EM

POWER

EMPOWERING EFFECTIVE TEACHERS

STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTING REFORMS

BILL & MELINDA
GATES *foundation*

ABOUT THIS SERIES

The contribution of teachers to student learning and outcomes is widely recognized. A teacher's effectiveness has more impact on student learning than any other factor under the control of school systems, including class size, school size, and the quality of after-school programs.[1] In a study of Los Angeles schools, the difference between the performance of a student assigned to a top-quartile teacher rather than a bottom-quartile teacher averaged 10 percentile points on a standardized math test.[2] Researchers studying high schools in North Carolina found that having a class with a strong teacher had an impact 14 times greater than having a class with five fewer students.[3]

In spite of these realities, the education community has not focused sufficiently on improving teacher effectiveness: on the recruitment, evaluation, development, placement, and retention of highly effective teachers. Instead of evaluating teachers' performance and treating them differently on that basis, teachers are treated uniformly and rewarded for longevity and degrees. Paper credentials that have little to no proven value trump how successfully teachers educate their students when it comes to compensation and tenure.

Intent on helping to change this current reality, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation embarked on a process to find sites that would help determine how to use measures of teacher effectiveness to transform human resources, specifically in determining who is hired and retained, how tenure is granted, how teachers are placed, and how compensation and promotion are determined. In April 2009, the foundation asked nine school districts and one coalition of charter management organizations (see sidebar) to propose strategies for dramatically improving teacher effectiveness, including:

- developing meaningful measures of teacher effectiveness, including but not limited to student achievement growth over time

- increasing the overall numbers of effective teachers

- providing increased pay and greater roles and responsibilities for teachers who earn tenure

- concentrating effective teachers where they are needed most

The participating sites committed to bringing district leadership, school board leadership, and teachers' union leadership to the table to develop a plan to transform teacher effectiveness policies and practices. These working teams spent the summer of 2009 developing proposals that outlined how the sites would radically reorganize their practices and policies to ensure that every student is taught by an effective teacher.

Information for this report is based on analysis of teacher effectiveness proposals by the Boston Consulting Group, McKinsey & Company, and The Parthenon Group in the following sites:

Site Partnerships

Atlanta, GA

The College-Ready Promise, CA

Denver, CO

Hillsborough County, FL

Memphis, TN

Omaha, NE

Palm Beach County, FL

Pittsburgh, PA

Prince George's County, MD

Tulsa, OK

The request for proposals did not stipulate specific strategies for improvement, but in the course of their planning, the sites identified many of the same strategies, including:

- **adopting multidimensional measures of teacher effectiveness,** including measurements of students' academic growth over time

- **creating better teacher evaluation tools and processes** that strengthen the leadership and evaluation skills of principals, provide specific feedback to help teachers improve practice, and generate targeted professional development opportunities

- **making the tenure decision a more meaningful milestone,** using the improved teacher effectiveness measures and evaluation processes to create a rigorous process for granting tenure and increasing the reward for those effective teachers who earn tenure

- **designing career pathways and differentiating compensation,** so that effective teachers can be rewarded for their work in the classroom based on performance rather than longevity or degree attainment

- **attracting and placing highly effective teachers** in priority schools or classrooms

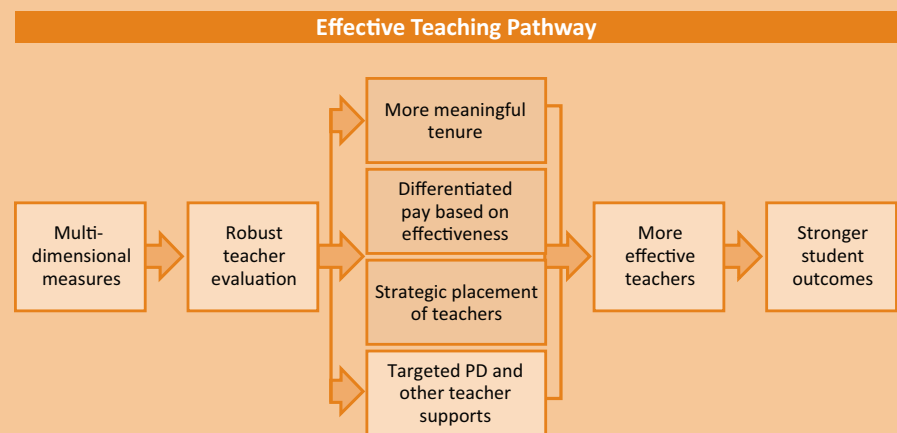## A PATHWAY TO EFFECTIVE TEACHING
As identified by participating sites

