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Developing an Effective Teacher Feedback System

90-DAY CYCLE REPORT

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90-Day Cycle Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Given that the modal length of teaching experience has now dropped to one year,[1] finding ways to support the growth and development of new teachers has become of paramount importance. One critical way to provide this support is through effective feedback that improves instruction. In this 90-Day Cycle[2] we investigate the factors and processes that contribute to an effective feedback system, paying particular attention to how the system affects early career teachers and how such systems can coexist with extant and emerging teacher evaluation systems. We identify a set of interconnected drivers at the district, school, and individual levels, and unpack the feedback process into a set of sub-processes that are shaped by individuals, systems, and the larger context in which those systems operate.

BACKGROUND AND DESCRIPTION OF WORK

Early career teachers make up an increasingly large proportion of the public school teaching force. In 2011-2012, 22 percent of teachers in the US had five or fewer years of experience; nearly 6.9 percent were brand new to the profession, making one year the modal length of experience for our nation's teachers.[3] Often less effective and facing greater challenges than their more experienced counterparts, new teachers tend to leave the profession at high rates.[4] This turnover is costly for schools and districts, which expend considerable resources hiring, training, and supporting new teachers. It is also costly for students, who see a constant churn of adults coming in and out of their schools. Disturbingly, low-income schools and schools with a higher proportion of racial minority students feel these effects most acutely, as less experienced teachers are assigned disproportionally to schools serving these student populations.

Because of the high number of new teachers in our schools and the financial and educational costs associated with their turnover, focusing on developing and retaining early-career teachers is a strategy with considerable potential for improving teaching quality, reducing costs, and making the distribution of strong teachers more equitable. Experts on teachers and teaching have identified high quality feedback—feedback that leads to improvements in instruction and student learning—as a crucial lever for driving professional growth and improving the likelihood that new teachers will persist in their careers.

In practice, feedback tends to be infrequent, uncoordinated, vague, or not actionable. The lack of professional development for feedback providers (principals, coaches[5], and peers) too often results in the lack of skills necessary to engage new teachers in trusting, instructive, and productive feedback conversations. Compounding these problems, other organizational and structural issues at the school and district levels can lead to confusion about the purpose of feedback. Teachers may wonder whether feedback is meant to evaluate or improve their performance. When more than one person provides feedback, a lack of coordination among individuals can lead to teachers receiving conflicting messages, or simply more ideas for improvement than they can reasonably accommodate.

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[1] Richard Ingersoll and Lisa Merrill, "The Changing Face of the Teaching Force," *PennGSE: A Review of Research* 7, no. 3 (2011): 7.

[2] See sidebar on p. 3 for a description of the 90-Day Cycle.

[3] NCES Schools and Staffing Survey, 2011-12.

[4] Matthew Ronfeldt, Susanna Loeb, and James Wyckoff, "How Teacher Turnover Harms Student Achievement," *American Educational Research Journal* 50, no. 1 (2013): 4–36. Retrieved from: http://aer.sagepub.com/content/50/1/4.

[5] Throughout this report, we use the term "coach" to describe any person who works individually with new teachers to support their growth and development over an extended period of time. Elsewhere, coaches may be referred to as mentors or peer coaches or, depending on their area of expertise, literacy coaches, math coaches, etc. Coaches come from within districts as well as from partner organizations, such as The New Teacher Project or Teach for America.

90-Day Cycles

90-Day Cycles are a disciplined and structured form of inquiry adapted from the work of the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI).

90-Day Cycles aim to:

- *prototype an innovation, broadly defined to include knowledge frameworks, tools, processes, etc.;*
- *leverage and integrate knowledge from scholars and practitioners;*
- *leverage knowledge of those within and outside of the field associated with the topic;*
- *include initial "testing" of a prototype;*

The process consists of three phases: 1) "Scan" of the field and development of the prototype, 2) "Focus" or testing of the prototype, and 3) "Summarize" or write-up of key learnings.

To begin improving the feedback teachers receive, districts must address these prevalent issues, recognizing that quality feedback requires a multi-step process embedded in a complex web of classroom, school, and district contexts. The aim of this 90-Day Cycle was to produce a framework that illustrates feedback as a complex system-embedded process. This report is organized around two diagrams that connect macro (district and school) and micro (classroom) perspectives and serve as starting points for understanding effective feedback systems. The first, a driver diagram, identifies the key components at each level of the system—district, school, and classroom—that support effective feedback processes. The second, a process map, delineates the basic steps of quality feedback, with a focus on feedback conversations between new teachers, principals, and coaches.

In these diagrams and throughout this report, our portrayal of the feedback system is not meant to be a distinct, singular model of interaction. Modifications will certainly be needed to adapt this system to particular districts, but we hope this report provides an initial framework districts can draw upon to begin improving their feedback systems.

Though quality feedback is valuable for all teachers, it may be even more significant for beginning teachers, whose first years in the classroom are a crucial period in their development and their socialization into the profession. If districts are to develop and retain the many new teachers who enter the profession each year, it is critical that feedback processes pay particular attention to their unique developmental needs.

