

RESEARCH BRIEF AUGUST 2016

Teacher Evaluation in Practice

Year 3 Teacher and Administrator Perceptions of REACH



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Introduction

New teacher evaluation systems are part of a recent wave of education reform that has focused on measuring and improving teacher effectiveness. Within the last five years, over 40 states have implemented or are implementing new teacher evaluation systems that include multiple measures such as classroom observations and student growth.

Chicago is part of that wave. It launched its revised teacher evaluation system, Recognizing Educators Advancing Chicago Students (REACH) in the fall of 2012. The REACH system differs significantly from the old checklist system: Teachers are observed on multiple occasions instead of just once; their observation ratings are based on a detailed rubric and evaluators have to provide evidence for each rating assigned.¹ Final evaluation scores are based on a combination of these observations and student growth metrics which can be a combination of student growth on district-wide grade- and subject-specific performance tasks for all teachers and value-added scores for teachers in grades 3-8 (For more details on REACH, see Appendix A).

Many studies have focused on the development or technical aspects of the metrics used to capture teacher quality, but notably fewer studies have focused on how teachers and administrators perceive the new systems. To fill this gap, and as part of an implementation study of REACH, the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research (UChicago Consortium) has been studying how Chicago Public School (CPS) teachers and administrators perceive this system since its implementation in 2012. Prior reports have shown that teachers and administrators were generally positive about

Data Sources

Data in this brief are taken from an annual survey of all teachers and principals:

2014-15 My Voice, My School (MVMS) Survey

- Administered January-March 2015
- Survey administered to 24,661 teachers
- 19,908 responded (81%)

2014-15 Consortium Administrator Survey

- Administered May 2015
- 288 of 643 principals responded (45%)
- 291 of 589 assistant principals responded (49%)

For more details on these surveys, and response rates for participants who were asked REACH-related questions, see Appendix B.

the new system, especially the observation process, but that teachers were negative about the inclusion of student growth, whether it was measured by standardized tests or teacher-created district-wide performance tasks. Teachers also felt the new system created additional stress. We noted a slight decline in teacher satisfaction with the overall system between 2012-13 and 2013-14 (Years 1 and 2), although teachers' perceptions

¹ In CPS, only principals and assistant principals can be evaluators.

of their evaluator’s fairness and ability to rate them remained strong. We also found teacher perceptions of REACH were positively related to their perceptions of school leadership and school community.²

REACH implementation was staggered depending on teachers’ tenure status and previous rating. **Figure 1** provides a timeline of REACH implementation and survey administration dates; questions on the surveys were used to gather teacher and administrator attitudes about REACH. Those attitudes might have been influenced by participants’ level of experience with the system at the time they responded to the survey. For example, at the time participants responded to the first survey, teachers had no knowledge of their student growth scores, and limited knowledge of observation ratings; administrators had experienced the demands of observing non-tenured teachers for stakes, but had not yet needed to officially evaluate tenured teachers.

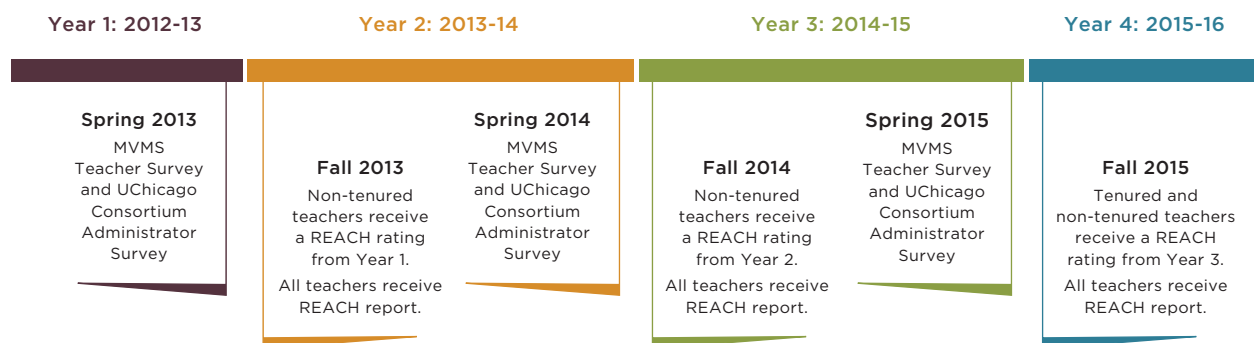
This brief builds on the prior two reports of teacher and administrator perceptions by summarizing their responses collected near the end of REACH’s third year. It also provides overall district-wide summative scores.

