Change in Practice in Maryland
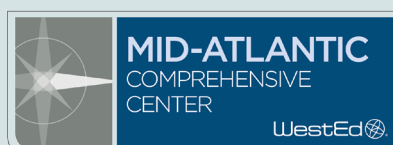
Student Learning Objectives and Teacher and Principal Evaluation

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Contents

Executive Summary

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is guiding and supporting the implementation of a new Teacher and Principal Evaluation (TPE) system in all school districts throughout the state. The system includes measures of both professional practice and student growth. Because the historical and current practice in Maryland is one of local control, the key TPE implementation decisions and the organizational supports that reinforce those decisions are made at the district level.

This study examines the perceptions of frontline educators in Maryland of the support they receive in understanding and implementing the TPE system. It particularly focuses on the key component of Student Learning Objectives (SLOs), an evidence-based instructional process for improving educator effectiveness and student achievement. Findings of this study are intended to help further inform and strengthen the implementation of the overall TPE system and the SLO component, in particular, in Maryland.

Data for this study include interviews of leaders from 12 districts and the state level education association; a case study of four districts; and statewide survey responses provided by teachers, principals and other educators from 24 districts.

Findings show that TPE implementation is generating changes in practice and perception.

Findings

Overall Perceptions of TPE
- With each year of implementation, perceptions of both principals and teachers are increasingly more positive about TPE. As educators have more experience with implementing TPE, they are more familiar and comfortable with all aspects of the TPE processes.
- While both principals and teachers are positive about TPE, principals are generally more positive than teachers, but differences in opinion are narrowing.
- Maryland has successfully addressed the initial challenges of TPE. In the context of this progress, gaps remain.

School, District and State Support
- Survey results show more principals and teachers agree in 2015 than in 2014 that school, district, and state support for the implementation of TPE has been helpful.
- While the pattern of perceptions is increasingly more positive, these data indicate further TPE-related support is still needed to reach all frontline educators.

Instructional Dialogue
- Many educators indicate that principals and teachers are deepening their reflection, and having more data-driven and focused conversations on instruction in their school or district.

Implementing Observations
- In interviews and focus groups, Maryland's frontline educators indicate that actual observation practice often differs from best practice.
- Eighty percent of principals and 52% of teachers agree that the evaluation frameworks and processes use validated observation measures/instruments.
- Ninety-three percent of principals and 66% of teachers agree that observations are conducted by observers/evaluators qualified to do the evaluation.

Teacher Ratings
- In the districts where TPE is implemented from instructional and capacity building perspectives, educators see more value of the evaluation results in promoting instructional conversations and measuring teacher performance.
- When the implementation of TPE is driven to a greater extent by complying with mandates, there is generally more stress for teachers related to achieving the "highly effective" rating and a greater sense of loss of the reflection dimension of evaluation.
- Teachers are generally becoming more confident that the evaluation results will be used to inform their professional development next year.

The Effect of PARCC
- Effectively implementing a new evaluation system, and new standards, curricula and assessments all require substantial input of resources, particularly time, from teachers and principals. In interviews, educators express anxiety about the concurrent rollout of these initiatives.
- Educators have concerns on the many tests that students have to take. Many feel they lose too many instructional hours due to the assessments, a concern that is generally exacerbated when a major new assessment is introduced.

Key Issues in Implementing TPE
- Pivotal and inter-related concerns affecting implementation in all of Maryland's districts are the quality of the TPE process, the consistency of quality within and across schools and districts, and the manageability of the new TPE systems.
- Emphasis on instruction versus compliance varies by district throughout the state. Districts generally appear in one of three groups: districts that are approaching TPE from an instructional perspective; districts with a range of capacities and implementation approaches; and districts that are implementing TPE because it is a state requirement.
- An ongoing challenge for Maryland districts and schools is to integrate a number of initiatives into a strategically coherent instructional improvement process.

SLO Quality Matters
- Districts are beginning to make progress in providing information to teachers about what constitutes a high quality SLO, but teachers still need more customized professional development on all aspects of SLOs to strengthen SLO quality and improve the consistency of that quality.
- Educators report that several districts are also making improvements in the quality and inter-rater reliability of SLO ratings.

Quality in the Overall SLO Process
- Maryland is making continued progress in preparing educators to implement the SLO process with greater fidelity. Over the past three years of implementation, survey and interview data indicate more educators agree that teachers are receiving support and resources on the SLO process; however, gaps remain.
- Teachers still want and need additional SLO-related professional development to improve their ability to select learning content, identify research-based instructional strategies, and set growth targets.

Broader Learnings about Support
- In districts that make a conscientious effort to improve the SLO process, teachers and administrators agree in interviews that the SLO process becomes easier and more effective with experience.
- Many interviewees feel that there is less fear and more understanding about the TPE process, and they are challenging themselves to develop better SLOs, and as a consequence having better dialogue and results.

Teacher Capacity and Support
- More teachers in 2015 compared to 2014 say they are receiving the support they need to implement TPE. Despite these improvements, approximately 45% of teachers indicate that they need further training.
- Teachers have needs in areas in which principals indicate similar and often greater need.

Principal Capacity and Support
- Principals' unmet needs in key capacity building areas affect their ability to support and guide their respective school staffs in the same areas.
- One area where interviewees feel principals need additional professional development is in providing feedback and leading a constructive dialogue on instruction.
- Principals want to see districts pay more attention to principal evaluation, giving principals the opportunity for meaningful feedback and dialogue around their instructional leadership.

Communication and Collaboration
- Where the teacher/district communication is two-way and considered genuine and respectful, interviewees indicate that implementation is more effective.
- In several districts, the quality of communication is also contributing to a higher level of union/district collaboration.
- Where the communication is perceived as being top-down, one way, or giving more the appearance than the reality of partnership, there is less buy-in from school site practitioners and TPE is often perceived as a compliance activity.

Common Language
- A factor that is enhancing the implementation of the new evaluation system—or key components of that system—is when district and school level practitioners develop a common language about instruction.
- In every district, more teachers and principals agree than disagree that they have a common language to describe the SLO process, and that expectations are clear.

Managing Technology and Using Data
- Districts are generally not yet making systematic use of the information generated through TPE. Interviewees describe technology systems that serve primarily as a repository of information, rather than as a management system.
- Districts need to examine their technology tools to understand how and to what extent principals and teachers make use of them.

Learnings from a Case Study of Four Districts
- When implemented with an instructional focus, attention to quality and an organizational commitment to achieving greater consistency of that quality, TPE promotes positive change in principal and teacher practice.
- When these factors are lacking, implementation is markedly less effective.

Recommendations

The recommendations focus on what the state can directly support, and what district and school leaders need to do well, to have a high quality implementation of the TPE system in general and of the SLO process in particular. These recommendations focus on ways to improve the quality, consistency and manageability of implementation within and across districts in Maryland, while reinforcing the instructional emphasis of TPE. To fulfill the state's vision of an evaluation system that is instructionally focused and strategically managed, a particular focus for the year ahead is for Maryland's districts to increasingly strengthen implementation and provide a broader set of supports to frontline educators in the schools.

Issue One: Key District Decisions and Support
- Examine district policy decisions related to TPE and SLO implementation.
- Use SLO, observation and teacher effectiveness data to inform professional and leadership development.
- Forge a stronger link between state-sponsored training and actual district follow-up.

Issue Two: Coherent Capacity Building
- Support principals and strengthen the consistency of implementation.
- Provide training to teachers that emphasizes TPE's instructional foundation.
- Adopt the state model of providing training to cross-positional teams.
- Continue to expand the training for teacher and principal preparatory programs.

Issue Three: TPE and Instructional Integration
- Make the key instructional connections.
- Strengthen the quality of SLOs and the overall SLO process.
- Conduct the overall observation process with greater fidelity.

Issue Four: Teachers' Voice and Two-Way Communication
- Establish mechanisms for genuine two-way communications in the districts.
- Build on the landmark partnership of the eight organization-MOU signees.
- Develop an interactive website for sharing vetted practices with teachers.

Summary

MSDE's implementation strategy for the new evaluation system is already promoting a significant change in practice. The key now is to take steps at the state and, in particular, district levels to extend the reach, quality and institutionalization of these changes. With an expanded emphasis on quality, consistency and manageability, districts can increase the impact of the evaluation system to the mutual benefit of Maryland's educators and students.

Chapter One: Introduction

Purpose of This Study

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is guiding and supporting the implementation of a new Teacher and Principal Evaluation (TPE) system in all school districts throughout the state.

For three years, MSDE has partnered with the Mid-Atlantic Comprehensive Center (MACC@WestEd) to evaluate the statewide implementation of TPE. The MACC@WestEd research and technical assistance team, a collaboration of the Community Training and Assistance Center (CTAC) and WestEd, has previously released two reports documenting the progress of TPE implementation in Maryland. The first, *Spotlight on Maryland: Student Learning Objectives and Teacher and Principal Evaluation*, was released in 2013 and the second, *Real Progress in Maryland: Student Learning Objectives and Teacher and Principal Evaluation*, was released in 2014.[1] MSDE has intentionally used the findings and recommendations from both reports to inform the state's support to educators throughout Maryland.

This study is a continuation of the successful joint efforts of the last three years. It examines the perceptions of frontline educators in Maryland of the support they receive in understanding and implementing the TPE system. It particularly focuses on the key component of Student Learning Objectives (SLOs), an evidence-based instructional process for improving educator effectiveness and student achievement. The study also explores educators' views of TPE implementation in 2014-2015 and additional supports they need, as well as the changes of their perceptions since the first study year of 2012-2013. Findings of this study are intended to help further inform and strengthen the implementation of the overall TPE system and the SLO component, in particular, in Maryland.

Background of This Study

During the 2011-2012 school year, a pilot of the TPE system was implemented in seven school districts: Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Charles County, Kent County, Prince George's County, Queen Anne's County, and St. Mary's County. The pilot consisted of 83 schools, 934 teachers, and 48 principals.

In 2012-2013, a field test was conducted in all schools within 22 school districts, all of which signed on to implement Maryland's Race to the Top grant. Three school districts (i.e., Anne Arundel County, Calvert County, and Somerset County) implemented the full state model and the other 19 districts developed their own local models approved by the state.

The first full statewide implementation of TPE took place in 2013-2014. Each district constructed an evaluation model based on its interests and priorities, and each local superintendent and head of the local bargaining unit signed off on the design. MSDE's ESEA flexibility waiver request, approved by the U.S. Department of Education in July 2014, recognizes school year 2014-2015 as the baseline year for student achievement. Under the waiver, Maryland will not use state assessment scores in personnel decisions during the first two years of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) assessments.

The 2014-2015 school year marks the second year of full statewide implementation of TPE.

Maryland's TPE System

Maryland is implementing a statewide TPE system that includes measures of both professional practice and student growth.[2] In the overall rating of teacher effectiveness, both professional practice and student growth are given equal weight.

The professional practice portion for teachers includes four domains outlined by the Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching (i.e., planning and preparation, instructional practices, classroom environment, and professional responsibilities).[3] The four domains are further broken down into 22 components. Each of the four domains accounts for 12.5% of the professional practice section, totaling 50% of the total evaluation score. For principals, the professional practice measure consists of eight domains based on the Maryland Instructional Leadership Framework and four domains from the Interstate School Leaders and Licensure Consortium. The 12 domains are weighted individually to reflect the needs of principals at varying times in their careers.

SLOs are the predominate measure of student growth for teachers and principals. The state TPE models allot 30%-50% of the total evaluation rating to SLOs, depending on the assignment of the teacher and principal. No single SLO, however, may count for more than 35% of the total performance score. (See Figures 1 and 2 in the appendix for the state's graphics that illustrate these models.)

District Variations

Because the historical and current practice in Maryland is one of local control, the key implementation decisions and the organizational supports that reinforce those decisions are made at the district level. Accordingly, local school systems in Maryland may choose to develop local plans and include additional measures that align to their local priorities. These local plans are required to include certain criteria and measures defined by the TPE framework that every evaluation model must have (e.g., the 50/50 split between professional practice and student growth, the four Danielson-like domains for teachers and the eight Maryland Instructional Leadership Framework domains for principals). Meanwhile, local models need to have the endorsement of the local collective bargaining unit and must receive approval from the state.

Most districts follow the state model for professional practice with some variation in the weight given to sub-measures of professional practice. All districts use SLOs, but the number and weighting in the overall teacher effectiveness rating of SLOs varies.

The two scores for professional practice and student growth are combined, and then translated into an overall rating of teacher effectiveness. Districts have a variety of means to combine these scores. Some districts use a linear transformation with cut scores that demarcate ineffective, effective, and highly effective. Some districts use a matrix of the two sub-domain scores with certain combinations of scores indicating ineffective, effective, and highly effective. Some districts maintain a fourth category, developing, that is not reported to the state, but that provides the district with information that allows them to target support for teachers.

On paper, most districts have a plan to combine scores giving equal weight to professional practice and student growth. In practice, a recent MACC@WestEd analysis of teacher effectiveness ratings and sub-ratings found there is wide variation in how professional practice and student growth correlate with the overall teacher effectiveness ratings that teachers receive.[4]

MSDE Ongoing Support for TPE Implementation

MSDE undertook a number of activities to comprehensively support TPE implementation in 2014-2015. Support to districts was organized in cycles that the state calls "Spheres of Influence". The state cannot mandate participation in each sphere. Instead it hopes to influence participation and thus TPE implementation through programming and professional development that the districts see as too valuable to miss.

The foci of each sphere in 2014-2015 include:
- Sphere 6: Crafting high quality and rigorous SLOs that are both attainable and differentiate educator performance.
- Sphere 7: Communications.
- Sphere 8: Sustainability of TPE beyond RTTT, Principal Pipeline, integration of TPE with PARCC and the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards, the use of grants and third party resources, and Institutes of Higher Education in preparing teachers and principals.

Within each sphere cycle, the TPE team at MSDE holds meetings with school district TPE leadership teams that consist of executive officers, principals, teachers, and district level professional leaders. In these meetings, MSDE provides professional development opportunities and supporting resources on the sphere topic to key LEA administrators and personnel responsible for TPE activities in the districts.

In addition to the sphere training, MSDE conducted its first Governor's Promising Principals Academy in July 2014. The program included 48 participants from every LEA in the state, organized into eight cohort groups. The Academy focuses on developing principals' core leadership knowledge and skills. It also provides training on using observations and SLOs to support and strengthen principal's instructional vision in schools. The second Promising Principals Academy consisting of 48 participants from all 24 LEAs and the SEED school commenced in July 2015 and will run until April 2016.

MSDE and the TPE team also provided Sustainability Grants to LEAs from 2012-2013 to 2014-2015 to use with local discretion in the implementation of TPE. These grants could be used for improving communication strategies, deepening SLO work, creating a virtual environment for meetings, aligning TPE models to Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards and the new PARCC assessment, and refining TPE models. In addition, MSDE issued Tablet/iPad Grants to the Governor's Promising Principals Academy participants to conduct the work of teacher evaluation and support networking.

As part of an overall support strategy, MSDE also sponsored SLO-related trainings for institutions of higher education that have preparatory programs for, respectively, teachers and principals in Maryland. These included 22 teacher preparation programs, 10 alternative preparation programs, and 15 principal preparation programs. These professional development opportunities focused on examining quality elements of a teacher/principal Student Learning Objective; evaluating sample teacher/principal SLOs using the Quality Rating Rubric; and aligning teacher/principal preparation programs with the SLO quality elements and processes.

The TPE team also continued to provide support to educators statewide through its MSDE Teacher and Principal Evaluation website which includes a wide variety of documents and communication materials related to TPE implementation.[5] The site makes available a total of thirty-two communication bulletins (as of July 2015) that cover all aspects of TPE implementation and MSDE responses to concerns raised by districts. Finally, in an effort to be responsive to district needs, and inform its professional development offerings, MSDE conducted a statewide survey of teachers and principals on SLO progress and the communication processes.

Teacher and Principal Guidance on Implementing SLOs

In the Maryland Teacher and Principal Evaluation Guidebook, Version 3, MSDE emphasizes using SLOs as an ongoing, iterative, and collaborative process focusing on data review, rigor, collaboration, refining instruction, and professional growth. It outlines the following steps for SLO implementation: (a) professional development; (b) data review; (c) SLO development; (d) review and approval conference; (e) mid-interval conference; (f) final SLO review; (g) integration of SLO results; (h) planning next steps; and (i) setting the attribution roster.[6]

To support teachers and principals in crafting high quality SLOs, over the past three years MSDE provided districts with a wide range of tools, including: SLO template for teachers; guiding questions for teachers to write SLOs; SLO template for principals; guiding questions for principals to write SLOs; SLO quality rating rubric; a crosswalk between SLOs and observations; and a crosswalk between SLOs and Maryland's College and Career-Ready Standards. In addition, MSDE developed guidance materials which provide criteria in four critical domains to assist with the review and approval process: (a) priority of standard; (b) rigor of target; (c) quality of measure and evidence; and (d) action plan.

It is the purview of local districts to establish processes based on guidance from MSDE for setting, reviewing, assessing, and aligning SLOs to school improvement plans and to LEA, state, and federal priorities. In addition, districts are expected to provide SLO training to local school personnel in keeping with the established state guidelines. They are also responsible for developing and documenting a verification process to validate the consistency, comparability, quality and rigor of SLOs and the evaluation results.

Teacher and Principal Guidance on Implementing Classroom Observations

MSDE provides guidance to support the implementation of the classroom observation component in TPE. Some key instructions on evaluating educators' professional practice are listed below.

- Classroom observations shall be conducted by certificated individuals who have completed LEA training that includes identification of teaching behaviors that result in student growth.
- An evaluation of a teacher's professional practice shall be based on at least two observations during the school year.
- Non-tenured and ineffective teachers shall be evaluated annually on professional practice and on student growth measures.
- Tenured and satisfactory or effective/highly effective teachers shall be evaluated on a three-year cycle using a phase-in model. Each district is required to determine a methodology for schools to initially identify proportional balancing of their tenured teachers for the continuous rolling evaluation plan.
- An observation, announced or unannounced, shall be conducted with full knowledge of the teacher. An evaluation report that rates a teacher as ineffective shall include at least one observation by an individual other than the immediate supervisor.
- A written observation report shall be provided to the teacher within a reasonable period of time. A certificated individual shall sign the observation report to acknowledge receipt; and
- An observation shall provide for written comments and reactions by the teacher being observed, which shall be attached to the observation report. An observation shall provide specific guidance in areas needing improvement and supports as well as a reasonable timeline to demonstrate improvement in areas marked as ineffective.

Statewide Memorandum of Understanding

As part of MSDE's commitment to high quality, collaborative TPE implementation, the state signed a historic Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in June 2014 between the Maryland State Board of Education, the Maryland State Department of Education, the Maryland State Education Association, the Public School Superintendents Association of Maryland, the Maryland Association of Boards of Education, the Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals, the Maryland Association of Elementary School Principals, and the Baltimore Teachers Union. All of the MOU signees pledged to coordinate their resources and strategies in the development of rigorous and measurable SLOs.

Maryland State Education Association

In support of the MOU, the Maryland State Education Association (MSEA) applied for a grant from the National Education Association to support educators with TPE implementation. MSEA also created a diverse cadre of member leaders (i.e., Student Learning Objectives Leadership Cadre, or SLOLC) from around the state to deliver professional development programs and activities on SLOs while helping to build local capacity. In July 2014, MSEA sponsored leadership training in which cadre members were provided two full days of content specific support on SLOs. The MSEA SLOLC members also participated in the three statewide training sessions sponsored by the MSDE in the 2014-2015 school year. MSEA provided additional support and resources to cadre members throughout the year.

Analysis of Maryland School Districts' Teacher Ratings

In October 2014, the TPE team presented to the State Board of Education findings of their descriptive analysis of 43,805 teacher evaluation ratings.[7] This was the first time that the state has been able to examine the impact and relationships of various methods for determining effectiveness ratings. The TPE team found that most teachers were rated effective or highly effective in 2013-2014 and the percentage of teachers rated ineffective was approximately twice what it had been under former evaluation models. In addition, there were differences in the distribution of ratings among districts by size, geographic location, and school level. Local districts were required to replicate MSDE's analyses and conduct independent studies of their own data to inform the refinement of their models.

Chapter Two: Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

For this evaluation, a mixed methods approach is used with both qualitative data and quantitative data collected from educators across the state. The multiple sources of data include interviews of leaders from 12 districts and the state level education association; a case study of four districts; and statewide survey responses provided by teachers, principals and other educators from 24 districts.

Key Leader Interviews

Confidential phone interviews were conducted from late April to early May 2015 with 20 key stakeholders in 12 districts and one statewide association. These included: six superintendents, six local teacher association leaders, one statewide teachers' association leader, two central office administrators, and six school principals (two each in elementary, middle, and high school). Using interview protocols developed by the study team, each interview was approximately one hour long.

A Case Study of Four Districts

Four districts were selected for in-depth case study research conducted in mid-May, 2015. The four districts varied by district enrollment, the percentage of ethnic minority students, and the numbers of schools, teachers, and administrators. Comparisons based on these observable characteristics suggest that the four case study districts constitute a diverse cross-section of all of the districts in the state.

The study of each district consisted of individual interviews and focus groups. The individual interviews were with the superintendent, the teacher association leader, and with district leaders in curriculum and instruction and in professional development. Each individual interview was approximately one hour long. The study team conducted focus groups within each district with, respectively, teachers, principals, and with SLO and TPE team members. Districts selected 8-10 participants for each focus group, making sure the teacher and principal focus groups had representatives from elementary, middle, and high schools. For the teacher focus group, the study team also requested a mix of teachers in tested and non-tested grades and subject areas. Each focus group was approximately ninety minutes long. All interviews and focus groups were conducted using a protocol developed by the study team.

Maryland Teacher and Principal Evaluation Survey

A web-based confidential survey, developed by the study team, was launched on April 17, 2015. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) sent an invitational email with the link to the survey to all superintendents in the state, asking them to share this information with the principals, teachers, and other school-based staff in the local school districts and encourage them to respond. The study team alone had access to survey responses. MSDE updated the superintendents regularly on the progress of survey participation. The survey was open seven weeks until June 5, 2015.

The 40 multiple choice questions centered on: (a) the systemic context for the implementation of the TPE system; (b) the quality of the TPE frameworks and processes; (c) supports teachers receive on Student Learning Objectives (SLOs); (d) educators' experience with the TPE system during the 2014-2015 school year; and (e) additional supports educators need. An open ended question was included which provided an opportunity for the respondents to share any comments they had concerning the TPE system.

Originally, 19,124 educators responded to the survey. A total of 102 surveys were excluded from the study for not identifying their district affiliations. The final analysis is based on the responses of 19,022 educators from all of the 24 local school districts. The district response rates range from 7.1% to 82.4%, with a state average of 30.3%. Compared with 2014 (i.e., 16,314 participants), the number of respondents in 2015 (i.e., 19,022) increased by 16.6 percentage points, or 2,708 more respondents (see Table 1 in the appendix for more detail on the response rates by district).

A substantial number of the survey respondents have gained knowledge about and experience with SLOs and the TPE system. The majority of the respondents have participated in SLO trainings (85%). And approximately half of the respondents have participated in classroom observation trainings (49%).

The majority of the respondents are classroom teachers (66%), and nearly two-thirds of the teachers have 10 or more years of teaching experience (65%). Most of the survey respondents have a Master's degree (76%). A total of 610 principals completed the survey, constituting 42.2% of all school principals in the state. The respondents to the 2015 TPE survey were very similar to those to the 2014 survey based on such observable characteristics as TPE experience, school level, position, subject area, experience as a teacher, experience as a principal, and highest educational degree. (See Table 2 in the appendix for more detail on the characteristics of the survey respondents.)

The survey analysis included an examination of the responses by three teacher categories: classroom teacher, non-classroom teaching staff, and special educator. Since teachers' responses were very similar across their categories, they have been grouped into one category, "Teacher," for the purposes of discussion in the report. For similar reasons, the principal and assistant principal responses have been grouped into one category, "Principal."

Cross tabulations and figures were used to describe educators' perceptions. Mann-Whitney U tests were conducted to examine the statistical significance of the differences across groups and years.

Limitations of the Data

In order to gain actionable information and timely insights in the implementation of the TPE system, data were collected and studied within a relatively short time frame. Although the four districts in the case study covered a broad range of characteristics in terms of district enrollment and the numbers of schools, teachers, and administrators, the findings in those four districts may not be generalizable to all of the districts. While the study team analyzed educators' survey responses from the 24 districts in the state, the response rates by district varied considerably. In addition, the data were perceptual in nature. No student performance data were available to the study team for analysis.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the survey data are not strictly longitudinal because the surveys are anonymous and it is not possible to identify whether the same teachers and principals are responding from one year to the next. Consequently, it is possible that some of the changes observed can be functions of the different samples in different years.

In spite of these limitations, however, consistent findings emerged from the interviews, focus groups, and survey responses, drawing a clear picture of the strengths and challenges of TPE, SLOs, and classroom observations. These findings have important policy and leadership implications for the continued implementation and improvement of the TPE system.

Chapter Three: TPE Implementation in Maryland

This chapter examines the implementation of the TPE system in Maryland. It covers educators' overall perceptions of TPE; the perceived helpfulness of the school, district, and state support; the impact of TPE on instructional dialogue; the implementation of classroom observations; the views of educators on teacher ratings; and the perceived effect that PARCC is having on TPE implementation.

Overall Perceptions of TPE

With each year of implementation, perceptions of both principals and teachers are increasingly more positive about TPE. These trends can be seen in both the three-year and two-year comparisons of survey responses.

Among the key findings:

- More principals and teachers view the supports at the school, district, and state levels as being helpful.

- While both principals and teachers are positive about TPE, there are nuances in their survey responses. Principals tend to be more positive about TPE on survey items than do teachers, yet teachers are showing greater improvement in their perceptions. **While there are differences between the two groups, perception gaps are narrowing between principals and teachers.**

- Educators report more instructionally focused dialogue with their colleagues and supervisors.

- Frontline educators still have concerns on issues ranging from the practice of classroom observations to the concurrence of the many educational initiatives, especially the PARCC assessments.

> *Simply put, principals and teachers are becoming more positive about TPE.*

2013-2015

Survey results from the past three years, including the survey data from the field test in 2012-2013 and two years of full statewide implementation, corroborate that educator opinions about TPE are improving as they gain experience implementing all the components of TPE. Table III-1 shows the percentage of educators who agree with the 18 statements that have been used in all three surveys from 2013-2015. There has been a year by year increase in the percent of teachers who agree with *every* survey item in the sections on "Systemic Context," the "Quality of TPE Frameworks and Processes," and "Student Learning Objectives." As shown in the "Capacity Building" section, there is also a year by year decrease in the amount of support needed by educators as they become more familiar with key aspects of TPE. Simply put, principals and teachers are becoming more positive about TPE and their ability to implement it.

The following comments from one Maryland superintendent show how the progression of TPE looks when it is approached systemically and from an instructional perspective.

> *"We are getting our hands dirty by understanding what growth looks like. We are just developing our system…We are learning by doing."*
>
> –Superintendent A, 2013

"[TPE is] bringing additional attention to instructional leadership, and [there are] more discussions between teachers and principals."

–Superintendent A, 2014

"[TPE] is a nice blend of what we were working on instructionally. So right now we are preparing to move toward additional conversations. With that, [we have] better personalized instruction for students…The framework helps teachers to better understand what is expected for them, and helps principals to have those conversations…so I think we are moving the instructional piece forward."

–Superintendent A, 2015

Table III-1. Percentage of Educators Agreeing with Survey Items 2013-2015

	Principals				**Teachers**			
Systemic Context	2013	2014	2015	2013-15 Change	2013	2014	2015	2013-15 Change
The expectations are clear for teachers and principals in the TPE system.	55%	70%	82%	+27%*	41%	50%	63%	+22%*
TPE is based on principles of continuous improvement.	83%	86%	87%	+4%	58%	60%	65%	+7%*
TPE recognizes the scope of an educator's roles and responsibilities.	67%	71%	74%	+7%	42%	46%	51%	+9%*
Quality of TPE Frameworks and Processes Teacher evaluation frameworks and processes…								
Respect educators' professional knowledge and skills.	82%	85%	88%	+6%*	51%	53%	59%	+8%*
Utilize validated observation measures/instruments.	67%	76%	80%	+13%*	40%	44%	52%	+12%*
Provide a summative rating of educator performance.	71%	84%	85%	+14%*	42%	51%	58%	+16%*
Lead to improved decisions related to instructional approaches.	66%	79%	82%	+16%*	38%	48%	53%	+15%*
Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) Teachers receive…								
Information about developing high quality SLOs.	57%	70%	76%	+19%*	42%	50%	57%	+15%*
Information about the use of SLO components.	64%	74%	79%	+15%*	44%	50%	57%	+13%*
Resources supporting the use of student baseline data.	56%	72%	77%	+21%*	35%	43%	52%	+17%*
Guidance in selecting learning content for SLOs.	50%	76%	79%	+29%*	32%	50%	56%	+24%*
Guidance in selecting research-based instructional strategies for SLOs.	45%	63%	70%	+25%*	27%	37%	45%	+18%*
Recommendations for selecting pre/post assessments for SLOs.	44%	71%	75%	+31%*	29%	48%	53%	+24%*
Valid and reliable approaches to setting growth targets for SLOs.	42%	60%	65%	+23%*	28%	40%	47%	+19%*

	Principals				Teachers			
Capacity Building I need support in…	2013	2014	2015	2013-15 Change	2013	2014	2015	2013-15 Change
Gaining timely access to student data.	51%	55%	50%	-1%	55%	47%	43%	-12%*
Analyzing student data for action.	44%	55%	49%	-5%	53%	46%	42%	-11%*
Using pre/post assessments.	48%	49%	43%	-5%	48%	38%	34%	-14%*
Receiving SLO feedback from school or district administration.	67%	55%	45%	-22%*	66%	50%	43%	-23%*

Note: Percentages represent the percent who agree/strongly agree. N (principal 2013=173, 2014=1,029, 2015=1,160); N (teacher 2013=1,657, 2014=14,905, 2015=17,344).Throughout this report, *Principals* refers to principals and assistant principals; *Teachers* refers to classroom teachers, non-classroom teaching staff, and special educators; and *indicates statistically significant differences at the 95% confidence level.

