Teacher Recruitment, Hiring and Performance Management in El Dorado Public Schools

The New Teacher Project | March 2010

About The New Teacher Project

The New Teacher Project (TNTP) is a national non-profit organization dedicated to closing the achievement gap by ensuring that poor and minority students get outstanding teachers.

Our work centers on recruiting and retaining the best talent for the classroom and ensuring that teachers have the environments that allow them to do their best work.

These goals are dependent on a continuum of policies, processes, systems and services that have a real daily impact on teachers and principals.
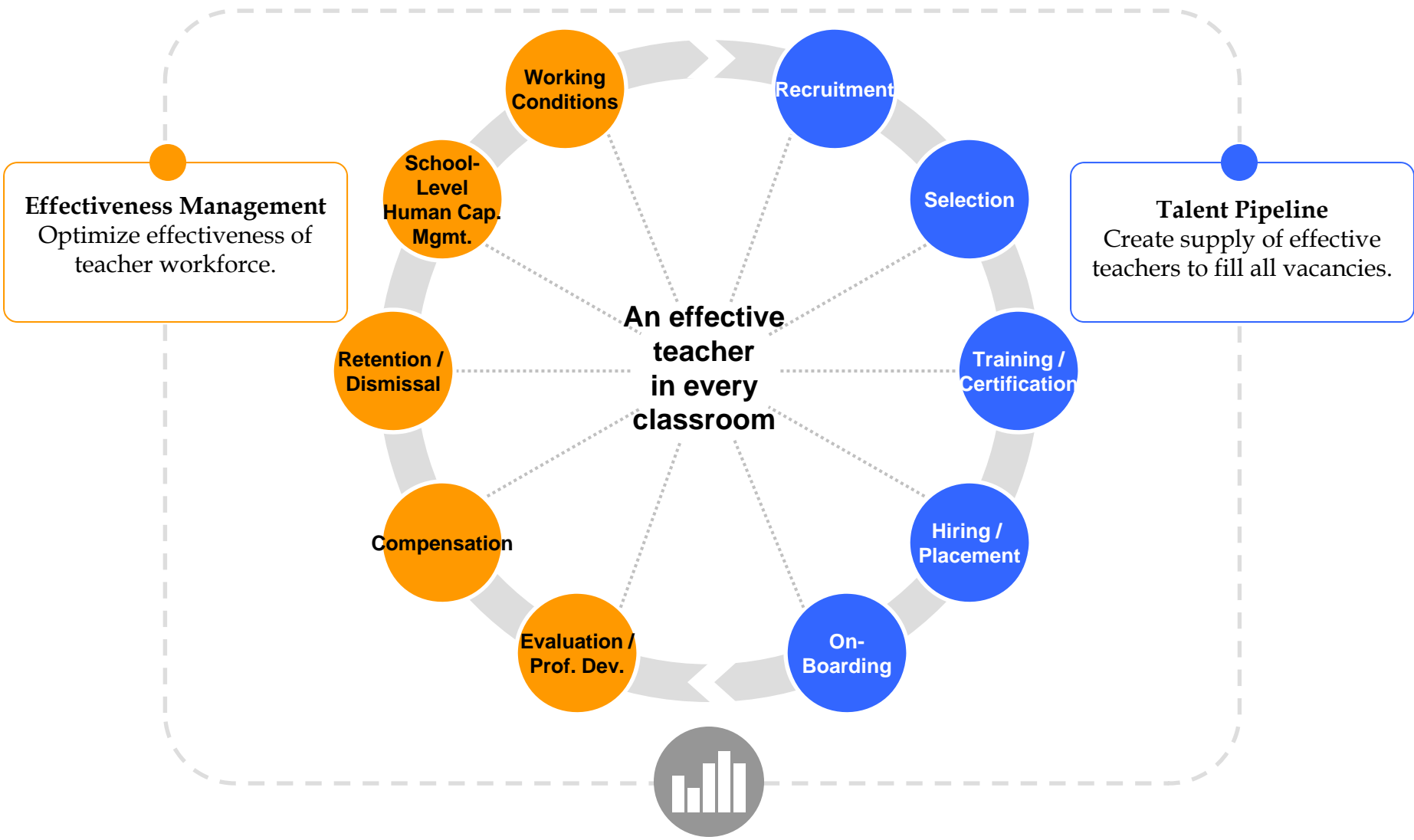
The purpose of this analysis is to increase the alignment of these systems to the ultimate goal of excellent instruction in every classroom.

In general, our inquiry centers around **fundamental questions**, such as:

✓ Is the district recruiting teachers effectively?

✓ Do placement processes facilitate strong, lasting matches between teachers and schools?

✓ Are schools creating effective instructional teams through the staffing process?

✓ Does the district effectively evaluate and support teachers to improve their instructional practice?

✓ Is the district retaining its best teachers?

TNTP helps districts develop their policies and practices that put an effective teacher in every classroom.

Effectiveness Management
Optimize effectiveness of teacher workforce.

Talent Pipeline
Create supply of effective teachers to fill all vacancies.

Working Conditions

Recruitment

School-Level Human Cap. Mgmt.

Selection

Retention / Dismissal

An effective teacher in every classroom

Training / Certification

Compensation

Hiring / Placement

Evaluation / Prof. Dev.

On-Boarding

Measures of student learning

TNTP conducted an analysis for El Dorado Public Schools on recruitment, hiring, placement, evaluation and retention.

Beginning in the fall of 2008, in collaboration with El Dorado Public Schools (EPS), TNTP conducted an analysis using three primary methods:

1 **Analysis of relevant policy and practice documents,** including the EPS Certified Personnel Handbook, Evaluation Handbook and various Arkansas state statutes.

2 **Stakeholder interviews** with district administrators, principals and teachers.

3 **Survey data** collected from school administrators and teachers; surveys yielded a 94 percent teacher response rate and 107 percent school administrator response rate (88 percent principal response rate).*

*All school administrator survey data presented in this report include both principal and assistant principal responses unless otherwise noted; 107 percent total response rate due to repeat survey starts by one assistant principal. All administrator data in this report reflects unique answers only.

EPS participated concurrently in TNTP's national report, *The Widget Effect*, which studied evaluation and dismissal practices nationwide.

In fall 2008 through spring 2009, TNTP partnered with **12 school districts** in **four states** to analyze each district's evaluation, tenure, remediation and dismissal policies and practices as well as each state's teacher performance management policies.

Arkansas
- **El Dorado Public Schools**
- Jonesboro Public Schools
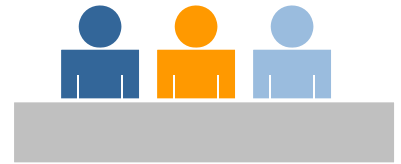- Little Rock Public Schools
- Springdale Public Schools

Colorado
- Pueblo City Schools
- Denver Public Schools

Illinois
- Chicago Public Schools
- District U-46 (Elgin)
- Rockford Public Schools

Ohio
- Akron Public Schools
- Cincinnati Public Schools
- Toledo Public Schools

Over 50 district and state officials and 25 teachers union representatives actively informed the study through advisory panels in each state.

Panel members provided ongoing feedback and perspective and were invited to submit unedited written responses to the study's findings and recommendations.

1 Under EPS' current evaluation process, differentiating teacher performance is a near impossibility. This contributes to the system's failure to:
- Formally and consistently address poor instructional performance; and
- Meaningfully support all teachers in helping them develop and improve their instructional practice.

2 EPS faces particular challenges in recruiting and hiring high-quality new teachers, but strategic use of data and earlier notification timelines can help improve the supply of teacher candidates.

Agenda

Background

▶ **The Widget Effect**

Findings

Recommendations

Widget Effect: A single, flawed assumption has fostered an education system that is generally indifferent to teacher effectiveness.

"When it comes to measuring instructional performance, **current policies and systems overlook significant differences between teachers**. There is little or no differentiation of excellent teaching from good, good from fair, or fair from poor. This is the **Widget Effect: a tendency to treat all teachers as roughly interchangeable,** even when their teaching is quite variable. Consequently, teachers are **not developed as professionals** with individual strengths and capabilities, and **poor performance is rarely identified or addressed**."