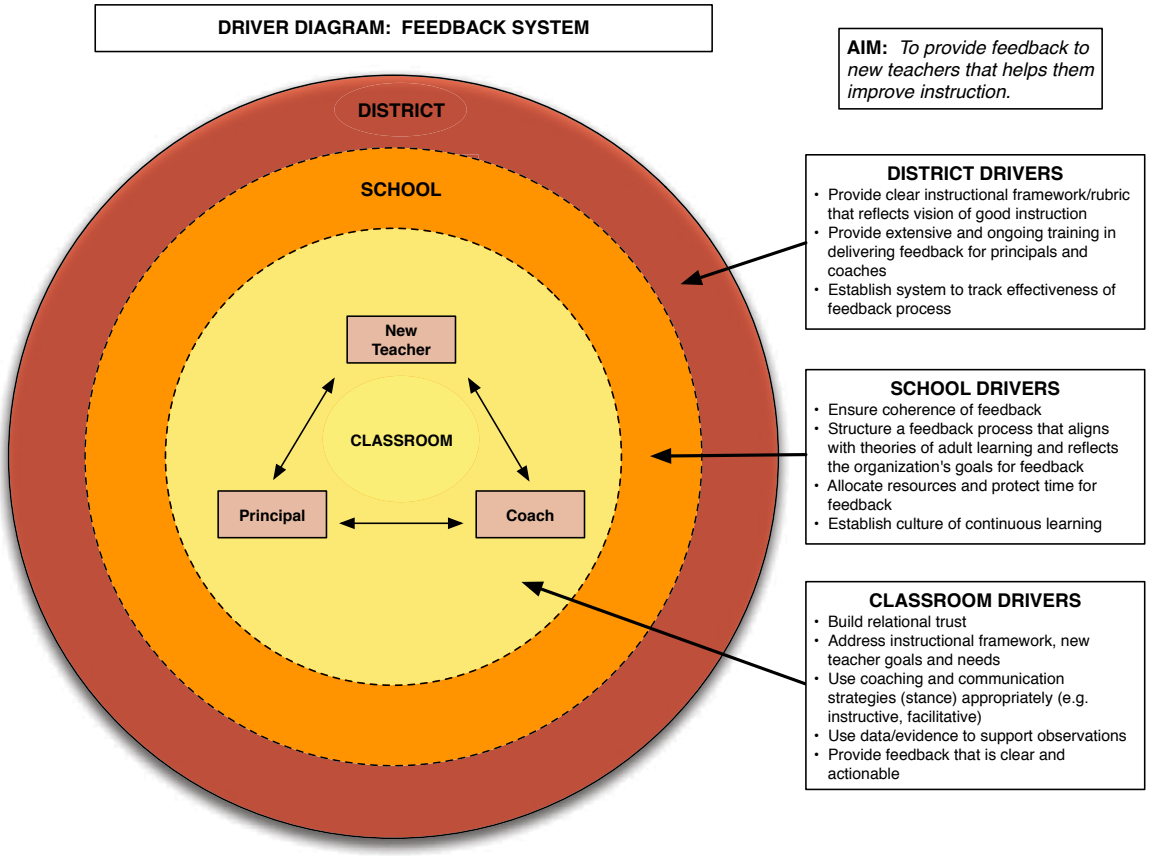
RESULTS OF THE 90-DAY SCAN: FACTORS NECESSARY TO CREATE AN EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK SYSTEM

In this section, we use a driver diagram to identify the key drivers of effective feedback processes at the district, school and classroom levels; the diagram provides a view of the broader system and the nested structure of processes within it. We describe each driver in detail, providing examples of how different organizations use these drivers in their work and highlighting potential tensions and differences in their approaches

Driver Diagram: Factors Necessary to Create an Effective Feedback System

[Giving feedback] is a system. I think that people often don't think of it that way…you have to look at all the different levels to help the teacher achieve success. It does not do well when it's set up based on the good will of individual [mentors]. You need to provide a framework and structure to make it happen.

-Lynn Kepp, Senior Vice President of Professional Services, New Teacher Center



Driver Diagram

A driver diagram organizes knowledge around a particular issue and represents a practical theory for achieving a specified outcome. It consists of three key elements: an aim, primary drivers, and secondary drivers.
The aim states the outcome an organization seeks to achieve in addressing a specific problem. The primary drivers are the processes, norms, and structures theorized to be the highest-leverage areas that, if improved, will move an organization closer to the aim.
Secondary drivers are the areas of specific action necessary to move the primary drivers.

Giving effective feedback is a complicated process shaped by a host of factors that extend beyond the individuals engaged in the feedback conversation. The actors and actions (including policies and programs) at the district and school levels form an interconnected system that supports the conversation itself, as implied by the nested structure of the diagram.

DISTRICT DRIVERS

Together, these drivers represent processes, norms, and structures that, if improved, will strengthen a district's ability to manage and support quality feedback systems and processes.

District Driver 1: Provide a clear instructional framework/rubric that reflects a good vision of instruction.

An instructional framework is a crucial tool around which the system builds coherence. Indeed, the experts we consulted asserted that a clear instructional framework (or rubric) was among the most significant components of an effective, coherent feedback system. The instructional framework defines a shared understanding of what "good teaching" (and, conversely, ineffective teaching) means in the district. With a framework in place, all levels of the system, from the

new teachers themselves, to the coaches who work directly with the new teachers, to the principals who coordinate support for them, to the district administrators who evaluate the effectiveness of the feedback system, share a common language about good practice, making it possible to work toward common goals.

