



# Complete Draft Policy Supporting Better Teaching and Learning

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## Creating a System to Improve Teacher Evaluation, Teacher Effectiveness, and Student Learning (Nov. 8, 2010)

**Rationale:** A quality teacher effectiveness plan supports teacher growth and the improvement of craft so that students can achieve academically, socially, and emotionally. Improving instruction will require changing our current Stull Evaluation process and making systemic reforms to support teachers throughout their careers. We need to transform the current system in order to provide teachers with meaningful feedback and support them in reflecting, collaborating, and improving. We are against replacing the current system with one that is unduly focused on removing teachers or that includes “merit” incentives that will lead to competition rather than collaboration among teachers.

We need a plan that is founded upon our best knowledge about how adults and children learn and grow. First, we know that teachers are the most important factor in our schools, but at the same time we know that factors outside of schools’ control greatly impact student learning. In addition, the efficacy of individual teachers’ efforts depends to a large extent on the quality of the supports that are available in a particular school and community.<sup>1</sup> This means that a truly serious effort to improve teacher effectiveness requires a focus that is much broader than simply revising the evaluation process. We must have

### Definitions of Terms

AALA – Associated Administrators of Los Angeles. The union representing administrators in LAUSD.

Career paths – opportunities for accomplished teachers to assume non-administrative leadership positions such as coaches, mentors or lead teachers.

Evaluation – a formal system that assesses the performance of individuals or groups.

Summative Evaluation – an evaluation that occurs at a particular point in time after instruction and determines a final judgment.

Formative Evaluation – an ongoing evaluation that occurs during instruction, is used as feedback, and changes as new information is analyzed.

Multiple measures – many different ways of assessing performance. For teachers, options include observations, value-added measures, student surveys, self-assessments.

PAR – (Peer Assistance and Review) a program in which “consulting” teachers observe and assist other teachers in making improvement. In some districts, these “consulting teachers” also conduct evaluations. In LAUSD, PAR is part of the current contract and it requires teachers to participate if they receive a below standard Stull evaluation.

Student outcomes data – any data that can be used to demonstrate growth in student learning, including student writing, projects, classroom tests, and standardized tests (also called student performance data).

Teacher Effectiveness – a term used to include all the systems used to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of teachers.

Tenure – a term commonly used to indicate when teachers achieve permanent status, are entitled to due process rights and can only be dismissed for cause (e.g., incompetence, insubordination, immoral conduct).

Value-added analysis – a statistical technique that uses student test scores to estimate the “value,” or amount of learning, that one teacher or group is responsible for “adding” (also called value-added models, value-added measures, VAM).

<sup>1</sup> Anthony Bryk, “Organizing Schools for Improvement,” *Phi Delta Kappan*, April, 2010.



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systemic reform that examines the entire continuum of teachers' careers to identify the levers that will help *all* teachers become more effective, from strengthened pre-service education, to improved induction and professional development, to a strengthened PAR process, to fair, efficient, and valid decisions about rehiring, dismissal, and permanent status, to increased teacher control over curriculum implementation, to alternative career paths for teachers. This system-wide approach also requires mutual accountability -- teachers must be given a substantial voice in evaluating administrators and the quality of teaching supports they provide.

Next, research tells us that in order to build effective school communities, we must establish trusting relationships.<sup>2</sup> Building trust means that, for the overwhelming majority of teachers, evaluation should be a low stakes, formative process focused explicitly on improving instruction and learning. For those teachers who are not meeting clearly defined expectations and have not improved, the evaluation process should include the real possibility of dismissal. Finally, building a comprehensive system of evaluation and development requires sufficient training and accountability for all parties.

### **Guiding Principles<sup>3</sup>:**

Our Teacher Effectiveness policy needs to be thorough, research-based, engaged with the community, and reflective of the following guidelines:

**1. Improved teaching and learning must be the primary goal:** All policies and practices related to teacher evaluation and effectiveness must be based on sound research showing a strong link to improved student outcomes.

**2. Teacher collaboration must be promoted systemically:** Many proposed accountability reforms, like merit pay, promote competition among teachers rather than collaboration. Time and again, research has shown that when teachers work together, everyone benefits, especially students.<sup>4</sup> Teachers and administrators should be held accountable for working collaboratively and they should be provided with the resources and time that are needed to do so.

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<sup>2</sup> Penny Sebring, et al, "The Essential Supports for School Improvement," Consortium on Chicago School Research, 2006; Bryk (2010).

