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A Nationwide Look at Teacher Perceptions of Feedback and Evaluation Systems

Findings from the American Teacher Panel

KEY FINDINGS

- A large majority of teachers reported receiving regular feedback that was helpful for improving their instructional practice.

- Teachers at higher-poverty schools reported receiving feedback from peers, school leaders, and coaches or mentors more frequently than teachers in lower-poverty schools.

- The most commonly reported component of teacher evaluation systems was classroom observation ratings.

- The frequency of feedback and observations was positively associated with teachers' perceptions that evaluation systems improved their practice.

- Teachers who were observed or given feedback by a peer, mentor, or coach had more-positive perceptions of teacher evaluation systems than those observed or given feedback by an administrator.

- Teachers who believed that evaluation systems were intended to promote teacher growth and development were more likely to rate those systems as fair.

- More than half of teachers indicated that they received sufficient resources related to formal instructional feedback and/or evaluation, while at least one-third of teachers reported receiving insufficient resources.

In recent years, state and local education leaders across the United States have revised their teacher evaluation policies and practices in an effort to enhance the quality of evaluation measures and improve instructional practices (Doherty and Jacobs, 2015). Approximately two-thirds of states have made changes to their teacher evaluation policies since 2009, and half of all states require districts to conduct annual evaluations of all teachers (Jerald, 2012). These evaluations are often based on multiple measures of performance, including classroom observations, indicators of teachers' contributions to their students' performance on standardized tests, and stakeholder surveys that measure parent and/or student

beliefs about teacher practices (Jerald, 2012; National Council on Teacher Quality [NCTQ], 2017). As of 2017, 39 states required the use of student achievement growth measures as part of districts' teacher evaluation systems, 47 states required classroom observation measures, and 34 states required or explicitly allowed student surveys to be incorporated into teacher evaluations (NCTQ, 2017). Prominent researchers (e.g., Baker et al., 2010; Chaplin et al., 2014; Glazerman et al., 2010) have argued that evaluation systems that draw on multiple sources of information provide the best approach to measuring teacher effectiveness while also generating evidence that can inform efforts to improve instructional practices.

Although having a variety of measures in an evaluation system can be helpful as a way of ensuring that the final rating captures multiple aspects of a teacher's performance, these measures are not necessarily all equally suited to informing instructional improvement. Recent research suggests that classroom observations can be particularly helpful in promoting teacher reflection and guiding professional development because they provide information about specific instructional practices (Marsh et al., 2017; Stecher et al., 2016; Strunk, Weinstein, and Makkonen, 2014; Taylor and Tyler, 2012). Furthermore, studies have found that giving teachers frequent and specific feedback as part of teacher evaluation systems can lead to improvements in teacher performance as well as student achievement (Garet et al., 2017; Steinberg and Sartain, 2015; Taylor and Tyler, 2012).

Formal and informal feedback systems must be perceived and accepted as valid for recipients to be motivated to respond in ways that lead to improved practices (Ilgen, Fisher, and Taylor, 1979). Without a sense that the received feedback is worth acting on, teachers might subvert or ignore the message and preserve their existing practices (Spillane, Reiser, and Reimer, 2002). Paying attention to teachers' perceptions of the feedback they receive and the systems (both formal and informal) used to evaluate their performance is critical for understanding how schools and districts can successfully translate evaluation and feedback into improved teaching practices.[1] We currently know little about how teachers have

responded to these systems outside of a small number of districts where research on teacher evaluation has been conducted. Therefore, national data on teacher perceptions about feedback and evaluation systems could provide valuable information to educators and policymakers.

This report draws on a nationally representative survey of educators to examine teacher perceptions about the feedback they receive and the teacher evaluation systems at their schools. We first provide a broad picture of the different types of feedback that teachers reported receiving during the 2015–2016 school year and whether teachers found it helpful in improving their instructional practices. We then focus on teachers' perceptions of their schools' evaluation systems, including the data sources that informed their most recent evaluation, the perceived helpfulness and fairness of evaluation systems, and the resources that teachers reported receiving to support their participation in these systems. Our analysis of teacher perceptions about feedback and evaluations examines variation across different school contexts. More precisely, we explore differences by school level (i.e., elementary versus secondary schools) and schools' socioeconomic status (i.e., the proportion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds), given that teachers at different types of schools may have different needs for and experiences with feedback and evaluation.

Data and Methods

This report draws on data from the October 2016 administration of the American Teacher Panel (ATP). The ATP is a randomly selected, nationally representative panel of public school teachers across the United States who periodically receive surveys on education issues of national import. For the October 2016 survey, 3,431 teachers participated in the panel, with 1,825 completing the survey for a response rate of 53 percent. Teachers were asked about the feedback they received about their instructional practices and their participation in formal evaluation systems.[2] To compare teachers from schools with different demographic profiles, we complemented the survey data with school-level files from the National Center for

Education Statistics (NCES) Common Core of Data. This allowed us to categorize teachers into quartiles based on the percentage of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL) at their schools.[3] The quartiles were split based on the distribution of the percentage of students receiving FRPL, with the cut points falling at 33.2 percent, 53.3 percent, and 74.1 percent.[4]

While the sample size and response rate provide substantial statistical power, we weighted the data to allow for proportionate representation of teacher demographics while also accounting for potential bias because of survey nonresponse. Weighting involved modeling selection probabilities (i.e., what is the chance that this individual was contacted for inclusion into the panel?) and response probabilities (given that they were selected, what is the probability that they responded?). Weights were calculated by modeling response probabilities of teachers across a wide variety of teacher characteristics (e.g., gender and professional experience) and school

characteristics (e.g., school size and urbanicity).[5] Hence, the weighted sample does not under- or over-represent certain types of teachers.

Table 1 provides details about the teacher participants and characteristics of their respective schools.

As shown in Table 1, teachers in our sample work in a wide range of contexts from urban to rural and in schools with diverse student populations. As reported by Johnston and Tsai (2018), there are consistent differences across the four FRPL-based subgroups that are presented in columns 2 through 5. In particular, teachers in high-poverty schools are more likely to work in schools with fewer white students and more black and Hispanic students. In addition, their schools are smaller and are more likely to be in urban settings relative to teachers in lower-poverty schools.

TABLE 1

Weighted Teacher and School Demographics, by School Poverty Level

Demographic Measures	Full Sample (*n* = 1,825)	Low Poverty (*n* = 449)	Mid-Low Poverty (*n* = 450)	Mid-High Poverty (*n* = 451)	High Poverty (*n* = 451)
Teacher characteristics					
Years teaching (mean)	16.0	16.6	16.5	15.1	15.5
School characteristics					
Urbanicity***					
City	30.8%	18.2%	22.3%	33.2%	52.9%
Rural	18.9%	16.0%	27.1%	22.5%	10.1%
Suburb	39.4%	58.5%	35.3%	29.6%	29.8%
Town	11.0%	7.4%	15.4%	14.7%	7.2%
White***	49.9%	70.0%	65.6%	43.1%	15.1%
Black***	15.2%	5.9%	10.0%	18.7%	29.0%
Hispanic***	24.1%	10.2%	15.8%	28.6%	45.5%
Asian***	5.1%	9.5%	3.4%	3.4%	3.5%
Elementary school***	48.6%	41.5%	47.3%	43.8%	63.3%
Size (mean)***	857.0	1,012.8	815.0	863.3	710.7

SOURCE: Johnston and Tsai, 2018.

NOTE: Quartiles do not sum to 1,825 because of missing school data for 24 respondents. Asterisks indicate significant differences between respondents from schools with different poverty levels, according to chi-square tests or weighted regressions in which each continuous characteristic is regressed on the linear specification of school poverty quartiles. *** $p < 0.001$.