The New Teacher Project, 2009

Secretary of Education Arne Duncan addressed the Widget Effect in a major policy speech to the National Education Association in July 2009.

"I believe that teacher unions are at a crossroads. These policies were created over the past century to protect the rights of teachers but they have produced **an industrial factory model of education that treats all teachers like interchangeable widgets.**

"A recent report from The New Teacher Project found that almost all teachers are rated the same. Who in their right mind really believes that? **We need to work together to change this**….

"It's time we all admit that **just as our testing system is deeply flawed—so is our teacher evaluation system—**and the losers are not just the children. When great teachers are unrecognized and unrewarded—when struggling teachers are unsupported—and when failing teachers are unaddressed—the teaching profession is damaged."

The Widget Effect in Teacher Evaluation: Summary of Findings

Treating Teachers as Interchangeable Parts	
All teachers are rated "good" or "great."	Although teachers and principals report that poor performance is common, less than one percent of teachers are identified as "unsatisfactory" on performance evaluations.
Excellence goes unrecognized.	When excellent ratings are the norm, truly exceptional teachers cannot be formally identified. Nor can they be compensated, promoted or retained.
Professional development is inadequate.	Almost 3 in 4 teachers did not receive any specific feedback on improving their performance in their last evaluation.
Novice teachers are neglected.	Low expectations for beginning teachers translate into benign neglect in the classroom and a toothless tenure process.
Poor performance goes unaddressed.	Half of the 12 districts studied have not dismissed a single non-probationary teacher for poor performance in the past *five years*. None dismisses more than a few each year.

Agenda

Background

The Widget Effect

▶ **Findings**

Recommendations

Finding #1

EPS' current evaluation process does not provide all teachers with a formal performance rating. As a result, poor performance is not addressed formally or consistently.

Overview of Current EPS Evaluation Process*

	Probationary Teacher Track	Professional Growth Track	Professional Support/ Assistance Track
Applies to…	All probationary teachers	All non-probationary teachers	Non-probationary teachers who need assistance in meeting any one of the Core Teaching Expectations
Frequency of Observations	• Minimum of two formal observations at least 30 minutes in length, with a pre- and post-conference • At least one informal observation	• **None required**, although growth plans must be developed in collaboration with the building principal • Growth plans may last one to three years	• As determined by the teacher-specific professional assistance plan • Specific goals for improvement and timeline identified
Documents Used	• Pre- and post-conference form • Classroom observation form • Core component documentation form • Summative evaluation form	• Goal setting form • Annual report for multi-year plans • Final report	• Professional Assistance Track meeting form (action plan outline) • Summative evaluation form
Rating Scale	• Summative ratings: "satisfactory," "needs improve-ment" and "unsatisfactory" across five core competencies • Recommendation for reappointment or non-reappointment on summative form • All other forms are qualitative	• **No ratings—**forms are entirely qualitative • Recommendation for renewal on final report	• "Satisfactory," "needs improvement" and "unsatisfactory" across five core competencies • Recommendation for Professional Growth Track, continuation in Professional Assistance Track, or non-renewal on summative form

*Evaluation process adopted from 2001 to 2008; a ratings-based evaluation process was used for the 2008-09 school year as a temporary solution while a new evaluation system was developed.
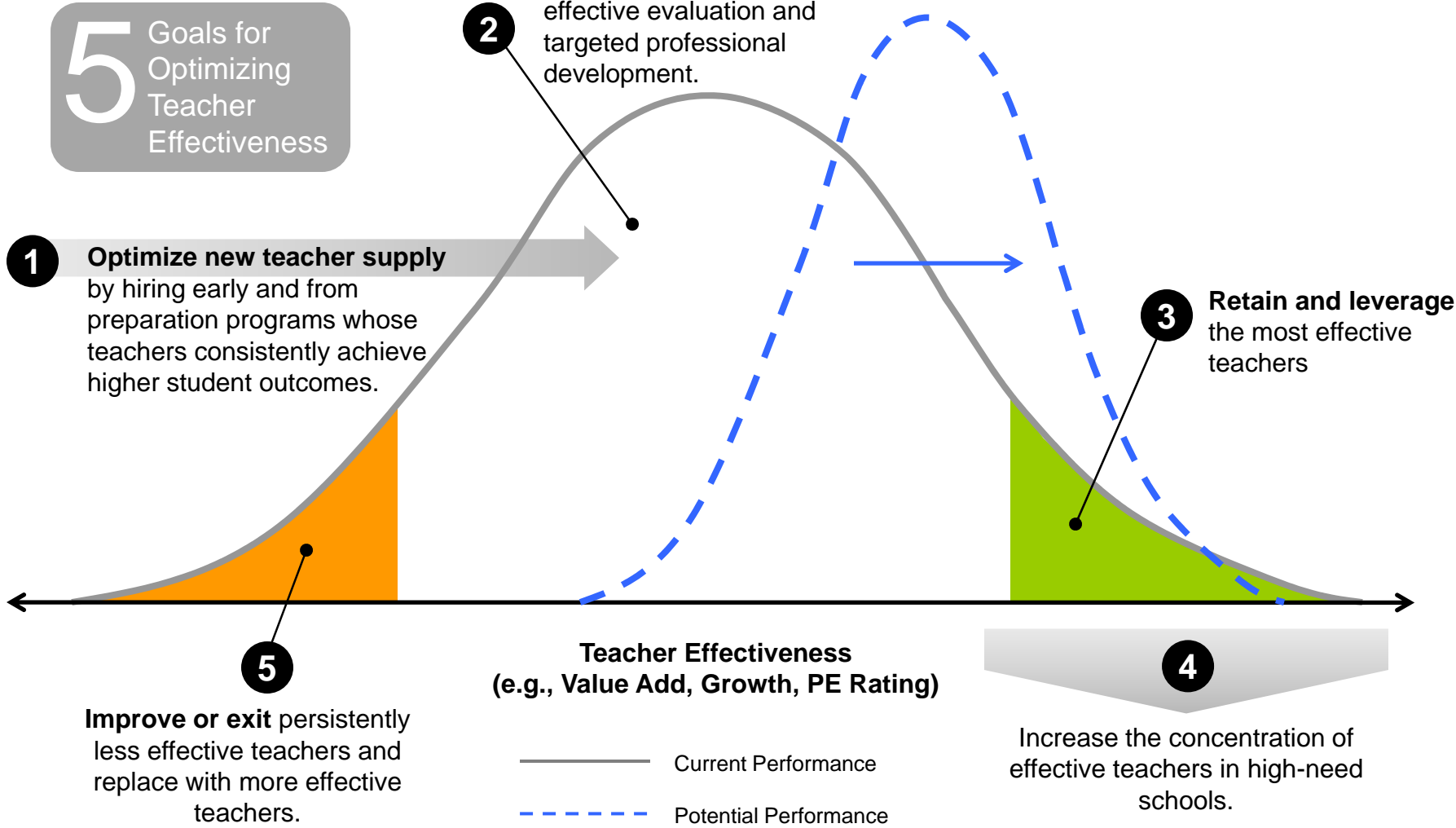
Without formal evaluation ratings for all teachers, it is impossible to precisely track overall teacher performance across the district.

5 Goals for Optimizing Teacher Effectiveness

2 **Boost effectiveness** of all teachers through effective evaluation and targeted professional development.

1 **Optimize new teacher supply** by hiring early and from preparation programs whose teachers consistently achieve higher student outcomes.

3 **Retain and leverage** the most effective teachers

5 **Improve or exit** persistently less effective teachers and replace with more effective teachers.

Teacher Effectiveness (e.g., Value Add, Growth, PE Rating)

4 Increase the concentration of effective teachers in high-need schools.

—— Current Performance

- - - - Potential Performance

Both teachers and principals, however, acknowledge that poor performance exists in their schools.

50%

of school administrators indicate that **between 5 and 10 percent of their teachers' performance is "unacceptable"** and that **between 10 and 30 percent of their teachers' performance "needs improvement."**

23%

of EPS teachers believe that there are teachers in their school who **should be dismissed for poor instructional performance** but have not been.