<sup>3</sup> These principles are supported by sound research and are consistent with recommendations made in a recent report from Stanford titled, "A Quality Teacher in Every Classroom: Creating a Teacher Evaluation System that Works in California."

<sup>4</sup> C. Kirabo Jackson and Elias Bruegmann. "Teaching Students and Teaching Each Other: The Importance of Peer Learning for Teachers," *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, October, 2009. Jackson and Bruegman (2009); Sebring, et al (2006).



**3. Teachers must be involved in development, implementation, and oversight:** Complete and honest collaboration is necessary among LAUSD, UTLA, and AALA in developing and implementing a Teacher Effectiveness plan. Experience shows that teachers and administrators must be part of creating evaluation tools that support teacher growth.<sup>5</sup> Committees formed to meet this objective need to be composed of a majority of teachers (as in the collective bargaining agreement, section 6.0.a, PAR panel qualifications). Ongoing communication will be critical to this process.

**4. Improving teacher evaluation must be embedded in a broader reform agenda:** Improving teacher effectiveness requires us to address the entire system, from teacher preparation through retirement. This work is not limited to reforming teacher evaluation, but must include:

- Strengthened and more accountable teacher preparation programs;
- A hiring process that includes teachers;
- Improved induction and training that provide all new teachers with the support they need. It should include high-quality training for BTSA mentors, specific and frequent feedback for new teachers, release time for them to observe expert teachers, and some choice for new teachers in terms of the mentor teachers from whom they seek help. An improved training system might be modeled after the UCLA IMPACT: Urban Teaching Residency. This new system should be evaluated annually to ensure it minimizes the high and costly rates of teacher turnover among new teachers;
- A more thoughtful process for tenure decisions that allows for an additional year of probationary status for *some* teachers on the basis of evidence of their potential as well as their struggles, provided that evidence is collected through multiple observations by expert teachers as well as administrators;
- Improved professional development that involves grade-level, departmental, school-wide, or even cross-site teams of teachers in its design. Professional development should be informed by student-outcomes data and targeted toward helping teachers address their weaknesses and build on their strengths. Professional growth activities must be evaluated for quality and take place within a collaborative environment in which teachers and teacher teams decide what kind of training they need, and are then provided with adequate time, funding, and materials for those professional growth and collaboration activities;
- Increased teacher control over curriculum implementation. Teachers must be allowed to differentiate instruction by using a variety of instructional strategies in order to meet the

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<sup>5</sup> This point was made repeatedly during the LAUSD Convocation “Setting the Stage for Supporting Effective Teaching: Learning from Research and Practice,” on June 28-29, 2010, by, among others, Laura Goe, Julia Indalecio, Doug Prouty, Ken Futernick, Judy Perez, and Drew Furedi.



diverse needs of their students and to ensure that students meet the state's academic standards (or the new federal common core standards). Mandated scripted curriculum stifles teacher effectiveness – with increased accountability for quality instruction there needs to be increased autonomy over instructional practices.

- A strengthened and more accountable PAR program such that the PAR process either results in verified improvement or leads to dismissal, the PAR panel is empowered to sign-off on a teacher's improvement as soon as evidence of effectiveness is demonstrated, and the recommendations of the PAR panel are taken seriously and acted upon efficiently.
- Differentiated career paths. The most effective teachers, as determined by a collaborative and objective process, should be provided with more opportunities to take on leadership positions with additional pay and responsibilities. These opportunities for professional growth will promote instructional quality and help to attract and retain highly effective teachers.
- More resources to schools and communities. Teacher effectiveness is affected by class size and other school resources as well as the well-being of students and their families.

**5. Mutual accountability means feedback and improvement for all:** We need mutual accountability at the school level so that teachers play a role in evaluating principals and other support providers charged with helping teachers improve instruction for students. The system for evaluating administrators at the local district, and Central Office levels also needs to be strengthened and needs to involve teachers as well as school-site administrators. Common survey instruments should be used to provide teachers with feedback from students and parents.