While it is important to study the technical properties of measuring teacher performance, it is also important to note that participants have a key role in identifying areas of strength and weakness. Examining their perceptions can provide important pieces of information as practitioners and policymakers look to build on the strengths of the system now in place and to minimize or correct areas of weakness.

Findings

In the first year of REACH, we found most teachers and principals responded positively to the observation process, but teachers were apprehensive about the inclusion of student growth in their evaluation. In the second year, our findings were similar to the first year: teachers continued to be positive about the observation process, negative about the inclusion of student growth. We also found a decline in teacher satisfaction with the overall system in Year 2 compared to the first year. It is important to look at participant perceptions in Year 3 since their level of experience with the system has changed.

FIGURE 1
REACH Reporting and Study Data Collection



Note: Tenured teachers missing a prior rating or with prior ratings of Unsatisfactory or Satisfactory are observed four times and receive a summative REACH rating annually beginning in Year 2. Tenured teachers with prior ratings in the top two categories are observed four times over the course of two years beginning in Year 2 and receive a summative REACH rating biennially. In Year 1 (2012-13) only non-tenured teachers’ REACH ratings counted for stakes. Non-tenured teachers are observed four times and receive a summative REACH rating annually. All teachers received REACH reports annually which detail scores on each measure of REACH. For more details on REACH, see Appendix A.

² For previous reports, see <http://consortium.uchicago.edu/page/teacher-evaluation>

REACH Final Ratings

Figure A displays teachers' ratings for both tenured and non-tenured teachers under the prior checklist system and under REACH. We see that under REACH fewer teachers are in the top two categories.

Most tenured teachers receive their final REACH rating biennially; hence, most tenured teachers received their first final rating in 2014-15. In that year, 83 percent of tenured teachers received ratings in the top two categories. In comparison, under the previous checklist system, 94 percent of tenured teachers received ratings in the top two categories (Superior or Excellent). The shift in the percent of teachers in the top category was more pronounced, going from 69 percent to 29 percent.

Under the previous checklist system, 87 percent of non-tenured teachers received ratings in the top two categories. Under REACH, 58 percent of teachers received ratings in top two categories in 2012-13. In Year 2 and Year 3 of REACH, we see a shift upward in ratings with more non-tenured teachings assigned top ratings. At this point, it is unclear whether this shift upward is due to teacher attrition, teacher improvement, or evaluators becoming more lenient.

A teacher's REACH final rating is comprised of a professional practice score and up to two measures of student growth.

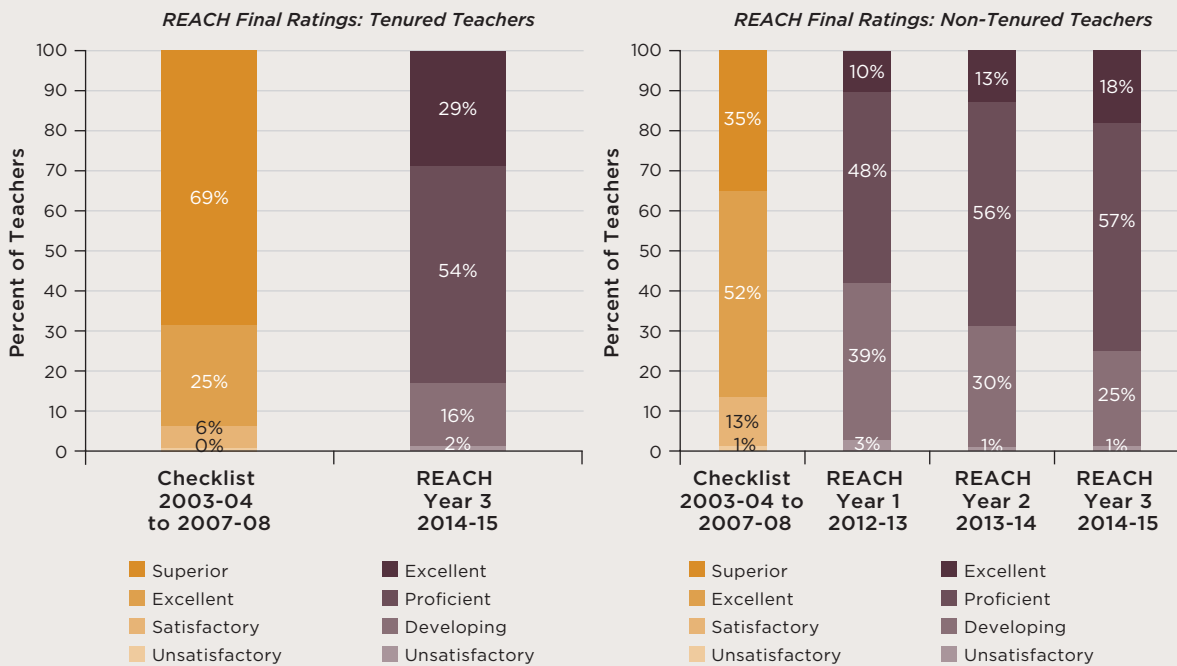
- **Professional Practice** is based on four observations using the CPS Framework for Teaching.
- **Student Growth** can be a combination of the following:

