

TEACHER EVALUATION REFORM

INTRODUCTION

Historically, teacher evaluations used to assist in the determination of employment decisions were primarily based upon two factors: years of experience and/or possession of a Master's degree in Education. Unfortunately for students and their parents, these two criteria are not statistically proven to enhance student academic performance (4). Student academic performance has not influenced teacher compensation or teacher employment decisions made by school administrators. Fortunately, states have embraced a number of innovative solutions over the past few years that promise to revolutionize American education by holding teachers accountable for providing a quality education.

THE VALUE-ADDED MODEL

A significant part of the current movement to evaluate teachers based on student performance involves a technique known as Value-Added Modeling (VAM). This method evaluates teachers via the quantifiable measurements of student performance. This is how it works: a teacher's class is tested at the beginning and end of each school year, and the aggregate scores are compared to determine if the students have made academic gains under the teacher's leadership. Empirical studies conducted by the Urban Institute in North Carolina (5) and the Manhattan Institute in Florida (6) have demonstrated the accurate predictability of teacher performance using VAM. These studies concluded a "statistically significant" and "substantial relationship" exists between a teacher's VAM score and the academic progress of their classroom (7).

STATE FLEXIBILITY

Teacher evaluation methods will and should vary state by state and district by district. The principles of limited government should inform education reform. Localized information informing local institutions, such as public school systems, can lead to more efficient and effective programs. States and school districts should be given the flexibility needed to innovate and modify their teacher evaluation programs to fit what works best for them. A trend toward greater flexibility within states can be seen today. Currently, 12 states have a single statewide teacher evaluation system, 10 states have a statewide system in which districts can opt out, and 27 states have a system in which districts receive state guidelines allowing for the personalization of individual teacher evaluation (8).

MOVING FORWARD

No one single teacher evaluation system can determine teacher effectiveness with 100% accuracy. Each state and school district should decide what system is best in evaluating teacher effectiveness for their schools. A three-year study by the Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) project determined that teacher evaluation systems with diverse portfolios provide the most accurate measurement of teacher effectiveness. MET recommends an evaluation system's composite that weighs 33-50% assigned to state standardize test scores. ix Any evaluation system is guaranteed to be imperfect on some level; therefore, a diverse mix of evaluation methods should be

QUICK FACTS

- From 2009 to 2013, states that require annual teacher evaluations have almost doubled from 15 to 28 (1).
- Of the 39 states where local districts create their own teacher evaluation systems, only 15 require state approval (2).

NOTABLE & QUOTABLE

"With respect to teachers' salaries, the major problem is not that they are too low on the average - they may well be too high on the average - but that they are too uniform and rigid. Poor teachers are grossly overpaid and good teachers grossly underpaid. Salary schedules tend to be uniform and determined far more by seniority, degrees received, and teaching merit."

- **Milton Friedman**,
Electromagnetic Spectrum (3)

adopted to obtain the most accurate information used to grade our children's educators.

CURRENT TRENDS IN TEACHER EVALUATION

Beginning in 2009, a nationwide trend for schools to adopt new teacher evaluation techniques has significantly increased. Included in these new evaluations are classroom observations, student surveys, and standardized test scores. These evaluations seek to directly tie teacher effectiveness and student improvement to employment decisions.

From 2009 to 2013, the number of states (and the District of Columbia) that require teacher evaluations to include:

- An objective measure of student achievement has risen from 15 to 41.
- Student growth to be the predominant factor in determining teacher performance has grown from 4 to 20.
- Student performance to be a part of the decision in awarding teachers tenure has risen from 0 to 19 (10).

CONCLUSION

Teachers should be compensated fairly based upon the merits of their work, not the length of their employment, the possession of a master's degree, or the strength of a teachers' union. Since 2009, significant progress has been made to evaluate teachers based upon student achievement; however, only five states (and the District of Columbia) directly tie teacher salary to teacher evaluation (11). Significant progress has been made, but more reform remains to be done.

Endnotes:

1. National Council on Teacher Quality, State of the States 2013 Connect the Dots: Using evaluations of teacher effectiveness to inform policy and practice (October 2013) (http://www.nctq.org/dmsView/State_of_the_States_2013_Using_Teacher_Evaluations_NCTQ_Report).
2. Ibid.
3. Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom* (1982).
4. National Council on Teacher Quality, State of the States 2013 Connect the Dots: Using evaluations of teacher effectiveness to inform policy and practice (October 2013) (http://www.nctq.org/dmsView/State_of_the_States_2013_Using_Teacher_Evaluations_NCTQ_Report).
5. National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research, *Assessing the Potential of Using Value-Added Estimates of Teacher Job Performance for Making Tenure Decisions* (February 2010) (http://www.urban.org/uploadedpdf/1001369_assessing_the_potential.pdf).
6. Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, *Transforming Tenure: Using Value-Added Modeling to Identify Ineffective Teachers* (September 2012) (http://www.manhattan-institute.org/html/cr_70.htm#.UpTESsRDsk0).
7. Ibid.
8. National Council on Teacher Quality, State of the States 2013 Connect the Dots: Using evaluations of teacher effectiveness to inform policy and practice (October 2013) (http://www.nctq.org/dmsView/State_of_the_States_2013_Using_Teacher_Evaluations_NCTQ_Report).
9. Measures of Effective Teaching project, *Ensuring Fair and Reliable Measures of Effective Teaching: Culminating Findings from the MET Project's Three-Year Study* (2013) (http://www.metproject.org/downloads/MET_Ensuring_Fair_and_Reliable_Measures_Practitioner_Brief.pdf).
10. Ibid.
11. National Council on Teacher Quality, State of the States 2013 Connect the Dots: Using evaluations of teacher effectiveness to inform policy and practice (October 2013) (http://www.nctq.org/dmsView/State_of_the_States_2013_Using_Teacher_Evaluations_NCTQ_Report).

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