial role in teacher quality in their buildings by evaluating the majority of teachers. Furthermore, while teachers participated in PAR, the principals we met remained involved in and aware of their progress through collaboration with the CTs.

Principals whom we interviewed in both systems appeared to be aware of the progress of interns, yet there was a distinct difference in how much they were involved in the process. Syracuse principals seemed to be closely engaged in the ongoing work

³ In Syracuse, principals become responsible for teacher evaluation beginning in year 2. In Cincinnati principals become responsible for teacher evaluation once the teacher has been "released" from the PAR program which might occur during year 1 or year 2 depending on the new teachers' progress.

of the CTs and the interns. In Cincinnati, however, respondents described the principals taking a more “hands-off” approach—following the interns’ progress through written updates rather than through direct involvement in the process.

Principals in Syracuse worked closely with CTs. Several Syracuse principals explained how they met with their CTs before the year began to ensure they shared expectations for the program. One said that he and the CT discussed “the school’s expectations, and personally, what are my expectations . . .” (Syracuse Principal 5). Another said she had a deliberate conversation with her CT about the “parameters” of the program:

I made sure I had a dialogue, because I first said, “What are they thinking? How do they feel about this program? What do they see [in] PAR?” So I was able to ask the questions that would make me feel comfortable and let me know that I was dealing with a teacher that was just like me. . . (Syracuse Principal 4)

While several principals in Syracuse reported conversations like this one, Cincinnati principals did not. It is possible that as a program matures and more principals have worked with CTs, these pre-conversations may be less necessary. Another explanation might be that the Cincinnati program was structured in such a way that these conversations were never necessary.

Once the program began, the Syracuse principals and CTs in our study seemed to be in constant communication. Much of this interaction was informal, yet as was described above, the PAR policy itself also created a number of required meetings and processes to ensure adequate communication between individuals holding the two roles. One principal described her work with a CT:

I am in touch with my consultant teacher all the time. . . We are constantly e-mailing each other. . . This year, I've met with the consultant teacher four times already, two exchange conferences and then two additional meetings we've had just to touch base with each other. (Syracuse Principal 3)

Clearly this principal, and others in Syracuse, communicated a lot with CTs. Some principals described detailed involvement in the coaching of new teachers:

Last year I had a teacher who really was struggling with classroom management and the PAR consultant came in and she and I talked a lot about what we were seeing and the expectations that we both had for our first year teacher. And we were able to narrow down exactly what this teacher needed to do and then the PAR consultant carried it out. This teacher really got her classroom management down and then we were able to see quality instruction going on. (Syracuse Principal 5)

Not only were some principals aware of the work of CTs, but in Syracuse, some principals were involved in the actual work of improving instruction.

Principals in Cincinnati took a "hands-off" approach. In Cincinnati, the principals we interviewed were similarly in close communication with the CTs. However, they described a "hands-off" approach to working with CTs, both for new teachers and struggling veterans. A principal in Cincinnati described her relationship with CTs:

It is kind of hands-off. . . . I really try to let the [CT] work with that teacher and for the teacher that is struggling, to not feel like I am going to interfere. . . . I don't think you can fix a problem easily with [your boss] standing over you. So I like to do hands-off and then keep in contact with the consulting teacher to see if there are things that I can support. (Cincinnati Principal 1)

This principal and other respondents suggested that the policy is deliberately designed such that CTs do not have regular discussions with the principal about the details of the interns progress. As the above quote suggests, the idea was that teachers stand a better chance to improve if they are not intimidated by the constant oversight of their

superior. Another reason CTs in Cincinnati worked without regular principal contact and input was to prevent CTs from being influenced by principals' views. The goal was for CTs to determine as objectively as possible based on classroom observations, whether the teacher was capable of quality instruction.

Principals in Cincinnati had a pivotal role in PAR: A principal's recommendation is one of two avenues for a teacher to enter the Intervention process.⁴ In order to make that recommendation, the principal must undertake a rather extensive process of: 1) conferencing to advise the teacher that he or she sees a deficiency, 2) observing and documenting the problem, 3) conferencing with the teacher again to establish a plan and timeline for improvement, and 4) then completing another observation to check for progress. Finally, if the principal does not see ample progress, he or she can recommend the teacher for Intervention.⁵ Principals in this study told us this could be, as one said, ". . . a real time-consuming and long process" (Cincinnati Principal 5). However, some describe this process as an extremely useful tool for instructional leadership:

So as an administrator I always found it helpful to walk teachers who were struggling through the [PAR] process as opposed to talking and transferring at the end of the year. . . . I think the peer review program allows for support and help and assistance. So I've used it a lot as an administrator because it was my goal to make sure that, if you needed the help, you got it. And to improve instruction, you have to put the best teachers in front of kids.

