MSDWT Evaluator Brief
January 30, 2015

May an observation be altered in SFS after it is completed and sent to the teacher?

Recently, an evaluator asked me the above question. We referred the question to SFS and below is the response. Perhaps other evaluators have encountered the same issue or question…

> *"Yes you can edit the Observation.*
>
> *First, when you send the Informal, it automatically 'completes' because there is no Conference. But the Comments can be accessed and dialog can still take place.*
>
> *Second, if you want to makes changes in an Informal, click on the 'completed' Informal, and then click on 'Reopen'. It will prompt you to state why you are reopening it (30+ characters). Then Reopen.*
>
> *Then click on 'Edit Observation' and you can adjust whatever you need.*
>
> *Then, 'Complete and Close'."*

Scripting PLC's or Other Team Meetings and Applying the Observation to Multiple Teachers: Do I Use Teachers' Initials or Something More Anonymous?

Q. If I am observing a PLC meeting, and I wish to use the observation for multiple teachers (differentiating appropriately with ratings and comments), is it better to use teachers' initials or should I identify teachers by labels such as Teacher #1, Teacher #2, etc.?

A. If you are extremely confident that your scripting is free from judgmental words or statements, you may use initials or labels to accurately notate the dialogue. There are times, such as when scripting during classroom observations, that identifying a person making particular statements is important in providing context.

If however, you have doubts about the level of judgment you used you may wish to consider:

1. Asking another administrator to review the script;
2. Reading it out loud (to yourself) to allow you to *hear* the words being used;
3. Taking out any reference to colleagues by label or initials;
4. Using only statements of the teacher you are observing.

As always, there is no clear-cut answer. But, it is important to point out that you are not prohibited from using initials and labels, when necessary and appropriate.

Indiana State Board of Education to Receive Recommendations for Teacher Evaluation Policy, Oversight, and Legislation

The ISBOE enlisted the assistance of TNTP (formally The New Teacher Project) to conduct a study of the state of Teacher Evaluation in Indiana. The TNTP met with teachers, administrators, the Indiana Department of Education, and others to review the current system. Additionally, the TNTP reviewed data and public opinion (including the survey conducted by INTASS).

The TNTP has created a list of recommendations. The recommendations will be presented to the Indiana State Board of Education on February 4th, 2015.

The recommendations, if followed, could create a significant impact on areas such as:

- **The weight applied to student achievement and growth measures on the overall outcome of a teacher's evaluation;**

- **The requirements of districts to conform to a common rubric or system;**

- **The eligibility of teachers to receive additional compensation based on categories of the evaluation (Should teachers designated as Improvement Necessary be eligible for additional compensation?);**

- **The requirements of districts to provide evidence of training;**

- **The level of teacher training required.**

I strongly urge you to, at minimum, review the attached PowerPoint (PDF). You may also wish to track this information by following the ISBOE meetings.

![TNTP reimagine teaching]

Recommendations for Strengthening Indiana's Teacher Evaluation System

Indiana State Board of Education – Strategic Planning Committee Meeting

January 26, 2015

Agenda

Overview of our work to date

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Next Steps

Building off our knowledge and experience with evaluation in Indiana, over the last 2 months we immersed ourselves in learning about the current state of Indiana's evaluation system.
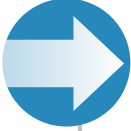
➢ First, we assessed the state's alignment to national best practices for teacher evaluation. We made initial recommendations based on this review of law and policy at the December 3, 2014 SBOE meeting.

➢ We gathered information about the local context and state of evaluation in Indiana through stakeholder input that included targeted focus group discussions, individual conversations and an examination of the INTASS survey results. This feedback guided our further research and analysis.

➢ We used this local context to supplement our deep experience designing and implementing teacher evaluation systems and knowledge of best practices. Our recommendations are the culmination of these efforts.
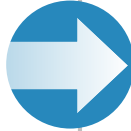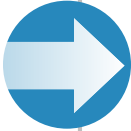
Our work has 3 phases:

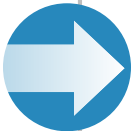| Policy Review	Research, Engagement & Analysis	Recommendations & Improvements
Nov - Dec	Dec - Jan	Feb - Mar

During Phase 2 of our work, we utilized stakeholder feedback to inform further research and analysis.

We surfaced areas for further investigation through focus group discussions, individual conversations as well as the recently conducted INTASS survey of over 2,000 educators.
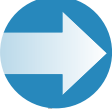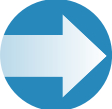
Over about 5 weeks in December 2014 and January 2015, TNTP conducted a series of focus groups and individual conversations where appropriate with a variety of stakeholders about the current state of evaluation in Indiana.

The purpose of these discussions was to explore some of the findings of the INTASS survey and identify areas where we should focus further research and analysis.

To enable productive conversations, we sought to connect with highly-engaged stakeholders in a variety of roles across the state, including:

- Teachers
- Principals
- Superintendents or other System-level Administrators

- Department of Education Staff who specialize in teacher evaluation
- External Partners with expertise in teacher evaluation

In our stakeholder discussions, we spoke with highly-engaged educators and external partners from across the state.

We planned to conduct 6-8 focus groups of 10-12 individuals each, which would have allowed us to connect with between 60 and 96 individuals.

We reached out to 115 individuals across the state in a variety of roles. Nearly half of these individuals were teachers.

We held 6 focus groups and several individual discussions to accommodate special circumstances. 40 people participated in these discussions, which is between 42 and 67% of our target goal. This is generally considered a successful participation rate for an engagement effort of this scale and timeline.

We spoke with educators from 21 corporations of all sizes and regions:
- Urban: 4 (19%)
- Suburban: 7 (33%)
- Rural: 10 (48%)

75% of participants were educators. Participation was high among principals, superintendents and DOE staff, but it was low among teachers.

The stakeholder feedback surfaced areas to probe with further research and analysis.

