



# Teacher Recruitment, Hiring and Performance Management in Springdale Public Schools

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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.

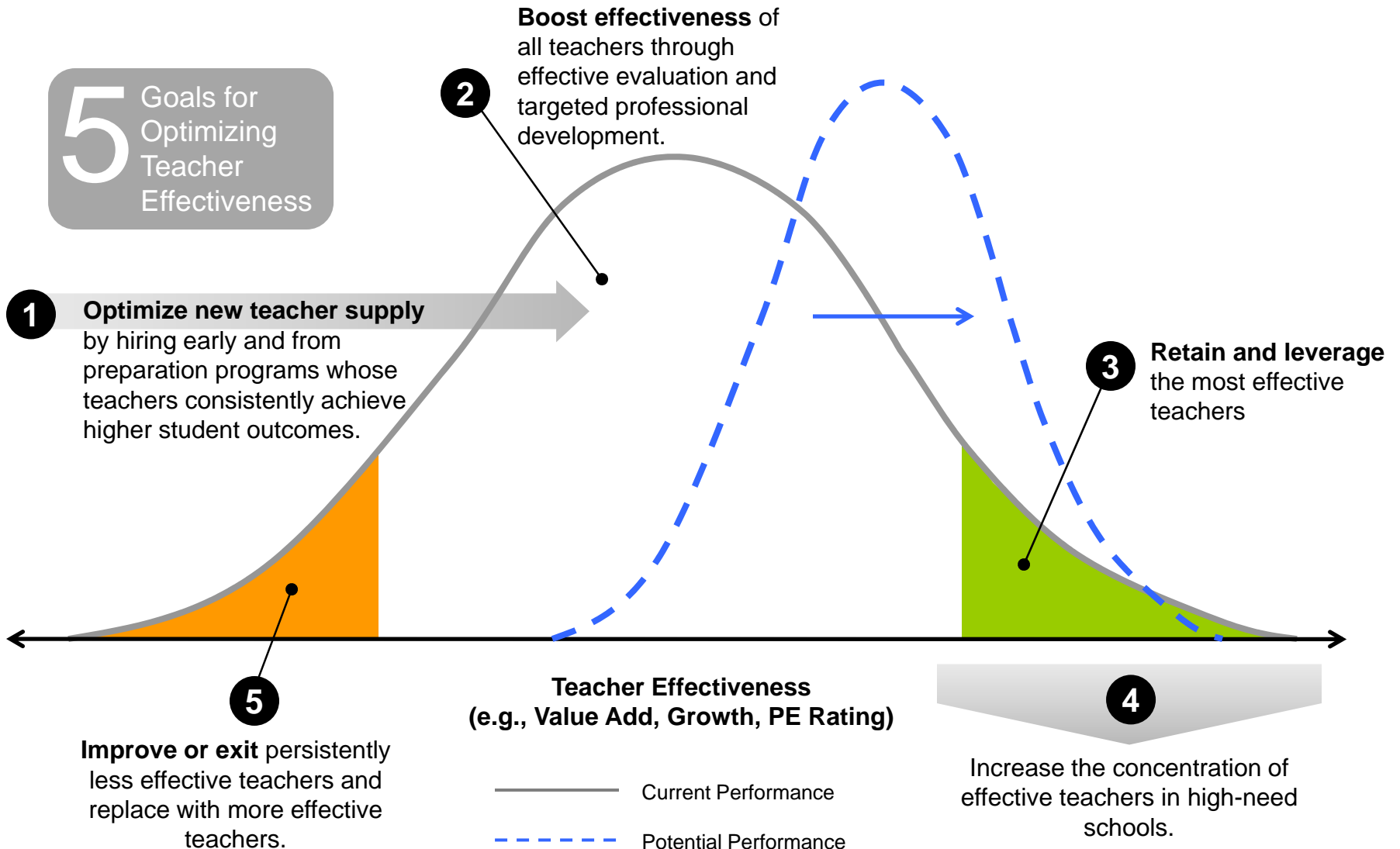
The purpose of this analysis is to increase the alignment of these systems to the ultimate goal of excellent instruction in every classroom.

