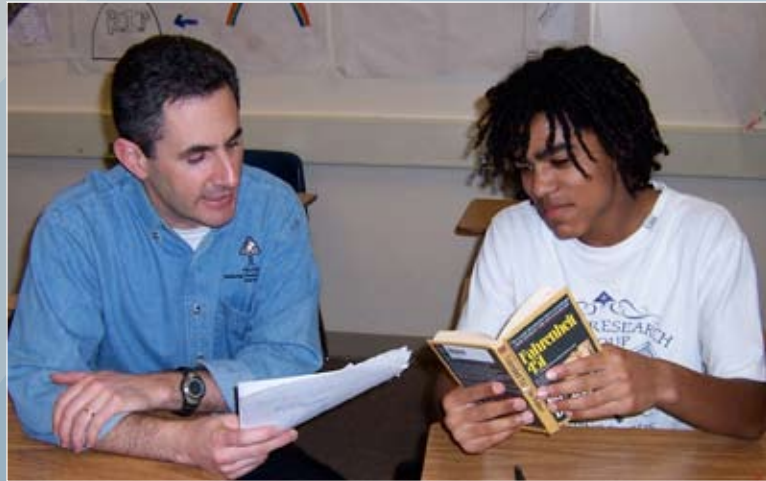


Perspectives from Accomplished California Teachers



A Quality Teacher in Every Classroom:

Creating a Teacher
Evaluation System that
Works for California

**National Board Resource Center,
Stanford University**

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The Accomplished California Teachers forum was established in January, 2008. ACT membership is open to National Board Certified Teachers and other accomplished teachers who wish to contribute to conversations about initiatives that advance quality teaching in California. Its primary mission is to give policymakers and the public ways to learn the views of skilled practitioners about the issues that will build and enhance the quality of the teacher workforce in the state. This report is the first in a series on education policies informed by teacher perspectives.

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Table of Contents

Foreword	i
Executive Summary	iii
Introduction	1
Teacher Evaluation in California: Does It Improve Teaching Quality?	2
What Do Teachers Need and Want from Evaluations?	7
Evaluation Based on Professional Standards	10
An Evaluation System Based on What We Know about Good Teaching	15
A Coherent System of Teacher Evaluation that Promotes Quality Teaching	16
Evaluation for Compliance or for Promoting Better Teaching?	34
Conclusion	37
References	38
Teacher Biographies	40

A Quality Teacher in Every Classroom: Creating a Teacher Evaluation System that Works for California

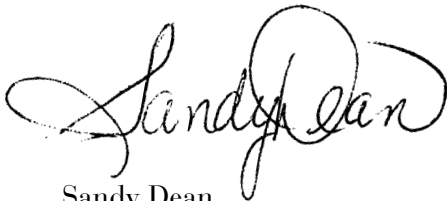
Perspectives from Accomplished California Teachers

Education policy informed by educators

Amidst the calls for better teaching and the flurry of ideas for how to get it, the time is right for the voices of those who best understand the complexity of the work to have their voices heard. The Accomplished California Teachers (ACT) network was launched for that explicit purpose, born as the brainchild of a group of National Board Certified Teachers affiliated with the National Board Resource Center at Stanford University who believe that listening to teachers who are at the top of the profession is essential to the task of creating strong and effective education policy.

This report is the work of a group of accomplished California teachers who share a common passion for teaching and a strong belief that improving the teaching profession is the domain of teachers themselves. They have given their time and good thinking to two serious questions: “How should we evaluate the quality of teaching?” and “What kind of evaluation system will move all California teachers on a path of improvement throughout their careers?” Distinguished teachers from all over the state met in virtual and real settings to discuss research and policy on teacher quality and evaluation, and to share their experiences. After months of conversation they conceived a set of recommendations to guide the decisions that will affect the future of teaching and learning in the state. Their work recognizes both the complexity of the work teachers do, its importance for the future of our state, and the common desires of good teachers to be better at what they do.

Our work was made possible with generous funding from the Stuart Foundation, without whom none of this would have been possible. We are grateful for the good counsel offered to us in this work by Barnett Berry and the staff of the Center for Teaching Quality. We have been encouraged to think harder, read more widely, and probe deeper by our mentor, Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond at Stanford University. We have been inspired by the unwavering commitment of our colleagues from all parts of California and the nation who have shared their stories and their hopes, and nurtured our belief in the power of our own voices.



Sandy Dean
Director, National Board Resource Center
Coordinator, Accomplished California Teachers
Stanford University

Foreword

The economic crisis creating such enormous upheaval in California and the nation should not eclipse the challenges we face in improving our children's education. In fact, the crisis—which has wrought so much damage in our schools—only underscores the urgent need to strengthen and improve our schools using our best knowledge and foresight. The hope for a healthy, sustainable economy with productive, contributing members lies in today's schools and in the choices we make to support their teachers and students.

It is easy to predict that teaching quality, which has been identified repeatedly as the essential school-related ingredient in student success, will be at the top of California's school reform agenda for years to come. What policy choices will we make to promote better quality teaching? How can we guard against decisions that produce consequences no one would welcome? How can we make sure that the time, energy, and scarce funds we have to invest will actually produce the results we want and that our students need?

We can begin by listening to the wise counsel of those most closely connected to the work.

Suppose that California were to assemble a diverse team of experts on the subject of teacher quality and effectiveness. We can well imagine who would be invited to the table for such a conversation. There would likely be researchers and policy analysts with expertise on teacher preparation, certification, induction, evaluation, and professional development. School administrators would certainly be there, along with policy makers. But what about teachers themselves? Quite often the contribution of teachers in such deliberations is limited to one or two voices. To be well-informed, however, the team of experts should include strong representation from expert teachers of all career stages who have engaged in the serious work of pursuing the highest quality teaching.


The expertise that is so essential and too often underrepresented resides with people like those who wrote this report: teachers recognized for the high quality of their work, whose professional journeys exemplify the pursuit of excellence. If elevating the quality of teaching is important, then those who have met the highest standards in the profession must be included when policymakers sit down to consider how to raise the quality of teaching in every classroom in California. They know what was helpful in getting them ready for their first day in the classroom. They know what helped them become better in their early years of practice. They have learned what it takes to teach students from diverse ethnic, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds. They have sought opportunities to improve continually and, in turn, they have invested time and energy in helping their colleagues to do the same.

At this level of accomplishment, they know a vast amount about what works to improve the quality of teaching. At the same time, they know what gets in the way of improvement. By virtue of their work in classrooms, analysis of that work, reflections on the results of teaching, and rich conversations with colleagues, they are true experts on the subject of teaching quality. Their wisdom and experience need to be tapped if California is to successfully create a smart, coherent system of teacher development that leads to consistently high-quality teaching.

The Accomplished California Teachers (ACT) network was formed precisely to capture the voices of the most expert teachers in the state. It is comprised of teachers who have relentlessly pursued excellence in their own work and achieved distinction in a multitude of ways, including recognition as teachers of the year in local school systems and associations, selection as national Milken award winners, participation as leaders in their schools and districts in developing curriculum and facilitating professional development, and the achievement of advanced certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

The goal of ACT is to present accomplished teachers' views and offer expertise on a wide range of issues about teaching quality. For the development of this report, ACT members have read the research, examined existing policies, asked probing questions of experts, and shared their own experiences in cultivating quality teaching.

This first report examines teacher evaluation. This is a key starting point, for, without a common understanding of how teachers should be evaluated—what constitutes quality and how it is defined and promoted—the rest of the conversation about improving teaching in California will be meaningless.



Linda Darling-Hammond,
Stanford University
Charles E. Ducommun Professor of Education



A Quality Teacher in Every Classroom: Creating a Teacher Evaluation System that Works for California

Executive Summary

We worry that the future of our young colleagues in teaching may not fulfill the promise we have dreamed of for our profession, where the highest consideration is given to teachers’ important questions: “How am I doing?” and “What can I do better?” We want evaluation that offers answers to those questions, that paints a detailed picture of good teaching, that serves to guide professional development, and that lays out a clear, coherent path through a teacher’s career where the expectation is for continual improvement.

— Excerpted from the full report, *A Quality Teacher in Every Classroom*

The dire state of education funding in California and across the nation means we must be smarter than ever about how we use our resources. Since teacher quality has emerged as one of the most powerful variables in student success, the focus of policy reform must be on building the capacity of our teachers—now and in the future—to meet the challenges our schools face. The urgency of the task of improving teacher quality holds both opportunity and peril. Getting reform right must, of necessity, include attending to the knowledge and experience of teachers themselves and not succumbing to quick-fix reforms accompanied by one-time infusions of money.

Recognizing the need for elevating the voices and perspectives of teachers who are deeply invested in the success of all of California’s children, Accomplished California Teachers (ACT) was created by a group of National Board Certified Teachers early in 2008. ACT is an organization of teachers from throughout the state who have achieved distinction in a multitude of ways: as teachers of the year, national Milken award-winning educators, leaders in curriculum development and professional learning, and teacher mentors and coaches. Many have also earned certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). ACT’s mission is to present practitioner perspectives and expertise on a wide range of issues concerning teaching quality.

This report, one in a series to be released by ACT, examines teacher evaluation. We chose to begin here because we believe that without a common understanding of what constitutes teaching quality and how teachers should be evaluated, any further conversation about improving teaching will be inconsequential. The recommendations in this report are drawn from research, analysis of existing policies, input from academic experts, and our own experiences as promoters of quality teaching. This report offers our recommendations on making teacher evaluation a more useful tool to advance the quality of teaching across California.

Overview: The state of teacher evaluation in California

While evaluation processes across the state vary widely, many of them look very much the same as they did in 1971 when the California Legislature enacted the Stull Act governing teacher evaluation. In sharing their own experiences with evaluation, ACT members revealed some common challenges: a system that teachers do not trust, that rarely offers clear directions for improving practice and that often charges school leaders to implement without preparation or resources.

Jane Fung, National Board Certified Teacher and Milken award winner in the Los Angeles Unified School District, shared her experiences with evaluation as she has experienced them in her career over the last 20 years.

I have had administrators who never came into my classroom for formal observations or asked me for anything more than the initial planning/goal sheet. I have had administrators observe a formal lesson and put the feedback sheet in my box without ever having spoken to me about the lesson, and I have had years where I am just asked to sign the end-of-the-year evaluation sheet [without being observed].

Middle School teacher in San Diego, Ellen Berg shared a different experience—more intrusive but no more productive:

Because there is not a common language about what quality teaching is, in some cases we use a checklist of random things. In San Diego Unified they had us go visit classrooms with a list of all these things that were supposed to be going on—group-work, cooperative learning, etc.—and it was impossible to do all these things in a 15- (or even 50-) minute period, and teachers were being ripped up for not doing everything on the list.

While we discovered places where evaluation actually helps teachers improve their practice, such examples are rare in California. The costs of the existing systems, both to the fiscal bottom line and to the teaching profession, are large. The fiscal costs entail much more than those associated with removing poor teachers after the tenure deadline passes. The financial impact accrues to school districts that must replace teachers who leave due to dissatisfaction with the profession caused by lack of guidance about improving their work and to loss of leadership that is overwhelmed by the task of providing that guidance. In cases where teachers leave because of lack of guidance and support, the costs related to hiring each new faculty member can amount to upwards of \$20,000. The impact on the profession comes with the loss of potential talent that disappears when promising young teachers leave. It comes as a result of the lack of opportunities for teachers to master the craft of teaching and advance their effectiveness with students, mastery that comes from collaboration with expert evaluators.

What's wrong with the current system?

From our discussions, conversations with teaching and administrative colleagues, and examination of the research, we have identified some elements of the current evaluation system that are the most problematic.

- The standards that attempt to guide teaching practice (the California Department of Education's California Standards for the Teaching Profession) list the elements of effective teaching but fail to elaborate on what constitutes commonly agreed upon evidence of these elements. Teachers and their evaluators do not hold in common truly well-defined and detailed pictures of what constitutes good professional practice at each level of teacher development.
- The focus of evaluations is not on improving the quality of teaching. There is rarely substantive discussion that occurs either before or after an observation that is focused on ways to get better at teaching. In most cases, the evaluations are conducted for compliance, not improvement.
- The amount of time available for principals to conduct effective evaluations is seriously limited, particularly in large schools and in high-need schools where the administrative demands are large. Furthermore, the amount of preparation principals receive in doing evaluations is inadequate. One evaluator in a school is rarely sufficient to judge the skill of teachers across a range of content and developmental levels, no matter how well-resourced a school might be.
- Most evaluations pay little or no attention to the performance of a teacher's students, even though the Stull Act requires student outcomes be considered. Evaluations too often focus on easy to observe practices like classroom management and whether students are on task, rather than looking for evidence that students are actually mastering the learning goals set for them.
- Current evaluation procedures occur on schedules mandated by local agreements that are not considerate of actual needs of teachers and have no sense of urgency about which teachers' work needs more careful support or scrutiny.
- Most evaluations are not used to target the needs of individual teachers and help them select professional development to address those areas in which they need additional knowledge or skills. This further contributes teachers' views that evaluation is not about their developing mastery of professional standards, but is rather a routine designed to ensure that an administrator is performing his job.