Effective Teaching Pathway

Multi-dimensional measures	→	Robust teacher evaluation	→	More meaningful tenure		
				Differentiated pay based on effectiveness	→	More effective teachers	→	Stronger student outcomes
				Strategic placement of teachers		
				Targeted PD and other teacher supports		

Although the sites have not implemented their proposed strategies yet, the planning process yielded some critical lessons and approaches that the foundation felt were important to share as promising practices. Rigorous evaluation over time will determine which strategies produce the most significant results. This series focuses on three key questions:

- How can you tell if your site is ready to engage in a teacher effectiveness reform agenda? (Brief 1)

- If you are ready to implement a teacher effectiveness agenda, where would you start and what steps might you take along the way? (Brief 2)

- What impact do state and federal policies have on your system's ability to undertake teacher effectiveness reforms? (Brief 3, forthcoming)

This second brief describes four site conditions that support efforts to implement reforms and follows with a discussion of five key strategies to improve teacher effectiveness.

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Measures of Effective Teaching

One barrier to major systems change is the lack of robust, multidimensional measures of teacher effectiveness. Great teaching, after all, is multidimensional and should be viewed through multiple lenses. Teachers should know what the expectations are for good teaching and what they can do to improve their practice. In fall 2009, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation launched the Measures of Effective Teaching project to study multiple measures of teacher effectiveness—including videotaped classroom observations, student surveys, tests of teachers' pedagogical content knowledge, and other test- and nontest-based data—and compare the measures to nationally recognized teaching standards. These data will help determine ways in which effective teaching can be measured fairly and consistently.

For more information on this project, current grants for teacher effectiveness, and what we are learning, please visit www.gatesfoundation.org.

SITE CONDITIONS THAT SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION

The 10 sites surfaced many of the same conditions required for successful implementation. These conditions fall into four distinct categories that represent a minimum readiness threshold that all school systems should have—or seek to achieve—before embarking on deep reform.

Shared leadership, vision, and commitment to action

Aligning all stakeholders around a common vision to improve student outcomes by increasing teacher effectiveness requires a significant change management effort. It is a step change for most districts to move from a culture based on compliance to one driven by performance.

All 10 sites felt they needed to dedicate high-level site resources—both human and financial—to the implementation of and accountability for teacher effectiveness strategies. Based on these sites' experience, leadership must be willing to reprioritize other initiatives and reallocate time and resources to focus on teacher effectiveness. In many cases, explicit project management expertise and resources will be needed to support the day-to-day execution of plans.

Guidance from the sites

- Create a roadmap of all initiatives and strategically make decisions about priorities. Determine what can be stopped or delayed based on resource constraints.

- Designate staff to track milestones, identify issues, and assign the right people to implement the strategies. One option is to create a Program Management Office, either with existing staff or through a contractor, to provide the service until it becomes embedded in "how things are done."

- Create external advisory committees. Several sites set up external advisory committees that included local funders, politicians, business leaders, and higher education representatives. One of these sites met publicly with this group before any plans were set and followed up with two substantive meetings to review a draft proposal and get feedback. This process resulted in relationships that helped maintain momentum.

SEE BRIEF 1 FOR A MORE DETAILED EXAMINATION OF SITE READINESS

Good data systems

These sites have learned the value of data systems that can track site, state, national, and formative student test scores; capture student and teacher demographic characteristics; maintain human resource data on teacher background information; audit student and teacher data to verify accuracy and quality; allow student and teacher data to be linked; and provide unique IDs for students, teachers, courses, and classes that are consistent over time and across disparate data systems.