Practices from the Field:

- Marie Costanza, director of Career in Teaching in Rochester, New York, explained that mentors in her district are all trained to use Charlotte Danielson's *Framework for Teaching*. Adopting this framework has enabled the mentors to develop a common language about teaching and align their feedback.
- Aspire Public Schools has invested substantial resources in norming coaches and principals on their instructional rubric. This norming includes training in collecting evidence, connecting the evidence to the rubric, and judging the rating derived from the rubric. This has significantly enhanced the skill set of the individual coaches and principals, and resulted in a shared language about instruction across the Aspire schools.

District Driver 2: Provide extensive and ongoing training in delivering feedback for principals and coaches.
While many districts require training for principals and evaluators who conduct observations, the content tends to focus on norming and re-calibrating observers around a rubric rather than on improving observers' feedback delivery. This is problematic, as identifying a new teacher's particular needs and effectively engaging her or him in a targeted conversation are difficult skills that require "hours of deliberate practice,"[6] while the resources districts allocate to the development of feedback expertise are usually scant.

Practices from the Field:

- In Rochester City Schools (NY), mentors in the peer-assistance mentoring program receive extensive training on how to build "learning-focused relationships."[7] Training involves videos of coaching conversations as well as practice sessions with new teachers to hone their skills.
- New Teacher Center uses videos, case studies, and role-play activities to teach coaches and principals how to engage in feedback conversations using a variety of approaches (instructive, collaborative, and facilitative).
- At Aspire and Success for All (SFA), coaches have coaches of their own to help further development. Allison Leslie, a "coach of coaches" at Aspire, uses a "development menu" during monthly meetings that highlights important skills for coaches to master.
- SFA and the Literacy Collaborative set benchmarks for their coaches using rubrics that outline core competencies. SFA coaches also use online portfolios to share materials and specific practices.

District Driver 3: Establish systems to track effectiveness of feedback process.
Many districts have developed databases and processes to monitor teacher observation data for evaluative purposes, but few have created systems to track the impact of their feedback processes. Developing such a system is crucial for districts to better understand how feedback affects instruction and, subsequently, student behavior and performance. Without this information, districts cannot improve their feedback processes at scale.

Practices from the Field:

- Every few months, Aspire administers student assessments and surveys teachers about their feedback relationships with coaches and principals. From this information, they evaluate teachers' progress

[6] Heather Kirkpatrick (Vice President of Education, Aspire Schools), in discussion with the authors, January 18, 2012.
[7] Laura Lipton and Bruce Wellman, *Mentoring Matters: A Practical Guide to Learning-focused Relationships*, Miravia: 2003. Retrieved from http://www.miravia.com/pdf/MM_Study_Guide.pdf.

toward their goals, identify teachers in need of more coaching, and highlight areas in which coaches may need more training.
- TNTP (The New Teacher Project) uses a similar approach to monitoring the impact of feedback, drawing heavily on data from rubrics used by coaches during observations.

SCHOOL DRIVERS

Together, these drivers represent processes, norms, and structures that, if improved, will strengthen a school's ability to implement quality feedback systems and processes.

School Driver 1: Ensure coherent feedback.

In many school systems, a new teacher will receive feedback from multiple individuals (e.g., principal, coaches, lead teachers, etc.). In the best-case scenario, the feedback will be coordinated, consistent, and clear, steadily guiding the teacher on a path of development. Unfortunately, it is common for new teachers to receive dissonant or contradictory feedback from different people, overwhelming them with mixed messages and leaving them without clear guidance or an actionable improvement plan.

Conversations with our experts reveal two key steps to ensure coherence. First, schools must anchor their system within a strong instructional framework. If coaches and principals share a vision of good instruction and a common language, they are more likely to support teachers' instructional improvement efforts with feedback that is consistent and coherent among feedback providers. Second, schools should build channels for regular communication among feedback providers. Coaches and principals must communicate with one another about the teachers they support to ensure they are sending consistent messages to each new teacher.[8] Our experts highlighted the importance of designating the task of coordinating this communication to one person, be it the principal or one of the coaches.

Practices from the Field:

- New Teacher Center conducts professional development for principals and coaches together to ensure that everyone is on the same page about how to provide support and feedback to new teachers.
- At Aspire Public Schools, where the new teacher support process is divided into "Acts" (phases of the new teacher's development), conversations between principals and coaches are structured into the beginning of each Act. Principals and coaches also sometimes conduct classroom observation in pairs. Debriefing sessions help them reach agreement about their recommendations and ensure coherent feedback to the teacher.
- Success for All and TNTP adopt the instructional frameworks of each of their partnering schools and districts so that coaches share expectations and vocabulary with other district personnel.

School Driver 2: Structure a feedback process that aligns with theories of adult learning and reflects the organization's goals for feedback.

The experts we spoke to did not agree on a single best way to carry out the feedback process. Approaches varied in the frequency of feedback, the mode of communication, whether teachers were notified in advance of observations and the order of activities within a feedback cycle. Varied as these processes were, however, each was strategically designed to reflect the theories about teacher learning and the beliefs about the purpose of

[8] Though we believe this kind of communication is important, we recognize that many districts have strict confidentiality rules intended to protect teachers' privacy. In some cases, principals and coaches may not freely exchange information about what they observe during classroom visits. While these rules may serve an important protective purpose (particularly in settings where evaluation results are used to make personnel decisions), experts posit that open channels of communication are a crucial component in developing processes geared toward improving teachers' practice.

feedback held at that institution. One area where experts did agree was on the importance of immediate feedback. When too much time passes between observation and feedback conversation, important reflections are lost.