What do we need to do?

I'd like to see the teacher evaluation process become meaningful in terms of teacher growth. I've never seen on any of my evaluations a suggested area that I might explore more deeply in my instruction. Why is that? Is it that the evaluators have nothing to suggest, don't know what to suggest, or don't bother to take the time to actually analyze my instruction?

—Kathie Marshall, Los Angeles Unified School District

Use existing high quality models and practices

Our desires for a better teacher evaluation system are two-fold: that it substantiates that the quality of a teacher's work meets the needs of her students, and that it helps a teacher understand what she needs to do to improve (regardless of the level of her experience or advanced coursework).

While the current system does not generally accomplish either of these goals, we did see some areas of strength on which the state can build a system that is likely to produce these results and, in so doing, make big strides in improving the quality of its teaching force. Indeed, we were impressed with some of the work already done. We believe that, rather than throwing away that work that was accomplished at considerable cost and commitment of expertise, it makes sense to use it to build a new system that will lead to a comprehensive approach to teacher evaluation that promotes professional learning throughout the teacher development continuum.

There are examples of effective evaluation tools such as the California Standards for the Teaching Profession, which, if built upon to develop clear descriptors of the standards in practice, could be used as an effective means for building a thoroughly aligned evaluation system for teachers who are professionally credentialed. Another is the state-approved Performance Assessment for California Teachers (PACT) which is a good measure of quality in the pre-service phase and a valuable tool for improving teacher preparation. PACT also has the potential to provide relevant data to develop a better, more personalized, path for new-teacher induction. The California Department of Education's Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment program (BTSA) provides a structure to evaluate and support teacher development in the first few years of teaching. Finally, the state should renew its investment in promoting National Board certification to create a worthwhile target for experienced teachers to continue developing their expertise, and should explore and develop ways to bridge the gap in professional learning opportunities that occurs between induction and readiness for certification by the NBPTS.

Design a new evaluation system based on best research on good teaching

Wisely using the elements that have already been developed, we recommend that a new evaluation system should be designed around the following principles:

A new evaluation system should be designed around the following principles:

- 1. Teacher evaluation should be based on professional standards** and must be sophisticated enough to assess teaching quality across the continuum of teacher development. The state should use the California Standards for the Teaching Profession and the National Board standards to create a continuum of expectations from pre-

service teaching to accomplished practice. The standards of teaching practice selected as appropriate at each level of teacher development should guide evaluations while accounting for the requirements for successful teaching in the variety of unique contexts in which teaching practice occurs.

- 2. Teacher evaluation should include performance assessments** to guide a continuous, coherent path of professional learning throughout a teacher's career. These should include existing assessments like PACT and the Teacher Performance Assessment (TPA) in pre-service; a new tool like the PACT that would be more productive than the current assessment to guide induction during BTSA; new, authentic assessments related to classroom practice for developing professionals; and the National Board assessment.
- 3. The design of a new evaluation system should build on successful, innovative practices** in current use, such as evaluations built on teachers' self- and peer-assessments in relation to high standards of performance or evidence-based portfolios that demonstrate ways that a teacher's instructional practice is contributing to student achievement. Teachers must have a significant role in the design of a new framework and in promoting it among teachers in the state.
- 4. Evaluations should consider teacher practice and performance, as well as an array of student outcomes for teams of teachers as well as individual teachers.** To support collaboration and the sharing of expertise, teachers should be evaluated both on their success in their own classroom and their contributions to the success of their peers and the school as a whole. They should be evaluated with tools that assess professional standards of practice in the classroom, augmented with evidence of student outcomes. Beyond standardized test scores, those outcomes should include performance on authentic tasks that demonstrate learning of content; presentation of evidence from formative classroom assessments that show patterns of student improvement; the development of habits that lead to improved academic success (personal responsibility, homework completion, willingness and ability to revise work to meet standards), along with contributing indicators like attendance, enrollment and success in advanced courses, graduation rates, pursuit of higher education, and work place success.
- 5. Evaluation should be frequent and conducted by expert evaluators,** including teachers who have demonstrated expertise in working with their peers. Evaluators at each juncture should be trained in the recognition and development of teaching quality, understand how to teach in the content area of the evaluated teacher, and know the specific evaluation tools and procedures they are expected to use. There should be training opportunities available for evaluators and final recommendations about teachers' tenure and employment should be subject to review by a reliable evaluation oversight team.
- 6. Evaluation leading to teacher tenure must be more intensive** and must include more extensive evidence of quality teaching. This evidence should be collected and reviewed by both the teacher and trained evaluators and should include documentation that shows that the teacher's practice exhibits the standards that define quality teaching. The process should be an ongoing part of a serious teaching induction process that helps novices grow in their profession, with the help of mentors and coaches, guided by clear standards of practice.

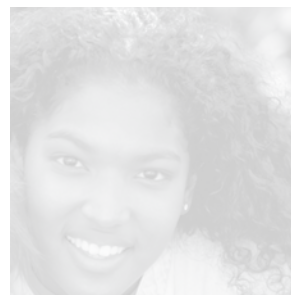
7. Evaluation should be accompanied by useful feedback, connected to professional development opportunities, and reviewed by evaluation teams or an oversight body to ensure fairness, consistency, and reliability.

Make expert teachers full partners in the process

As we examined the role that evaluation currently plays in affirming and elevating the quality of teaching in California, and as we looked at the research and read about evaluation practices in other states and countries, we became convinced that California should begin crafting new policies to improve its evaluation system immediately. However, it should not do so without the voices of teachers who can contribute knowledge about good practice, how to identify and improve it, and how to ensure that all teachers in the state meet the standards it sets for them.

It is critical that teachers embrace and trust this new, comprehensive teacher evaluation system, secure in the knowledge that classroom teachers have been full partners in its design and that it truly has the potential to transform practice and dramatically increase student achievement.

We believe that teachers of the highest quality can lead California's classrooms to new levels of learning when we build evaluation systems that support and engage teachers in this process. In this report we offer our vision of continual professional growth, building on a combination of reflection and collaboration between administrators and teachers, leading to greater outcomes for all of our students. Teachers are ready to step up as partners to make our schools places where all of us, from the principal to the kindergartner, and everyone in between, learn together.



Introduction

This report is the culmination of many months of conversations among a group of accomplished teachers in California about their experiences with the state's teacher evaluation system and their vision for making evaluation a more useful tool to advance the quality of teachers' work. We enter this discussion arena not because we believe that poor teaching is the biggest problem in schools, but because we believe that raising the quality of teaching is the essential place to begin changing the ways our schools work. Good teacher evaluation practices open an important window for teachers and policymakers alike through which to assess and advance teaching quality.

In the course of our discussions about evaluation we have re-examined old assumptions and challenged one another about what changes we want and need to advance our own practice. Both research and our own experiences reveal a strong connection between the quality of teachers' work and what students learn. Therefore, while we consider the research on evaluation, this report represents primarily what we have learned from our own teaching. It represents our multiple perspectives, our agreements and disagreements, and our shared hopes for change.

We believe that quality teaching requires the support of a school culture that nurtures teacher learning and advances teaching quality as the foundation for insuring success for all students. Despite the widely popular image of great teachers portrayed in the media—those teachers who seem to perform miracles among the hardest-to-teach students in schools where little else works—the conception of quality teaching we embrace in this report is not embodied by the lone hero achieving outcomes most deem impossible. Rather, we share a vision of great teaching as the collective work of professional communities of teachers. We believe that the quality of our work is a shared concern that includes all members of a school community and distributes responsibility for developing high quality throughout. A teacher who is not fully invested in good teaching and does not advance student learning and the learning of his or her colleagues diminishes the effectiveness of the whole community. Conversely, the most accomplished and talented teachers who share their expertise and contribute to the learning of their colleagues enrich their learning community and advance the profession of teaching.

In creating this report we looked at existing evaluation practices and policies on teacher preparation and professional development in California that are intended to improve teaching quality. We looked at ways that, in our experience, these were successful, where they fell short, and where there was untapped potential. We also shared our evaluation experiences in different districts and with different evaluators. We considered which evaluation approaches helped us improve our practice and which ones left us little better for the experience.

This report includes our views about linking teacher evaluations to student performance, some ideas about how this might be done well, and some cautions to heed in creating such links. Finally, we recommend steps that policymakers, teachers, and other education leaders should consider in creating a new system for evaluation that serves to improve teaching quality while honoring the complexity of the work of teaching.

Teacher Evaluation in California: Does It Improve Teaching Quality?

I have had administrators who never came into my classroom for formal observations or asked me for anything more than the initial planning/goal sheet. I have had administrators observe a formal lesson and put the feedback sheet in my box without ever having spoken to me about the lesson, and I have had years where I am just asked to sign the end-of-the-year evaluation sheet.

— Jane Fung National Board Certified Teacher, Los Angeles Unified School District

When we began talking about our own teacher evaluations, Jane’s statement was typical. We are not alone in this. In their report critiquing evaluation practices, Toch and Rothman (2008) present this quote from Michigan State University Professor Mary Kennedy that resonates with our experiences:

The evaluations themselves are typically of little value—a single, fleeting classroom visit by a principal or other building administrator untrained in evaluation, wielding a checklist of classroom conditions and teacher behaviors that often don’t even focus directly on the quality of teacher instruction. It’s typically a couple of dozen items on a list: “Is presentably dressed,” “Starts on time,” “Room is safe,” “The lesson occupies students.... But, in most instances, it’s nothing more than marking “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory.” (Toch & Rothman, 2008)

The checklist approach to evaluation is what most of us have experienced as teachers in California. It is rare for a teacher to report that a formal evaluation gave her anything more than the satisfaction that the experience was over for two more years.

Teachers are evaluated at the beginning of the year, the end of the year, and we usually have a snapshot of one day. We all know that on one day, things can go horribly wrong, and the next day might be different. Because there is not a common language about what quality teaching is, in some cases we use a checklist of random things. In San Diego Unified they had us go visit classrooms with a list of all these things that were supposed to be going on: group-work, cooperative learning, etc.; and it was impossible to do all these things in a 15- (or even 50-) minute period, and teachers were being ripped up for not doing everything on the list.

—Ellen Berg, San Diego Unified School District

Even positive evaluations can miss the mark and inhibit teacher growth. In contrast to Ellen Berg’s description of teachers faulted for not covering everything, teacher Kathie Marshall describes the disappointment that can also accompany a “satisfactory” evaluation.

Towards the end of the year, my principal placed a copy of my evaluation in my box for my signature. She had never once observed me all year. Yet in each

section, “satisfactory” was checked, and my overall evaluation was “meets expectations.” Nowhere were my extensive leadership roles mentioned, nor were there any comments on my performance. I still recall the letdown I felt at that moment.

— Kathie Marshall, Los Angeles Unified School District

What should teachers expect of evaluations and how do we make sense of an evaluation based on observations that never occurred or lasted only a few minutes? Most evaluations are not designed or conducted in a way that captures what’s most important to teachers: affirmation of effective practice and help deciding how to address ineffective parts.

In a report for the Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning, Wechsler et al. (2007) state:

Teachers... are required to be evaluated regularly by an administrator. But almost all of these evaluations do not consider learning outcomes for students and are not connected to teachers’ professional development needs. There rarely are distinctions between those teachers who are most effective with students and those who are least effective. Also, interviewed teachers reported that they do not receive concrete feedback from their evaluations. At the same time, teachers consistently tell us that they want constructive feedback on their teaching.

We recognize that while the quality of evaluations leaves much to be desired, principals should not be held solely accountable. According to the report on school leadership issued as part of Stanford University’s Getting Down to Facts project, principals in California are far too overburdened to carry out the kinds of high-quality evaluations that we desire (Darling-Hammond & Orphanos, 2007). On average, California principals need to do more of the management work that district offices do elsewhere, and are less supported by assistant principals, counselors, and others who would handle student supports and other tasks. Complicating the situation with respect to their instructional leadership responsibilities is the lack of collegial support for the work.

If we feel isolated in our roles as teachers, it is nothing compared to the isolation that principals feel. The structures that once supported the work of principals in California, such as the California School Leadership Academy, have fallen victim to budget cuts. Some of the supports that were intended to replace the missing professional development are not seen as very useful, for example, AB 75, which is a mechanism for including principals in AB 466 trainings created to help teachers use new English/language arts adoptions. Those of us who support our teaching colleagues as coaches in content areas or as National Board support providers can attest to the difficulty of the tasks facing our principals. The skills required to observe a teacher, identify evidence of strengths and needs, engage in conversations that promote reflection, and to develop improvement plans are difficult to master and require ongoing learning and support from other designated instructional leaders. Very few managers in business and other professions are charged with supervising the work of so many employees, let alone taking charge of facilities, public relations, professional development, and miscellaneous tasks such as lunchroom supervision or chaperoning school dances.

The most disturbing fact about teacher evaluation we uncovered is that for teachers it occurs in a climate of fear. As it is currently constructed in most places it has little to do with helping teachers look honestly at their students' performance or about helping them get better at what they do. It is most often conducted in a way that neither recognizes quality nor provokes honest conversations about improving student learning. Teachers mostly experience evaluations as a fear-inducing exercises that will either uncover some shortcoming (that may or may not have anything to do with effective teaching) or give a nod to the quality of their work without citing any real evidence or recommendation for further improvement. At the same time most evaluations engender unease because they feel like judgment with nothing to offer the teacher whose work is being judged.