We deepened our understanding of the current state of evaluation in Indiana in the following ways:

➢ Consultation with local experts on Indiana's evaluation system

➢ Research into how other "exemplary" states are approaching evaluation after a few years of implementation

➢ Review of the State's authoritative documents on evaluation policy and practice, including its ESEA waiver, the Board's Strategic Plan, and other reports on evaluation results and implementation

➢ Review of the State's current implementation practices and structures, including IDOE resources and monitoring protocols

Our research, engagement and analysis all contributed to our final recommendations.

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Four years ago, Indiana set out to establish an ambitious system to assess teacher quality, grounded in best practices and research.

Goals for Indiana's Evaluation System

| Recognize excellent teaching | Support educators to improve their practice | Encourage the equitable distribution of effective teachers across the state | Ensure students have effective teachers so that student learning will increase |

Because teaching is the most influential in-school factor affecting student performance, these goals for evaluation in Indiana are aligned with research and best practice.

Indiana should be celebrated for what it has accomplished on teacher evaluation already. However, we appreciate its desire to grow and strengthen its evaluation policies and practices.
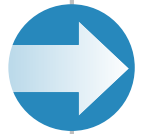
Indiana's accomplishments over the last two years are noteworthy and important.
- The laws and policies continue to reflect best practice and a high standard for teacher evaluation
- There are indications that policies are positively influencing how corporations and schools address teacher quality
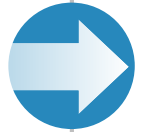
As with any bold initiative, there have been obstacles to successful implementation and lessons learned over the last two years.
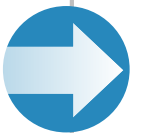
Indiana is well-positioned to build off its early successes and refine its evaluation system so that it can continue to lead the nation in teacher quality initiatives.

Our review of the current state of evaluation in Indiana reveals two recommended areas of focus.

Area of Focus #1: Accurate Evaluations for All Teachers

➢ To achieve its stated goals for evaluation, Indiana must first be able to provide accurate evaluations to every teacher.

➢ The ratings distributions suggest there are opportunities to improve the completeness and accuracy of teachers' ratings.

- Nearly 90% of teachers were rated Effective or Highly Effective
- Less than 0.5% of teachers across the state were rated Ineffective
- More than 10% of first and second year teachers received no evaluation ratings last year
- Over 13% of teachers in schools that earned a grade of "F" were not evaluated

Very often issues with accuracy and completeness in evaluation ratings are a byproduct of the implementation challenges that have been reported.

Area of Focus #2: Refocus on High-Quality Implementation

➢ Accurate and reliable evaluation ratings are a result of diligent and high-quality implementation.

➢ Stakeholder feedback indicates that many of the issues Indiana is facing could be addressed through strengthened implementation practices.
- Teacher perceptions could be improved by providing training
- Administrators asked for more support with plan design and implementation

➢ Our examination of State policies and practices reinforced this need for improved implementation.
- The level of local control in Indiana's system can lead to excessive variation in plan design and implementation practices
- Increased guidance and support from the State will improve consistency across plans and ultimately reduce the State's involvement

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To achieve a culture that values teacher evaluation as a tool to provide the support and recognition teachers deserve, Indiana must shift the culture around assessing teacher quality.
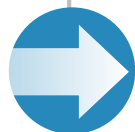
This shift in culture starts at the top and is ultimately achieved through diligent, high-quality guidance and support.
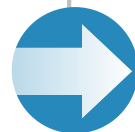
Changes to law or regulation create the enabling conditions necessary for Indiana to continue the hard but critical work of implementation, but they will not take the place of leadership support.

"Moving from a system that rates everyone as just fine to one that differentiates performance is daunting and requires a culture shift."
– National Council on Teacher Quality

Our recommendations are intended to support Indiana achieve a culture around evaluation that is aligned with its stated goals.
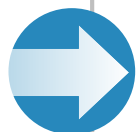
The recommendations that follow include ways to strengthen the State's evaluation system through legislation, regulation, or implementation strategies.

- We emphasize the importance of coordinated and high-quality implementation
- Where we have called for changes to law or regulation, the intention is to enable improved implementation practices
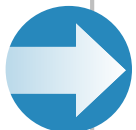
Recommendations are based on the following information:

- Local context we gained through research and stakeholder engagement
- National best practices
- Our deep experience supporting states and districts to design and implement evaluation systems.

We have categorized our recommendations by the following topics:

- ➢ Establish a vision for Indiana's evaluation system and provide change management leadership

- ➢ Increase the focus on high-quality training for both evaluators and teachers

- ➢ Address lack of clarity, consistency and rigor in the use of objective measures of student performance

- ➢ Ensure educators are engaged in the process of designing locally-created and modified evaluation plans

- ➢ Enhance current practices of monitoring and supporting corporations to design and implement consistent and comparable evaluation plans

- ➢ Make revisions to the State's model plan – RISE 2.0

- ➢ Strengthening the current policies and practices for performance-based compensation

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Establish a vision for Indiana's evaluation system and provide change management leadership

Recommendation	Context
Set a vision and theory of action for teacher evaluation (**Implementation**)	• Despite articulating the intended purpose of evaluation in the ESEA waiver and the SBOE's Strategic Plan, these goals have not fully penetrated to the classroom level. • Without a universally held purpose, Indiana will not be able to make adjustments to its current system in a coherent way. • SBOE may consider revising its Strategic Plan to include the purpose, theory of action and guiding principles.
Develop a change management and implementation plan to address forthcoming changes (**Implementation**)	• With a clear vision for the evaluation system, the Board will be able to lead the State through changes to the evaluation system and to initiate the culture shift needed. • The Board may wish to establish a subcommittee to produce a plan that addresses change management and implementation priorities.