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?

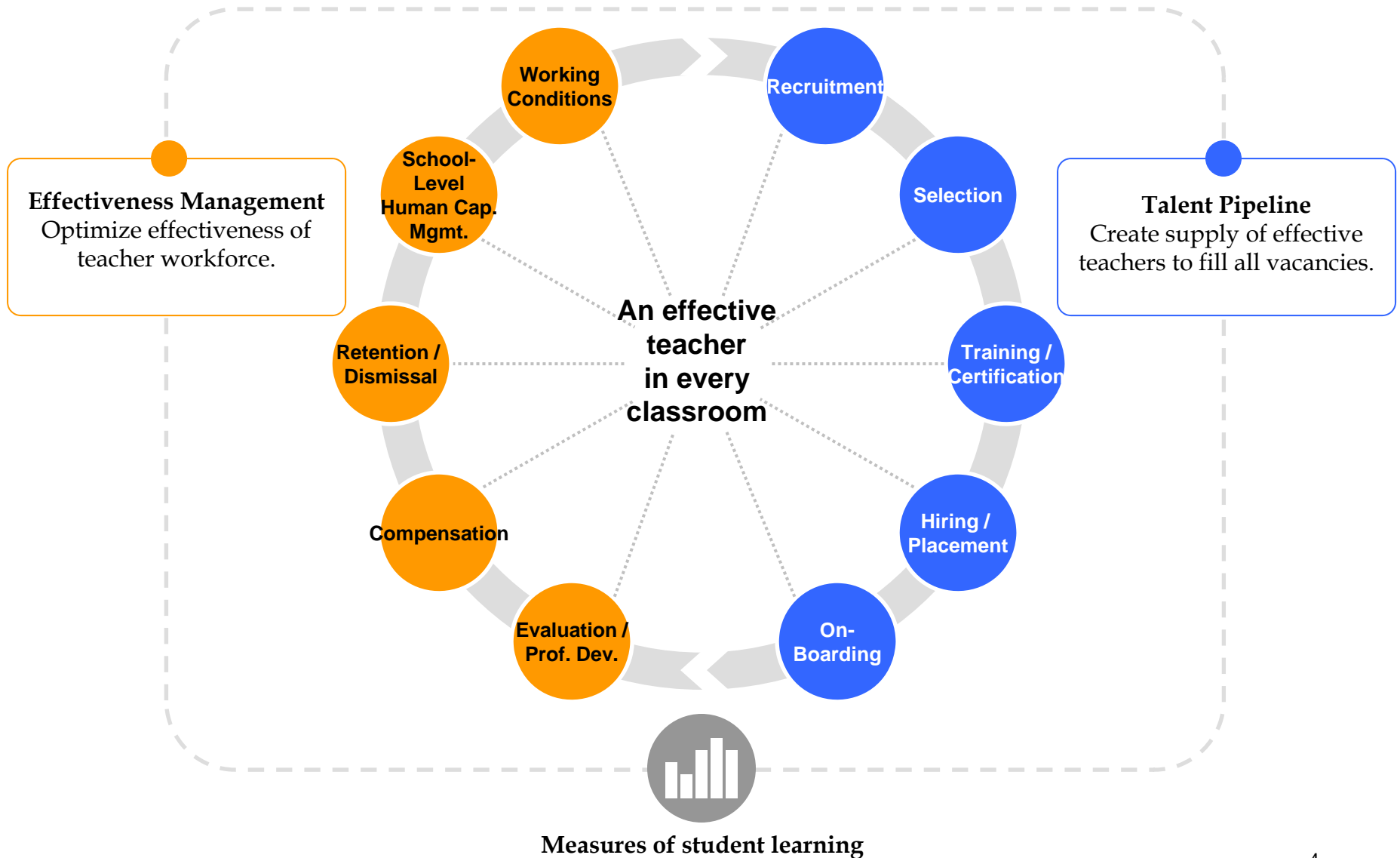


# Dramatic improvements in student achievement cannot occur without a sustained and strategic focus on teacher effectiveness.



