



THE NEW FACE OF TEACHER EVALUATION

Said the Cheshire Cat in *Alice in Wonderland*, “If you don’t know where you are going, any road will take you there.” To put this in CLI terms, teachers cannot accurately measure student achievement without clear and measurable learning outcomes supported by detailed components aligned to national, state, and local standards that stipulate what students must know and do. Once those clear outcomes are established along with well-aligned assessments, student learning and skill development can be identified and documented. In addition, student performance on standardized tests can be predicted.

For some teachers the challenge of using outcomes and components from a local curriculum aligned with standards is especially challenging. Those of us associated with the Curriculum Leadership Institute (CLI) are sensitive to that situation, and are now working on processes that support building principals as they attempt to help well intentioned but struggling teachers meet new expectations.

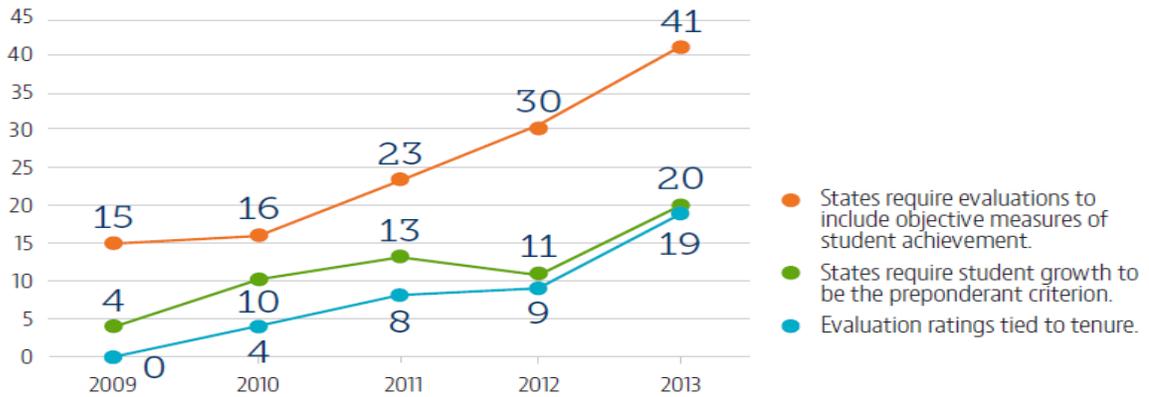
Given the challenges, how must the work of building principals be different today than ten to twenty years ago? In the past, principals entered a teacher’s classroom perhaps only one time a school year to conduct an observation, which in turn became the annual evaluation. Usually they would come in quietly (and sometimes unan-

nounced), sit in a corner with notepad in hand, and attempt to fairly evaluate a teacher’s instructional techniques and ability to increase student achievement. It is hard to believe such a process was ever thought to be an effective and fair way to measure teacher effectiveness!

Perhaps the transformation was brought about by the 44 billion federal dollars distributed by the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* into state stimulus funds designed to upgrade the quality of teacher evaluation techniques, reporting requirements, and process improvement measures. States that applied for and received ARRA funds provided assurances that current evaluation systems would be revamped to include measures requiring the inclusion of student achievement as one significant aspect of discernible teacher effectiveness.

In a report issued in October, 2013 by the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ), there are now 35 states and the District of Columbia Public Schools which require student achievement as a “significant” factor in evaluation of teachers. This is a sharp increase from the four states that included student achievement as a factor in 2009! So, over a relatively short period of time, the face of teacher evaluation has taken on a very different look.

Teacher Effectiveness: State Policy Trends 2009-2013:



As shown in the above chart, a growing number of states now include measures of student achievement as a part of teachers’ evaluations, and some indicate that it should be the preponderant factor. In fact, there are 27 states and the District of Columbia Public Schools requiring multiple objective measures of student growth.

States requiring student achievement data in teacher evaluations:



Teachers are not opposed to the inclusion of student achievement measures as a part of their evaluations. A teacher in one district says, “It is about time that how far I am able to move a group of students and increase their learning is taken into account. I work very hard every year to assess what student’s know and are able to do, and have evidence that students are learning. However, sometimes the results from

standardized tests don’t indicate the same progress.”

Multiple measures of student achievement can appear quite different from state to state. According to the Center for Public Education, most states now judge teachers on the basis of their impact on student learning. That information appears alongside traditional

measures such as classroom observations, student/parent surveys (supported by the GATES Foundation), teacher reflections and artifacts, and other indicators. The combination of such measures is believed to “make for a more accurate evaluation and serve as a tool for continuous improvement.” (Center for Public Education)

In their reports, states tend to use statistical models such as *student growth percentiles* or *value-added models* to fairly account for differences in high and low achieving students’ learning rates. That approach helps teachers who work with disadvantaged students who do not do well on tests, but can improve over time. However, both methods have good and bad points. *Student growth percentiles* are a good measure of individual student learning from one year to the next, but don’t take into account differences in learning rates within groups of students. On the other hand, *value-added* models take into account the year-to-year variability of learning growth within groups of students.

Student growth percentiles are cheaper and easier to understand than *value-added methods*, but are not as accurate. As stated in a Center for Public Education report, the changing face of teacher evaluations is a relatively new concept and not any single system is going to be perfect. The different approaches being taken can serve as a learning catalyst for states, and may be used to refine and improve teacher evaluation.

In a CLI district, teacher evaluation processes and effectiveness should be of interest to both the district’s administrative team as a measure of principal effectiveness, AND the curriculum coordinating council as a measure of how well new curriculums and academic strategies are working in classrooms. The superintendent and curriculum coordinator should work together in guiding that kind of analysis as they work with their administrative and academic leaders! Their efforts will definitely be made easier as the strategies for evaluating teaching effectiveness improve and become more pervasive in American schools.