Practices from the Field:

- Master Educators at District of Columbia Public Schools use a mixture of announced and unannounced observations of teachers. Unannounced observations were included as a means of capturing "real" teacher practice for evaluative purposes. To increase reliability of ratings, the observation process includes ratings from at least two people on five different occasions.
- At Aspire, coaches regularly model teaching strategies before asking a new teacher to implement that strategy in her classroom. This practice reflects Aspire's belief that when teachers receive scaffolded support they are more likely to develop stronger relationships with their coaches, leading to richer feedback conversations.
- At Aspire, coaches can provide immediate feedback and coaching to teachers while they are teaching through the use of ear buds. Similarly, TNTP has experimented with a model that places a coach in a teacher's classroom for as long as two weeks, providing real-time guidance to support and improve her practice.

School Driver 3: Allocate resources and protect time for feedback.

The feedback process takes time. Organizations must make efficient use of this precious resource. Some experts choose to devote more time to struggling or novice teachers than to those with track records of strong performance. In other cases, feedback providers are given a reduced load of other responsibilities in order to free time for observation and detailed feedback.

Practices from the Field:

- Principal Sarah Fiarman (Graham & Parks School, Cambridge, MA) discussed visiting her new teachers' classrooms once a week, while she observes her more experienced teachers with less frequency. She also varies the length of the observation itself based on circumstances including the need of the teacher.
- In the Rochester Career-in-Teaching program, mentor teachers are provided with a permanent, part-time substitute for the entire year so they can spend time mentoring other teachers. It is an important part of the program that the mentor teachers receive only a partial time-release, allowing the teachers receiving mentorship to observe their expert counterparts at work.

School Driver 4: Establish culture of continuous learning.

A culture of continuous learning can promote transparency of practice, create space for experimentation, and influence teachers to be more willing to accept feedback. Research has shown that individuals are more likely to absorb feedback if they believe it is for their development and growth, rather than seeing it as strictly for purposes of judgment.[9]

Many of our expert practitioners reinforced these findings, explaining that a culture focused only on accountability and evaluation can negatively influence not only teachers' willingness to accept feedback, but the effectiveness of the entire feedback process.

[9] Jeannie Myung and Krissia Martinez, "Strategies for Enhancing the Impact of Post-Observation Feedback for Teachers," The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (2013). http://carnegiefoundation.org/elibrary/strategies-enhancing-the-impact-post-observation-feedback-teachers

Practices from the Field:

- A study of Literacy Collaborative Coaching points to principals who create "safe zones" in their schools for teachers to experiment with new practices and receive feedback. These zones foster high levels of trust, creating school cultures where individuals can be vulnerable for the purpose of growth.
- The New Teacher Center encourages principals to use classroom observation data not just for evaluation, but as the basis for feedback conversations that support improvement. Lynn Kepp described how this ideally occurs in conjunction with a joint approach to improvement. Feedback providers emphasize how *we* can work together to improve practice, rather than placing all of the responsibility for improvement on the teacher.

CLASSROOM DRIVERS (PRINCIPAL-COACH-TEACHER)

Together, these drivers represent processes, norms, and structures that, if improved, will strengthen individuals' ability to provide and receive feedback.

Classroom Driver 1: Build relational trust.

Trust is a critical facet of an effective feedback process. Whether and to what degree colleagues trust one another shapes how feedback is given and received. Many of the experts we spoke to asserted that the first few months of interaction with a new teacher are a particularly critical period for building trust. The experts identified the beginning of the school year as the most important time to begin building trust by validating new teachers' experiences and providing emotional support. Daniel Duke (1990) describes how feedback providers build trust by demonstrating that they are credible as a source of performance feedback; capable of establishing helping relationships; and knowledgeable of technical aspects of teaching.

Our consulting experts described how feedback providers can build trust early in the year by listening more than directing, encouraging the teachers to voice self-identified needs, and demonstrating subject matter expertise (if possible).

The effort to build trust cannot end after the first few weeks of school, however; feedback providers must continue building relationships throughout the school year.

Practices from the Field:

- At Aspire schools, coaches build trust by co-teaching or modeling teaching strategies to scaffold new teachers' learning, well before new teachers are formally observed practicing these strategies. A coach at Aspire described how this helps to build her "credibility" with the new teacher.
- DCPS Master Educators spoke about building trust with teachers in the beginning of the year by listening to the teachers and allowing the teachers' interests and concerns to guide the conversation. They also discussed building rapport with teachers by discussing their own previous personal experiences as teachers, smiling and being positive, and approaching the interaction with the teacher as a conversation rather than a debate.

Classroom Driver 2: Address instructional framework, new teacher goals and needs.

Goal setting is a critical part of the effective feedback process for new teachers. Effective feedback fills the gap between a teacher's current practice and his professional goals.[10] Feedback providers must therefore have a clear understanding of where a teacher is, and where he wants to go.

[10] John Hattie and Helen Timperly, "The Power of Feedback," *Review of Educational Research* 77, no. 1(2007): 81-112.