2014-2015

A deeper look at survey responses from 2014 to 2015, the most recent two-year comparison, shows that both changes in practice and changes in perception are positive. Table III-2 shows that principals and teachers have higher levels of agreement with nearly all factors in the "Systemic Context," the "Quality of TPE Frameworks and Processes," and "Student Learning Objectives" survey sections. **As educators have more experience with implementing TPE, they are more familiar and comfortable with all aspects of the TPE processes.** This is consistent with findings from last year's evaluation of TPE.[8]

In the section on "This Year's Experience" in Table III-2, the only survey item that does not have more teachers in agreement in 2015 versus 2014 is, "There were opportunities to confer with my principal about my SLOs." For principals, nearly three-quarters indicate they have opportunities to confer about SLOs, engage in mid-year conferences, reflect on instructional practices, and participate in instructionally focused dialogue, but there is either no change or a slight decline in their level of agreement from 2014 to 2015.

As shown in the "Capacity Building" section, both principals and teachers show a decrease from 2014 to 2015 in the type of support they need as they implement key aspects of TPE. Similar to the three-year comparison, this indicates that educators are becoming more comfortable with their capacity in these areas.

The findings from the survey show that, overall, **Maryland has successfully addressed the initial challenges of TPE. In the context of this progress, gaps remain.** Both principals and teachers need more support in key areas of TPE implementation, but they do not need the same types of training they needed when learning the system. Instead, they need more customized professional and leadership development.

Building on the steady progress made to date, subsequent sections show that the state now has a more sophisticated set of challenges to address in order to have systemic impact on improving instruction and instructional leadership across Maryland's districts.

> *Maryland has successfully addressed the initial challenges of TPE.*

Table III-2. Percentage of Educators Agreeing with Survey Items 2014-2015

	Principals			Teachers		
Systemic Context	2014	2015	Change	2014	2015	Change
The expectations are clear for teachers and principals in the TPE system.	70%	82%	+12%*	50%	63%	+13%*
TPE is based on principles of continuous improvement.	86%	87%	+1%*	60%	65%	+5%*
TPE recognizes the scope of an educator's roles and responsibilities.	71%	74%	+3%*	46%	51%	+5%*
The State's support of the implementation of the TPE system is helpful.	44%	49%	+5%*	25%	32%	+7%*
My district's support of the implementation of the TPE system is helpful.	77%	81%	+4%	40%	46%	+6%*
My school's support of the implementation of the TPE system is helpful.	88%	88%	0%	55%	57%	+2%*
The school community's support of the implementation of the TPE system is helpful.	45%	51%	+6%*	27%	33%	+6%*
Quality of TPE Frameworks and Processes Teacher evaluation frameworks and processes…						
Respect educators' professional knowledge and skills.	85%	88%	+3%*	53%	59%	+6%*
Utilize validated observation measures/instruments.	76%	80%	+4%*	44%	52%	+8%*
Are conducted by observers/evaluators qualified to do the evaluation.	90%	93%	+3%	61%	66%	+5%*
Provide a summative rating of educator performance.	84%	85%	+1%	51%	58%	+7%*
Provide useful feedback to teachers.	84%	87%	+3%	49%	54%	+5%*
Encourage reflection on instructional practices.	89%	90%	+1%	66%	70%	+4%*
Lead to improved decisions related to instructional approaches.	79%	82%	+3%	48%	53%	+5%*
Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) Teachers receive…						
Information about developing high quality SLOs.	70%	76%	+6%*	50%	57%	+7%*
Information about the use of SLO components.	74%	79%	+5%*	50%	57%	+7%*
Resources supporting the use of student baseline data.	72%	77%	+5%*	43%	52%	+9%*
Guidance in selecting learning content for SLOs.	76%	79%	+3%*	50%	56%	+6%*
Guidance in selecting research-based instructional strategies for SLOs.	63%	70%	+7%*	37%	45%	+8%*
Information on connecting Maryland's CCR Standards to SLOs.	55%	65%	+10%*	33%	45%	+12%*
Recommendations for selecting pre/post assessments for SLOs.	71%	75%	+4%*	48%	53%	+5%*
Valid and reliable approaches to setting growth targets for SLOs.	60%	65%	+5%*	40%	47%	+7%*
Professional development that is informed by the SLO process.	66%	71%	+5%*	43%	49%	+6%*
Guidance in developing strategies for student differentiation or accommodation where appropriate.	64%	70%	+6%*	37%	46%	+9%*

			Principals			Teachers		
This Year's Experience This year, I believe…			2014	2015	Change	2014	2015	Change
	Data were used to develop my SLOs and to improve my teaching.		77%	82%	+5%*	55%	62%	+7%*
	There were opportunities to confer with my principal about my SLOs.		90%	88%	-2%	71%	67%	-4%*
	There were opportunities to engage in a mid-interval review and refinement of my SLOs.		82%	79%	-3%	63%	64%	+1%*
	Reflection on my instructional practices deepened.		72%	71%	-1%	44%	50%	+6%*
	There was more instructionally focused dialogue with my colleagues.		75%	75%	0%	42%	48%	+6%*
	There was more instructionally focused dialogue with my supervisor.		78%	78%	0%	39%	44%	+5%*
	The results of my evaluation will be used to inform my professional development plan for next year.		74%	75%	+1%	45%	49%	+4%*
Capacity Building I need support in…								
	Gaining timely access to student data.		55%	50%	-5%	47%	43%	-4%*
	Analyzing student data for action.		55%	49%	-6%	46%	42%	-4%*
	Using pre/post assessments.		49%	43%	-6%*	38%	34%	-4%*
	Using Maryland's College and Career-Ready Standards.		63%	53%	-10%*	55%	46%	-9%*
	Receiving SLO feedback from school or district administration.		55%	45%	-10%*	50%	43%	-7%*
	Using data from SLOs and observations to strengthen school improvement planning.		64%	57%	-7%*	48%	44%	-4%*
	Using data from SLOs and observations to make improvements in my instructional practices (for teachers only).		N/A	N/A	N/A	48%	43%	-5%*
	Using data from SLOs and observations to make improvements in my instructional supervision (principals only).		70%	59%	-11%*	N/A	N/A	N/A

Note: Percentages represent the percent who agree or strongly agree. N (Principal, 2014=1,029; 2015=1,160); N (teacher, 2014=14,905; 2015=17,344).

School, District and State Support

The positive trend in how educators perceive the merits and overall implementation of TPE appears to be a function of the level and type of support educators receive. For most educators, that support comes from the district and the school, but many have also participated in state trainings sponsored by MSDE or association trainings sponsored by MSEA.

Survey results show more principals and teachers agree in 2015 than in 2014 that school, district, and state support for the implementation of TPE has been helpful. As Figure III-1 demonstrates, a preponderance of principals agree that district support of TPE implementation is helpful (81%) and even more agree that school level support is helpful (88%). Teacher perceptions are less favorable than principals regarding district support (46%) and school support (57%) of TPE implementation.

While the pattern of perceptions is increasingly more positive, these data indicate further TPE-related support is still needed to reach all frontline educators.

Figure III-1. Principal and Teacher Views on the Support for TPE

	2014	2015	2014	2015	2014	2015	2014	2015	2014	2015	2014	2015
Disagree	21%	16%	37%	29%	10%	7%	29%	23%	3%	4%	21%	19%
Undecided	35%	35%	39%	40%	13%	13%	31%	31%	9%	8%	23%	24%
Agree	44%	49%	25%	32%	77%	81%	40%	46%	88%	88%	55%	57%

(Chart: stacked bar graph with Agree, Undecided, Disagree groupings by Principals and Teachers, 2014 and 2015, across three statements: "The State's support of the implementation of the TPE system is helpful.", "My district's support of the implementation of the TPE system is helpful.", "My school's support of the implementation of the TPE system is helpful.")

Note: Throughout this report, *Agree* is a composite of strongly agree/agree and *Disagree* is a composite of strongly disagree/disagree.

Informed by last year's research,[9] MSDE sponsored multiple sessions on SLOs with principals, teachers, and district curriculum and instruction leaders to model high quality training that attendees could in turn use in their districts and schools. These professional learning opportunities were highly regarded by the participants.

> *"The rubrics and activities were extremely helpful! The dialogue at each table with colleagues from around the state was very beneficial."*
>
> –Principal

> *"[It is] very helpful to discuss/rate the various components of an SLO. The annotated SLO is very helpful. [Please] video the session for use back in the districts."*
>
> –Central Administrator

> *"MSDE is doing these convenings…I think the good part is that they are asking for teams from districts to come."*
>
> –Union Leader

> *"The state has had extensive training about how to write the SLO, which components it should contain, and that's all been shared with the teachers…The state has also provided annotated SLOs with feedback and we will look at scoring and the type of feedback we give to the teacher to make them higher quality."*
>
> –Principal

Instructional Dialogue

One key objective of the TPE system is to prompt educators' use of student data to inform their practices, encourage instructional reflection, and promote meaningful dialogues between administration and their staff. **In interviews, many educators indicate that principals and teachers are deepening their reflection, and having more data-driven and focused conversations on instruction in their district or school.** In particular, they believe that the conversations are getting more courageous and authentic over the years, and the principals more adept at leading the process.

> *"Principals are more comfortable and they are really having instructional conversations. We call them very courageous conversations when a principal talks to a veteran teacher of 25 years and tells him that his students really didn't learn anything. In the first year, there was difficulty."*
>
> –Superintendent

> *"TPE facilitates a great deal of conversation with teachers and administration. We have those instructional discussions. We've gotten better with that than last year. Initially, we were so concerned with the process that it almost became a distraction to have the discussion. The process has improved a great deal…We really improved and make it clear that the conversation should be about instruction. It does promote that conversation. It makes you sit down and have that – even with SLOs, you have check points to follow up and it encourages that."*
>
> –Principal

> *"I believe that the TPE/SLO process has brought about some positive changes in data driven instruction and instructional discussions among colleagues."*
>
> –Teacher

In addition to having more meaningful instructional conversations, educators also indicate that their reflection on instructional practices is deepening and that is a positive outcome of TPE implementation.

> *"We are thoughtful and purposeful about what we are seeing in teachers. It forces me to be reflective and more focused in classrooms. The conversation following a walk-through, years ago it was very general and now it's very specific. 'I noticed you didn't have success criteria, let's talk about that. You have kids self-selecting, did that seem effective?' That has a direct response to impact on student learning when teachers are forced to be that reflective."*
>
> –Principal

> *"It makes people constantly reflect upon the instruction and where you should be. All of these things work together to make teachers better reflective practitioners."*
>
> –Union Leader

> *"The key thing I see is the reflective practice. It provides opportunities for us to reflect on our instructional practices."*
>
> –Principal

While most interviewees express positive thoughts regarding the conversations that are occurring, some teachers still have concerns. They note that in some cases the conversations are not happening as they should be, due either to a lack of time to have in-depth conversations or a lack of consistency across principals in their skills at providing instructional leadership.

> *"It's time to have the dialogue – where is that time? You wind up doing it after school on your own time with your principal. We have contractual language about planning during the day. In some places, they violate that language. We have before school and after school for meaningful dialogue. At least a half hour or 45 minute conversation is good. We have a lot of good principals, and some are doing that, but we also have a lot of brand new principals who are on a road to do everything possible to shine. That causes angst."*
>
> –Union Leader

> *"It's opened the door for teacher/administrator communication. That's the good piece, but it isn't being done in a way that makes it feel meaningful to staff members. The professional growth is getting lost in the stress and anxiety of proving yourself."*
>
> –Teacher

Implementing Observations

Teacher observations are central to the professional practice component of TPE. While districts can choose among several different models or protocols when conducting observations, or develop their own district model, the most commonly accepted best practice is to have a pre-observation conference of the teacher and the evaluator, the actual observation of the teacher in the classroom by the same evaluator, and a post-observation conference of the teacher and that same evaluator.

In interviews and focus groups, Maryland's frontline educators indicate that actual observation practice often differs from best practice. For reasons varying from the many demands on too little time in some districts and schools to significant inattention to best practices in others, interviewees say that the pre-observation conferences often do not take place. In addition, and equally as important, the observers/evaluators can differ at different parts of the observation process. Beyond being an inconsistency of practice, this dynamic can lead to an evaluation of a teacher by evaluators who are neither communicating with each other nor providing a teacher with a coherent evaluation, thereby diminishing the potential impact of the observation process.

Figure III-2 shows teacher and principal views of the evaluation frameworks and processes. **The three-year trend lines in perceptions are increasingly positive, with 80% of principals and 52% of teachers agreeing that the evaluation frameworks and processes use validated observation measures/instruments.**

Figure III-2. Principal and Teacher Views on Observation Measures

Teacher evaluation frameworks and processes utilize validated observation measures/instruments.
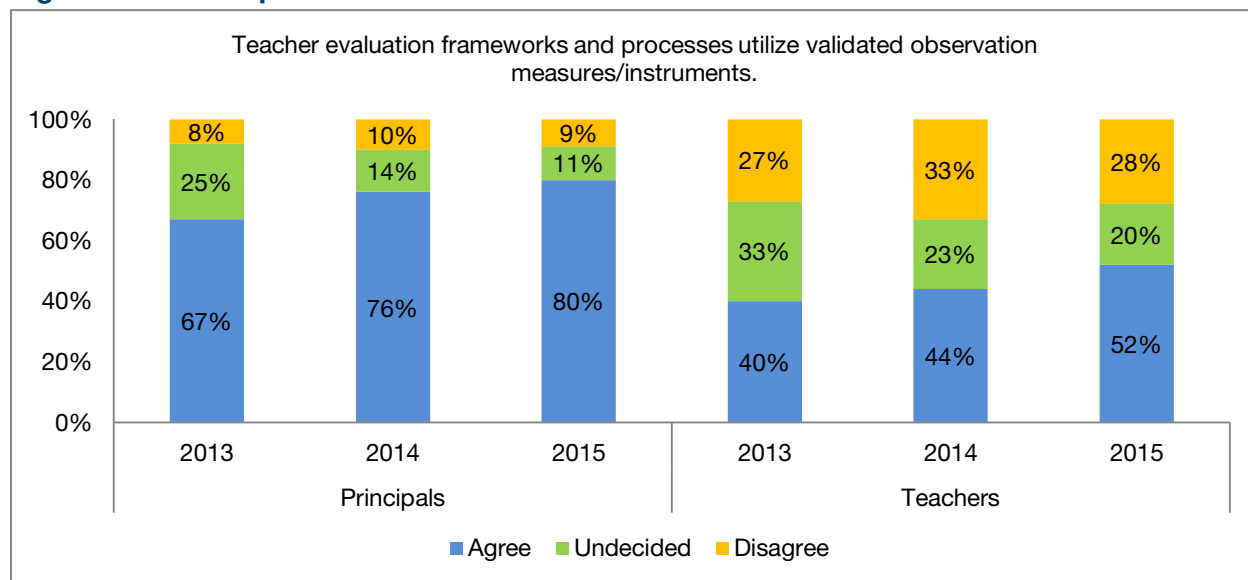
In Table III-3, responses show that **93% of principals and 66% of teachers agree that observations are conducted by observers/evaluators qualified to do the evaluation.** Here, again, the percentages in agreement increase with each subsequent year of implementation.

Table III-3. Principal and Teacher Views on Observations

Quality of TPE Frameworks and Processes	Year	Principals (P)			Teachers (T)		
		A	U	D	A	U	D
Teacher evaluation frameworks and processes are conducted by observers/evaluators qualified to do the evaluation.	2014	90%	6%	4%	61%	19%	20%
	2015	93%	5%	3%	66%	16%	18%

Note: A=*Agree*, a composite of strongly agree/agree. U=*Undecided*. D=*Disagree*, a composite of strongly disagree/disagree.

In both Figure III-2 and Table III-3, the responses are largely positive and the percentages in agreement are increasing. These data also show that there are disparities in the levels of agreement by, respectively, principals and teachers. These disparities are nuanced. For example, principals are the school leaders responsible for guiding and overseeing the teacher evaluation process and for conducting the observations. Accordingly, in the self-reporting protocol of responding to a survey, it is possible that some principals are over-stating their capabilities in these areas. With respect to the teachers, their response rates suggest that there is still work to be done to build the credibility of the new evaluation system with parts of the teaching force.

District leaders and school level practitioners describe both strengths and gaps in the observation process.

> *"We have set up a certain amount of observations and conferences. Principals actually have a chart to guide them. We look at it and make sure everything is getting done. We also have a process that if there is someone who is experiencing a problem, we have a support system to help teachers with more professional development or a mentor or whatever."*
>
> –Superintendent

> *"I am in the classroom more. We still have where I have to do one observation, and a supervisor does an observation, and we collectively do the evaluation. I'm in the classroom everyday because there's no way you can gather all that evidence."*
>
> –Principal

> *"Again, it depends on the teacher and the culture. Teachers in my building value the process and strive to make the process work."*
>
> –Teacher

The quality of the observation process is integral to the credibility of the new evaluation system with teachers, the potential for the observations to improve professional practice, and the ability of districts to effectively link evaluation to instructional improvement.

> *"You've got a lot of principals in the system. Some are instructionally ready and some may be hired for other reasons. The new evaluation system is not causing the problem. It is revealing the problems and gaps."*
>
> –Teacher

> *"With observations, again, we need to do a lot more work with our principals, so that the observations are of quality and become a good professional practice for teachers."*
>
> –Superintendent

> *"I think that the shift with the Danielson framework is making teachers make their classrooms more student-centered and less teacher-centered."*
>
> –Union Leader

Others comment on how the observation process works when it is implemented with fidelity.

> *"The strength is that it's less subjective compared to what we had prior to. It does give teachers more than just a one-time shot. In the previous system, the principal came in and observed, and that was it."*
>
> –Principal

"Everyone is doing the same thing. It allows us to focus on instruction and learning, and tie them together. I rarely mention the word evaluation. We talk about reflection and collaboration. It should be a positive process to improve teacher evaluation."

–Principal

"The observation tool has generated more dialogue and allowed teachers to think about instruction."

–Teacher

Both administrators and teachers identify needs for additional professional development so that the observation process can fulfill more of its intended instructional potential.

"We need a lot of work on that [getting professional development for staff].It is our greatest weakness."

–Superintendent

"We initially started off explaining what the Danielson framework looks like as opposed to what we used to have…but the best professional development is when they're being observed and when they go through the process in terms of the pre-observation, the observation itself, and do the post-observation conference."

–Principal

"Last year, I was evaluated on Danielson and didn't even understand what those domains were… For the majority of the teachers…they can't tell you what the domains are."

–Teacher

"We spent a lot of time on providing quality feedback: quantifiable feedback that gives them specific suggestions on how to grow. We spent a lot time in the cluster meetings talking about what real time feedback is. We also worked on providing feedback through structured walk-throughs. That's an area we need to grow our folks."

–Central Administrator

Teacher Ratings

Districts in Maryland produced and submitted their final teacher and principal ratings to the state in Spring 2014. At the district level, eighteen of the twenty-four districts had 3% or fewer teachers rated ineffective. Ten districts had 50% or more of their teachers rated highly effective.[10]

Interview data suggest that in the districts where TPE is implemented from instructional and capacity building perspectives, educators see more value of the evaluation results in promoting instructional conversations and measuring teacher performance.

"Under the old system, if you did have a highly effective teacher, that rating wasn't there so they appeared to be as effective as the other effective teachers. There was no way to highlight them. It was the first time it was really an honest reflection of where my staff was at. Even within the effective range, there were a handful on the line. For them, it was the first time they could see 'I'm at the bottom of effective' or 'I'm not as effective as the person beside me.' That was a useful discussion for me."

–Principal

On the contrary, when the implementation of TPE is driven to a greater extent by complying with mandates, there is generally more stress for teachers related to achieving the "highly effective" rating and a greater sense of loss of the reflection dimension of evaluation. In addition, some educators feel that it is too easy for a teacher to be rated highly effective, and that the student growth component has too much weight in the evaluation system.

"The highly effective rating also was a stressor for teachers. Teachers are used to being effective all the time, now they have a place to reach for…You're never going to replicate highly effective all day, every day. Your teachers are striving for it. It creates a layer of stress that was really hard for some teachers to accept."

–Central Administrator

"I didn't think it [the rating] was a true reflection of teacher ability. A lot of it was the approach they took with the SLOs, and the administration team not knowing if the target was appropriate. I don't think the scores correlated with their abilities."

–Principal

"We are missing the opportunity for reflection. It's almost compliance. I have to get all this stuff at the end of the year and ok, I'm done. The reflection piece is where the professional growth will occur and it's very difficult after you've uploaded all the documents, and then reflect."

–Teacher

In some districts, TPE is being implemented with the intent of consciously increasing the rigor of the evaluations over time.

"We didn't want to scare teachers and the group away from believing this is a good system, so we made the cutoff scales very reasonable. So, if you look at the data…[most] of the teachers were highly effective. We all know that's not true, but we thought we had to build trust into the system and let teachers know they were doing a good job. We don't want the system to alienate them, to make them think the system is broken, so we made it pretty easy to be highly effective. This year…we will continue to upgrade the rigor until we believe teachers are accurately judged. This is a process that evaluation is to improve instruction. If the people doing the evaluations don't believe in the fidelity of the process, they won't change. If the people being evaluated don't believe it with fidelity, they won't believe they can make changes with the kids."

–Superintendent

As noted in chapter one, a major objective of TPE is to utilize teacher evaluation results to inform teachers' professional development. Survey results (see Table III-4) show that compared with the 2013-2014 school year, **teachers are generally becoming more confident that the evaluation results will be used to inform their professional development next year** (45% in 2013-2014, and 49% in 2014-2015, an increase of four percentage points).

Table III-4. Principal and Teacher Views on This Year's Experience

	Year	Principals (P)			Teachers (T)		
		A	**U**	**D**	**A**	**U**	**D**
This year, I believe the results of my evaluation will be used to inform my professional development plan for next year.	2014	74%	20%	6%	45%	30%	25%
	2015	75%	17%	8%	49%	26%	26%

Note: A=*Agree*, a composite of strongly agree/agree. U=*Undecided*. D=*Disagree*, a composite of strongly disagree/disagree.

The Effect of PARCC

In the past few years there have multiple and concurrent changes in preK-12 education nationally. For example, in 2013-2014, schools across the state implemented Maryland's College and Career-Ready Standards. In the same school year, the state fully implemented the TPE system. In 2014-2015, Maryland administered the new Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessments. **All of these major reforms share the same goal of enhancing teacher instruction and improving student learning. Meanwhile, they all require substantial input of resources, particularly time, from teachers and principals. In interviews, educators express anxiety about the concurrent rollout of these initiatives.**

> *"The Common Core rolled out in such a rush that everyone is on edge, kind of like building planes while in flight. The Common Core is a plan or roadmap, it is not a curriculum. It is hard to feel that you're doing a good job when you don't have the resources, or when the curriculum has not been written yet. They are trying to develop a tool chest of materials at the same time that they are holding people accountable for implementation. People are very nervous. Eventually it will do what it was designed to do, but there is a lot of pain between now and then."*
>
> –Union Leader

> *"I think the mere fact that so much is coming all at once made it more incoherent than it needed to be."*
>
> –Union Leader

In particular, educators have concerns on the many tests that students have to take. Many feel they lose too many instructional hours due to the assessments, a concern that is generally exacerbated when a major new assessment is introduced.

> *"PARCC has been detrimental. It's taken away staff instructional time."*
>
> –Principal

"Am I hearing the concern on the time demand of PARCC? Absolutely, when you see so many days of non-instruction, teachers are really concerned about it. They're concerned the [testing] windows are not correlated with the amount of time instruction was needed. They are very concerned on the loss of instruction time. We are hearing it all over the place."

–Union Leader

"It's been harder – I'm behind. Everyone is behind. It's been more of a time crunch. On average, 12 days lost with PARCC. We've been giving an assessment every single day since April and through May."

–Principal

Summary

Statewide, both principals and teachers are becoming more favorable towards TPE, teachers show greater improvement in their perceptions than do principals, and the perceptions gaps between principals and teachers are decreasing. In the next chapter, we will discuss in more detail the common issues of TPE implementation in the state.

Chapter Four: Three Key Issues in Implementing TPE

This chapter builds on findings from chapter three and highlights three key issues that affect the implementation of TPE. The issues are quality, consistency and manageability; emphasis on instruction versus compliance; and district and school capacity to integrate initiatives.

Quality, Consistency and Manageability

Three pivotal and inter-related concerns affecting implementation in all of Maryland's districts are the quality of the TPE process, the consistency of quality within and across schools and districts, and the manageability of the new TPE systems.

Quality
The role of quality is central to the implementation of TPE. Research makes clear that quality matters when implementing SLOs and teacher observations. In Denver and Charlotte-Mecklenburg, the quality of SLOs developed by teachers is positively associated with higher student achievement.[11] In Austin, research indicates a positive association between SLOs and students' performance.[12] Research in Cincinnati shows that when conducted effectively, classroom observations can both identify effective teaching practices and predict student achievement.[13]

> *"Last year it was more about that test scores are going to cost me my job. Now they're worried about the quality of the evaluation information and the things they have control over."*
>
> –Union Leader

> *"I believe the quality of teacher evaluation has improved and will continue to improve as teachers and principals are getting more comfortable."*
>
> –Superintendent

> *"How do teachers feel overall? They are starting to become more comfortable. When it was rolled out, it rolled out very poorly. The school system did not explain the major changes happening as well as they could have. That caused quite a lot of difficulty. However, over time, people have been increasingly more comfortable with it."*
>
> –Union Leader

> *"This year, we're calling it TPE 2.0. Last year we had a lessons learned group and brought in people, talked about what went well and what we could do better."*
>
> –Central Administrator

Consistency
Consistency and quality are closely connected; they are key to maintaining the integrity of implementation. Interviewees describe the challenge of achieving consistency in implementation, noting in particular the need to prepare administrators and teachers so that they can implement the new system with fidelity.

"We need consistency in how we are evaluating principals and teachers."

–Central Administrator

"What are the top concerns of educators this year about the TPE? Just the inconsistency of implementation, particularly with SLOs."

–Union Leader

"As far as the student growth portion, it's very muddy…we use baseline before instruction so growth will always be shown. It's not consistent across the board within a subject or teachers within a subject."

–Principal

"There is no consistency school to school. I know the principals have received a lot of professional development on TPE, less on SLOs. Implementation varies based on the administrators."

–Union Leader

Variations in survey responses reveal the extent to which districts struggle with the consistency of implementation. The variation in survey responses from educators in a district indicates how much teachers share the same views on what is happening within that district. A low level of variation means educators see things in a similar fashion to each other; a high level of variation shows less shared understanding among educators about what is happening in the district.

Educators' responses on whether data are used to develop SLOs and to improve teaching show, in Figure IV-1, a range of distinct differences by district. This range extends from districts which have high levels of shared agreement (the districts on the left side of the graph) to districts which exhibit lower levels of shared agreement on these items (the districts on the right side).

Figure IV-1. Variation of Principal and Teacher Views on Data to Develop SLOs
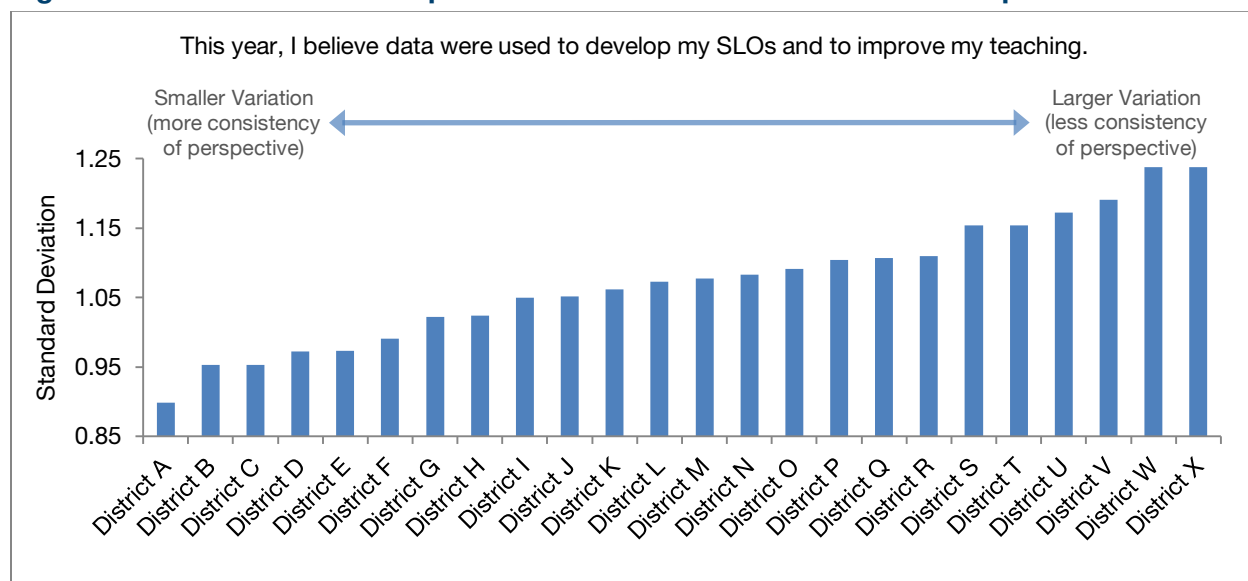
Note: Each bar refers to one district, and the height of the bar represents the district-level standard deviation of principal and teacher views on the survey item based on a Likert scale of 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=undecided, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree. Where district level data on the 24 Maryland school districts are reported, districts are depicted by the letters A though X. In similar figures, districts are consistently identified by the same letter in each figure.