Establish a vision for Indiana's evaluation system and provide change management leadership

Recommendation	Context

Ensure there are high-quality communications and resources to support implementation
 (Implementation)
	• Successful change management and implementation depend on having clear, frequent and thoughtful communication at all levels.
	     • Develop clear expectations for receiving reports on evaluation implementation
	     • Hold constituent meeting to address concerns and introduce the SBOE's vision
	     • Review IDOE communications content and processes

Allocate resources and personnel to ensure implementation aligns with the State's vision **(Implementation)**	• Allocation of resources – especially personnel – is an indication of an organization's priorities. • To adequately prioritize implementation, we recommend IDOE reallocates its personnel to ensure it can meet the demands of high-quality implementation.

Increase the focus on high-quality training for both evaluators and teachers

Evaluator Training	
Recommendation	**Context**
Require corporations to retrain evaluators whenever substantive changes are made to their evaluation plans. **(Regulatory)**	• Retraining will ensure evaluators have the skills necessary for accurately assessing teacher quality. • It provides an opportunity to build a shared understanding of the purpose of evaluation. • It may increase teacher perception of evaluators' ability.
Offer "plan agnostic" training for evaluators and trainers of evaluators **(Implementation)**	• All evaluators must possess certain skills in order to accurately assess teacher quality - regardless of a corporation's plan. • Training provides another opportunity to ensure evaluators are aligned with the State's vision for evaluation.
Leverage ESCs to provide high-quality training to school corporations **(Implementation)**	• ESCs are uniquely positioned to train evaluators. • According to stakeholder feedback, the quality of training by ESCs has been inconsistent. • IDOE should first ensure ESCs are thoroughly trained on best practices and changes to the evaluation system.
Highlight the mutually reinforcing nature of evaluator evaluation and teacher evaluation **(Implementation)**	• One of the most effective tools for increasing and maintaining the accuracy of evaluators is to hold them accountable for the accuracy of their ratings. • The RISE model incorporates this expectation into the evaluator rubric; the same expectation should be universally set for all school administrators.

Increase the focus on high-quality training for both evaluators and teachers

Teacher Training	
Recommendation	**Context**
Require corporations to train teachers on their evaluation plans (Legislative)	• There is no explicit requirement in statute or regulation that teachers be trained on their corporation's evaluation plan. • Feedback from teachers indicates that more deliberate training on the evaluation plan may improve their perception of the plan.
Establish standards for teacher training on evaluation plans (Regulatory)	• SBOE should set standards for the content of the trainings as it has for evaluator training • Standards can be broadly framed so corporations retain a degree of control over content; however, they should ensure that teachers are receiving a consistent level of training.
Ensure there are adequate resources to support corporations train teachers (Implementation)	• IDOE should identify and promote resources for conducting teacher training on evaluation plans. • IDOE and ESCs should consider offering a "plan agnostic" training for trainers of teachers that includes best practices and resources.

Address lack of clarity, consistency and rigor in the use of objective measures of student performance

"Objective measures" is broadly defined and can be based on a variety of assessment tools – not just state assessments.

➢ Corporations may use student portfolios, end of course exams, locally-created or teacher-created assessments as objective measures of student performance.

➢ As an example, **RISE 2.0** uses multiple types of objective measures: IGM scores, SLOs, and school-wide performance.

Group 1: Teachers who have individual growth model data for at least half of classes taught

SLO 10%
SWL 5%
IGM 35%
TER 50%

Group 2: Teachers who have individual growth model data for fewer than half of classes taught (but at least one class with growth model data)

SLO 15%
SWL 5%
IGM 20%
TER 60%
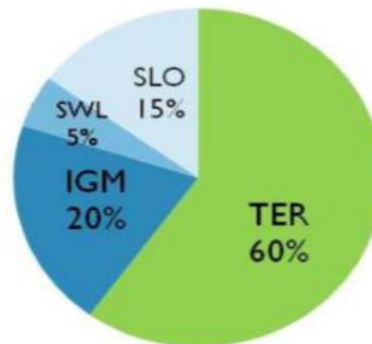
Group 3 Teachers: Teachers who do not teach any classes with growth model data

SLO 20%
SWL 5%
TER 75%

Address lack of clarity, consistency and rigor in the use of objective measures of student performance

Recommendation	Context

Define "significantly inform" so that all corporations use comparable levels of objective measures of student performance
(Regulatory)
	• The wide variation across corporations in their use of objective measures has created 2 issues:
	  1. Lack of comparability across plans
	  2. Over-reliance on more subjective measures in some plans
	• We suggest the following definition:
	  • **For teachers who receive IGM scores:** Objective measures account for 33-50% of teacher evaluation ratings
	  • **For teachers who do <u>not</u> receive IGM scores:** Objective measures account for 25-40% of teacher evaluation ratings
	  • The **effective date** of this definition should be after Indiana has 1 year of baseline data from the new assessment

Require SBOE approval of the definition of "negative impact" and the related guidance the IDOE issues **(Regulatory)**	• SBOE is empowered to define "negative impact." In regulation, negative impact is defined as when students achieve a "below acceptable" or "unacceptable" rate of growth. Guidance for the acceptable rates of growth are set by the IDOE each year. • The definition of "negative impact" is especially pertinent because it provides an additional check on the accuracy of teacher ratings.

Address lack of clarity, consistency and rigor in the use of objective measures of student performance

Recommendation	Context
Build off current support structures to help corporations revise their local definitions and understand the implications of these changes **(Implementation)**	• To support corporations needing to revise their plans, IDOE should provide resources online and consider providing in-person training sessions • A review of the new definitions should become a focus of IDOE's on-site monitoring protocol, as outlined in the ESEA waiver.
Leverage IDOE expertise to support SBOE and corporations to understand assessment guidance **(Implementation)**	• Stakeholders reported that they appreciate the ability to create their own assessments, but felt it was challenging to develop valid, reliable assessments. • IDOE should ensure that assessment guidance is clearly and prominently provided to corporations. This may include training corporations and schools on how to create high-quality assessments. • IDOE should support SBOE to understand the role that assessments play in evaluation policy and practice by providing regular updates on its guidance.