Teachers believe that dismissal is an important aspect of performance management and that principals fail to perform it.
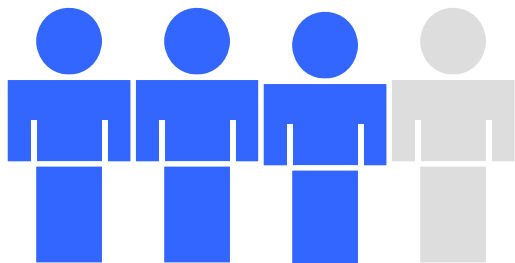
Almost 3 out of 4 EPS teachers believe that dismissing teachers for poor instructional performance is an **important part of maintaining and developing a high-quality teaching staff.***
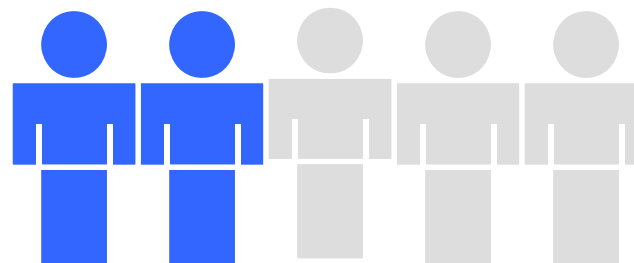
2 out of 5 EPS teachers believe that **administrators fail to dismiss poor performers.****

*Percentage of teacher survey respondents who answered "agree" or "strongly agree" for the given statement.
**Percentage of teacher survey respondents who answered "yes" to the given statement.

Principals report failing to initiate dismissal proceedings because they believe it is an arduous process.

36%

of school administrators **have actually initiated the dismissal** of a non-probationary teacher for poor instructional performance in the last five years.

82% of school administrators describe the amount of time, effort and resources required to dismiss a teacher for poor instructional performance as "**too high**."

Instead, principals use informal means to address poor performance, which ultimately leave poor instructional performers in EPS.

Top Options for Dismissal that Principals Have Utilized

- Transfer teachers:

  o 67 percent of school administrators who have used alternative strategies have encouraged a teacher to seek a transfer to another school.

  o No school administrator has, however, encouraged a teacher to leave the district.

- Reassign teachers:

  o 100 percent of school administrators who have used alternative strategies have reassigned a teacher to a new teaching position within their school.

n=3

Finding #2

EPS' current evaluation process does not meaningfully support teachers, particularly those in need of remediation, to develop and improve their instructional practice.

While a relatively high portion of El Dorado teachers receive lower performance ratings, these teachers do not receive the support necessary to improve.

Percent of Teachers Who Report Receiving "Unacceptable" or "Needs Improvement" (or Equivalent) Ratings on Their Most Recent Evaluations

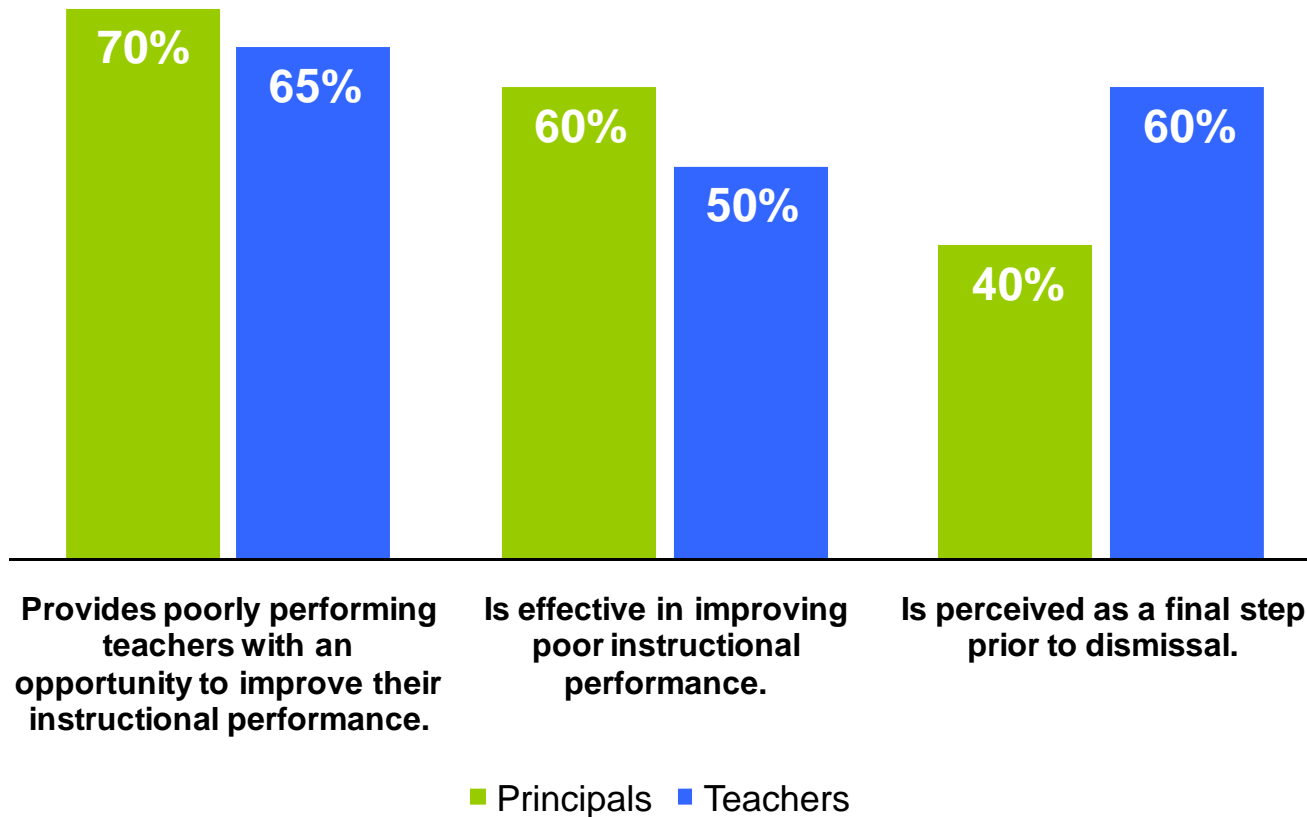|		
25%		
	6%	**2%**
El Dorado	Arkansas District A	Arkansas District B
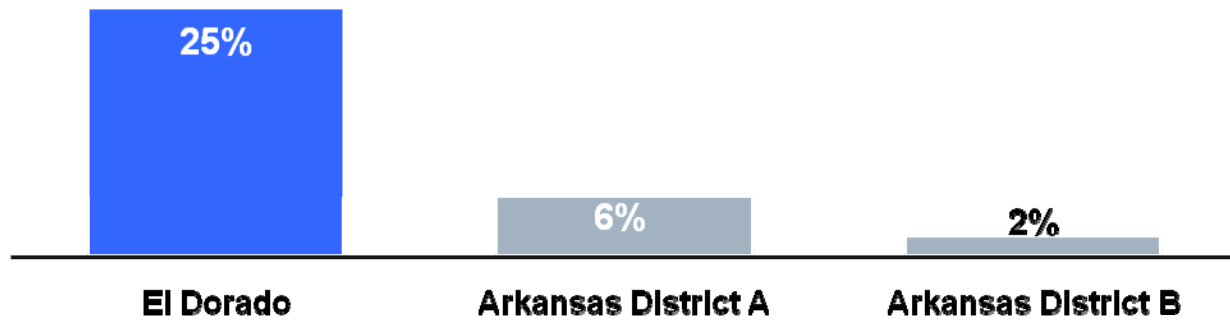
Fewer than half of these teachers:

- Report that their evaluator identified or provided the resources to help them improve in the identified areas of improvement.

- Report receiving support that was useful in improving their instructional practice in those improvement areas.

Even for teachers identified as needing additional intensive support, the process does not effectively remediate teachers.

Principal and Teacher Opinions* on Professional Assistance Track Effectiveness

Provides poorly performing teachers with an opportunity to improve their instructional performance.
- Principals: 70%
- Teachers: 65%

Is effective in improving poor instructional performance.
- Principals: 60%
- Teachers: 50%

Is perceived as a final step prior to dismissal.
- Principals: 40%
- Teachers: 60%

■ Principals ■ Teachers

*Percentage of teacher and principal survey respondents who answered "agree" or "strongly agree" for the given statements.