(Cincinnati Principal 5)

⁴ A principal's recommendation is not the only way that a teacher can be recommended for Intervention. All teachers technically have a "comprehensive review" completed by a Teacher Evaluator/CT every five years. If a teacher receives a less than satisfactory evaluation under this process they can be placed in Intervention.

⁵ At that point, the PAR Panel sends a team to determine whether the teacher is in fact in need of Intervention.

“[T]alking and transferring at the end of the year” refers to a process through which many principals encouraged low-performing teachers to move to another school, rather than proceeding with a formal dismissal. For this principal, utilizing the PAR intervention process was far more productive. Thus, these principals in Cincinnati and Syracuse remained critical to instructional improvement in the school by evaluating teachers not involved in the PAR program, collaborating with CTs, and/or referring teachers to the Intervention program.

Principals Failed to Maximize Their Use of the Intervention Process

The Syracuse PAR program did not include veteran teachers and so we cannot know from them how principals in a new program might assess Intervention. Many of the principals we interviewed in Cincinnati had referred teachers to Intervention, although very few were currently doing so. In discussing this concern one principal said:

I think there has to be a way to help principals feel comfortable with the whole [Intervention] process And it’s frustrating to [find that a low performing teacher] has been in the district 18 years and not ever been at least brought up on the fact that he may be in need of intervention or support. So I think there has to be a way to make the principals more comfortable with the process, and make principals more committed to using the process. (Cincinnati Principal 3)

Some principals that we interviewed said they were hesitant to utilize Intervention because the process is long and complex. They said that it is easy to miss a step and that

it was too frustrating to have the referral rejected by the PAR Panel. They also said they did not like referring teachers because other faculty members might protest the referral and disrupt the building culture:

. . .[W]hen you refer someone to Intervention . . . usually what happens is they tell their Union rep and then they get all the teachers . . . in the school to rally around them. . . . So sometimes Principals don't like to . . . bite the bullet and do it because it can cause . . . disturbances in your school. . . .

(Cincinnati Administrator 2)

Many respondents reported that, due to these factors, principals often try to counsel a teacher to transfer schools instead of referring them to PAR.

Discussion and Implications

Because this is a small study with a selected sample, the findings are not generalizable to other PAR programs and principals. Nonetheless, the themes that surface in these interviews provide insight into how principals in these two districts responded to PAR. This analysis illuminates:

- how principals that we interviewed from both an early-stage and mature program responded to PAR, and
- the nature of these principals' role in instructional leadership in the context of the PAR program.

Principals that we interviewed in Syracuse, where the program had just begun, initially resisted the shift in authority for teacher evaluation that occurs with the introduction of PAR. Quickly, however, these principals came to believe that PAR provided them with useful resources that enhanced their instructional leadership. Principals that we met in both Cincinnati and Syracuse described how CTs had the time, expertise, and peer relationships to do an excellent job with teacher evaluation

and support. Many suggested that, given these strengths, CTs were better positioned than principals to conduct effective teacher supervision. Principals in both districts described how, through close communication with CTs, they continued to be engaged in and knowledgeable about the growth and development of their newest teachers and their low-performing teachers. Even though PAR offers assistance with struggling veteran teachers (only in the Cincinnati program), the principals and other stakeholders we talked with reported that most principals did not utilize this tool as effectively as they could. Ultimately, many of these principals said that the PAR program enabled them to carry out their job more effectively.

Implications for Future PAR Programs

Findings from this study can help school districts and their unions anticipate and plan for the principals' responses to PAR. For example, districts implementing PAR for the first time should be sure to engage principals and their unions early in the development of the program. They should also consider intensive education for principals about the goals, processes, and potential benefits of PAR, prior to the start of the program. Given that PAR creates a substantial shift in the principal's role in supervision, having a comprehensive understanding of these larger issues at the outset may help alleviate principals' initial resistance. PAR administrators also should think carefully about where to locate PAR offices—ideally in a neutral location such as a Teacher Resource Center—to ensure that the program does not jeopardize its status as a joint venture of labor and management. Similarly, in recruiting inaugural CTs, program administrators should aim to reach out to teachers who are actively engaged in the

union as well as those that are not, in order to avoid the perception that this is a union-controlled program.