Ensure teachers are engaged in the process of designing locally created and modified evaluation plans

Recommendation	Context
Require districts that wish to use a locally-created or modified plan to engage teachers in the design process **(Legislative)**	• Teacher engagement is critical to the success of an evaluation plan. • The current requirement of a vote of approval falls short of meaningful engagement. • Instead, the law should require teachers to be involved in the design process.
Provide guidance to districts on how to create an implement an appropriate teacher engagement process **(Implementation)**	• IDOE should provide guidance on best practices for involving teachers in the design process. • As part of its review and approval of the modified or locally-created plans and on-site monitoring, IDOE should also review the corporation's teacher engagement processes and structures to confirm that they were thorough and equitable.

Enhance current practices of monitoring and supporting corporations to design and implement consistent and comparable evaluation plans

Recommendation	Context
Require corporations to submit locally-created or modified plans to IDOE for approval **(Legislative)**	• Current law places the onus on the IDOE to identify noncompliance. • Corporations should proactively seek approval from IDOE.

Require regular monitoring and reporting of corporations' plan implementation
 (Legislative)
	• There is no requirement in law that the State ensure corporations are implementing their plans with fidelity.
	 • Legislation should build off IDOE's monitoring protocols – as outlined in the ESEA waiver. Two ways to strengthen IDOE's practices are:
	  • Require the SBOE to approve of the subset of schools that receive annual monitoring
	  • Ensure all corporations implementation progress is reviewed at least every other year.

Support corporation administrators to leverage best practices when designing evaluation plans **(Implementation)**	• Despite the resources available on IDOE's website, administrators report feeling underprepared to design or modify an evaluation plan. • We recommend IDOE facilitate connections among superintendents to support them in sharing best practices.
Institute a regular reporting cycle on the progress of implementation **(Implementation)**	• Establishing a regular reporting cycle will ensure SBOE is informed on the status of implementation and can support IDOE with enforcement as needed

Address issues with making revisions to the State's model plan

Recommendation	Context
Require SBOE to approve of changes to the model plan **(Legislative)**	• Current law is unclear about SBOE's role in making changes to the model plan. • Because the model plan exemplifies the State's interpretation of best practices and should represent the highest standard of evaluation practice and policy, we recommend requiring SBOE to approve of substantive changes to the model plan.
Streamline the Teacher Effectiveness Rubric (TER) and align it to the new state standards **(Implementation)**	• Since the adoption of the TER, Indiana has adopted new standards that should be reflected in the evaluation rubric. • Stakeholders report redundancies in the rubric, particularly in Domains 1 and 3, that should be eliminated.

Strengthen the current policies and practices for performance-based compensation

Recommendation	Context

Address the perceived impact of preventing compensation increases for teachers rated Improvement Necessary
 (Legislative)
	• Some stakeholders speculated that preventing salary increases deters evaluators from giving teachers in need of development an honest assessment.
	 • We propose the following policy changes:
	     • Allow teachers to be rated "IN" two years in a row or "IN" followed by "IE" before a salary increase is withheld.
	     • Include a provision that allows teachers rated "IN" to apply for a waiver from the condition that they not be given a salary increase. The waiver can be granted if the teacher demonstrates extraordinary circumstances impacted his/her ability to perform at an "Effective" level. SBOE would issue rules establishing the process and standards for reviewing and granting waivers.

Strengthen the current policies and practices for performance-based compensation

Recommendation	Context
Allocate more funding for grants used to support performance compensation **(Legislative)**	• Stakeholders reported that the size of the salary increases are not sufficient. • Some corporations do not budget for salary increases outside of the School Performance Awards. • We recommend that the State allocate more funding for the School Performance Awards for the next two years while corporations work towards self-sustaining compensation models

Clarify the IDOE and SBOE's authority to enforce compliance with compensation model requirements
 (Legislative)
	• Current law is vague about the SBOE's enforcement powers.
	 • To provide more specificity, we offer the following options:
	   • If a corporation's noncompliance affected the salary increase of any Effective or Highly Effective teachers, SBOE can call for the corporation provide backpay to these teachers
	   • If a corporation fails to correct any areas of noncompliance by the start of the next school year, the corporation can be required to pay a monetary penalty. In SBOE's discretion, the penalty can be used to supplement teacher salaries for Effective and Highly Effective teachers in that corporation.

Strengthen the current policies and practices for performance-based compensation

Recommendation	Context
Support corporations by identifying exemplary compensation models when they are published on IDOE's website **(Implementation)**	• IDOE posts all compensation models on its website, but it notes that not all models are compliant with state law. • To support corporations that are seeking exemplars, IDOE should, at a minimum, identify which models are not in compliance. • IDOE should also indicate which models it considers exemplary and highlight the strengths of those models.
Support corporations to plan for sustainable compensation models **(Implementation)**	• To support corporations plan for sustainable compensation models, IDOE should facilitate collaboration among corporations. • Similarly situated corporations may be able to work together to solve for a common problem of practice. • They may also be able to collaborate with external partners who can provide expert guidance where needed.

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▶ **Next Steps**

Next Steps: Stakeholder Design Committee

➢ Should the Board adopt our recommendations, TNTP will convene and facilitate a small Stakeholder Design Committee.

➢ We will work closely with Board staff to identify and invite stakeholders to join the Committee.

➢ At the Board's direction, the Stakeholder Design Committee will begin to execute on the changes that are adopted.

➢ We will provide regular updates to the Board on the progress of the Stakeholder Design Committee between now and when our engagement ends on March 31st.

Connect with us.

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Indiana Evaluation Focus Group Report

January 23, 2015

Summary of Project

TNTP held a series of focus groups in December 2014 and January 2015 with various stakeholders represented in the state of Indiana, including teachers, principals, superintendents, other system-level administrators, external stakeholders, and Department of Education staff. The goals of the focus groups were to engage with stakeholders in order to gather high-level information about the current state of evaluation systems in Indiana and to identify areas where we should focus further research and analysis. The information gathered from the focus groups along with the information from various sources will collectively be used to inform a set of recommendations for changes to Indiana's Evaluation System.