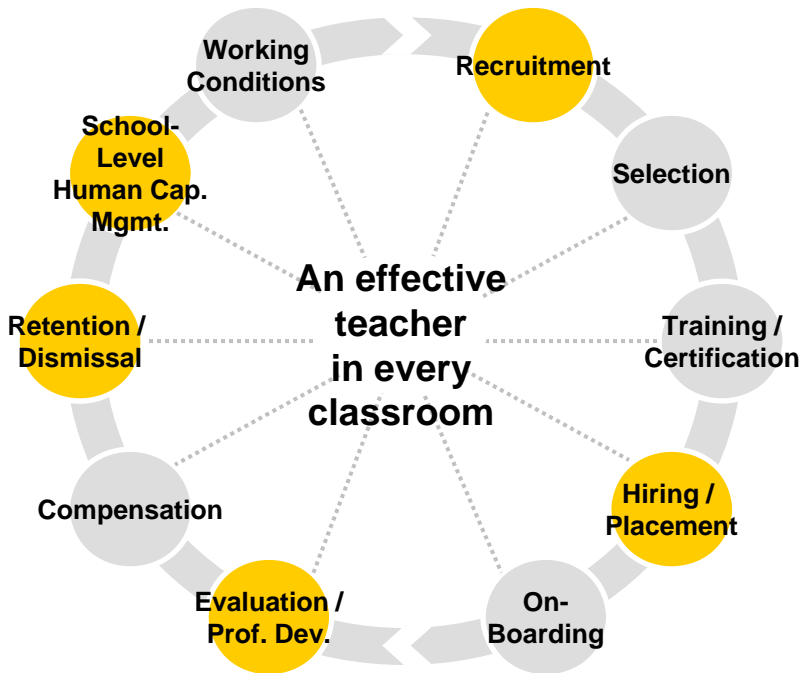


TNTP helps districts develop policies and practices that put an effective teacher in every classroom.





Beginning in 2008, TNTP collaborated with Springdale Public Schools (SPS) to analyze several aspects of the district's human capital system.



### TNTP's four primary analysis methods:

- 1 Analysis of relevant policy documents, including Arkansas state statutes.
- 2 Stakeholder interviews with district administrators, principals and teachers.
- 3 District transaction data for teachers, including records on hiring, transfers, and evaluations.
- 4 Survey data collected from district principals, assistant principals, and current SPS teachers. Surveys yielded 763 responses from teachers and 55 responses from school administrators.

\*TNTP developed the human capital continuum to represent its perspective on the various human capital components that are critical to ensuring an effective teacher in every classroom.



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

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

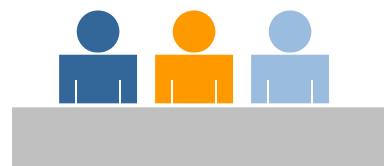
- Pueblo City Schools
- Denver Public Schools

### 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.



# Agenda

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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 1 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

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The Widget Effect



**Findings**

Recommendations



## Finding #1

**The current evaluation process fails to provide teachers with adequate feedback and the necessary supports to improve their instructional practice.**



# Overview of Current SPS Evaluation Process

## Clinical Evaluation Model

## Professional Growth Model

Applies to...