The findings in this study also suggest that a primary avenue through which principals overcome their initial resistance to PAR is through experiencing the program and seeing the CTs' work. While some principal/CT pairs seemed to collaborate well without mandated communication structures, others did not. Thus, facilitating the early collaboration of the principals and the CTs may also assist principals in becoming comfortable with PAR.

Implications for Instructional Leadership in Schools

Overall, the findings in this analysis paint a picture of PAR as a program that enhances not only the instructional leadership of principals, but also the instructional capacity of schools. Principals in this study ultimately welcomed PAR as a way to enhance their instructional leadership. They could count on CTs to 1) carry out the day-to-day work of teacher supervision, *and* 2) keep principals apprised of and involved in the progress of PAR participants. It is well documented that principals are burdened with too many responsibilities to do them all well, and that teacher supervision often falls by the wayside, even in some excellent schools (Copland, 2001; DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). The principals in this study said that having CTs in their school meant that new and identified low-performing teachers were given the in-depth support they needed, and that principals remained connected to this work. Thus, principals could delegate a portion of their responsibilities to CTs and focus on other aspects of their job.

Under PAR, CTs take on elements of teacher supervision typically under the principal's purview, and these responsibilities are the CTs' sole focus. Thus, teachers receive more support and experience more thorough evaluations than under the traditional structure. Theoretically, additional mentoring and evaluation for teachers should lead to improved teaching and learning. Furthermore, because CTs are working with their teachers, principals have more time to attend to other areas critical to ensuring effective instruction throughout the school. These include not only other instructional leadership tasks, such as supervising teachers not involved in PAR, ensuring the collection and use of data to improve instruction, and recruiting high-quality teachers, but also general school management duties that create the conditions for good teaching and learning. Thus, PAR enables a shift in priorities for principals that may contribute to better overall teaching and learning in the school.

Our interviews with these principals in the Syracuse and Cincinnati PAR programs suggest that there was plenty to do for both CTs and principals in the area of coaching and evaluating new and struggling teachers. This implies that sharing responsibility for teacher supervision is an effective approach to enhancing instructional leadership. Despite a great deal of literature on the potential of distributed leadership for improving school achievement (Elmore, 2000; Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2000), few examples exist for how school administrators share this role in practice (Lashaway, 2006b). Goldstein (2003) has suggested that PAR offers policymakers and principals a concrete example for what distributed leadership looks like, how it works

and what challenges it presents. A closer look at our analysis and findings using a distributed leadership framework would likely prove illuminating.

As policies that create teacher leadership positions (coach, lead teacher, staff developer) continue to proliferate (Smylie, 2008), districts administrators, teachers, unions and policymakers will benefit from further understanding of the principal/teacher leader relationship in PAR programs. Existing research finds that teachers in leadership roles struggle to earn the respect of their colleagues and are therefore limited in their effectiveness (York-Barr & Duke, 2004; Mangin, 2005; Donaldson, et al., 2008). Research also indicates that principals' support plays an important role in helping teacher leaders gain the credibility they need to influence instructional practice (York-Barr & Duke, 2004; Mangin, 2005). After a brief period of resistance, the principals in this study reported collaborative relationships with CTs, and they also recognized the quality of the CTs work as evaluators and mentors. Such positive, public relationships between CTs and principals may have contributed to the authority the CTs needed to carry out their work. Thus, such relationships with principals may help other teacher leadership roles garner respect for their work. Of course, it is also possible that the reason the CT role seemed to flourish where other teacher leader roles have failed is that PAR empowers them to recommend a teacher for dismissal. Nonetheless, anchoring the teacher leaders' work in the ongoing work and leadership of the principal may be a key to increasing the effectiveness of these positions.

The limited use of the Intervention process in Cincinnati has potential insights not only for PAR programs, but also for traditional teacher evaluation systems. In Cincinnati, principals only have to refer teachers to PAR, and then a CT carries out the rest of the work to complete the process. Nonetheless, principals *still* hesitated to engage in this process, much like their counterparts in a traditional evaluation system. This suggests that, of the many factors that might impede principals' use of the dismissal process, a critical stalling point may be that of identifying instructional weaknesses and holding the initial conversations with the struggling teacher. It is possible that PAR does not entirely solve this problem, because even in the context of PAR, the principal is alone in making this initial judgment. Principals in this study described how difficult it was to tell somebody that their teaching is not up to standards, and that often their colleagues "rally around them," putting the principal in an uncomfortable position. Once Intervention has begun, CTs have the members of the PAR Panel as allies in this work, and the PAR Panel makes the final decision. Thus, CTs have support in this difficult process, and they need not feel that the decision rests entirely on their shoulders. Structures that may assist principals with these early steps in the Intervention process may provide important lessons for PAR programs as well as traditional principal-led teacher evaluation.