Topics covered in the focus groups included:

1. The current state of Indiana evaluation systems
2. The confidence level of various stakeholders in the system and its components
3. The strengths of the system over the past two years
4. Where there are room for improvements moving forward

Engagement Strategy

In late Spring/early Fall 2014, the Center on Education and Lifelong Learning (CELL) conducted an extensive survey across the state to gauge educators' perceptions and beliefs about the State's evaluation policies and practice. This survey gathered information on various topics and revealed some key gaps in the perception and beliefs of individual stakeholder groups. In total, the survey sampled 2,427 teachers, 374 principals, and 218 superintendents.[1] TNTP felt that it would be important to follow up with targeted stakeholders, and engage with them through focus groups and individual conversations, where appropriate. This approach allowed us to build off of the State's previous stakeholder engagement efforts, including CELL's survey, and delve deeper into stakeholder beliefs and experiences in ways that are possible only through in-person discussions.

In order move forward with the work, TNTP reached out to the authors of the survey, Dr. Hardy Murphy and Dr. Cassandra Cole, to better understand methodology and survey results. Once we had an opportunity to discuss the survey findings, TNTP proceeded to develop targeted focus group questions to further understand stakeholders' experiences regarding the state evaluation systems.

Gathering input from a variety of stakeholders is essential to identifying both the pain points and possible solutions to implementation challenges. Therefore, we have worked closely with the State Board of Education (SBOE) staff to identify key stakeholders. It was our goal for the following types of stakeholders to have the opportunity to share their experiences, perspectives and expertise:

- Teachers
- Principals
- Superintendents or other System-level Administrators
- Department of Education Staff who specialize in teacher evaluation
- External Partners with expertise in teacher evaluation

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[1] Indiana Teacher Appraisal and Support System survey results, retrieved from http://www.in.gov/sboe/files/2014-09-26_INTASS_PPT.pdf.

Additionally, to ensure we connected with the maximum number of teachers, principals and superintendents possible in our short timeframe, we coordinated with the following groups:

- Indiana Association of Public Schools Superintendents
- Indiana Association of School Principals
- Teacher Ambassadors

Our goal was to hold six to eight focus groups of 10-12 participants each in the months of December 2014 and January 2015. That would have allowed us to connect with between 60 and 96 individuals. In total, we reached out to 115 individuals either directly or with the help of key personnel within each of the associations. Our hope was to be able to use the groups' regular meetings to host focus group discussions when possible. Leveraging these regular meetings provided two advantages. First, we were able to reach a significant number of educators who are already engaged in education policy through their membership to these associations. Second, we would be able to tailor the discussion topics in these forums to the participants' particular interests, expertise and experiences. Because of the importance of teacher input, we strove to connect with as many Teacher Ambassadors as possible as they already work closely with the State Board of Education and are highly engaged in policy at the state level. Nearly half of the stakeholders invited for this effort were teachers. In addition, multiple sessions and opportunities were offered for teachers to share their perspectives and experiences.

Focus Groups

Formal focus group discussions began on December 17, 2014 and concluded on January 20, 2015. In total, TNTP offered eight scheduled focus groups at various locations, days, and times. Each session was scheduled for one and a half hours. Six sessions were attended with a total of 34 participants. In addition, in order to accommodate scheduling conflicts, TNTP conducted six individual conversations. The total number of participants engaged directly through this process was 40 individuals, which is between 42 and 67 percent of our target goal and is generally considered a successful participation rate for an engagement effort of this scale and timeline. Regrettably, participation was lowest amongst teachers despite our efforts to provide flexible scheduling and alternative opportunities for input. This could be due to a number of factors including the challenges in scheduling during December/January holiday schedule, lead time, or transportation and logistical concerns.

Below is a summary of the outreach effort made including the total number of participants engaged during this process and a summary of the sessions held with attendance.

Categories	Contacted	Total Participation	Participation Rate
Teachers	55	3	5.5%
Principals	14	10	71.4%
Superintendent or Administrator	29	17	58.6%
Department of Education Leadership and Staff	6	6	100.0%
External Stakeholders	11	4	36.4%
TOTAL	**115**	**40**	**34.8%**

	Session Title	Participants
1	Evansville Focus Group	4
2	Indiana External Stakeholders (Indianapolis - Session 1)	5
3	Indiana External Stakeholders (Indianapolis - Session 2)	3
4	Indiana Association of Public Schools Superintendents Focus Group	11
5	Teacher Focus Group	2
6	Indiana Association of School Principals Focus Group	9
	Other participants (individual contributions/comments)	6
	Total	40

Summary of Findings

What follows is a brief summary of the relevant findings from information gathered during focus group discussions.

Major Themes
Qualitative data analysis revealed seven overarching themes across the focus group sessions and conversations.

Theme 1: Communications

In all focus groups, there was discussion surrounding the role of RISE or other evaluation models. Across the board, participants felt that there was no clear objective of the evaluation system, nor was there clear alignment with what the system actually achieves. While many participants felt that as a whole, things have been going well, there was a general consensus that there are opportunities for further refinement and improvements to various components. Many participants reported a number of negative experiences with how the system was presented to educators in the state. These individuals noted they felt mistrusted, disrespected, or dismissed by the system. In more than one focus group, the phrase, "this was a system that was done to teachers" was noted.

Further, participants clearly expressed a need and desire for consistent, quality and targeted information at the state level for various stakeholders, specifically information for school leaders and teachers. This was particularly important to many participants especially where it concerned upcoming changes, modifications, or other elements which would require time to manage and communicate at the local level.