Results

Our analysis of the ATP data generated two sets of findings about teachers' perceptions, with the first set focusing on the feedback they received and the second on the evaluation systems in which teachers participated. We found that most teachers reported receiving feedback that was useful for improving their instructional practices, although majorities perceived feedback from fellow teachers and from coaches or mentors more positively than feedback from formal observations or from school leaders. We also found that teachers in higher-poverty schools reported receiving more-frequent feedback from peers, school leaders, and coaches and mentors than teachers in lower-poverty schools. In addition, although secondary school teachers were more likely than elementary school teachers to report receiving feedback at least once during the year, elementary school teachers reported receiving feedback more often than secondary school teachers.

Our analyses of teachers' responses to the questions about evaluation systems indicated that teachers who reported being observed or given feedback more often had more-positive perceptions of the helpfulness of their schools' teacher evaluation systems. In addition, perceptions about the fairness of evaluation systems varied among teachers with different understandings of the purpose of those systems. More precisely, teachers who believed that evaluation systems were intended to promote teacher growth and development were more likely to rate

Teachers who believed that evaluation systems were intended to promote teacher growth and development were more likely to rate those systems as fair.

those systems as fair. Furthermore, at least one-third of teachers reported receiving insufficient resources (e.g., time, instructional support, materials) related to their schools' teacher evaluation systems. We describe these findings in more detail in the following two sections.

Frequency of Different Types of Feedback and Reports of Improved Practices

In this section, we discuss our main findings related to teacher reports of the frequency with which they received different types of feedback during the 2015–2016 school year. We also discuss teachers' perceptions of the helpfulness of this feedback in improving their instructional practices. We then examine variation by school poverty level and between elementary and secondary school teachers.

A Large Majority of Teachers Reported Receiving Regular Feedback That Was Helpful for Improving Their Instructional Practices

Eighty-eight percent of teachers reported receiving feedback on their instructional practices at least once in the 2015–2016 school year, and 35 percent reported receiving it a couple of times or more per month. Figure 1 shows the frequency with which teachers reported receiving feedback in a typical month from any source, as well as from seven specific sources. Feedback from formal observation was the most common source, with 89 percent of teachers reporting that they received feedback from this source at least once.[6] Although fewer teachers overall reported receiving feedback from informal observation by other teachers or school leaders, a large percentage of teachers indicated receiving feedback from these two sources at least a few times per month. The least common source was feedback received from student surveys, which only 22 percent of teachers reported receiving. Approximately 12 percent of teachers reported receiving no feedback at all.

For each type of feedback included in the survey, at least 60 percent of teachers who reported receiving that feedback indicated that it was helpful for

FIGURE 1

Frequency of Teacher-Reported Feedback from Different Sources (*n* = 1,825)

In a typical month, how often do you receive feedback on your instructional practices from each of the following sources?

Source	Occasionally (two or three times per month), often (once or twice per week), daily or almost daily (three to five times per week)	Rarely (once per month or less)	Never
Any source	35	53	12
Formal observation	9	80	11
Informal observation by other teachers	14	39	47
Informal observation by school leaders	16	55	29
Student surveys	3	19	78
Informal student feedback	13	31	57
Parent feedback	9	29	62
Feedback from coach or mentor	10	26	64
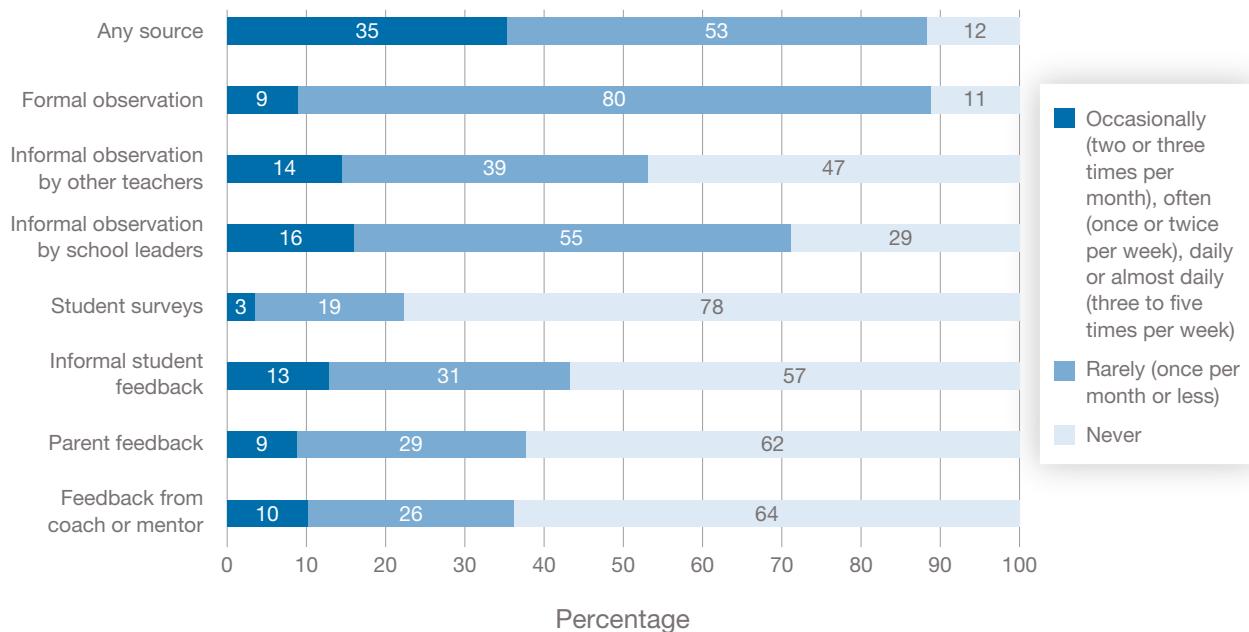
Percentage

NOTE: Bars may not add to 100 percent because of rounding.

improving their practices. However, some types of feedback were found to be helpful by a larger percentage of teachers. Table 2 shows both the percentage of teachers who reported receiving each feedback type at least once and the percentage of those teachers that found the feedback to be somewhat or extremely helpful.

The most common source of feedback was formal observation, and 73 percent of teachers who received feedback from this source found it helpful for improving their instructional practices. Most teachers who received feedback from informal observation also found this helpful, and more helpful when conducted by other teachers (86 percent) rather than school leaders (74 percent). Feedback from a coach or mentor was less common (36 percent), but 82 percent of teachers who received this type of feedback found it helpful. A possible explanation for why feedback from peers and coaches was rated as helpful by a large percentage of those receiving it is that peers and coaches may provide more subject-specific feedback, which teachers might perceive as more useful (Kraft, Blazar, and Hogan, 2018). Other less common

sources of feedback were parents, students, and externally validated student surveys. Nevertheless, 57, 62, and 78 percent of teachers who reported receiving feedback from students, parents, and student surveys, respectively, found that feedback helpful in improving their instructional practices.

We also examined the types of feedback that teachers found to be extremely helpful (Table 2 aggregates the percentage of teachers that found feedback somewhat *or* extremely helpful). We found a similar pattern to the one reported in Table 2, with feedback from informal observation by other teachers and from coaches or mentors being perceived as extremely helpful by the largest percentage of teachers that reported receiving it (26 percent and 27 percent, respectively). Feedback from student surveys and parents was perceived as extremely helpful by the smallest percentage of teachers (11 percent for both).

TABLE 2

Prevalence of Feedback from Different Sources and Reports of Improved Practices

	Teachers who reported receiving feedback from the following sources at least once during the year (n = 1,825)	Teachers who found feedback somewhat or extremely helpful for improving instructional practices (n = 365–1,578)
Any source	88%	81%
Formal observation	89%	73%
Informal observation by other teachers	53%	86%
Informal observation by school leaders	71%	74%
Student surveys	22%	62%
Informal student feedback	43%	77%
Parent feedback	38%	67%
Feedback from coach or mentor	36%	82%

Teachers at Higher-Poverty Schools Reported Receiving Feedback from Peers, School Leaders, and Coaches or Mentors More Frequently Than Teachers in Lower-Poverty Schools

To examine variation by schools' socioeconomic status, we compared teacher responses across four FRPL-based subgroups (see Table 1). Figure 2 displays the three types of feedback for which we found significant differences by school poverty level. (Our analysis for all feedback types is included in Table A.1 in the appendix.)