Value-Added Measures: Teachers teaching reading and math in grades 3-8 receive an individual value-added score. Teachers teaching other subjects and grades may receive a school-level value-added score in literacy.

Performance Tasks: Developed by teams of CPS teachers, individual schools, and/or central office staff, performance tasks are written or hands-on assessments designed to measure the mastery or progress toward mastery of a particular skill or standard. Performance tasks are typically administered and scored by teachers. There is a grade/subject specific performance task for every grade and subject combination.

For more details on REACH components, see Appendix A.

FIGURE A
Fewer Teachers in Top Two Categories Under REACH



Note: Most tenured teachers have received final REACH ratings one time (2014-15) as 2012-13 was a pilot year and tenured teachers are rated biennially. Figure reflects only tenured teachers who received final ratings in 2014-15. Checklist ratings are from 2003-04 to 2007-08.

Source: Checklist ratings; <http://tntp.org/assets/documents/TNTPAnalysis-Chicago.pdf>

Note: REACH figures reflect only non-tenured teachers who received final ratings in each of the years represented. Checklist ratings are from 2003-04 to 2007-08.

Source: Checklist ratings; <http://tntp.org/assets/documents/TNTPAnalysis-Chicago.pdf>

Teacher and Administrator REACH Year 3 Survey Results³

The majority of teachers and administrators remain optimistic that REACH will improve instruction and student learning. In Year 3 of REACH, over 60 percent of teachers agreed or strongly agreed they were satisfied with the evaluation system. And over 60 percent of teachers and over 80 percent of administrators agreed or strongly agreed REACH will lead to better instruction and improved student learning (see Figure 2).

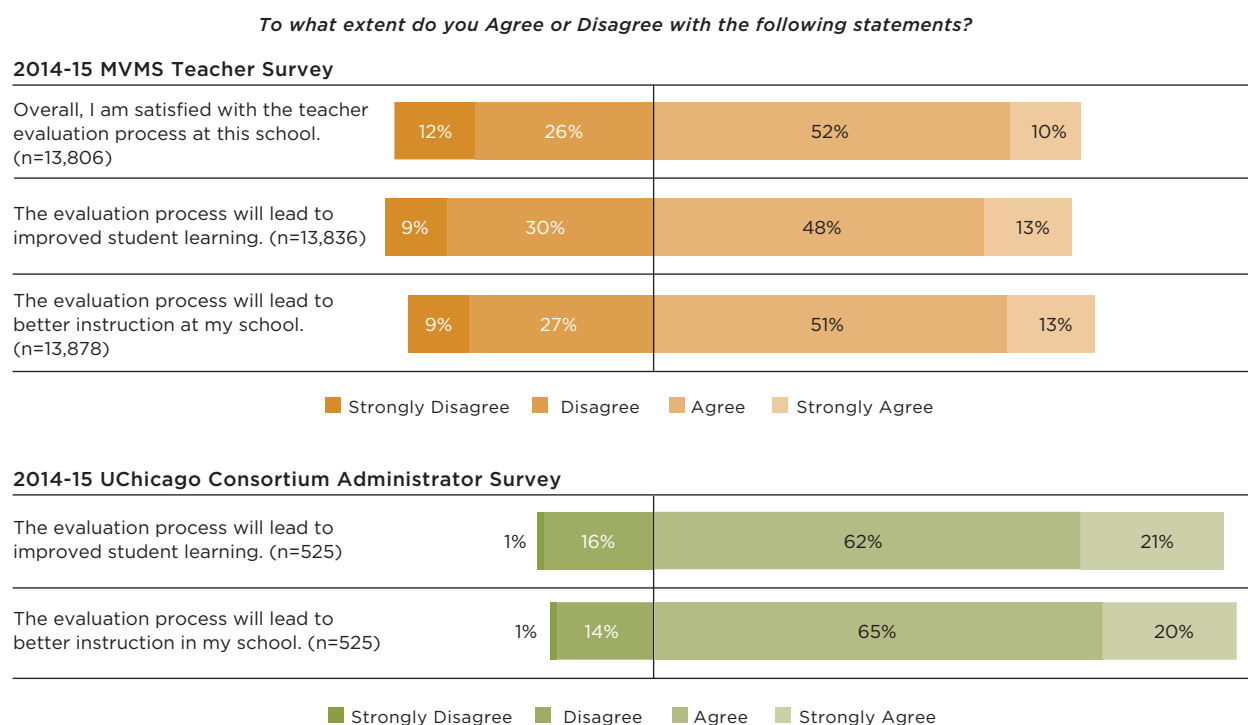
Most teachers continue to have negative perceptions about the inclusion of student growth metrics in their evaluation. Almost 60 percent of teachers surveyed disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that performance tasks were a fair way to evaluate their performance and 72 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed that value-added measures were a fair way to evaluate their performance (see Figure 3). In addition, most teachers continue to feel student growth counts