Theme 2: Evolution of Evaluations

Across many focus groups, when asked to describe the current state of evaluations, there was a common theme of the system as an evolving or transitioning system. Most participants expressed that the first few years of implementation were the most challenging and created anxiety among many individuals, but as corporations and schools have progressed further along in the process, there was marked improvement in implementation. Participants who come from corporations newer to the process often discussed how they have benefited from the trial and errors made from other corporations who have been undergoing and making changes to the model for some time. Many participants from various corporations discussed how they have benefited from trainings as well as collaboration within the local community among teachers, principals, administrators and community members and externally with other corporations. Participants noted that as implementation continues, there is a desire to be able to share best practices among the educator community.

Theme 3: Flexibility at the Local Level

In all focus groups, participants expressed the desire for local control. Participants noted how important it was for educators within a particular corporation to be able to modify or create a plan that meets their specific needs. This includes the ability to determine the right process, which tools to use (rubrics), what kind of objective measures should be used, and the weights these objective measures should hold in determining a teacher's overall rating. Many participants currently achieve this through a systematic process of trial and modification. Many participants noted that their corporation used RISE as a base plan and developed a committee of stakeholders to review and modify the plan based on local needs before implementing it for year one. The committee would continually monitor the strengths and weaknesses during this first implementation year before making additional edits and adjustments to further improve the system for subsequent year. While this process has fared well, there was an express concern over the time and resources required to develop a deep understanding of the system, conduct research or gather resources necessary to make changes to the process, make the necessary change, and roll out for adoption.

Theme 4: Improved Feedback and Consistent/Common Language for Teacher Quality

In most focus groups, participants noted that over the past few years, as corporations implemented RISE (RISE Modified) or other evaluation plans, one of the greatest improvements has been the conversations between educators across the teaching community, but especially between teachers and their evaluators regarding teacher quality. Many participants cited the RISE Teacher Effectiveness Rubric (TER), or variants of the TER, as a critical element to this positive change. Participants noted that the TER was a valuable tool in helping create a common, intentional language for discussing teacher quality and it enabled teachers and evaluators alike to discuss clear expectations regarding what good teaching looks like. This includes a baseline around what is most important and valuable, and

what is not. Most agreed that this tool was better than previous tools they have used in the past, in part because it was structured and was utilized statewide.

However, there were a number of individuals who expressed that while the structure of the TER was helpful, it was also an area of concern in that it was too rigid and/or too detailed and complex. Many felt that they lacked proper training on the TER or that additional time for training and adoption was necessary.

Theme 5: Need for Consistent Levels of Trainings for Various Stakeholders, Particularly Teachers
In all focus groups, participants expressed the need to have access to additional trainings and support for practitioners, especially for teachers earlier on in the process. Some training topics includes an overview of the evaluation model (or system) used by the corporation, training on the specific observation that would be used and training on what effective teaching looks like as it pertains to the rubric. A number of participants recommended cross-training teachers on evaluation methodologies so that there is a deeper understanding of how they will be evaluated in the classroom.

For principals, evaluators and other administrators, it was recommended that there be more consistent trainings across corporations. Some participants expressed their concerns based on personal experience of the varying availability, frequency and/or quality or training and resources across corporations. A number of participants were familiar with individuals who were part of the RISE Pilot noted that pilot corporations benefited from the extensive training provided during the pilot phase and recommended that similar training should be provided for all corporations.

Theme 6: Need for Resources
The need for additional resources was a point that was discussed in all focus groups. This includes time, monetary resources, and human capital needs. At the systems level, participants felt that there was a lack of resources readily available in order to make informed decisions. For instance, one participant noted that their corporation wanted to modify the TER, however, they did not have access to tools, experts, or samples and therefore opted not to modify it. Another echoed a similar sentiment about modifying the RISE model plan. Many participants who did make changes and modified the plan noted that their corporation made concerted efforts to research their own tools and created their own trainings and resources, but that they would have liked more access to materials. This includes communication materials that can be shared with corporations, schools, teachers, and the community.

Almost all participants agreed that the time it takes to adopt a new evaluation model is extensive. Many expressed concern that there was not enough time allocated to train educators and transition into their corporation's plan. A number of participants noted that they have begun to collaborate with other corporations in order to share resources and develop tools such as assessments for use in the Student Learning Objectives process. Often these cohorts and collaborations were self-created/self-directed by corporations that have experienced lack of access to resources.

Lastly, while almost every participant expressed that the conversations around teacher quality has improved, there is agreement that in many corporations and schools, there is simply not enough time for evaluators to provide the consistent feedback to teachers on a regular basis. Some participants noted that the formal observations and feedback opportunities was a good start to supporting teachers improve their practice, but they expressed a desire for more informal touch points in order to provide/receive the professional development support.

Theme 7: Change Management
Across many focus groups, participants discussed frustrations and difficulties regarding the pace and amount of changes corporations, schools, and teachers have had to sustain in such a short period of time. In addition, there was great concern of more changes to come. Some participants noted that they would like to be able to see a "pause" or slower, more methodical roll out of the system, including a "buffer" or "test-year" for new elements.

Other Targeted Discussion Topics:
Confidence level of various stakeholders in the system and its components
- Teacher Effectiveness Rubrics (TER)