PAR appears to offer a potential solution to the overburdened principal by delegating the day-to-day responsibilities and tasks of mentoring and evaluating new and struggling teachers. In turn, through collaborating with CTs, the principal can ensure that instructional guidance reaches more teachers more effectively than the

principal alone could achieve. With new and struggling teachers in the able hands of CTs, principals have additional time to spend on other crucial instructional leadership tasks and on traditional management tasks that maintain an environment in which excellent instruction can flourish. Rather than seeing PAR as an intrusion into their role as instructional leader, most principals in this study described it as a welcome contribution and enhancement to the instructional capacity of the school.

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APPENDIX A: Interview Protocols

Interview Protocol for Superintendent and Union President

1. Please tell me briefly how long you've worked in education and in the district.
 - What roles have you had?
 - When did you first become involved with the PAR program?
 - Have you been active in your union?
2. We want to understand how PAR relates to the broader relationship between labor and management here. Does PAR stand out as typical or unusual, given that relationship?
3. We're interested in how PAR came to be in this district:
 - How was PAR negotiated?
 - Who were the proponents and opponents?
 - Did you have difficulty convincing the superintendent?
 - Your members? (which ones)
 - Principals?
 - Are there unique features of the district's PAR program?
4. How do you choose the members of the PAR panel? Is there a labor-management split?
5. What are the effects of PAR on the principal's role? What issues does PAR raise for them?
6. What have been the biggest challenges?
7. Have there been any significant changes in the past two years?
8. What do you think are the costs and benefits of PAR?
9. What do you see as the future of PAR in Cincinnati?
10. If another superintendent/union president asked you for advice about PAR, what would you say?

Interview Protocol for Union Officials and District Administrators

Personal Background

1. Please tell me briefly how long you've worked in education and in Cincinnati.
 - What roles have you had?
 - When did you first become involved with the PAR program?
 - Have you been active in your union?

PAR Background/History/Purpose

2. Can you tell me about how and why PAR was introduced in your district?
 - Who proposed this program? Why?
 - Who were the proponents? Were there opponents? Why did it pass?
 - Were people familiar with similar programs in other districts?
3. What are the goals for these programs? Do you think those goals are being achieved?
4. We are interested in whether the program has changed over time. Have there been any important changes in the way the program is administered or in the program goals since it began?
5. Who are the key union leaders or district administrators involved in PAR?
 - Do they work together or separately?
 - Is there a point person for each side?
 - Does each side work independently to make this work, or is there constant collaboration between the union and the administration?

Labor-management Relations and Program Governance

6. Most people who don't know about these types of programs are surprised by the extent of labor-management collaboration that these programs require. Can you describe the nature of the labor-management relationship in the district? Has it changed over time?

IF ON THE PAR PANEL:

7. (Ask the first few Panel members that we interview this question, but not everyone.) Can you briefly describe how the Panel meetings work?
 - Do all interns get presented at each meeting?
 - What kinds of questions are asked by panel members?
 - How do decisions get made (voting)?
 - How often are CT recommendations overturned?
 - Who attends meetings (principals attend? their role?)

ASK THIS QUESTION OF KEY PEOPLE, NOT EVERYONE

8. On average, how many dismissals does the panel recommend each year (Apprentice and Veteran)?

IF NOT ON PAR PANEL

9. What do you think of the Panel and how it works?

View of CTs

10. Do you think you are getting the best teachers to be CTs?

11. I'd like to know your views of CTs and the work that they do.

- Do you feel that they give the Interns and Intervention cases adequate support?
- Do you feel confident in CT recommendations?
- Are those views shared by others?

IF ON PAR PANEL

12. What more, if any, support do you think CTs need?

13. We understand the CT term limit is 3 years. Do any CTs serve for longer?

What is the typical career path of a CT – i.e. do they tend to work as CT for a while and then return to full-time teaching?