as too much of their final score. Over 60 percent of teachers reported their evaluation relies too heavily on student growth (see Figure 7).

Most teachers believe their evaluators are fair and classroom observations are a fair way to evaluate their performance. Seventy-six percent of teachers surveyed agreed or strongly agreed using classroom observations were a fair way to evaluate their performance (see Figure 3). Most teachers continue to report positively when asked about their own evaluators. About 70 percent of teachers responded ‘to a great extent’ when asked if their evaluator was fair, and unbiased, and if their evaluator was able to accurately assess their performance. And 63 percent of teachers reported their evaluators were knowledgeable about their strengths, weaknesses, and classrooms to a great extent (see Figure 4).

Teachers and administrators continue to report the observation process has encouraged reflection and influenced practice. Almost ninety percent of

FIGURE 2
Teachers/Administrators Remain Positive the Evaluation Process Has Potential to Improve Instruction, Student Learning



³ In this brief, we do not explicitly make year-to-year comparisons for all survey items as not all survey items were consistent in

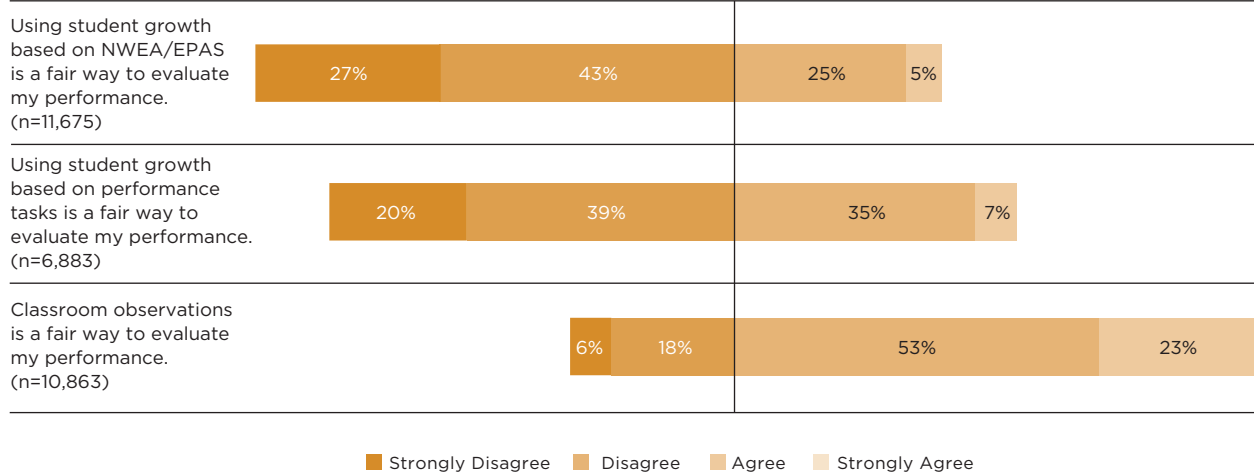
each year. Reports from our early survey findings can be found at <http://consortium.uchicago.edu/page/teacher-evaluation>.

FIGURE 3

Most Teachers Agree Classroom Observations Are a Fair Way to Evaluate Performance, and Disagree that Student Growth Is a Fair Way to Evaluate Performance

To what extent do you Agree or Disagree with the following statements?

