

Teacher and Leader Evaluation Systems (TLES) Study



Importance and Purpose of the TLES Study

One of the most influential innovations in the education profession in the last decade is the creation of evaluation systems that inform professional growth. In such systems, educators know the professional practices upon which they are being reviewed, receive evidence-based feedback that encourages them to be reflective about their professional practices, and have access to data about how their practices are influencing student growth. Recent studies suggest that these tools can help educators improve their practices and become more effective. In addition, the federal government has emphasized the importance of teacher and leader evaluation systems, starting in 2006 with the Teacher Incentive Fund and continuing in Race to the Top and other initiatives in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009. Most recently, a large number of states have expressed an intention to promote new teacher and leader evaluation systems in exchange for flexibility on provisions of the 2002 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) of the U.S. Department of Education (ED) has contracted with the American Institutes for Research (AIR) and its partners to conduct a ground-breaking study to investigate how teacher and leader evaluation systems influence educators and students. We have partnered with leading providers in the areas of teacher and principal evaluation to create a comprehensive system, supported by the best available research, which our team can implement in your district. The goal of the system is to improve professional practice and student achievement. Participating in this high-profile, large-scale study would give your district an opportunity to pilot this system and to help inform state and federal education policy.

TLES Study Design

The TLES study is designed to help us understand how a comprehensive teacher and leader evaluation system influences teacher instructional practice, principal leadership, and student achievement. As a corollary to teacher and principal practices, we will investigate educator retention and mobility as intermediate outcomes which may influence student achievement. In addition, we want to know about the experiences and actions of teachers, leaders, and central office personnel as they implement the study's system. The study will include approximately 15 participating districts, with at least 10 participating schools per district. Participating schools will be assigned by lottery into one of two groups. Both groups will continue using their districts' current evaluation systems. One of the groups will get the added benefit of the study's system, with implementation training and assistance throughout the two-year period of the study.

Components of the Teacher and Leader Evaluation System

The system provided by the TLES Study includes three core components that provide feedback using well-established instruments and procedures.

1. Feedback on classroom practices. Teachers in schools piloting the study's teacher and leader evaluation system will receive feedback on instruction using an observation tool that specifies expected practices for multiple aspects of instruction and has been shown to be related to student growth. The pilot schools in half of the districts will use Danielson's Framework for Teaching (FFT) and the other half will use the Classroom Assessment and Scoring System (CLASS). Both tools serve as a basis for feedback conversations and ongoing professional dialogue. Teachers in grades 4-8 who are responsible for instruction in

mathematics and/or reading/English language arts will be observed four times each year—one time by the school principal and three times by observers who will be selected by the district. Teachers in other academic subjects or grades will be observed twice each year.

2. Feedback on principal leadership. Principals in schools piloting the study's teacher and leader evaluation system will receive feedback on their leadership, obtained twice per year through the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership (VAL-ED). This tool is among the most widely-used and well-researched tool for providing feedback on principal performance, to help them grow as school leaders. The VAL-ED is a "360-degree" tool which uses feedback on principal leadership obtained through surveys from principals, supervisors, and teachers.

3. Feedback on student growth. In schools piloting the study's teacher and leader evaluation system, both teachers and principals will receive feedback on student growth in mathematics and/or reading/English language arts. The analysis and reporting of student growth data will be conducted by AIR, which provides similar services in school districts around the U.S., including statewide services in Florida and New York. Measures of student growth will inform educators about how their efforts influence student performance.

The three components described above will be the basis for an overall effectiveness score for teachers and principals each year. This score and the component results collected during the school year will be made available to teachers, principals, and central office staff through AIR's secure, online reporting system, which provides reports tailored to the needs of the user.

Benefits of Participation

Districts have an opportunity to be part of ground-breaking research that may lead to improved educator practices and student outcomes. Participating districts will receive the state-of-the-art system described above for a two-year period **at no cost** including:

- Feedback on classroom practice using FFT or CLASS;
- Feedback on principal leadership using VAL-ED; and
- Feedback on student growth using AIR's services.

All necessary training will be provided for principals, teachers, and the observers who are selected by the district. Districts are expected to work closely with the study team to ensure participation and high quality implementation of the study's evaluation system.

Initial Criteria for Participation

The study will include approximately 15 districts, each with at least 10 participating schools. To qualify, each of the schools should meet the following criteria:

- Be an elementary, middle, or K-8 school;
- Have at least half of its student enrollment eligible for the National School Lunch Program; and
- Is not currently using teacher or leader evaluation system components that are similar to those described above.

In addition, districts must have data systems that allow student achievement records to be linked to individual teachers.

Study Timeline

During the 2011-2012 school year, we will engage in conversations with districts that meet the initial criteria above. By the end of the school year, we will have signed agreements with those districts that are the strongest fit for the study and can commit to full participation.

The study activities will take place during the school years 2012-13 and 2013-14. In the summer prior to each of these school years, teachers and principals will participate in an orientation to the evaluation tools being introduced as part of the study, and principals and observers will participate in training sessions around conducting teacher observations and related feedback sessions.

For Additional Information

The study has been commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES) and is being conducted by the American Institutes for Research (AIR); its Project Director is Dr. Andrew Wayne (awayne@air.org | 202.403.5483). For more information about the study, or to begin a conversation with us about partnering on this project, contact Dr. Anja Kurki (akurki@air.org | 202.403.5153), or Dr. Rebecca Herman (rherman@air.org | 202.403.5449), Co-Directors of Outreach.