Teachers at higher-poverty schools received feedback from their school leaders, coaches, mentors, and peers more frequently than teachers in lower-poverty schools.

As Figure 2 shows, we found consistent differences across the four FRPL-based subgroups. As in Johnston and Tsai's (2018) analysis of the ATP, a greater percentage of teachers in high-poverty schools reported ever receiving feedback from informal observation by other teachers relative to their peers in lower-poverty schools. We found that a larger percentage of teachers at high-poverty schools reported ever receiving feedback from a coach or mentor (48 percent) and receiving feedback more than monthly from informal observation by school leaders (24 percent). Overall, our findings suggest that teachers at higher-poverty schools received feedback from their school leaders, coaches, mentors, and peers more frequently than teachers in lower-poverty schools.

Compared with Elementary School Teachers, More Secondary School Teachers Reported Receiving Feedback from Any Source, from Informal Observation by School Leaders, and from Students

As shown in the last two bars of Figure 3, 86 percent of elementary school teachers reported receiving feedback on their instructional practices at least once during the school year, compared with 90 percent of secondary school teachers. However, 40 percent of elementary school teachers reported receiving feedback more than once per month, compared with

FIGURE 2
Reported Frequency of Feedback, by School Poverty Level (*n* = 1,825)
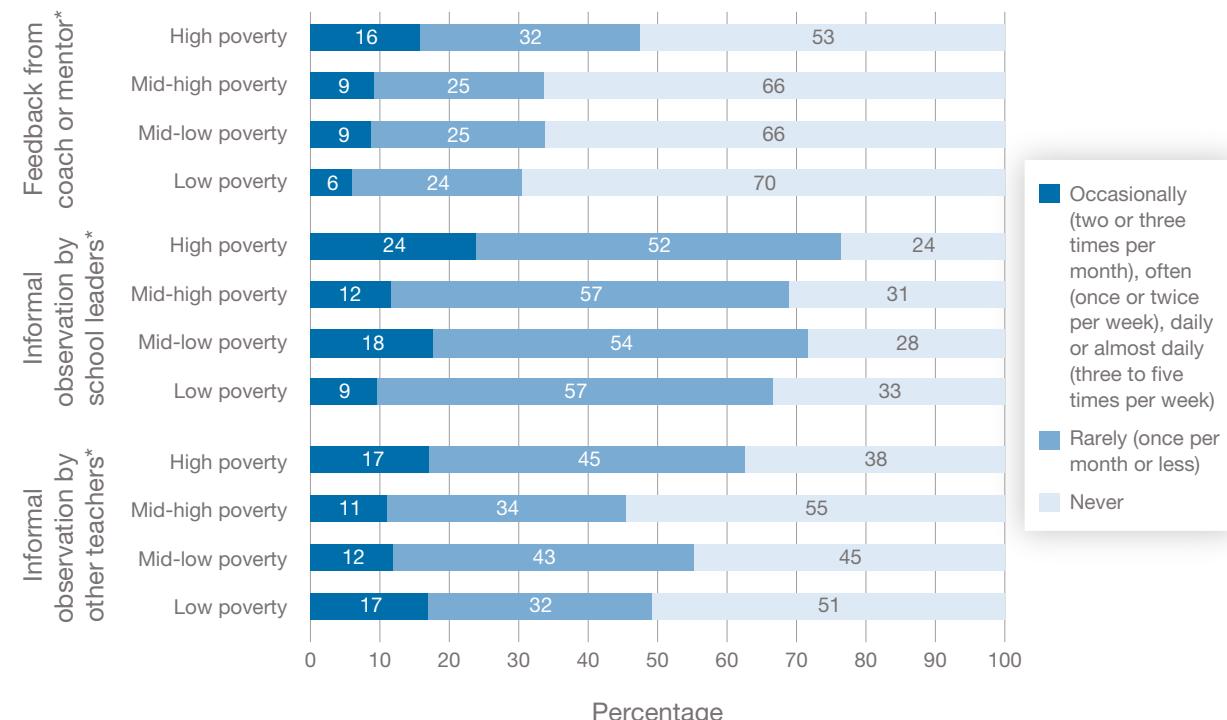
NOTE: Bars may not add to 100 percent because of rounding. Asterisks indicate significant differences among respondents from schools with different poverty levels, according to Pearson chi-square tests. We used the Benjamini-Hochberg procedure to adjust for multiple comparisons, applying a false discovery rate of 0.05. For more information, see Benajmini and Hochberg (1995).

31 percent of secondary school teachers. Hence, while a larger percentage of secondary school teachers reported receiving feedback, elementary school teachers received it more often. (Our analysis for all feedback types is included in Table A.2 in the appendix.)

We also found significant differences between elementary and secondary school teachers in the reported frequency of feedback received from specific sources. Twenty percent of elementary school teachers reported receiving feedback more than once per month from informal observation by school leaders, compared with 12 percent of secondary school teachers. Moreover, a larger percentage of secondary school teachers received informal feedback from students (53 percent) than did elementary school teachers (32 percent).

Teacher Evaluation Systems: Components, Reports of Improved Practices, Perceptions of Fairness, and Related Resources

While the previous section of this report described the different types of feedback that teachers reported receiving and the usefulness of that feedback, this section focuses on teacher evaluation systems. Here, we look at the components of these systems, teachers' perceptions of their helpfulness and fairness, and the resources teachers received related to them.

The Most Commonly Reported Component of Teacher Evaluation Systems Was Classroom Observation Ratings

Ninety-six percent of teachers reported being evaluated by their school districts' teacher evaluation systems in the 2015–2016 school year. As Table 3 shows, teachers reported that their school districts' teacher

FIGURE 3

Variation of Reported Frequency of Feedback Between Elementary and Secondary School Teachers (*n* = 1,825)
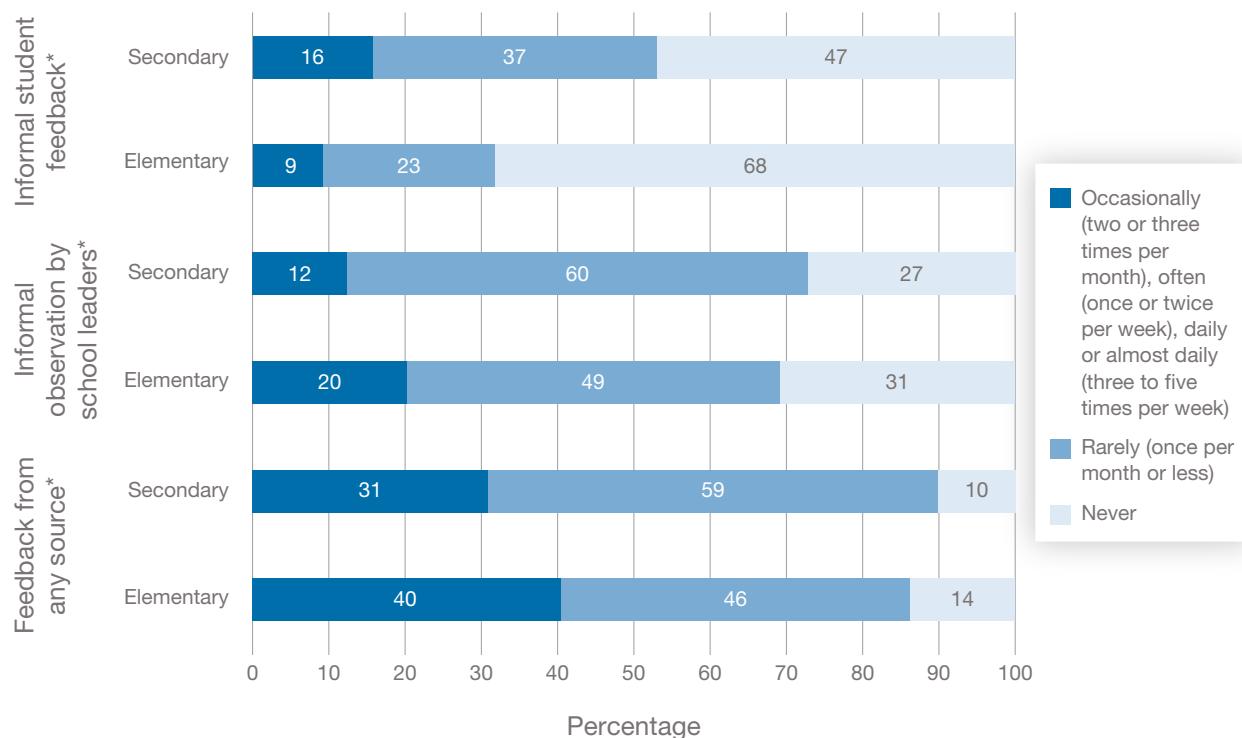
NOTE: Bars may not add to 100 percent because of rounding. Asterisks indicate significant differences among respondents from schools with different poverty levels, according to Pearson chi-square tests. We used the Benjamini-Hochberg procedure to adjust for multiple comparisons, applying a false discovery rate of 0.05. For more information, see Benajmini and Hochberg (1995).