2014-15 MVMS Teacher Survey



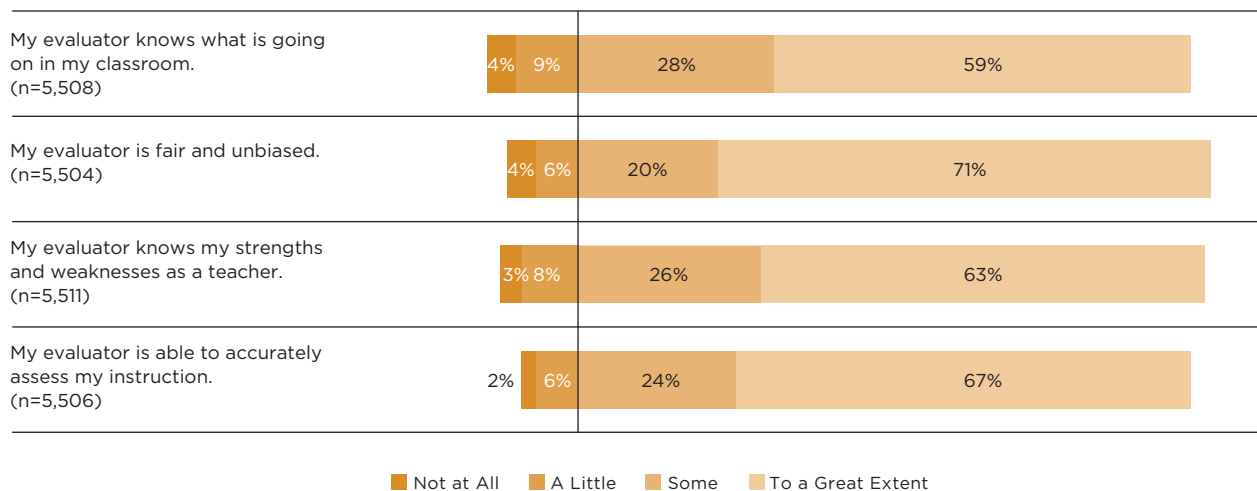
Note: Number of respondents on items may be significantly different due to randomization of some survey items. See Appendix B for more details. Perceptions may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

FIGURE 4

Most Teachers Continue to Perceive Their Evaluators as Fair, Unbiased, and Knowledgeable about Their Classrooms and Practice

To what extent do you Agree or Disagree with the following statements?

2014-15 MVMS Teacher Survey



Note: The number of respondents on items may be significantly different due to randomization of these survey items. See Appendix B for more details. Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

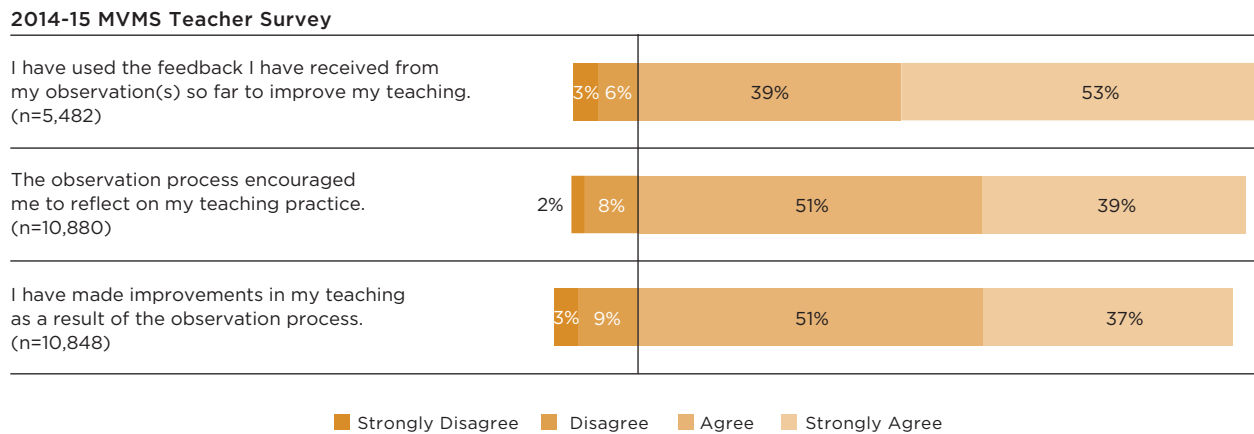
teachers agreed or strongly agreed the observation process has encouraged them to reflect on their practice, 88 percent reported it has changed their teaching, and 92 percent said they have used the feedback they have received (see Figure 5). Administrators also report teachers using their feedback and making improvements. Seventy-seven percent of administrators report most or all of their teachers have incorporated the feedback into their teaching and 61 percent of administrators report most or all of their teachers

have made noticeable improvements over the year (see Figure 6).

Both teachers and administrators continue to report the evaluation process has increased teachers' levels of stress and anxiety. And most administrators agreed or strongly agreed REACH has increased their own levels of stress. In addition, over half of teachers and over 40 percent of administrators agreed or strongly agreed the evaluation process takes more effort than the results are worth (see Figure 7).