As Figure IV-2 shows, there are similar variations on the topic of whether teachers receive information about developing high quality SLOs. Again, districts range from those with high levels of shared agreement that teachers receive this information (the districts on the left side of the graph), to those with lower levels of shared agreement (the districts on the right side).

Figure IV-2. Variation of Principal and Teacher Views on Developing High Quality SLOs
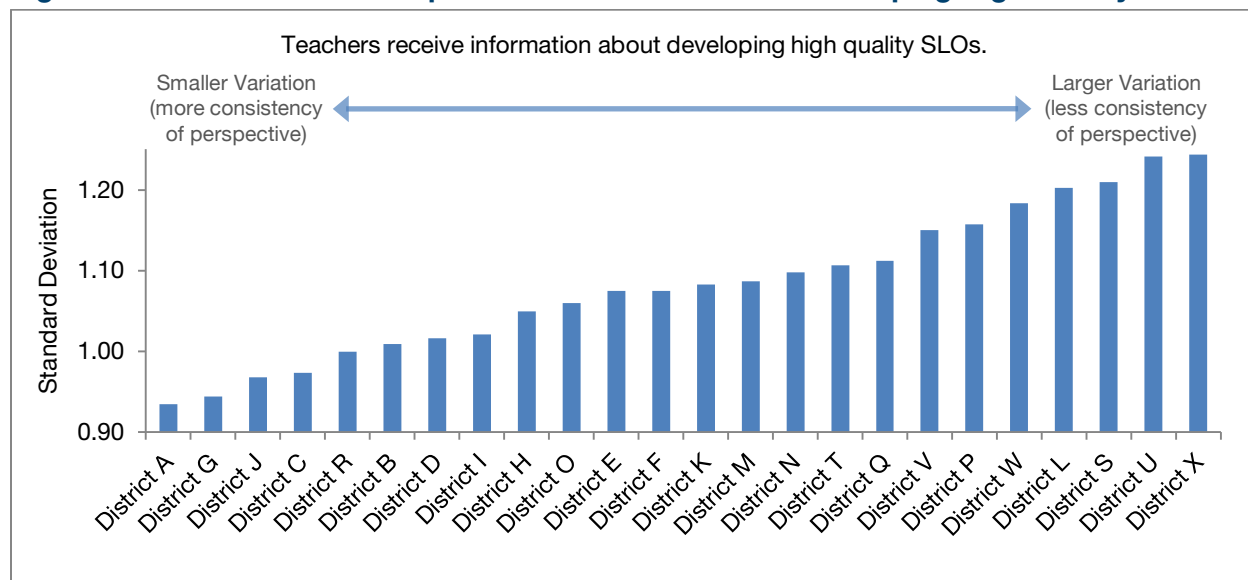
Note: Each bar refers to one district, and the height of the bar represents the district-level standard deviation of principal and teacher views on the survey item based on a Likert scale of 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=undecided, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree. Where district level data on the 24 Maryland school districts are reported, districts are depicted by the letters A though X. In similar figures, districts are consistently identified by the same letter in each figure.

Throughout this report, the comments of interviewees indicate that problems related to the consistency of implementation across districts are also found at the school level. The consistency and quality of key elements of TPE implementation vary from school to school and sometimes classroom to classroom.

Manageability

Making TPE manageable means districts have to think through how they are going to address the demands of time and capacity. Similar to districts nationally, Maryland's school districts are implementing TPE concurrent with other major reforms. These include implementing new standards, curricula and assessments. Interviewees indicate that because they have developed greater familiarity with these reforms, they are now able to work on building connections and finding glue across these initiatives. Districts that make these connections show more progress and buy-in from frontline educators than those districts that are implementing the reforms as separate, disconnected efforts.

> *"The past couple of years has seen a perfect reform storm in education with so many changes, Common Core, Career Readiness, PARCC, HSA, MSA, so many things coming at them [principals] all at one time. They've handled it very well."*
>
> –Superintendent

"We've done a lot of work with our teachers on developing formative assessment tools, summative assessment tools, and performance-based tools. When they did identify common tools, they were all aligned to Common Core…Teachers identified assessments aligned with SLOs and address those critical pieces of knowledge with the College and Career-Ready Standards."

–Superintendent

"You need to see something 5-7 times before you start to understand it. You need to do it a year before you get it under your belt. Nobody is all-knowing at one time. It takes a lot of time to absorb."

–Union Leader

"I'm managing it okay content-wise, but I'm concerned about how we will manage it time-wise at the end of the year."

–Principal

Instruction v. Compliance

The link between instruction and the new evaluation system is a demarcating line among Maryland districts. In terms of TPE implementation, there appear to be three groupings of districts statewide. These distinctions are further illustrated by a case study of four districts in chapter seven.

The first are those districts that are approaching TPE from an instructional perspective. They are making connections between their instructional reforms. Because they are focused on improving instruction, they emphasize building capacity within the district and welcome genuine teacher/district collaboration.

The second grouping covers a range of districts. It includes those who want to move in the direction of the first set of districts but are overwhelmed by the breadth of concurrent changes affecting the field, as well as those who were initially slower in adopting TPE as an organizational and instructional priority. It also includes those who are approaching the reform from a top-down perspective which seems to provide more the appearance than the substance of true collaboration with teachers and limits instructional decision-making by the school sites.

The third set is primarily compliance-driven. These districts are implementing TPE because it is a state requirement. They have limited buy-in and commitment from leadership to support high quality implementation, the links to instruction are haphazard, and union/management relations tend to de-emphasize collaboration.

As described in chapter one, MSDE's policies and trainings consistently underscore the instructional emphases of TPE. **Although there are variations across districts in their commitment to and progress with the state's vision, both teachers and principals are increasingly positive that the focus of TPE is on instruction.** For example, 53% of teachers and 82% of principals believe that TPE's frameworks and processes lead to improved decisions related to instructional approaches. Moreover, the percentages of teachers and principals who have this view are increasing with each year of implementation (see Figure IV-3).

Figure IV-3. Principal and Teacher Views on Quality of TPE Frameworks and Processes

Teacher evaluation frameworks and processes lead to improved decisions related to instructional approaches.

	Principals			Teachers		
	2013	2014	2015	2013	2014	2015
Disagree	10%	6%	5%	25%	26%	24%
Undecided	24%	15%	13%	38%	26%	23%
Agree	66%	79%	82%	38%	48%	53%

■ Agree ■ Undecided ■ Disagree
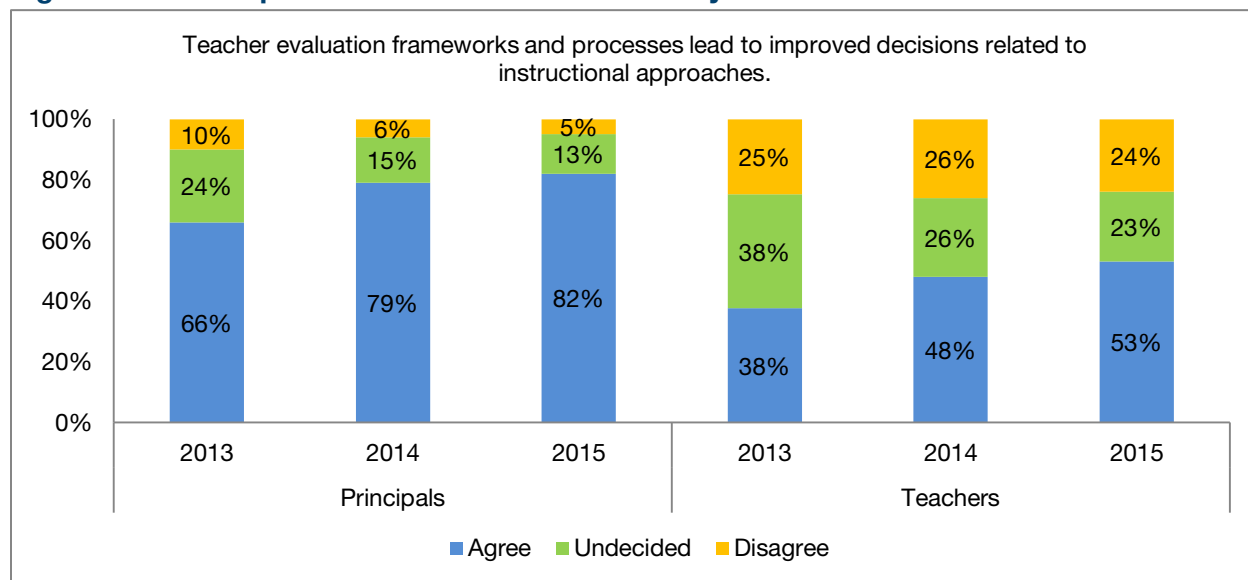
Where districts implement TPE as an integral companion to their instructional approach, teachers indicate that they receive needed support, experience deepened reflection on their teaching practice, and have more instructionally focused dialogue with colleagues.

Numerous interviewees cite the links between TPE implementation and improved instruction.

> *"TPE was critical to our instructional strategy…we have overarching goals and indicators, outcomes, and expectancies to be tied to what we look for in the classroom."*
>
> –Superintendent

> *"Initially teachers thought it was more an accountability piece of work, not anything to improve instruction, more of a monitoring piece...Now they can see that this really is about improving students."*
>
> –Principal

> *"Ultimately, the goal is to use TPE as a way not to be punitive with evaluation, but to use it to help teachers grow. That's basically the line on this. And for the most part I believe it is working."*
>
> –Union Leader

Others describe the importance of emphasizing TPE's role in improving instruction rather than viewing it as a compliance activity.

> *"Every goal should be related to instruction. What we try to do is to improve instruction. The purpose of evaluation is to help principals and teachers to be better at what they do."*
>
> –Superintendent

"I think there has been a clear attempt, successful I would say, to link the TPE to authentic growth and real student achievement. I think that the system is definitely working toward making the TPE process something that will have a genuine impact rather than a 'go through the motions' type of endeavor."

–Principal

"A majority of teachers have moved SLOs beyond a compliance activity. They see connections and the ability to make student instruction decisions, and for teachers and principals to receive additional professional development."

–Superintendent

There are schools and/or departments that, whether doing so intentionally or accidentally, are reinforcing compliance rather than instruction as the focus of TPE implementation.

"We have some teachers that are at the compliance level, jumping through the hoop without consideration to make it useful. It does seem to them like it's an add-on and not incorporated to what they regularly do. Teachers who aren't used to looking at their data have some frustration. Other teachers who were used to high-stakes tests and looking at data, it was easier for them."

–Principal

District and School Capacity to Integrate Initiatives

An ongoing challenge for Maryland districts and schools is to integrate a number of initiatives into a strategically coherent instructional improvement process. This requires building a high level of capacity at school site and district levels so that all schools and classrooms are able to connect SLOs, observations, and Maryland's College and Career-Ready Standards.

Districts that are approaching TPE implementation from an instructional support perspective describe their focus and progress in integrating their initiatives.

"There is a kind of intertwined approach to look at assessments, professional development, and Common Core. You cannot separate out the work of SLOs and the work of the Common Core."

–Superintendent

"The SLO forces teachers to look at kids and how to grow kids. As a parent of two children, I want them to grow. It really forces us to look at the kids."

–Teacher

"We had not digested standards until we tied them to the evaluation system and now PARCC."

–Superintendent

"It's more focused. Your observations focused on your SLOs and the standards are what you use in your assessments. The standards are the driver across the three things."

–Teacher

> *"We are emphasizing the SLO needs to be linked to the standards and the critical content…literally what is the most critical content a 3rd grade student needs to be successful in 4th…They do see the link between the SLOs and the standards."*
> –Central Administrator

In districts with a strong instructional focus, there is on-going, intensive, and strategic work across the district to make sure that all reform efforts work together.

> *"As a system, we have done a lot of work unpacking standards, and working with teachers who are creating SLOs. This is the 2nd year and a lot of teachers teach us how to write SLOs. The district has done a lot of work on the connections."*
> –Central Administrator

> *"We revamped the curriculum and assessment. We started 3 years ago. We laid the foundation for the entire SLO process."*
> –Central Administrator

> *"I have a math coach and a literacy coach, and we just took the standards and broke them apart. My math teachers had already made a pedagogical shift years ago prior to the standards, so they were ahead of the curve. Everyone is struggling with figuring out how deep to go with each standard."*
> –Principal

Several interviewees highlight gaps in district readiness and capacity that are hindering TPE implementation and the effective integration of instruction and evaluation.

> *"In terms of looking at the curriculum and moving it from what we had as pre-college and career-ready to where it needs to be, I think the challenge isn't necessarily on the teachers. It's the curriculum office that needs to make those changes."*
> –Principal

> *"Are teachers seeing the glue across SLOs, observations, new standards, new assessments, new curriculum? There are a lot of gaps."*
> –Union Leader

Summary

Building on accomplishments to date, the next phase of TPE implementation in Maryland involves addressing a sophisticated and inter-related set of challenges: to continue to improve the quality of implementation, to increase the consistency of that quality, and to further advance the capacity to manage implementation with fidelity and instructional effectiveness.

Chapter Five: SLO Implementation in Maryland

In Maryland's model for TPE, Student Learning Objectives serve a dual function—to assess student growth, and to drive instructional improvement to achieve that growth. SLOs are used as the student growth component of the TPE rating. Differing from other growth measures, SLOs are based on the premise that increased student academic growth comes from making improvements in practice. As such, in the state model, SLOs are the glue that links the standards, curricula, and assessments to improved instructional practices seen in the observations. This chapter examines the progress districts and schools are making in implementing SLOs.

Research and Maryland's Model

Research from Denver and Charlotte-Mecklenburg shows that to achieve changes in instructional practice and improve student academic growth, SLOs need to be crafted at a high level of quality, allowing ample opportunity for teachers and their supervisors to engage in dialogue and reflect on best practices for improving student learning.[14] In other words, the quality of SLOs and the thinking process associated with SLOs are what matter.

In examining the implementation of SLOs in Austin, research indicates a number of positive impacts on teachers' instructional practice: teachers who created SLOs had more collaboration with other teachers, felt the SLO process positively changed their instructional strategies, thought SLOs had improved their teaching, and reported greater use of data. The researchers concluded that "…the SLO process was linked with improvements to desirable instructional practices."[15]

The intent in Maryland is that SLOs lead to a more engaged conversation about instruction between teachers and principals, and help catalyze teachers' thinking about how to apply instructional practice—with an emphasis on learning content—to improve the academic performance of students. Teacher participation in the process is critical. To develop high quality SLOs, teachers need to identify gaps in student learning in targeted areas, develop instructional strategies and content to address those gaps, assess student progress, and make changes in instructional practices needed to help students learn.[16]

The key for districts and schools is to refine a process for developing and implementing high quality SLOs, and to engage teachers in thoughtful reflection and action that strengthens instructional practice and increases student learning.

SLO Quality Matters

Through state-sponsored training sessions, MSDE introduced a quality rating rubric to all 24 districts. The intent is that districts use it or something similarly rigorous to consistently develop high quality SLOs. The rubric provides guidance on making sure all elements of a high quality SLO are covered, including: assessing baseline data and the student population to be targeted, determining the learning content to be covered, selecting appropriate instructional strategies, selecting the assessment to be used, setting rigorous and realistic growth targets, and providing the rationale for the SLO selections.

Districts are beginning to make progress in providing information to teachers about what constitutes a high quality SLO. In 2015, three-fourths of principal survey respondents and 57% of teacher respondents indicate that teachers receive information about developing high quality SLOs. Both the principal and teacher response percentages show increases from what survey respondents reported in the 2013 pilot year and the 2014 first year of full state implementation (see Figure V-1). **Based on teachers' responses, they still need more customized professional development on all aspects of SLOs to strengthen SLO quality and improve the consistency of that quality.**

Figure V-1. Principal and Teacher Views on Developing High Quality SLOs
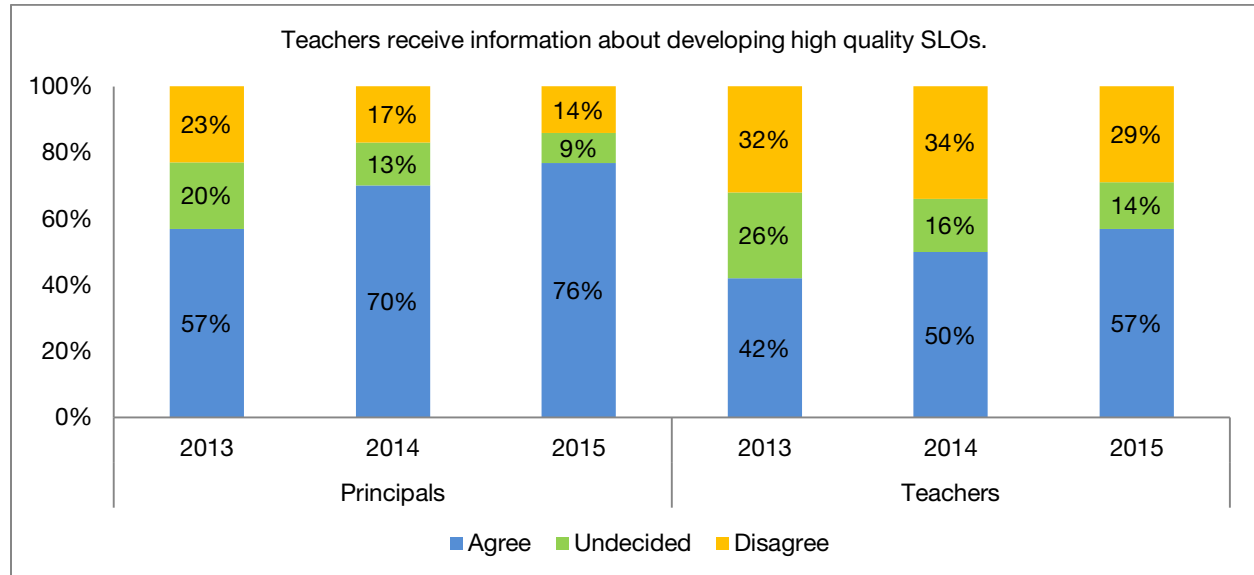
Teachers receive information about developing high quality SLOs.

Note: Throughout this report, *Principals* refers to principals and assistant principals; *Teachers* refers to classroom teachers, non-classroom teaching staff, and special educators; *Agree* is a composite of strongly agree/agree and *Disagree* is a composite of strongly disagree/disagree. Differences are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

In interviews, a number of administrators indicate that they are now using a quality rating rubric in their district.

"Right now what we are doing is we are working on a quality rubric to evaluate SLOs. Some principals...use the rating rubric with teachers at faculty meetings."

–Superintendent

"What about the SLOs? We made a lot of gains for SLOs...We use their (CTAC) rating rubric to help teachers identify good SLOs."

–Principal

"We use a quality rating rubric and my instructions are for admin teams to use it and we give it to teachers...That's a tremendous help."

–Principal

"This year, it's more focused. A rubric has been provided to us now and we'll be working with content supervisors to help us evaluate SLOs. There's definitely been a much larger shift this year in making sure the SLO process is more rigorous."

–Principal

Even in districts with widespread buy-in to SLOs and the SLO process, interviewees indicate that they are still striving to strengthen the quality of the SLOs and improve the consistency of that quality. There is more work needed to do so.

"The grading of the SLOs, the intention is there, but it's still inconsistent across schools."

–Teacher

"We've done a lot of looking at SLOs and with the professional development and principals, we brought samples to them and have dialogue with them. We brought a lot of scenarios. We're not there yet, but we are moving in that direction."

–Central Administrator

Numerous districts are also making progress in bringing greater quality, consistency and inter-rater reliability to the rating of SLOs.

"At our meeting, we have random SLOs which we go through and rate. The practice of going through and rating them has been extremely powerful."

–Teacher

"I would say the SLOs are definitely improving in their quality. Last year, it was getting something to me and we figure it out. This year, we push more for rigor…We talk through it, and I get them to explain where their target is. Teachers probably get on me a little bit there, but they know their kids, and that should be a big part of them setting their target."

–Principal

"At our level or cluster meeting, we've had to bring the SLO and diagnose it together. At least looking at mine, I feel like they are quality SLOs but there are challenges. Transient populations are a problem – targeted groups and kids are coming in and out. It changes your data – your post-assessment and your target looks different because it's changed."

–Principal

"We don't want School A's idea on SLOs to be different from School B's. We came up with a system-wide school plan that all teachers had the same information about what SLOs were and how they would be used. Trying to achieve that consistency across the district is a very high priority for us."

–Superintendent

Quality in the Overall SLO Process

The over-riding strength of the SLO process is found in engaging teachers and principals in instructional conversations rooted in reflection on instructional practices and analysis of student academic growth.

Importance of Instructional Dialogue and Reflection
It's the thinking process that matters with SLOs. Both the national research and the experience to date of many Maryland educators demonstrates that the power of SLOs comes from analyzing data, understanding standards, identifying appropriate instructional strategies, and using assessments and growth targets to ascertain the progress of both students and teachers.

Most principals and teachers are conferring about SLOs, and are taking time for mid-interval reviews of SLOs. When asked about their experience with SLOs in each of the last two years, teachers and principals are both likely to agree that they had opportunity to confer about SLOs. In 2015, 88% of principals and 67% of teachers agree (see Figure V-2). They also agree, at somewhat lesser levels, that they had opportunities to engage in mid-interval review and refinement of SLOs, but nearly two-thirds of teachers say they have that opportunity.

Figure V-2. Principal and Teacher Views on This Year's Experience with SLOs
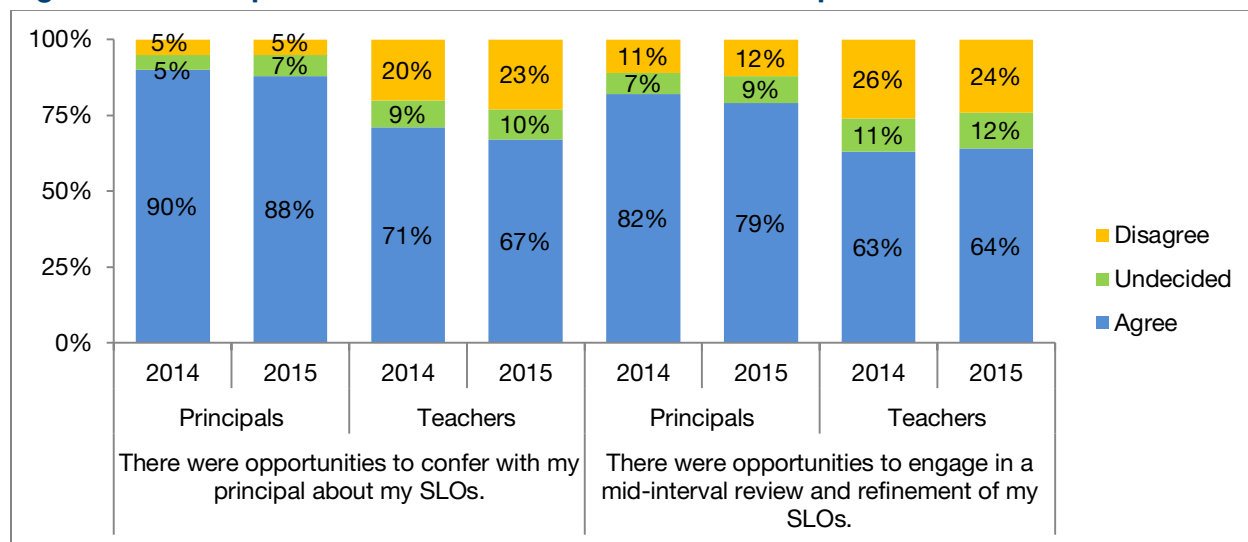
With more chances to confer about SLOs, principals and teachers should have opportunity for more instructionally focused dialogue—to focus on instructional strategies that can help students with specific needs. A greater percentage of teachers agree in 2015 than in 2014 that they have more instructionally focused dialogue with colleagues and supervisors. In 2015, 48% of teachers agree that they have more instructionally focused dialogue with colleagues, up six percentage points from 2014 (see Figure V-3). In addition, 44% of teachers agree they have more instructionally focused dialogue with supervisors, up five percentage points from 2014.

There remains, though, a large percentage of teachers who do not indicate that there was more instructionally focused dialogue with colleagues and supervisors. There is also a gap between principal and teacher perceptions on this item. Approximately three-fourths of principals say that instructionally focused dialogue has increased compared to less than half of teachers who say so.

Figure V-3. Principal and Teacher Views on This Year's Experience with Instructional Dialogue
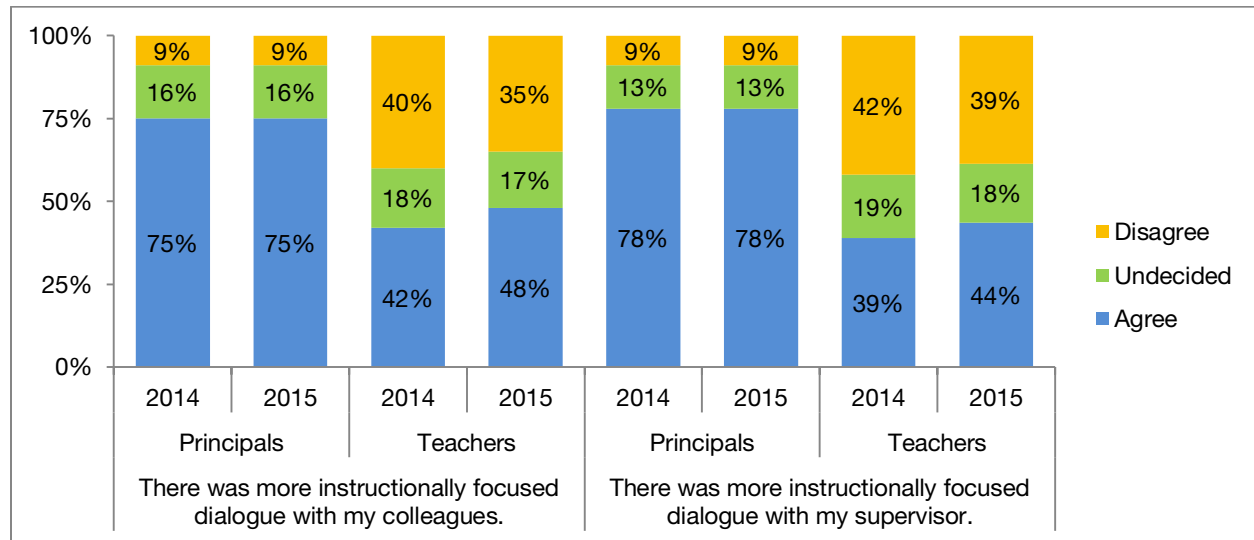
Related to the issue of the amount of instructionally focused dialogue, Figure V-4 shows that teachers are more likely to agree in 2015 than in 2014 that reflection on their instructional practice deepened. Half of all teacher survey respondents agree that reflection on instructional practices deepened, compared to 44% of 2014 teacher respondents. This is an important step forward, yet it also leaves 32% of teachers who disagree on this item. In contrast, more than 70% of principals believe that reflection on instructional practices deepened.

Figure V-4. Principal and Teacher Views on This Year's Experience with Instructional Reflection
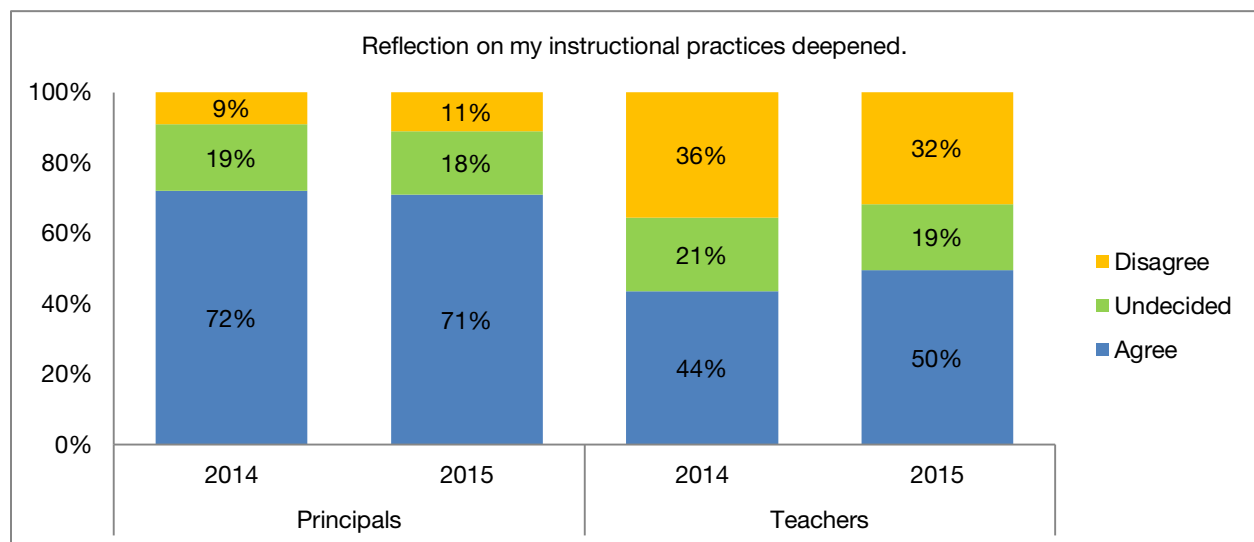
In reflecting on their recent experiences with SLOs, many interviewees cite the value of SLOs in deepening the conversations about instruction, students and student needs, while holding teachers accountable to help targeted students to learn.