21

Teachers strongly believe that poor performers should be placed in the Professional Assistance Track, but principals fail to take this step.

91%

of teachers agree that teachers identified as poor instructional performers should be placed on a Professional Assistance Track

50%

of school administrators have not placed a single non-probationary teacher on the Professional Assistance Track **in the past five years**
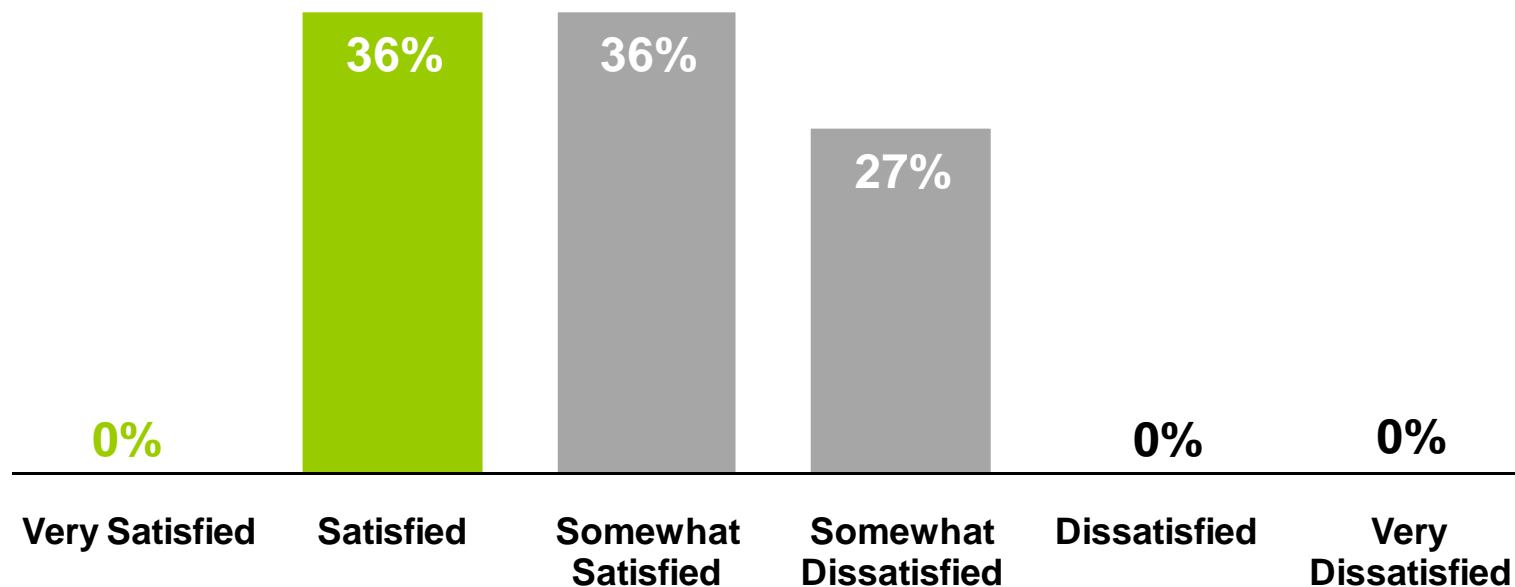
On average, no administrator has put more than **one teacher a year** on a Professional Assistance Track.

In general, principals are not fully satisfied with the evaluation process.

"How satisfied are you with the evaluation process?"

Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
0%	36%	36%	27%	0%	0%

*Percentage of principal survey respondents

Principals find the process difficult to implement, and only a small majority agree that it allows for an accurate assessment of a teacher's performance.

36%

of principals agree that the teacher evaluation process is **clear and easy to carry out**

64%

of principals agree the evaluation process allows them to **accurately assess their teachers' instructional performance**

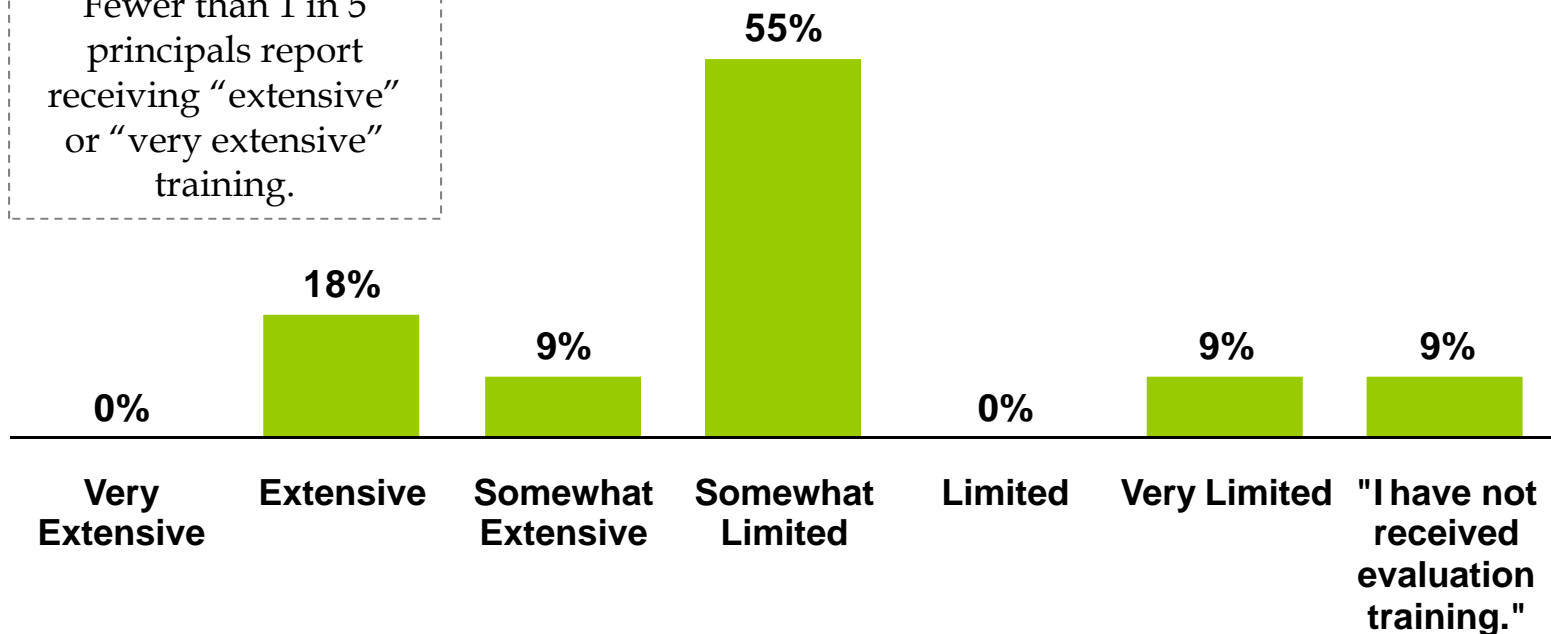*Percentage of principal survey respondents who answered "agree" or "strongly agree" for the given statements.

Principal skepticism around the evaluation process could be due in part to the limited evaluation training they receive.

"How would you describe the extent of training you have received on how to conduct an effective evaluation of a teacher's instructional performance?"

Fewer than 1 in 5 principals report receiving "extensive" or "very extensive" training.

Very Extensive	Extensive	Somewhat Extensive	Somewhat Limited	Limited	Very Limited	"I have not received evaluation training."
0%	18%	9%	55%	0%	9%	9%

Characteristics of the Widget Effect vs. EPS Evaluation Policies and Practices

| Widget Effect Characteristics	EPS Evaluation System
• Performance evaluations are perfunctory and infrequent.	🟠
• The primary use of evaluations is to identify incompetence.	⭕
• Teachers expect to receive the highest possible rating, even during their first years in the classroom.	🟠
• Evaluations do not yield meaningful feedback for teachers, and professional development is not aligned to evaluations.	🟠
• Administrators are poorly trained to evaluate and districts do not prioritize the process.	🟠
• Teachers who receive feedback for improvement during the evaluation process tend to feel singled out, often unfairly.	⭕

Finding #3

EPS faces particular challenges in recruiting and hiring high-quality new teachers, as indicated by principal reports of inadequate supply and delayed timelines.