FIGURE 5
Almost 90 Percent of Teachers Agree or Strongly Agree the Observation Process Has Encouraged Reflection and Improved Their Practice

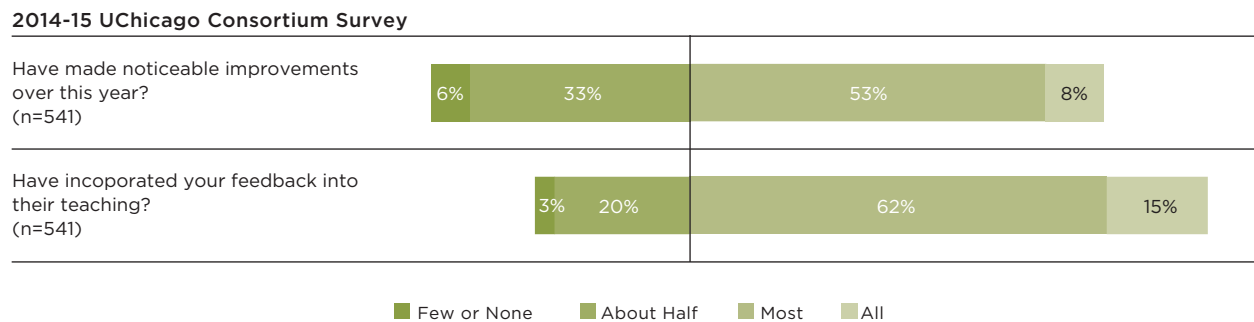
To what extent do you Agree or Disagree with the following statements?



Note: The number of respondents on items may be significantly different due to randomization of these survey items. See Appendix B for more details. Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

FIGURE 6
Administrators Report Most Teachers Have Incorporated Evaluation Feedback Into Their Teaching

Of the teachers you have observed this year, how many...



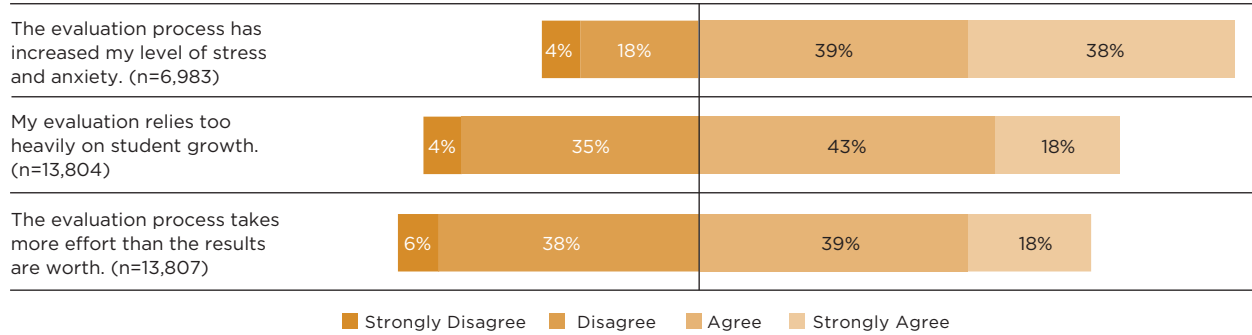
Note: See Appendix B for more details on the UChicago Consortium administrator survey including response rates.

FIGURE 7

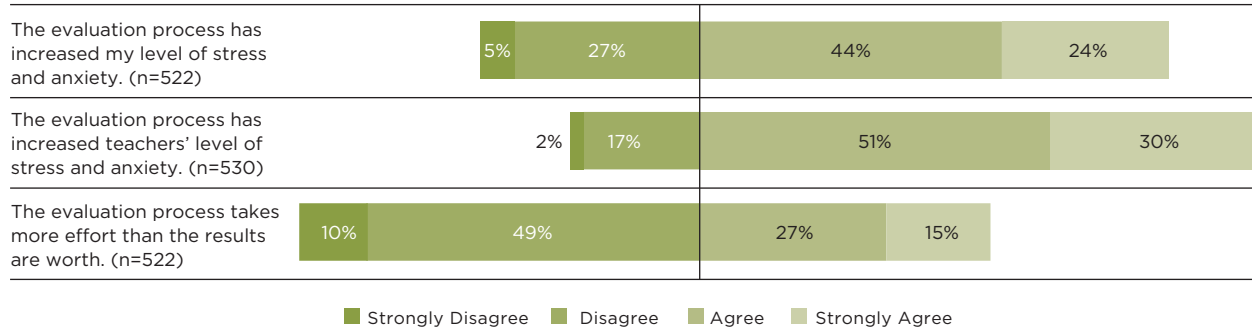
Both Teachers and Administrators Report REACH Has Increased Their Stress and Anxiety

To what extent do you Agree or Disagree with the following statements?

