

# Teacher and Leader Evaluation System Design and Implementation: Overcoming Barriers and Seizing Opportunities

Angela Minnici

Director, Center on Great Teachers and Leaders  
American Institutes for Research

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Center on  
**GREAT TEACHERS & LEADERS**

at American Institutes for Research ■

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# Center on Great Teachers and Leaders (GTL Center)

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- A national content center dedicated to supporting states in their efforts to grow, respect, and support great teachers and leaders for all students
- Part of the U.S. Department of Education's Comprehensive Centers Program, which includes seven national content centers and 15 regional centers supporting all 50 states

# Session Goals

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- Discuss the successes of teacher evaluation
- Identify the special case of leader evaluation
- Identify the current challenges states and districts are facing in designing and implementing teacher and leader evaluation systems
- Suggest recommendations for states and districts moving forward

# Adaptive or Technical Challenge?

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“Indeed, the single most common source of leadership failure we’ve been able to identify...is that people, especially those in positions of authority, treat adaptive challenges like technical problems.”

Heifetz, R. A., & Linsky, M. (2002). *Leadership on the line: Staying alive through the dangers of leading*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press (p. 14).

# Technical Versus Adaptive Challenges

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## ■ Technical Challenges

- Can be fixed by experts and by implementation of best practices
- Easy to identify and have solutions that can be implemented quickly

## ■ Adaptive Challenges

- Require people to change their values, behaviors, and attitudes
- Necessitate learning new ways of doing business
- Often difficult to identify
- Must be solved by the people with the problem
- Often require experiments, innovations, and new learning
- Can take longer to implement

# Successes in Teacher Evaluation

## How Far Have We Come?

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- States and districts recognize the importance of establishing a common language and vision about instruction and professional practice
- Many states and districts have prioritized efforts to engage stakeholders in teacher and principal evaluation design processes to support successful implementation
- Rapid development and validation of measures
- Progress in developing and implementing evaluator training

# Successes in Teacher Evaluation

## How Far Have We Come?

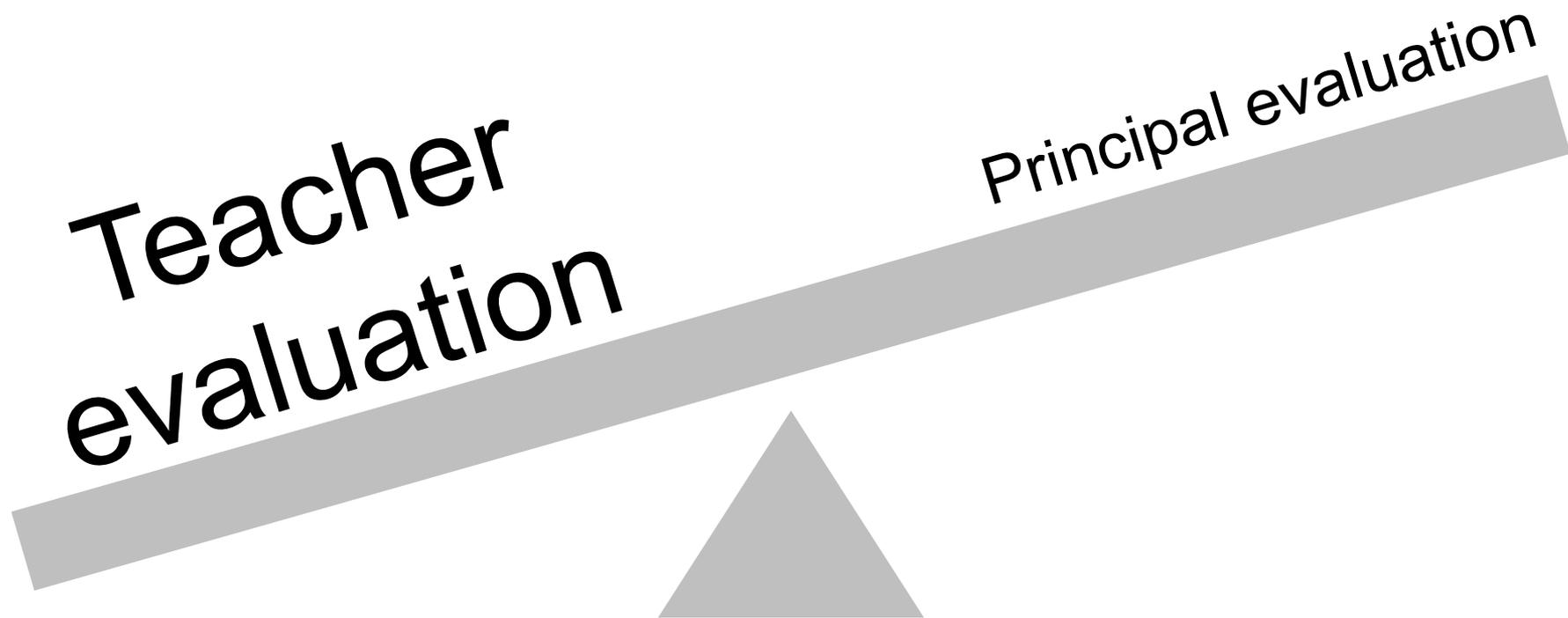
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- Enhancement of data systems to include workforce performance information
- Broad recognition in the education and policy community of the need for more valid and reliable data to inform improvements in instruction and high stakes employment decisions
- Aligned policies at the federal and state level provide consistent focus on the importance of educator effectiveness