evaluation systems were informed by data from a variety of sources, ranging from parent feedback to student achievement measures. Eighty-six percent of teachers reported that ratings from classroom observations informed their evaluations. The widespread reliance on observations for teacher evaluation is consistent with the finding that formal observations were the most widely reported source of feedback for teachers (see Figure 1).

Another common source of input was student achievement data. About half of all teachers reported that their teacher evaluation systems were informed by trends in their students' achievement (e.g., value-added or student growth percentiles), the percentage of their students achieving proficiency, or the success of their students in meeting student learning or growth objectives. In addition, 38 percent reported that schoolwide achievement data were a component of the evaluation systems. Considering all of these

sources together, we found that 74 percent of teachers indicated that they were evaluated by systems that included at least one of these types of student achievement data.

The components that were least likely to be reported by teachers were (in order of prevalence from lowest to highest) parent feedback, ratings from validated externally developed student surveys, informal student feedback, and feedback from coaches or mentors. The low prevalence of these four sources of information is noteworthy given that, as shown in Table 2, more than 60 percent of teachers who reported receiving feedback from these sources found it to be useful for improving their instructional practices.

TABLE 3
Teacher Reports About the Components of their School Districts' Teacher Evaluation Systems

	Teachers who reported that their evaluations were informed by the following (n = 1,741)
Trends in student achievement for the students you teach (e.g., value-added or student growth percentile)	51%
Percentage of your students achieving proficiency (or the average student achievement level)	55%
Success of your students in meeting student learning objectives (SLOs) or student growth objectives (SGOs)	45%
Schoolwide achievement level (e.g., schoolwide value-added, schoolwide percentage proficient)	38%
Ratings from classroom observations	86%
Ratings from validated externally developed student surveys (e.g., Tripod)	13%
Informal student feedback (e.g., teacher-developed student surveys, other feedback)	15%
Parent feedback (e.g., surveys, other feedback)	6%
Feedback from coach or mentor	17%

Frequency of Feedback and Observations Was Positively Associated with Teachers' Perceptions That Evaluation Systems Improved Their Practices

Overall, 76 percent of teachers reported that they made improvements to their instructional practices as a direct result of their participation in their schools' evaluation systems, although these perceptions varied as a function of the frequency with which they were formally observed and given feedback. Teachers who were observed more frequently as part of their schools' teacher evaluation systems were more likely to report that the evaluation systems improved their instructional practices. As shown on the left side of Figure 4, 65 percent of teachers who were observed only once somewhat or strongly agreed with the statement, "I have made improvements to my instructional practices as a direct result of participating in my school's evaluation system." In contrast, 76 percent of teachers who reported being observed two or three times during the school year and 83 percent of teachers who were observed four or more times reported agreeing with the same statement. Interestingly, a slightly larger percentage of never-observed teachers (70 percent) reported finding

the teacher evaluation systems helpful compared with those who reported being observed just once, although the percentage of teachers who were never observed was small (11 percent).

Similarly, we found that the frequency with which teachers reported receiving feedback was related to their perceptions that the evaluation

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FIGURE 4

Teacher Reports of Improved Practices as a Result of the Teacher Evaluation System, by Frequency of Observations and Feedback Received (*n* = 1,741)

I have made improvements to my instructional practices as a direct result of participating in my school's evaluation system.
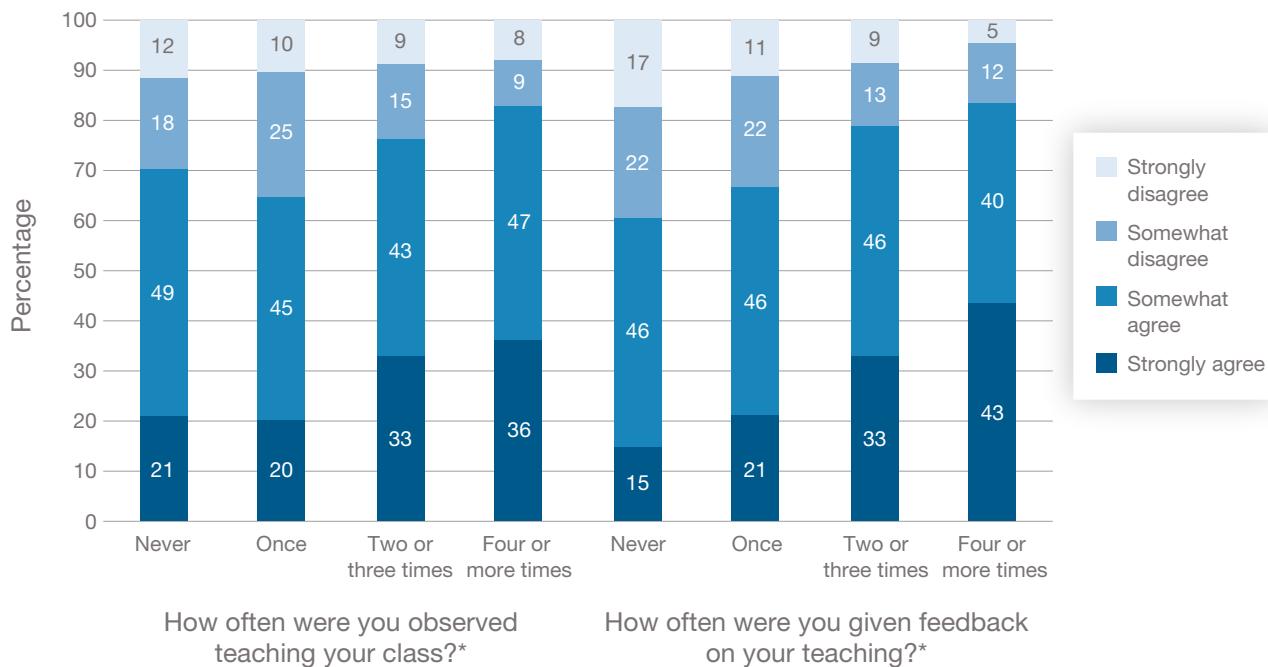
NOTE: Bars may not add to 100 percent because of rounding. Asterisks indicate significant between-group differences by reported frequency of observations, according to Pearson chi-square tests. We used the Benjamini-Hochberg procedure to adjust for multiple comparisons, applying a false discovery rate of 0.05. For more information, see Benajmini and Hochberg (1995).

systems led to improved practices, as illustrated on the right side of Figure 4. Eighty-three percent of teachers who reported receiving feedback four or more times indicated that their schools' teacher evaluation systems improved their instructional practices, compared with 79, 67, and 61 percent of teachers who reported receiving feedback two or three times, once, or never, respectively. Overall, our findings suggest that teachers who received more classroom observations and more feedback had more-positive perceptions about the helpfulness of their schools' teacher evaluation systems in improving their instructional practices.

