Reform Support Network

# Multiple Measures in Sync

## Ensuring Timely Access to Indicators of Teacher Effectiveness

States and local educational agencies (LEAs) are increasingly using multiple measures—including multiple measures of student growth, such as value-added and student learning objectives—as part of the evidence used to evaluate educator effectiveness. When well-designed and implemented, student growth measures have the potential to support fair and objective teacher evaluations and teacher professional development that furthers student growth, as well as provide valuable insight into the academic performance and instructional needs of students.

Until recently, when some States changed their policies to begin calling for the incorporation of student growth data as evidence in teacher evaluation decisions, the calendar for publishing student results was independent from the calendar for conducting teacher evaluations. When States shift policy to require that evaluations incorporate student growth data, synchronizing these calendars will have to occur if the teacher evaluation process is to access these data in a way that is timely and relevant to consequential teaching and learning decisions.

Although teacher evaluation systems around the country are as different as the States and LEAs pioneering them, many depend on what they call "lagging indicators"—data that are critical to evaluating teacher effectiveness but are not necessarily obtainable on the same timeline as other measures of teacher performance. The data may not be available because of internal data management processes, supplier timelines or testing timelines.

This publication explores several State and LEA policies designed to synchronize different data sources to support a well-informed teacher evaluation process. This publication analyzes how several States and LEAs—**Houston, Texas; Hillsborough, Florida; Washington, D.C.; Ohio; and Tennessee**—have approached the coordination and timing of their teacher evaluations with the release of results from the systems that generate student performance data. The analysis does not attempt to present a comprehensive or exhaustive overview of policy in this area, or to assess the quality of these policies. The information conveyed in this publication is intended to inform leaders charged with

**This publication examines how some States and LEAs are implementing teacher evaluations that incorporate measures of student achievement. The information in this publication was collected in response to a technical assistance request to the Reform Support Network from Maryland. Education leaders charged with designing that State's teacher evaluation system were interested in learning more about how States and LEAs are dealing with what some in the field call "lagging indicators"—data that are critical to evaluating teacher effectiveness but are not necessarily obtainable on the same timeline as other measures of teacher performance included in teacher evaluations. The report was presented to the Maryland Department of Education in June 2012.**

The Reform Support Network, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, supports the Race to the Top grantees as they implement reforms in education policy and practice, learn from each other, and build their capacity to sustain these reforms, while sharing these promising practices and lessons learned with other States attempting to implement similarly bold education reform initiatives.

designing teacher evaluation systems about the policies and guidelines that other jurisdictions have established to synchronize the multiple measures of teacher effectiveness included in their teacher evaluation systems.

The States and LEAs examined in this publication have applied one or more of the following three strategies to ensure they obtain results from multiple data sources in time to integrate them into the teacher evaluation process:

- **Shorten the data delivery timeline** – States and LEAs can shorten the data delivery timeline by (1) negotiating with suppliers, or (2) improving the efficiency of internal processes and structures.
- **Draw exclusively on available data** – States and LEAs can opt to utilize only data available at a specified time by (1) not including late-arriving data; or (2) using data from the previous year, possibly in combination with any current data that is available.
- **Modify the teacher evaluation calendar** – States and LEAs may adjust the teacher evaluation system calendar, waiting until the required data are in hand before finalizing evaluations, and postponing final evaluations until the beginning of the next academic year.

## State and LEA Strategies for Synchronizing Data for Teacher Evaluation

| | Shorten the data delivery timeline | Draw exclusively on available data | Modify the teacher evaluation calendar |
|---|---|---|---|
| District of Columbia Public Schools | X | X | |
| Hillsborough County Public Schools | | | X |
| Houston Independent School District | | X | X |
| Ohio Department of Education | | X | |
| Tennessee Department of Education | X | X | |

## Shorten the Data Delivery Timeline

Some States and LEAs have explored ways to shorten their timelines for data processing and delivery. Given the trend toward real-time data collection methods, such as online testing and adaptive assessments, shortened timelines are likely to become more common. Until then, one way to achieve shortened timelines is to negotiate with suppliers to provide data sooner. The **Tennessee Department of Education** (TDOE) employed this strategy with regard to its value-added system. The State negotiated a mid-June deadline for delivery of the value-added data from its vendor. This allows the TDOE to enter the data into its system ready to use for teacher evaluation purposes by early July. To ensure that value-added data could be returned by mid-June, TDOE worked with the vendor to prioritize which data components would be needed sooner than others. To communicate

the evaluation results efficiently, TDOE also employs a data management system that allows teachers to log in and see their scores as they are entered into the system.

Another option for shortening the delivery timeline is to develop internal processes and structures to make data collection and reporting systems more efficient. **District of Columbia Public Schools**, for example, employ a common, four-point scale for all evaluation measures used by IMPACT, the District's performance-based teacher evaluation system. The common scale helps streamline the data management process.

The District's process for managing data begins in late summer when staff members responsible for implementing IMPACT examine the previous year's data and explore research options—such as whether specialized classrooms should constitute a control variable for future data analysis. Before student testing occurs in the spring, the District engages in a roster confirmation process to help ensure data accuracy by confirming that students and teachers are properly matched for the purposes of calculating value-added scores for teachers. From around May to July, the IMPACT office waits for data from its test provider, the most significant time lag in the data management process. State assessment data become available in June or July and are quickly submitted to the value-added provider. The turnaround time for receiving value-added data is swift—usually two or three days. The provider also converts the value-added estimates into the four-point performance scale to reflect the data reporting structure. Upon acquiring the value-added data, central office staff members prepare final reports in mid-July. These reports are sent to teachers via email and regular mail and include important notices, such as contract nonrenewal.