Evaluation [now] is based on a culture of fear—a “gotcha” mentality. Teachers are afraid of being observed by peers, and afraid of anybody being critical, and then that observation of their failures going into their regular evaluation file.

— *Tammie Adams, Oakland Unified School District*

We found this thread running through many of our conversations about evaluation despite the fact that all of us have achieved distinction in our work and many of us voluntarily subjected our practice to the high level of scrutiny required for certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Nonetheless, the early memories persist of being observed by evaluators whose purpose had little to do with helping us become good at teaching.

The evaluation processes in place in districts in the state vary widely, but most of them look very much the same as they did in 1971 when California's Stull Bill on teacher evaluation was enacted. Indeed, the veterans among us have pointed to our own evaluation reports that date to early in our careers that look much the same as those we received very recently. The kind of evaluation done back then was not guided by common standards, did not have a uniform approach to looking at the quality of teaching, was narrowly focused on a few indicators of satisfactory teacher performance, and was not intended to recommend targeted areas to help improve teacher performance. Even after revisions by the Legislature that include making student outcomes part of the evaluation process, none of feel that evaluations provide consistent and reliable information about how well our work reflects the standards of practice the state endorses. Certainly teachers' evaluations fall short of meeting the rigorous scrutiny we are expected to achieve in assessing the work of our students.

Many times since (undertaking National Board certification), I have thought about these two polar experiences. I feel they shine a light on key inadequacies of the current Stull evaluation process that might be thoughtfully improved. In order to be effectively implemented, the Stull process needs to reflect meaningfully the performance of teachers at every level—from the weakest, who must be identified for assistance or dismissal—to the superior, who deserve recognition for their exemplary roles in our schools. The media frequently clamor about getting rid of “bad teachers,” which taints us all. Meanwhile, many of our most outstanding teachers work tirelessly year in and year out with little official recognition or reward for their efforts.

— *Jane Fung, National Board Certified Teacher, Los Angeles Unified School District*

California is not alone in this respect. Duffet et al. (2008) cited the results of a survey of 1,010 teachers:

Teachers indicate that the most obvious technique used to assess teacher quality—the formal observation and evaluation—is not doing the job. In fact, only 26% of teachers report that their own most recent formal evaluation was “useful and effective.” The plurality—41%—say it was “just a formality,” while another 32% say at best it was “well-intentioned but not particularly helpful” to their teaching practice. Almost 7 in 10 teachers (69%) say that when they hear a teacher at their school has been awarded tenure, they think that it’s “just a formality—it has very little to do with whether a teacher is good or not.”

The problem of awarding tenure whether merited or not has serious fiscal costs that turn up when an underperforming teacher has erroneously received evaluations good enough to result in the award of permanent status. Undoing that mistake through a long, expensive set of interventions or documenting a case for removal is extremely expensive and labor intensive.

The financial costs escalate when the problem of teacher attrition and turnover is factored in. California suffers from a chronic “brain drain” in the teaching profession. Many teachers enter the profession, but a large proportion leave within a few short years. Since it can cost school districts as much as \$20,000 for each teacher who leaves (Barnes & Crowe, 2007), failure to retain them represents a huge cost, not to mention the loss of expertise in the schools. Ineffective guidelines for evaluation are compounded by problems of weak leadership skills in many schools, especially in the area of teacher assessment. According to Wechsler and Shields (2008):

In addition to time and professional community, quality teaching is supported by strong leadership. Teachers are able to do their best when they are supported by their principals, assessed by those who understand curriculum and instruction and have the training to make reliable evaluations, and provided opportunities for professional development that is relevant to the teacher’s needs in promoting student learning outcomes.

We believe that if the state attended to the skills of those doing the evaluating while improving the guidelines for evaluation, teacher attrition would be lower, saving scarce recruitment and induction dollars.

As teachers, we know that if we cannot safely confront both our shortcomings and our strengths and lay open our practice to examination by both peers and administrators, we will not be able to improve our teaching in ways that meet the challenges of improving the schools where we work. Teaching will remain work that is characterized by isolation. Communities of teachers who learn from their collective, shared experience will not become the norm in California’s public schools. The costs will be in the loss of promising talent who experience “the lack of the strong sense of team” referred to earlier. We will continue to incur the costs of mounting student failures in schools that cannot attract the best teaching talent where it is most needed.

We are concerned that current teacher evaluation practices do little more than ensure that someone has actually seen a teacher at work for a few minutes during the year. They provide little useful information about the effectiveness of the teacher in most cases, and they don’t offer teachers the perspectives they need to make decisions to improve their skills. In fact, they

are not even very effective in removing the teachers who should be encouraged to leave the profession. In most cases, they do little more than ensure some level of adequacy. If California is serious about making the quality of the teacher a central issue in reforming schools, then it needs to have a teacher development system that uses evaluation to make sure that no teacher is left to languish at a level of mere adequacy. Further, it needs to make use of National Board certification (the most rigorous teacher evaluation process in the profession) to encourage and support teachers to move to levels of accomplishment demonstrated to make a difference in outcomes for student learning.

The current evaluation system is hampered by these conditions:

- Lack of consistent and clear standards of good teacher practice: The standards that attempt to guide teaching practice (the California Standards for the Teaching Profession) list the elements of effective teaching but fail to elaborate what constitutes evidence of these. There is a great deal left to individual interpretation about what constitutes evidence of good practice and, thus, no assurance that an evaluator will be able to make an accurate, fair, and reliable assessment of a teacher's work.
- No focus on improving practice: Discussion about ways to improve the quality of the teaching performance is very often, even routinely, left out of the follow-up conversation. Few of us could recall instances where we received good counsel about ways to improve our practice as a result of an evaluation conference (if indeed there was a conference).
- Inadequate time and staff for effective evaluations: In many schools, especially those we consider "high needs," the amount of time, not to mention training, a principal has for thorough evaluations of all teachers is scarce (Darling-Hammond & Orphanos, 2007). This was echoed by many of our own group who confided that they had not been evaluated for years.
- Little or no consideration of student outcomes: Of most serious concern, however, is that most evaluations pay little or no attention to the performance of a teacher's students, despite the fact that the Stull Bill governing teacher evaluation requires student outcomes be considered. Some of us recalled instances when we knew an observed lesson had not been successful at all in producing the desired outcomes for students. We would have liked to get some ideas about the causes for this, but usually evaluators made little note of it. As long as the class is well managed and *seems* to be on task, not much else matters.
- Cookie-cutter procedures that don't consider teacher needs: Evaluation procedures are subject to local contractual agreements, but typically they occur several times a year for novices and every other year after a teacher achieves "permanent status." The question of which teachers truly need evaluating and what form those evaluations take is not a consideration. Evaluations are conducted within the letter of the law without regard for which teachers need to be evaluated, how often, in what manner, and by whom.
- Detachment of evaluations from professional development: The evaluation is not used to target the needs of individual teachers and to help them select professional development to address their unique learning needs. Professional development remains in most places highly prescriptive and does not consider the needs of each teacher or groups of teachers. Decisions are most often made by an administrator who buys into a program or by a teacher whose

decision is based on convenience or personal interest, not necessarily connected to identified areas for improvement.

Recently I was observed doing a math lesson. It was the first time I used this new approach. I went through the lesson, and maybe two or three students got it. The students were supposed to be working independently, but I had to go around and help everyone. When it was over I asked the observer for feedback, and she said, “Oh my god, it was wonderful! It was perfect!” But nobody got it! It was delivered correctly, but no one got it.

—*Tammie Adams, National Board Certified Teacher, Oakland Unified School District*

What Do Teachers Need and Want from Evaluations?

I'd like to see the teacher evaluation process become meaningful in terms of teacher growth. I've never seen on any of my evaluations a suggested area that I might explore more deeply in my instruction. Why is that? Is it that the evaluators have nothing to suggest, don't know what to suggest, or don't bother to take the time to actually analyze my instruction?

—Kathie Marshall, Teacher, Los Angeles Unified School District

We considered research about and our own experiences with formative assessment (i.e., the assessments teachers conduct that help them know day by day, sometimes minute by minute, what students are understanding) as a means to improving learning. Used by knowledgeable practitioners in the last 10 years, formative assessment has changed how we observe and evaluate our students and how we use that information to guide instruction. Formative assessment in the hands of a skillful teacher not only helps the teacher keep track of student learning as it unfolds, but it also ensures that students are aware of the goals for their learning, know what constitutes evidence of mastery, and what they need to do to move forward. Unfortunately, few of us experience that kind of sophistication in assessments of our teaching. Teaching assessments are still top-down, superficial, and lacking meaningful feedback and recommendations for growth to the teacher. It is sadly ironic that the kinds of successful teaching practices that both teachers and researchers have identified as effective in promoting student learning are not similarly used to promote teacher learning.

The current evaluation process is too superficial to support teaching or personnel decisions, but there are some assets that we hope California will use to build a more productive system. Among these are the California Standards for the Teaching Profession, which were created in 1998 and seen as a promising step toward establishing a common approach for examining teachers' work. We had high hopes that these would become a lens for evaluating teachers and helping recruits and novices in the profession learn what they need to know and be able to do. In some respects, our hopes were realized. The standards became the foundation for the induction program known as Beginning Teacher Support and Assistance. They later served as the foundation for building some evaluation approaches although they were not used in a uniform manner across the state. They were used in some contexts to recommend professional development (Designs for Learning,

a professional development framework created by the state, featured them prominently). More recently, they have been used to develop the Teacher Performance Assessment and the Performance Assessment for California Teachers both of which are used as the summative assessment of candidates in pre-service programs. These are important advances in evaluation for teachers. They assess whether teachers can actually do the things that are essential for student learning in the classroom. What has been lacking is the same ingredient we see lacking in much of the policy that drives the work of schools and teachers in California: connections and coherence.

California Standards for the Teaching Profession

Engaging and supporting all students in learning	Planning instruction and designing learning experiences for all students
<p>Teachers need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Build on students’ prior knowledge, life experience, and interests to achieve learning goals for all students; ■ Use a variety of instructional strategies and resources that respond to students’ diverse needs; ■ Facilitate challenging learning experiences for all students in environments that promote autonomy, interaction, and choice; ■ Actively engage all students in problem solving and critical thinking within and across subject areas; ■ Teach concepts and skills in ways that encourage students to apply them in real-life contexts that make subject matter meaningful; and ■ Assist all students to become self-directed learners able to demonstrate, articulate, and evaluate what they learn. 	<p>Teachers need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Plan instruction that draws on and values students’ backgrounds, prior knowledge, and interests; ■ Establish challenging learning goals for all students based on student experience, language, development, and home and school expectations; ■ Sequence curriculum and design long-term and short-range plans that incorporate subject matter knowledge, reflect grade-level curriculum expectations, and include a repertoire of instructional strategies; ■ Use instructional activities that promote learning goals and connect with student experiences and interests; and ■ Modify and adjust instructional plans according to student engagement and achievement.

Creating and maintaining effective environments for student learning	Assessing student learning
<p>Teachers need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Create physical environments that engage all students in purposeful learning activities and encourage constructive interactions among students; ■ Maintain safe learning environments in which all students are treated fairly and respectfully; ■ Encourage all students to participate in making decisions and in working independently and collaboratively; ■ Assure that expectations for student behavior are established early, clearly understood, and consistently maintained; and ■ Make effective use of instructional time as they implement class procedures and routines. 	<p>Teachers need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Establish and clearly communicate learning goals for all students; ■ Collect information about student performance from a variety of sources; ■ Involve all students in assessing their own learning; ■ Use information from a variety of ongoing assessments to plan and adjust learning opportunities that promote academic achievement and personal growth for all students; and ■ Exchange information about student learning with students, families, and support personnel in ways that improve understanding and encourage further academic progress.
Understanding and organizing subject matter for student learning	Developing as a professional educator
<p>Teachers need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Exhibit strong working knowledge of subject matter and student development; ■ Organize curriculum to facilitate students' understanding of the central themes, concepts, and skills in the subject area; ■ Interrelate ideas and information within and across curricular areas to extend students' understanding; and ■ Use their knowledge of student development, subject matter, instructional resources, and teaching strategies to make subject matter accessible to all students. 	<p>Teachers need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reflect on teaching practice and actively engage in planning their professional development; ■ Establish professional learning goals, pursue opportunities to develop professional knowledge and skill, and participate in the extended professional community; ■ Learn about and work with local communities to improve professional practice; ■ Communicate effectively with families and involve them in student learning and the school community; ■ Contribute to school activities, promote school goals, and improve professional practice by working collegially with all school staff; and ■ Balance professional responsibilities and maintain motivation and commitment to all students.

Some circumstances that have nothing to do with classroom practice, such as students' socioeconomic status or language abilities, may impact the outcomes of teacher evaluations.

