

Stated Briefly

Relationship between school professional climate and teachers' satisfaction with the evaluation process



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This study examined the relationship between teachers' perceptions of school professional climate and their satisfaction with the process for evaluating their performance. It used the responses of a nationally representative sample of teachers to examine whether teachers' satisfaction with the evaluation process was associated with two measures of school professional climate (principal leadership and teacher influence), teacher and school characteristics, and the inclusion of student test scores in the evaluation system. Teachers' perceptions of their principal's leadership was positively associated with their satisfaction with the evaluation system. Teachers' evaluation rating was also associated with their satisfaction, with those rated satisfactory or higher more likely to be satisfied. Teachers' whose evaluations included student test scores were less likely to be satisfied.

This Stated Briefly report summarizes the findings of Lacireno-Paquet, N., Bocala, C., & Bailey, J. (2016). *Relationship between school professional climate and teachers' satisfaction with the evaluation process* (REL 2016-133). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Northeast & Islands. That report is available at <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/project.asp?ProjectID=4460>.



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Regional Educational Laboratory
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Why this study?

Recent changes in the policy environment have led states and districts nationwide, including in the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Northeast & Islands Region, to enhance their educator evaluation systems with more frequent observations of teachers or the inclusion of student test score data. As of August 2014, 43 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico had received federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act flexibility waivers that contained provisions for enhancing teacher evaluations if the state had not already done so.

Members of the Northeast Educator Effectiveness Research Alliance wanted to explore the relationship between school professional climate and teachers' satisfaction with the evaluation process. The findings are useful to educators involved in evaluating teachers, including school leaders, staff developers, coaches, and other leaders. This study addressed five research questions:

- To what extent do teachers indicate that they were satisfied with the evaluation process?
- What are teachers' perceptions of school professional climate (that is, principal leadership and teacher influence)?
- Is teachers' satisfaction with the evaluation process related to how teachers perceive the school professional climate?
- Is teachers' satisfaction with the evaluation process related to teacher demographic characteristics, teacher professional characteristics, or school characteristics?
- Is teachers' satisfaction with the evaluation process related to whether the evaluation process included student test scores?

Box 1 summarizes the data and methodology of the study, and box 2 defines key terms used in this brief.

Box 1. Data sources and methods

The study used data from four linked survey questionnaires of public schools and teachers that are part of the National Center for Education Statistics 2011/12 Schools and Staffing Survey (School Questionnaire and Teacher Questionnaire) and 2012/13 Teacher Follow-up Survey (Questionnaire for Current Teachers and Questionnaire for Former Teachers). The data were from a nationally representative sample of 4,430 teachers, including 2,850 current teachers and 1,580 former teachers. Because data were missing for some teachers, 3,076 teachers were included in the logistic regression model used to answer research questions 3, 4, and 5. After analytic weights are used to account for the complex sampling design, the sample represents a population of more than 3 million teachers.

The outcome variable of interest was a measure of teachers' satisfaction with the evaluation process, which could have one of two values, with one value being strongly disagree or somewhat disagree that they were satisfied with their evaluation process and the other being strongly agree or somewhat agree that they were satisfied (see box 2 for definitions of key terms). Statistical analyses, including descriptive and inferential statistics, were used to answer the research questions. Specifically, logistic regression was conducted to predict the odds of a teacher being satisfied with his or her evaluation process, after several teacher- and school-level variables were taken into account. The odds ratio indicates whether the odds of a certain outcome (for example, being satisfied with the evaluation process) differs for two groups (for example, those with student outcomes included in their evaluation and those without).

Box 2. Key terms

Current teacher. A respondent who was employed as a teacher during the 2011/12 and 2012/13 school years, although not necessarily at the same school.

Former teacher. A respondent who was employed as a teacher during the 2011/12 school year but left the teaching profession, as reported on the 2012/13 Teacher Follow-up Survey Questionnaire for Former Teachers.

Inclusion of student test scores. A dichotomous variable, coded yes or no, based on the respondent's answer to the question of whether "student test score outcomes or test score growth [were] included as an evaluation criterion in your FORMAL evaluation this school year" (from the 2011/12 Schools and Staffing Survey Teacher Questionnaire).