2014-15 MVMS Teacher Survey



2014-15 UChicago Consortium Administrator Survey



Note: Number of respondents on items may be significantly different due to randomization of some survey items. See Appendix B for more details on the UChicago Consortium administrator survey including response rates. Perceptions may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Summary

Teacher and administrator perceptions of REACH provide important information about buy-in and about the implementation of the initiative. They are based on participant experiences with each piece of the system; they also depend on their sense of whether it is fair and useful and whether it places an undue burden on them. Our survey findings from Year 3 of REACH are very similar to our findings from Year 2, indicating there was little change in perceptions about REACH's fairness and usefulness as participants gained more direct experience with the system.

There are some clear positive patterns in responses to questions about fairness, potential, and usefulness. Three years into implementation, most teachers and administrators view many aspects of REACH favorably and believe it is leading to instructional improvement. Over all three years, teachers have consistently responded that they see their evaluators as fair and able to assess their performance. Teachers also responded positively when asked whether observations are a fair way to assess their performance. Both administrators and teachers agreed the feedback from observations are being used to improve practice and that the system has potential to improve instruction and student learning.

Similarly, teachers and principals remain negative about aspects of REACH that were viewed negatively in prior years. Teachers continue to believe that student growth counts too much in their evaluation. Slightly fewer than four out of every five teachers agreed REACH

has increased their levels of stress and anxiety and more than two out of three of administrators agreed that REACH had increased their own levels of stress.

Both positive and negative perceptions provide useful information for the success of this initiative, since it relies so heavily on the engagement and participation of teachers and school leaders. Previous research has shown that the degree to which any educational reform is successful at meeting its goals depends on how individuals involved in that effort interpret and act on that reform. Hence, it is crucial for policymakers and practitioners to take participant perceptions about this reform into account and build on the positive perceptions while simultaneously addressing those aspects participants perceive as needing improvement.

This is the third report in this series on teacher and administrator perceptions of REACH. As new evaluation systems are implemented in districts and states across the nation, it is an important time to understand teacher and administrator response to and interpretation of evaluation policies, especially as the policy arena around teacher evaluation continues to change with the passage of the Every Student a Success Act (ESSA). Our future work on teacher evaluation in Chicago will continue to highlight teacher and administrator perceptions, focusing on how the data generated by teacher evaluation systems are used and how their use may translate into improvements in teacher practice.

Appendix A

2014-15 REACH Scores and Ratings

A teacher's REACH score is comprised of a professional practice score and up to two measures of student growth. For more details on REACH, visit <http://www.cps.edu/reachstudents>.

Professional Practice

Teachers are evaluated over multiple classroom observations using the CPS Framework for Teaching, a modified version of the Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching. Formal observations last at least 45 minutes and include pre- and post-observation conferences. Currently in CPS, only principals and assistant principals can be certified evaluators. To be assigned a REACH rating, a teacher must be observed four times. Non-tenured teachers⁴ and tenured teachers with previous low ratings are observed four times annually and receive a REACH rating each year. Tenured teachers with previous high ratings⁵ are observed four times over the course of two years and receive a REACH rating every two years, since under Illinois law tenured teachers are evaluated every two years.

Student Growth

To meet Illinois state law requirements about which assessments must be used for teacher evaluation, CPS has identified two different types of student assessments.

Value-Added Measures

Teachers who teach grades 3-8 reading and/or math receive an individual value-added score based on their students' NWEA MAP—an adaptive, computer-based

test. Teachers in non-tested subjects and/or grades receive a school-level literacy value-added score. For high school teachers in core subjects, CPS used the EPAS suite of tests (EXPLORE, PLAN, and ACT) in the 2013-14 school year; no value-added scores were used for high school teachers in 2014-15.

Performance Tasks

Developed by teams of CPS teachers, individual schools, and/or central office staff, performance tasks are written or hands-on assessments designed to measure the mastery or progress toward mastery of a particular skill or standard. Performance tasks are typically administered and scored by teachers at the beginning and end of each year.

REACH Scores and Ratings

Professional practice scores are combined with student growth scores for an overall REACH score, which ranges from 100 to 400 and translates to a REACH rating of Unsatisfactory, Developing, Proficient, or Excellent (see Table A.1). The percentages of professional practice and student growth are detailed in Table A.2.