As one teacher explains it:

We need to reframe what we mean by a quality teacher. When I went through National Board certification, I realized that at the high school I attended as a student, which has an API rank of 10 [the highest ranking], most of the teachers would not meet the definition of high quality. The students were motivated, but the teachers used teacher-directed instruction, rote memorization, and encouraged very little critical thinking. The colleagues at the school where I now work are phenomenal, even though the school's API score is much lower.

Cliff Lee, National Board Certified Teacher, doctoral candidate at UCLA

Evaluation Based on Professional Standards

In thinking about what we want and need from an evaluation, we turned to our own experiences of evaluation that helped improve our teaching. Many of the contributors to this report have voluntarily subjected their teaching practice to the most intense evaluation available: certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). We cannot help comparing our experiences with NBPTS with that of our routine evaluations. While we recognize that these two experiences cannot be of the same degree of rigor, we do believe that the routine teacher evaluations for California teachers should incorporate the same attention to using professional standards to identify evidence of effective practice and using an approach that guarantees that all teachers get reliable feedback about the quality of their work.

NBPTS certifies teachers in 30 different content areas by requiring them to demonstrate evidence of how their teaching aligns with standards that have been identified as essential elements of the highest level of practice. Teachers submit portfolios of their work that includes videos and examples of student work. At the core of all of the evidence they submit is its impact on student learning. In addition, candidates sit for a rigorous examination of their content knowledge. Those of us who have undertaken this challenge attest that it is among the most challenging and rewarding experiences of our professional lives. The following testimonials are typical of what most teachers say:

The process assisted in developing a deeper and more meaningful self-reflective aspect to my teaching. Professionally, I benefited from the certification process but more importantly, my students benefit from changes I made and continue to make as a result of participating in national board certification.

— National Board Certified Teacher, Science

The Work of the NBPTS

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) has developed standards for accomplished teaching in more than 30 teaching areas defined by subject matter and developmental level of students. The NBPTS then developed an assessment of accomplished teaching that assembles evidence of teachers' practice and performance in a portfolio that includes videotapes of teaching, accompanied by commentary, lesson plans, and evidence of student learning. These pieces of evidence are scored by trained raters who are expert in the same teaching field, using rubrics that define critical dimensions of teaching as the basis of the evaluation. Designed to identify experienced accomplished teachers, a number of states and districts use National Board certification as the basis for salary bonuses or other forms of teacher recognition, such as selection as a mentor or lead teacher. Recognizing that National Board certification has the biggest impact on students with the greatest needs, California offered a \$20,000 bonus, paid over four years, to National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) working in high-need schools—helping to distribute these accomplished teachers to students who need them. (Since the current fiscal crisis, these bonuses have been suspended and it is unclear if they will be reinstated in the future.)

A number of studies have examined the impact of National Board certification on the practice of NBCTs and on student achievement. One such study (Vandervoort, Amrein-Beardsley & Berliner, 2004), showed that achievement for students of Board certified teachers over four years, measured by SAT-9 scores, improved consistently, compared to students of non-Board certified teachers. Of the statistically significant scores, students of NBCTs outperformed their non-NBCT-taught peers 100% of the time, measuring for three subject areas: reading, math, and language. Another study by Bond, Jaeger, Smith and Hattie (2004) used 13 prototypical features of expertise to rate NBCTs impact on student achievement and found that students taught by NBCT teachers excelled in 11 of 13 comparisons of these features. The same study also looked at outcomes for students of NBCTs. Assessed on a writing task, three quarters of the students of Board certified teachers in this study showed deeper understanding than students of non-NBCTs on more relational and abstract tasks.

Equally important is the finding that teachers' participation in the National Board certification process supports their professional learning and stimulates changes in their practice (Sato, Wei, & Darling-Hammond, 2008). NBCTs were found to have enhanced abilities to analyze their own and their students' work in light of standards, to be better able to assess student learning, to evaluate the effects of their own actions, and adopt new practices called for in the standards and assessments. Lustick and Sykes (2006) examined the precise nature of the learning outcomes by science teachers who pursued National Board certification and found that they gained considerable knowledge about how to develop in students the mental operations, habits of mind, and attitudes that characterize the process of inquiry. Additionally, they reported that they engaged in collaborative work with colleagues more often and at deeper levels. These are among the important outcomes that school reformers have identified as most needed for creating the schools needed to meet 21st century challenges. Taken together, these and other studies confirm that investments made in promoting National Board certification have advanced the performance of teachers and the profession as a whole.

The National Board standards articulate a vision for accomplished teaching that I had suspected existed but had never before seen in one place. The National Board standards/process honor the teaching profession by presenting a provocative expectation for what it means to be excellent. The certification process requires teachers to dig in so deeply to their rationale for instruction and assessment that one can't help but get better. It taught me what it means to be a truly reflective teacher.

— National Board Certified Teacher, English

The process of analyzing and reflecting on our teaching during the certification process required demonstrating that we had accounted for the our students' learning needs in setting goals, in choosing instructional strategies, in reconciling student success with our instruction, in making informed decisions about next steps for them and, finally, for making choices about our own professional learning needs. Most of us still long for feedback about our teaching that reflects the kinds of conversations we had with our National Board colleagues that would allow us to continue to build on the learning acquired in our candidacy year and to share in substantive conversations with teachers at our school sites.

California does not need to start from scratch to accomplish the goal of making all teacher evaluations more conducive to improving teaching quality. Some good steps have already been taken that can be used to create the connections and coherence we think are essential. The California Standards for the Teaching Profession could become the building block of a system used to create a continuum of teacher development. In 2008, the state took an important step in requiring a teacher performance assessment at the end of student teacher preparation. The Performance Assessment for California Teachers (PACT) is one of two state-approved assessments for prospective graduates from teacher education programs. This evaluation tool is a good measure of teacher quality and a valuable means for improving teacher preparation and potentially providing relevant data for teacher induction programs.

The Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment program (BTSA) has done more than most state programs to provide resources for mentoring beginning teachers in their early years on the job. However, the links between existing policies for preparation, induction, ongoing evaluation, and professional development are weak or non-existent now, and the result is a patchwork of programs that don't achieve the purpose of creating a system that ensures and promotes quality teaching at all levels of teacher development. For example, while PACT and the state's Teacher Performance Assessment are major advances in assessing teachers-in-training, the state has never delivered the promised funds in support of these important tools, so they have not been fully implemented in all programs yet. And while there is lip service paid to using these tools as entry points for induction work, we are not aware that this ever actually occurs in local BTSA programs. The BTSA portfolio is very often a pro forma product of a prescribed induction program, with required paperwork referred to by new teachers as "the box." BTSA does not guarantee high-quality on-site mentoring around common standards for all beginning teachers. It rarely serves as the basis for recommending further professional development, and it often

The Performance Assessment for California Teachers

The Performance Assessment for California Teachers (PACT), is one of two state-approved assessment options for students seeking a credential through California teacher education programs. It requires student teachers or interns to:

- plan and teach a week-long unit of instruction mapped to state standards;
- reflect daily on the lesson they've just taught and revise plans for the next day;
- analyze and provide commentaries of videotapes of themselves teaching;
- collect and analyze evidence of student learning;
- reflect on what worked, what didn't and why; and
- to project what they would do differently in a future set of lessons.

Candidates must show how they take into account students' prior knowledge and experiences in their planning. Adaptations for English language learners and for students with special needs must be incorporated into plans and instruction. Analyses of student outcomes are part of the evaluation of teaching.

Faculty and supervisors score these portfolios using standardized rubrics in moderated sessions following training, with an audit procedure to calibrate standards. Faculties use the PACT results to revise their curriculum. In addition, both the novice teachers and the scoring participants describe benefits for teacher education and for learning to teach from the assessment and scoring processes. A prospective teacher noted:

For me the most valuable thing was the sequencing of the lessons, teaching the lesson, and evaluating what the kids were getting, what the kids weren't getting, and having that be reflected in my next lesson... the "teach-assess-teach-assess-teach-assess" process. And so you're constantly changing—you may have a plan or a framework that you have together, but knowing that that's flexible and that it has to be flexible, based on what the children learn that day.

A teacher education faculty member observed, "This [scoring] experience... has forced me to revisit the question of what really matters in the assessment of teachers, which, in turn, means revisiting the question of what really matters in the preparation of teachers."

A cooperating teacher explained: "[The scoring process] forces you to be clear about "good teaching"—what it looks like, sounds like. It enables you to look at your own practice critically, with new eyes."

And an induction program coordinator stated, "I have a much clearer picture of what credential holders will bring to us and of what they'll be required to do. We can build on this."

isolates new teachers rather than routinely engaging them in work with colleagues, both novice and veteran at their school.

The sad result of this lack of coherence in policies is that while a teacher entering the profession in California today may have an idea of expectations for beginning levels of practice, after that, the vision of what constitutes increasingly accomplished practice over the trajectory of a teaching career is murky at best.

We are not alone in citing the problem of murky standards. This issue was discussed in the Getting Down to Facts project's *A Review of State Teacher Policies* (Loeb & Miller, 2007) and in the 2008 *Teaching Quality in California* report from the Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning, among others. A conclusion from the latter stated:

Policy changes needed to build and support quality teaching require attention to all segments of the system. However, policymakers cannot address the segments in isolation. Systemic change will require purposeful connections so that segments of the system work together and enhance one another.

We experience firsthand this lack of connection and coherence in the policies that guide our teaching and know that it leads to stagnation for teachers and impedes progress in our schools. We worry that the future of our young colleagues in teaching may not fulfill the promise we have dreamed of for our profession where the highest consideration is given to teachers' important questions: "How am I doing?" and "What can I do better?" We want evaluation that offers answers to those questions, paints a detailed picture of good teaching that serves to guide professional development, and lays out a clear, coherent path through a teacher's career where the expectation is for continual improvement in teaching and where professional advancement is more than moving through the steps on the salary scale.

In reading the report... *Teaching Quality in California*, the words that jumped out at me were: *consistency, continuity, and sustainability*. We need a system that works.

— David Cohen, National Board Certified Teacher, Palo Alto Unified School District



An Evaluation System Based on What We Know about Good Teaching

The overarching principle upon which a new model should be built is this: the primary purpose of evaluation must always be the improvement of teaching and promotion of better student learning. Indeed, at the most fundamental level what we want is honest evaluation of our work by skilled and knowledgeable evaluators who can help us see the ways to improve practice at every stage of our professional lives and increase our contributions to the learning of our students. In the following section we share our ideas for a new evaluation system for California that is built on that one overarching principle. Taken together, we believe these concepts are the foundation for the coherent, reliable system of teacher evaluation we want and need. A new evaluation system should be built on the following principles:

- 1. Teacher evaluation should be based on professional standards** and must be sophisticated enough to assess teaching quality as it is manifested across the continuum of teacher development. The state should use the California Standards for the Teaching Profession and the National Board standards to create a continuum of expectations from pre-service teaching to accomplished practice. The standards of teaching practice selected as appropriate at each level of teacher development should guide evaluations while accounting for the requirements for successful teaching in the variety of unique contexts in which teaching practice occurs.
- 2. Teacher evaluation should include performance assessments** to guide a path of professional learning throughout a teacher's career. Existing assessments like the Performance Assessment for California's Teachers (PACT) and the Teacher Performance Assessment (TPA) in pre-service; a similar, more productive tool to guide induction through BTSA; new, authentic assessments related to classroom practice for developing professionals; and the National Board assessment should be used to build coherence and continuity.
- 3. The design of a new evaluation system should build on successful, innovative practices** in current use, such as evaluations built on teachers' self assessments in relation to high standards of performance or evidence-based portfolios that demonstrate ways that a teacher's instructional practice is contributing to student achievement. Teachers must have a significant role in the design of a new framework and in promoting it among teachers in the state.
- 4. Evaluations should consider teacher practice and performance, as well as an array of student outcomes for teams of teachers as well as individual teachers.** Those outcomes should include a number of indicators not limited to standardized test scores, that constitute evidence of student success. Evidence should include performance on authentic tasks that demonstrate learning of content; presentation of packages of evidence from formative assessments that show patterns of student improvement; the development of habits of mind that lead to improved academic success along with contributing indicators like attendance, enrollment in advanced courses, graduation rates, pursuit of higher education, and work place success. Teachers should be evaluated both on their success in their own classroom and their contributions to the success of their peers and the school as a whole.

- 5. Evaluation should be frequent and conducted by expert evaluators**, including teachers who have demonstrated expertise in working with their peers. Evaluators at each juncture should be trained in the recognition and development of teaching quality, understand how to teach in the content area of the evaluated teacher, and know the specific evaluation tools and procedures they are expected to use. There should be training opportunities available for evaluators and final recommendations to teachers should be subject to review by a reliable evaluation oversight team.
- 6. Evaluation leading to teacher tenure must be more intensive** and must include more extensive evidence of quality teaching. This evidence should be collected and reviewed by both the teacher and trained evaluators and should include documentation that shows that the teacher’s practice exhibits the standards that define good practice. The process should be an ongoing part of a serious teaching induction process that helps novices grow in their profession, with the help of mentors and coaches, guided by clear standards of practice.
- 7. Evaluation should be accompanied by useful feedback, connected to professional development opportunities, and reviewed** by evaluation teams or an oversight body to ensure fairness, consistency, and reliability.