Principal leadership. A composite variable created by averaging teachers' responses to six items from the 2011/12 Schools and Staffing Survey Teacher Questionnaire related to their principal's leadership that use a four-point scale indicating level of agreement (strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, somewhat agree, and strongly agree):

- The school administration's behavior toward the staff is supportive and encouraging.
- The principal enforces rules for student conduct and backs me up when I need it.
- The principal knows what kind of school he or she wants and has communicated it to the staff.
- In this school, staff members are recognized for a job well done.
- I am generally satisfied with being a teacher at this school.
- I like the way things are run at this school.

Satisfaction with evaluation process. Teachers' level of agreement (strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, somewhat agree, and strongly agree) with the following statement on the National Center for Education Statistics 2012/13 Teacher Follow-up Survey (Questionnaire for Former Teachers or Questionnaire for Current Teachers) about the process for evaluating their work as teachers during the previous school year (2011/12): I was satisfied with the formal evaluation process.

School characteristics. Enrollment, urbanicity, percentage of students who are English learner students, percentage of students approved for free or reduced-price lunch, percentage of students with an individualized education program, and percentage of students who are a racial minority (non-White) or an ethnic minority (Hispanic).

School professional climate. A rating generated by the study team that is based on teachers' survey responses to items on the National Center for Education Statistics 2011/12 Schools and Staffing Survey Teacher Questionnaire asking about the working environment for school professionals and that focuses specifically on two scales: principal leadership and teacher influence. See definitions for *principal leadership* and *teacher influence* for more on the survey items for these scales.

Teacher demographic characteristics. Gender, Hispanic ethnicity, and a three-category race variable (Black, White, or other).

Teacher influence. A composite variable created by averaging teachers' responses to seven items about teacher influence from the 2011/12 Schools and Staffing Survey Teacher Questionnaire that use a four-point scale (no influence, minor influence, moderate influence, and a great deal of influence):

How much actual influence do you think teachers have over school policy AT THIS SCHOOL in each of the following areas?

- Setting performance standards for students at this school.
- Establishing curriculum.

(continued)

Box 2. Key terms (continued)

- Determining the content of in-service professional development programs.
- Evaluating teachers.
- Hiring new full time teachers.
- Setting discipline policy.
- Deciding how the school budget will be spent.

Teacher professional characteristics. School level taught (elementary/combined or middle/high school), years of teaching experience, self-reported previous-year evaluation rating (unsatisfactory, satisfactory, excellent), and teaching status (current or former teacher).

What the study found

This section first describes the extent to which teachers were satisfied with the evaluation process and their perceptions of school professional climate. It then presents the results of analyses of the association between teachers' satisfaction with the evaluation process and several other factors, including teachers' perceptions of school professional climate, teacher and school characteristics, and whether the evaluation process included student test scores.

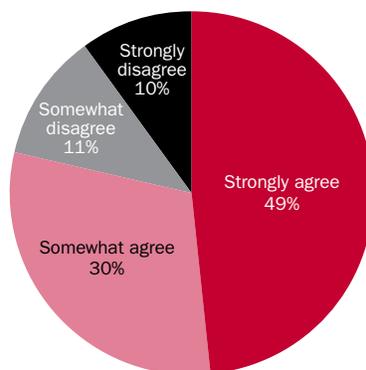
Most teachers reported being satisfied with the process by which they were evaluated

Overall, 79 percent of teachers in the sample reported strongly agreeing and somewhat agreeing that they were satisfied with the evaluation process conducted in the previous year (figure 1).

Teachers reported positive perceptions of their principal's leadership but perceived themselves to have little influence over school policies

On average, teachers somewhat agreed that their principal provides positive leadership, as measured by the composite variable for principal leadership (mean of 3.1 on a scale of 1, strongly disagree, to 4, strongly

Figure 1. Teachers generally reported being satisfied with the formal evaluation process in 2011/12



Note: $n = 3,810$ weighted to represent a population estimate of 2,846,477. Refers to responses to the question "I was satisfied with the formal evaluation process." Teachers were asked in 2012/13 to report their satisfaction with the evaluation process based on their experiences in 2011/12.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics 2012/13 Teacher Follow-up Survey (Questionnaire for Former Teachers and Questionnaire for Current Teachers).

agree). Teachers on average reported having minor influence in their school over policies (mean of 2.2 on a scale of 1, no influence, to 4, a great deal of influence), such as setting performance standards for students, establishing curriculum, and hiring new full-time teachers, among others.