Overall, both principals and newly-hired teachers are satisfied with the hiring process.

"Overall, how satisfied are you with the new teacher hiring process?"
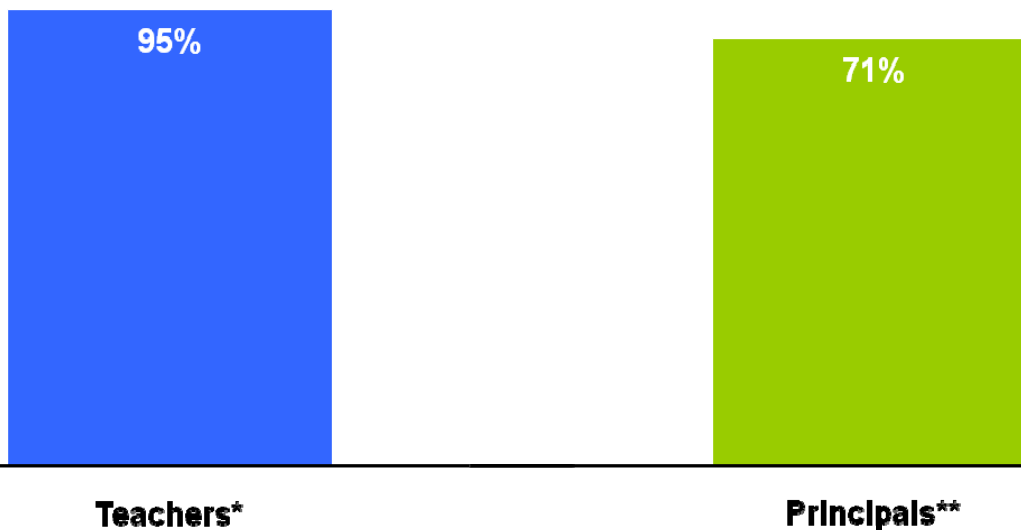
95%	71%
Teachers*	Principals**

Percentage of teacher survey respondents who answered "satisfied" or "very satisfied" for the given statements.

*Teachers hired to EPS in the last three years only. n = 99.
**Principal respondents only; assistant principals were not asked hiring questions.
 Source: Online survey of EPS teachers and school administrators conducted in December 2008.

Principals are highly satisfied with the authority they have to shape their instructional teams, but hiring timelines pose a challenge.

100%

of principals are satisfied with their **level of discretion to hire the teachers they want** and agree that the new teacher hiring process **allows them to hire the best possible teachers** for their school

43%

of principals agree that the hiring timeline allows them to **hire early enough to capture the highest quality** new teacher applicants

In fact, two-thirds of principals have lost a desirable candidate because of delayed resignation and retirement timelines.

67%

of principals responded "yes" to the question:

"Have you ever lost a more desirable candidate from outside the EPS system because you were unable to make an offer in a timely fashion?"

Most frequently cited factors contributing to hiring delays:

- Late resignation and retirement notifications.
- Delays in central office processing.

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In addition, the vast majority of principals are dissatisfied with the quantity of available new hires, especially in high-need subject areas.

Only 2 out of 7 principals are **satisfied with the quantity** of applicants in EPS.*
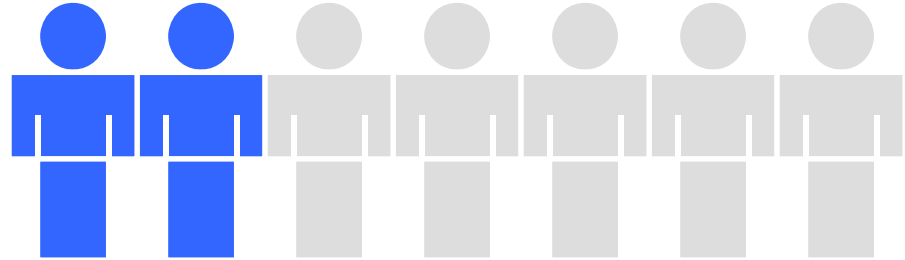
Only 1 out of 7 principals believes that the pool of available new hires **includes enough teachers in high-need subject areas.**

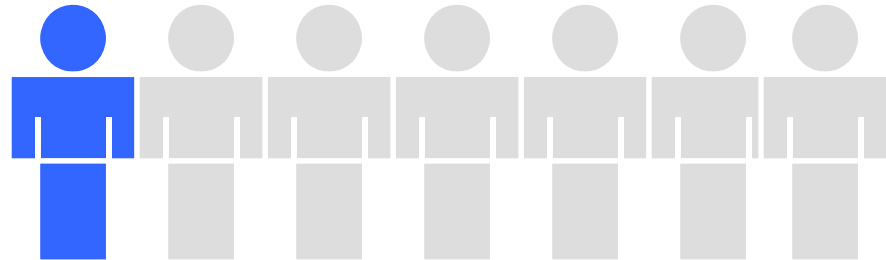# EPS principals are much less satisfied with the <u>quality</u> of new hires than their peers in other Arkansas districts.

Principal Satisfaction with the Quality of New Hires (Excluding Student Teachers)
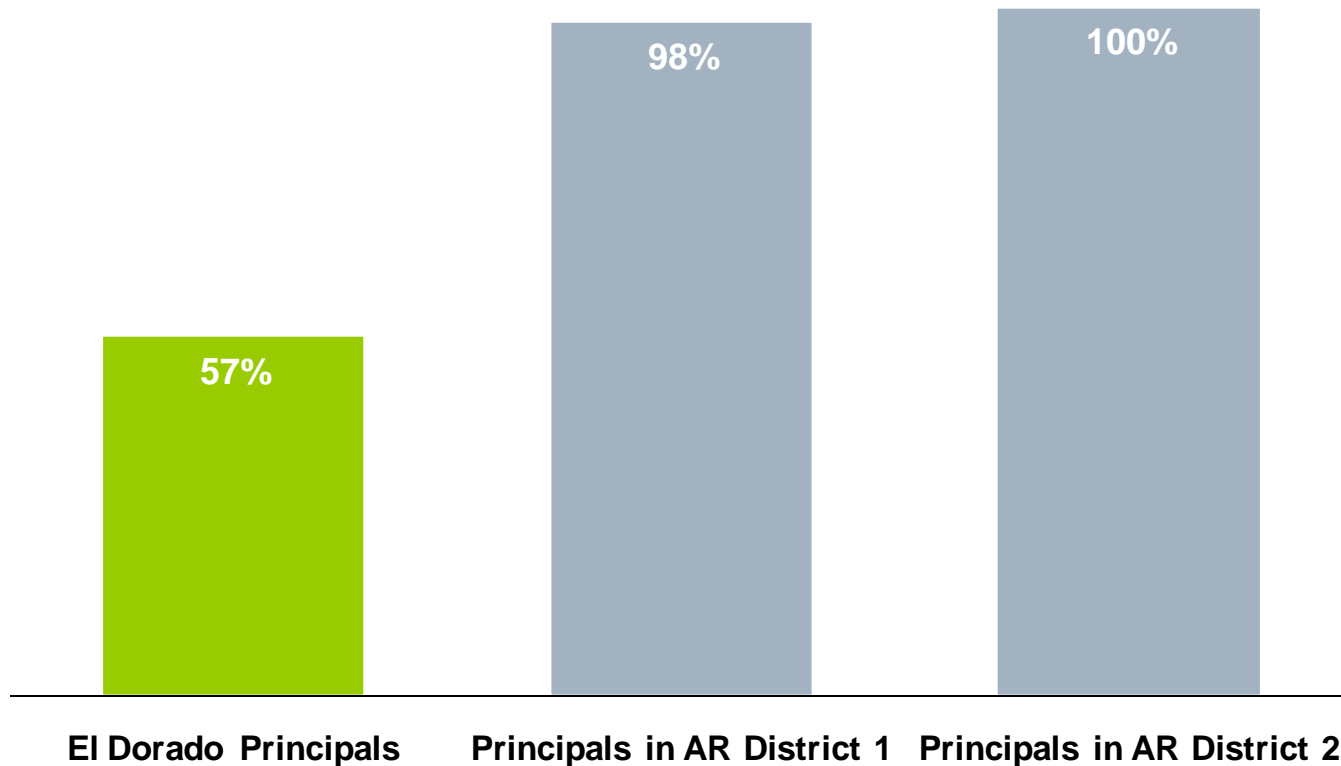
57%	98%	100%
El Dorado Principals	Principals in AR District 1	Principals in AR District 2

The issues of inadequate supply and late hiring have made principals less likely to attempt to replace low-performing teachers.