A Coherent System of Teacher Evaluation that Promotes Quality Teaching

Principle 1

Teacher evaluations must be based on professional standards that are sophisticated enough to match our knowledge of teaching quality as it is manifested across the whole continuum of teacher development. The state should use the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (defined at a more detailed level to make evidence of them unambiguous) and the National Board standards to create a continuum of expectations from pre-service teaching to accomplished practice. The standards of teaching practice selected as appropriate at each level of teacher development should guide evaluations but should take into account the requirements for successful teaching in the unique context in which it occurs.

As we explored the concept of teacher evaluation, we wrestled with the dilemma of how to articulate our shared understanding of the complexity of teaching and to clearly identify the elements that comprise high quality teaching. We turned to experts in the field first and found some basic premises that resonate with our own experience and views of quality teaching.

In 1988, Lee Shulman described something he called “pedagogical content knowledge,” which “transcends mere knowledge of subject matter as well as generic subject matter of pedagogy alone.” He explains:

The teacher not only understands the content to be learned and understands it deeply, but comprehends which aspects of the content are crucial for future understanding of the subject and which are more peripheral and are less likely to

impede future learning if not fully grasped. The teacher also understands when present preconceptions, misconceptions or difficulties are likely to inhibit student learning. The teacher also has invented or borrowed or can spontaneously create powerful representations of the ideas to be learned in the form of examples, analogues, metaphors or demonstrations.

Mere understanding of the content is only half the challenge. Teachers must translate that content into language and ideas accessible to their students.

Darling-Hammond (2007) identifies a list of qualities that have been found by research to contribute to teacher effectiveness. These qualities indicate the complexity of teaching and how thoughtful approaches to evaluation must be constructed. The qualities include:

- Strong general intelligence and verbal ability that helps teachers organize and explain ideas, as well as observe and think diagnostically;
- Knowledge of how to teach others in a subject (content pedagogy), in particular how to use hands-on learning techniques (e.g., lab work in science and manipulatives in mathematics) and how to develop higher-order thinking skills;
- An understanding of learners and their learning and development—including how to assess and scaffold learning, how to support students who have learning differences or difficulties, and how to support the learning of language and content for those not proficient in the language of instruction; and
- Adaptive expertise that allows teachers to make judgments about what is likely to work in a given context in response to students' needs.

Obviously, these attributes of high quality teaching are not acquired all at once and do not arrive fully developed on the first day a teacher enters the classroom. A set of qualities this complex demands a thoughtful approach that supports teachers to develop and improve throughout their careers. If indeed this is our goal for all members of our profession, then we must find ways to reach that goal using many of the same approaches to formative assessment we know work with students. An essential part of that kind of formative assessment, as we pointed out earlier, is frequent feedback from and collaboration with knowledgeable peers that help us see our own teaching clearly in light of high standards of practice and reflect on ways to improve. Many of us have personally experienced holding up our practice against the indicators of quality teaching based on the standards of the National Board, which contain just those indicators described by Shulman and Darling-Hammond. A good evaluation system will build such experiences into a continuum of teacher development for all California teachers.

Principle 2

Teacher evaluations should include performance assessments to guide a path of professional learning throughout the career. Existing assessments like the TPA and PACT in pre-service, a revised, more productive tool for BTSA, and the National Board assessment should be used to build coherence and continuity.

We turned our attention next to what a system based on solid indicators of teaching quality might look like and how, if it were used well in the hands of knowledgeable assessors, it would help teachers assess their strengths and needs, set goals for improvement, choose instructional strategies, work with colleagues to build new knowledge, self-assess their own work, reflect on the quality of the work by looking at student success, and begin the cycle anew in the quest for continual improvement.

Danielson (1996) describes a framework that organizes teaching standards into four domains:

- planning and preparation
- classroom environment
- instruction
- professional responsibilities

She provides rubrics for observing and reflecting on practice in each of these domains. Danielson explains, “Teaching is so complex and its various components so intertwined that many novices feel overwhelmed. A framework for teaching offers a structure to assess a teacher’s practice and to organize improvement efforts.” We suggest that veterans often feel overwhelmed, as well. The complexities of teaching do not diminish as we learn more. Indeed, one National Board Certified Teacher recently said that one of the results of the certification process that surprised her was that, as she began to think more deeply about her practice, the number of questions she raised about her work grew exponentially.

Frameworks for observing and assessing teaching are already used in many places and circumstances in California. The PACT assessment uses a framework appropriate for the end of pre-service study. BTSA, in many of its forms, uses a framework that is based on the California Standards for the Teaching Profession. The National Board uses a well-structured framework adapted to a variety of student developmental levels and content areas and has a rigorous process of peer assessment that is well respected for its reliability as a measure of teacher accomplishment.

Evaluation within school districts would be improved if these standards were used. The glaring hole we, like many others who have looked at the issues, would point out is that the majority of teachers in the state are not evaluated in a reliable and consistent way using any framework based on standards for the profession. In the same way that good teachers help students understand learning goals that include detailed descriptions of the expected performance accompanied by exemplars of that performance, teachers should be provided with the same clear expectations in the form of elaborated descriptions of standards, exemplars of good practice, a framework for evaluating their work, and a process for feedback from other knowledgeable professionals. If the state is to be taken seriously about achieving the goal of uniformly high quality teaching at all levels and content areas, then finding a way to evaluate teachers using frameworks aligned with standards like those already created and in use at the foundational levels is essential. There must also be ample support for teachers at every career stage as they work to meet and exceed those standards.

In our discussions about the ways that standards are used and understood in our various workplaces, there was agreement that most schools in the state know about the standards, but there is little agreement that they are a force in the work of teachers in classrooms or the reference points that drive conversations about teaching practice. As Danielson (1996) states, “With a framework of professional practice in hand... participants can conduct conversations about where to focus improvement efforts within the context of shared definitions and values. These conversations can focus on means, not ends, and they can be conducted in an environment of professional respect.”

One key element that has been left out of the state’s California Standards for the Teaching Profession is in the “making sense” aspect of the standards. Our experiences in working toward National Board certification included extensive time devoted to making sense of the standards and identifying evidence of them in our own practice. That process is what National Board Certified Teachers credit for transforming their practice. As teachers who have experienced this transformation, we are eager to see the same kinds of conversations included in evaluations across the professional development continuum because we know that when communities of teachers engage in them together, the quality of teaching improves. Danielson (1996) states this well:

When teachers engage in self-assessment, reflection on practice, and professional conversation, they become more thoughtful and analytic about their work, and are in a position to improve their teaching. Evaluators can contribute to teachers’ professional learning through the use of in-depth reflective questions. By shifting the focus of evaluation from “inspection” to “collaborative reflection” educators can ensure the maximum benefit from the evaluation activities.

The challenge is to do what has been done at the pre-service level in the design of PACT and TPA and create performance assessments that span every level of the continuum including National Board certification and beyond. A framework based on common standards must be adaptable for use in the evaluation of teaching in many different contexts, content areas, and developmental levels. We believe that the California Standards for the Teaching Profession can fulfill their potential to be that driver of higher teaching quality in the state.

Principle 3

The design of a new evaluation system should include a study of existing successful innovative practices that are being used in the state and country and should encourage schools and districts to explore innovations. Teachers must have a significant role in the design of a new framework and in promoting it among teachers in the state.

There are examples of innovation within the state that are putting into practice some of the elements of what we have concluded should be part of an effective system of teacher evaluation. The Governor’s Committee on Education Excellence, which issued its findings in the 2007 *Students First* report, encourages the idea of learning from local innovations, a few of which we highlight below. These are also noteworthy as examples that contradict the general perception that teacher unions are indefatigable opponents of innovations or reform in teacher evaluation.

Best practices: An evaluation program that improves teaching

Lynne Formigli, a National Board Certified Teacher in science, and a leader in her union local, describes how an innovative evaluation program in Santa Clara Unified School District improved her practices.

In my continuing struggle to improve student writing, I teamed up with a seventh and eighth grade writing teacher. Our focus was on how we teach writing at different grade levels. We each spent time observing each other teaching the writing process. Afterwards, we met and compared our observations. We came away with specific ways to improve our students' writing, as well as ideas for integrating writing throughout all grade levels and subjects.

Observing other teachers demonstrating the writing process to their students helped me understand how critically important modeling is, allowing me to overcome my fear of giving students the answers when I give them examples. We found that in our search to help students be more effective communicators, we had all developed similar tools to scaffold their writing. During our discussions we were excited to consider the impact on our students if we standardized the tools we use, so students would recognize them from class to class, grade level to grade level. As we continue to work toward that goal as a school, we have the added benefit of increased communication and collaboration among teachers. The end result is of great benefit to the students we teach every day.

The three of us presented a summary of what we had done and our reflections on the entire process with our principal. Afterwards, in his formal evaluation narrative he wrote:

At the middle school level, it is beneficial when students can see a common strand run through their instructional day. When something learned in science is tied to something learned in English, both make more sense. When instruction is coordinated from subject to subject and then from one grade level to the next, we not only have good education, we have magic. And that is what Lynne, Lourdes, and Sara created.... Participating in the reflective discussion related to the alternative evaluation project was an evaluation-supervision highlight for me. We spoke about the writing process, genres, cross-grade and cross-subject education, staff development opportunities, standards, the need to share learning experiences, validation, and a host of other things.

I am fortunate to work in a district where the evaluation process is more than a drive-by observation that generates a bunch of paperwork that is a burden to all involved. Instead I am given an opportunity to reflect on my practice, collaborate with my colleagues in a meaningful way, and improve the learning of my students. That's what it's all about.

In the Palo Alto Unified School District, the local teachers' association and district administration addressed the issue of ensuring consideration of content area expertise in evaluation. There, longstanding practice is in place at secondary schools where teachers serve as instructional supervisors to conduct most evaluations and to take the lead in hiring recommendations. This distribution of the evaluative workload mitigates potential overload for principals (a problem identified earlier our report). With reference to instructional evaluations in particular, San Mateo Superintendent Scott Laurence, a former principal in Palo Alto, notes the advantages:

The content area expertise is the most important aspect of teachers evaluating teachers. As a former social studies teacher, I felt comfortable as a principal observing social studies and English classes, and the early-stage courses of math and science. But in upper level math and science courses I had to spend more of my time watching instruction and management, and give less focus to the content. I also believe that curriculum and instructional practices have changed. I was last in a classroom over 10 years ago. It does make a difference.

Santa Clara Unified School District addressed concerns about differentiating evaluations based on the location of teachers on the professional growth continuum. Teachers who have received satisfactory evaluations in the past are allowed to choose the Alternative Professional Growth Evaluation. In this model, teachers choose to focus on improving one aspect of their practice, set concrete goals, and at the end report on what they have learned and how their practice has changed. This allows teachers to engage in what research has shown to be one of the most powerful forms of professional growth available: teacher action research.

Vaughn Next Century Learning Center, a conversion charter school in Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), uses a modified evaluation system somewhat based on Danielson's framework. It was developed alongside of its performance pay system. It uses a teacher's self-assessment, peer evaluation, and administrator evaluation. It has been an evolving system subject to revisions based on feedback from administrators and teachers together. The approach is particularly interesting not only because of the way that it has evolved over time but also because in its latest iteration it has considered exactly those issues that our group identified as important earlier: consideration of content areas, developmental levels, and contexts. The focus on including evaluation of instructional practices aligned to achieving school-wide targets is a consideration used at Vaughn that we think deserves careful examination and will be an issue we hope to pursue as we move on to pay-for-performance issues in a future report.

Finally, we considered the innovative system of teacher development used in Poway Unified School District, located near San Diego. Poway has made use of the Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) program to build their approach. Recognizing that some teachers may, at different times in their careers, not be as effective as they should be, California has funded the PAR program for several years. District leaders in partnership with union representatives across the state designed PAR programs to provide a form of assistance and due process for teachers who have received poor evaluations. In most of these programs, a joint committee composed of teachers and administrators oversees a

team of coaches (usually classroom teachers on special assignment) who offer assistance to struggling teachers and prepare reports based on their observations. This information can then be factored into decisions made regarding the teacher's professional future. The role of the PAR program in Poway has been expanded to include coaching and reviewing the performance of beginning teachers. Their program, modeled after similar ones in Rochester, New York, and Toledo, Ohio, is in its 21st year.

Charlotte Kutzner, Program Coordinator for the Poway Professional Assistance Program (PPAP), explained the process to our group:

Poway's PPAP is a BTSA program, and like others, we are responsible for meeting all of the induction standards. But unlike most other induction programs, we are also responsible for evaluation of first-year teachers. So we observe and conference, we support teachers, but our evaluations are not confidential. When I work with a new teacher I share what I see in their classroom with their principal, and also report to a governance board, which includes the assistant superintendent of personnel, the union president, and two teachers. People ask, "How can you do both support and evaluation?" We do, and it has worked since 1987, and from the get-go it has been evaluative. I would say that over the years 95% of the teachers I have worked with, by Thanksgiving, have forgotten that I am their evaluator. I am Charlotte, I am their friend, their colleague; I am there to support them. There is also a program to support veteran teachers who have been rated as not meeting standards. This program, the Permanent Teacher Intervention Program (PTIP) [similar to PAR in other districts], is designed to assist permanent teachers who have been identified as being in serious professional jeopardy. The PTIP teacher receives assistance from a teacher consultant much like the new teacher does in the induction program. In this program, the principal remains the evaluator and the teacher consultant reports progress to the principal and the PPAP Governance Board. Our program is successful because of our working relationship with the district and the union. This is truly a joint effort.