**6. Evaluations must be differentiated for teachers with different needs:** Differentiated evaluation is necessary for different teachers (i.e. new teachers, permanent teachers doing well, permanent teachers who are struggling). An improved evaluation system should make distinctions among several levels of proficiency, be based on agreed-upon standards of practice that take into account the complexities of teaching, and rely on a clearly defined rubric that is illustrated with examples showing what each level of proficiency looks like. UTLA believes that evaluation should consist of a summative component to determine competency to teach, and a formative evaluation designed to improve the instructional skills of all teachers. The overwhelming majority of teachers need an evaluation system that is low stakes and focused on improvement, on building on their strengths and addressing areas for growth.

- Basic Competency: High stakes, summative evaluations for possible dismissal must be made more efficient in order to safeguard the rights of all students, while at the same



time not abrogate due process provisions that protect the rights of teachers, ensure buy-in and trust from all stakeholders, and maintain the ability of the LAUSD to attract and retain a quality teaching workforce.<sup>6</sup> Useful models for these basic competency evaluations can be found in the strong PAR programs in place in districts such as Poway and San Juan Unified in California, Rochester in New York, Montgomery County in Maryland, and Toledo, Ohio.

- **Better Teaching and Learning:** Low stakes, formative evaluation for improvement must be built on trust, promote collaboration, and look at all relevant data. Student learning outcomes, parent and student feedback, peer and administrator observations, and self-reflection can all play a role in helping each teacher to analyze and improve her/his practice. Importantly, this evaluation process must recognize that teachers will learn at different rates and each teacher will need somewhat different supports in order to be best able to improve her/his practice. Therefore, this evaluation process must offer teachers different options such as peer evaluation, portfolio evaluation, videotaped self-reflection, and administrator evaluation.

**7. Evaluations must use data fairly and wisely:** Decisions should be informed by multiple forms of data from observations, student performance assessments,<sup>7</sup> and student and parent surveys, but not by test scores alone. A limited and appropriate use of standardized test scores can play a part in informing teachers' practice. However, these tests are not designed for the purpose of high-stakes evaluations of individual teachers, and the value-added analyses derived from them are too unreliable for that purpose.<sup>8</sup> Relying on these test scores for high-stakes evaluation is likely to lead to serious and harmful unintended consequences such as narrowing of the curriculum, teaching to the test, and diminished professional collaboration. As such, standardized test scores should play no part in high stakes decisions leading to dismissal or entry into PAR.

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<sup>6</sup> See, for instance, recommendation #6 in Stanford's report, "A Quality Teacher in Every Classroom: Creating a Teacher Evaluation System that Works in California."

<sup>7</sup> See, for instance, recommendation #2 in Stanford's report, "A Quality Teacher in Every Classroom: Creating a Teacher Evaluation System that Works in California."

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Standardized tests are not designed to measure teachers' effectiveness and are not valid for this purpose: Popham (2006) and <http://www.edutopia.org/f-for-assessment>. VAM are unstable from one year to the next: Sass (2008); McCaffrey et al (2008); Koedel and Betts (2007). VAM misclassify one in four teachers: Schochet et al (2010). VAM are unreliable and the rankings change depending on the model that is used: Rothstein, J. (2007). "Different tests result in different teacher rankings..." Sass (2008). Margins of error are so large that, even with four years of data, a teacher whose rank is estimated to be at the 53<sup>rd</sup> percentile might actually be anywhere from the 32<sup>nd</sup> percentile to the 80<sup>th</sup>. Corcoran (2010).



**8. The evaluation system must be integrated with professional development:**<sup>9</sup> A system-wide program must be developed to provide continuous and targeted professional development and growth for all teachers – new teachers as well as veterans, struggling teachers as well as experts. Professional development must respond to the needs identified through evaluations, and evaluations must be explicitly aimed toward helping teachers to grow.

**9. Time, adequate training and re-training is needed for evaluators, teachers, and community members:**<sup>10</sup> All evaluators must have sufficient time to conduct valid evaluations. They must also receive high-quality initial training in order to have a common and accurate understanding of quality teaching. They must use collectively agreed upon rubrics and methods for evaluation. In order to maintain and sharpen their skills, they must be retrained and certified on a regular basis (as required by districts such as Montgomery County Maryland and San Juan Unified in Sacramento). Teaching Standards must be differentiated appropriately for teachers as they move through the developmental stages early in their careers and the standards must be accompanied by rubrics, video examples, and other means that illustrate how teachers could demonstrate they are meeting those standards at different grade levels and teaching different content. In addition, the evaluation process itself must be continually monitored and standards must be developed to ensure valid and reliable evaluations. Standards must be developed for aspects such as the ratio of administrator evaluators to teachers,<sup>11</sup> the amount of training that is needed, and the number of observations that should be conducted. Evaluators and those evaluated must also understand the communities we serve, while at the same time, teachers and school communities must be engaged in understanding quality teaching.