Top Reasons Principals Give for Not Initiating Dismissal Proceedings for Teachers Assigned a Low Evaluation Rating

Recruitment and Hiring-related Factors

44%	**33%**	**33%**
I have other less contentious and less resource-intensive options available to me.	I am concerned that a teacher's replacement could be worse.	I am concerned that I will not be able to find an appropriate replacement in a timely manner.
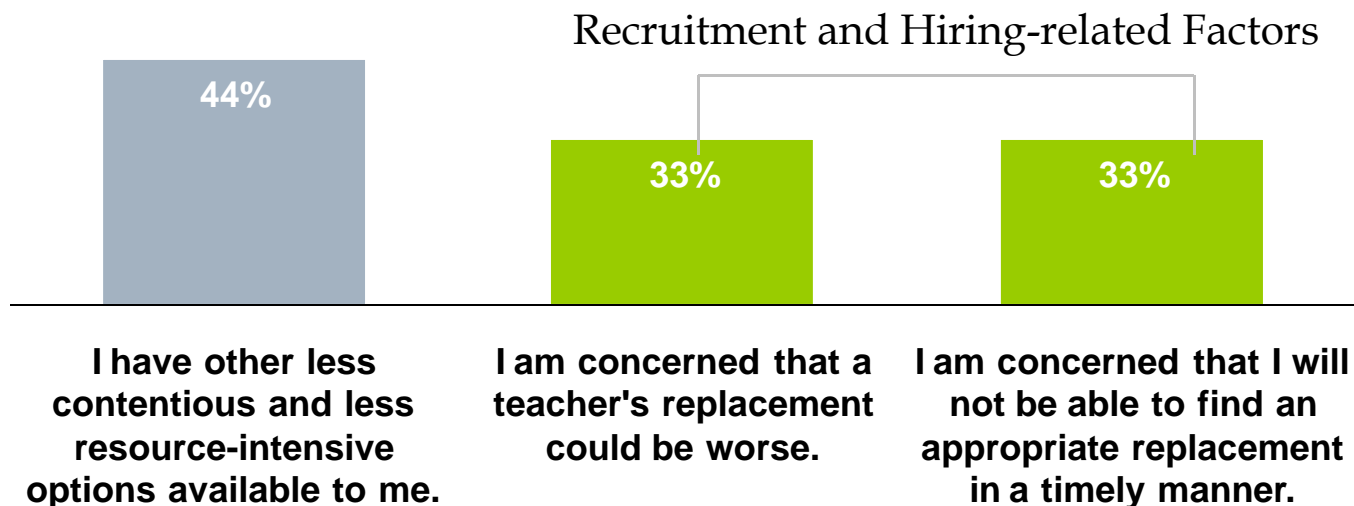
Finding #4

While EPS staffs many vacancies through the best practice of mutual consent, this effort is undermined when principals use the transfer process as a way to move poor performers out of their schools.

EPS maintains a best practice in school staffing, placing nearly three quarters of transferring teachers through mutual consent.

89%

of transferring teachers agree: "It was important to me when changing schools that my new principal wanted me to move to his/her school."

Transferring Teachers' Method of Placement
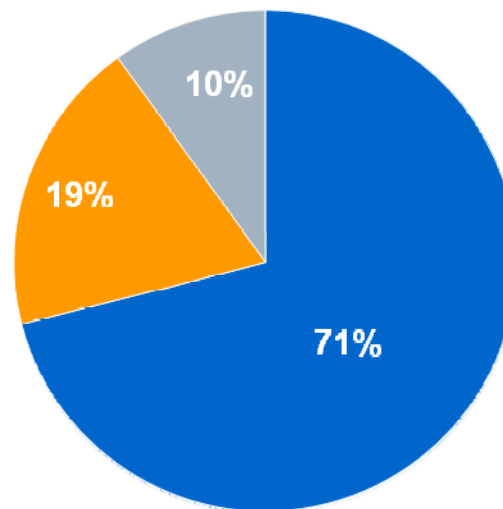
- Interviewed with principal and were selected — 71%
- Assigned by the central office — 19%
- Other — 10%

*Percentage of teacher survey respondents who answered "agree" or "strongly agree" for the given statements.

Overall, transferring teachers report high levels of satisfaction with the transfer process.

Transferring Teachers' Opinions of the Transfer Process
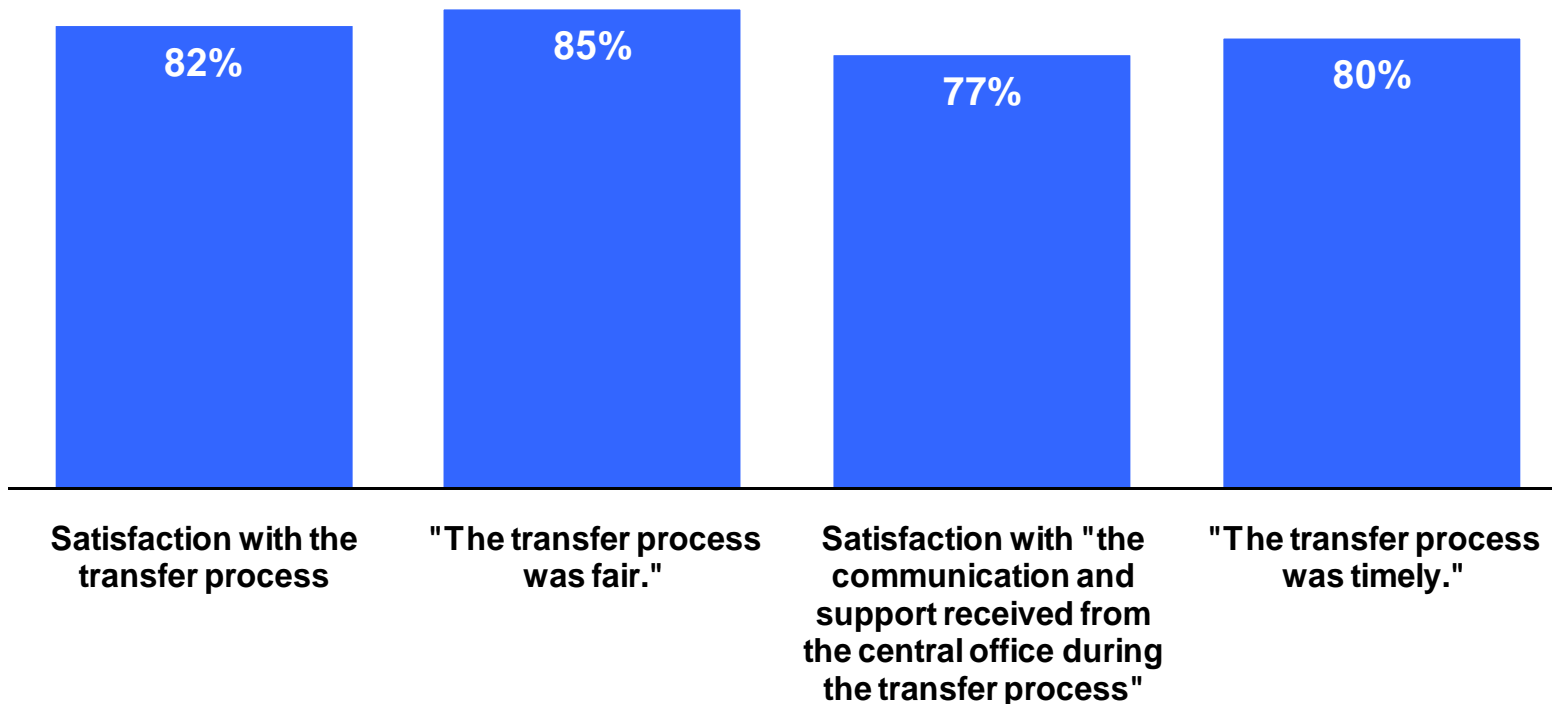
82%	85%	77%	80%
Satisfaction with the transfer process	"The transfer process was fair."	Satisfaction with "the communication and support received from the central office during the transfer process"	"The transfer process was timely."