Teachers Who Were Observed or Given Feedback by a Peer, Mentor, or Coach Had More-Positive Perceptions of Teacher Evaluation Systems Than Those Who Were Observed or Given Feedback by an Administrator

Our findings suggest that *who* observes or provides feedback to teachers is associated with teacher perceptions of the effects of the teacher evaluation systems.[7] As illustrated in Figure 5, a smaller percentage of teachers who indicated being observed or given feedback by an administrator reported that the evaluation systems improved their instructional practices when compared with those who reported being observed or given feedback by a peer or colleague or a mentor or coach. These findings are noteworthy because administrators were the most common formal observers and feedback providers. More precisely, 90 percent of teachers reported being

FIGURE 5

Teacher Reports of Improved Practices as a Result of the Teacher Evaluation System, by Type and Number of Observers and Feedback Providers (*n* = 1,729 and 1,698, respectively)

I have made improvements to my instructional practices as a direct result of participating in my school's evaluation system.
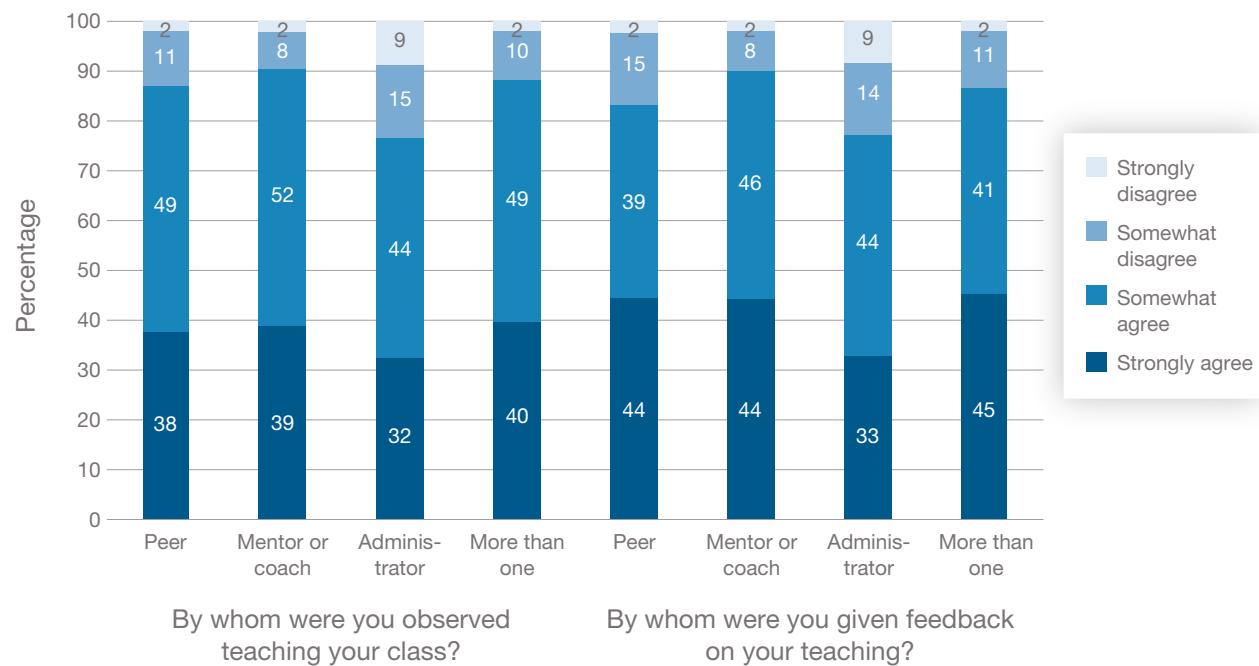
NOTE: Bars may not add to 100 percent because of rounding. We used the Benjamini-Hochberg procedure to adjust for multiple comparisons, applying a false discovery rate of 0.05. For more information, see Benajmini and Hochberg (1995).

observed by or receiving feedback from administrators as part of their evaluation, compared with 10 and 14 percent for colleagues or peers and coaches or mentors, respectively.

The number of observers or feedback providers may also be related to teachers' perceptions of the helpfulness of their evaluation systems. As the last bar in both sections of Figure 5 show, teachers who reported being observed by or receiving feedback from more than one type of school employee (e.g., an administrator and a coach or a peer and a coach) had more-positive perceptions of their schools' evaluation systems than those who received feedback from an administrator only.

Perceptions About the Fairness of Teacher Evaluation Systems Varied Among Teachers with Different Understandings of the Purposes of Those Systems

Teachers' perceptions about the fairness of their evaluation systems are important for promoting teachers' support for those systems and for increasing the likelihood that teachers will respond to the evaluations in ways that improve teaching and learning (Spillane, Reiser, and Reimer, 2002). Although 88 percent of teachers reported that the formal teacher evaluation systems at their schools had been fair to them, only 67 percent reported that those systems were fair to all teachers, regardless of their personal characteristics or those of the students they teach. This difference is consistent with findings from an earlier study of teacher evaluation systems in several school districts and charter management organizations (Stecher

Some teachers have concerns about the effects of the system on their colleagues, even if they believe their own ratings were fair.

et al., forthcoming) and suggests that at least some teachers have concerns about the effects of the system on their colleagues, even if they believe their own ratings were fair. In this section, we explore whether perceptions of fairness varied among teachers in schools with different percentages of FRPL students and among teachers with different understandings of the purpose of teacher evaluation systems.

While group differences were not statistically significant, we found that larger percentages of teachers at higher-poverty schools reported disagreeing with the statement, "In my school, the evaluation system has been fair to me," relative to teachers in

lower-poverty schools. More specifically, as shown in the top section of Table 4, 19 percent of teachers in high-poverty schools did not find the evaluation systems to be fair to them, compared with between 10 and 12 percent of teachers in the other three subgroups.

We found a similar pattern by school poverty level for teacher perceptions of whether their school's evaluation system is fair to all teachers. As the bottom panel of Table 4 illustrates, the percentage of teachers who reported disagreeing with the statement, "In my school, the evaluation system is fair to all teachers, regardless of their personal characteristics or those of the students they teach," was larger in higher-poverty schools than in lower-poverty schools.

We also found that teachers' understandings about the purpose of teacher evaluation systems were related to their perceptions of the fairness of those systems. More precisely, teachers who believed that evaluation systems were intended to promote teacher growth and development were more likely to rate those systems as fair. As illustrated by the dark-blue bars in Figure 6, while most teachers (93 percent) who agreed with the statement, "The teacher evaluation system is intended to promote teacher growth

TABLE 4

Perceived Fairness of Teacher Evaluation Systems, by School Poverty Level

	In my school, the evaluation system has been fair to me (*n* = 1,719)	
	Strongly and somewhat disagree	Strongly and somewhat agree
Low poverty	10%	90%
Mid-low poverty	12%	88%
Mid-high poverty	11%	89%
High poverty	19%	81%
	In my school, the evaluation system is fair to all teachers, regardless of their personal characteristics or those of the students they teach (*n* = 1,697)	
	Strongly and somewhat disagree	Strongly and somewhat agree
Low poverty	25%	75%
Mid-low poverty	30%	70%
Mid-high poverty	32%	68%
High poverty	33%	67%

NOTE: We found no significant group differences between FRPL subgroups using Pearson chi-squares tests after correcting for multiple comparisons using the Benjamini-Hochberg procedure, applying a false discovery rate of 0.05. For more information, see Benjamini and Hochberg (1995).

FIGURE 6

Perceived Fairness of Teacher Evaluation Systems, by Teacher Beliefs About Their Purpose (*n* = 1,735)

I have made improvements to my instructional practices as a direct result of participating in my school's evaluation system.