> *"I have had very rich conversations with teachers about student needs, student strengths, and instructional pedagogy."*
>
> –Principal

> *"The essence of the SLO is your day to day data conversations."*
>
> –Principal

> *"Teachers who really bought in are finding some of the samples very powerful in helping them to see across the school year. When teachers really buy in, it is a way to demonstrate the value to show their kids' growth."*
>
> –Central Administrator

> *"The strength is the accountability for both teachers and principals so that teachers teach the intended curriculum with fidelity and principals ensure the curriculum is delivered."*
>
> –Central Administrator

> *"I personally like the SLO process. It forces teachers to look closer at instruction and supports reflection."*
>
> –Teacher

Of the many decisions district leaders make to support implementation, one of the most critical and contentious is deciding who develops SLOs. Many districts draw on the national research and MSDE's guidance and have teachers develop their SLOs which are subject to the approval of principals. This approach is predicated on building professional judgment and promoting instructional dialogue with principals. The expectation is teachers will have more instructionally valid SLOs for the students in their classroom. Many districts also allow teachers a number of choices—which the teachers must justify—in developing their SLOs, such as developing classroom-wide SLOs and/or targeted SLOs, and teachers can make choices about the most appropriate growth methodology for their students. In contrast, some districts have opted to take a centralized approach, in which teachers select from a menu of district-approved SLOs. These districts believe this to be a more reliable SLO process.

As districts continue further with implementation, they need to assess their SLO process based on its quality and ability to engage teachers in an instructionally focused dialogue on improving student achievement.

> *Maryland is making continued progress in preparing educators to implement the SLO process with greater fidelity, but gaps remain.*

Maryland is making continued progress in preparing educators to implement the SLO process with greater fidelity, but gaps remain. In the surveys, teachers and principals provide insight regarding the guidance and support teachers receive in using student data to set baselines, deciding on learning content and standards, identifying research-based instructional strategies for SLOs, selecting pre/post assessments, and setting growth targets.

Using Student Data

Over the past three years of implementation, both principal and teacher survey and interview data indicate respondents agree that teachers are receiving resources to support the use of student data (see Figure V-5). Principals agree at steadily higher levels (56% agree in 2013, 72% agree in 2014, and 77% agree in 2015). Teachers are also more likely to agree with principals that they are receiving resources related to using data for SLOs (35% agree in 2013, 43% agree in 2014, and 52% agree in 2015).

Increasingly more site-level educators overall indicate teachers are receiving resources to support the use of student baseline data. The gap between principals and teachers who say teachers receive that support is decreasing, from 29 percentage points in 2014 to 25 percentage points in 2015.

Figure V-5. Principal and Teacher Views on Guidance for Using Data
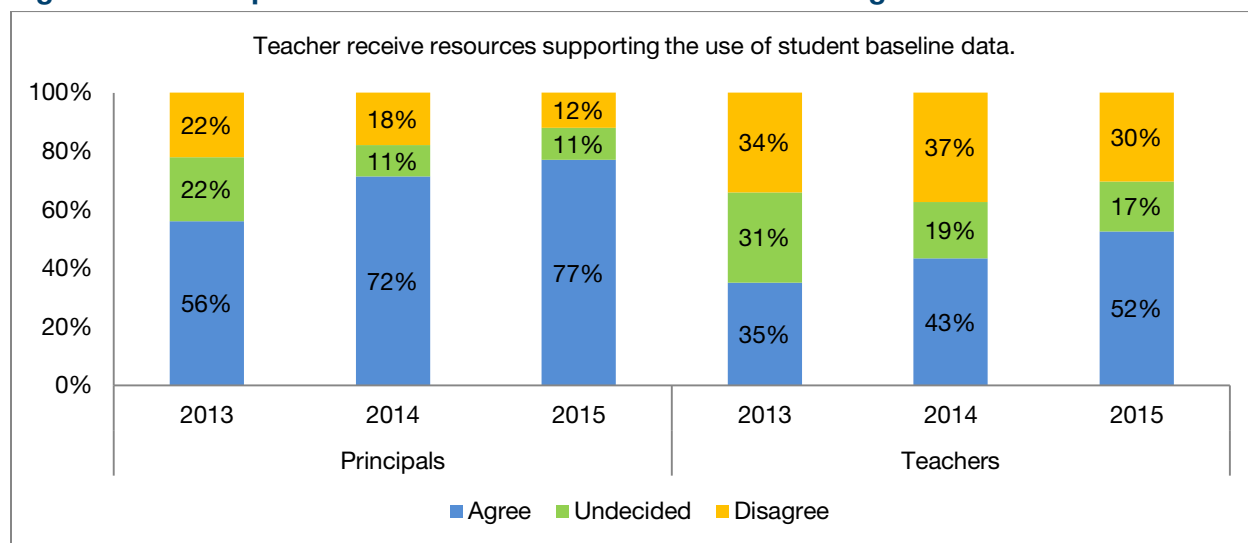
Deciding on Learning Content and Standards

The learning content—the standards that students need to master—is a critical element of an SLO. Research shows that learning content and instructional strategies need to be the drivers of the SLO.[17]

Both principals and teachers believe that teachers receive guidance in selecting learning content, but they have differing levels of agreement on this survey item (see Figure V-6). Most principals now indicate they are providing teachers with guidance in select learning content for SLOs (50% agree in 2013, 76% agree in 2014, and 79% agree in 2015). Teachers also increasingly agree that they are receiving this guidance, but at lower levels than principals (32% agree in 2013, 50% agree in 2014, and 56% agree in 2015).

Figure V-6. Principal and Teacher Views on Guidance for SLO Learning Content
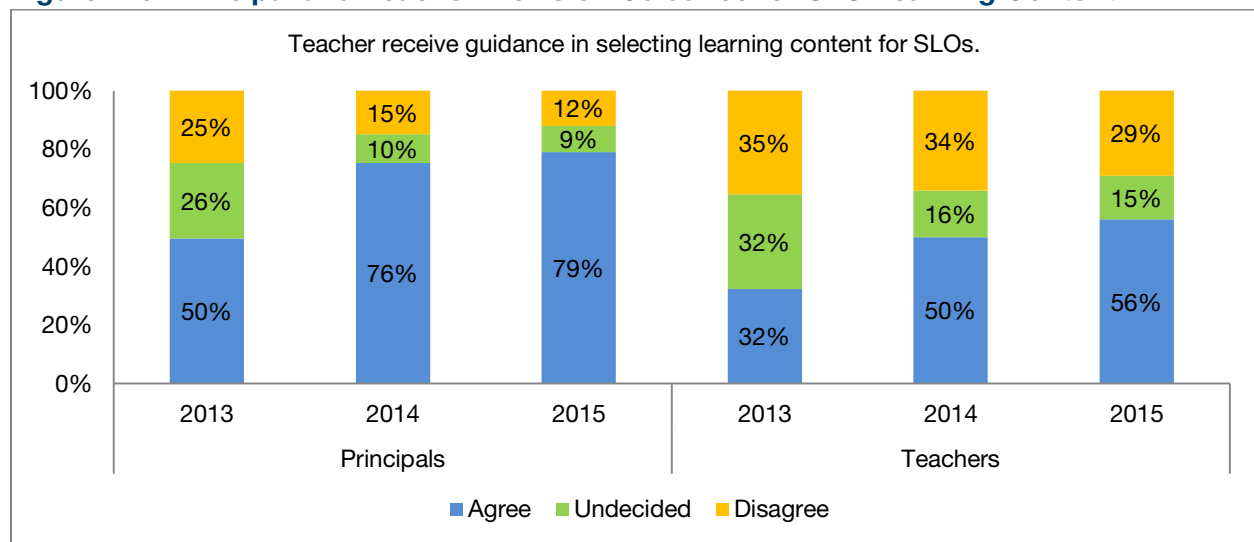
Maryland introduced College and Career-Ready Standards as a cornerstone of both instructional improvement overall and of TPE in particular. Principals are positive in indicating that teachers received information on connecting Maryland's College and Career-Ready Standards (CCRS) to SLOs. In Table V-1, 65% of principals agree that teachers receive this information, an increase of 10 percentage points from 2014. A higher percentage of teachers in 2015 (45%) say they receive information about connecting SLOs to CCRS, an increase of 12 percentage points compared to 2014. Yet in 2015, more than half of teachers are either uncertain or disagree on this item. This is an area where further technical assistance to frontline educators is needed.

Table V-1. Principal and Teacher Views on Connecting Maryland's College and Career-Ready Standards to SLOs

Student Learning Objectives (SLOs)	Year	Principals (P)			Teachers (T)		
		A	U	D	A	U	D
Teachers receive information on connecting Maryland's College and Career-Ready Standards to SLOs.	2014	55%	19%	26%	33%	23%	43%
	2015	65%	17%	19%	45%	20%	35%

Note: A=*Agree*, a composite of strongly agree/agree. U=*Undecided*. D=*Disagree*, a composite of strongly disagree/disagree.

While acknowledging that they have more work to do, a number of administrators see progress in integrating SLOs, observations, and the College and Career-Ready Standards. They say that SLOs are starting to reinforce their work in standards-based curriculum and instruction.

> *"As a system, we have done a lot of work unpacking standards, working with teachers creating SLOs…The district has done a lot of work on the connections."*
>
> –Central Administrator

"They're reinforcing each other. There is a complete overlap. They have to say what instructional strategies they are going to use to impact the SLO and I look for that if I'm going in that content area to observe. I look at the SLO before the observation."

–Principal

"With SLOs, teachers are using common assessments and keeping track of student progress. That allows them to stay on top of standards, curriculum and student progress and to embed SLOs throughout the whole process."

–Superintendent

Identifying Instructional Strategies

Effective teachers know the research-based or field-proven instructional strategies that are appropriate for the specific standards they are helping students to master.

An important issue in the SLO process is whether teachers receive guidance in selecting research-based instructional strategies. As Figure V-7 shows, 70% of principals agree that teachers are receiving guidance on using research-based instructional strategies for SLOs, increasing from the 63% who agree with this statement in 2014. While more teachers agree in 2015 than in 2014 that they receive research-based instructional strategies (45% versus 37%), more than half of teachers disagree or are undecided. In effect, these teacher responses pinpoint an area where further capacity building is needed.

Figure V-7. Principal and Teacher Views on Selecting SLO Instructional Strategies

Teachers receive guidance in selecting research-based instructional strategies for SLOs.

	Principals			Teachers		
	2013	2014	2015	2013	2014	2015
Disagree	27%	22%	16%	38%	43%	37%
Undecided	28%	16%	13%	35%	20%	18%
Agree	45%	63%	70%	27%	37%	45%

■ Agree ■ Undecided ■ Disagree
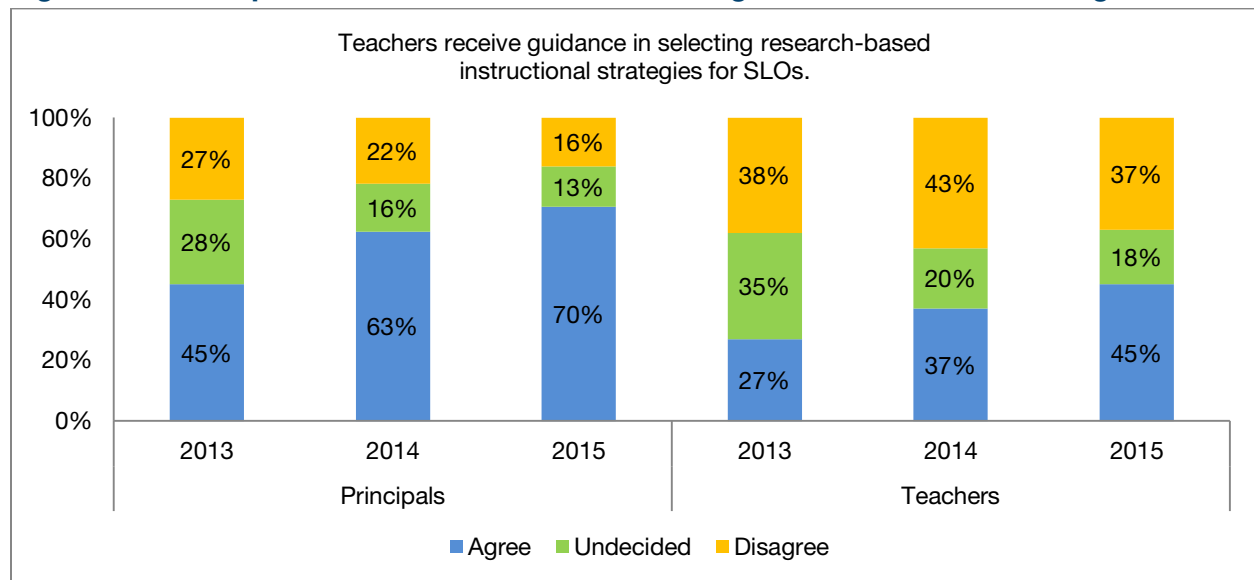
Selecting Assessments

There is a similar pattern on the issue of whether teachers receive recommendations on selecting pre/post assessments for SLOs, with principals being more likely to say teachers receive these recommendations (see Figure V-8). The gap between principals and teachers on this item in 2015 is 22 percentage points (75% of principals agree as compared with 53% of teachers).

Figure V-8. Principal and Teacher Views on Guidance for SLO Assessments

Teachers receive recommendations for selecting pre/post assessments for SLOs.

	Principals			Teachers		
	2013	2014	2015	2013	2014	2015
Disagree	29%	18%	15%	37%	36%	31%
Undecided	27%	12%	11%	33%	16%	15%
Agree	44%	71%	75%	29%	48%	53%

■ Agree ■ Undecided ■ Disagree
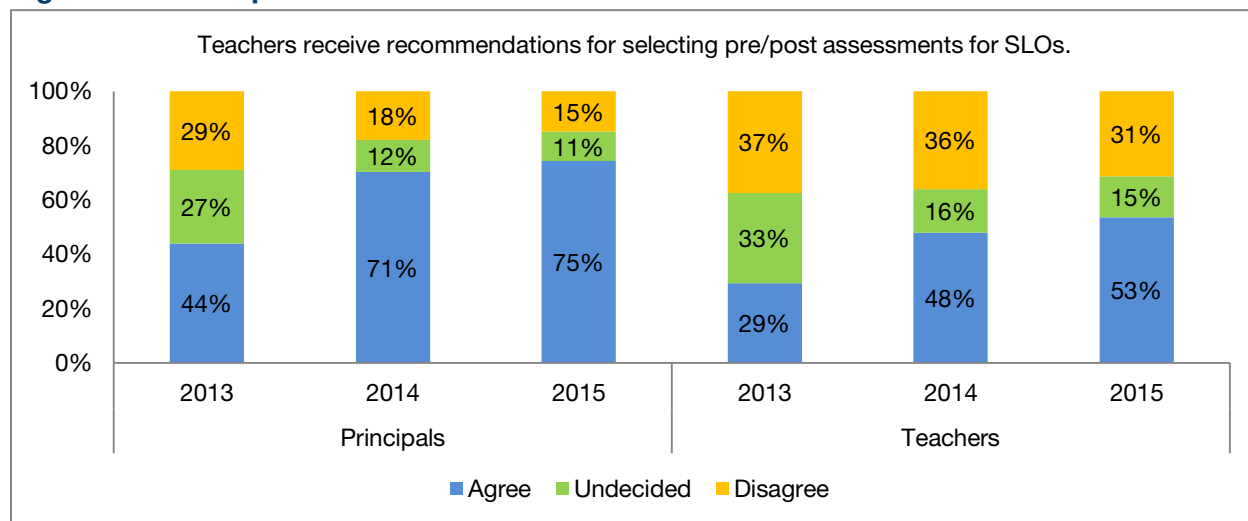
For many districts, the development of SLOs has revealed pre-existing weaknesses and gaps in the alignment of standards, curricula, and assessments.

"What is missing for us is that we don't have great data sources, so teachers are floundering with what data source they're looking at. Our benchmarks are out of alignment for math, reading, and science. Our system is working towards that alignment."

–Principal

"We've done a lot of work with our teachers on developing formative assessment tools, summative assessment tools, and performance based tools. When they did identify common tools, they were all aligned to Common Core. There is still a lot work to do, especially at the elementary school level."

–Superintendent

"We found that teachers struggle with how to create pre/post. We helped them and put out model tests. Many work. Some don't, so they have to develop their own. We are not experts on that."

–Superintendent

Educators are also concerned when the approved assessments are a poor fit for their student population or subject area, or are measuring achievement rather than growth.

"We were given a county rubric and told the best way to assess student growth was to use that...It didn't fit into every content area."

–Teacher

"The problem is that PARCC is a proficiency test, not growth. We as a system are not any more prepared to hold teachers accountable or have more valid measures than we were five years ago."

–Central Administrator

A commonly cited SLO challenge among interviewees concerns the setting of growth targets. Approximately two-thirds of principal survey respondents now agree that teachers receive valid and reliable approaches to setting growth targets for SLOs. This is a noteworthy response particularly when compared to the 42% of principals who agreed with this statement in 2013 (see Figure V-9). Among teacher respondents in 2015, slightly less than one-half of teachers agree they are getting these approaches to setting targets, while more than one-third of teachers disagree that they are getting these approaches.

The upward trend of these responses over a three-year period is positive and encouraging. State-sponsored training during this past year emphasized six approaches to setting growth targets that are in wide use nationally. These survey responses show that additional training is needed to help teachers to continue to grow in this area.

Figure V-9. Principal and Teacher Views on Setting Growth Targets
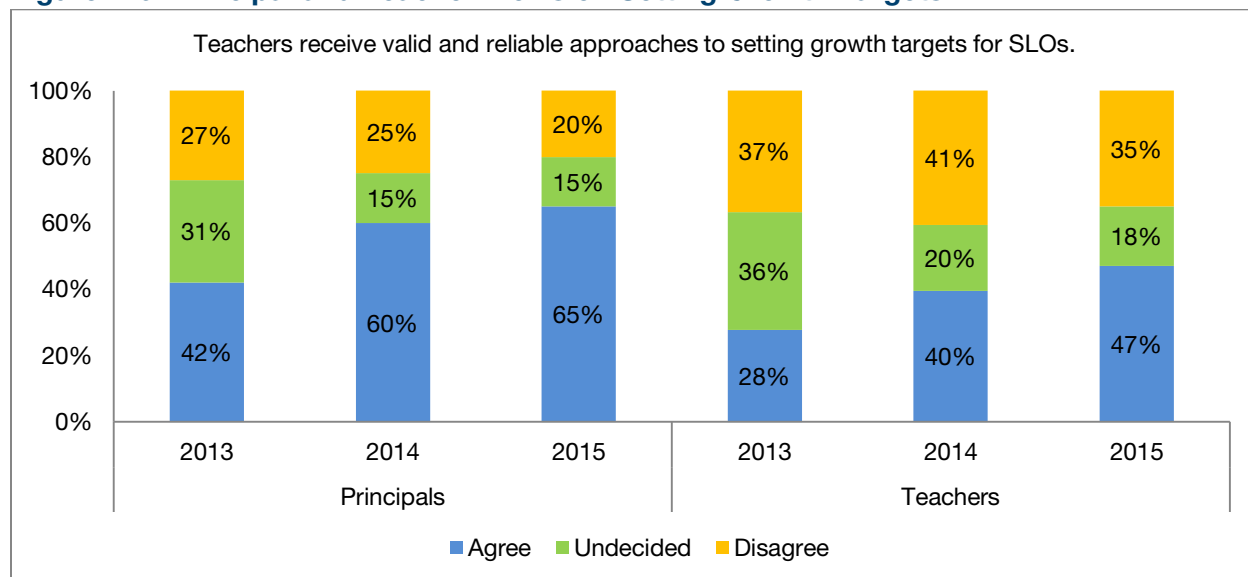
When it comes to using data to establish a baseline of student performance, a number of interviewees indicate that they have access to and readily use data to target students and improve instruction.

> *"I would say the main correlation is that I'm trying to get teachers to teach using data-driven instruction. So with the requirement of SLOs, that's requiring the teachers to look at their data and set goals moving forward. That's helped to reinforce what I'm trying to make an everyday practice for my staff."*
>
> –Principal

> *"We can see SLOs in various areas. We can see disaggregated data, how kids moved from pre to post. We share the data with the principals and teachers… We told them we are not trying to set you up to fail, but we want to make sure SLOs are rigorous."*
>
> –Superintendent

Interviewees identify a number of issues with setting growth targets. Some struggled with lack of baseline data. Others experienced difficulty when trying to strike a balance between rigor and realism in their targets.

> *"Another challenge, especially with SLOs, has been setting reasonable targets. A lot of them did not have good baseline data in the class and they were not sure what a good target was. As administrators we had a hard time helping them with that."*
>
> –Principal

> *"Part of the biggest struggle isn't what to look at, it's setting the target. It's the number and the percentages in a reasonable way…I still think that is a piece where we are struggling."*
>
> –Principal

> *"Are people setting more realistic targets this year? I think they are trying to be as rigorous as they can…Some teachers are not using SLOs ideally as they are supposed to. It is a number game now. That's what my members feel."*
>
> –Union Leader

> *"If I ask anyone to tell me who would be the master teachers, five teachers' names would come up. When you look at the results, however, those five teachers' overall ratings are not highly effective. That's because they have set so high standards on the targets in their SLOs. They're just so rigorous. Conversely, we had a teacher who came into the conference and got a low end effective on professional practice, but because he was skilled in writing SLOs, he exceeded attainment…When he was leaving the meeting, he said, 'I know, I am not a highly effective teacher.'"*
>
> –Superintendent

Broader Learnings about Support

Because principals are most often overseeing and guiding the support for SLOs, it is not surprising that they are more likely than teachers to agree with statements about the support teachers receive regarding SLOs. To make consistent progress in implementation, principals need to check in with teachers to ascertain whether the support and guidance they are offering is sufficient for their teachers to implement consistent, high quality SLOs.

In districts that make a conscientious effort to improve the SLO process, teachers and administrators agree in interviews that the SLO process becomes easier and more effective with experience. When there is intentional focus, districts and schools are refining processes and learning from past mistakes. Many interviewees feel that there is less fear and more understanding about the TPE process, and they are challenging themselves to develop better SLOs, and as a consequence have better dialogue and results.

"This is our 4th or 5th year doing some variations of SLOs. The first couple of years were system development and every time as we developed the system, we would take it out to our team's association meetings so everyone was on the same page. In recent years, it is institutionalized. The work has focused on the conversations around how to make sure an SLO is rigorous, relevant and achievable."

–Superintendent

"We want to have SLOs so teachers can feel good about it and students can be successful. We pushed teachers to develop more appropriate and rigorous SLOs. In the first year it was all about compliance. There was a lot of fear."

–Central Administrator

"It's an ongoing process…Now we have more and better materials…We are using examples and rubrics to evaluate our SLOs. Principals have the opportunity to review and develop strong SLOs."

–Superintendent

Summary

Districts are making progress in implementing higher quality SLOs, but they need to continue their focus on using a rating rubric to increase the quality. Principals and teachers need more training in assessing SLOs and districts need to focus more on increasing inter-rater reliability within and across schools. In many districts, developing SLOs has revealed—but not caused—pre-existing gaps in the assessment system that need to be addressed.

Districts need to find ways to better account for and alleviate gaps in perception between teachers and principals about the level of support teachers are receiving to implement high quality SLOs. While fewer teachers today indicate they need support than they did two years ago, there is still a large percentage of teachers that want more SLO-related professional development and support.

Districts are making progress in supporting a higher quality SLO implementation process that is incorporated into the districts' overall instructional framework, but challenges remain. Some districts are getting more consistent results with greater teacher buy-in, and their efforts need to be expanded to other districts around the state. As teachers become more familiar with SLOs, districts need to support more teacher-developed SLOs. This support should be paired with a robust review process that facilitates instructional dialogue, promotes rigor, and encourages teachers to reflect on their instructional practices and on student progress.

Chapter Six: Capacity Building

Implementing TPE requires building capacity at teacher, principal, and central administrative levels. Research shows that districts that train and support teachers to implement quality SLOs with a focus on improved instructional practices see improvements in student learning.[18] Principals, likewise, need support to manage the TPE process, integrate initiatives in the school, and engage in dialogue with teachers about instruction. Finally, central administrators need to lead efforts to align standards, curricula and assessments, and ensure two-way communications, in support of an instructional strategy that is reinforced through TPE processes.

Teacher Capacity and Support

An increasing number of teachers overall indicate that they are receiving the support they need to implement TPE, thus fewer teachers in 2015 compared to 2014 say they need additional support. Despite these improvements, approximately 45% of teachers indicate that they need further training.

Figure VI-1 below presents several specific teacher views on capacity building which delineate where teachers feel they need additional support. These data indicate that there are improvements in teachers' capacity from the 2013-2014 to 2014-2015 school years.

There remain, though, significant percentages of teachers who identify needs related to using Maryland's College and Career-Ready Standards (46%), linking SLOs to these standards (49%), receiving feedback from administrators (43%), using data from SLOs and observations to strengthen school improvement planning (44%), and using data from SLOs and observations to make improvements in teachers' instructional practices (43%).

Figure VI-1. Teacher Views on Capacity Building
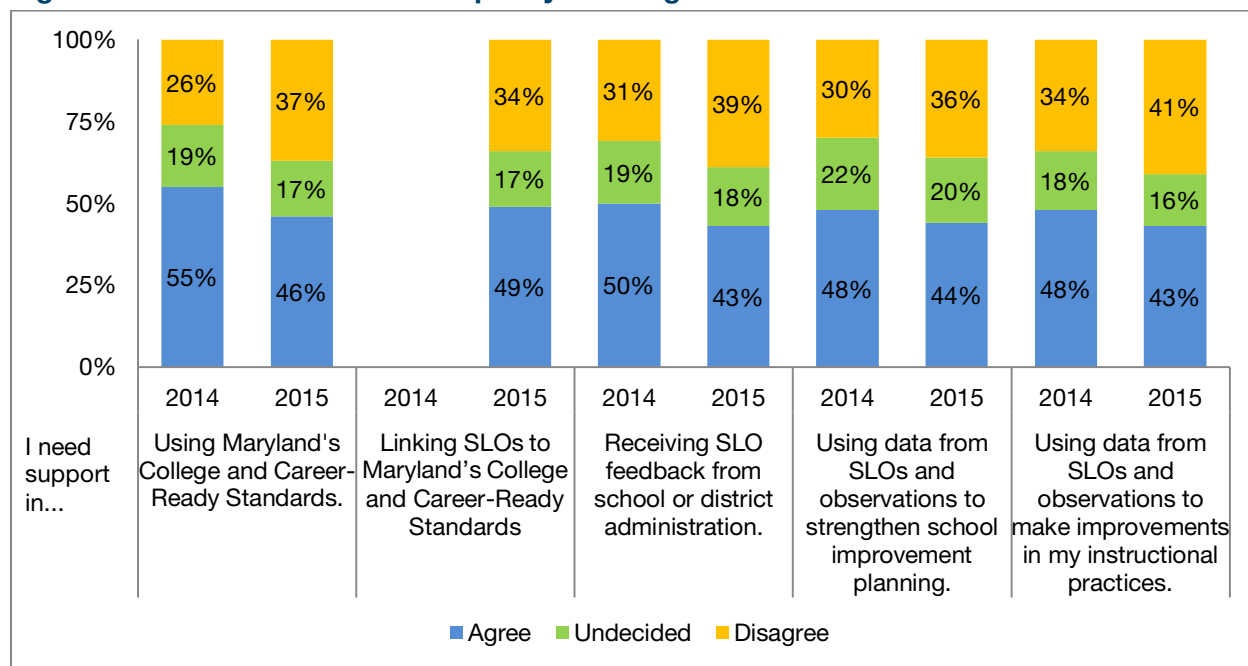
Note: Throughout this report, *Agree* is a composite of strongly agree/agree and *Disagree* is a composite of strongly disagree/disagree.

Teachers are also more comfortable with the SLO process. Figure VI-2 depicts survey data that show a steady decline in the percentage of teachers who need support in obtaining and using data, and using assessments. Between 43% and 54% of teachers disagree that they need support in those areas. Again, despite these gains, approximately 40% of teachers would still like more support in these areas.

Figure VI-2. Support Teachers Need
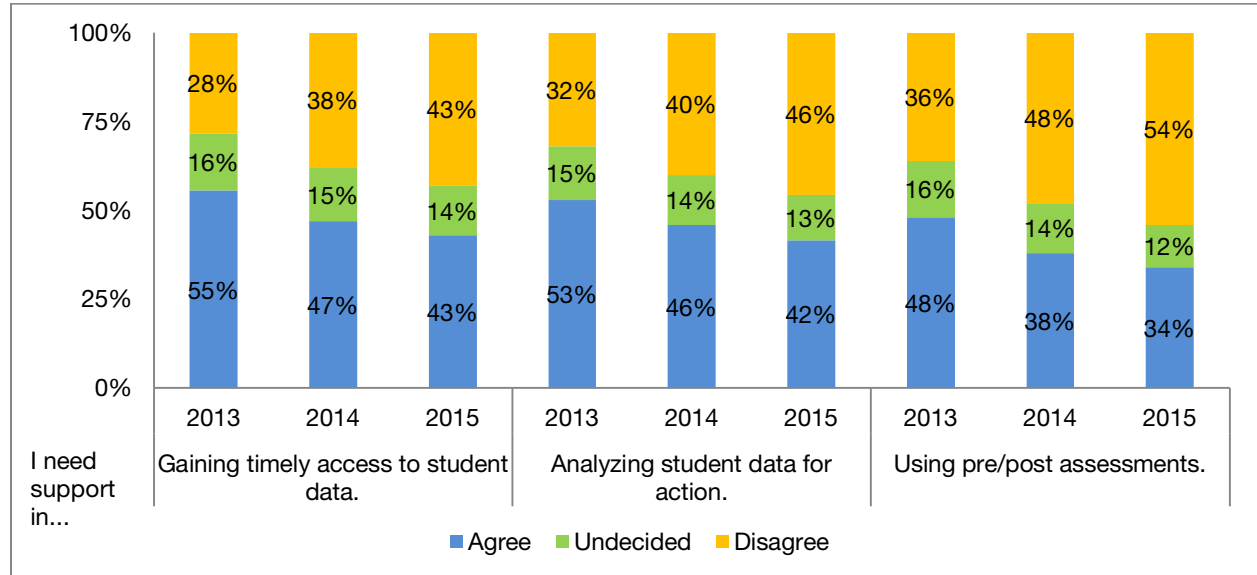
Some districts have made a strong effort to implement a consistent, collaborative process with substantial instructional support for teachers.