IF UNION OFFICIAL:

14. What do your members think about teachers evaluating other teachers and sometimes recommending dismissal?

Program Evaluation

15. Do you think the PAR program is successful? Do others see it the same way or differently?

16. What do you see as the costs and benefits of the program? On balance, do you think it is worthwhile?

17. We know that the program has been evaluated. What have you learned from that process? Is there any evidence of improved teacher quality?

18. Are there additional challenges or benefits that the district has encountered in implementing and sustaining PAR?

Going forward

19. What do you see as the future of PAR in Cincinnati?

Interview Protocol for Panel Members

Personal Background

1. Please tell me briefly how long you've worked in education and in this district.
 - What roles have you had?
 - When did you first become involved with the PAR program?
 - Have you been active in your union?

PAR Background/History/Purpose

2. [If applicable.] Can you tell me about how and why PAR was introduced in your district?
 - Who proposed this program? Why?
 - Who were the proponents? Were there opponents? Why did it pass?
 - Were people familiar with similar programs in other districts?
3. What conditions have enabled PAR to last in the district?
 - What groups have opposed these programs? Supported them?
 - Have there been any substantial challenges to them?
 - How are they funded?
4. We are interested in whether these programs change over time. Have there been any important changes in the way the program is administered or in the program goals since it began?

Panel and Responsibilities

5. How are members chosen? How long are members' terms?

CT Selection/Training/Support

We are particularly interested in understanding the role of the Panel in employment decisions. Before we get into that, we want to ask you about some other areas of the Panel's responsibility.

6. How often does the Panel meet and for what purposes?
7. Selection of CTs
 - What is the process?
 - Who applies? Is this a strong pool? How do you know?
 - What criteria do you use for selection?
 - How do you decide which ones to take?
8. Training of CTs
 - How are the CTs trained?
 - Is there on-going training?
 - Who is responsible for this?

9. Supervise/Support CTs
 - How do you know if CTs are doing their job?
 - How do you evaluate them? What is entailed in the CT evaluation form?
 - What makes CTs effective in their work?
10. Can you talk about how the Pair process works?
11. Does the Panel review and make changes in the program?
12. What role, if any, does the Panel take in helping CTs navigate their relationships with building principals?

Teacher Evaluation/Employment Decisions

13. Walk me through a typical Panel teacher evaluation meeting:
 - Who attends?
 - How many cases do you hear at a time?
 - Who presents the case? What kind of information do they present? Who makes recommendations?
 - Are there deliberations? What kind of discussions do you have?
 - What options does the Panel have in deciding a case?
 - Does the Panel vote? What vote is required for action?
 - How often does the Panel overturn the recommendations?
 - How often do Panel recommendations get overturned? By whom?
 - How does this process work for veteran teachers?
14. The Panel is deliberately composed of both union and administrative representatives. This might suggest that the groups have different, possibly conflicting, priorities. Does the panel have split decisions along party lines (4-4 votes)? How do you handle them?
15. What is the next step if the Panel decides not to renew a teacher?
 - Who tells the teacher? Are they counseled out (before or after non-renewal vote)?
 - Have you had to have these conversations? Can you give me an example?
16. How many Intern teachers are dismissed through the program each year? How many veterans? Are these all formal actions or did some people choose to leave before that happened?
17. [If not covered yet] As a Panel member, do you have any special responsibilities?
18. [If not covered yet] How do the roles of Program Facilitator and Co-Facilitator work?

Views of Other Constituents

19. How do others in the district (teachers, principals, district administrators, school board members) view PAR? Does the Panel solicit these views?

Program Success/Evaluation

20. Do you think the PAR program is successful? Do others see it the same way or differently?
21. What do you see as the costs and benefits of the program? On balance, do you think the program is worthwhile?
22. We know that the program has been evaluated. What have you learned from that process?
23. Do you have any recommendations for improving the program or the work of the Panel?

Interview Protocol for Consulting Teachers

Personal Background

1. Please tell me briefly how long you've worked in education and in this district.
 - What roles have you had?
 - When did you first become involved with the PAR program?
 - Have you been active in your union?

Selection/Initial Training

2. I'm interested in knowing more about how the CT selection process works here. Could you describe the process that you went through as an applicant?
3. Do you have a sense for how the position of CT is viewed by your peers (other teachers)?
4. Do a lot of people apply? [try to get a sense of the strength of the pool]
5. What initial training was provided for you as a CT?
 - Did you learn things there that you find useful as a CT?
 - Are there topics that the training didn't cover, but should?

What do CTs do and where did they learn to do it?