The sites are committed to creating a data system that can measure the impact a teacher has on a student by linking courses, teachers, and students to determine the value-added impact of teachers' instruction. Proposed improvements to human resources data systems call for capturing contextual information on certification, degrees (including major and institution), years of experience, salary, attendance, and participation in professional development activities.

The data that are captured should be high-quality and user-friendly. Audits are important to ensure that all data are timely and accurate, especially if teacher effectiveness data are linked to compensation and career progression.

Guidance from the sites

- Build, buy, or enhance an existing data warehouse to ensure that all necessary data are captured in ways that can link teacher performance to student outcomes. If the site already has a data warehouse and a good information technology department, it may make sense to build on the existing structure. Establishing good data systems requires a significant investment. Since sites will be living with the decision for a long time, it is key to make the right choices upfront.

- Develop information "dashboards" that allow all users across the site (e.g., school board, central office staff, principals, and teachers) to access relevant, timely data to help assess and improve teacher performance.

These sites are communicating to both internal and external stakeholders every step of the way and soliciting their input when appropriate.

Stakeholder engagement

These sites have involved internal and external stakeholders from the start in the planning processes. Their participation is essential to build and maintain commitment to the vision. Keeping stakeholders engaged throughout implementation is just as important. These sites are communicating to both internal and external stakeholders every step of the way and soliciting their input when appropriate. Principals, teachers, unions, and the school board are particularly important stakeholders, but it is hard to find a constituent who is not interested in teacher effectiveness.

Guidance from the sites

- Form a working group comprising teachers, principals, union representatives, and parents/community-based organization representatives. Some members should be chosen by union leaders, some by site leadership. Create a charter for the working group and meet regularly to communicate progress, discuss roadblocks and solutions, solicit feedback, and make adjustments.

- Train the core site team how to communicate effectively with each stakeholder group.

- Create a communications plan that encompasses and engages all stakeholders, including teachers, school leaders, the central office, the school board, unions, parents, and the community. Continuously execute and adjust the plan throughout implementation.

- Be open to feedback from all stakeholders, incorporate when appropriate, and communicate proactively when feedback is not incorporated. One site conducted four focus groups with teachers and principals and set up a cross-functional central office working team that brought many perspectives to the table.

- Work with site parent groups and community-based organizations to hold regular town hall meetings with families and students.

- Provide regular updates to school board members through board meetings and individual discussions.

- Be proactive with the media and hold a media roundtable when the timing is right. In communities with high media interest and education reporters, reach out early in the process. In communities where it is hard to get media attention, sites may be able to wait until there is progress to report rather than try to get coverage of "what we intend to do."

Financial sustainability

As they move from planning to implementation of a teacher effectiveness system, these sites are identifying sources of funding to support their efforts: eliminating current inefficiencies, reallocating existing dollars, and seeking state and federal grants.

The sites are budgeting approximately $20 million to $46 million annually for a period of five years to implement their teacher effectiveness strategies, representing 2 to 6 percent of district annual operating budgets. (The figures do not include one-time, up front costs.) One prospect for resource reallocation is adjustments in class size. One district calculated that increasing class size by one to two students could result in reallocations equaling $5 million to $10 million per year. The sites are also planning reductions in central office expenditures, particularly those with declining enrollment.

State funding and a site's eligibility for federal Race to the Top funds will have a significant impact. National and local foundations and philanthropists are another source of funds; however, the challenge is ensuring that there is enough money to implement strategies over five years or more. Using grants and state/federal sources as a catalyst and reallocating existing resources likely will be the most sustainable way for sites to implement a high-performing teacher effectiveness system.

Guidance from the sites

- One site currently allots approximately $30 million annually in base salary to reward advanced degrees. Since research has shown that such additional degrees have little impact on student performance, the site plans to reallocate this funding toward criteria that directly link to student outcomes, such as a teacher's evaluation performance and ability to improve student achievement.