"There is more intervention and more resources. When I started in TPE, I was scared. A huge change in how I teach. I was scared of the shift. We do have the support from the supervisors and specialists. They are helping us and they are visible."

–Teacher

"We were one of the pilot schools for the SLOs and so we got more professional development than other schools."

–Union Leader

"Everything we've done at our principal meetings we brought back and did with our teachers. We started last year by looking at sample SLOs that we thought were good."

–Principal

"Our system is about support. It came from 15 years of work. It started with the premise that professional development is not only for teachers, it's for everybody. We have professional development led by teachers and attended by principals, professional development led by principals and attended by teachers, and professional development led by central administrators and attended by teachers and principals."

–Superintendent

In other districts, the major factors affecting teachers' views of their capacity are the disparities in the quality of district efforts to prepare teachers for the new evaluation system and the inconsistencies between and among school sites in how the process is rolled out. Interviewees articulate concerns related to training, expectations and the length of the piloting period.

> *"Expectations for teachers need to be made clear by the administrators. There was very little guidance and support through the process."*
>
> –Teacher

> *"In my discussions with my members, it's all over the board. Some teachers received good professional development, and others had minimal professional development."*
>
> –Union Leader

> *"We had one meeting at the beginning of the year that lasted 2 hours for you to look at what the system provided as examples for SLOs. The training was largely logistical – here's how you upload, here's what it looks like, and the components. The process was covered but not the intricacies of the content."*
>
> –Union Leader

> *"We need training and we need leadership and guidance. It was just one more thing to do and to monitor with no clear guidance or expectations."*
>
> –Teacher

Interviewees described training sponsored, respectively, by MSDE and MSEA as often having distinct reach in their buildings.

> *"The union held SLO trainings – 6 different events…We sent people to the trainings offered by MSDE and MSEA. When they came back, they hooked up with the teachers in the county in developing the tools. Together they made the tools and presented the workshops."*
>
> –Union Leader

Many teachers discuss their needs for professional development. They present these needs not as excuses or reasons for rejecting the new evaluation system, but to indicate what is necessary for TPE implementation to be productive for their teaching and accurate in portraying their performance.

> *"We need additional professional development at the schools to help us in the beginning of the year to look at data and how to utilize past data to set targets. We are doing the best we can based on what our teacher's understand, but we still feel unsure that we are selecting appropriate goals."*
>
> –Teacher

> *"We are still growing. I feel I am finally getting it. Can the trial be a little longer so that people get more comfortable? Let's have conversations with the administrators on how we can improve the staff. The pilot is not enough."*
>
> –Teacher

"I can read an evaluation form…What I need is someone to provide on-going professional development as to the 'how' to get there with specific examples; model lessons; model teaching practices…Time is too valuable."

–Teacher

When it comes to SLOs, teacher interviewees are looking for more information and more support to develop their capacity for producing high quality SLOs.

"There is limited opportunity on detailed SLO writing in a comprehensive manner that has examples appropriate for age and job description. I feel that the hasty delivery in the beginning days…or the last days of the school year were not enough."

–Union Leader

"It is my expectation that each of my students have multiple opportunities in unique ways to prepare new skills…that has not happened to me as a teacher. It would be appropriate to revisit SLO writing, teacher evaluation, observation, rating…The 17 minutes at the end of a staff meeting once a month hasn't worked. The voluntary opportunity to add extra hours hasn't worked."

–Union Leader

"I don't know that teachers have gotten that reflective yet. It's just, 'this kid can't get it.' They aren't looking at themselves yet. It's still a work in progress."

–Central Administrator

What is particularly noteworthy in these data is that large percentages of teachers have needs in areas in which principals indicate similar and often greater need. These responses suggest areas for districts to target their professional and leadership development efforts. These continuing needs for capacity building also help to explain why there are variances and inconsistencies in implementation between and among schools.

Principal Capacity and Support

Principals are the linchpin of TPE implementation at the school site level. To a large extent this work falls on the principals to create a coherent process that leads to improved instruction, relying on their ability to manage their instructional teams to make sure all the pieces work together. Principals have made it clear that this is not easy work. As such, the success of the principals depends on several factors: the district's commitment and ability to prepare principals for their pivotal role in leading school level TPE implementation; the quality and consistency in how principals actually lead the process within and across buildings; and the ability of principals to manage the TPE-related time demands.

> *Principals' unmet needs in key capacity building areas affect their ability to support and guide their respective school staffs in the same areas.*

Principals report they need additional support with SLOs. Figure VI-3 shows fewer principals in 2015 need support across a range of SLO activities. These data indicate that there are improvements in principals' capacity. However, there remain significant percentages of principals who identify needs related to using Maryland's College and Career-Ready Standards (53%), linking SLOs to these standards (58%), receiving feedback from administrators (45%), using data from SLOs and observations to strengthen school improvement planning (57%), and using data from SLOs and observations to make improvements in principals' instructional supervision (59%). These survey responses are particularly important because **principals' unmet needs in key capacity building areas affect their ability to support and guide their respective school staffs in the same areas.**

Figure VI-3. Principal Views on Capacity Building
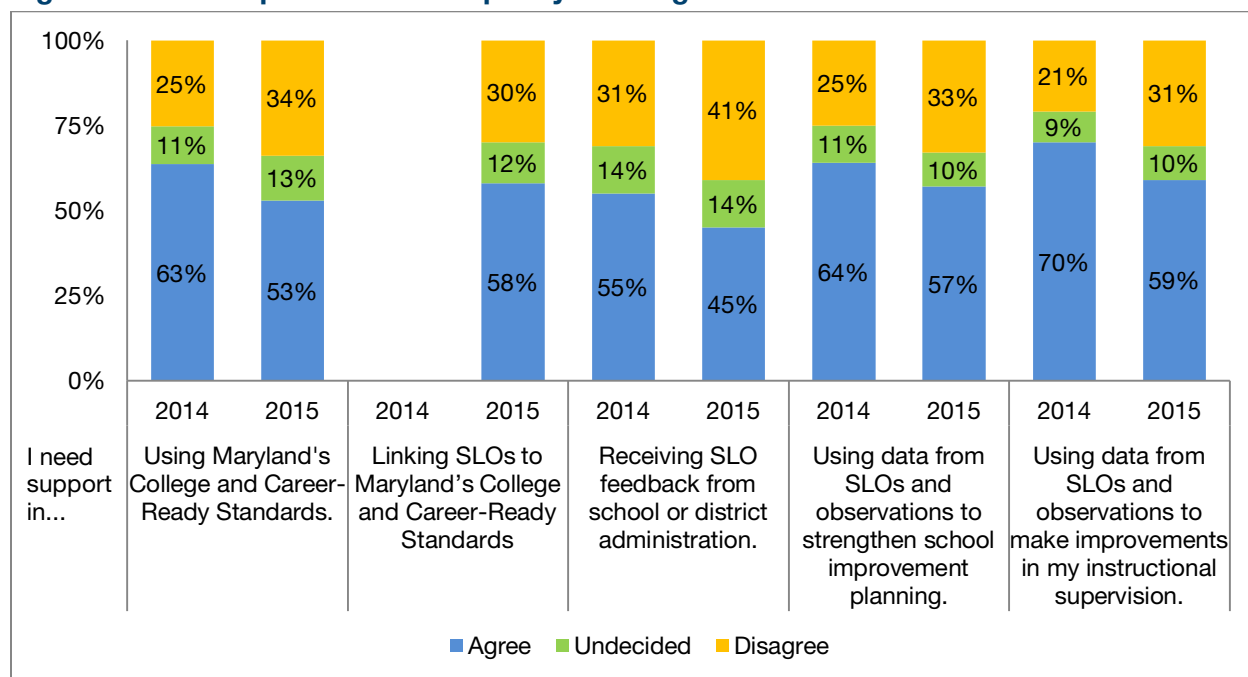
Principals are becoming familiar with the SLO process, and indicate less need for support in 2015 compared to prior years. Figure VI-4 depicts survey data that show a steady decline in the percentage of principals who need support in obtaining and using data, and using assessments. These gains are important, but there is more work for districts to do for the 43%-50% of principals who would like more support in these areas.

Figure VI-4. Support Principals Need
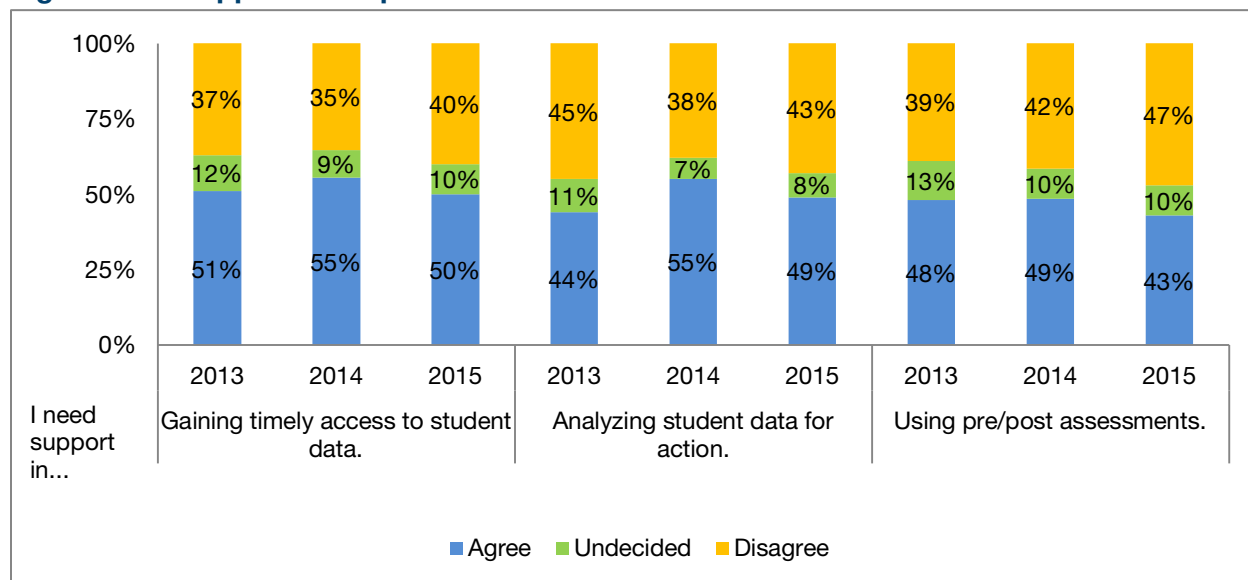
Because TPE is intended as a systemic, instructional reform, the need for quality and consistency in how principals lead the process at the schools is extremely important. Interviewees have concerns related to this issue.

> *"As principals, we need more professional development to feel comfortable providing professional development to our staff. Too often we receive too limited training and then are expected to be the 'expert' for our staff."*
>
> –Principal

"I would say 40% of the principals or so are really good, really bought into the whole process. Another 40% are right there in the second group of principals to improve, moving in the right direction but still need some coaching. There are about 20% who are thinking they are going to retire or it's going to go away."

–Superintendent

"It's inconsistent among the administrators."

–Central Administrator

One area where interviewees feel principals need additional professional development is in providing feedback and leading a constructive dialogue on instruction.

"There is lack of calibration for the administrator. My administrator has told me I have gotten more training about understanding artifacts than she has. People in the building are coming to me, and I'm giving them my opinion, but I'm not giving the evaluation."

–Teacher

"Many are committed to do their very best, and continue to get better. But we, as leaders and authorities, have created a culture of fear and insecurity. We need to be very strategic in the future about continuing the sense of urgency and the urgency of increasing our skills, but be very careful not to send away the strongest of educators and administrators who know that pushing people down is not the way to lift people up."

–Principal

"I interpreted it one way and administrators another way and my teachers are crying and they're calling other principals. The state level isn't clear. Who's clear? We aren't getting the same message. There's no consistency."

–Teacher

"The principal is the key of TPE…The trust – some people don't have the trust."

–Teacher

Because the principal has responsibility for managing the TPE process at the school level, they have to make a considerable and intensive effort to meet the TPE-related challenges.

"It's amazing to me how long it takes to fairly look at all the rubrics and evaluate teachers based on that. That's significantly more difficult than our old system had been…There's a learning process and time investment until rubrics become more familiar."

–Central Administrator

"The need to distribute leadership is more important given the increased responsibility."

–Principal

"My only struggle is helping the teacher that's the rock star continue to improve. I'm more comfortable with novice teachers or ones that are solid and need to turn it up a little."

–Principal

"The most daunting one to me is the end of the year conferences…It's virtually locking me in my office for 2 weeks. I've got to figure out better ways to do those. I think it took me away from other things that I needed to do even though they are extremely important."

–Principal

Principal Evaluation

While the statewide focus is on both teacher and principal evaluation, a continuing trend in principals' comments is that the principal evaluation component is receiving less attention than the teacher component. Principals from numerous districts describe both their frustrations and the potential of the new systems.

"From the principal evaluation perspective, it has really been an afterthought for our system. We have gotten no professional development. We were given the rubric and told this is how we will be assessed, but no discussion on what it means. It's been a source of frustration to principals."

<div align="right">–Principal</div>

"It hasn't helped as a principal yet, but as I look at the rubric and expectation, I think it can be. It's definitely allowed me to reflect and that's going to make me grow. There just needs to be more professional development."

<div align="right">–Principal</div>

"I don't have one thing that's really meaningful. It's just me telling them how great I am, and they agree. I never leave with something meaningful to improve on or a growth piece and that would be nice. There are many things I can improve on, and I don't get that."

<div align="right">–Principal</div>

Just as teachers describe inconsistencies in TPE implementation by supervisors at the school sites, the principals describe similar issues with their evaluators.

"We are supposed to have a conference with the Assistant Superintendent of Instruction – we set goals at the beginning of the year… We rate ourselves and at the end of the year we do a narrative based on how well we met those goals and then we are supposed to have a conference with the Superintendent but that hasn't happened in 3 years."

<div align="right">–Principal</div>

"I have the standards I'm accountable to. I report on how I met my goals in regard to the 11 items there…I'm accountable for the school improvement plan so I do my best to make sure my SLOs are linked to the school improvement plan…What they're using to evaluate me parses my job in a lot of different areas, and I can show how I'm doing that so it's fine."

<div align="right">–Principal</div>

"We met at the beginning, mid-year, and end of the year. We also get a visit from the Superintendent and others and talk about where we are as a school… There are plenty of opportunities for communication."

<div align="right">–Principal</div>

"I don't think it was that great of feedback to be honest with you. I didn't feel like I got a lot of specific things that I could take from it and go back and work on. I felt that way about the previous evaluation model too. I didn't feel like it was specific enough to give you something concrete you can do and improve."

<div align="right">–Principal</div>

District Capacity

To have consistent and high quality TPE implementation, leaders need to increase their organizational capacity to address a number of areas on a district wide basis. Three of those areas are to develop effective communication and collaboration, to develop a common language, and to manage technology and use data to improve instruction.

Communication and Collaboration

The quality of TPE implementation is connected to the quality and substance of teacher/district communication. **Where the communication is two-way and considered genuine and respectful, interviewees indicate that implementation is more effective.** In several districts, the quality of communication is also contributing to a higher level of union/district collaboration. Where the communication is perceived as being top-down, one way or giving more the appearance than the reality of partnership, there is less buy-in from school site practitioners and TPE is often perceived as a compliance activity.

> *"This year, we worked with the union over the summer, changed the scale and we will continue to upgrade the rigor until we believe teachers are accurately judged."*
>
> –Superintendent

> *"We've worked pretty collaboratively, so it's been an easy process. We had a committee…It made a lot of decisions about the structure."*
>
> –Union Leader

> *"They have TPE work groups. They created guidelines, tutorials, professional development, and documentation. They put those on the county website. Teachers and principals did big development. They had principals work together to dive deep. They trained the leadership team of principals and supervisors."*
>
> –Central Administrator

The quality and flow of communication involves both the state/district relationship and the district/school relationship. Gaps or breakdowns at either of these levels affect the fidelity of the reform's implementation.

> *"We are trying to get the same message out to everyone. I think the breakdown may come more from the district to the building. I visited a school last fall and had to answer questions about state or district requirements. Teachers asked, 'Is this a state thing or a district thing?' Teachers don't even know. There is information that, for whatever reason, is not getting out to everyone."*
>
> –Union Leader

> *"To my knowledge, I would not say we have established a communication plan. When we came back from the [state-sponsored] convenings, we had the information distributed, reviewed and discussed with principals. We receive TPE communications from the state and I will certainly make sure that gets out to the principals. I hope they will disseminate it to the teachers."*
>
> –Superintendent

Where the communication is spotty, inconsistent or perceived as not being genuine, it brings a level of confusion or tension to an already challenging implementation of a system-wide evaluation system.

> *"At times, the district has made unilateral changes without consulting the TPE committee, the group that put the TPE together. That's been contentious at times. Is it compounded with the communication issue? Absolutely, the biggest issue I see is communication."*
>
> –Union Leader

> *What vehicles do you have to have your concerns heard?* *"None. Even my administrator is frustrated that there is none."*
>
> –Teacher

Even when the communication is positive, tension points can remain.

> *"We are very collaborative if it's something they want as well. We are less collaborative if it's not on their agenda. We meet monthly and have open and honest dialogue, but it's usually things they are bringing. They aren't giving us the courtesy of giving us a heads up. It's kind of like, they let us know when they want us to know…I don't think we get the same professional courtesy."*
>
> –Union Leader

> *"I think it's good that we're talking. A lot of times it feels like there is mutual input being sought but when we don't agree, the Central Office just says, 'this is how it's going be.'"*
>
> –Union Leader

Practitioners at school and district levels, though, see a link between effective two-way communication and TPE's focus on instructional improvement.

> *"They see what works and what doesn't work. They learn to work together and collaborate to offset some of their weaknesses. They rely on some of the strength of the profession, and they rely on colleagues, especially in team teaching situations and in grade level of content. A lot of discussion is happening."*
>
> –Superintendent

> *The quality of TPE implementation is connected to the quality and substance of teacher/district communication.*

> *"There's better dialogue about instruction. There's been some real discussion about instruction in the context of that. It's just starting to bring some constructive discussion. There's good troubleshooting going on."*
>
> –Union Leader

"There is more collaboration, and teachers look outside for resources to bring in. Having had those initial meetings, mid-year conferences, and final conferences, I grew and I know things I need to do to be better. The process strengthens our department. It's more aligned. It definitely is affecting the conversation."

–Teacher

"There's a ton more collaboration and team planning than ever before."

–Teacher

In districts where the communication and collaboration are genuine, teachers share stories of TPE-catalyzed changes in their buildings.

"At high schools, more teachers are doing things they did not use to do. There is more collaborative grouping and differentiated activities. Even teachers who have been teaching for years are trying something new."

–Teacher

"TPE is creating some creativity in our building. We took the 60 lowest kids in math tracked from elementary school to high school and put them with three teachers who volunteered and two Special Education co–Teachers and an aide, so six of us working with the kids year-long for 90 minutes. So they allowed us to do that because of this whole thing. We were observed and our principal was able to observe six of us at the same time. But she was able to do that and we wrote our SLOs together because we thought, if we're going to do it, we are going all in. For me, it's been enlightening to watch this move on. It happened because we talked about these kids all along, starting this new curriculum and we wanted to try it…Teachers are willing to be accountable for their students' performance if they think it's going to be fairly evaluated. You're willing to take responsibility and show some growth, you're willing to take on that load if the tool at the end is going to be fair and you're supported."

–Teacher

Both district and union leaders indicate that two-way communication can lead to formal collaboration.

"When we did our teacher workgroup, I co-chaired along with the union president. We are non-voting members. We had a cross section of teacher representatives by grade level, administrators from all buildings… We didn't dictate SLOs either. We allow teachers to work with principals and supervisors to develop SLOs. They have ownership."

–Superintendent

"Does the district have a history of collaboration? Yes, there has always been a collaborative partnership. Sometimes more pleasant than the others, but we always worked with them."

–Union Leader

"It is being honest and transparent. We always invite them to attend or have teacher representatives."

–Superintendent

Common Language

A factor that is enhancing the implementation of the new evaluation system—or key components of that system—is when district and school level practitioners develop a common language about instruction. In this context, three questions to consider are:

- Do practitioners believe there is a common language in their district?
- Are there differences in how practitioners see common language?
- Is the common language the right language?

Educators report that districts have varying levels of success building a common language. Data from an MSDE survey in Figure VI-5 shows the percentage of survey respondents who report that there was a common language being used in their district describing the SLO process. All of the districts with reported data have at least 60% of educators indicate that there is such a common language in their districts.

Figure VI-5. Principal and Teacher Views on Common Language
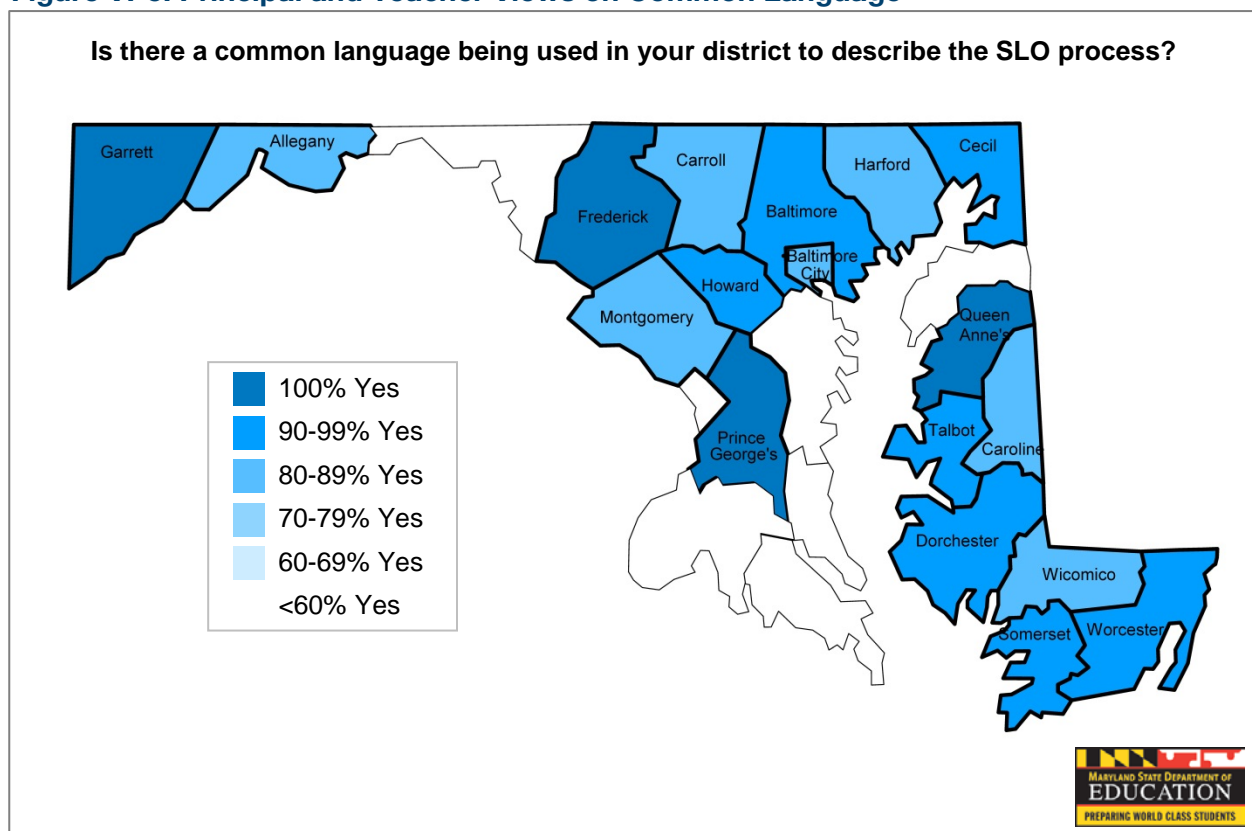
Source: Adapted from *MSDE's SLO Progress Survey Results (February 24, 2015)*. Retrieved from http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/tpe/docs/MSBE-SLO-Survey-Presentation-2.24.15.pdf

One example of common language is a shared understanding of expectations. **Educators report high, yet varying, levels of agreement that the expectations for teachers and principals in the TPE system are clear.** Figure VI-6 shows the average level of agreement on whether expectations for TPE are clear (based on an average of all respondents answers on a Likert scale of 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=undecided, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree) among all teachers and principals in each district. Districts are sorted from high levels of agreement to low levels of agreement.

Figure VI-6. Principal and Teacher Views on TPE Expectations
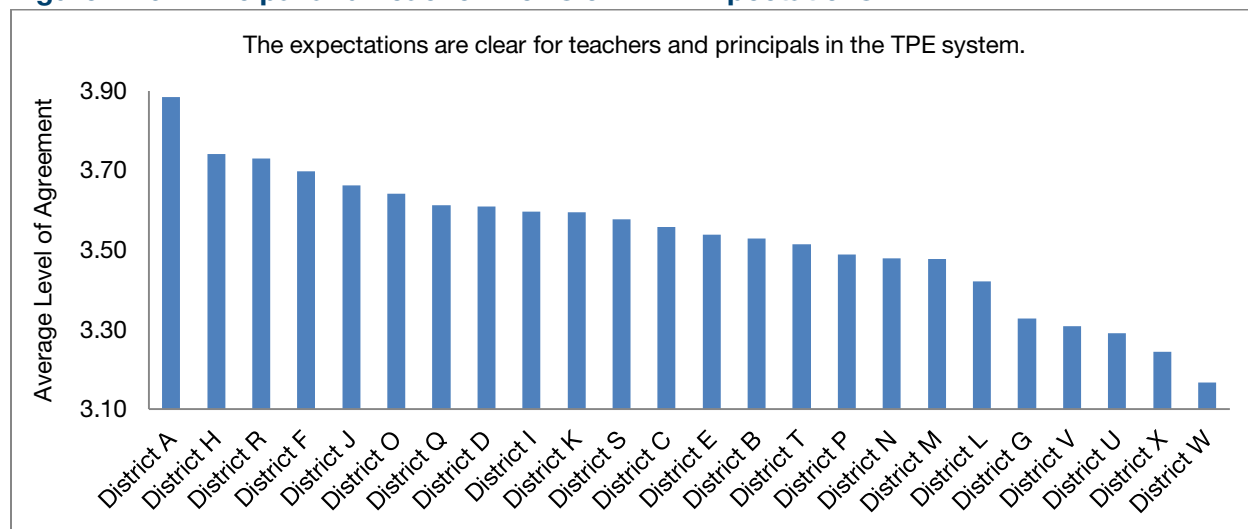
The expectations are clear for teachers and principals in the TPE system.

Note: Each bar refers to one district, and the height of the bar represents the district-level mean of principal and teacher views on the survey item based on a Likert scale of 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=undecided, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree. Where district level data on the 24 Maryland school districts are reported, districts are depicted by the letters A though X. In similar figures, districts are consistently identified by the same letter in each figure.

In every district, more teachers and principals agree than disagree that they have a common language to describe the SLO process, and that expectations are clear. Yet the level of agreement on both items varies considerably from district to district. Simply put, the common language is not always common.

With the new evaluation system, having the right common language can mean a greater focus by principals and teachers on instruction, growth and the needs of students.

> *"We are more student-focused on each and every individual making progress than we have ever been."*
>
> –Superintendent

> *"SLOs allow us to have commonality, common languages."*
> –Teacher

The issue of common language needs to be approached carefully and with a measure of caution. Common language can sometimes mask low standards and expectations.

> *"I was surprised at how low our standard was. In all of the meetings when the new tool came out, there was an unacceptably low expectation… Through committee work, we met again and we increased the cut score and threw the data back in the model and noticed it kicked out and excluded an acceptable level of teachers from the old model to the new model."*
>
> –Union Leader

Managing Technology and Using Data

It is a common practice for educators to blame reforms for the faultiness of their implementation. It is therefore important to look at perceptions of how districts are managing TPE-related data and how they are using technology to facilitate the implementation process.

Through TPE, districts generate three potentially powerful sources of data: SLOs, observations and teacher and principal effectiveness ratings. The question, then, is what do the districts do with these data? This is more than a question of whether the districts are implementing TPE well. It cuts to the heart of whether districts are using the data to manage implementation more strategically. Are the data being used to inform their decision- and policy-making related to professional and leadership development, human capital, assessments and other areas?

Interviewees cite numerous examples of how TPE-related data are being used at school sites to generate and inform new levels and types of instructional dialogue and student-centered teaching practices. However, at the district level, this year's and last year's interviews suggest that **districts are generally not yet making systematic use of the information generated through TPE**.

> *"We put the data out on our website as required, but we didn't do a lot with it."*
>
> –Superintendent

> *If you want to know which teachers are having difficulty with the College and Career-Ready Standards, can the system pull that information by grade or subject area? "That's a great question. I don't know the answer. I've never asked for that data."*
>
> –Superintendent

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, both principals and teachers indicate that there remains a need for capacity building related to gaining timely access to student data, analyzing student data for action, and using TPE data for school improvement planning and for improving instructional practices and supervision.

Districts also need to examine their technology tools to understand how and to what extent principals and teachers make use of them. Further, districts are in different places with respect to how they are using technology to help principals and teachers manage their TPE-related data. Some are using systems developed by external vendors. Some others are using district-developed systems. Still others lack a unified platform within the districts.