- All teachers with less than 3 years experience in SPS
- Experienced teachers by choice or at principal's discretion

- All non-probationary teachers

Frequency of observations;  
Process and documents used

- Two formal and one informal observation required per year for required participants; First observation must happen within first three months of school
- One formal and one informal observation for teachers who voluntarily opt-in to this model

- Each teacher sets professional growth goal at the beginning of each year
- Teacher must describe goal, articulate rationale for goal, and show alignment of goal with instructional standards
- Formal observations not required
- Midyear status check by principal on growth goal progress via conference
- Summative evaluation conference at end of year to review goal, progress made, and outcomes of the goal

Rating scale

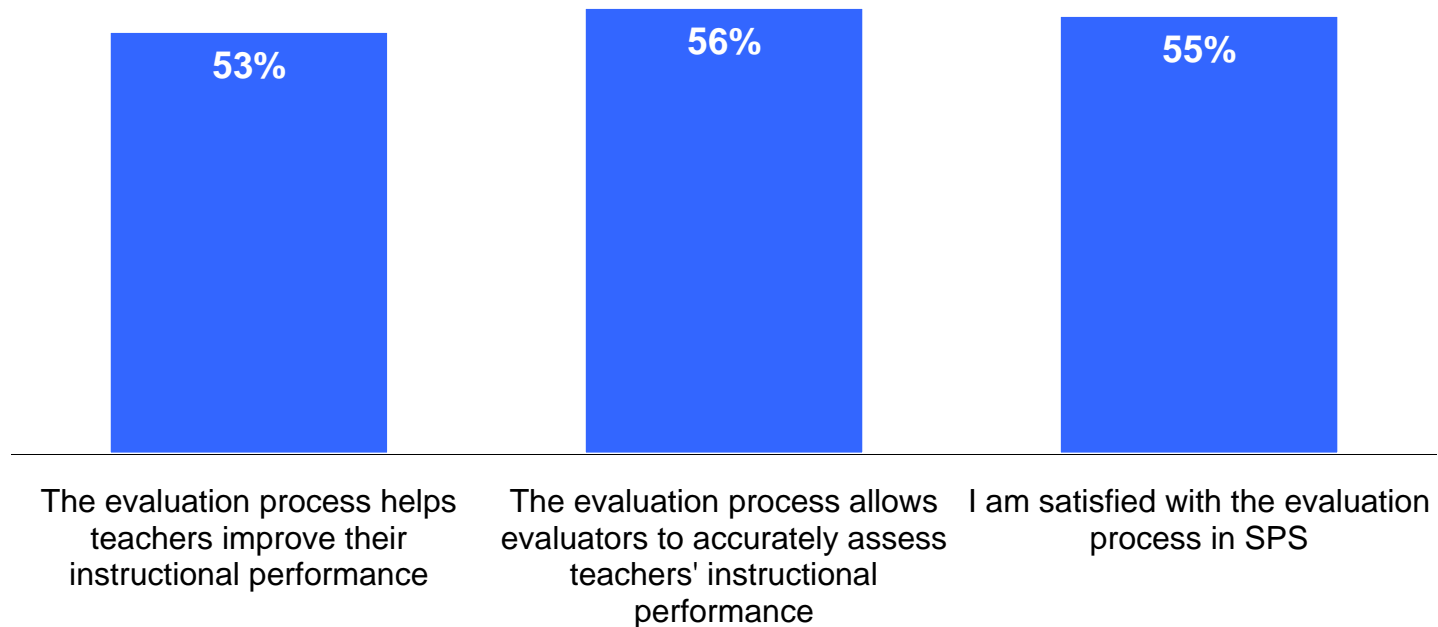
- Checklist that rates fundamental skills and competencies
- Teachers given summative *Commendable*, *Competent*, or *Unsatisfactory* rating

- "Ratings" are not evaluative- end of year form options are *Goal Completed*, *Partially Completed*, or *Will Continue*
- Recommendation for renewal of contract



Only about half of SPS teachers are satisfied with the current evaluation process.