Of the two concepts used to measure school professional climate—principal leadership and teacher influence—only principal leadership was associated with teachers’ satisfaction with the evaluation process

Teachers with more positive perceptions of their principal’s leadership were more likely to be satisfied with the evaluation process. The odds that a teacher was satisfied with the evaluation process increased 2.5 times for every one point increase in the rating of principal leadership, after teacher demographic characteristics, teacher professional characteristics, school characteristics, and whether the evaluation process included student test scores were controlled for (figure 2). This finding was statistically significant. But teachers’ perceptions of their influence over school policies were not associated with their satisfaction with the evaluation process.

Teachers who were rated at the highest level on their teacher evaluations in 2011/12 expressed more satisfaction with the evaluation process that year than teachers who were rated at lower levels

The only teacher professional characteristic significantly associated with satisfaction with the evaluation process was teachers’ self-reported previous-year evaluation rating (see figure 2). Specifically, teachers who received an evaluation rating of satisfactory or effective were 0.4 times less likely to be satisfied with the evaluation process than those who received an evaluation rating of excellent, outstanding, or highly effective. Almost all teachers in the sample reported receiving a favorable evaluation rating in the previous school year: 60.3 percent reported being rated excellent, outstanding, or highly effective, and 36.8 percent reported being rated as satisfactory or effective.

Teachers whose evaluation process included student test scores were less likely to be satisfied with the evaluation process than teachers whose evaluation process did not include student test scores

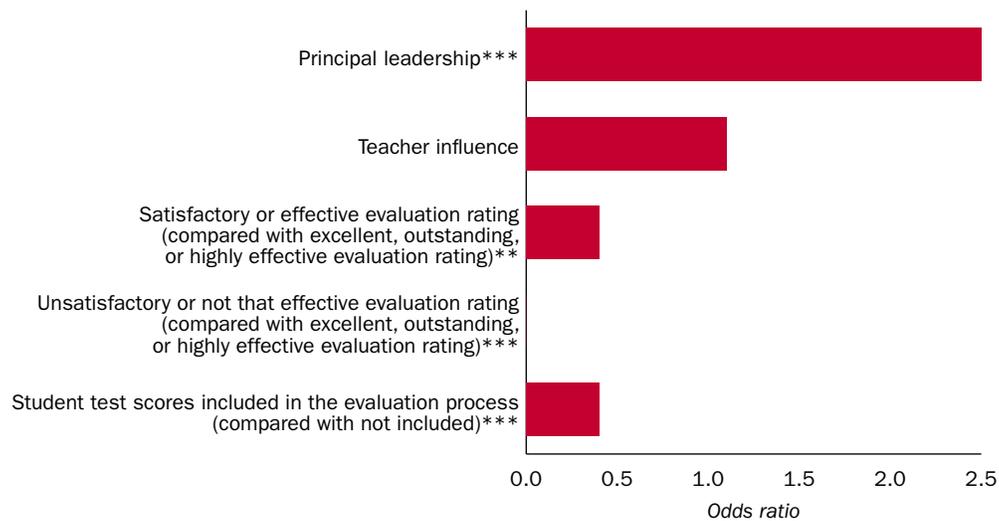
Approximately 27 percent of teachers reported that the evaluation process included student test scores, such as growth models or value-added models, in 2011/12. Those teachers whose evaluation process included student test scores were 2.5 times less likely (odds ratio of 0.4) to be satisfied with the evaluation process than teachers whose evaluation process did not (see figure 2).¹ This finding remained consistent after teacher demographic characteristics (gender, ethnicity, and race), teacher professional characteristics (school level taught, years of experience, previous-year evaluation rating, and teaching status), and school characteristics (school enrollment, urbanicity, percentage of students who are English learner students, percentage of students approved for free or reduced-price school lunch, percentage of students with an individualized education program, and percentage of students who are a racial/ethnic minority) were controlled for.

Implications of the study findings

The findings from this study have several implications for policy and practice.

The finding that principal leadership—as one measure of school professional climate—was associated with teachers’ satisfaction with the evaluation process reinforces previous research about the importance of the school principal in establishing a positive school professional climate (Drago-Severson, 2012; Grissom, 2011; Kraft, Marinell, & Yee, 2015). A recent study in Chicago also found that teachers’ perceptions of their evaluation were related to both school leadership and the concepts of professional community (such as principal–teacher trust; Jiang, Spote, & Lupescu, 2015).