The issue of functionality cuts across many of these systems. **Interviewees describe technology systems that serve primarily as a repository of information, rather than as a management system.** Further, they describe different levels of user-friendliness which affects usage and educators' perceptions of the value of the technology system.

> *"The SLO data entry process needs to be more user-friendly. It has too many layers and steps and I spent more time worrying about getting information entered properly as opposed to reflecting on my teaching."*
>
> –Teacher

"We have a system that was created last year. So when SLOs are rejected or accepted – it keeps track. It keeps track of evaluation ratings and the scores at one central location."

–Principal

"There's been some frustration among the administrators with the formatting and navigating using the database to actually use the forms, so ours has been more of a technical form issue instead of problems with the SLOs, developing the SLOs, or implementing the evaluation system."

–Principal

"In an effort to make the SLOs more stringent, they've taken a computer program that's efficient and turned it into a long document. The technology is slowing the process down. It is being used to make it easier now, but the more they add into it makes it more cumbersome to use by everybody."

–Union Leader

Interviewees also highlight the need to use and manage the data systemically.

"We all have our own way. We have no system-wide way."

–Principal

"We started the whole system to make sure everybody is held accountable. Without a unified platform to gather all these data, if it is done on paper or Microsoft Word, that's going to be very challenging."

–Superintendent

Summary

Among teachers, principals, and central administrative offices, districts have made progress in building capacity for high quality TPE implementation. An increasing number of teachers and principals indicate that they are receiving adequate support for most aspects of the TPE and SLO processes. A number of districts report that genuine, collaborative communication is occurring between districts, schools and associations; and survey data suggest that they have made progress in establishing clear expectations and common language for instruction. A number of district interviewees report good progress in establishing data systems to house TPE data, with increasingly sophisticated reporting mechanisms.

But districts still have a ways to go to adequately support all teachers and principals, and many need to revisit the training and professional development offered to their staff. A significant portion of teachers and principals want more support to better understand and implement TPE in their schools, with particular needs in the development of high quality SLOs and SLO processes. Principals also need more support in integrating all the initiatives in their school, and in providing effective feedback to teachers on instruction.

Districts have generally paid less attention to the principal evaluation while they focused on the teacher evaluation. Going into the next full year of implementation, there needs to be equal emphasis between

the two. Like the teacher evaluations, principal evaluations need to be implemented with more clarity and consistency, giving principals the opportunity for meaningful feedback and dialogue related to their leadership of the school.

A number of districts have made collaboration with teachers and principals a cornerstone of their TPE implementation efforts, and interviewees indicate that implementation is more effective and leads to better processes in schools. Some districts have had less success in developing robust communication about TPE, and interviewees express more dissatisfaction with TPE implementation in those districts. Clear and consistent communication, coupled with opportunities for feedback and input from teachers, generates more buy-in and support for TPE in schools.

Finally, now that districts are generating more data from the TPE systems, there is an opportunity to move beyond using the system as a repository of data, and start using it to generate information that can inform instructional dialogue and student-centered teaching practices. Districts are making improvements in this area, but the past two years of interviews suggest that districts need to think more strategically about using these data to inform decisions about improving instruction and targeting support to teachers and principals.

Chapter Seven: Learnings from Four Districts

Building on the previous discussions, this chapter provides a case study of four school districts which highlights the implementation of TPE. The findings reinforce that when TPE and SLOs are implemented in a high quality and consistent manner, focusing on instruction and the integration of initiatives, the implementation is more effective.

Four Case Study Districts

In mid-May 2015, the study team conducted a four-district case study. The four districts constitute a diverse cross-section of all of the districts in the state as measured by such observable characteristics as district enrollment and the numbers of schools, teachers, and administrators.

In each of these four districts, the study team held confidential interviews with the superintendent, the teacher association leader, and the central administrators in curriculum and instruction and in professional development. In addition, the team conducted focus groups with principals, teachers, and district SLO/TPE teams. (See chapter two for more details.)

This chapter uses a random selection of color codes (i.e., Blue, Orange, Purple, and Green) to identify the four districts so as to protect their identity. For similar reasons, quotes from all central administrators, including the executive leaders, are grouped into the "central administrator" category, and quotes from the teachers' association leaders are included in the "teacher" category.

Three Types of Districts

As discussed in chapter four, there are three groupings of districts in the state in terms of how they are approaching TPE implementation. The first are those districts that are approaching TPE from an instructional perspective, with high levels of capacity building and teacher/district collaboration. The second grouping covers districts with a range of capacities and implementation approaches. The third group of districts is primarily compliance-driven; they are implementing TPE because it is a state requirement.

The three types of districts are manifest in the survey responses from the four case study districts. In the figures that follow, each marker represents one corresponding color-coded district. Each data point represents the district-level mean of teachers' views on individual survey items, based on a Likert scale from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree. Markers near the top of the chart show higher levels of agreement on survey items.

Figure VII-1 shows teachers' perceptions about the quality of TPE frameworks and processes. The perceptions of teachers on the TPE frameworks and processes are most positive for the Blue District. The responses of teachers are similar across the Purple District and the Orange District, but are both less positive than the Blue District. Teachers in the Green District, however, are the least positive about the survey items related to the quality of the TPE frameworks and processes.

Figure VII-1. Teacher Perceptions of the Quality of TPE Frameworks and Processes
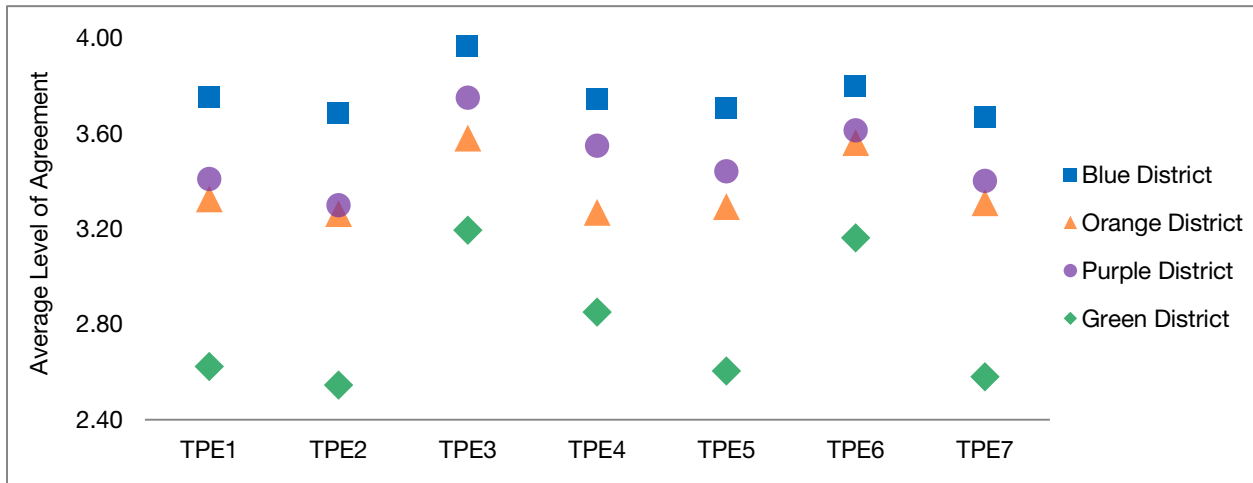
Note: Each data point represents the district-level mean of teachers' views on individual survey items based on a Likert scale of 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=undecided, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree.

Teacher evaluation frameworks and processes…
- TPE1: Respect educators' professional knowledge and skills.
- TPE2: Utilize validated observation measures/instruments.
- TPE3: Are conducted by observers/evaluators qualified to do the evaluation.
- TPE4: Provide a summative rating of educator performance.
- TPE5: Provide useful feedback to teachers.
- TPE6: Encourage reflection on instructional practices.
- TPE7: Lead to improved decisions related to instructional approaches.

Similarly, Figure VII-2 shows teachers' perceptions of SLOs. Again, teachers in the Blue District are most positive about the support they receive on SLOs. By contrast, teachers in the Purple District and the Orange District are less positive about the support on SLOs. Teachers in the Green District are again the least positive.[19]

Figure VII-2. Teacher Perceptions of Student Learning Objectives (SLOs)
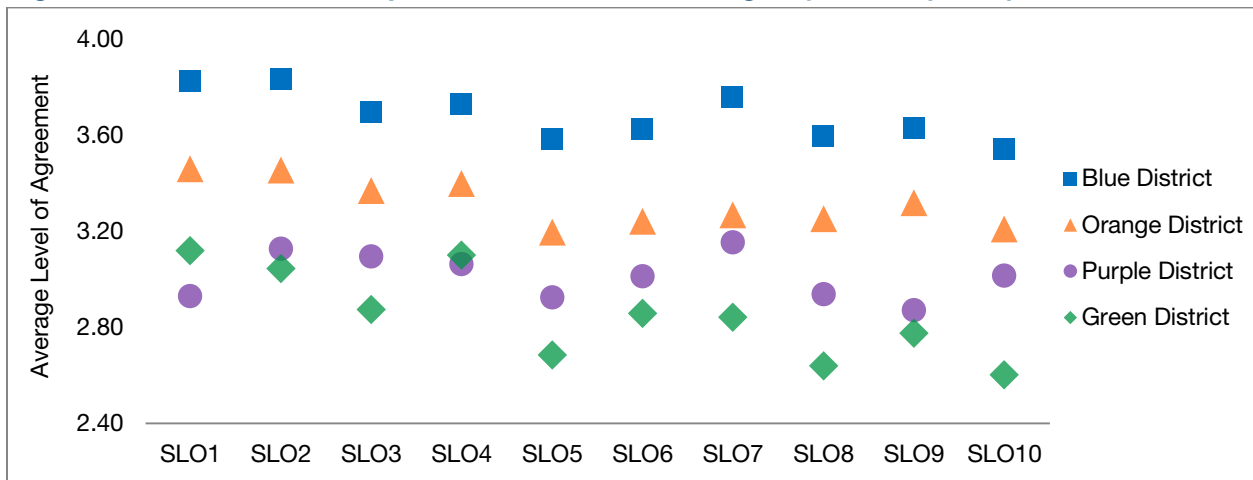
Note: Each data point represents the district-level mean of teachers' views on individual survey items based on a Likert scale of 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=undecided, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree.

Teachers receive…

SLO1: Information about developing high quality SLOs.
SLO2: Information about the use of SLO components.
SLO3: Resources supporting the use of student baseline data.
SLO4: Guidance in selecting learning content for SLOs.
SLO5: Guidance in selecting research-based instructional strategies for SLOs.
SLO6: Information on connecting Maryland's College and Career-Ready Standards to SLOs.
SLO7: Recommendations for selecting pre/post assessments for SLOs.
SLO8: Valid and reliable approaches to setting growth targets for SLOs.
SLO9: Professional development that is informed by the SLO process.
SLO10: Guidance in developing strategies for student differentiation or accommodation where appropriate.

The survey responses above show that there exists substantial variation among teachers from these four districts in their perceptions of the implementation of TPE overall, and the SLO component in particular. To better understand what factors may be contributing to these differences, the following section explores the perceptions of the approaches to TPE and SLO implementation within each district.

The Blue District

The survey data show that the perceptions of teachers in the Blue District are consistently much more positive than their peers in the other three districts. As indicated in the appendix, they report the highest levels of agreement on the survey items related to systemic context, quality of the TPE frameworks and processes, SLOs, and their experience during the 2014-2015 school year.

A salient characteristic of the implementation of TPE in the Blue District is that district leadership strongly emphasizes connecting teacher evaluation and instruction. Further, there appears to be a shared vision among central administrators, principals, and teachers on the instructional focus of TPE and SLOs.

> *"Everything was planned for, rolled out, explained, and re-explained. There are many conscious decisions: All focused on the one project and the master plan of greater teachers and great leaders."*
>
> –Central Administrator, Blue District

> *"I do think the heart and soul [of TPE] is instruction."*
>
> –Central Administrator, Blue District

> *"I like the setup for evaluation because it's more realistic and there is more collaboration. It's more informative. I like the SLO process. It's a good way to reflect on my classes and prepare for them. I see the process very useful to me."*
>
> –Teacher, Blue District

This emphasis helps educators in the district to understand and embrace the integration of the TPE components and instruction.

> *"We're lucky because we've piloted things for a while…now a year or two into it, it feels like things [SLOs, observations, standards] are molding. It feels a lot different than two years ago."*
>
> –Teacher, Blue District

> *"Your observations focused on your SLOs and the standards are what you use in your assessments. The standards are the driver across the three things."*
>
> –Teacher, Blue District

Teacher buy-in plays a crucial role in determining the success or failure of many educational reform initiatives. In the Blue District, the central administration focuses on collaboration on the front end of TPE implementation, and actively engages the teachers' union and the teaching force. This strategic partnership supports teachers in taking ownership of TPE and SLO implementation.

> *"They [The union] have input. They shape what we do, so all are fine."*
>
> –Central Administrator, Blue District

> *"Our county has been at the front of this movement. The leadership made a wise decision to bring teachers into the process from the beginning. We had support of the teachers and it has paid off. My school is very comfortable with the TPE system."*
>
> –Principal, Blue District

This partnership perspective is also shared by many school administrators. Numerous teachers report that their principals value and promote teacher leadership.

> *"The administration at our school has gone to great lengths to assist our staff with understanding the new evaluation system. They deserve a big thank you for going the extra mile, meeting the needs of all of our staff members, young and old."*
>
> –Teacher, Blue District

> *"Teacher leadership is a huge factor. Some principals have embraced teacher leadership. My principal is a first and he lets me be the voice. Teachers are more open to me. They know I am a resource. Teacher leadership is often far more effective. They will be more comfortable to go to their coworkers. That's what makes the implementation so successful. If you have an equal one promoting the dialogues, teachers are more open and vocal about the issues they have. The positive is on the school climate. When you see leadership spread out, it is not micromanaging."*
>
> –Teacher, Blue District

In addition, the Blue District places a priority on strengthening the quality of implementation and educator craft knowledge. The district engages teams of administrators and teachers on a regular basis in rating SLOs and discussing SLO quality. These firsthand professional learning activities support educators in making better use of the SLO tools and to develop a deeper understanding of the quality and consistency of SLOs and the instructional orientation of the SLO process.

> *"We look at examples of SLOs and try to score them. We have an SLO quality rating rubric...The rubrics are very useful."*
>
> –Central Administrator, Blue District

> *"Each year we get better at SLOs. Working on looking at quality indicators has really helped."*
>
> –Principal, Blue District

> *"At our meetings, we have random SLOs where we go through and rate them. The practice has been extremely powerful."*
>
> –Teacher, Blue District

The Blue District also supports principals and supervisors with professional development, particularly on the issue of inter-rater reliability. These trainings build the capacity of the principals to work together with teachers and to better support them.

> *"The county did a great job in training the principals and the supervisors. We did a lot of work on inter-rater reliability."*
>
> –Central Administrator, Blue District

> *"This year, we've continued our administrator training on inter-rater reliability. We've taken SLOs and gotten in small groups in our principal meetings and rated and discussed them."*
>
> –Principal, Blue District

Among the four districts, the Blue District is the most positive regarding the technical assistance and training that the state has sponsored. They also make the most proactive use of the protocols, instruments and best practices shared at the state trainings.

> *"We are still using the materials we got from that [the first two statewide SLO trainings]. The rubrics are extremely useful and we brought them back to use. We have someone to look at those SLOs and try to have a session with what we were trained on. The models presented have been very important and the rubrics are extremely helpful."*
>
> –Central Administrator, Blue District

> *"The state has also provided annotated SLOs with feedback and we will look at scoring and the type of feedback we give to the teacher to make them higher quality."*
>
> –Central Administrator, Blue District

The Orange District

The responses of the teachers in the Orange District to the survey are largely in the middle range in terms of agreement. Although the district had a relatively slow start in earlier years of TPE implementation, district leadership is establishing an organizational and instructional priority on TPE and SLOs.

One approach the district takes is to tie SLOs to school improvement plans.

> *"We've done a complete overhaul on school improvement in the past three years. We provided principals with a lot of professional development and significantly narrowed the focus of our school improvement plan…We also use SLOs to do the work of the priorities…We do some school wide focus areas, but also some grade level and department focuses."*
>
> –Central Administrator, Orange District

> *"They [SLOs, observations, and standards] go hand in hand. It allows us to have commonality, common languages. That's part of our school improvement plan. They all helped to make sense."*
>
> –Teacher, Orange District

> *"The SLOs have got us to have the connections seamlessly [among SLOs, observations, and standards]. We are on our way there."*
>
> –Central Administrator, Orange District

The district is also intentionally moving towards more rigor in the implementation of TPE and SLOs.

> *"I spent ample time with them [principals] to review them [SLOs]…We had a lot of conversations with principals on what is a rigorous target."*
>
> –Central Administrator, Orange District

> *"The SLO piece continues to be something we work on. We try to make sure that's consistent and is doing what it's supposed to do. We are working hard on our SLOs and communicating with teachers and principals how to develop and improve them."*
>
> –Central Administrator, Orange District

> *"Teachers are more comfortable. We're raising the rigor."*
>
> –Principal, Orange District

In addition to providing ongoing professional development, the Orange District provides schools with personnel whose specific responsibilities are to focus on SLOs. They help teachers and principals to grow and hone their skill sets. As one teacher who fills this role explains:

> *"Most of the time, I sat down with my teachers to access data…I don't like my teachers in my department to feel SLOs are there to punish them or to rate them. I hope they see SLOs as action research projects. This is for you to see where you can improve."*
>
> –Teacher, Orange District

In the Orange District, there is a continuing and substantial learning curve. In particular, the district is exploring ways to achieve a higher level of inter-rater agreement and inter-rater reliability.

"Do people understand inter-rater reliability and inter-rater agreement? No."

–Central Administrator, Orange District

"In secondary schools, it's easier to get inter-rater reliability and consistency because they all have teams. You build on the strengths from members of those teams. In our elementary schools, that's where the challenge is to get those lone principals on the same page."

–Central Administrator, Orange District

The interviews and focus groups reveal that there are inconsistencies in terms of the provision of training and support in this district. Teachers and principals emphasize the importance of having more training and support, and more consistency within and between schools.

"[There is] not enough training for supervisors in using the evaluation tool consistently among the county."

–Principal, Orange District

"Honestly, I'm not convinced that all schools hold the same high expectations for their staff when it comes to SLOs… Consistency is the core — as long as there were consistent expectations, my staff was more secure in their understanding. This year there were far more 1's & 2's than last year and they were still very proud of their accomplishments thanks to the overall support they received along their journey."

–Principal, Orange District

"I received training and as such should have felt well informed about the process, however, information within the county, cluster to cluster, and even building to building seemed to vary, often significantly."

–Teacher, Orange District

"I think the SLO and the rating process have put a large burden on teachers who are already burdened. The support is not provided for teachers, and is too subjective. It's not consistent across the state or the county level."

–Teacher, Orange District

The Purple District

The Purple District has a centrally-controlled process for SLOs. Teachers in the district do not craft their own SLOs. Instead, they choose class-wide SLOs from the SLO menu provided by the district administration. District administrators believe that this approach promotes rigor and consistency within and across the schools.

"We were concerned about there being inconsistency with what people were being held accountable for. We want the same math teachers in 3rd grade to have the same rigor. That has worked well for us because it's consistent. We can rework those that aren't working well. It's less work for teachers and principals because it's not something they have to develop."

–Central Administrator, Purple District

Some principals and teachers are concerned that this approach is contrary to what they perceive as the value of SLOs in promoting instructional conversations and improving pedagogy. Some teachers perceive the Purple District's approach as undercutting the thinking process of teachers and principals. They suggest that SLOs are being used solely as a rating score rather than to spur instructional conversations and improvement.

"Once the SLOs were introduced, it was scrambling to figure out how to do it on the fly. No explanations about goals. None. It's a hodge-podge process of teachers trying to figure it out."

–Teacher, Purple District

"SLOs concerned me. Teachers see it as a score or grade in their evaluation, not something changing their instruction. I don't see it as using data to differentiate instruction to help the kids. They see it something to check off."

–Principal, Purple District

"Although district office supervisors for content areas take SLOs somewhat seriously, building level administrators do not take these goals seriously other than the numbers. I was told by an assistant principal who was reviewing my numbers last year that I could 'boost my level to highly effective' by making sure I chose certain classes. The point of my SLO is to do reflective teaching."

–Teacher, Purple District

Teachers in the Purple District have the lowest level of agreement on the survey items related to SLOs and share concerns that the SLO process is not sufficiently supporting their instructional practice and professional development.

"My administrators are under a great deal of pressure…typically, SLOs have been logistical in nature. We haven't got to the point of real discussions related to instruction and professional development. It's more like, 'How comfortable are you?' Very macro conversations."

–Teacher, Purple District

"The SLO conferences are very logistical – 'did you pick one?'"

–Teacher, Purple District

"The principals are so pressed for time that when they have a good teacher, the conversation is extremely quick. It's kind of sad – it's probably the one who wanted to have the conversation."

–Teacher, Purple District

In addition, the district moved from a growth based approach to a mastery based approach for SLOs. Some teachers express concerns on the elimination of pre-tests and the fairness of the system.

> *"Our SLOs did not have a growth model. All students have to get a target score. I was hopeful when I heard SLOs would be about growth, but by the second year we are back to everyone needing the same score. I'm really frustrated with the SLOs in our county."*
>
> –Teacher, Purple District

> *"I feel the SLO process without the growth model is not fair. You need to show growth, not all students start at the same place."*
>
> –Teacher, Purple District

> *"I felt that the growth model SLO we were able to use last year with the comparison between the pre and post assessments was a very informative tool that provided useful information about student growth and therefore the ability of the teacher to teach. The model that is used this year is based only on post test scores and does not consider pre assessment performance…There is some inconsistency and injustice with the current system and I am hoping to go back to a growth model."*
>
> –Teacher, Purple District

The Green District

Teachers in the Green District have the lowest levels of agreement overall among the four districts in their responses to the survey items. In interviews and focus groups, Green District educators describe the implementation of TPE and SLOs in the district as inconsistent and compliance driven.

Some members of the central administrative team in the Green District show relatively low levels of support for and commitment to TPE. They view the implementation of TPE as a compliance activity to fulfill obligations.

> *"[TPE] is a compliance tool at this point. It's a requirement from the state…We haven't really put in a lot of thought. It's a compliance piece…The evaluation piece is compliance driven…There is no added value investing in it at this point."*
>
> –Central Administrator, Green District

> *"Once we saw all the data coming back, as a system, we never had a conversation about the rigor of SLOs and instruction."*
>
> –Central Administrator, Green District

Because the implementation appears to be focusing on complying with state requirements, teachers generally indicate that they are missing the opportunities for using evaluation as a way to promote reflection and instructional conversations, and improve practice. Some, though, have a different type of experience.

"[TPE] opened the door for teacher/administrator communication…but it isn't being done in a way that makes it feel meaningful to staff members."

–Teacher, Green District

"The ultimate goal [of TPE] is to improve professional growth…We are missing the opportunity for reflection. It's almost compliance. I have to get all this stuff at the end of the year and okay, I'm done."

–Teacher, Green District

"I heard a music teacher say, 'This is the first time my principal has really sat down and looked at my curriculum and tried to understand what I do, what I try to accomplish with my students.' So when you move away from the compliance piece, teachers feel very, very good."

–Central Administrator, Green District

Some other administrators in the Green District appear to be approaching TPE and SLOs more from an instructional perspective. They strive to engender commitment and consistency in implementation.

"You don't want people to spend tons of time on figuring it [SLOs] out. At the same time, you don't want to lose the learning process. It's a balance issue…We are going back to look at those samples, taking suggestions from teachers and principals and tweak them."

–Central Administrator, Green District

"The balance between the two is that as a principal, I need to make sure the SLOs they pick are rigorous enough and not outside of their reach. My goal is to guide them to pick the challenging goal and take the risk."

–Principal, Green District

"One of the things we got right with our tools is the conversations early on when we talked about student mastery versus growth…We really value having those conversations not only within schools, but across schools. It's a district understanding of what high quality looks like."

–Central Administrator, Green District

"[TPE] allows us to focus on instruction and learning, and tie them together…We talk about reflection and collaboration. It should be a positive process to improve teacher evaluation."

–Principal, Green District

In the Green District, there also appears to be a lower level of collaboration between the district administration and the teachers' association.

"Our hands are all tied by involving the union and requiring they come on board. They don't want to be held accountable. Our cut scores are low and that's the way the union likes it. They want it to be even lower."

–Central Administrator, Green District

"It's not that the union wants to negotiate everything, it's the inability of the system to approach the reform in a collaborative process."

–Teacher, Green District

"The expectations are not consistent, when there's no trust, things feel more subjective."

–Teacher, Green District

Summary

This chapter uses a four-district case study to illustrate the implementation of TPE. The study of the four districts reinforces the findings described in previous chapters. When implemented with an instructional focus, attention to quality and an organizational commitment to achieving greater consistency of that quality, TPE promotes positive change in principal and teacher practice. When these factors are lacking, implementation is markedly less effective.

Chapter Eight: Issues and Recommendations

During the next phase of implementation, MSDE is well prepared to extend and deepen the support it is making available to districts. To fulfill the state's vision of an evaluation system that is instructionally focused and strategically managed, a particular focus for the year ahead is for Maryland's districts to increasingly strengthen implementation and provide a broader set of supports to frontline educators in the schools.

The following recommendations focus on ways to improve the quality, consistency and manageability of implementation within and across districts in Maryland, while reinforcing the instructional emphasis of TPE. They provide MSDE and the 24 districts with an actionable roadmap for continuing improvement, recognizing that capacities vary by district. These recommendations also should become part of the agenda of the alliance of eight Maryland organizations that have come together to support the effective implementation of SLOs as part of the overall TPE.

Issue One: Key District Decisions and Support

Overview

Effective district rollouts of new evaluation systems are driven by data analysis and supported by strategic management. As districts work towards having an increasingly more sophisticated and supported implementation of TPE, their ability to recognize and address changing issues of policy and practice is pivotal to their level of success.

Recommended Action

Examine district policy decisions related to TPE and SLO implementation. Drawing on their recent experiences with TPE implementation, districts need to position themselves to enact informed mid-course corrections and improvements. Selecting and carrying out an initial TPE implementation strategy is not a single decision of policy and practice; rather, it is a decision that kicks off other policy decisions that need to be systematically re-visited or visited anew. Districts need to carefully examine such as issues as the quality and impact of their communications strategies, their training of school and district personnel, the mechanisms to ensure quality control, and—most critically—their instructional support and integration efforts. This means, for example, assessing how well the research on and rationale for SLOs and observations is understood and acted upon in the district, examining how quality rating rubrics are introduced and used, and determining the extent to which the schools and district are prepared to implement the reforms with fidelity.

Use SLO, observation and teacher effectiveness data to inform professional and leadership development. Data mean nothing without a planned response to them. SLOs, observations and effectiveness ratings provide districts new sources of evidence regarding the quality and impact of educator practice. To the extent that districts make use of these data to inform their decision making, they will be better able to inform, target and improve professional and leadership development.

Forge a stronger link between state-sponsored training and actual district follow-up. Districts need to be intentional in taking what is learned from state-sponsored trainings about research and best practices in SLO implementation, and channeling that information into planned actions that support continuous improvement at school site and central administrative levels. While the more instructionally-focused districts are approaching this work purposefully and intentionally, others need to do so to improve the quality and consistency of implementation and ensure more buy-in to TPE at the schools.

Impact

TPE provides districts with new sources of evidence regarding student learning and instructional practices. By using these data to systematically inform and guide district decision-making, professional development and leadership development, districts are better positioned to support implementation.

Issue Two: Coherent Capacity Building

Overview

Due to its multi-year phased implementation, most of Maryland's frontline educators are experienced with the precepts and practices associated with TPE. At the district and school levels, they now need capacity building which goes deeper into their instructional and/or supervisory practice to support individual and institutional change.

Recommended Action

Support principals and strengthen the consistency of implementation. Principals are key to the effective implementation of the TPE. Their success depends on their ability to leverage the power of SLOs and observations to provide evidence of and improve the instructional practice of teachers. This means that districts, in turn, need to provide principals with field-tested prompts for leading the process, share examples of how to guide and oversee the work in phases so that it is more manageable, and make sure the expectations and priorities for principals are consistent, clearly communicated and understood, and institutionally supported.

Provide training to teachers that emphasizes TPE's instructional foundation. As teachers have become more comfortable with the components of the new evaluation system, they indicate that they need further field-tested practical guidance in the main instructional elements of identifying pivotal standards, linking standards to research-based instructional strategies, and using multiple measures—formative and summative—to gauge student progress in meeting growth targets.

Adopt the state model of providing training to cross-positional teams. MSDE-sponsored training is well regarded by district participants. They indicate that it is helping to build the capacity of the participating teams of teachers, principals and executive officers in many of the districts. This approach, which ensures that different groups of practitioners hear the same things and learn the same skills at the same time, should be replicated and be part of the rollout strategy as districts prepare their staffs for increasingly more effective implementation.

Continue to expand the training for teacher and principal preparatory programs. MSDE and the vast majority of higher educational preparatory institutions in Maryland are already collaborating to incorporate the new elements of TPE within preparatory programs. As this collaboration continues at the state level, it should also be replicated at the county level by districts that have close working partnerships with institutions of higher education so that the preparatory pipeline meets district needs.

Impact

The success of TPE depends on having teachers, principals and central administrators with the skills and understandings needed to implement the new system. A coherent and comprehensive approach to capacity building is a necessity.

Issue Three: TPE and Instructional Integration

Overview

Maximizing TPE's instructional intent depends on the ability of districts to integrate the new evaluation system within their core instructional frameworks. When districts focus on the intent and integrity of the TPE process, there is greater emphasis on having quality and consistency drive the implementation. The priority is on strengthening classroom practice; the districts stay clear of compliance-driven shortcuts. Surveys and interviews show that most districts are interested in providing increasingly higher levels of support to help teachers improve instructional practices and tie this improvement process to the evaluation system.