- o Many stakeholders felt that the Teacher Effectiveness Rubrics have been a useful tool in helping set clear expectations on what good teaching looks like.
- o Participants noted that the tool, used in conjunction with other elements of an evaluation plan, helps set a common language for discussing teacher quality within a school community as well as with other corporations.
  - One participant noted that the involvement of the community has resulted in a more positive perception of the evaluation process
- o Rubrics have helped evaluators and teachers identify areas of need and support.
- o While most thought the rubrics have been helpful, most people agreed that it was very lengthy and took a lot of time to properly train and adopt to the rubrics.
  - A number of participants specifically noted overlaps in coverage of some of the domains and suggested a simplification of the rubric (domains 1 and 3 which both examine teacher "inputs" like planning and collaboration with peers, which are often assessed using the same evidence – like the quality of unit plans).
- o A number of individuals from various sessions noted that they would like to see iterations of the rubrics available on the State's resource website. (It was noted that there is "no access to old rubrics".)
- Student Learning Objectives (SLO)
  - o Most participants did not feel that the SLO model was useful in practice.
    - Some individuals thought that the SLO model was designed to be a "one-size-fits-all" model, but that there are not enough resources to be able to modify and tailor to each teacher in a meaningful way.
    - Some individuals cited the model as being too lengthy or cumbersome to be able to implement fully during a school year.
    - One individual described it as "busy work."
  - o Many of these individuals did not feel that the model was a fair model nor did they feel there a good or consistent mechanism in place to ensuring quality measures for student growth.
    - Some thought that teachers who had ISTEP or End of Course Assessments (ECAs) were disadvantaged since they did not have prior access to the assessments while educators who used other measures, including self-created assessments may have "easier" assessments.
  - o A number of participants noted that they did not feel the model was set up to help teachers improve in their practice.
- Assessments/Objective Data
  - o Upcoming changes in assessments over the next few years was an area of concern for many participants.
  - o In a number of sessions, many individuals expressed the desire to see a "pause" on the evaluations in order to determine how best to incorporate new assessments into the process.
  - o Many participants expressed concern regarding the availability and access to reliable assessments.
  - o Many participants appreciated the flexibility be able to create their own assessment.
    - However, a number of participants noted their concern regarding the ability of teachers to create fair and valid assessments.
  - o Participants noted that the current system focuses too much on formative, not summative, assessments, which limits the ongoing support and development that educators desire throughout the year.
- Use of Data
  - o While most participants agreed that data should be used, in part, to inform evaluations, most participants noted a concern about the current use of data in the system.
    - The primary concern heard was the timing of the release of the data. Infrequent and late access to data was a concern expressed each time the topic was covered.
    - Reliability of data across grades and subjects was another concern expressed. Many participants felt that the system was not fair between teachers with students who take ISTEP or had access to ECAs vs. teachers without those assessments.

- Observation and Feedback
  - The TER has helped by creating a common language for evaluators and teachers to discuss teacher quality.
  - Quality of observation and feedback is dependent on the evaluator.
  - The RISE Model does not drive at professional development – there is limited time, training, and resources for evaluators to provide the targeted professional development growth desired by educators.
- Trainings
  - Principal (Evaluator) and Administrator Trainings
    - Some participants agreed that corporations received the same level of baseline training from their corporation's resource center and felt that the principal and administrator has been sufficient during these initial years.
    - Many participants felt that there should be additional trainings on how to have meaningful feedback conversations in order to support educator growth and development.
    - Depending on the resources available, some corporations provided more in-depth trainings to their staff.
      - There was an expressed desire to be able to have access to more in-depth training materials (that can be modified or tailored to the specific needs of the corporations).
    - Depending on the plan used or the Education Service Center (ESC) the corporation belonged to, some corporations had access to more training materials than others.
  - Teacher Trainings
    - Many participants did not feel that there was sufficient training for teachers to fully understand how they were going to be evaluated when the system rolled out.
    - Some participants indicated that they felt teachers should receive evaluator trainings to best understand the model and system used in their corporations. One teacher specifically noted that they felt much more positively about the system when they were trained as an evaluator.
- Compensation
  - There is a lot of consensus among stakeholders that the current compensation incentives do not help motivate teachers. Many felt that this may be due, in part, to lack of monetary resources.
  - There was agreement among some individuals that by linking compensation to evaluations, the system is dis-incentivizing collaboration.
  - Many felt that the current compensation model is one key factor that is deterring individuals from entering the profession.
    - A number of participants noted that during the first few years of entering the profession, many teachers are developing and refining skills in the classroom. During this time, teachers are unlikely to receive the ratings necessary to earn an increase.
    - Others noted that not having a steady increase over time may deter individuals who are looking for a stable/steady earning potential.
- Overall Rollout Strategy
  - Most participants felt that while progress is being made, they wanted more time to train and/or iron out the process at the local level.
  - Most participants expressed concerns regarding upcoming changes and how it may disrupt progress made to date.

Strengths of the system over the past two years
- In all focus groups, participants felt that the flexibility and autonomy at the local corporation level was a key strength.
- This flexibility allows corporations to create a system that best meets their individual needs.
- Most participants felt that the trainings for principals and administrators has been an area of strength.

Where there are room for improvements moving forward
- Resources
    - Most participants felt that there was a need for access to more resources. Some wanted some sort of "resource/knowledge-hub" or "toolbox" where they can get access to information regarding the following topics:
        - Research based information on various components of the model
        - Guidebooks and examples (access to other's modified plans, rubrics, SLO models, roll-out plans/timelines)
        - Training materials that can be adapted by the local level for principals, evaluators, teachers, and teacher leaders
        - Professional development support/teacher improvement plan support tools
            - Materials to help guide discussion/action plan on what happens after an evaluation. How can a principal use the information to support their teachers in improving their own practice? How to work on developing benchmarks, goals, outcomes for teachers as part of a teacher improvement plan.
- Communications
    - Many participants felt that communication and engagement needs to improve, especially with and for teachers and the local community.
    - Many expressed the desire to have more opportunities for participation in the design, development and feedback process.

Conclusion

Through these targeted focus group discussions, we sought input from a variety of highly-engaged stakeholders to further understand the current state of evaluations in Indiana and ultimately help us further focus our research and analysis. The discussion, in conjunction with other research and analysis, informed recommendations for changes in the Indiana's Evaluation System.

The findings discussed in this report highlight the complex and dynamic role of key stakeholders in the ongoing evolution of evaluations in the state. The themes highlighted summarize a range of positive as well as negative experiences within the current system. These themes speak to the accomplishments and hard work from all stakeholders over the past two years in building a system that meets the goals of supporting Indiana educators and recognizing excellent teaching.