Figure 2. Odds ratios of key variables show that teachers' satisfaction with the evaluation process was related to principal leadership, 2011/12



** is significant at $p < 0.01$; *** is significant at $p < 0.001$.

Note: $n = 3,080$ weighted to represent a population estimate of 2,389,401. Teachers were asked in 2012/13 to report their evaluation ratings from 2011/12 and to report their satisfaction with the evaluation process based on their experiences in 2011/12. An odds ratio that approaches 0 indicates that the outcome is extremely unlikely to occur, an odds ratio of less than 1 indicates that the outcome is less likely, an odds ratio of 1 indicates an equal likelihood of the outcome, and an odds ratio of more than 1 indicates that the outcome is more likely. For continuous variables (such as teacher influence, which has a scale of 1 to 4) the odds ratio is the change in the odds of being satisfied for every one unit increase in the continuous variable. For dichotomous variables (such as whether the evaluation process included student test scores) odds ratios compare the likelihood of the two groups being satisfied with the evaluation process. An odds ratio of zero can be a statistically significant finding. The model overall is significant $F(20, 68) = 4.4$, $\text{Prob} > F = 0.00$, design degrees of freedom = 87. Goodness-of-fit test: Hosmer & Lemeshow $F(9,79) = 0.5$, $\text{Prob} > F = 0.9$.

Source: Authors' calculations based on data from the National Center for Education Statistics 2011/12 Schools and Staffing Survey (School Questionnaire and Teacher Questionnaire) and 2012/13 Teacher Follow-up Survey (Questionnaire for Former Teachers and Questionnaire for Current Teachers).

States or districts that are just beginning to implement new evaluation systems have an opportunity to gather data before and after implementation to answer questions about the relationship between school professional climate and teachers' satisfaction with the evaluation process. State and district leaders may also be interested in investigating whether and to what extent school professional climate is related to how successfully the new evaluation systems are implemented.

The finding that teachers are less likely to be satisfied with the evaluation process when the evaluation process includes student test scores warrants further exploration, given that many policymakers advocate for evaluation systems that include a measure of student achievement or growth. At the time the survey data were collected, many states were revising their plans to include some measure of student learning, but only Florida was fully implementing its new evaluation system (National Council on Teacher Quality, 2012). It is possible that the negative association between the inclusion of student test scores and teachers' satisfaction with the evaluation process may be driven fully or partially by new evaluation systems or the length of time the systems have been in place. However, the current study's finding might also be due to teachers' belief that student test scores do not accurately measure instructional practice (Coggshall, Ott, & Lasagna, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2015). It would be informative to replicate the study with more recent data now that a majority of states have fully implemented new evaluation systems to see whether the findings are consistent.

When the 2011/12 Schools and Staffing Survey and 2012/13 Teacher Follow-up Survey were administered, teachers' evaluation ratings varied little, and teachers' satisfaction with the evaluation process was high. Teachers overwhelmingly reported being rated effective or highly effective, with 60.3 percent rated excellent, outstanding, or highly effective, 36.8 percent rated satisfactory or effective, and 2.9 percent rated as ineffective or unsatisfactory. Indeed, lack of differentiation in teacher ratings has been a criticism of and motivator for new evaluation systems (Toch & Rothman, 2008; Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, & Keeling, 2009). This again suggests that further research is needed to determine whether the findings are consistent after states fully implement new evaluation systems.

Limitations of the study

This study is correlational and does not support causal conclusions about any relationships between school professional climate and teachers' satisfaction with the evaluation process. The findings are from a particular point in time, and the findings might differ if the study were conducted at a different time. While the sample for the study is designed to be representative, the education systems and teacher evaluation policy contexts of individual states may differ from the average or representative school in the National Center for Education Statistics Schools and Staffing Survey dataset. Finally, the study included only two dimensions of school professional climate (principal leadership and teacher influence on school policy); however, the research suggests that other dimensions, such as trust, may be related to support of or satisfaction with the evaluation process (Riordan, Lacireno-Paquet, Shakman, Bocala, & Chang, 2015).

Note

1. It is possible that the significant relationship between the inclusion of test scores in evaluations and teachers' satisfaction with the evaluation process may actually be capturing differences across states. However, the association remained significant when tested in an alternative model that controlled for differences across states.

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