Poway's approach has much to recommend it in terms of efficiency, coherence in evaluation, support at different levels, and building professional relationships, but one of the features that is particularly relevant to the problem of the costs of teacher turnover is the support provided to the struggling teacher. While some have suggested that it is a worthwhile goal to weed out the lowest performing members of the teaching force, the truth is such an approach would be far more costly than a program that intervenes to help low performers rise to levels of proficiency.

At Poway, we see a system in which the teacher evaluator also serves as a mentor. Teachers in Poway have arrived at their model by reasoning that the mentor who works most closely with the teacher is best positioned to make recommendations about the teacher's employment status. The process is open and transparent, and the mentor does not exercise any authority independently of the review board.

Other models stress a separation between the functions of mentorship and evaluation. The reasoning suggests that teachers in need of mentorship must be able to confide in their mentors and risk exposing areas of weakness in their practice as the fear factor takes center stage again.

Knowing that the mentor will eventually make an employment recommendation could cause the evaluated teachers to withhold important information compromising the quality of the mentorship and the potential for growth.

Jane Fung, a National Board Certified Teacher in LAUSD, advocates for separation of mentor and evaluator roles from her own experience on both sides of the relationship:

My first weeks of teaching were full of stress and the feeling of being overwhelmed. I had difficulty with classroom management and wasn't sure how to organize my day, let alone teach the programs I was not familiar with. Luckily, I had a mentor that came into my class and modeled different strategies that she used. She then provided me with a much needed sub day for me to shadow her in her classroom. I was able to gain ideas and the support I needed from her to be a more successful first year teacher. Her role was made clear to me: "I am here to support you, not evaluate you.

When I mentor new teachers, I keep those feelings of my first year close at hand. The idea of being both a mentor and an evaluator for a new teacher feels uneasy to me. As a mentor, I must first establish a relationship and build trust with the new teachers I work with. Confidentiality is essential to building that trust. They must feel safe enough with me to be honest and open about what is going on in their classrooms. As a mentor, I observe the new teacher and document evidence I see, but I share the data collected only with the new teacher, and help them use it to reflect on their practice. Together we develop an action plan on how to improve their practice so that they can feel successful. My role as a mentor is to provide new teachers with support, resources, and a safe place to express their thoughts and feelings. I am a coach, a teacher, and friend to that new teacher. I do not judge, evaluate, or make decisions on their professional career. If I were seen both as evaluator and mentor, I am not sure if I would be able to establish the same kind of trust and provide the support needed to that new teacher; the person meant to support them shouldn't add more stress by evaluating them at the same time.

We are not advocating for any one specific model, but we have agreed that they all have interesting features to recommend them and that getting a system of evaluation right means being willing to look at models being used around the state, and inviting a closer look at them, so that the best ideas can be put together to create the coherent system we need to ensure uniformly high quality teaching. In general the features that they share and which merit inclusion in good evaluation systems are:

- Frequent, ongoing evaluation for new teachers.
- A well-trained evaluator that has expertise in the content areas specific to the teacher's practice and who works collaboratively with other experts to ensure teachers receive accurate and effective evaluation and recommendations.
- The use of multiple measures to evaluate effective practice connected to a wide array of evidence of student outcomes, not just test scores.

- Collaboration between the evaluator and teacher, with a focus on teacher development.
- Differentiated evaluation for experienced teachers, with focus and form open to some negotiation among teachers, administrators, and evaluators (when other than administrators).

We encourage policymakers who will be charged with selecting those who will design a new evaluation system to recognize the expertise of accomplished teachers. We have been involved with change initiatives in various forms at many schools sites. We know from this experience that teachers who do not share some power over decisions made about their work will resort to the power of resistance. Getting the evaluation system right is too important to risk in this way. Therefore, among the principles we believe need to be included in designing a new system is the involvement of teachers at every phase in the process: designing, negotiating, and implementing evaluation. The staff at Vaughn Learning Center echoed this notion in one of their recommendations stating, “Encourage involvement of representative people in designing the system, but recognize the need for a ‘change champion’ at times.”

We sadly acknowledge that trust between teachers and policymakers has eroded over the last several years as the finger of blame for the collective failures of our schools has pointed at teachers most directly. Whether or not there is justification for this, we believe that renewing the essential trust needed to reform schools is essential. For teachers and their leadership to embrace an evaluation system, school communities and policy leaders must take steps to help repair the climate for our collective learning. In many recent reform efforts, our professional expertise has been denigrated, and professional development has been relegated back to “workshop” approaches designed to ensure compliance with one size fits all mandates.

Principle 4

Schools and districts should focus on building teacher accountability that looks at student outcomes among teams of teachers as well as that of individual teachers. Those outcomes must include agreed-upon indicators, and not only standardized test scores, that are recognized as evidence of student mastery of the state standards for the grade and content area.

The genuine accountability that we feel to our students and to one another, when we work as part of a functional collaborative community, dwarfs any sense of accountability that can be imposed by test scores, site administrators, or state oversight. This accountability is derived from our shared commitment to the learning and well-being of our students, and our desire to support one another in meeting students’ needs. An overarching purpose of evaluation ought to be to promote collaborative examination, analysis, and reflection on the work being done, and figuring out how to improve each teacher’s skill set in ways that improve the work of all teachers in the school. As Santa Clara science teacher Lynne Formigli said, “I believe an evaluation system should have at its core the purpose of helping all of us to grow in our profession.” Many voice concerns about teachers protecting poor teaching in such an arrangement. On the contrary, we have a very big stake in ensuring that ineffective and poor teachers are either helped to improve in a timely manner or counseled out of the profession.

Best Practices: Evaluation through Professional Learning Communities

Cliff Lee, a National Board Certified Teacher and doctoral candidate at the University of California, Los Angeles, describes how ongoing evaluation from peers in a professional learning community setting can improve practice.

One of my strongest and most successful memories of teacher evaluations came from the work we did at our school from collegial support and evaluation groups. Three years ago, our professional development team (consisting of teachers and our assistant principal) created a volunteer, after-school curriculum and pedagogy brainstorm group called the Project Based Learning Cadre. The cadre was made up of teachers in different disciplines and in different grades. We met on a weekly basis, where one teacher would present a project, either in the planning or evaluation phase, and receive critical feedback through a highly-structured format. The presenter began with a brief introduction of the project, then, clarifying and specific questions from group members, followed by a whole group discussion with the presenter taking notes and finally, the presenter reflecting on the points brought up by her colleagues. In addition, each participant was asked to write up the curriculum for the project, following a highly structured format, to be saved for future use by interested teachers.

Every member raved about the benefits of this group in helping them frame, shape, evaluate, and probe deeper into their projects. The effectiveness of this collegial evaluation can be owed largely to its voluntary nature, with respectful compensation for our meeting times, write-up of our respective projects and honest, yet tactful, feedback that we received from one another.

I believe the initial buy-in with volunteers greatly enhanced the positive reaction by our cadre members, as well as by subsequent teachers that heard about it and wanted to join. In fact, some teachers were so interested in each other's projects, they took time to observe their classrooms and gave further feedback about what they noticed. I felt that we strongly held each other accountable for growth and educational outcomes because of the voluntary setup, and the positive and forward-looking framing of our work. It was also an optional professional development opportunity that served a direct benefit to our own classroom curriculum and pedagogy. We brought what we felt was most pressing and valuable to us.

The format of the presentations also allowed for greater support and constructive criticism, since there was structured space for the group to talk about the project without the presenter feeling the need to explain or even defend certain aspects of it. Although seemingly silly at first, since the group had to pretend the presenter was not in the room, this structure took the pressure off the presenter and forced the group members to ask probing and inquiring questions that led to deeper conversations.

Finally, the fact that every member would present created an egalitarian space that fostered mutual respect and trust in sharing our work. Perhaps, it may be idealistic, but I believe this communal group work of sharing curriculum and pedagogy for feedback, can be easily replicated if framed in the right manner, with an emphasis on growth and constructive criticism, rather than on punitive or judgmental evaluations. A fair compensation of the work also shows respect to the teachers and develops a level of professionalism in evaluating each others' work.

Let's face it! We are much harder on and more demanding of our colleagues than any outside evaluator or administrator could ever be. After all, when their work is good we all have it easier. When it's not, we all suffer and have much fixing to do.

— *Lynne Formigli, National Board Certified Teacher, Santa Clara Unified School District*

Student outcomes have the central place in this process. Teachers and administrators should include agreed-upon indicators of learning that are valid and appropriate measures of the curriculum and the students being taught in the evaluation process. There are many instances we know of where this occurs now. Consider the following work undertaken by members of our network:

- Site-based research is done where teams of teachers collaborate to create common assessments focused on important learning goals, and then analyze student learning outcomes. They then share instructional strategies used by members of the group that have worked and analyze the related student outcomes, helping all teachers in the research cohort, if not the whole school, to improve.
- A lesson study project is conducted that involves a team of teachers setting instructional goals based on local needs, observing a colleague deliver a lesson, analyzing resulting student work, and then recommending changes to the teacher's instruction based on student results.
- A collaborative project is designed where teachers of different subjects team up to create an interdisciplinary unit of study, mutually teaching and reinforcing clear learning goals, and then assessing the impact of that approach on student learning and what they might change individually and collectively in their instructional approaches to improve the outcomes.
- A professional learning community functions at the school where teachers meet regularly to review student work in light of current research, best practices, learning objectives and state standards, with a process for sharing findings with colleagues so that they can integrate these ideas in their own practices and improve their instruction.

The kind of collaborative, reflective approach to reviewing curriculum and pedagogy described by Cliff Lee (see sidebar) must occur as an integral part of the work of the school. It is professional development. A consistent complaint about professional development from teachers is that it has been disconnected from real work at school sites. It is as if we all got prescribed the same medicine for whatever disease we might be suffering from. Teachers want to address their shortcomings as long as the solution is connected to the problem and is undertaken in a climate that is based not on fear of uncovering problems but based on getting better at the work they do.

So the question that naturally arises is how does standardized test data fit into teacher evaluation and what dimension of effective teaching does it reveal? It is no secret that many teachers react with skepticism—and yes, fear—to the idea of including student outcomes as part of teacher evaluations or compensation schemes because over the past decade those outcomes have mostly been equated with standardized test scores. This has led to well-documented problems including a narrowing of the curriculum to focus on tested subjects, topics, and even test formats. The more pressure there is to increase scores, the more likely it is that schools

will resort to isolated test preparation, which can result in an artificial inflation of scores, while depriving students of the real skills and knowledge they need.

Many of us have had experience with students who have, according to their standardized test scores, mastered the grade- or course-level materials that are prerequisites to what we teach. However, when we begin working with that student on the assumption she has the knowledge base to master the material in our class, we discover that the test score does not match the student's ability to perform at the expected level. What went wrong, we wonder? Many possibilities might be responsible. Among them: the student learned the material only at a level to be able to answer questions on a multiple choice test; there was some guessing or dumb luck involved; the student never had an opportunity to apply the learning in real contexts so it was not retained. Furthermore, standardized tests are frequently invalid for students with special education needs and for new English language learners, revealing little about what these students know and can do.

In addition, student performance is influenced by home supports, attendance, and school supports (such as class size and the availability of materials and specialist help), and it reflects the work of prior and other current teachers as well as parents and tutors as much as any individual teacher. Jackson and Bruegmann (2009) affirmed what many of us have long believed to be true—good teachers in a school affect the performance of other teachers and, in turn, affect student achievement.

Another big concern is that standardized tests only measure a limited domain of knowledge, and miss a great many things we value. For example, science is only tested once in elementary school, and history is not tested at all. This has led to a systematic de-emphasis of these subjects in many schools, particularly those with low AYP reports. Our concerns are magnified by the fact that the standardized tests that are being used are multiple-choice tests in California. This means that many of the dimensions of learning that we should be assessing because of their importance for 21st century skill sets are not assessed. These dimensions include students' ability explain and defend their ideas in writing, to analyze carefully the research and documents they encounter, and to produce actual products based on their learning. When we have been asked as National Board candidates to cite, display, and analyze our evidence of student learning, we have discovered that standardized test scores (or any kinds of multiple choice tests) give us little or no useful information from which to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of our teaching, to make useful changes in our practice, or to convey to students and parents direction that can be used to guide new learning paths.