Appendix A: Topics & Sample Questions

Introduction (5-10 minutes)

- Introductions: Please tell the group your name, your role, how long you have been in your current role and the evaluation plan your corporation uses or the plan you are most familiar with.
- In one word or a short phrase - Can you describe how things are going with teacher evaluation in Indiana or more specifically your school or school corporation?
  - *What gives you confidence with teacher evaluation (word or phrase)?*
  - *What is your greatest concern with teacher evaluation (word or phrase)?*
- What is your hope for teacher evaluations in Indiana?
- What do you know about the program now that you wished you'd known over the past two years?

Teacher / School Leader Trainings

- What was your experience with training for the new teacher evaluation system?
  - Who provided you with your training?
- Which trainings were most useful to your role? Which trainings were not useful to your role?
  - In what ways were the trainings useful or not useful? *Be sure to identify the training.*
  - Are there particular techniques, tools and resources that you have found to be particularly effective in helping teachers with implementing components of the evaluation system?
- Are there components of the evaluation plan or processes that you would have liked more training on?
- Are there particular techniques, tools, and resources that you have found to be particularly effective in helping you understand and navigate the various components of the evaluation system?
- What additional trainings would you recommend for 2015-16?
- Are there professional development opportunities you are aware of to help improve your understanding and use of the evaluation system?
- What's the best way to communicate resources or opportunities to you?
- In general, do you feel your preparation for being a teacher and the state's licensure requirements prepared you for the expectations established in the state's evaluation system?

[EXTERNAL PARTNERS]

- What was your experience or familiarity with trainings for new teacher evaluation systems or processes?
- Based on your experience, were the trainings provided in the state consistent with best practices in the field?
  - In what ways can the trainings be improved?
- Based on your experience, are there any gaps you observed in the trainings provided (to principals, evaluators, and teachers)?

Teacher Evaluation Process

Practice/Student Growth

- What is your role in implementation of the new evaluation system in your corporation?
  - Can you describe the experience with how the plan has been implemented in your corporation?
- How has corporation plan impacted the instructional practice of your teachers (classroom teaching and learning)?
  - Have you seen an impact on student growth?
  - What are some of the most helpful components of the evaluation?
  - Which one need improvement? How should they be improved?
- In your experience, what has been the most effective way to identify teacher impact on student learning?

- o How should these objective measures be used to determine a teacher's evaluation? What is the appropriate weight?

[EXTERNAL PARTNERS]

- In your experience, what has been the most effective way to identify teachers' impact on student learning?

Rubrics

- For those of you who are familiar with the RISE plan, what are the strengths of the Teacher Effectiveness Rubric?
  - o Is it easy to use?
  - o How can it be improved to help drive teacher practice and student growth?
- For those who use a different plan, what are the pros and cons of the observation rubric used in your corporation?

Student Learning Objectives

- For those of you whose plans have an SLO component, what are the strengths of the Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) process?
  - o Is the process streamlined and easy to understand?
  - o Is the SLOs process valuable or does it help you improve your own teaching practice?
  - o Are there adequate assessment coverage or guidance for objective measures of student learning?
  - o Do you have access to quality assessments?
  - o How can the SLO process be improved to further support teaching practice?

Assessments/Objective Measures

- What types of objectives measures are useful in gauging teachers' impact on student learning?
  - o Are there adequate assessment coverage or guidance for objective measures of student learning?
  - o Do you have access to quality assessments?
- What role should objective measures play in the overall evaluation rating?
- Do you feel that you have received sufficient communication from the state regarding the measures of student learning?
  - o How can the state improve communications to ensure you have the information on measures of student learning?
- Do you have any concerns with the assessment changes this year?

Administrator Support – Observation & Feedback

- How do principals/evaluators use the evaluation tools to provide feedback to teachers after observation?
  - o What steps do you take to follow up with your principal/evaluator or teachers after an observation?
  - o How would you rate quality of feedback?
- In your opinion, do teachers have a clear understanding of what they are being observed on? Rubrics? Data points?
  - o What evidence/sources of data do your teachers use?
- Are there specific instances where you have received helpful feedback? What made these instances successful?
- What happened in the instances where you did not receive helpful feedback?
- As an evaluator, do you feel well prepared and/or equipped to provide feedback to teachers and/or help them understand how rubrics and data points are being used?
- Did the trainings help you and your evaluators better understand how to identifying teacher quality?

- What resources and/or training would you recommend for school leaders in order to best prepare them for consistent observations/feedback?
- Does the current system build in enough opportunities for you to have performance discussions with your teachers?
- School leaders and evaluators can clearly communicate assessment results and information regarding the evaluation process and help teachers develop measureable and achievable student learning goals. Agree or disagree.
  When have you seen this? Why do you were successful (or not) in their communications?

[EXTERNAL PARTNERS]

- What is the appropriate use of evaluation?
- To your knowledge does the system capture these best practices seen in the field?

Compensation
- What's your understanding of your corporation's compensation model or the state's compensation model requirements?
- How has the compensation model impacted teacher performance, evaluator feedback and school culture?
- In your experience, what are the benefits and disadvantages of using performance ratings to inform compensation decisions?
  - In what ways can the system be improved?
  - In what should evaluation ratings be used to determine compensation?

Communications

- In what ways do you receive information on evaluation guidance?
  - As a corporation/school leader, do you feel the information is sufficient?
  - As a teacher do you feel the information is sufficient?
  - Is the information helpful?
  - What can be improved?

What can the State do to make sure you have the tools and resources necessary to meet the goal of supporting your colleagues and students?

Program Improvements

- Show of hands – who is working with, or have had experience with a locally-created or modified plan?
- What role do teachers currently play in the design of locally-created/modified plans?
  - Is this the right role?
  - Should teachers be more or less involved?

[EXTERNAL PARTNERS]

- What should the role of the State be in teacher evaluation process?
  - What level of engagement or role should the state play in reviewing and ensuring of consistency across all plan and implemented?
  - What is the role of the state in reviewing and approval locally-created or modified plans and all plan implementation?

Conclusion

- If there was one thing that you can do immediately to improve teacher evaluations in Indiana, what would that one thing be?
- Are there any additional thoughts or questions you have about the state's evaluation system?