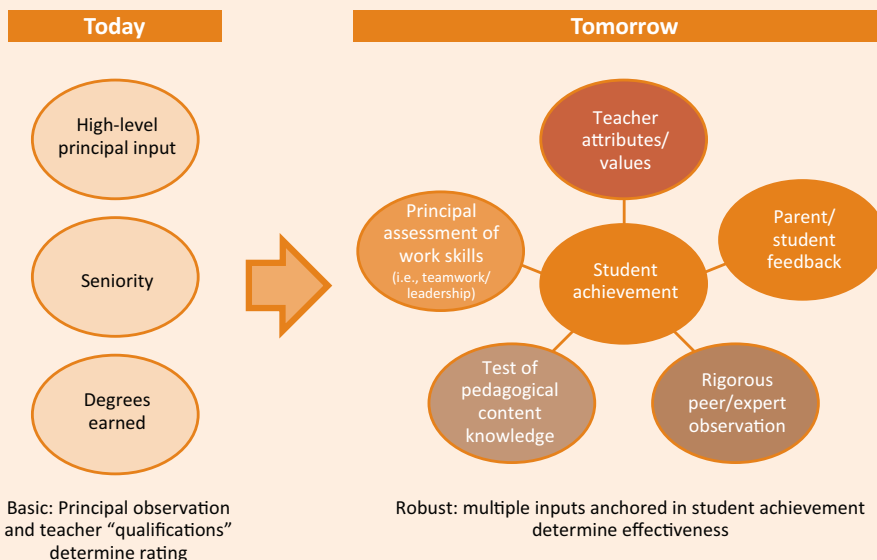# KEY STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS

Multidimensional measures of effectiveness

Defining teacher effectiveness is the key first step and will underpin all other elements of a high-performing system. The 10 sites are intent on developing a comprehensive, robust, valid, and reliable system to measure teacher performance. Student outcomes will be included, which typically is not the case now.

Guidance from the sites

■ Develop multidimensional indicators of teacher effectiveness that include such measures as value-added scores based on student assessment scores, observation of teacher performance calibrated against a rubric, and

nontest measures, such as student/parent surveys. For example, one site is focusing on four elements:

□ **Student outcomes—**The site will work with an external partner to develop value-added measures, using existing state tests and qualitative end-of-course evaluations of student work. This will count for 40 percent or more of the overall score.

□ **Observation data—**Teachers will be observed according to a performance competency model linked to the state standards for teaching. This will count for 30–40 percent of the overall score.

TEACHER EVALUATION CRITERIA

Today
High-level principal input
Seniority
Degrees earned

Tomorrow
Teacher attributes/values
Principal assessment of work skills (i.e., teamwork/leadership)
Student achievement
Parent/student feedback
Test of pedagogical content knowledge
Rigorous peer/expert observation

Basic: Principal observation and teacher "qualifications" determine rating

Robust: multiple inputs anchored in student achievement determine effectiveness

□ **Family and student feedback—**The site will leverage current work as well as partner with an outside firm to develop valid, statistically significant surveys and other methods (e.g., focus groups) for gathering student and family input to teacher evaluations. This will count for 10 percent of the overall score.

□ **A measure of teacher attitudes and beliefs—**The site will identify a partner to develop a tool to measure specific core values such as collaboration, the belief that all students can learn and achieve, and self-reflection. This will count for 10–20 percent of the overall score.

Evaluation that informs professional development

In most school systems across the country, teacher evaluations tend to be one-dimensional indicators that do not adequately measure or support teacher effectiveness. In the participating sites with "satisfactory" and "unsatisfactory" rating systems, less than 1 percent of teachers are typically found "unsatisfactory" despite low student achievement levels. In many cases, this disconnect is partly explained by the fact that student achievement is not a component of a teacher's evaluation. Further, the sites are challenged to create an evaluation system that accepts performance differences among teachers.

In addition, teachers often perceive evaluations as punitive rather than a tool to help them improve. This implies that a massive cultural shift in beliefs and behaviors in the use of teacher evaluations is needed.