We do not mean to dismiss standardized test scores entirely, as we recognize they do provide some useful information. It is the nature of the information they provide that we would ask those who would use them in teacher evaluation to consider. Test scores reveal patterns of achievement at school sites and with cohorts of students in some subject areas. If the roles and contributions of teachers at a school site with cohorts of students are identified using careful analysis of scores and used to locate patterns of performance over time, they might be used as indicators to guide some direction for improvement. However, if this is to be done well, test scores must still be used together with other indicators of student achievement. We believe that test scores can be

starting places for making sense of student learning if they involve careful examination of test results by teachers at a school site working with people trained to analyze test data. Teachers should use the interpretations of testing data in concert with other assessments to decide on ways to improve student performance and the teaching strategies that promote it. Done this way, the results of this careful analysis might be used as part of the evaluation of teacher performance. The questions that an evaluator or team of evaluators could use in this case might include:

- How well aligned to the instructional goals for the grade or course were the assessments the teacher used to obtain a more complete and accurate picture of student performances?
- What instructional strategies did the teacher select that matched the identified student needs and how appropriate were they in light of the goals for student learning?
- Did the reflections from the teacher seem to account for student outcomes that were directly connected to her own instruction?
- Has the teacher (alone or with his or her colleagues) selected strategies that are likely to improve her practice that match her own professional development needs to be able to deliver appropriate instruction to the particular students she is assigned to teach?

This is clearly more complicated than a simple direct link of test scores to an individual teacher as a measure of their teaching proficiency. We understand the desire for evaluation of teacher quality to be easy. We wish it could be, but teaching is complex work. Evaluating the quality of that work cannot be reduced to a simple link between the teacher and test scores. If it could, we would happily support it. However, we think that the approach we recommend honors the complexity of the work of teaching and the full range of skills that good teachers must bring to it.

Other approaches have been suggested as a way of using test scores. Some have suggested that if standardized tests are problematic for evaluative purposes, then might we consider using Value Added Methodology (VAM) to look at gains in student learning, rather than straight test scores. School leaders across the country are experimenting with VAM as a way to evaluate teachers and schools. Roughly speaking, VAM evaluates the academic growth students experience over the course of a school year, rather than comparing the current year's cohort with the previous year's. VAM also allows for adjustment of the measures for various student characteristics and for school factors. This seems like an improvement over systems that hold teachers accountable for students' average scores, or the percentage that are "proficient."

However, in a recent policy guide on the subject (Braun (2005) identified a number of specific flaws in using state tests and VAM to evaluate individual teachers. Among those flaws is the fact that students are not assigned to classes on a random basis. Also, small sample sizes in the data set, especially for individual teachers, make conclusions unreliable, and the effects of the entire school and prior school experience cannot be separated out.

Finally, as value-added methodology could raise the stakes further in an already flawed testing system, it could amplify the negative effects described above. Braun writes:

VAM results should not serve as the sole or principal basis for making consequential decisions about teachers. There are many pitfalls to making causal attributions of teacher effectiveness on the basis of the kinds of data available from typical school districts. We still lack sufficient understanding of how seriously the different technical problems threaten the validity of such interpretations.

Finally, we think we need to offer a perspective about good assessment practice in real classrooms. Teachers' views of what constitutes real student learning are very different than the public perception that test scores are reliable measures of learning. We see the standardized tests as a snapshot of performance, subject to variability on any given day, that may be useful for evaluating the system as a whole. However, as an indicator of students' ability to use and apply their learning in real situations, a standardized test score is unlikely to help a teacher either advance student learning or improve their own instructional practice. For those purposes, a teacher must use assessment practices more closely linked to the actual instruction, that reveal changes in learning over time, and that allow students to demonstrate their understanding through real performance. Research on assessment has demonstrated that when teachers assess student learning in ways that help them understand both what content is being mastered and also what confusions are arising on a daily basis, the learning of students is elevated considerably, especially for those who traditionally encounter the greatest challenges. This kind of assessment is a hallmark for us of quality teaching and should be central to the teacher evaluation process.

Principle 5

Evaluations should be frequent and conducted by expert evaluators, including teachers who have demonstrated expertise in working with their peers. Evaluators at each juncture should be trained in the recognition and development of teaching quality; understand how to teach in the content area of the evaluated teacher, and know the specific evaluation tools and procedures they are expected to use. Evaluations should be accompanied by useful feedback, connected to professional development opportunities, and reviewed in evaluation teams to ensure fairness, consistency and reliability.

Even if we implement our first principle and create the sophisticated tools based on what we know about good teaching, we will fail to accomplish our goal if we do not make sure that skillful evaluators are using these tools in ways that are known to be successful. Even the best tools are ineffective in the hands of those who lack knowledge and skills to use them well.

During an interview with an ACT member, Scott Laurence, a former principal in Palo Alto Unified School District, described the problems associated with evaluating teachers in content areas with which he was unfamiliar. He pointed out further disadvantages associated with his increasing distance from classroom practice. As we shared our experiences with evaluation we repeatedly surfaced the same concerns. All too often we found ourselves being evaluated by principals who had no experience teaching our grade or content area. One of us was evaluated by a principal who had only taught physical education, another was evaluated in a first grade setting by a high school physics teacher who relied on his reading about primary reading instruction to understand what the teacher was doing, still another had a principal who had been hired from the business sector on the premise that this person could manage a site more efficiently than someone with a background in education. While none of us held any animosity toward these evaluators, neither did we feel much inclined to discuss anything more than surface features of our work. Evaluation in these cases satisfied only the need to complete required paperwork.

While we are not convinced that any of the systems of teacher evaluation we examined would be the perfect fit for California, we were impressed by the level of knowledge and expertise shown by evaluators in many of them. For example, many teachers participating in the Teacher Advancement Programs (a teacher evaluation system), were evaluated several times a year, were involved in setting their own goals for improvement, and were evaluated by people who were all trained using the same evaluation strategies. We found some of the protocols used in this program less than compelling, although we were favorably impressed by the program's use of portfolios to demonstrate professional growth and the careful way the portfolios were assessed. In Minnesota, the term "evaluation" was abandoned altogether in favor of "assessments," in which teachers' work around a particular dimension of professional practice is scored using well-defined indicators of success by teams of experts that include administrators and teachers. Danielson's *Framework for Teaching* recommends using portfolios that include both teachers' documentations of increasing skill as well as records of conversations with and observations from a teaching supervisor. Teachers are highly involved in working with supervisors in creating a professional development plan with the goal of improving practice. In every case we researched, the evaluators were highly trained in whatever approach they used and there was a high level of predictability and consistency in their approaches. Frequent observations and follow-up conversations were also common features.

There are many in the state who have already endorsed the idea that effective evaluation must include teachers. Despite our chagrin that no teachers contributed to *Students First Renewing Hope for California's Future* (GCEE report, 2007), the principles that we have discussed are consistent with its directives, and our recommendations will, hopefully, be carefully considered when it is time to revise and implement them. To strengthen teaching and learning, the Committee on Educational Excellence recommended policies that will help "make teaching and education leadership true professions." Included is the notion of, "giving teachers advanced career opportunities without leaving the classroom, including mentoring and site leadership roles." With respect to opportunities to promote quality teaching, the report recommends that:

Teachers have significant roles in selecting, designing, and implementing a professional development plan that meets the needs of all teachers, and that, given the constraints that limit administrators' participation in a robust, ongoing evaluation process, peers and leaders [should] use professional standards and performance outcomes to evaluate teachers and principals. Let good teaching and leadership drive out bad.

We need to clarify our own position relative the last part of this statement. In our discussions over the last several months, one fact that stands out is that teachers are undoubtedly less tolerant of poor performers in our profession than most of those who are empowered to evaluate us. Our conclusion is that, indeed, this would probably result in "good teaching driving out bad." But our greatest hope is that the participation of teachers would result in the construction of true professional learning communities where we hold one another accountable for helping every student succeed by learning from our individual and collective successes as well as our failures; and where schools are places in which there is no fear of making our teaching public.

The Center for Teaching Quality further supports our case for more peer evaluation as an important element in evaluation reform:

Finally, we argue that a key to strengthening [teacher evaluation] will be to involve more classroom teachers in the process of reviewing their colleagues. We make this claim for several reasons: One is that good teachers know content and how to teach it—and this component needs to be a part of an improved [evaluation program]. The second is that administrators are overburdened with many complex issues that only they can address. Schools are not funded and organized to support a more rigorous and in-depth teacher evaluation system. The third is that any effective teacher evaluation system will need to be closely connected to other elements of teacher development from pre-service, induction and professional development in working communities of teaching professionals.

Including teachers in the development of teacher evaluation systems addresses a number of important goals. Opportunities to grow and improve in the profession are precisely what’s missing for too many teachers; and, as we noted earlier, teacher retention is negatively affected by those missing opportunities. Ambitious teachers who have thrived in the classroom are often drawn out of teaching if they want to pursue greater challenges or the means to exert greater influence on the direction of public education. LAUSD National Board Certified Teacher Jane Fung adds the voice of personal experience: “I have seen good, newer teachers leave the classroom each year in search of another place or career that will recognize and value their efforts more than classroom teaching does.”

Here we see additional benefits to teacher involvement in designing and implementing a better evaluation program. An evaluation system with teachers at the center will make evaluations more credible, more productive, and more valuable to teachers. Schools are more likely to retain skilled teachers who have opportunities to apply their expertise in work with colleagues. Teachers who take on these expanded roles benefit from the process in equal measure with their peers, expanding their own knowledge, skills, and perspectives and becoming better able to take the additional steps to promote quality work.

An example of this kind of expansion of professional knowledge and skill comes from the National Board Resource Center at Stanford. Support providers for National Board candidates are frequently recruited for the center’s support program from National Board Certified Teachers who have already been through the program. Year after year they attest to the powerful impact on their own teaching as they help others learn to align their practice to National Board standards. A typical comment is, “As hard as it is to get out of bed on Saturday mornings, it is so worth the effort. At the end of the day, I always leave a better teacher than when I came in.”

While teacher evaluation should primarily be about recognizing and improving the quality of teaching, we acknowledge that we must consider the serious decisions that must be made through the evaluation process. The opportunity to advance along the continuum of professional growth is one of the options that is most important to us as teachers. It is equally important to make sure that a fair system is in place to determine which teachers remain in the profession.

Principle 6

The evaluations that lead to teacher tenure must include more extensive evidence of quality teaching. This evidence should be collected and reviewed by both the teacher and trained evaluators and should include documentation that shows that the teacher's practice exhibits the standards that exemplify good practice. The process should be an ongoing part of a serious teaching induction process that helps novices grow in their profession, with the help of mentors and coaches, guided by clear standards of practice.

Awarding tenure to teachers who merit it could be done with greater certainty if we created an evaluation system that was a more reliable indicator of quality. Using elements that are already in place, teachers in collaboration with evaluators could compile bodies of evidence that document how their teaching meets standards for practice. Adding to the portfolio begun in pre-service, teachers would be able to show how they have continued to align their practice to ever more sophisticated standards based on the continuum of professional practice we have recommended. A logical and important way to do this would be to build on PACT and TPA and design a similar assessment for moving from a preliminary to a clear credential that reflects the growth in skills and knowledge a teacher has mastered during the induction period.

This assumes, of course, that PACT and TPA are developed to meet their full potential. This means that these assessments are uniformly implemented, scored by panels of knowledgeable assessors, and used to recommend an induction program that is focused to ensure that novice teachers have every opportunity and support available to learn and get feedback about their work. We would further recommend that BTSA be improved to incorporate some of the same features we believe are integral to a good evaluation system—mentoring and coaching by accomplished peers who have experience in the same content areas as the novice teachers with whom they work and, where possible, who teach in the same school.

Awarding permanent status along with dismissal of chronically poor teachers are issues on which we spent a significant amount of time. We have a large stake in making sure that our colleagues not only contribute effectively to students' learning but also contribute to our collective professional knowledge. We all want to support and contribute to the learning and growth of our novice peers, but we want to do so as part of a system that truly believes that communities of teachers should hold one another accountable. Very few teachers are denied tenure after they have completed their induction programs even though we, who have mentored them or worked with them as grade level or department colleagues, may have concerns about granting them permanent status. The fact is, though, the observations and work done in BTSA or in collaborative work are not usually considered in tenure evaluations. Tenure approval is usually based solely on the recommendation of the principal.

Because we all have a large stake in making sure that our colleagues are ready to work effectively with students and be a productive part of school learning communities, it seems fitting that we should have a role in determining permanent status. Tammie Adams, a union representative and National Board Certified Teacher from the Oakland Unified School District, posed the question to another union representative about how a community of teachers should exert influence on tenure decisions. He voiced the same concerns about the cavalier manner in which tenure decisions are often made. While he did not come down on the side of a more rigorous summative evaluation before tenure could be granted, he did voice a strong opinion

about roles teachers should play in determining who is awarded tenure, and the degree of tolerance we should have for novices (and others) about whom we have serious concerns. A benchmark summative assessment at the end of the probationary period, created with significant involvement of accomplished teachers and supported by unions and professional communities, could go far in ensuring that good decisions are made with respect to who stays in the profession.

The union officer stated the principal’s evaluation was a small part of the decision about granting tenure, but a bigger part is the pressure we put on these teachers as colleagues. If we make agreements about what is good teaching and the particular skills and dispositions needed in a particular school setting, then we all have to abide by them. So that opens up the question of how much of this pressure to perform needs to come from the principal and how much should be from the colleagues?