I'm interested in understanding in more detail what your job entails and what you do day to day throughout the year.

6. Could you describe your case load? (number of teachers; matched by grade and subject) Is yours a typical case load?
7. Could you choose a typical novice teacher and describe how you work with him/her throughout the year? [Explore program requirements vs. choice]
8. What might you do differently with someone whose work concerns you? [Explore the balance of coaching and evaluation.]
9. How does this process work in your support and review of veteran teachers?
10. How did you learn how to do these things?
11. As you do your job, how do you decide what good teaching is? How do you use the standards and rubrics? Example?
12. Could you describe the process that you use when you make recommendations about a teacher's reemployment?
13. How do you decide what is "good enough"? Do you factor in a teacher's improvement or promise?

14. Your job is to support and evaluate new and experienced teachers.
 - What role, if any, do principals have in first year evaluation?
 - How does the process work for veteran teachers?

15. Can you describe how you work with principals day-to-day throughout the year? [It might be useful to pick a typical principal/intern and walk me through your interactions throughout the year.]
[Probe how this differs for more “challenging” principals.]

16. Do you and the principal ever disagree?

17. I’m interested in understanding the kind of support and assistance that is available to you as you do this work with teachers. When you have questions or need help, who do you go to?

18. Do you work closely with other CTs?

PAR Panel

19. I’m interested in your experience with the Panel. Could you describe what you do at Panel meetings and what that experience is like? (NOTE: Once we understand how the meetings work in any district we only need to ask the second part of this.)

CT Role/Teaching Career

20. What do you find most challenging about your work?

21. What are the benefits and drawbacks, to you personally, of being a CT?

22. Could you tell me what you plan to do when you complete your term as a CT?
...and ten years from now?

Interview Protocol for Principals

Personal Background

1. Please tell me briefly how long you've worked in education and in this district.
 - What roles have you had?
 - When did you first become involved with the PAR program?
 - Have you been active in your union?

PAR Background/History/Purpose

2. How does the PAR program fit into what you hope to accomplish within your own school?
3. I'm interested in knowing more about the role of PAR in this district.
 - What do you see as the current goals for this program?
 - Do you think they are being achieved?

Experience with PAR

4. I'm interested in learning more about how PAR works in your school. Please describe how the program works. [novice and veteran programs]
5. Have you ever referred teachers for Intervention?
6. How do you as a principal identify an underperforming teacher?
 - What would be some warning signs that a teacher was in need of a performance review?
 - Do you look at test scores?
 - [Can you give me an example of an underperforming teacher who you – or the CT – identified as underperforming? How does that teacher get into Intervention?]
7. Could you describe how you work day to day and over the course of the year with the CTs?
8. What do you think of the CTs and the work that they do?
 - Candidate pool?
 - Selection process?
 - Subject/grade match?

IF NOT COVERED ABOVE:

9. Do you feel confident about the support the CTs give to apprentice teachers and their recommendations about reemployment? [Also for other veteran teachers and intervention cases]
10. Have you ever disagreed with a recommendation? Have you ever disputed a CT's recommendation?
11. What do you think makes the CTs more or less effective in their role?

12. How do teachers in your school view PAR? [novice and veteran programs]
13. Has a teacher you worked with ever been dismissed? Without getting into the details, could you give me a sense of what the concern was about? [novice and veteran]
14. From the time a teacher is identified as needing assistance, what's the quickest time until a resolution of the case? What's the longest? In your experience, what has the typical timeline been?

How PAR Affects Role of Principal

15. I understand that PAR and the work of a CT may affect the work of a principal quite a bit. We understand that the principal's role in evaluation is limited in the first year but that the principal takes over responsibility in the second year. Can you tell me about that?
16. How would you describe who is responsible for evaluation in this district?
17. How does this process work for veteran teachers?
18. How does this affect what you can / cannot do as a principal?
19. How do you think about your accountability and PAR? You are accountable for the results at your school, but CTs are making recommendations about employment. How do you feel about this?
20. In cases where the review plan works and teachers "get better," what does "get better" mean? What does it look like? Please give us an example of how you knew when a teacher improved.

Perspectives on PAR Overall

21. Are your views of the PAR typical of other principals in the district? Have views changed over time?
22. Overall, do you think the program is successful? Do you have recommendations for improving it?
23. We know that principals inevitably face challenges and constraints in these types of programs – what do you (or your peers) see as some of the biggest concerns?
24. What do you see the district doing that helps principals understand how to participate in PAR?