Using feedback to help the teacher establish short-term goals can address immediate problems or concerns, while longer-term goals can support the development of pedagogical skill, as well as professional habits of self-reflection and continuous improvement. According to Sharon Feiman-Nemser (2001), balancing both types of goals is important to ensure that proper attention is paid to teachers' development of an analytic stance towards their teaching, even in the midst of addressing immediate concerns.

Short-term goals should be nested within and connected to longer-term goals. Experts talked about single feedback events as steps in a longer, cyclical process of moving a new teacher towards improved practice. When feedback events are unrelated to each other and address immediate concerns as isolated instances, improvement becomes less likely.

New teachers' goals should also be nested within school and district goals and drawn from the district's instructional framework. When individual teacher goals are connected to broader shared goals, new teachers can contribute to school-wide improvements while working on improvements in their own pedagogy.

Practices from the Field:

- At Success for All, teachers work with coaches who observe their practice and help them assess their progress in relationship to their goals, including goals for student success. Teachers may also watch videos of themselves teaching, so that, with the support of their coaches, they develop an understanding of their current practice.
- Aspire charts teachers' growth along developmental arcs that guide and inform goal-setting and subsequent coaching conversations. Under these arcs, new teachers start with a focus on relationship building and classroom management, and move toward more individualized instructional goals depending on each teacher's needs.

Classroom Driver 3: Use coaching and communication strategies (stance) appropriately.

The effectiveness of feedback depends on coaches and principals knowing when to be directive and when to be responsive to new teachers, when to be corrective and when to reinforce strong performance; coaches and principals must also know how to navigate using these approaches as they collaborate to provide feedback. In a directive stance, the coach or principal will assert her ideas about how the teacher performed and what he should do next. Alternatively, while in a responsive stance, the coach or principal will guide the teacher to share his reflections and ideas. Experts used different terms for these stances (e.g., pushing and pulling, instructing, collaborating, and facilitating), but there was widespread agreement that strategically blending these modes of communication is critical to the outcome of self-reflection, improved practice, and trusting feedback relationships.

A coach's stance often shifts from reflective to directive in a single session.[11] In some cases, coaches use their judgment in the moment to shift from one mode to another, while in others a feedback protocol may call for a shift from a responsive stance to a directive stance mid-conversation.

While many experts talked about taking a responsive stance early on in the relationship with a new teacher to develop a sense of trust, others felt a more directive stance was appropriate given that new teachers need more explicit guidance and bring less expertise to their work.

[11] Jacy Ippolito, "Three Ways that Literacy Coaches Balance Responsive and Directive Relationships with Teachers," *The Elementary School Journal* 111, no. 1 (2010): 164-190.

Practices from the Field:

- DCPS Master Educators described how various factors influence whether they take a more directive stance or a coaching stance with a teacher during a feedback conversation. Factors include the teacher's number of years of teaching experience (less likely to be directive with more experienced teachers); the teacher's general openness to receiving feedback (more fruitful to be directive with a teacher open to feedback); and whether the observed lesson included any serious problems (directive stance necessary if there were serious problems in the classroom and the teacher did not recognize the problems).
- Sandy Matthews described how Success for All coaches assume a "pushing" or "pulling" stance in their conversations with teachers. In "pushing" conversations coaches are more directive with teachers, while in a "pulling" stance the coach guides the teacher to be reflective of his or her own practices. Coaches are trained in these approaches to coaching, and they make judgments about which approach to use based on the amount of information and self-awareness teachers appear to have about their own practice.

Classroom Driver 4: Provide feedback that is clear, targeted, and actionable.

Clear, targeted, and actionable feedback is concrete and narrow in focus. Hattie and Timperley (2007) explain that effective feedback depends on goals that are clearly understood and accepted by the teacher, information about the teacher's current performance relative to that goal, and specifically articulated actions that should be undertaken to make progress towards those goals.

Practices from the Field:

- At DCPS, Master Educators believe firmly in not overwhelming new teachers with too many suggestions or advice. To make feedback more digestible, Master Educators highlight examples of problematic or effective practice and capitalize on opportunities to role-play. These strategies not only make for clearer feedback, but also help new teachers see the conversations as opportunities for growth and reflection.
- Kim Marshall explains that effective mentors end feedback conversations with new teachers by identifying one or two actionable steps for the new teacher to take. The steps should be concrete and focused to avoid overwhelming the teacher.

Classroom Driver 5: Use data and evidence to support observations.

Clear, targeted, and actionable feedback (Classroom Driver 4) relies on evidence to pinpoint issues or identify solutions. Data from classroom observations, often captured in a rubric or on video, are important for feedback conversations. The Consortium on Chicago School Research found that data from the observation provide a sense of "objectivity" and a focus on practice, and are less likely than other forms of feedback to be perceived as subjective and personal. Our experts confirmed that evidence gathered during observations can ground effective feedback conversations. Some also used student work or test score data to supplement feedback conversations.

Practices from the Field:

- Sarah Fiarman, a principal in Cambridge, MA, and a researcher for the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers, described how using data for feedback conversations allows the feedback provider and the teacher to "get on the same page" about the teaching and learning that transpires in the classroom. Without data, she explained that the feedback provider and recipient may use similar words to mean different things, and therefore speak "in parallel" with each other, rather than engaging in an effective dialogue.