—*Tammie Adams, National Board Certified Teacher, Oakland Unified School District*

Principle 7

Evaluations should be accompanied by useful feedback, connected to professional development opportunities, and reviewed in evaluation teams to ensure fairness, consistency and reliability.

Good teaching practice involves offering frequent feedback to students about their progress toward well-understood performance goals. The same principle should apply to teacher evaluation to improve the quality of practice. Teachers need to be helped to internalize the vision of good teaching as exemplified by standards and they must be helped to hold their own practice up for comparison to those standards. Conversations that help teachers to reflect on their instructional decisions, the rationale for making them, the results of their actions, and their impact on students are essential if we are to help teachers advance the quality of their practice throughout their professional lives. The kind of feedback we are talking about is not a simple checklist of the sort commonly employed in the current evaluation protocol nor is it a series of comments on the implementation of a scripted curriculum. Rather, it is a conversation conducted by highly skilled and knowledgeable evaluators who understand how to help candidates reflect deeply and who know how to ask questions that push teachers to see their own practice more clearly and to engage with evaluators (and, by extension, other colleagues) in addressing the challenges of their own classrooms.

We were enthusiastic about the work done by teachers in Minneapolis where peer evaluators helped teachers identify growth areas based on evaluations and then helped them select coursework specifically designed by and for teachers in the district that aligned with identified areas of work. In this program, teachers who attended classes taught by other teachers with expertise in the targeted skill areas were found to incorporate their learning in subsequent evaluations and to create projects that demonstrated mastery of the target performance area. These projects were not just done to fulfill a course requirement, as is the case in so many continuing professional development courses taken by teachers, they were used to apply or analyze classroom practice and were evaluated and scored by an evaluation team according to a rubric based on the standards. Teachers often submitted artifacts of their teaching practice

that showed changes they had made as a result of their coursework only to be given additional feedback to support continued work toward mastery in exactly the same way that teachers ask students to revise and refine their work.

An important component of providing feedback is ensuring that evaluators have the support and skill to provide it. This means that they need to be able to talk with other evaluators about the dilemmas they encounter in providing support and they must have opportunities to frequently “re-calibrate” assessments of what constitutes the target level of performance for each stage of teacher development. Those of us who have worked on holistic scoring of various kinds of assessments, including those of our National Board candidates, know that this process increases our ability to engage in good collaborative reflection that improves our own practice as well as that of those we assess. This aspect of the evaluation system we recommend becomes an important vehicle for changing the culture for teaching in schools by promoting shared accountability and changing the nature of professional conversations.

Evaluation for Compliance or for Promoting Better Teaching?

If our principles were used to create a new evaluation system in California how would the professional lives of teachers be different and what difference would that make for students? We share two scenarios of evaluation stories, the first that we know all too well, and a second one that offers a glimpse of evaluation for professional learning.

2010: Evaluation for compliance

John walks into the staff room and slams his books on the table where Sarah and Marty are having coffee. He pulls out a form from his backpack and lays it in front of his colleagues. “Evaluation conference didn’t go well?” Marty asks.

John laughs. “If you mean did I listen to Jack read this form to me, tell me I was doing fine, and show me where to sign, then I’d say it went just fine!”

John’s colleagues shrug. Sarah looks at him and says, “Well, that’s over with for another two years anyway. What’s the matter with that?”

John slumps into a chair and sighs. “What’s wrong is that I have been here for four years. I have loads of questions about why some of my kids aren’t doing better. It’s good to talk to you guys and you really help, but I want to work on things that really matter for my teaching and all I get are a bunch of forms that say my work “meets expectations.” I’m not really sure that I know what “expectations” are, and I’m not convinced that Jack knows either. I teach chemistry and physics, remember? Jack was a history teacher. I’m not sure he knows what I’m even talking about in my class. It’s frustrating! I get some feedback when I look at the students’ work, but how do I know that I am doing this the best way? How can I be sure I know how to get better at this

job? And, what about those kids I never seem to be able to reach? Do I just keep trying stuff until something sticks? That seems pretty lame.”

Marty and Sarah nod in understanding. They have both experienced the same thing. Marty has been teaching for 12 years and this year he was asked to sign off on his evaluation even though he hadn't been observed teaching at all. Jack, the principal, had explained that he had been in Marty's classroom during walk-throughs several times and everything seemed to be all right. He needed more time to do evaluations with the younger teachers, most of them interns. Sarah received her evaluation this year and had been given a “needs improvement” on her classroom management. She had noted that the students had been involved in a rather heated discussion in her government class that day after a controversial ballot measure had just been passed. The noise level was high and some of her students were actually pacing in the back of the room. Unfortunately, Jack had not had much time to discuss with Sarah what was actually going on in the class. In his view a well-managed learning environment meant that students are quiet and only speaking in turns. Sarah had not been able to explain to him that the discussion that day had led to a very serious discussion of the Constitution, and her students had turned in the best research projects they had done in the past two years as a result of the energy and interest generated from that lesson.

John shakes his head, picks up the papers, and says, “I guess I'll put these in the same file with my other ones just in case someday somebody questions whether I'm really any good at this job.”

The Future: Evaluation that Identifies Quality and Promotes Teacher Learning

Louisa, a fourth-year science teacher sits down to discuss her teacher development portfolio with her evaluator. Her portfolio by now contains documentation and analysis of her work from the end of her pre-service program through her first three years in the classroom. It also contains records and assessments of professional development projects she has done over the last three years. Louisa and her evaluators have selected these assessments at different times in her first years of teaching to help her attend to the teaching improvements they identified together.

Susannah, who is Louisa's current evaluator, is a 15-year veteran science teacher at the same school. She is released to work as a member of the district evaluation team for three periods each day. In her role as an evaluator, Susannah observes her colleagues, prepares written assessments, meets with teachers to discuss or plan observations, and attends meetings in which a district team reviews evaluations and individual professional development plans. The district evaluation team is composed of accomplished classroom teachers, administrators from each school site, and the district Peer Assistance and Review coordinator. Their job is to review the evaluations of teachers to ensure that each of them is meeting performance expectations, progressing along the teacher development continuum, and receiving good counsel about ways to improve performance. When there are cases of serious concern about a teacher's performance, the team sends in another evaluator to validate the concern and help the team recommend a course of action that may range from targeted coaching to dismissal.

Louisa opens her observation notebook to the page that contains notes about the lesson that Susannah observed the previous day. Susannah has already given Louisa a copy of the observation notes she made and questions for her to think about before they meet. Louisa has added some reflections about the lesson and questions she wants to explore with Susannah. Louisa has brought some writing her students did that morning in response to a question she posed when they came into class. Susannah asks Louisa for her own assessment of the lesson and, in particular, how well she thinks that the discussions went. She points to evidence in the discussion of the content mastery students showed. However, there is a discrepancy between what occurred during the discussion and evidence of content mastery in the students' writing that Louisa has brought along.

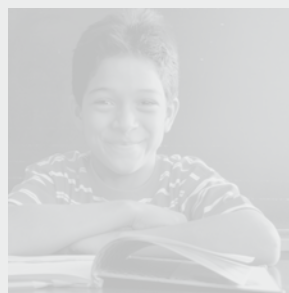
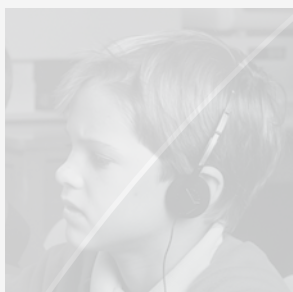
In her observations Susannah has cited much of the same kind of evidence that Louisa has discussed. She points out that the students still struggle to explain their thinking clearly. She directs Louisa's attention to the students' use of questions to one another and their limited reference to the informational texts they read. This is an "ah-hah" moment for Louisa.

"Oh," she says, "this is what we've talked about when we have been trying to figure out why the kids do poorly on comprehension questions on informational texts!" She is referring to the meeting they had after they had looked at some of the school's standardized test data alongside other assessments. Louisa had complained several times about how few questions her students asked about their reading and how literal their conversations about their reading often were. She suggested that students' lack of questions might well be related to their ability to pose questions about the text as they read. Susannah reminds Louisa that inquiry in science means being able to ask "Why?" at the appropriate times. Louisa knows this and recognizes that posing questions while reading is a way readers develop their own understanding. If students are not asking questions during reading then very likely they will not notice that they are missing the meaning.

Louisa's next reaction is one of chagrin. "What should I do about this?" she asks. Susannah suggests that Louisa and her colleagues who have been doing some action research on students' reading in science invite one of the English teachers who has taught reading to English learners for several years to come to their next research meeting. Together, they can explore strategies to try with these students. Susannah's role will be to focus her observations on helping Louisa reflect on the success of the strategies she uses. As Susannah looks for evidence of teaching standards in Louisa's work this year, they agree she will focus on the effective teaching skills that she brings to solving this problem. They conclude by filing the observations, the records of their conversations, and agreements about what Louisa will do next in the year four section of Louisa's portfolio. Thus begins a new chapter in Louisa's documentation of her professional journey.

Conclusion

Accomplished California Teachers speak in one voice in this report, from schools around the state, to advocate for a real system of teacher evaluation and accountability that is based on the continued development of teachers from preparation to retirement. We recognize our unique position and the tremendous responsibility to prepare California's children for the future. We embrace the accountability that accompanies such a position, and ask all stakeholders in education to join us as partners, accepting shared responsibilities to support teaching and learning—holding ourselves jointly accountable for results.



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Teacher Biographies



Tammie Adams is a kindergarten teacher in the Oakland Unified School District. She is a National Board Certified Teacher and supports new candidates for certification at the National Board Resource Center at Stanford.



Elena Aguilar is an Instructional Coach for Program Improvement schools in the Oakland Unified School District. She was previously a teacher in one of Oakland's highly successful small schools. She is a National Board Certified Teacher.



Ellen Berg teaches eighth grade English and American history at San Diego Cooperative Charter School. She has developed curriculum, served as her team leader, mentored novice teachers and led staff development at her school.



Liane Cismowski is a National Board Certified Teacher in Adolescence and Young Adulthood/ English Language Arts. She is an English and English language development teacher at Olympic High School in Concord, Calif. She was recognized as the Contra Costa County Teacher of the Year in 2003, was the recipient of the California Teachers Association WHO award in 2004, and was California District Seven Teacher of the Year in 2005. In 2006 she was named the California Affiliate Nominee for the NEA Award for Teaching Excellence. She has led the Mt. Diablo National Board Certification candidate support group for the past six years. Ms. Cismowski is also a faculty member of the Masters of Arts in Teaching Leadership program at St. Mary's College, Calif.



Anthony Cody is an experienced science teacher in Oakland and now works with a team of experienced science teacher-coaches who support the many novice teachers in his school district. He is a National Board Certified Teacher, an active member of the Teacher Leaders Network, and writes a regular feature for Teacher Magazine. Anthony is a founding member of ACT and has planned and organized its online discussion topics. He is leading efforts to help its members write about teaching for publication and media presentations.



David B. Cohen has taught high school English for 14 years, 11 of them in California public schools. He is a National Board Certified Teacher, currently employed at Palo Alto High School. For two years, he supported National Board candidates who teach English throughout the San Francisco Bay Area, an experience that provided insights into teaching practices in different types of schools, and that informed his understanding of how teacher evaluation could be improved. Cohen is also a member of the Teacher Leaders Network, and is a founding member of Accomplished California Teachers.



Sandra Dean is currently the director of the National Board Resource Center at Stanford University and coordinates the ACT network. She is a National Board Certified Teacher who taught mostly primary grades for over thirty years and was a literacy coach and school reform coordinator. She has mentored new teachers, supported National Board candidates and been part of several teacher research projects.



Lynn Formigli teaches sixth-grade science in the Santa Clara Unified School District. She is a California Teachers Association State Council representative and chaired the Santa Clara County Service Center Council. She is National Board certified in Early Adolescent Science.



Jane Fung is a primary grade teacher in the Los Angeles Unified School District. She is a National Board Certified Teacher and a Milken Educator, and a member of the Teacher Leaders Network. She has published her teacher research and has been a mentor teacher in her district.



Cliff Lee taught English, social studies and media arts at Life Academy in Oakland Unified School District for five years before becoming a doctoral student at UCLA where he is focusing on critical pedagogy, urban education, professional development, small schools, social justice, and media arts. He became a National Board Certified Teacher in 2007 and is a member of the Technology Liaison Network Leadership Team for the National Writing Project.



Kathie Marshall has taught for 35 years in public and private schools. She currently teaches English, history, and math intervention at Pacoima Middle School in the Los Angeles Unified School District. She is a fellow with the Teacher Leaders Network and a member of their Teacher Solutions Team. She is a former winner of a Disney Creative Classroom Grant. Kathie is a frequent contributor to Teacher Magazine.



Nancy Skorko is a National Board Certified Teacher who teaches third grade in Santa Monica. She has been a Fulbright Exchange Teacher in Yorkshire, England.



Silver White is a literacy coach at East Palo Alto Academy and a Reading Recovery Teacher Leader. She has taught primary grades and been a reading coach for more than 30 years. She is a National Board Certified Teacher and supports literacy candidates for board certification in the Stanford support program.