Many sites struggle with providing professional development support that is tailored to a teacher's identified areas of need, based on his/her relative strengths and weaknesses. Without effective measures and a system to evaluate the performance of teachers, this neglect is not surprising. Too often, professional development courses are not strategically aligned to areas of improvement but rather based on scheduling convenience or marketing appeal.

High attrition among new teachers is a common challenge that might be addressed by differentiated professional support. Many of the sites feel that novice teachers receive inadequate support in their first few years of teaching. Specifically, site induction programs often do not provide sustained support through the initial years of teaching, resulting in both high turnover and ineffective teaching. Early career turnover can be as much as 30 percent for first-year teachers, 15 percent for second-year teachers, and 10 percent for third-year teachers. Teachers need continued appropriate professional development, mentoring to build teacher effectiveness, and ongoing support that will ensure they want to stay in the classroom.

Teachers and academic coaches also express a need for support that is ongoing and school-based to allow for application of the support they receive. These sites also face challenges in tracking the effectiveness of professional development to ensure that support provided to teachers ultimately drives student achievement growth.

To effectively lead an evaluation process tied to professional development support for teachers, principals need to be strong leaders within their schools. Currently, most principals are not adequately trained to effectively evaluate teachers and ensure customized professional development is provided. Further, principals in most sites currently are not held accountable for the accuracy or quality of teacher evaluations or ultimately their schools' student gains.

Guidance from the sites

- Conduct evaluations annually (more frequently for new and struggling teachers) and ensure principals provide one-on-one feedback to each teacher.

- Link performance evaluations to other elements of the teacher effectiveness system: tenure/dismissal, recognition/promotion, compensation/incentives, and professional development.

- Train principals to conduct observations, provide feedback, and take action to develop/reward teachers or partner with an external, objective reviewer. Doing this will help catalyze the process and build capacity in school leadership to become self-sustaining.

- One site is planning to implement professional learning communities or teams at each school site to foster instructional and data-driven collaboration rather than apply a one-size-fits-all, centrally driven approach.

- A few of the sites are using or plan to use teacher and administrator dashboards. The dashboards provide frequent student-level data that allow teachers to have discussions about how to improve instruction.

- One site is planning an intensive summer induction program to provide new teachers with the skills they need to be successful (e.g., focus primarily on classroom experience by allowing all new teachers to gain exposure to schools and classrooms of varying needs).

- Another site is supporting mentors for new teachers to help drive increased satisfaction, accelerate professional growth, and boost retention. A set of

master teachers either will leave the classroom for one year to serve as dedicated mentors to a new cohort of teachers before they are rotated back into the classroom the next school year, or alternatively, a number of master teachers will be given a reduced class load to allow sufficient mentoring time without having to leave the classroom completely.

More rigor in deciding tenure

In most sites, tenure is granted automatically with little flexibility in the timing and not enough rigor in the decisionmaking

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process. Such virtually automatic tenure can result in poor-performing teachers ending up in classrooms for many years even if

they do not improve student outcomes. Less than 1 percent of teachers with more than two years of experience leave involuntarily, even though there are more than 1 percent of teachers who are ineffective. This trend is further exacerbated by dismissal processes that often are underused for teachers not meeting performance standards.

Many of these sites are evaluating how to overhaul their tenure process, which may require overcoming political or legal constraints. (See Brief 3, forthcoming, for a detailed examination of policy barriers.) Principals will need significant support from their human resources departments, particularly in implementing a robust evaluation and feedback process to identify and intervene with struggling teachers.

Guidance from the sites

- One site is planning to abolish automatic tenure and instead create a tenure review board with highly respected and credible members to assess teachers' eligibility for tenure after at least two years, based on teacher effectiveness measures linked

to student outcomes. The intended result is to give significantly more teachers a probationary third or fourth year before offering them tenure.

■ One site is planning to create a new human resources function that will help principals conduct regular teacher evaluations and have the sometimes difficult conversations about ineffective performance, including clear and direct recommendations on how to improve or discussions of possible dismissal.