The teacher evaluation system is intended to promote teacher growth and development.

Legend:
- The evaluation system has been fair to me.*
- The evaluation system has been fair to all teachers.*
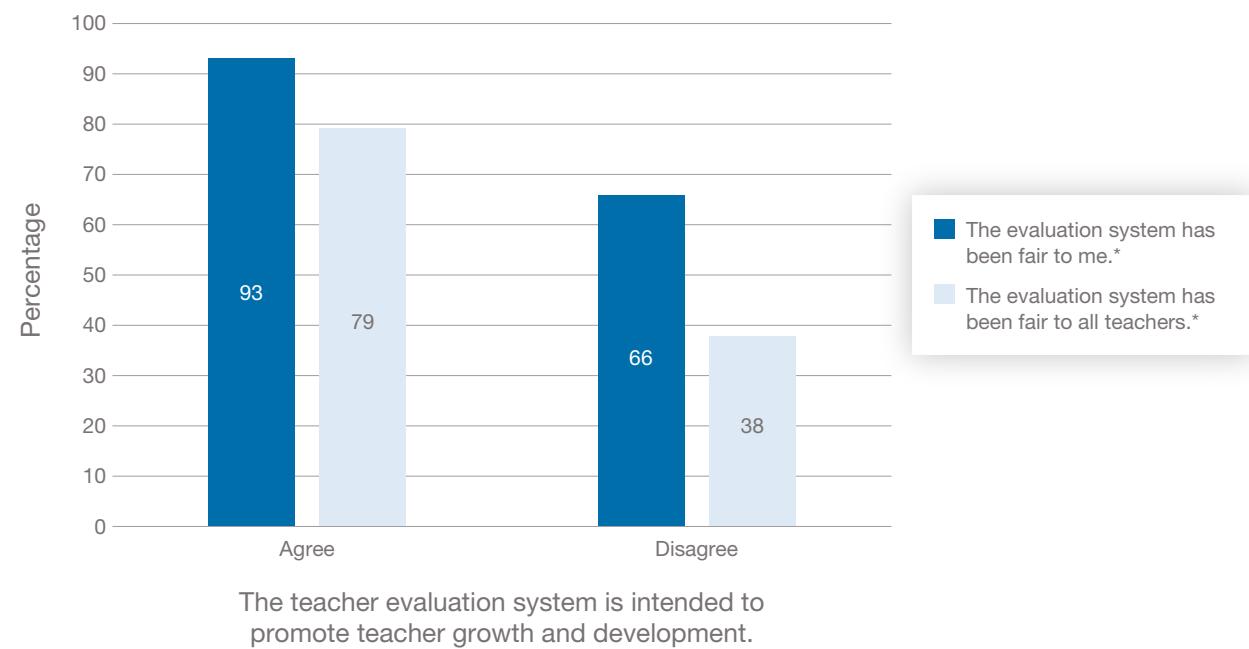
NOTE: Asterisks indicate significant differences between teachers who agree and disagree with the statement, "The teacher evaluation system is intended to promote teacher growth and development," according to Pearson chi-square tests. We used the Benjamini-Hochberg procedure to adjust for multiple comparisons, applying a false discovery rate of 0.05. For more information, see Benajmini and Hochberg (1995).

and development," reported that the system had been fair to them, a smaller percentage (66 percent) of teachers who disagreed with the same statement believed that the system was fair to them. Similarly, as illustrated by the light-blue bars in Figure 6, 79 percent of teachers who agreed with the above statement and 38 percent of those who disagreed reported that the evaluation systems were fair to *all* teachers, regardless of their personal characteristics or those of the students they teach.

We also explored differences in teachers' perceptions of fairness when comparing those that agreed and disagreed with the statement, "The teacher evaluation system is intended to inform teacher promotion." Because the use of evaluation ratings to inform promotion is a high-stakes decision, we hypothesized that teachers' perceptions of fairness might be lower among those who believed that their ratings would affect promotion. We did observe differences, but

they were not significant, so we did not find evidence to support that hypothesis.

More Than Half of Teachers Indicated Receiving Sufficient Resources Related to Formal Instructional Feedback and/or Evaluation

Teachers reported receiving a variety of resources related to their schools' formal teacher evaluation systems. Table 5 lists the six types of resources included in our survey and the percentage of teachers who found received resources to be mostly or completely sufficient. More than half of teachers found the resources to be mostly or completely sufficient. Leadership support was sufficient for 70 percent of the teachers who reported receiving it, the largest percentage relative to the other types of resources. In contrast, time was sufficient for the lowest percentage

TABLE 5

Teacher Reports of Resources Received Related to Formal Instructional Feedback and/or Evaluation

	Teachers who reported that the received resources were mostly or completely sufficient (n = 1,422–1,649)
Leadership support (e.g., key information and guidance from school administrators) for feedback and/or evaluation processes	70%
Time (e.g., planning or release time to complete evaluation materials)	51%
Materials (e.g., guidelines to facilitate the feedback and/or evaluation process)	64%
Access to staff with specific expertise (e.g., instructional coaches) within and/or outside my school	63%
Instructional support for areas of improvement and/or growth identified by my evaluator	59%
Technology (e.g., data management software or cloud-based tools) that supports implementation of feedback and/or evaluation processes	62%

(51 percent) of teachers who reported receiving this resource.

While more than half of teachers indicated that the resources they received were sufficient, between 49 and 30 percent of teachers found those resources to be mostly or completely *insufficient*. Thus, across the nation, at least one-third of teachers perceived receiving insufficient resources related to their schools' formal teacher evaluation systems.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Together, the findings presented in this report provide a national picture of how teachers perceive the feedback they receive and the evaluation systems in which they participate. In this section, we provide a brief recap of the key findings and discuss the implications of these findings for policymakers and education leaders who are involved in the design or implementation of teacher feedback and evaluation systems.

Teachers Value Feedback, but Education Leaders Need to Consider the Trade-Offs Between Formal and Informal Feedback Systems

The nationally representative survey data we summarize in this report provide encouraging news for practitioners and policymakers who are implementing teacher feedback systems. Nearly nine in ten teachers reported receiving some type of feedback on their instructional practices in the 2015–2016 school year, and most of those teachers reported finding that feedback useful for improving their instructional practices. At the same time, the results suggest that the perceived utility of feedback varies by source: Informal feedback received from peers or coaches or mentors was perceived to be useful by a larger percentage of teachers than feedback received from formal observation or student surveys, which are common components of teacher evaluation systems. School and district leaders who design feedback systems should consider how much emphasis to place on the formal feedback that occurs as part of an evaluation system versus the less-formal feedback that teachers often receive from colleagues, administrators, and others, and whether increased emphasis on the former might come at the expense of the latter. In addition, teachers at higher-poverty schools reported receiving informal feedback from peers, school

leaders, and coaches or mentors more frequently than teachers in lower-poverty schools, suggesting that some higher-poverty schools could provide models of how to create robust feedback systems. At the same time, it is important to keep in mind that teachers in higher-poverty schools may have different characteristics (e.g., less teaching experience or different credentials) than teachers at lower-poverty schools, and some of the differences in the frequency of feedback could be related to these factors.

Teacher Evaluation Systems Are Perceived More Positively When Teachers Receive More-Frequent Feedback and Observations, but There Is a Need to Consider the Associated Time Burden

In addition to examining teacher reports of the feedback they receive, our research also examined the components and teacher perceptions of teacher evaluation systems. As expected given the requirements in 47 states, formal classroom observations represent the most commonly reported component of teacher evaluation systems. Three-quarters of teachers reported that the feedback they received from formal classroom observation was helpful in improving their instructional practices, which suggests that this activity is widely valued. At the same time, the fact that one-quarter of teachers did not find this feedback helpful suggests a need to understand the factors that influence the utility of this type of feedback, particularly given the prevalence of formal classroom observations nationwide. Practitioners and policymakers could benefit from research that examines the type of feedback that is most helpful to teachers and why some teachers do not find that feedback helpful.