## Draw Exclusively on Available Data

Some States and LEAs simply work with whatever data are available at a specific time. This approach means in most cases excluding late-arriving data from teacher performance evaluation. For example, as one component of measuring student learning under the District of Columbia Public Schools' IMPACT evaluation system, teachers select off-the-shelf assessments that fit into the District's calendar or develop their own, with a definitive deadline for submitting scores.

States and LEAs may also decide to integrate data from the previous year, possibly in combination with any current data available. The **Houston Independent School District** employs this strategy to support its process for making high-stakes decisions based on teacher evaluations.

The **Ohio Department of Education** uses a combined method at the LEA level. Although the department allows flexibility in the design of LEA evaluation models, State laws affect the timelines for implementing these models. Ohio LEAs are required to finalize their teacher evaluations and notify teachers of their contract renewal status in May of each year. However, students take the statewide assessment in March, with results released in May. Many vendors also issue their assessment results around this time. Value-added data are not available until August. To address the mismatch between the State's deadlines and the timing of data release, the State is piloting in selected LEAs the use of the previous year's value-added data in combination with any current data available. LEAs may use current year data from either an approved vendor assessment or locally-determined student growth measures.

## Modify the Teacher Evaluation Calendar

Some States and LEAs have opted to wait until all necessary data are in hand and then finalize evaluations for the previous year early in the new academic year. Both the **Houston Independent School District** and **Hillsborough County Public Schools** have adopted this approach, providing teachers with the qualitative elements of their evaluations at the end of the school year and their final assessment in the fall.

Houston's annual appraisal cycle consists of three conferences in which every teacher and his or her appraiser confer at the beginning, middle and end of the year. At the conference in the beginning of the year, they discuss the prior year's outcomes, set student learning measures and professional goals for the current school year and create a development plan. During the mid-year conference, the appraiser offers feedback and the teacher adjusts performance goals accordingly. At the end-of-year conference, the appraiser provides feedback based on the entire school year. Final evaluation results are provided at the beginning-of-year conference in October, and reflect the value-added data released in August. LEAs may make personnel decisions, including dismissals, throughout the cycle. State law mandates that LEAs must notify teachers of dismissals by the spring, so they often make such notifications around February, using the previous year's data combined with any new data available.

A noteworthy feature of the Hillsborough teacher evaluation system is that data are provided to teachers staggered throughout the year, as they become available. The qualitative data (principal and mentor/peer ratings) and quantitative data (value-added estimates) become available at different times during the year. Teacher observations, the number of which varies depending on a teacher's prior performance, begin in September each year. In March, the school system notifies non-tenured teachers if they will not receive tenure. In June, teachers receive a report that contains the qualitative elements of their evaluation. If, after the written evaluations are completed in June, a teacher appears to be in danger of being rated unsatisfactory for a second consecutive year, he or she is assigned to a substitute position in the fall until the final evaluation is available.

Hillsborough teachers participate in roster verification several times a year. In late summer, the school system delivers all test data to its value-added provider. Two rounds of roster verification/data checking are completed after teachers return in August so that everyone has the opportunity to verify test scores as well. In an attempt to represent each student's contribution to the teacher's performance, value-added estimates are provided via a star report on which each student's performance is represented by stars corresponding to standard deviations above or below the mean. In October, the school system gives teachers their final evaluation results, based on both the qualitative and quantitative measures.

## Other "Sync" Strategies

In addition to the strategies discussed in this publication, States and LEAs may consider "outside-the-box" approaches to synchronizing their timelines for the multiple measures that inform their teacher evaluation systems. One option is to frame annual educator evaluation as a two-year process. During the first year, evaluators could use such data as value-added estimates and student perception

surveys to assign teachers to groups or "professional growth tracks" that would determine the types and levels of support they would receive. During the second year, administrators might employ such strategies as differentiated observations and professional growth activities to extend the knowledge and skills of teachers. Over the course of the two years, schools would amass a sufficient quantity of data to make well-informed annual evaluation decisions.[1]

## A Step-by-Step Approach to Synchronizing Evaluation Data Measures

1. **Complete an audit of the current performance data and the delivery timelines.** What types of performance data are currently collected? When and how do the State education agency (SEA) and the LEA currently deliver data? What flexibility do the SEA and LEA have to shorten delivery timelines? What new data are needed?

2. **Reexamine statutory and regulatory requirements for evaluation timelines.** What flexibility do the SEA and LEA have to adjust the evaluation timeline to allow for the use of current year data? Could complications potentially result from extending the final evaluation timeline?

3. **Assess the current processes for data collection, analysis and reporting.** What are the SEA or LEA's current processes around assessment, scoring and analysis?

4. **Determine which elements (for example, evaluation schedule, data delivery timelines and process improvements) are options for improving the coordination of data timelines.**

5. **Engage education stakeholders in the process to be sure they understand the impact of any changes to the system.**

6. **Develop a short-term and a long-range plan for integrating indicators on different timelines in evaluation systems.**

7. **Develop a comprehensive communications plan for the evaluation system and the processes involved in developing it.**

8. **Consider piloting the process if there are concerns around implementing it effectively throughout *the entire district at the same time*.**

9. **Provide ongoing support for educators implementing the system.**

10. **Continually evaluate the processes and look for areas for improvement.**

[1] J. Hussey and N. Khandaker, "Measuring and increasing educator effectiveness: A balanced approach," Battelle for Kids, www.battelleforkids.org (2012).

As States and LEAs work towards ensuring they have secured all the data and indicators required to evaluate teachers based on multiple measures, they will benefit from continuing to investigate the national landscape, engage and communicate with local stakeholders, invest in high-quality data and systems and strive for continuing improvement. In this way, they will develop effective and efficient systems that support educators and drive student success.