Recommended Action

Make the key instructional connections. The major instructional reforms in the schools need to be integrated. If they are approached as disparate and disconnected initiatives, the quality of their implementation will be inconsistent and piecemeal. Both districts and schools need focused assistance to integrate and connect TPE with instruction. This means emphasizing and explicitly strengthening the connections between SLOs, observations of teacher and principal practice, and Maryland's College and Career-Ready Standards.

Strengthen the quality of SLOs and the overall SLO process. Research makes clear that quality matters when implementing SLOs. Districts need to ensure that increasingly higher levels of quality are imbued into SLOs at two levels. First, districts need to introduce quality rating rubrics and related tools to encourage the thinking process of teachers and principals regarding student data, learning content, instructional strategies, and student growth. Maryland districts that have already begun using the quality rating rubric report that the quality of teacher SLOs is improving and the SLOs are generating deeper dialogues regarding student learning and teacher practice.

Second, quality needs to be at the heart of a district's overall SLO process. Districts indicate that crafting high quality SLOs is one part of a broader instructionally-focused SLO implementation. An effective SLO process includes probing deeply into standards and pedagogy, developing broader understandings of approaches to growth target setting, customizing professional and leadership development, and using learnings from the analysis of these data and strategies to improve teacher practice and student learning.

Conduct the overall observation process with greater fidelity. Simply conducting observations is not a strategy for improvement or accountability. The impact of conducting observations comes from the evidenced-based dialogue of principals with teachers around instructional practice, gaps, and ways to improve. Similarly, school supervisors and principals need these same types of dialogue around instructional leadership. This means that districts need to provide greater clarity and support to frontline educators regarding high quality practices, calibration, and two-way feedback so that the observations become a more effective vehicle for improving the delivery and impact of instruction.

Impact

Maryland's implementation to-date shows that a thoughtful, systemic emphasis on instruction ties directly to district progress in implementing TPE. The more that teachers and principals see and trust that the evaluation system is integrating with their districts' instructional framework, the greater the improvements in instructional practice and student results.

Issue Four: Teachers' Voice and Two-Way Communication

Overview
Successful implementation of TPE requires clear two-way communication and teacher buy-in. Frontline educators need to understand the new evaluation system and also have the opportunity to contribute to refining and improving its implementation. A focus on two-way communication is a cornerstone of effective implementation.

Recommended Action
Establish mechanisms for genuine two-way communications in the districts. Three years of survey and interview data in Maryland show that the districts with meaningful two-way district/teacher communication are making more progress in implementing TPE. Districts need structures for communications and collaboration such as working groups or TPE committees that have the substance, and not just the appearance, of genuine partnership with teachers.

Districts also need to evaluate what methods are being used in communicating about TPE with frontline educators, how frequently they are being utilized, what opportunities teachers have to share their perspective, and how the districts are ascertaining that principals are delivering consistent messages at each of the schools. Effective two-way communication is integral to teacher buy-in to TPE at the school level and to making informed mid–course corrections at the district level.

Build on the landmark partnership of the eight organization-MOU signees. The alliance of the eight leading educational organizations in Maryland to support effective SLO implementation is more than a statement of joint commitment. It is also a resource that can assist districts and unions as they think through ways to collaboratively take the research and best practices from statewide training sessions directly to the schools.

Develop an interactive website for sharing vetted practices with teachers. There is interest from teachers in learning about promising practices in TPE implementation from other teachers. MSDE can help address this need by providing a central location where promising practices, vetted by MSDE's TPE team, can be shared on an inter-district basis.

Impact
Districts need to pay attention to what teachers are saying. Effective two-way communications helps inform mid-course corrections, while broadening the base of buy-in to the new evaluation system.

Summary

MSDE's implementation strategy for the new evaluation system is already promoting a significant change in practice. The key now is to take steps at the state and, in particular, district levels to extend the reach, quality and institutionalization of these changes. With an expanded emphasis on quality, consistency and manageability, districts can increase the impact of the evaluation system to the mutual benefit of Maryland's educators and students.

Endnotes

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2. See the *Maryland Teacher and Principal Evaluation Guidebook, Version 3* at http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/tpe/TPE_Guidance_Version3_092013.pdf

3. See https://danielsongroup.org/framework/

4. MACC@WestED. (2015). *Analysis of Maryland School Districts' Teacher Ratings*. Retrieved from http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MsDE/programs/tpe/docs/Analysis-MD-LEA-TeacherRatings-MSBE-Presentation_2.24.15.pdf

5. http://marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/tpe/index.html

6. See http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/tpe/TPE_Guidance_Version3_092013.pdf

7. *Spring 2014 Teacher and Principal Evaluation Ratings*, retrieved from http://marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/tpe/docs/Spring2014TeacherPrincipalAnalysis.pdf

8. Slotnik, Bugler, & Liang, *Real Progress in Maryland: Student Learning Objectives and Teacher and Principal Evaluation*.

9. Ibid.

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11. Slotnik, W., Smith, M. *et al*. (2004). *Catalyst for Change: Pay for Performance in Denver*. Boston, MA: Community Training and Assistance Center; Slotnik, W., Smith, M. *et al*. (2013). *It's More Than Money: Teacher Incentive Fund–Leadership for Educators' Advanced Performance, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools*. Boston, MA: Community Training and Assistance Center.

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14. Slotnik, Smith, *et al*., *Catalyst for Change* and *It's More Than Money*.

15. Schmitt, *Summary of REACH Findings*.

16. Love, N., Stiles, K., Mundry, S., DiRanna, K. (2008). *The Data Coaches' Guide to Improving Learning for All Students*. California: Corwin Press.

17. Slotnik, Smith, *et al*., *Catalyst for Change* and *It's More Than Money*.

18. Slotnik, Smith, *et al*., *Catalyst for Change* and *It's More Than Money*.

19. See also Table 9, Teachers' Responses by Case Study District, in the appendix.

Appendix

Figure 1: State Teacher and Principal Models

Source: *The Maryland Teacher and Principal Evaluation Guidebook, Version 3*, http://msde.state.md.us/tpe/TPE_Guidance_Version3_092013.pdf

Figure 2: Local Teacher and Principal Models

Local Teacher Evaluation Models 2013-2014*

Professional Practice

50 % Qualitative Measures
Domain percentages proposed by LEA and approved by MSDE

Student Growth

50 % Quantitative Measures
As defined below

- Planning and Preparation
- Instruction
- Classroom Environment
- Professional Responsibilities

Additional Domains Based on Local Priorities

MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Preparing World-Class Students

DRAFT 6/6/13

Elementary/Middle School Teacher Two Content Areas
Either
5 % - Reading MSA (Class)
5 % - Math MSA (Class)
10%- School Progress Index
or
10%- Reading MSA (Class)
10%- Math MSA (Class)
and
30% - LEA proposed objective measures of student growth and learning linked to state and/or local goals and approved by MSDE

or

Elementary/Middle School Teacher One Content Area
Either
10% - Reading MSA (Class) or Math MSA (Class)
10% -School Progress Index
or
20% -Reading MSA (Class) or Math MSA (Class
and
30% - LEA proposed objective measures of student growth and learning linked to state and/or local goals and approved by MSDE

or

High School Teacher
LEA proposed objective measures of student growth and learning linked to state and/or local goals and approved by MSDE; no single measure to exceed 35% . For tested area teachers, one Student Learning Objective must include an HSA data point.

or

Elementary/Middle School Teacher Non-Tested Subject
LEA proposed objective measures of student growth and learning linked to state and/or local goals and approved by MSDE; no single measure to exceed 35% .

* MSA/SPI split increases to 15%/5% in 2014-2015 and becomes 20% MSA/PARCC in 2015-2016

Local Principal Evaluation Models 2013-2014*

Professional Practice

50 % Qualitative Measures
Outcome percentages proposed by LEA & approved by MSDE

Student Growth

50 % Quantitative Measures
As defined below

Maryland Instructional Leadership Framework (8)
- School Vision
- School Culture
- Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
- Observation/Evaluation of Teachers
- Integration of Appropriate Assessments
- Use of Technology and Data
- Professional Development
- Stakeholder Engagement

Additional Domains Based on Local Priorities

MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Preparing World-Class Students

DRAFT 6/6/13

Elementary & Middle School Principals

Either
• 5 % - Reading MSA (School)
• 5 % - Math MSA (School)
• 10%-School Progress Index
or
10%- Reading MSA (School)
10%- Math MSA (School)
and
• 30% - LEA proposed objective measures of student growth and learning linked to state and/or local goals and approved by MSDE

or

High School Principals

LEA proposed objective measures of student growth and learning linked to state and/or local goals and approved by MSDE; no single measure to exceed 35%. One Student Learning Objective must be targeted at HSAs.

or

Other Principals (e.g., Special Center, PreK-2)

LEA proposed objective measures of student growth and learning linked to state and/or local goals and approved by MSDE; no single measure to exceed 35%. If appropriate, one Student Learning Objective must be targeted at HSAs.

* MSA/SPI split increases to 15%/5% in 2014-2015 and becomes 20% MSA/PARCC in 2015-2016

Source: *The Maryland Teacher and Principal Evaluation Guidebook, Version 3,* http://msde.state.md.us/tpe/TPE_Guidance_Version3_092013.pdf

Table 1. Survey Response Rates by District, 2015

District	Response Rate
Allegany County	41.7%
Anne Arundel County	62.8%
Baltimore City	7.1%
Baltimore County	7.5%
Calvert County	28.4%
Caroline County	16.7%
Carroll County	18.2%
Cecil County	52.3%
Charles County	56.1%
Dorchester County	35.2%
Frederick County	11.1%
Garrett County	52.7%
Harford County	26.0%
Howard County	13.7%
Kent County	44.4%
Montgomery County	21.3%
Prince George's County	51.7%
Queen Anne's County	82.4%
Somerset County	53.5%
St. Mary's County	19.5%
Talbot County	56.3%
Washington County	69.3%
Wicomico County	34.2%
Worcester County	48.2%
State Total (All 24 districts)	**30.3%**
State Total (Only districts with a 10% or higher response rate)	**36.7%**

Note: Statewide, the number of survey respondents increased by 16.6% (or 2,708 educators) from 16,314 in 2014 to 19,022 in 2015.

Table 2. Characteristics of the Survey Respondents, 2014 and 2015

	2014 (n=16,314)	2015 (n=19,022)
I have*:		
Participated in classroom observation training(s)	44%	49%
Participated in Student Learning Objectives (SLO) training	86%	85%
Accessed other source(s) of information or experiences related to TPE	26%	26%
Accessed other source(s) of information or experiences related to SLOs	49%	53%
The school level I work in is:		
Elementary school	48%	48%
Middle school	23%	21%
High school	27%	27%
Not Applicable / No Response	2%	3%
My position is described by this educator category:		
Classroom teacher	68%	66%
Non-classroom teaching staff	11%	13%
Special educator	12%	13%
Principal	4%	3%
Assistant principal	2%	3%
Other administrator	1%	1%
Central office staff	1%	1%
No Response	1%	1%
In my position, the majority of my work is in the following subjects and/or area(s)*:		
Arts	8%	7%
Career and Technical Education	6%	5%
Elementary (multiple subject areas)	31%	28%
English/Language Arts	21%	20%
English as a Second Language	3%	3%
Health and Physical Education	6%	5%
Math	18%	17%
Science	15%	12%
Social Studies	14%	12%
Special Education	13%	12%
World Languages	4%	4%
Other (e.g., music)	8%	9%
Years of teaching experience (teachers only; n=14,905 for Y2 and 17,344 for Y3):		
0-3	11%	11%
4-6	10%	10%
7-9	15%	12%
10+	63%	65%
Not Applicable / No Response	1%	1%

	2014 (n=16,314)	2015 (n=19,022)
Years of experience as a principal (principals only; n=1,029 for Y2 and 1,160 for Y3):		
0-3	27%	29%
4-6	17%	17%
7-9	18%	15%
10+	25%	26%
Not Applicable / No Response	13%	12%
The highest educational degree I have attained is:		
Bachelor's degree	21%	20%
Master's degree	76%	76%
Doctoral degree	2%	3%
No Response	1%	1%

*Denotes multiple choice survey items; percentages do not add up to 100.

Table 3. Responses from Principals and Teachers, 2014 and 2015

	Year	Principals (P)			Teachers (T)			PvsT 2015	P 14vs15	T 14vs15
		A	U	D	A	U	D			
Systemic Context										
The expectations are clear for teachers and principals in the TPE system.	2014	70%	13%	17%	50%	20%	30%	*	*	*
	2015	82%	8%	9%	63%	17%	20%			
TPE is based on principles of continuous improvement.	2014	86%	9%	6%	60%	23%	17%	*	*	*
	2015	87%	9%	5%	65%	20%	15%			
TPE recognizes the scope of an educator's roles and responsibilities.	2014	71%	14%	16%	46%	21%	33%	*	*	*
	2015	74%	13%	13%	51%	19%	30%			
The State's support of the implementation of the TPE system is helpful.	2014	44%	35%	21%	25%	39%	37%	*	*	*
	2015	49%	35%	16%	32%	40%	29%			
My district's support of the implementation of the TPE system is helpful.	2014	77%	13%	10%	40%	31%	29%	*		*
	2015	81%	13%	7%	46%	31%	23%			
My school's support of the implementation of the TPE system is helpful.	2014	88%	9%	3%	55%	23%	21%	*		*
	2015	88%	8%	4%	57%	24%	19%			
The school community's support of the implementation of the TPE system is helpful.	2014	45%	41%	14%	27%	41%	32%	*	*	*
	2015	51%	35%	15%	33%	39%	27%			
Quality of TPE Frameworks and Processes Teacher evaluation frameworks and processes…										
Respect educators' professional knowledge and skills.	2014	85%	7%	8%	53%	17%	30%	*	*	*
	2015	88%	7%	5%	59%	14%	27%			
Utilize validated observation measures/instruments.	2014	76%	14%	10%	44%	23%	33%	*	*	*
	2015	80%	11%	9%	52%	20%	28%			
Are conducted by observers/evaluators qualified to do the evaluation.	2014	90%	6%	4%	61%	19%	20%	*		*
	2015	93%	5%	3%	66%	16%	18%			
Provide a summative rating of educator performance.	2014	84%	9%	7%	51%	23%	27%	*		*
	2015	85%	9%	6%	58%	18%	24%			

	Year	Principals (P)			Teachers (T)			PvsT 2015	P 14vs15	T 14vs15
		A	U	D	A	U	D			
Provide useful feedback to teachers.	2014	84%	11%	5%	49%	24%	27%	*		*
	2015	87%	9%	4%	54%	20%	26%			
Encourage reflection on instructional practices.	2014	89%	7%	4%	66%	17%	17%	*		*
	2015	90%	6%	4%	70%	14%	16%			
Lead to improved decisions related to instructional approaches.	2014	79%	15%	6%	48%	26%	26%	*		*
	2015	82%	13%	5%	53%	23%	24%			
Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) Teachers receive…										
Information about developing high quality SLOs.	2014	70%	13%	17%	50%	16%	34%	*	*	*
	2015	76%	9%	14%	57%	14%	29%			
Information about the use of SLO components.	2014	74%	11%	15%	50%	17%	33%	*	*	*
	2015	79%	9%	12%	57%	15%	28%			
Resources supporting the use of student baseline data.	2014	72%	11%	18%	43%	19%	37%	*	*	*
	2015	77%	11%	12%	52%	17%	30%			
Guidance in selecting learning content for SLOs.	2014	76%	10%	15%	50%	16%	34%	*	*	*
	2015	79%	9%	12%	56%	15%	29%			
Guidance in selecting research-based instructional strategies for SLOs.	2014	63%	16%	22%	37%	20%	43%	*	*	*
	2015	70%	13%	16%	45%	18%	37%			
Information on connecting Maryland's College and Career-Ready Standards to SLOs.	2014	55%	19%	26%	33%	23%	43%	*	*	*
	2015	65%	17%	19%	45%	20%	35%			
Recommendations for selecting pre/post assessments for SLOs.	2014	71%	12%	18%	48%	16%	36%	*	*	*
	2015	75%	11%	15%	53%	15%	31%			
Valid and reliable approaches to setting growth targets for SLOs.	2014	60%	15%	25%	40%	20%	41%	*	*	*
	2015	65%	15%	20%	47%	18%	35%			
Professional development that is informed by the SLO process.	2014	66%	15%	20%	43%	20%	37%	*	*	*
	2015	71%	13%	16%	49%	18%	33%			
Guidance in developing strategies for student differentiation or accommodation where appropriate.	2014	64%	14%	22%	37%	20%	42%	*	*	*
	2015	70%	14%	16%	46%	18%	36%			
This Year's Experience This year, I believe…										
Data were used to develop my SLOs and to improve my teaching.	2014	77%	14%	9%	55%	17%	28%	*	*	*
	2015	82%	12%	6%	62%	15%	23%			
There were opportunities to confer with my principal about my SLOs.	2014	90%	5%	5%	71%	9%	20%	*		*
	2015	88%	7%	5%	67%	10%	23%			
There were opportunities to engage in a mid-interval review and refinement of my SLOs.	2014	82%	7%	11%	63%	11%	26%	*		*
	2015	79%	9%	12%	64%	12%	24%			
Reflection on my instructional practices deepened.	2014	72%	19%	9%	44%	21%	36%	*		*
	2015	71%	18%	11%	50%	19%	32%			
There was more instructionally focused dialogue with my colleagues.	2014	75%	16%	9%	42%	18%	40%	*		*
	2015	75%	16%	9%	48%	17%	35%			
There was more instructionally focused dialogue with my supervisor.	2014	78%	13%	9%	39%	19%	42%	*		*
	2015	78%	13%	9%	44%	18%	39%			
The results of my evaluation will be used to inform my professional development plan for next year.	2014	74%	20%	6%	45%	30%	25%	*		*
	2015	75%	17%	8%	49%	26%	26%			

	Year	Principals (P)			Teachers (T)			PvsT 2015	P 14vs15	T 14vs15
		A	U	D	A	U	D			
Capacity Building I need support in…										
Gaining timely access to student data.	2014	55%	9%	35%	47%	15%	38%	*		*
	2015	50%	10%	40%	43%	14%	43%			
Analyzing student data for action.	2014	55%	7%	38%	46%	14%	40%	*		*
	2015	49%	8%	43%	42%	13%	46%			
Using pre/post assessments.	2014	49%	10%	42%	38%	14%	48%	*	*	*
	2015	43%	10%	47%	34%	12%	54%			
Using Maryland's College and Career-Ready Standards.	2014	63%	11%	25%	55%	19%	26%	*	*	*
	2015	53%	13%	34%	46%	17%	37%			
Linking SLOs to Maryland's College and Career-Ready Standards	2014	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	*	N/A	N/A
	2015	58%	12%	30%	49%	17%	34%			
Receiving SLO feedback from school or district administration.	2014	55%	14%	31%	50%	19%	31%		*	*
	2015	45%	14%	41%	43%	18%	39%			
Using data from SLOs and observations to strengthen school improvement planning.	2014	64%	11%	25%	48%	22%	30%	*	*	*
	2015	57%	10%	33%	44%	20%	36%			
Using data from SLOs and observations to make improvements in my instructional practices (for teachers only).	2014	N/A	N/A	N/A	48%	18%	34%	N/A	N/A	*
	2015	N/A	N/A	N/A	43%	16%	41%			
Using data from SLOs and observations to make improvements in my instructional supervision (for principals only).	2014	70%	9%	21%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	*	N/A
	2015	59%	10%	31%	N/A	N/A	N/A			

Note: *Principals* refers to principals and assistant principals; *Teachers* refers to classroom teachers, non-classroom teaching staff, and special educators. A = Total Agree, a composite of strongly agree/agree. U = Undecided. D = Total Disagree, a composite of strongly disagree/disagree. *PvsT 2015* refers to the difference of perceptions between principals and teachers in 2015. *P14v15* refers to the difference of principals' perceptions between 2014 and 2015. *T14vs15* refers to the difference of teachers' perceptions between 2014 and 2015. *Indicates statistically significant differences at the 95% confidence level. N (principal, 2014) = 1,029; N (principal, 2015) = 1,160; N (teacher, 2014) = 14,905; N (teacher, 2015) = 17,344.

Table 4. Responses from Principals and Teachers to Same Questions in 2013, 2014, and 2015

	Year	Principals				Teachers			
		A	U	D	Diff	A	U	D	Diff
Systemic Context									
The expectations are clear for teachers and principals in the TPE system.	2013	55%	26%	20%	Y1 vs. Y2: *	41%	31%	28%	Y1 vs. Y2: *
	2014	70%	13%	17%	Y2 vs. Y3: *	50%	20%	30%	Y2 vs. Y3: *
	2015	82%	8%	9%	Y1 vs. Y3: *	63%	17%	20%	Y1 vs. Y3: *
TPE is based on principles of continuous improvement.	2013	83%	12%	5%	Y1 vs. Y2:	58%	29%	13%	Y1 vs. Y2:
	2014	86%	9%	6%	Y2 vs. Y3: *	60%	23%	17%	Y2 vs. Y3: *
	2015	87%	9%	5%	Y1 vs. Y3:	65%	20%	15%	Y1 vs. Y3: *
TPE recognizes the scope of an educator's roles and responsibilities.	2013	67%	16%	16%	Y1 vs. Y2:	42%	31%	27%	Y1 vs. Y2:
	2014	71%	14%	16%	Y2 vs. Y3: *	46%	21%	33%	Y2 vs. Y3: *
	2015	74%	13%	13%	Y1 vs. Y3:	51%	19%	30%	Y1 vs. Y3: *
Quality of TPE Frameworks and Processes Teacher evaluation frameworks and processes…									
Respect educators' professional knowledge and skills.	2013	82%	11%	8%	Y1 vs. Y2:	51%	25%	24%	Y1 vs. Y2:
	2014	85%	7%	8%	Y2 vs. Y3: *	53%	17%	30%	Y2 vs. Y3: *
	2015	88%	7%	5%	Y1 vs. Y3: *	59%	14%	27%	Y1 vs. Y3: *
Utilize validated observation measures/instruments.	2013	67%	25%	8%	Y1 vs. Y2:	40%	33%	27%	Y1 vs. Y2:
	2014	76%	14%	10%	Y2 vs. Y3: *	44%	23%	33%	Y2 vs. Y3: *
	2015	80%	11%	9%	Y1 vs. Y3: *	52%	20%	28%	Y1 vs. Y3: *
Provide a summative rating of educator performance.	2013	71%	20%	9%	Y1 vs. Y2: *	42%	33%	25%	Y1 vs. Y2: *
	2014	84%	9%	7%	Y2 vs. Y3:	51%	23%	27%	Y2 vs. Y3: *
	2015	85%	9%	6%	Y1 vs. Y3: *	58%	18%	24%	Y1 vs. Y3: *
Lead to improved decisions related to instructional approaches.	2013	66%	24%	10%	Y1 vs. Y2: *	38%	38%	25%	Y1 vs. Y2: *
	2014	79%	15%	6%	Y2 vs. Y3:	48%	26%	26%	Y2 vs. Y3: *
	2015	82%	13%	5%	Y1 vs. Y3: *	53%	23%	24%	Y1 vs. Y3: *
Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) Teachers receive…									
Information about developing high quality SLOs.	2013	57%	20%	23%	Y1 vs. Y2: *	42%	26%	32%	Y1 vs. Y2: *
	2014	70%	13%	17%	Y2 vs. Y3: *	50%	16%	34%	Y2 vs. Y3: *
	2015	76%	9%	14%	Y1 vs. Y3: *	57%	14%	29%	Y1 vs. Y3: *
Information about the use of SLO components.	2013	64%	22%	14%	Y1 vs. Y2: *	44%	27%	30%	Y1 vs. Y2: *
	2014	74%	11%	15%	Y2 vs. Y3: *	50%	17%	33%	Y2 vs. Y3: *
	2015	79%	9%	12%	Y1 vs. Y3: *	57%	15%	28%	Y1 vs. Y3: *
Resources supporting the use of student baseline data.	2013	56%	22%	22%	Y1 vs. Y2: *	35%	31%	34%	Y1 vs. Y2: *
	2014	72%	11%	18%	Y2 vs. Y3: *	43%	19%	37%	Y2 vs. Y3: *
	2015	77%	11%	12%	Y1 vs. Y3: *	52%	17%	30%	Y1 vs. Y3: *

	Year	Principals				Teachers			
		A	U	D	Diff	A	U	D	Diff
Guidance in selecting learning content for SLOs.	2013	50%	26%	25%	Y1 vs. Y2: *	32%	32%	35%	Y1 vs. Y2: *
	2014	76%	10%	15%	Y2 vs. Y3: *	50%	16%	34%	Y2 vs. Y3: *
	2015	79%	9%	12%	Y1 vs. Y3: *	56%	15%	29%	Y1 vs. Y3: *
Guidance in selecting research-based instructional strategies for SLOs.	2013	45%	28%	27%	Y1 vs. Y2: *	27%	35%	38%	Y1 vs. Y2: *
	2014	63%	16%	22%	Y2 vs. Y3: *	37%	20%	43%	Y2 vs. Y3: *
	2015	70%	13%	16%	Y1 vs. Y3: *	45%	18%	37%	Y1 vs. Y3: *
Recommendations for selecting pre/post assessments for SLOs.	2013	44%	27%	29%	Y1 vs. Y2: *	29%	33%	37%	Y1 vs. Y2: *
	2014	71%	12%	18%	Y2 vs. Y3: *	48%	16%	36%	Y2 vs. Y3: *
	2015	75%	11%	15%	Y1 vs. Y3: *	53%	15%	31%	Y1 vs. Y3: *
Valid and reliable approaches to setting growth targets for SLOs.	2013	42%	31%	27%	Y1 vs. Y2: *	28%	36%	37%	Y1 vs. Y2: *
	2014	60%	15%	25%	Y2 vs. Y3: *	40%	20%	41%	Y2 vs. Y3: *
	2015	65%	15%	20%	Y1 vs. Y3: *	47%	18%	35%	Y1 vs. Y3: *
Capacity Building I need support in…									
Gaining timely access to student data.	2013	51%	12%	37%	Y1 vs. Y2:	55%	16%	28%	Y1 vs. Y2: *
	2014	55%	9%	35%	Y2 vs. Y3:	47%	15%	38%	Y2 vs. Y3: *
	2015	50%	10%	40%	Y1 vs. Y3:	43%	14%	43%	Y1 vs. Y3: *
Analyzing student data for action.	2013	44%	11%	45%	Y1 vs. Y2: *	53%	15%	32%	Y1 vs. Y2: *
	2014	55%	7%	38%	Y2 vs. Y3:	46%	14%	40%	Y2 vs. Y3: *
	2015	49%	8%	43%	Y1 vs. Y3:	42%	13%	46%	Y1 vs. Y3: *
Using pre/post assessments.	2013	48%	13%	39%	Y1 vs. Y2:	48%	16%	36%	Y1 vs. Y2: *
	2014	49%	10%	42%	Y2 vs. Y3: *	38%	14%	48%	Y2 vs. Y3: *
	2015	43%	10%	47%	Y1 vs. Y3:	34%	12%	54%	Y1 vs. Y3: *
Receiving SLO feedback from school or district administration.	2013	67%	15%	18%	Y1 vs. Y2: *	66%	21%	12%	Y1 vs. Y2: *
	2014	55%	14%	31%	Y2 vs. Y3: *	50%	19%	31%	Y2 vs. Y3: *
	2015	45%	14%	41%	Y1 vs. Y3: *	43%	18%	39%	Y1 vs. Y3:*

Note: *Principals* refers to principals and assistant principals; *Teachers* refers to classroom teachers, non-classroom teaching staff, and special educators. A = Total Agree, a composite of strongly agree/agree. U = Undecided. D = Total Disagree, a composite of strongly disagree/disagree. *Y1* refers to 2013, *Y2* 2014, and *Y3* 2015. *indicates statistically significant differences at the 95% confidence level. N (principal, 2013) = 173; N (principal, 2014) = 1,029; N (principal, 2015) = 1,160; N (teacher, 2013) = 1,657; N (teacher, 2014) = 14,905; N (teacher, 2015) = 17,344.