In this study, we began to address this need for additional research by exploring teacher perceptions of the formal feedback they receive as part of teacher evaluation systems. We found that teachers who were formally observed or given feedback more often reported more-positive perceptions of the helpfulness of their schools' teacher evaluation systems in improving their instructional practices. More precisely, teachers found teacher evaluation systems to be more helpful in improving instructional practices when they had been formally observed or given feedback more than once per year. Our findings add to previous work by Johnston and Tsai (2018), which reported that teachers' perceptions of the usefulness of informal feedback from observations were more positive when the observations occurred more frequently. Hence, we suggest that practitioners and policymakers looking to improve teachers' perceptions of evaluation systems should consider providing teachers with multiple opportunities for classroom observation and feedback provision. Recent research found that giving teachers frequent and specific feedback as part of teacher evaluation systems can lead to improvements in teacher performance and student achievement, in addition to teacher perceptions about evaluation systems (Garet et al., 2017; Steinberg and Sartain, 2015; Taylor and Tyler, 2012).

The potential benefits of more-frequent classroom observation or feedback should be weighed against a consideration of the associated time burden for observers and feedback providers. A recent study found that teacher evaluations involve a significant time burden for principals (Stecher et

Practitioners and policymakers looking to improve teachers' perceptions of evaluation systems should consider providing teachers with multiple opportunities for classroom observation and feedback provision.

al., forthcoming). Researchers, practitioners, and policymakers could explore the design of teacher evaluation systems that reduce the time burden on school administrators by involving teachers' peers, coaches, and mentors as both classroom observers and feedback providers. Our findings suggest that feedback from colleagues other than administrators is valued and, in at least some cases, is perceived more positively by teachers.

Teacher Buy-In for Evaluation Systems Could Benefit from Highlighting How These Systems Aim to Promote Development and Growth

Beliefs about the fairness of teacher evaluation systems—in addition to perceptions about the helpfulness of such systems—could be particularly important for understanding teacher buy-in. Our results suggest that teachers who reported believing that their evaluation systems are intended to promote teacher development and growth were more likely to report that the system is fair to them and others. Hence, practitioners and policymakers hoping to improve teacher buy-in for evaluations could benefit from underscoring how these systems aim to promote growth. Efforts to communicate clearly about the potential benefits of evaluation systems should be coordinated so that teachers receive

consistent messages from central office staff, school leaders, and professional teacher organizations (e.g., unions). Developing a clear and consistent message can be challenging but is likely to yield the benefit of improved engagement among all stakeholders, including teachers.

Education Leaders Need to Consider the Resources That Can Help Teachers Productively Participate in Teacher Evaluation Systems

Finally, we explored whether teachers reported receiving sufficient resources related to teacher evaluation systems and found that at least half of teachers did so. However, 49 percent of teachers reported receiving insufficient time and 40 percent received insufficient instructional support. While research has found that teacher evaluations impose a significant time burden on principals (Stecher et al., forthcoming), less is known about the time burden and other challenges these systems impose on teachers. Hence, practitioners and policymakers involved in the implementation of teacher evaluation systems should consider not only how to provide school leaders with sufficient resources, such as training and time to effectively carry out evaluations, but also how to provide teachers with the resources they need to participate in evaluations in a way that improves their ability to benefit from such systems.

Practitioners and policymakers hoping to improve teacher buy-in for evaluations could benefit from underscoring how these systems aim to promote growth.

Notes

[1] Some schools are located within local education agencies that are not traditional districts (e.g., charter schools that are operated by a charter management organization). For simplicity we use the term *district* throughout this report to refer to any type of local education agency.

[2] Our findings are based entirely on teacher self-reports, which could be affected by social desirability bias, driving some responses up or down (e.g., teachers underreporting the resources their school provides for them). Nonetheless, we believe that these findings represent a reasonable demonstration of teachers' perceptions of feedback and evaluation systems.

[3] Although the FRPL metric is not the ideal approach to measuring economic disadvantage, in part because the adoption of community eligibility rules allows schools with at least 40 percent of students eligible for the program to offer subsidized meals to all of their students, this was the only metric available for this study.

[4] These cut points are based on the unweighted distribution of the FRPL eligibility percentage of the students taught by the teachers in our sample of respondents. We considered using percentage-based cut points at 25 percent, 50 percent, and 75 percent, but the high level of agreement between the two forms of categorization and the consistent results in all subsequent analyses of FRPL-based differences led us to use the quartile cut points for ease of interpretation. Following the naming conventions of the Institute of Educational Sciences, we label these categories *low*, *mid-low*, *mid-high*, and *high poverty* (NCES, 2017).

[5] Analyses were conducted in Stata, and all estimates were adjusted for weighting using inverse probability weights via the *pweight* specification.

[6] *Formal observation* refers to an observation conducted as part of a school's evaluation system for teachers.

[7] We did not explore whether observed group differences were statistically significant, in part because the survey response categories for these questions were not mutually exclusive.

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NCES—*See* National Center for Educational Statistics.

NCTQ—*See* National Council on Teacher Quality.

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Appendix

Abridged Survey Instrument

1. In a typical month, how often do you receive feedback on your instructional practices from each of the following sources?

	Never	Rarely (approximately once per month or less)	Occasionally (approximately 2–3 times per month)	Often or Daily (approximately 1–5 times per week)
Feedback from any source	☐	☐	☐	☐
Feedback from formal observation as part of evaluation system	☐	☐	☐	☐
Feedback from informal observation by other teachers	☐	☐	☐	☐
Feedback from informal observation by school leaders	☐	☐	☐	☐
Feedback from validated externally-developed student surveys (e.g., Tripod)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Informal student feedback (e.g., nonvalidated surveys, other feedback)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Parent feedback (e.g., surveys, other feedback)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Feedback from coach or mentor	☐	☐	☐	☐

2. Think about the last time you received feedback on your instructional practice from each of these sources. How helpful was it for improving your instructional practice? *[Populate with all items from Question 1 for which panelists responded rarely, occasionally, or often—not never.]*

	Not Helpful at All	Mostly Not Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Extremely Helpful
Feedback from any source	☐	☐	☐	☐
Feedback from formal observation as part of evaluation system	☐	☐	☐	☐
Feedback from informal observation by other teachers	☐	☐	☐	☐
Feedback from informal observation by school leaders	☐	☐	☐	☐
Feedback from validated externally-developed student surveys (e.g., Tripod)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Informal student feedback (e.g., teacher-developed student surveys, other feedback)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Parent feedback (e.g., surveys, other feedback)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Feedback from coach or mentor	☐	☐	☐	☐

3. Which of the following best describes you?

☐ I have been evaluated by my school district's formal teacher evaluation system.

☐ My school district has a formal teacher evaluation system, but I have never been evaluated by it.

☐ My school district does not have a formal teacher evaluation system.

4. Think about the last year-end evaluation of your teaching you received. To the best of your knowledge, which pieces of information went into that evaluation? *[Skip if panelist checked the third box on Question 3.]*

	Not Included	Optional	Included	I Don't Know
Trends in student achievement for the students you teach (e.g., value-added or student growth percentile)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Percentage of your students achieving proficiency (or the average student achievement level)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Success of your students in meeting student learning objectives (SLOs) or student growth objectives (SGOs)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Schoolwide achievement level (e.g., schoolwide value-added, schoolwide percentage proficient)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ratings from classroom observations	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ratings from validated externally-developed student surveys (e.g., Tripod)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Informal student feedback (e.g., teacher-developed student surveys, other feedback)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Parent feedback (e.g., surveys, other feedback)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Feedback from coach or mentor	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other (please specify)	☐	☐	☐	☐

5. **Last school year (2015–2016)**, *as part of* your school and/or district's formal teacher evaluation system, *how often* and *by whom* were you: *[Skip if panelist checked the second or third box on Question 3.]*

	How often?				By whom?		
	Select one response per row				For each element that occurred last year (one or more times), check all who were involved[a]		
Action Taken	Never	Once	2–3 Times	4 or More Times	Colleague or Peer	Mentor or Coach	Administrator
. . . observed teaching your class?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
. . . given feedback on your teaching?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

[a] Gray out this second set of columns for anyone who selects "never" for either row in this question.