- At Success for All, data about student learning at the beginning of the year serve as a "baseline" against which teachers' progress is tracked. Student learning data can also inform goal-setting conversations, pointing to areas of teachers' instructional growth or need for improvement.

RESULTS OF THE 90-DAY SCAN: COMPONENTS OF THE FEEDBACK PROCESS

In this section, we turn our attention to the feedback process itself. In unpacking the components of the feedback process, one begins to appreciate its complexity. New teachers receive feedback from multiple providers (principals, coaches, peers) and the purpose of the feedback often varies (improvement, evaluation), making coordination of feedback a challenging endeavor.

Given the growing focus on teacher evaluation, many districts have turned their attention to providing feedback in an evaluative context. This often means a 30-45 minute formal classroom observation followed by a post-observation conference, where feedback is delivered. These evaluations are conducted anywhere between two and six times a year by the principal and, in some situations, an outside evaluator. The feedback conversations tend to be broad and summative, focusing on a number of competencies as outlined by the district's teacher observation rubric. While feedback from evaluations can certainly be used to improve instruction, the primary goal of evaluations is to make consequential decisions about a teacher's status within the district.

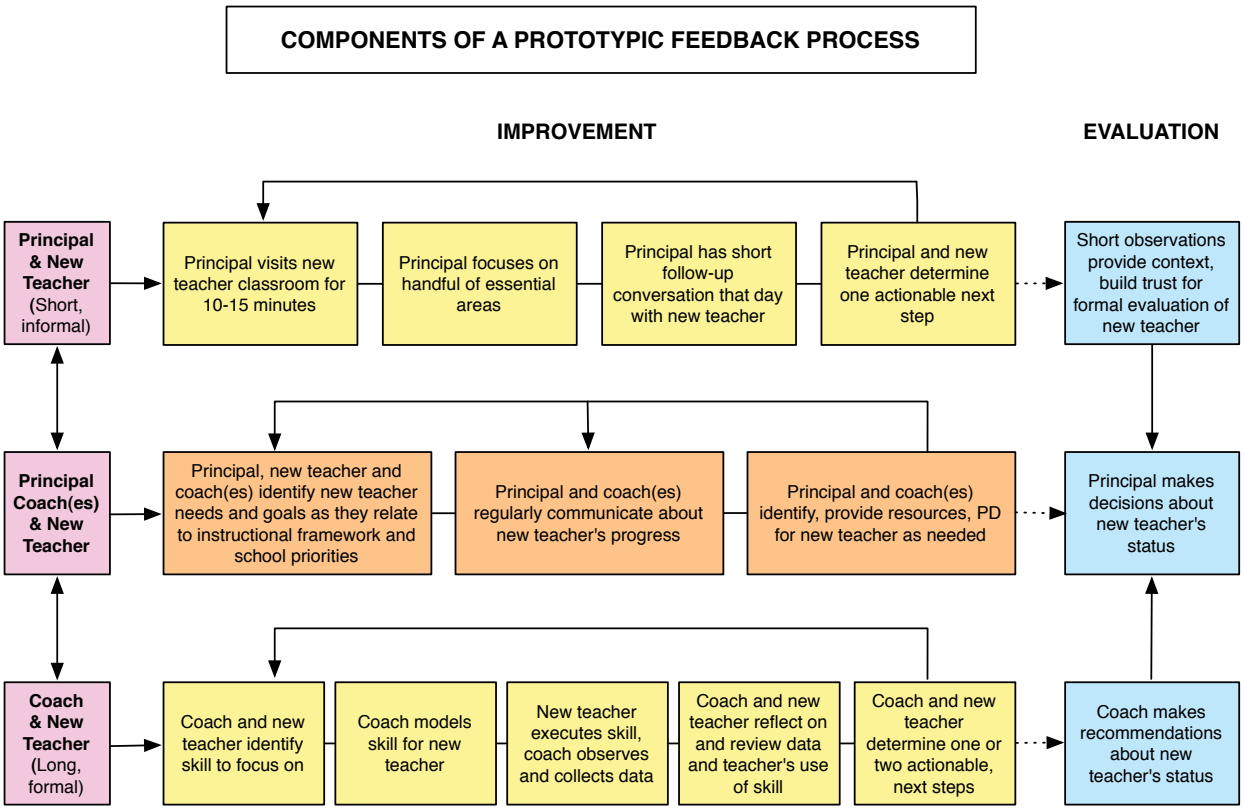
In contrast, with a feedback process for improvement, observations are generally more frequent and focus on one or two specific skills at a time, ideally tied to the district's instructional framework and learning goals established at the beginning of the year. Observers are usually instructional coaches or mentors rather than principals, increasing the potential for trusting relationships to develop. The frequency of these meetings, coupled with the non-evaluative nature of the observations and the specific focus of the feedback, encourage new teachers to be more transparent about their needs, open to suggestions, and willing to develop new skills.

Because of the inherent differences between growth-oriented feedback and feedback for formal evaluation, some experts advocate keeping the two systems entirely separate. For example, in DCPS, instructional coaches provide improvement-oriented feedback, while principals and/or outside evaluators provide feedback that is evaluative. However, with some Peer Assistance Review (PAR) programs the systems are integrated, with Consulting Teachers serving as both coaches and evaluators.