# The Special Case of Leader Evaluation

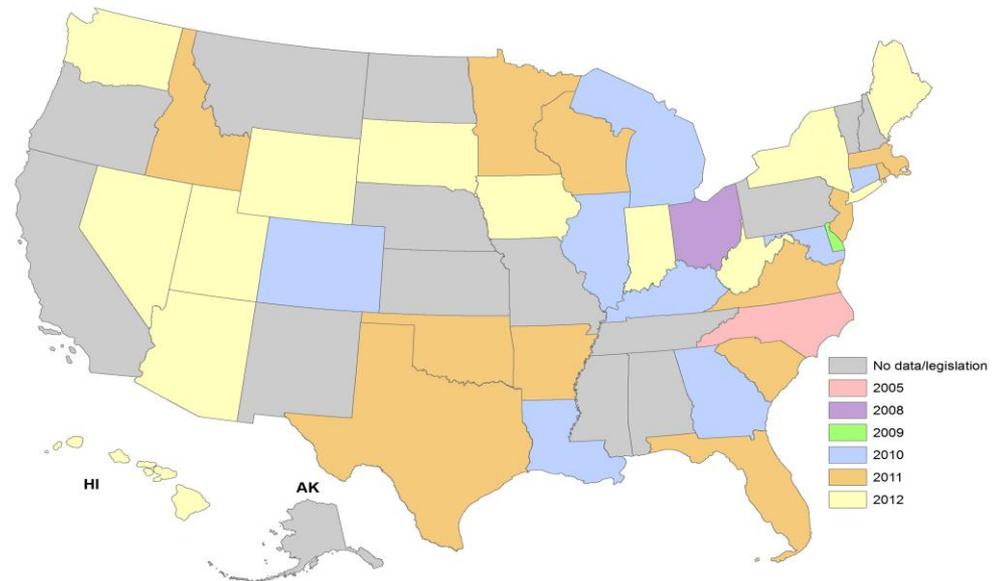
The dialogue about evaluation virtually ignores leaders.

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# The Current Landscape of Principal Evaluation

- Twenty-four states have implemented new legislation or administrative rules on principal evaluation within the past two years.
- Fifteen states are slated to implement new principal evaluation systems in 2012–13, and seven are slated to implement them in 2013–14.



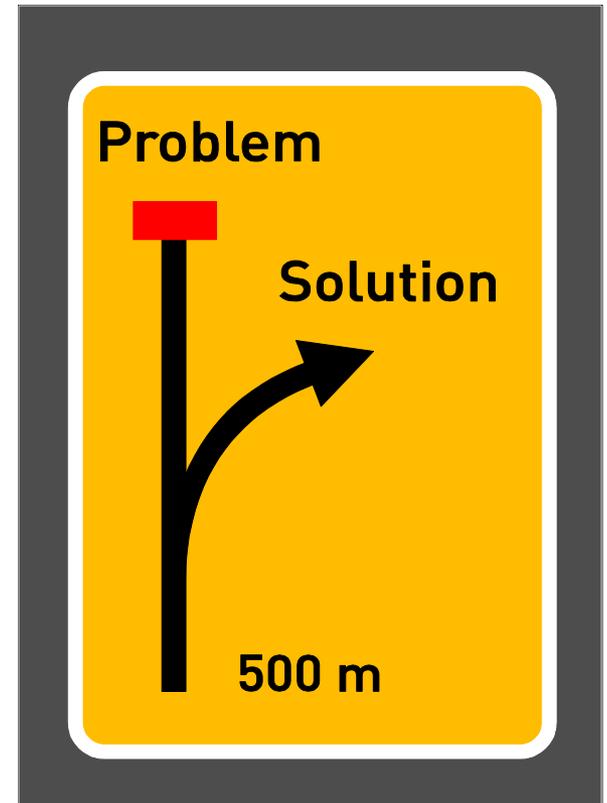
# Teacher and Leader Evaluation: Common Design and Implementation Challenges

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# 10 Areas Where Challenges Occur

1. Stakeholder Engagement and Buy-In
2. Communication
3. Knowledge Management
4. Training
5. Creating Professional Growth Systems
6. Using Evaluation Data
7. Alignment and Integration
8. Adapting to Changes in Context
9. Scaling Up
10. Sustainability



# 1—Stakeholder Engagement and Buy-In

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- Foundation of a successful effort to implement and sustain a robust educator evaluation system
- Along with communication issues, lack of engagement and buy-in is frequently cited reason for reform failure
- Beginning of creating a culture of trust and well-being

# 2—Communication

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- States and districts must develop strategic communication plans that outline *multiple ways* to reach educators, parents, the community, and other important stakeholders about the effort.
- The communication plan must be designed to specifically inform educators throughout the change process.