6. Indicate your agreement with the following statements about the formal teacher evaluation system used in your school district during the previous school year (2015–2016). [Skip if panelist checked the third box on Question 3.]

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	I Don't Know
In my school, the evaluation system has been fair to me. *[Skip if panelist checked the second box on Question 3.]*	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
In my school, the evaluation system is fair to all teachers, regardless of their personal characteristics or those of the students they teach.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have made improvements to my instructional practices as a direct result of participating in my school's evaluation system. *[Skip if panelist checked the second box on Question 3.]*	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

7. Indicate your agreement with the following statements about the purpose of the teacher evaluation system in your district. *[Skip if panelist checked the third box on Question 3.]*

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
The teacher evaluation system is intended to promote teacher growth and development.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The teacher evaluation system is intended to help me improve my instructional practice.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The teacher evaluation system is intended to improve student learning.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The teacher evaluation system is intended to inform teacher promotion, retention, and/or placement.	☐	☐	☐	☐

8. Think about the resources you received from your school during the **past school year (2015–2016)** related to *formal instructional feedback and/or evaluation.* How sufficient were each of the following resources?

	N/A, Did Not Receive This Support	Completely Insufficient	Mostly Insufficient	Mostly Sufficient	Completely Sufficient
Leadership support (e.g., key information and guidance from school administrators) for feedback and/or evaluation processes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Time (e.g., planning or release time to complete evaluation materials)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Materials (e.g., guidelines to facilitate the feedback and/or evaluation process)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Access to staff with specific expertise (e.g., instructional coaches) within and/or outside of my school	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Instructional support for areas of improvement and/or growth identified by my evaluator	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Technology (e.g., data management software or cloud-based tools) that supports implementation of feedback and/or evaluation processes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Additional Analysis for Figures 2 and 3

TABLE A.1

Reported Frequency of Feedback from Different Sources, by School Poverty Level (*n* = 1,799)

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally, Often, or Daily
Any source (*p* = 0.8246)			
Low poverty	12.2%	55.3%	32.6%
Mid-low poverty	11.4%	54.2%	34.4%
Mid-high poverty	13.5%	53.7%	32.8%
High poverty	10.4%	50.1%	39.5%
Formal observation as part of evaluation system (*p* = 0.0578)			
Low poverty	9.3%	84.3%	6.4%
Mid-low poverty	12.8%	79.8%	7.3%
Mid-high poverty	10.8%	83.3%	5.9%
High poverty	13.2%	72.9%	13.9%
Informal observation by other teachers (*p* = 0.0125)			
Low poverty	50.8%	32.2%	16.9%
Mid-low poverty	44.8%	43.2%	11.9%
Mid-high poverty	54.6%	34.3%	11.1%
High poverty	37.5%	45.3%	17.1%
Informal observation by school leaders (*p* = 0.0036)			
Low poverty	33.4%	57.2%	9.4%
Mid-low poverty	28.3%	54.0%	17.7%
Mid-high poverty	31.1%	57.2%	11.6%
High poverty	23.8%	52.3%	24.0%
Externally-developed student surveys (*p* = 0.2755)			
Low poverty	78.1%	17.9%	4.0%
Mid-low poverty	79.2%	18.3%	2.5%
Mid-high poverty	79.4%	19.3%	1.4%
High poverty	76.6%	17.0%	6.3%
Informal student feedback (*p* = 0.9643)			
Low poverty	55.4%	30.7%	13.9%
Mid-low poverty	56.3%	31.7%	12.0%
Mid-high poverty	58.4%	30.5%	11.1%
High poverty	58.1%	28.2%	13.7%
Parent feedback (*p* = 0.2267)			

Table A.1—Continued

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally, Often, or Daily
Low poverty	59.1%	31.5%	9.4%
Mid-low poverty	61.5%	28.4%	10.1%
Mid-high poverty	63.9%	31.7%	4.4%
High poverty	66.3%	23.5%	10.2%
Feedback from coach or mentor (p = 0.0081)			
Low poverty	69.6%	24.4%	6.1%
Mid-low poverty	66.3%	24.9%	8.8%
Mid-high poverty	66.3%	24.6%	9.0%
High poverty	52.6%	31.6%	15.7%

NOTE: Data in rows may not add to 100 percent because of rounding. The response options in our survey for the frequency of received feedback in a typical month were defined in the following way: never; rarely = approximately once per month or less; occasionally = approximately 2 or 3 times per month; often = approximately 1 or 2 times per week; daily or almost daily = approximately 3 to 5 times per week. We used Pearson chi-square tests to assess between-group differences and include the p-value for each feedback type in parenthesis.

TABLE A.2

Reported Frequency of Feedback from Different Sources, by School Level (n = 1,799)

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally, Often, or Daily
Any source (p = 0.0013)			
Elementary	13.9%	45.7%	40.4%
Secondary	10.1%	59.0%	31.0%
Formal observation as part of evaluation system (p = 0.9258)			
Elementary	10.8%	80.2%	9.0%
Secondary	11.6%	79.7%	8.7%
Informal observation by other teachers (p = 0.4893)			
Elementary	45.5%	38.4%	16.1%
Secondary	48.0%	38.9%	13.1%
Informal observation by school leaders (p = 0.0021)			
Elementary	30.9%	48.9%	20.1%
Secondary	27.2%	60.4%	12.4%
Externally-developed student surveys (p = 0.0420)			
Elementary	81.3%	14.9%	3.8%
Secondary	74.7%	22.1%	3.2%
Informal student feedback (p = 0.0000)			
Elementary	68.2%	22.7%	9.1%
Secondary	47.1%	37.1%	15.8%

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally, Often, or Daily
Parent feedback (p = 0.5899)			
Elementary	61.2%	28.9%	9.9%
Secondary	63.4%	28.8%	7.8%
Feedback from coach or mentor (p = 0.4883)			
Elementary	62.8%	25.6%	11.6%
Secondary	64.6%	26.4%	9.0%

NOTE: Data in rows may not add to 100 percent because of rounding. The response options in our survey for the frequency of received feedback in a typical month were defined in the following way: never; rarely = approximately once per month or less; occasionally = approximately 2 or 3 times per month; often = approximately 1 or 2 times per week; daily or almost daily = approximately 3 to 5 times per week. We used Pearson chi-square tests to assess between-group differences and include the p-value for each feedback type in parenthesis.

About This Report

In recent years, state and local education leaders across the United States have revised their teacher evaluation policies and practices in an effort to enhance the quality of evaluation measures and improve instructional practices. These teacher evaluations are often based on multiple measures of performance, including classroom observations, indicators of teachers' contributions to their students' performance on standardized tests, and stakeholder surveys that measure parent and/or student beliefs about teacher practices. We currently know little about how teachers have responded to these systems outside of a small number of districts where research on teacher evaluation has been conducted. To address this issue, this research used a nationally representative survey of educators to examine teacher perceptions about the feedback they receive and the teacher evaluation systems at their schools. Analysis provides a broad picture of the different types of feedback that teachers reported receiving during the 2015–2016 school year and whether teachers found it helpful in improving their instructional practices. The research also focuses on teacher perceptions of the data sources that informed their most recent evaluation, the perceived helpfulness and fairness of evaluation systems, and the resources that teachers reported receiving to support their participation in these systems. Most teachers reported receiving useful feedback, although majorities perceived feedback from fellow teachers and from coaches or mentors more positively than feedback from formal observations or from school leaders. Teachers at higher-poverty schools reported receiving more-frequent feedback from peers, school leaders, and coaches and mentors than teachers in lower-poverty schools.

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RR-2558-BMGF