*Percentage of teacher survey respondents who answered "satisfied" /"very satisfied" or "agree"/"strongly agree" for the given statements.

For the one in five teachers who are assigned by the central office, however, the process is less effective.

Transferring Teachers by Placement Method

Able to Develop an Accurate Picture of New School	Process Helped Locate a Good Fit
83% (Teachers who interviewed and were selected)	73% (Teachers who interviewed and were selected)
63% (Teachers who were assigned by HR)	63% (Teachers who were assigned by HR)

■ Teachers who interviewed and were selected*
■ Teachers who were assigned by HR**

Percentage of teacher survey respondents who answered "agree" or "strongly agree" for the given statements.

*n=27 **n=8

Principals are less satisfied than teachers with the transfer process, and principals also prefer other hiring processes.

Principal and Teacher Satisfaction with the Transfer Process

Principals **Teachers**

Principal Opinions on the Transfer and New Hiring Processes
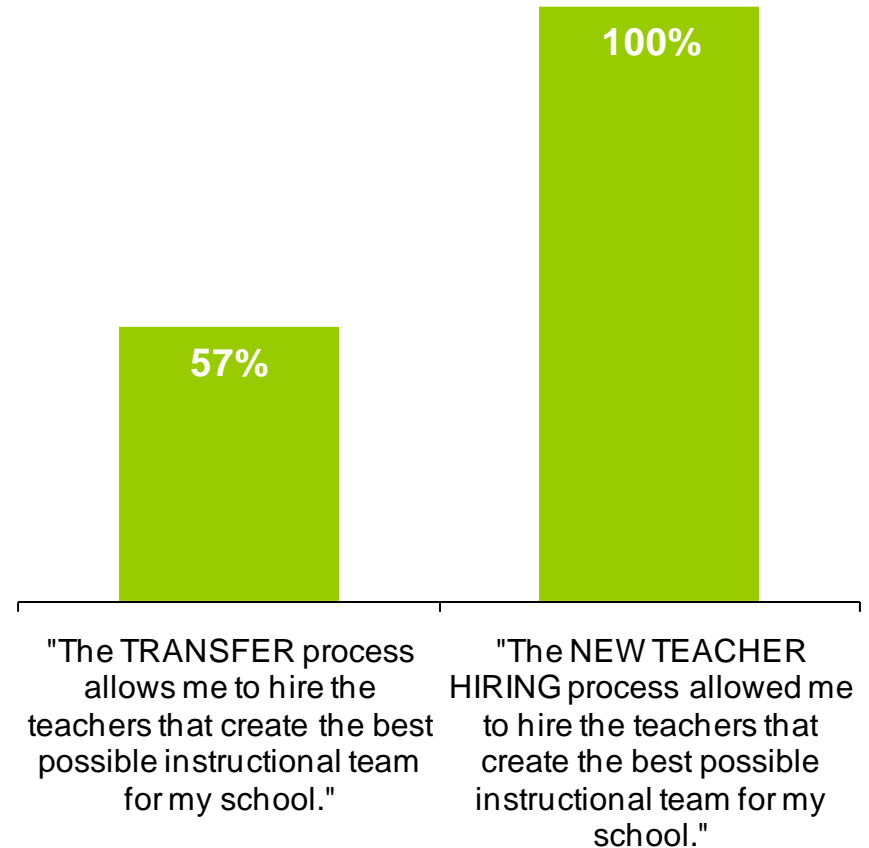
"The TRANSFER process allows me to hire the teachers that create the best possible instructional team for my school." — **57%**

"The NEW TEACHER HIRING process allowed me to hire the teachers that create the best possible instructional team for my school." — **100%**
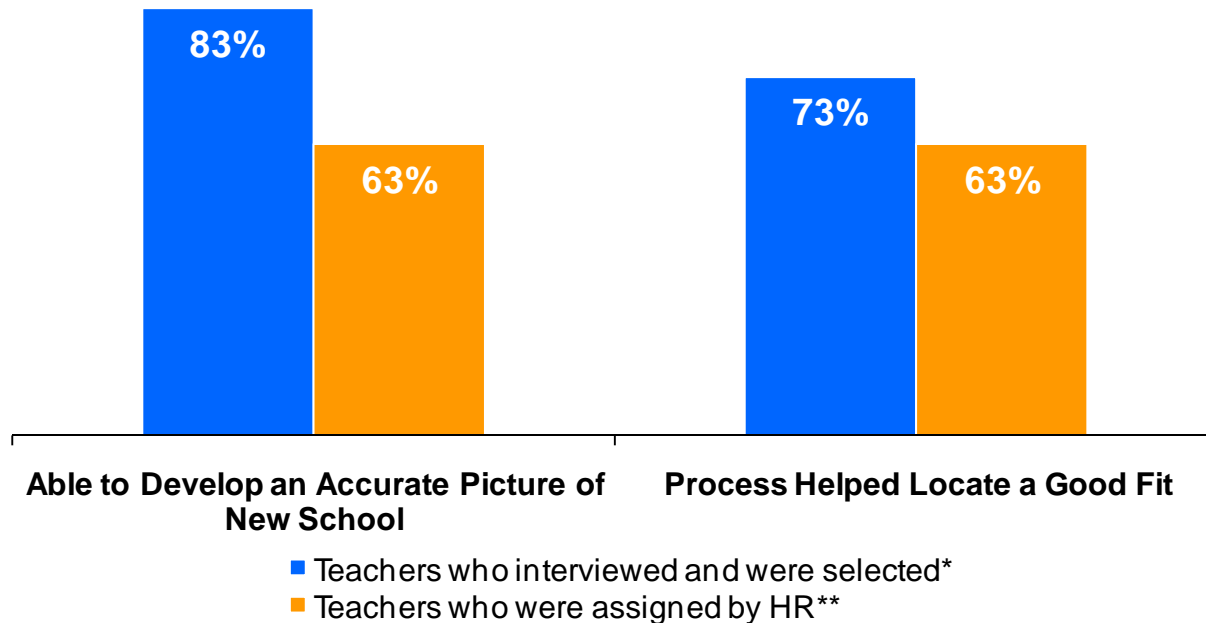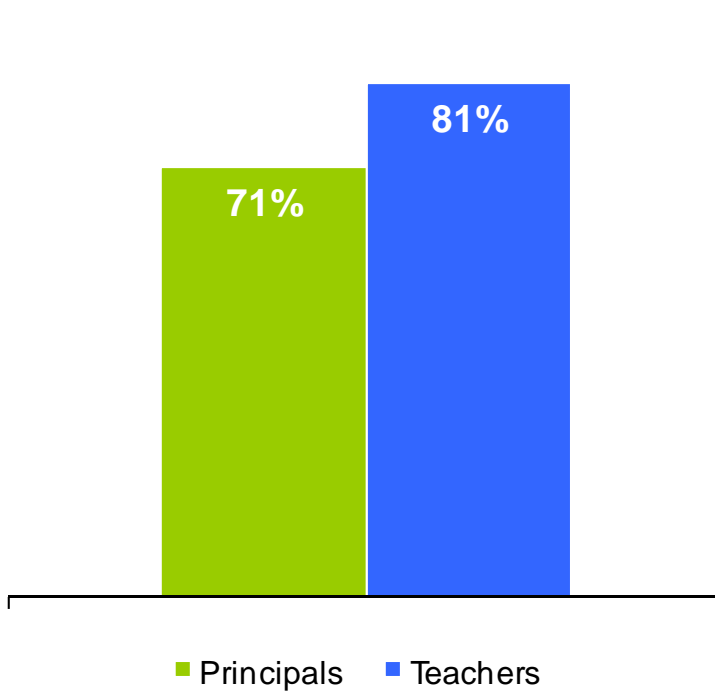
*Percentage of teacher and principal survey respondents who answered "satisfied"/"very satisfied" or "agree"/"strongly agree" for the given statements.