TABLE A.1
REACH Ratings

REACH Score	Rating
100 - 209	Unsatisfactory
210 - 284	Developing
285 - 339	Proficient
340 - 400	Excellent

⁴ Most teachers in CPS hired after July 1, 2013 attain tenure at the beginning of their fourth or fifth year, depending on their evaluation ratings.

⁵ Tenured teachers with previous low ratings include those who received an Unsatisfactory or Satisfactory rating on the

previous system. Tenured teachers missing previous ratings were to receive four observations and a REACH rating in 2013-14 and then be placed on a biennial cycle in the following year. Tenured teachers with previous high ratings include those who received an Excellent or Superior rating on the previous system.

TABLE A.2
REACH Measures and Percentages

Teachers	Year 1: 2012-13		Year 2: 2013-14		Year 3: 2014-15	
	Professional Practice (Observations)	Student Growth Performance Tasks	Value Added	Professional Practice (Observations)	Student Growth Performance Tasks	Value Added
Elementary Grade 3-8 English, Reading, and/or Math Teachers	75%	10%	15% Individual	75%	10%	15% Individual
Elementary PreK-Grade 2 Teachers	75%	15%	10% School-wide	75%	25%	—
Elementary Grade 3-8 Teachers of Non-Tested Subjects, such as Science, Social Science, Fine Arts, Physical Education. This Category includes Librarians	75%	15%	10% School-wide	75%	15%	10% School-wide
High School Teachers Who Teach English, Math, Science, and/or Social Science	90%	10%	—	75%	20%	5% Individual
High School Teachers Who Do Not Teach English, Math, Science, and/or Social Science	100%	—	—	75%	20%	5% School-wide
Counselors, Related Service Providers (RSP), Educational Support Specialists (ESS)	100%	—	—	100%	—	—

Appendix B

Survey Data

DATA

Data from this brief include surveys of teachers and principals in CPS. Teachers and principals in charter schools were not asked REACH-related items. For more information on the survey, including questions that were asked, see consortium.uchicago.edu/surveys/documentation.

CPS' My Voice, My School Teacher (MVMS) Survey

This web-based survey was conducted by UChicago Impact in collaboration with CPS and the Illinois State Board of Education. It was administered in January through March 2015 to all teachers in all CPS neighborhood, charter, selective enrollment, and alternative schools. 24,661 classroom teachers were eligible to participate; 19,908 responded (response rate=81%). Survey questions on the teacher survey included questions on leadership, school climate, and teacher collaboration. Responses on the MVMS teacher survey are anonymous, so we cannot link, for example, a teacher's perceptions about REACH to his or her evaluation ratings.

Only teachers in non-charter schools were asked REACH-related questions since charter schools in CPS do not participate in REACH. Of a possible 21,257 teachers

in non-charter schools, 16,950 (80%) replied to REACH-related questions, although the number of respondents varied with each question. In an effort to reduce the length of teacher time spent on the survey, some REACH-related survey questions were randomized; that is, some teachers were randomly selected to answer one group of REACH items and other teachers were randomly selected to answer a different group of REACH items. We tested for differences between the randomly assigned groups and found no significant differences.

UChicago Consortium Administrator Survey

We included REACH-related content on UChicago Consortium's administrator survey. This web-based survey was administered to all principals and assistant principals in May 2015. Administrators in 532 non-charter schools and 111 charter schools were invited to participate; a total of 288 principals in charter and non-charter schools responded, for an overall principal response rate of 45 percent. However, only administrators in non-charter schools were invited to respond to REACH-related questions. 252 of these 532 principals responded (47%); 291 assistant principals of a possible 589 responded (49%).

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

SUSAN E. SPORTE At the time this research brief was written, Dr. Susan Sporte was Director of Research Operations at UChicago Consortium on School Research, where her research interests centered on the organization of schools, teacher preparation, and teacher evaluation. She has since retired, remaining committed to the idea that research can inform policy and practice that will improve educational opportunities and outcomes for children and their families.

JENNIE Y. JIANG is a Senior Research Analyst at UChicago Consortium. In addition to her work on teacher evaluation, she is working on a study of Chicago's charter schools. Previously, she was a teacher in both Chicago Public Schools and in Shenzhen, China. She earned an MPP in public policy at the University of Chicago and an MS in education at Northwestern University. Jiang's research interests include teacher preparation, quality and support.

This report reflects the interpretation of the authors. Although UChicago Consortium's Steering Committee provided technical advice, no formal endorsement by these individuals, organizations, or the full Consortium should be assumed.

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