Table 5. Responses by Participants' Experience with TPE and SLOs, 2015

	Participated in Training(s) on Classroom Observation and/or SLOs			Accessed Information Related to TPE and/or SLOs			Neither Participated in Trainings nor Accessed Information		
	A	U	D	A	U	D	A	U	D
Systemic Context									
The expectations are clear for teachers and principals in the TPE system.	66%	16%	18%	54%	20%	26%	52%	24%	24%
TPE is based on principles of continuous improvement.	68%	18%	14%	61%	21%	18%	59%	25%	16%
TPE recognizes the scope of an educator's roles and responsibilities.	53%	18%	29%	48%	20%	31%	46%	24%	31%
The State's support of the implementation of the TPE system is helpful.	34%	39%	27%	28%	42%	30%	27%	45%	28%
My district's support of the implementation of the TPE system is helpful.	50%	29%	22%	39%	32%	28%	38%	36%	26%
My school's support of the implementation of the TPE system is helpful.	60%	22%	17%	48%	27%	25%	46%	32%	22%
The school community's support of the implementation of the TPE system is helpful.	35%	39%	26%	30%	40%	30%	29%	44%	28%
Quality of TPE Frameworks and Processes Teacher evaluation frameworks and processes…									
Respect educators' professional knowledge and skills.	61%	13%	25%	55%	16%	29%	56%	18%	27%
Utilize validated observation measures/instruments.	55%	19%	26%	49%	22%	29%	47%	25%	29%
Are conducted by observers/evaluators qualified to do the evaluation.	68%	15%	16%	64%	17%	19%	63%	20%	18%
Provide a summative rating of educator performance.	60%	17%	23%	56%	22%	23%	54%	22%	24%
Provide useful feedback to teachers.	57%	19%	24%	50%	22%	28%	49%	24%	27%
Encourage reflection on instructional practices.	72%	13%	15%	64%	18%	18%	62%	21%	17%
Lead to improved decisions related to instructional approaches.	56%	22%	22%	49%	25%	26%	48%	27%	25%
Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) Teachers receive…									
Information about developing high quality SLOs.	61%	13%	26%	42%	19%	40%	39%	21%	40%
Information about the use of SLO components.	61%	14%	25%	41%	20%	39%	40%	22%	39%
Resources supporting the use of student baseline data.	56%	17%	28%	43%	22%	36%	37%	23%	40%
Guidance in selecting learning content for SLOs.	60%	14%	27%	44%	20%	36%	40%	21%	40%
Guidance in selecting research-based instructional strategies for SLOs.	49%	17%	34%	35%	22%	43%	31%	24%	45%
Information on connecting Maryland's College and Career-Ready Standards to SLOs.	48%	19%	32%	33%	23%	43%	32%	27%	41%

	Participated in Training(s) on Classroom Observation and/or SLOs			Accessed Information Related to TPE and/or SLOs			Neither Participated in Trainings nor Accessed Information		
	A	U	D	A	U	D	A	U	D
Recommendations for selecting pre/post assessments for SLOs.	57%	14%	29%	44%	19%	37%	39%	20%	41%
Valid and reliable approaches to setting growth targets for SLOs.	50%	18%	33%	37%	21%	41%	34%	23%	43%
Professional development that is informed by the SLO process.	53%	17%	30%	35%	21%	44%	33%	22%	45%
Guidance in developing strategies for student differentiation or accommodation where appropriate.	49%	18%	34%	36%	23%	41%	34%	23%	43%
This Year's Experience This year, I believe…									
Data were used to develop my SLOs and to improve my teaching.	65%	14%	21%	51%	20%	29%	48%	22%	29%
There were opportunities to confer with my principal about my SLOs.	69%	10%	21%	54%	16%	30%	57%	16%	27%
There were opportunities to engage in a mid-interval review and refinement of my SLOs.	66%	11%	22%	49%	18%	33%	50%	18%	32%
Reflection on my instructional practices deepened.	52%	18%	30%	43%	23%	34%	42%	23%	35%
There was more instructionally focused dialogue with my colleagues.	51%	16%	32%	41%	18%	40%	39%	22%	38%
There was more instructionally focused dialogue with my supervisor.	47%	17%	36%	36%	21%	44%	35%	23%	42%
The results of my evaluation will be used to inform my professional development plan for next year.	51%	25%	24%	41%	29%	30%	39%	31%	30%
Capacity Building I need support in…									
Gaining timely access to student data.	44%	13%	43%	47%	16%	37%	43%	19%	38%
Analyzing student data for action.	42%	12%	46%	46%	14%	40%	45%	17%	39%
Using pre/post assessments.	34%	12%	54%	37%	14%	49%	38%	17%	45%
Using Maryland's College and Career-Ready Standards.	46%	16%	37%	48%	20%	32%	48%	21%	31%
Linking SLOs to Maryland's College and Career-Ready Standards	49%	16%	34%	54%	18%	28%	50%	22%	28%
Receiving SLO feedback from school or district administration.	43%	17%	40%	48%	21%	31%	46%	22%	31%
Using data from SLOs and observations to strengthen school improvement planning.	45%	19%	37%	46%	25%	29%	43%	27%	30%
Using data from SLOs and observations to make improvements in my instructional practices (for teachers only).	42%	16%	42%	45%	20%	35%	45%	23%	32%
Using data from SLOs and observations to make improvements in my instructional supervision (for principals only).#	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Note: N = 19,022; A = Total Agree, a composite of strongly agree/agree. U = Undecided. D = Total Disagree, a composite of strongly disagree/disagree. # A dominant majority (i.e., 99%) of the principal respondents have participated in training(s) on classroom observation and/or SLOs.

Table 6. Teachers' Responses by Years of Teaching Experience, 2015

	0-3 Years			4-6 Years			7-9 Years			10+ Years		
	A	U	D	A	U	D	A	U	D	A	U	D
Systemic Context												
The expectations are clear for teachers and principals in the TPE system.	66%	18%	15%	62%	18%	20%	64%	17%	19%	63%	17%	20%
TPE is based on principles of continuous improvement.	69%	21%	10%	63%	21%	16%	65%	20%	15%	65%	19%	16%
TPE recognizes the scope of an educator's roles and responsibilities.	57%	20%	23%	47%	19%	34%	51%	18%	31%	51%	18%	31%
The State's support of the implementation of the TPE system is helpful.	36%	42%	22%	28%	41%	32%	30%	40%	29%	32%	39%	29%
My district's support of the implementation of the TPE system is helpful.	48%	34%	18%	40%	33%	27%	46%	31%	23%	47%	29%	24%
My school's support of the implementation of the TPE system is helpful.	57%	26%	17%	53%	27%	20%	57%	25%	18%	58%	23%	20%
The school community's support of the implementation of the TPE system is helpful.	39%	41%	20%	31%	40%	29%	33%	40%	27%	33%	39%	28%
Quality of TPE Frameworks and Processes Teacher evaluation frameworks and processes…												
Respect educators' professional knowledge and skills.	68%	14%	18%	58%	15%	27%	60%	15%	25%	57%	14%	29%
Utilize validated observation measures/instruments.	61%	21%	18%	50%	19%	30%	53%	20%	28%	51%	20%	29%
Are conducted by observers/evaluators qualified to do the evaluation.	75%	15%	11%	67%	15%	18%	68%	15%	16%	64%	17%	19%
Provide a summative rating of educator performance.	63%	18%	19%	53%	17%	30%	56%	19%	25%	57%	18%	25%
Provide useful feedback to teachers.	63%	18%	19%	52%	21%	27%	55%	20%	25%	52%	20%	28%
Encourage reflection on instructional practices.	79%	12%	9%	70%	15%	15%	70%	15%	15%	68%	15%	17%
Lead to improved decisions related to instructional approaches.	65%	20%	15%	52%	23%	25%	54%	22%	24%	51%	23%	26%
Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) Teachers receive…												
Information about developing high quality SLOs.	52%	17%	30%	53%	13%	34%	56%	13%	30%	59%	14%	27%
Information about the use of SLO components.	53%	18%	29%	52%	14%	34%	55%	14%	31%	59%	15%	26%
Resources supporting the use of student baseline data.	50%	20%	30%	48%	16%	36%	50%	17%	34%	54%	18%	29%
Guidance in selecting learning content for SLOs.	52%	17%	31%	53%	14%	33%	55%	13%	32%	58%	15%	28%
Guidance in selecting research-based instructional strategies for SLOs.	43%	21%	37%	41%	16%	43%	42%	18%	40%	47%	18%	35%
Information on connecting Maryland's College and Career-Ready Standards to SLOs.	45%	21%	34%	43%	16%	41%	43%	18%	38%	46%	21%	33%
Recommendations for selecting pre/post assessments for SLOs.	53%	17%	30%	51%	13%	36%	52%	14%	34%	54%	15%	30%
Valid and reliable approaches to setting growth targets for SLOs.	47%	20%	33%	43%	17%	40%	45%	17%	38%	48%	18%	34%

	0-3 Years			4-6 Years			7-9 Years			10+ Years		
	A	**U**	**D**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**A**	**U**	**D**
Professional development that is informed by the SLO process.	50%	20%	29%	46%	17%	38%	47%	16%	36%	50%	18%	32%
Guidance in developing strategies for student differentiation or accommodation where appropriate.	45%	20%	35%	42%	16%	42%	44%	17%	39%	47%	19%	35%
This Year's Experience This year, I believe…												
Data were used to develop my SLOs and to improve my teaching.	61%	17%	22%	58%	14%	28%	61%	14%	24%	63%	14%	23%
There were opportunities to confer with my principal about my SLOs.	64%	12%	23%	64%	10%	27%	66%	10%	25%	68%	10%	22%
There were opportunities to engage in a mid-interval review and refinement of my SLOs.	61%	13%	25%	62%	10%	29%	62%	12%	27%	65%	12%	23%
Reflection on my instructional practices deepened.	56%	20%	24%	45%	18%	37%	48%	17%	35%	50%	19%	32%
There was more instructionally focused dialogue with my colleagues.	52%	18%	29%	43%	17%	40%	46%	16%	38%	49%	16%	35%
There was more instructionally focused dialogue with my supervisor.	50%	19%	32%	39%	19%	42%	42%	17%	41%	43%	18%	39%
The results of my evaluation will be used to inform my professional development plan for next year.	57%	24%	19%	44%	24%	32%	46%	25%	29%	48%	27%	25%
Capacity Building I need support in…												
Gaining timely access to student data.	47%	16%	37%	41%	14%	45%	41%	13%	46%	44%	13%	43%
Analyzing student data for action.	49%	15%	36%	39%	12%	49%	37%	12%	51%	42%	12%	46%
Using pre/post assessments.	37%	14%	48%	29%	13%	58%	29%	12%	59%	34%	12%	54%
Using Maryland's College and Career-Ready Standards.	49%	17%	35%	43%	16%	41%	44%	15%	40%	46%	18%	36%
Linking SLOs to Maryland's College and Career-Ready Standards	52%	17%	31%	48%	16%	36%	50%	16%	35%	49%	17%	34%
Receiving SLO feedback from school or district administration.	48%	18%	35%	45%	18%	37%	43%	16%	41%	43%	18%	39%
Using data from SLOs and observations to strengthen school improvement planning.	49%	20%	31%	43%	20%	37%	43%	19%	39%	43%	20%	37%
Using data from SLOs and observations to make improvements in my instructional practices (for teachers only).	50%	17%	34%	43%	16%	41%	41%	15%	44%	42%	17%	42%
Using data from SLOs and observations to make improvements in my instructional supervision (for principals only).	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Note: N = 17,344; *Teachers* refers to classroom teachers, non-classroom teaching staff, and special educators. A = Total Agree, a composite of strongly agree/agree. U = Undecided. D = Total Disagree, a composite of strongly disagree/disagree.

Table 7. Teachers' Responses by School Level, 2015

	Elementary School			Middle School			High School		
	A	**U**	**D**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**A**	**U**	**D**
Systemic Context									
The expectations are clear for teachers and principals in the TPE system.	66%	17%	18%	62%	17%	21%	60%	18%	22%
TPE is based on principles of continuous improvement.	70%	18%	12%	64%	20%	16%	59%	21%	19%
TPE recognizes the scope of an educator's roles and responsibilities.	54%	18%	28%	49%	19%	33%	47%	19%	33%
The State's support of the implementation of the TPE system is helpful.	34%	40%	26%	29%	41%	30%	31%	38%	32%
My district's support of the implementation of the TPE system is helpful.	48%	31%	21%	44%	31%	25%	44%	30%	26%
My school's support of the implementation of the TPE system is helpful.	61%	23%	17%	54%	25%	20%	53%	24%	22%
The school community's support of the implementation of the TPE system is helpful.	36%	40%	25%	30%	41%	29%	32%	39%	30%
Quality of TPE Frameworks and Processes Teacher evaluation frameworks and processes…									
Respect educators' professional knowledge and skills.	62%	14%	24%	57%	14%	29%	55%	14%	31%
Utilize validated observation measures/instruments.	56%	20%	24%	49%	20%	31%	48%	20%	32%
Are conducted by observers/evaluators qualified to do the evaluation.	73%	14%	13%	63%	18%	19%	58%	19%	23%
Provide a summative rating of educator performance.	62%	17%	21%	54%	20%	26%	54%	18%	28%
Provide useful feedback to teachers.	58%	19%	23%	51%	22%	28%	50%	19%	31%
Encourage reflection on instructional practices.	74%	13%	13%	69%	15%	16%	65%	15%	20%
Lead to improved decisions related to instructional approaches.	58%	22%	20%	50%	25%	25%	48%	23%	29%
Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) Teachers receive…									
Information about developing high quality SLOs.	58%	14%	28%	56%	14%	30%	58%	14%	28%
Information about the use of SLO components.	58%	15%	27%	56%	15%	29%	57%	14%	28%
Resources supporting the use of student baseline data.	55%	17%	28%	50%	18%	32%	50%	18%	32%
Guidance in selecting learning content for SLOs.	58%	14%	27%	55%	15%	30%	53%	15%	31%
Guidance in selecting research-based instructional strategies for SLOs.	47%	18%	35%	44%	18%	38%	44%	18%	38%
Information on connecting Maryland's College and Career-Ready Standards to SLOs.	49%	20%	32%	42%	20%	38%	42%	21%	37%
Recommendations for selecting pre/post assessments for SLOs.	56%	15%	30%	53%	15%	33%	51%	16%	33%
Valid and reliable approaches to setting growth targets for SLOs.	49%	18%	33%	45%	18%	37%	45%	18%	36%

	Elementary School			Middle School			High School		
	A	**U**	**D**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**A**	**U**	**D**
Professional development that is informed by the SLO process.	50%	18%	33%	47%	18%	35%	50%	18%	32%
Guidance in developing strategies for student differentiation or accommodation where appropriate.	47%	19%	34%	44%	18%	38%	45%	18%	37%
This Year's Experience This year, I believe…									
Data were used to develop my SLOs and to improve my teaching.	66%	14%	20%	60%	15%	25%	56%	16%	28%
There were opportunities to confer with my principal about my SLOs.	72%	10%	18%	63%	10%	27%	61%	11%	28%
There were opportunities to engage in a mid-interval review and refinement of my SLOs.	65%	11%	23%	63%	11%	26%	62%	13%	25%
Reflection on my instructional practices deepened.	53%	19%	28%	47%	19%	34%	46%	18%	36%
There was more instructionally focused dialogue with my colleagues.	52%	17%	31%	45%	17%	38%	44%	16%	39%
There was more instructionally focused dialogue with my supervisor.	47%	18%	35%	40%	18%	42%	40%	17%	43%
The results of my evaluation will be used to inform my professional development plan for next year.	52%	26%	22%	46%	25%	29%	45%	25%	29%
Capacity Building I need support in…									
Gaining timely access to student data.	41%	13%	46%	45%	13%	42%	48%	15%	37%
Analyzing student data for action.	40%	12%	49%	43%	12%	45%	45%	14%	41%
Using pre/post assessments.	32%	11%	57%	34%	12%	54%	36%	14%	50%
Using Maryland's College and Career-Ready Standards.	43%	16%	41%	48%	18%	35%	50%	18%	32%
Linking SLOs to Maryland's College and Career-Ready Standards	46%	17%	37%	52%	17%	31%	52%	17%	30%
Receiving SLO feedback from school or district administration.	42%	17%	41%	44%	18%	38%	45%	19%	37%
Using data from SLOs and observations to strengthen school improvement planning.	43%	19%	38%	46%	19%	35%	44%	21%	34%
Using data from SLOs and observations to make improvements in my instructional practices (for teachers only).	42%	15%	43%	43%	15%	41%	44%	18%	38%
Using data from SLOs and observations to make improvements in my instructional supervision (for principals only).	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Note: N = 17,344; *Teachers* refers to classroom teachers, non-classroom teaching staff, and special educators. A = Total Agree, a composite of strongly agree/agree. U = Undecided. D = Total Disagree, a composite of strongly disagree/disagree.

Table 8. Teachers' Responses by District Poverty Level, 2014 and 2015

	Year	Low Poverty (18-30% FRL)			Medium Poverty (32-49% FRL)			High Poverty (52-84% FRL)		
		A	U	D	A	U	D	A	U	D
Systemic Context										
The expectations are clear for teachers and principals in the TPE system.	2014	48%	20%	32%	52%	20%	28%	49%	20%	31%
	2015	66%	16%	18%	62%	17%	21%	61%	18%	21%
TPE is based on principles of continuous improvement.	2014	60%	22%	18%	61%	23%	15%	60%	24%	16%
	2015	65%	19%	16%	65%	19%	16%	64%	21%	15%
TPE recognizes the scope of an educator's roles and responsibilities.	2014	43%	20%	37%	50%	21%	29%	46%	23%	31%
	2015	49%	18%	32%	51%	18%	31%	53%	19%	28%
The State's support of the implementation of the TPE system is helpful.	2014	21%	39%	40%	26%	40%	34%	30%	37%	33%
	2015	28%	41%	31%	29%	42%	29%	38%	36%	27%
My district's support of the implementation of the TPE system is helpful.	2014	39%	31%	30%	42%	30%	27%	38%	31%	31%
	2015	44%	32%	24%	46%	31%	24%	47%	29%	25%
My school's support of the implementation of the TPE system is helpful.	2014	57%	22%	21%	57%	23%	20%	50%	25%	25%
	2015	58%	24%	18%	57%	24%	19%	56%	23%	21%
The school community's support of the implementation of the TPE system is helpful.	2014	25%	43%	33%	28%	42%	30%	29%	39%	33%
	2015	32%	40%	28%	31%	41%	28%	37%	36%	27%
Quality of TPE Frameworks and Processes Teacher evaluation frameworks and processes…										
Respect educators' professional knowledge and skills.	2014	51%	17%	32%	57%	16%	27%	53%	18%	29%
	2015	58%	15%	28%	58%	13%	29%	58%	14%	27%
Utilize validated observation measures/instruments.	2014	42%	24%	34%	45%	23%	32%	48%	22%	30%
	2015	51%	20%	29%	49%	20%	31%	53%	20%	26%
Are conducted by observers/evaluators qualified to do the evaluation.	2014	61%	19%	20%	64%	18%	17%	58%	19%	23%
	2015	68%	15%	18%	68%	16%	16%	64%	17%	19%
Provide a summative rating of educator performance.	2014	47%	23%	29%	57%	21%	22%	49%	23%	28%
	2015	56%	18%	25%	60%	17%	24%	58%	18%	24%
Provide useful feedback to teachers.	2014	46%	26%	29%	53%	23%	24%	50%	23%	27%
	2015	53%	20%	27%	53%	19%	28%	55%	20%	25%
Encourage reflection on instructional practices.	2014	65%	17%	19%	67%	17%	16%	67%	17%	16%
	2015	68%	15%	17%	69%	14%	16%	71%	14%	15%
Lead to improved decisions related to instructional approaches.	2014	45%	27%	28%	50%	26%	23%	50%	25%	25%
	2015	52%	23%	25%	51%	23%	26%	54%	23%	22%
Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) Teachers receive…										
Information about developing high quality SLOs.	2014	53%	15%	32%	48%	17%	35%	47%	14%	39%
	2015	61%	14%	25%	53%	16%	32%	58%	14%	28%
Information about the use of SLO components.	2014	53%	17%	30%	48%	18%	34%	46%	16%	38%
	2015	60%	15%	24%	53%	17%	30%	59%	14%	27%
Resources supporting the use of student baseline data.	2014	45%	19%	36%	41%	21%	38%	43%	18%	39%
	2015	55%	18%	28%	47%	19%	33%	55%	17%	28%
Guidance in selecting learning content for SLOs.	2014	53%	15%	32%	50%	16%	34%	45%	16%	39%
	2015	59%	14%	26%	53%	17%	31%	56%	15%	29%
Guidance in selecting research-based instructional strategies for SLOs.	2014	38%	19%	42%	37%	21%	43%	36%	19%	45%
	2015	48%	18%	34%	43%	19%	38%	47%	18%	35%
Information on connecting Maryland's College and Career-Ready Standards to SLOs.	2014	34%	23%	43%	33%	24%	43%	33%	23%	45%
	2015	50%	20%	31%	44%	21%	35%	47%	21%	32%

	Year	Low Poverty (18-30% FRL)			Medium Poverty (32-49% FRL)			High Poverty (52-84% FRL)		
		A	U	D	A	U	D	A	U	D
Recommendations for selecting pre/post assessments for SLOs.	2014	46%	15%	39%	49%	18%	33%	49%	16%	35%
	2015	54%	15%	31%	51%	17%	32%	61%	14%	25%
Valid and reliable approaches to setting growth targets for SLOs.	2014	41%	19%	40%	38%	21%	41%	38%	20%	42%
	2015	50%	18%	32%	43%	19%	38%	49%	18%	33%
Professional development that is informed by the SLO process.	2014	45%	19%	35%	42%	22%	36%	42%	18%	40%
	2015	52%	18%	31%	42%	21%	37%	55%	17%	28%
Guidance in developing strategies for student differentiation or accommodation where appropriate.	2014	38%	19%	43%	38%	21%	41%	36%	20%	44%
	2015	48%	18%	34%	43%	20%	36%	46%	19%	36%
This Year's Experience This year, I believe…										
Data were used to develop my SLOs and to improve my teaching.	2014	57%	17%	26%	51%	18%	30%	56%	17%	27%
	2015	65%	14%	22%	57%	15%	28%	63%	16%	21%
There were opportunities to confer with my principal about my SLOs.	2014	75%	8%	17%	73%	10%	18%	60%	11%	29%
	2015	71%	9%	20%	77%	9%	14%	65%	12%	23%
There were opportunities to engage in a mid-interval review and refinement of my SLOs.	2014	72%	9%	19%	60%	12%	28%	48%	15%	37%
	2015	73%	10%	17%	71%	10%	19%	55%	14%	31%
Reflection on my instructional practices deepened.	2014	43%	21%	37%	44%	20%	36%	45%	21%	34%
	2015	49%	19%	32%	48%	19%	33%	53%	19%	28%
There was more instructionally focused dialogue with my colleagues.	2014	40%	18%	42%	42%	18%	39%	44%	19%	37%
	2015	47%	17%	37%	45%	18%	38%	53%	17%	30%
There was more instructionally focused dialogue with my supervisor.	2014	38%	19%	43%	41%	19%	40%	39%	20%	41%
	2015	43%	18%	39%	43%	18%	39%	48%	18%	35%
The results of my evaluation will be used to inform my professional development plan for next year.	2014	43%	32%	26%	46%	30%	23%	47%	28%	24%
	2015	47%	27%	26%	50%	25%	25%	54%	25%	22%
Capacity Building I need support in…										
Gaining timely access to student data.	2014	45%	16%	39%	47%	15%	37%	52%	13%	35%
	2015	40%	14%	46%	42%	15%	43%	49%	14%	37%
Analyzing student data for action.	2014	44%	14%	43%	47%	14%	39%	50%	13%	37%
	2015	37%	13%	51%	42%	13%	45%	49%	13%	38%
Using pre/post assessments.	2014	36%	14%	51%	38%	14%	48%	43%	13%	44%
	2015	28%	12%	60%	32%	13%	55%	41%	13%	46%
Using Maryland's College and Career-Ready Standards.	2014	54%	19%	27%	55%	20%	25%	58%	18%	24%
	2015	41%	17%	42%	43%	17%	40%	52%	16%	31%
Linking SLOs to Maryland's College and Career-Ready Standards	2014	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	2015	43%	17%	40%	47%	18%	35%	55%	17%	28%
Receiving SLO feedback from school or district administration.	2014	46%	20%	35%	49%	21%	30%	59%	17%	24%
	2015	35%	18%	47%	39%	18%	42%	53%	17%	29%
Using data from SLOs and observations to strengthen school improvement planning.	2014	45%	22%	33%	48%	23%	29%	56%	20%	24%
	2015	38%	20%	43%	41%	22%	37%	52%	19%	29%
Using data from SLOs and observations to make improvements in my instructional practices (for teachers only).	2014	44%	18%	38%	50%	18%	32%	55%	17%	28%
	2015	35%	17%	48%	42%	17%	41%	51%	16%	33%

Note: *Teachers* refers to classroom teachers, non-classroom teaching staff, and special educators. A = Total Agree, a composite of strongly agree/agree. U=Undecided. D=Total Disagree, a composite of strongly disagree/disagree. N (teacher, 2014) = 14,905; N (teacher, 2015) = 17,344.

Table 9. Teachers' Responses by Case Study District, 2015

	Blue District			Orange District			Purple District			Green District		
	A	**U**	**D**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**A**	**U**	**D**
Systemic Context												
The expectations are clear for teachers and principals in the TPE system.	78%	13%	9%	68%	17%	15%	67%	16%	17%	49%	17%	34%
TPE is based on principles of continuous improvement.	77%	17%	7%	65%	21%	14%	68%	18%	13%	45%	19%	35%
TPE recognizes the scope of an educator's roles and responsibilities.	68%	17%	15%	48%	20%	31%	53%	18%	29%	32%	12%	55%
The State's support of the implementation of the TPE system is helpful.	47%	42%	11%	29%	42%	29%	34%	47%	19%	15%	32%	54%
My district's support of the implementation of the TPE system is helpful.	63%	27%	9%	44%	34%	23%	51%	33%	16%	34%	28%	39%
My school's support of the implementation of the TPE system is helpful.	72%	19%	9%	57%	26%	17%	60%	25%	15%	52%	19%	29%
The school community's support of the implementation of the TPE system is helpful.	46%	42%	13%	33%	41%	27%	33%	45%	22%	22%	35%	43%
Quality of TPE Frameworks and Processes Teacher evaluation frameworks and processes…												
Respect educators' professional knowledge and skills.	73%	17%	10%	58%	16%	27%	63%	12%	25%	35%	12%	53%
Utilize validated observation measures/instruments.	69%	20%	12%	53%	21%	27%	54%	19%	26%	29%	17%	54%
Are conducted by observers/evaluators qualified to do the evaluation.	82%	12%	6%	67%	15%	18%	74%	14%	12%	53%	18%	29%
Provide a summative rating of educator performance.	73%	17%	11%	53%	20%	27%	65%	18%	18%	40%	18%	42%
Provide useful feedback to teachers.	69%	19%	12%	54%	20%	26%	59%	20%	21%	28%	20%	51%
Encourage reflection on instructional practices.	75%	15%	10%	67%	16%	17%	69%	15%	15%	55%	14%	32%
Lead to improved decisions related to instructional approaches.	68%	19%	13%	52%	24%	24%	56%	24%	20%	29%	20%	51%
Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) Teachers receive…												
Information about developing high quality SLOs.	77%	12%	11%	63%	14%	23%	39%	20%	42%	51%	12%	36%
Information about the use of SLO components.	76%	14%	10%	63%	15%	22%	48%	19%	34%	49%	12%	40%
Resources supporting the use of student baseline data.	70%	17%	13%	58%	18%	24%	44%	22%	34%	42%	12%	46%
Guidance in selecting learning content for SLOs.	72%	15%	14%	61%	14%	25%	45%	17%	37%	52%	11%	37%
Guidance in selecting research-based instructional strategies for SLOs.	65%	18%	17%	50%	18%	32%	39%	18%	43%	33%	16%	51%
Information on connecting Maryland's College and Career-Ready Standards to SLOs.	67%	18%	15%	52%	19%	29%	39%	24%	36%	40%	17%	43%
Recommendations for selecting pre/post assessments for SLOs.	73%	14%	13%	55%	16%	30%	50%	18%	32%	42%	11%	48%

	Blue District			Orange District			Purple District			Green District		
	A	**U**	**D**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**A**	**U**	**D**
Valid and reliable approaches to setting growth targets for SLOs.	66%	19%	16%	54%	17%	29%	38%	24%	39%	33%	13%	54%
Professional development that is informed by the SLO process.	67%	20%	14%	56%	17%	27%	34%	25%	41%	38%	13%	49%
Guidance in developing strategies for student differentiation or accommodation where appropriate.	64%	18%	18%	51%	18%	31%	43%	22%	36%	31%	14%	55%
This Year's Experience This year, I believe…												
Data were used to develop my SLOs and to improve my teaching.	75%	15%	10%	66%	14%	20%	46%	20%	34%	39%	12%	48%
There were opportunities to confer with my principal about my SLOs.	85%	8%	7%	67%	10%	23%	68%	12%	20%	76%	7%	17%
There were opportunities to engage in a mid-interval review and refinement of my SLOs.	76%	13%	12%	73%	10%	17%	37%	17%	46%	81%	6%	14%
Reflection on my instructional practices deepened.	64%	19%	17%	48%	20%	32%	48%	19%	33%	31%	14%	55%
There was more instructionally focused dialogue with my colleagues.	65%	16%	20%	48%	17%	35%	48%	16%	36%	27%	13%	60%
There was more instructionally focused dialogue with my supervisor.	54%	18%	28%	44%	19%	37%	41%	20%	39%	31%	12%	57%
The results of my evaluation will be used to inform my professional development plan for next year.	65%	24%	11%	46%	28%	26%	50%	26%	25%	29%	22%	49%
Capacity Building I need support in…												
Gaining timely access to student data.	36%	14%	50%	41%	14%	45%	35%	16%	50%	37%	14%	50%
Analyzing student data for action.	33%	15%	51%	38%	13%	49%	36%	15%	50%	33%	10%	57%
Using pre/post assessments.	31%	13%	56%	28%	12%	59%	24%	14%	63%	24%	8%	67%
Using Maryland's College and Career-Ready Standards.	39%	17%	44%	41%	16%	42%	36%	17%	46%	31%	16%	53%
Linking SLOs to Maryland's College and Career-Ready Standards	41%	18%	41%	42%	16%	42%	41%	19%	40%	36%	15%	49%
Receiving SLO feedback from school or district administration.	32%	20%	48%	34%	19%	47%	36%	20%	44%	29%	14%	57%
Using data from SLOs and observations to strengthen school improvement planning.	37%	19%	43%	38%	20%	42%	36%	25%	39%	31%	16%	52%
Using data from SLOs and observations to make improvements in my instructional practices (for teachers only).	39%	16%	45%	34%	18%	49%	41%	19%	40%	31%	14%	55%
Using data from SLOs and observations to make improvements in my instructional supervision (for principals only).	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Note: *Teachers* refers to classroom teachers, non-classroom teaching staff, and special educators. A = Total Agree, a composite of strongly agree/agree. U=Undecided. D=Total Disagree, a composite of strongly disagree/disagree. *indicates statistically significant differences at the 95% confidence level. A total of 4,831 teachers in the four districts participated in the survey. District level numbers are not reported to protect the identity of the districts.