The perception that certain transferring teachers are of lower quality may be contributing to principals' dissatisfaction.

Principals' reluctance to formally address poor performance is driving this perception.

57% More than half of principals have encouraged a teacher to transfer when they thought the teacher was not performing well.

29% Only 29 percent of principals are satisfied with the quality of involuntary transfers.*

*Percentage of principal survey respondents who answered "satisfied" or "very satisfied" for the given statement.

Agenda

Background

The Widget Effect

Findings

▶ **Recommendations**

EPS should strive to meet two overarching goals to improve teacher instructional effectiveness and student learning outcomes.

Strategies to accomplish goals:

Goal 1: Teacher performance will be rigorously and accurately evaluated so that all EPS students are taught by effective teachers.

1. Develop and adopt a new teacher evaluation system that incorporates student learning outcomes.

2. Articulate and promote teacher effectiveness standards and performance expectations.

3. Train principals to effectively evaluate teacher performance and hold them accountable for faithfully implementing the system.

Goal 2: The district will collect and use teacher applicant and employment data to drive key human capital decisions.

4. Develop a system that will facilitate the collection of applicant, employment and performance data.

5. Revise the teacher application to include additional data points and use the data to make strategic recruitment decisions.

6. Create incentives for teachers to share their intent to resign or retire earlier in the school year and use the data to drive the recruitment and hiring strategy.

Strategy #1: Develop and adopt a new evaluation system that incorporates student learning outcomes as the primary determinant of teacher effectiveness.

In order to improve teacher instructional performance and student learning outcomes, EPS' new evaluation system must:

✓ Use a multiple rating scale that allows evaluators to clearly distinguish excellent performance from good, good from fair, and fair from poor.

✓ Identify growth areas for each teacher that are linked to performance standards. These areas should be used directly to determine targeted and differentiated professional development for each teacher.

✓ Provide specific remediation steps, support channels, and timelines for poorly performing teachers.

✓ Measure criteria that is linked directly to performance standards that are tied to student learning outcomes, not teacher inputs. Criteria should measure key drivers of student learning.

✓ Use language that reflects criteria for exemplary-level performance, not simply at the level of competence.

✓ Use language that is specific and includes concrete examples of what particular teacher actions should look like.

Strategy #2: Clearly articulate and promote teacher effectiveness standards and performance expectations.

✓ Thoughtful and regular communication about the central office's commitment to developing and implementing a rigorous evaluation system is key. To establish a culture of effectiveness and accountability, district leadership should:
  o Develop a working group comprised of principals and teachers to establish a definition for teacher effectiveness and the accountability measures to support it; and
  o Develop a campaign to educate all faculty and staff about the new standard by holding quarterly information sessions at each school site to set the initial direction of the conversations and allow teachers to ask questions
  o The central office can send out an annual pulse survey to all teachers to gauge teacher opinions on their performance and to measure progress

✓ Modify district HR policies to reflect the new effectiveness and accountability focus. The district must set– and follow through – on the expectation that:
  o Teachers will be evaluated primarily on their effectiveness in raising student achievement.
  o Teachers will be given individualized support and professional development that target their specific needs.
  o Principals will faithfully implement the new evaluation system and will be held accountable to the results of the evaluations, including exiting ineffective teachers who do not improve to meet instructional standards with additional support.

Strategy #3: Train and provide ongoing support for principals to effectively evaluate teacher performance and hold them accountable for faithfully implementing the system.

✓ **Allocate resources to provide intensive and ongoing training for principals,** specifically related to differentiating teacher performance. Training should enable principals to:
  - o Set rigorous yet achievable performance standards for teachers;
  - o Objectively measure teacher performance against those standards;
  - o Provide frequent constructive and actionable feedback to teachers; and
  - o Provide differentiated support teachers need to meet or exceed the standards.

✓ **Provide principals with additional support and resources** to increase their ability to genuinely manage the performance of their teaching staff.

  - o **Set expectations and goals around principal walk-around time**, including the number of unannounced classroom visits for all teachers, and hold them accountable for meeting goals.

  - o **Plan monthly or quarterly meetings** to reinforce key performance management strategies, and allow principals to reflect upon their practice in this area with their peers

✓ **Allow administrative team staffing levels that allows administrators to dedicate the time necessary to observe and accurately assess teacher performance**

✓ **Evaluate principals primarily on their effectiveness at making accurate performance evaluations and improving teacher performance. Administrator evaluation criteria should include:**

- o Fair and accurate ratings of teacher instructional effectiveness, normed regularly through third-party or peer assessments;

- o Improvement of teacher instructional effectiveness through targeted professional development and access to necessary resources;

- o Retention of effective teachers; and

- o Timely exiting of ineffective teachers who do not improve after sufficient time and support.

✓ **In addition to district administrator's evaluations, use 360-degree evaluations to gather teacher input.** These reviews should incorporate feedback from teachers on:

- o Overall administrator performance;
- o Ability to provide strong actionable feedback for growth; and
- o Quality of working conditions.

Strategy #4: Develop a system that will facilitate the electronic collection and use of applicant, employment, and performance data.

- ✓ Train two district employees to enter all teacher information into an electronic database using Microsoft Excel.

- ✓ The database should collect and keep longitudinal records of:
    - o Employee data, including basic information and teacher movement;
    - o Teacher performance data, including observation notes and outcomes, evaluation ratings, and professional development records and results;
    - o Applicant data; and
    - o Student performance data.

- ✓ Analyze the collected data to develop strategies to inform key HR decisions, including but not limited to:
    - o **Recruitment**: identify which recruitment sources provide the most effective teachers, and invest time and resources in recruiting candidates from these sources
    - o **Retention**: determine which teachers are most effective in order to recognize and reward their performance, including performance based compensation opportunities, as well as career ladder and lead teacher opportunities
    - o **Individualized professional development**: identify skill and performance deficiencies and ensure each teacher has access to high quality development and support activities
    - o Layoffs, RIFs, etc., if ever necessary.

Strategy #5: Revise the teacher application to include additional data, and use this data for strategic recruitment and hiring.

✓ Applications for certified teaching positions should include, at a minimum:
   o Basic information such as contact information, educational background, teaching experience and certification/licensure areas (all required for applicant to answer);
   o Preferred positions (required);
   o Race and gender (optional); and
   o How the applicant learned about EPS or an opening at EPS (optional).

✓ All applicant information should be recorded electronically, including optional questions.
   o Each applicant's file should also include district/school contact points and final outcome and placement.
   o Applicant data should be kept as a computer file for a minimum of five years and used every fall to analyze the success of the prior year's recruitment tactics and make necessary adjustment to the coming year's recruitment plan, particularly around high-yield avenues for diverse candidates.

✓ Collected data can be used to determine which sources and which types of applicants yield the most effective teachers. Once identified, EPS can strategically allocate time and resources to those recruitment sources and candidate types.

Strategy #6: Create incentives for teachers to share their intent to resign or retire earlier in the school year and use the data to drive the recruitment and hiring strategy.

✓ District leadership should develop a communication campaign to educate all faculty and staff on importance of early intent notification.

✓ Provide principals with a comprehensive training to spread awareness and create cultures at their schools that allow teachers to share retirement, resignation, and transfer intentions early in the year. Training topics to address:
  o The importance of frequent and regular conversations with staff
  o Messaging
    • How to communicate difficult or sensitive topics with staff
    • How to engage staff in 'intent' conversations for the coming year
  o Strategies to gauge staff temperature and techniques to collect staffing information for the coming school year, including the use of intent forms
  o Ideal district timelines for gathering staffing-related information

✓ Encourage early retirement notification by setting a non-binding March 15 deadline and providing incentives for notification by this date, such as continued health care through the end of summer or early payouts of accrued vacation.