Differentiated compensation and career pathways

The compensation structure in most sites is based on level of education and years of teaching, despite little evidence of linkages between student achievement and these factors. Even in sites with pay-for-performance plans, these programs often are viewed as an add-on to the base salary, rather than the fundamental compensation structure.

For those teachers who are identified as effective, sites currently have few opportunities to increase substantially the teachers' roles or salaries unless they agree to leave the classroom. Often, teachers achieving the greatest student gains are not being rewarded for their performance, either financially or with leadership opportunities.

Effective teachers can be rewarded both career advancement opportunities and financial incentives. Creating a defined career progression provides a means to recognize teachers who have developed a certain level of performance, encourages

Effective teachers can be rewarded both career advancement opportunities and financial incentives.

teachers to continuously improve, and offers additional roles that develop a teacher's capabilities in mentoring, evaluation, and instructional leadership.

Further, teacher compensation must align with the defined career progression to ensure that sites retain their finest teachers and attract a new generation of talented professionals to the field. Pay-for-performance should compensate teachers for their demonstrated performance and, as such, motivate them to continuously improve their teaching practice and ultimately move student outcomes. For most sites, this means a move from an experience- and degree-based salary system to a salary system driven by demonstrated teacher effectiveness.

Guidance from the sites

■ Create performance-based and role-based career steps, with each step providing effective teachers with increased responsibilities and compensation.

■ One site is planning to create performance-based career steps starting from apprentice teacher to career teacher to advanced teacher to master teacher, with additional compensation ranging from $5,000 to $15,000 at each step. The site also plans to create new roles of mentor, evaluator, and instructional leader that also will have additional compensation at each step.

Compensation for placement in priority schools

Many sites face the same challenge: making hard-to-staff schools or classrooms compelling places to teach. Too often a disproportionate number of effective teachers are assigned to high-performing schools instead of schools with greater needs. Teachers frequently require additional support as well as incentives to teach in lower-performing schools or classrooms in which working conditions can be more difficult.

Guidance from the sites

- Provide financial incentives for teachers to teach in high-need schools. One site, for example, is planning to provide a $10,000 annual stipend (guaranteed for three years if the teacher is effective in the role) for teachers in high-need schools. These teachers will observe, give feedback, and serve as a model for their team of four to seven teachers in addition to meeting with them weekly to have data-driven discussions and strategy sessions. Professional learning team leaders, along with the principals, will be held accountable for ensuring implementation of the practices learned in team meetings and modeling sessions.

- Provide teachers with additional support and resources. One site plans to provide unique professional development opportunities by creating teacher academies housed in high-need schools to provide teachers in these schools with additional, customized professional development, which teachers view as a benefit.

CONCLUSION

It would be a mistake to conclude from this report that these 10 partnership sites know how to ensure an effective teacher in every classroom. They know much more than they did at the beginning of summer 2009 as the result of rigorous data analysis and planning, and they are prepared to learn even more as they move to implement their carefully constructed plans. The intent in sharing this early learning is to point to possibilities and to identify some paths to progress, not to say "take this road for the next 50 miles." It also would be a mistake for a school system to wait until these districts have more to share before embarking on a teacher effectiveness agenda. Too many districts have detoured around teacher effectiveness, making it the road less traveled for too long. It is time for school districts and charter management organizations to pursue a course of action that builds on the existing knowledge base and improves teaching and learning in every classroom.

ENDNOTES

[1] Steven G. Rivkin, Eric A. Hanushek, and John F. Kain, "Teachers, Schools, and Academic Achievement," *Econometrica*, Vol. 73, No. 2 (March 2005), pages 417–458.

[2] Robert Gordon, Thomas J. Kane, and Douglas O. Staiger, "Identifying Effective Teachers Using Performance on the Job," *Hamilton Project Discussion Paper*, (March 2006), The Brookings Institution.

[3] C. Clotfelter, H. Ladd, and J. Vigdor, "How and Why Do Teacher Credentials Matter for Student Achievement?" (2007b), National Center for the Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research; Clotfelter et al. (2007a).