**10. A multi-year timeline is essential:** The timeline for developing and piloting a teacher evaluation and effectiveness plan must be conducive to real collaboration, quality training, and focused attention to all the important details. The experience of other districts that have recently undergone similar reform efforts suggests an extensive and intensive multi-year

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<sup>9</sup> See, for instance, recommendation #7 in Stanford’s report, “A Quality Teacher in Every Classroom: Creating a Teacher Evaluation System that Works in California.”

<sup>10</sup> See, for instance, recommendation #5 in Stanford’s report, “A Quality Teacher in Every Classroom: Creating a Teacher Evaluation System that Works in California.”

<sup>11</sup> According to Richard Rothstein, “Management theorists recommend that no leader should have more than 5 direct-reports...[but] frequently, one principal supervises as many as 30 teachers.”

[http://www.epi.org/analysis\\_and\\_opinion/entry/unions\\_not\\_an\\_important\\_impediment\\_to\\_removing\\_ineffective\\_teachers/](http://www.epi.org/analysis_and_opinion/entry/unions_not_an_important_impediment_to_removing_ineffective_teachers/)



process.<sup>12</sup> This process of development should start immediately through a joint UTLA/AALA/LAUSD oversight body that will be charged with continuously revising, improving, and updating instruments and processes as we begin implementation and new research becomes available.

**UTLA will not support:**

- An exclusive focus on removing ineffective teachers: Research clearly suggests that an exclusive focus on removing ineffective teachers is unlikely to lead to significant improvements in student learning. According to researcher Ken Futernick, “poor teaching results more often from poorly functioning systems than from individual shortcomings.” The drive to remove ineffective teachers, he argues, “ignores the fact that struggling teachers often lack adequate support and resources to give them a good chance to succeed.” And, “it falsely assumes that a ready supply of effective teachers is available to replace those who would be removed.” Furthermore, “attrition [46% of teachers leave within five years] and mis-assignments [close to 40% of math teachers in urban high schools are teaching out-of-field] do far more than incompetence to diminish teacher quality.”<sup>13</sup> UTLA will, however, support an improved high-stakes evaluation system and stronger, more accountable PAR program that includes the real possibility of dismissal for those teachers who have been given a real chance to improve but are unable to meet clearly defined standards. However, the efforts to remove the small number of underperforming teachers must not distract us from the challenge that will have a much greater impact on student learning: providing quality professional development and useful feedback so that all teachers in the district can improve their practice.
- Aligning pay with performance: Evidence suggests that merit pay is unlikely to improve student learning, and may have unintended negative consequences. The recent study by researchers at Vanderbilt University found that large pay incentives for teachers in Nashville, Tennessee produced no achievement gains

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<sup>12</sup> For example, at the Convocation on Teacher Effectiveness June 28-29, representatives from Cincinnati, Montgomery County, and Chicago all emphasized the need to go slowly, and to prepare teachers and administrators with the proper training and professional development. Cincinnati began their process in 1997, started their pilot in 1999, and only began implementing the new evaluations with veteran teachers in 2005. In Montgomery County, they took two years to develop the program and then three additional years to roll out the evaluation system to all employees.

<sup>13</sup> Ken Futernick, “Incompetent Teachers or Dysfunctional Systems,” *Kappan Magazine*, October, 2010.



among students: “To conclude, there is little evidence that [the district’s] incentives induced teachers to make substantial changes to their instructional practices or their level of effort, and equally little evidence that the changes they did make were particularly well chosen to increase student achievement...”<sup>14</sup> In fact, according to journalist, Andrea Gabor, “there is virtually no evidence that pay is a driver of long-term good performance in industry.”<sup>15</sup> As noted above, however, UTLA does support the concept of additional compensation for additional work such as coaching and curriculum development provided by exemplary teacher leaders.

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<sup>14</sup> Mathew J. Springer, et al, “Teacher Pay for Performance: Experimental Evidence from the Project on Incentives in Teaching,” *National Center on Performance Incentives*, September, 2010.

<sup>15</sup> Andrea Gabor, “Why Pay Incentives are Destined to Fail and How They Could Undermine School Reform,” *EdWeek*, September 20, 2010.