# 3—Knowledge Management

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- States and districts must consider how they ensure that all stakeholders understand the evaluation system, its components—including teaching standards—the evaluation process, and how the results will be used and affect their work.

# 4—Training

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- At the heart of an evaluation system are personnel who can accurately assess teacher performance, communicate the results of that assessment to teachers, and help them plan for their professional growth.
- High-quality training is essential to ensure validity so that decisions that result from evaluation processes will be both fair and defensible.
- Training serves to ensure that evaluators agree on (1) the evidence and (2) what the evidence means in terms of a score.
- Calibration among evaluators requires ongoing training and should be done regularly to ensure that evaluators agree on the evidence and what it means.
- High-quality training builds trust!

# 5—Creating Professional Growth Systems

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- Evaluation systems should be based on a theory of how teachers grow throughout their careers.
- The theory of development should guide professional learning opportunities and supports necessary to improve teacher practice.
- Creating the systems relies on the ability to accurately assess *all* teachers across a continuum of performance and to provide high-quality feedback.
- Evaluation instruments and processes should be aligned with state teaching standards, which outline the performance expectations for teachers.
- Professional growth opportunities should be job-embedded, collaborative, and sustained. The expectation is that growth happens over time. Opportunities for sharing and reflection around professional growth should also be built into the system.

# 6—Using Evaluation Data

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- Evaluation as a process to improve teaching and leadership practice relies on valid and reliable data that are accessible to educators.
- Some data are more useful than others for helping teachers to adjust instruction. Data that are closer to the classroom and to specific instruction will be most useful for changing teacher practice.
- Observations followed quickly by specific feedback about instructional practice may be most helpful to teachers.
- Evaluation data should be part of a larger talent management system or approach.

# 7—Alignment and Integration

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- Evaluation systems should not be layered on top of other initiatives but rather integrated and embedded into a larger system of educator talent development.
- Evaluation systems should align with and connect to statewide and districtwide priorities (e.g., college- and career-ready initiatives, teacher preparation).

# 8—Adapting to Changes in Context

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- Creating dynamic systems is key to adapting to changes in state or district leadership or state and federal legislation.
- Focus on codifying essential practices and elements and building broad support and political will to weather changes.

# 9—Scaling Up

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- At the state, district, and school levels, creating a plan to scale up the evaluation system should be thoughtful and strategic and should be developed early in the design phase.
- Implementing a continuous improvement plan is essential (e.g., pilot, test, revise) as you scale.
- Be thoughtful about collecting and analyzing pilot data. Develop a set of questions you want answered by the pilot data before you implement the pilot.
- Consider who should participate in the pilot.

# 10—Sustainability

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- Sustaining high-quality, robust educator evaluation systems is challenging in three ways:
  - Costs
  - Time
  - Teacher and principal beliefs about the value of the system and process

# Overcoming Barriers to Success: Advice to States and Districts

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- Don't reinvent the wheel. Rely on what others have done and learned, and modify it to fit your state and local context.
- Leverage your capacity with other state and national organizations.
- Adopt the mindset of “Get It Right” over “Get It Done.” Contemplate focusing on some primary purposes in the initial implementation years.
- Continuously build the political will and support you need to sustain this effort over time.
- Engage stakeholders throughout the design, implementation, and revision process.
- Focus on supports to build teacher and leader capacity to implement high- leverage instructional principles.

# Overcoming Barriers to Success: Supporting SEAs and Districts

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- Make resources from other states and districts available to support this work. Share ideas, challenges and solutions.
- Connect states and districts with other potential partners including non-profit organizations, IHEs, advocacy organizations and businesses.
- Stress quality and substantive progress over compliance.
- Provide practical solutions to significant problems of practice (e.g., student growth for non-tested areas, connecting professional development to teacher evaluation).
- Help SEAs and districts demonstrate coherence and alignment across reform efforts, initiatives, and funding.

# GTL Center Resources

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## *Ask the Team Briefs*

- **[Lacking Capacity? How to Work Smart in Teacher Evaluation](#)**

Find out how states are addressing capacity challenges, such as dealing with the challenge of performing multiple observations for teachers.

- **[High Fidelity: Investing in Evaluation Training](#)**

Explore how states are providing training to districts, evaluators, and educators on new teacher and principal evaluation systems.

- **[Two of a Kind: Are Your District's Evaluation Systems Equivalent?](#)**

Learn how states are creating equivalency or approval processes for district evaluation systems.

# GTL Center Resources

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## **Teacher and Principal Evaluation Practical Guides**

Need guidance to help design your teacher and leader evaluation systems? Access key resources, guiding questions, and practical examples through these interactive sites.

<http://www.gtlcenter.org/tools-publications/online-tools/teacher-evaluation>

<http://www.gtlcenter.org/tools-publications/online-tools/principal-evaluation>

# Questions?

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Angela Minnici  
aminnici@air.org  
202-573-4129 (cell)

1000 Thomas Jefferson Street NW  
Washington, DC 20007-3835  
877-322-8700  
gtlcenter@air.org  
www.gtlcenter.org | www.air.org

 [www.facebook.com/gtlcenter](http://www.facebook.com/gtlcenter)

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