Here we provide a feedback process map to guide districts in developing such a system. By considering a number of sub-processes involved in both the feedback and evaluation contexts, we identify opportunities to blend the two approaches into one supportive, coherent, transparent process that provides actionable feedback for improvement but can also evaluate teachers' performance in a meaningful manner. Though our framework describes the sub-processes in sequence, they are meant as an adaptable guide rather than a universal prescription for success.

Process Map: Components of the Feedback Process

This process map delineates the basic components of a quality feedback system, outlining different but interconnected roles for principals, coaches, and new teachers. Though this system is heavily focused on providing feedback for improvement, it also lays the groundwork for a more effective and meaningful evaluation process.



COACH & NEW TEACHER

In systems that seek to improve and evaluate teachers, coaches can play an important role by providing meaningful, actionable feedback and supporting new teachers' growth over time.

Step 1: Coach and new teacher identify skill to focus on.
Coaches and new teachers should focus on no more than one or two skills at a time. The experts we interviewed emphasized the importance of tying the skills to the instructional framework and any longer-term goals established by the principal, coach, and teacher at the beginning of the year. Many also emphasized that teachers should drive the goal identification process. At the same time, however, they recognized that new teachers may not have enough experience to know what they should focus on or to prioritize options. In these situations, the coach may need to be more directive in guiding the teacher toward skills that the coach sees as being in greater need of development.

Step 2: Coach models skill for teacher.
Modeling can be done either in the new teacher's classroom, in the coach's own classroom (if she teaches part-time), or during a feedback session when the coach and new teacher are discussing an actionable next step. Modeling has two benefits: first, it fosters trust between coach and new teacher; second, it makes the skill more concrete and actionable.

Step 3: New teacher executes skill, coach observes and collects data.
After the modeling experience, a new teacher attempts the skill on her own with the coach observing and collecting data on the new teacher's performance. According to Lynn Kepp, Director of Professional Services at The New Teacher Center, the data should be drawn from a variety of sources—observable teacher and student

behavior, rubrics, student work and test scores, etc.—while making sure that data collection is manageable for the coach.

Step 4: Coach and new teacher reflect on and review data and teacher's use of skill.
This step represents the heart of the feedback process. How coaches approach this discussion—with an inquiry stance, a directive stance, or a combination of the two—should vary based on the substance of the feedback and the receptivity of the new teacher. Coaches should consider a few strategies when engaging new teachers in feedback conversations:

1. They should include opportunity for self-reflection to help teachers develop a growth mindset toward their practice.[12]
2. Feedback should be delivered as soon after the observation as possible. In a review of ten empirical studies on feedback to new teachers, immediacy was identified as a critical attribute of effective feedback.[13]
3. Coaches should draw on clear evidence or data to support their feedback. This lends a certain degree of objectivity to the conversation and helps new teachers make clear connections between their practice and its impact on student behavior and performance.[14]

Step 5: Coach and new teacher determine one or two actionable next steps.
Based on the feedback the new teacher has received, the coach and new teacher should identify a clear and actionable next step. One or two steps should suffice; more will decrease the likelihood that a new teacher will carry them out. Together, the teacher and coach should record the action step and agree (in writing) when it will be completed and how results will be measured in the future.[15]

PRINCIPAL & NEW TEACHER

Principals traditionally have the responsibility of conducting formal, summative evaluations for new teachers, but new teachers also look to principals for direction and instructional leadership and want constructive, formative feedback from them.[16] Though time constraints and limited expertise sometimes make it difficult for principals to provide the same level of detailed and in-depth feedback provided by coaches, these steps can help a principal engage meaningfully with new teachers. They are also designed to help principals build trusting relationships with new teachers and to reduce the anxiety new teachers often feel during formal evaluations.

Step 1: Principal visits new teacher's classroom for 10-15 minutes.
Frequent, informal, and short visits to new teachers' classrooms allow principals to observe more classes, ideally including different instructional aims during different times of the day and year. These visits help the principal gain a better sense of the teacher's classroom and instructional style and help build a greater sense of mutual trust. Short, regular visits often have a "multiplier effect," highlighting issues that may cut across various

[12] Hattie and Timperly, 81-112; Sharon Feiman-Nemser, "From Preparation to Practice: Designing a Continuum to Strengthen and Sustain Teaching," *Teachers College Record* 103, no. 6(2001): 1013-1055.
[13] Mary Catherine Scheeler, Kathy Ruhl, and James K. McAfee, "Providing Performance Feedback to Teachers: A Review," *Teacher Education and Special Education* 27, no.4 (2004): 396-407.
[14] Lauren Sartain, Sara Ray Stoelinga, and Eric R. Brown, *Rethinking Teacher Evaluation in Chicago: Lessons Learned from Classroom Observations, Principal-Teacher Conferences, and District Implementation,* Research Report, Consortium on Chicago School Research (2011).
[15] Kim Marshall, *Rethinking Teacher Supervision and Evaluation: How to Work Smart, Build Collaboration and Close the Achievement Gap* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009).
[16] Susan Moore Johnson, *Finders and Keepers: Helping New Teachers Survive and Thrive in Our Schools* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007).

classrooms as well as allowing cross-pollination of ideas as principals pass along effective practices observed in one classroom to others.

Step 2: Principal focuses on a handful of essential areas.
Given the brief and informal nature of the visits, it is not generally appropriate for principals to use a long checklist or rubric during shorter observations.[17] With too lengthy a list, it is harder to be a keen and thoughtful observer. Instead, principals should identify a short list of essential, easy-to-identify, and discrete areas to watch for during their visits.

For example, former principal Kim Marshall recommends that principals focus on five areas (SOTEL) during their short, informal observations:

1. **S**afety: Is the classroom physically and psychologically safe for students?
2. **O**bjectives: Is the lesson aligned with district/state standards? Is its purpose clear to students?
3. **T**eaching: Is the teacher using appropriate strategies for the lesson?
4. **E**ngagement: Are the students involved in the lesson?
5. **L**earning: Is the teacher regularly checking for understanding, addressing misunderstandings as they arise? Are all students learning what's being taught?

Whether principals choose to focus on the SOTEL areas or other competencies tied to the instructional framework, these priorities should be taken into consideration within the context of the new teacher's long-term goals and needs.

Step 3: Principal has short follow-up conversation that day with new teacher.
Recognizing the importance of immediacy in delivering feedback, principals would ideally follow up with teachers on the same day they are observed.[18] When face-to-face conversation is possible, principals recommend keeping the tone informal to make teachers less nervous and more open to feedback. Informal conversations also provide opportunities for principals to ask quick follow-up questions and for teachers to share more information and reflection about the lesson. Like coaches, principals must be able to read the situation quickly at the beginning of the conversation to determine the best approach, and whether they offer praise, reinforcement, suggestions, or criticism, they should always focus their feedback on a specific element of the lesson.

Step 4: Principal and new teacher determine one actionable next step.
Principals should identify a single actionable next step for the new teacher, making clear when it should be completed and how the teacher's actions will be assessed in the future.

PRINCIPAL, COACH & NEW TEACHER

Working together, principals, coaches, and new teachers can ensure feedback is frequent, coherent, actionable, and relevant to future conversations about professional growth and evaluation.

Step 1: Principal, new teacher and coach identify new teacher's needs and goals as they relate to instructional framework and school priorities at the beginning of the year. It is important for the feedback process to be coherent and consistent, particularly when multiple individuals provide feedback to an individual teacher. Coherence can be achieved if the principal, coach, and new teacher collectively identify areas of focus tied to the

[17] Marshall
[18] Ibid.

instructional framework. Coherence is important for ensuring effective feedback and for developing teachers' trust in the formal evaluation process.

Step 2 (ongoing): Principal and coach regularly communicate about the new teacher's progress.
It is crucial that the principal and coach maintain ongoing communication about the new teacher's progress and their own roles in supporting that progress (as much as possible under local confidentiality policies). Many of our expert practitioners interviewed for this study felt this was among the most important steps to ensuring ongoing coherence of feedback.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: FEEDBACK FOR IMPROVEMENT AND EVALUATION

Drawing on extensive interviews with expert practitioners as well as research in the field of feedback and development, this report has identified a set of interconnected drivers at the individual, school, and district levels that combine to create effective feedback systems.

While each driver forms a crucial component of an effective feedback system, evidence from the field suggests that training feedback providers in the use of the instructional framework and in the use of coaching and communication strategies (stance) has the potential to foster significant improvement in the quality of the feedback new teachers receive *and* in the strength of the other drivers. Because conversations between teachers and instructional leaders are at the heart of a feedback system geared toward improving teachers' practice, raising their quality is of the utmost importance.

Of course, most contemporary feedback systems are not focused exclusively on driving improvement in teachers' practice. Fortunately, this scan reveals a number of promising practices and two frameworks that can help districts and schools create feedback systems to simultaneously improve *and* evaluate new teachers' practice. By developing trusting relationships through frequent observations; aligning the goals for and content of feedback conversations; and engaging new teachers in their own goal setting conversations, school leaders and feedback providers can build effective, multi-functional feedback systems to develop and retain stronger early-career teachers.

* * * *

As mentioned earlier, this report is just a starting point in learning what effective feedback systems look like. Further testing of the primary drivers and feedback process map in more districts would be beneficial, as would the identification of secondary drivers and greater detailing of the sub-processes (for example, it would be useful to explore the process for collecting and managing evidence used in a feedback conversations). Finally, additional research might consider the many other avenues through which teachers receive feedback, including some our experts mentioned: curriculum and lesson planning in teams and professional learning communities. Exploring these opportunities and local variations could expand our framework in the future.

APPENDIX

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List of Interviewees

- Eric Bethel, Master Educator, District of Columbia Public Schools
- Jarrod Bolte, Director of Teacher Supports and Development, Baltimore City Schools
- Marie Costanza, Director, Career in Teaching (CIT), Rochester City Schools (NY)
- Sarah Fiarman, Principal, Graham and Parks School (Cambridge, MA)
- Chana Karlin-Neumann, second-year teacher, Aspire Schools
- Lynn Kepp, Director of Professional Services, New Teacher Center
- Heather Kirkpatrick, Vice President of Education, Aspire Schools
- Allison Leslie, Reading Coach, Aspire Schools
- David Lussier, (formerly) Executive Director for Education Quality, Austin Independent School District
- Kim Marshall, principal author of the Marshall Memo
- Michelle Mercado, The New Teacher Project, Nashville
- Sandy Matthews, Coaching Resources Manager, Success for All
- Matt Radigan, Master Educator, District of Columbia Public Schools
- Chad Vignola, (formerly) Vice President, New Visions for Public Schools

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