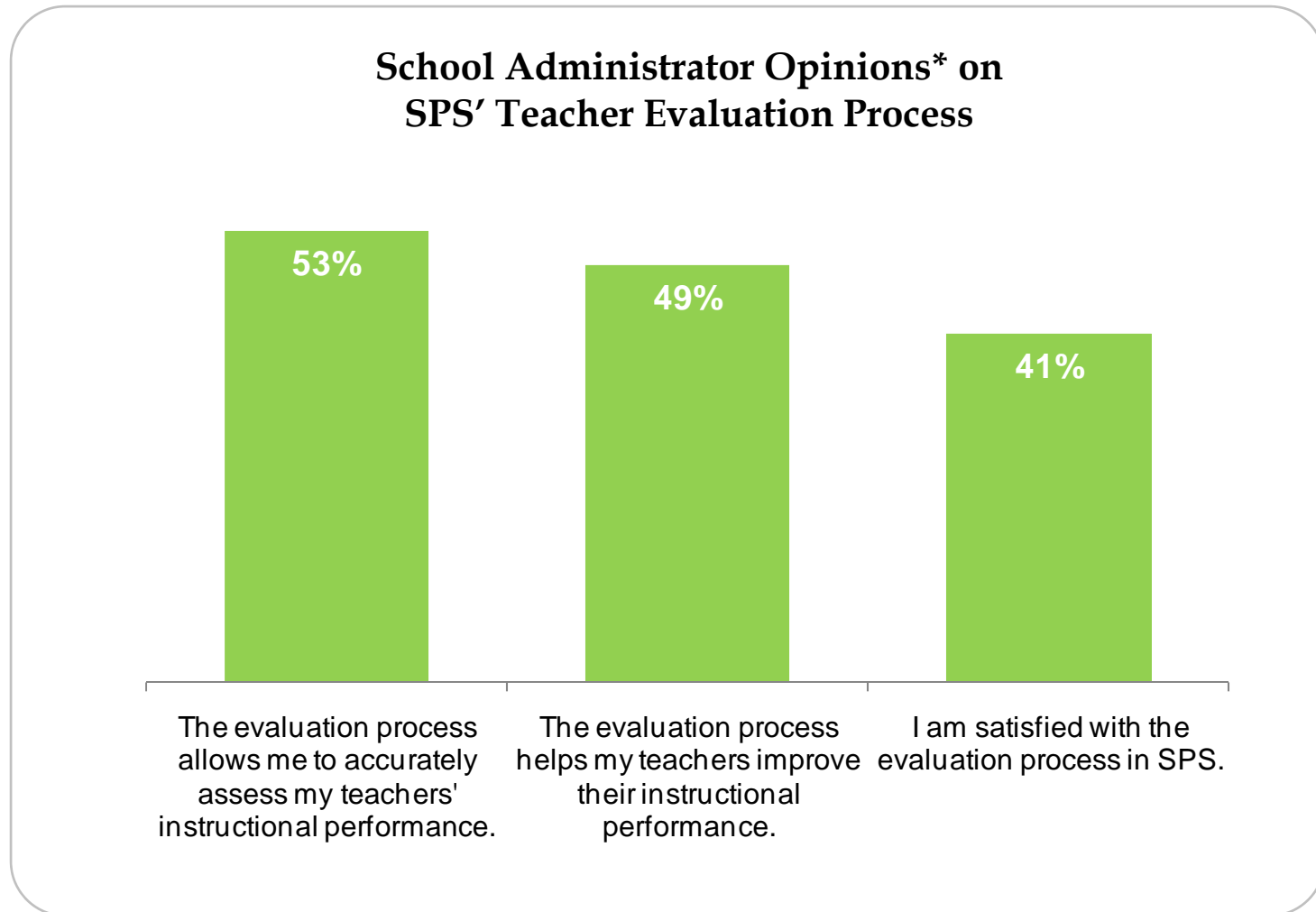
### Teacher Opinions\* on Evaluation Process in SPS



\*Percentage of teacher survey respondents who agree or strongly agree with the statements provided.



Similarly, only about half of administrators believe the evaluation process leads to improved instructional performance.

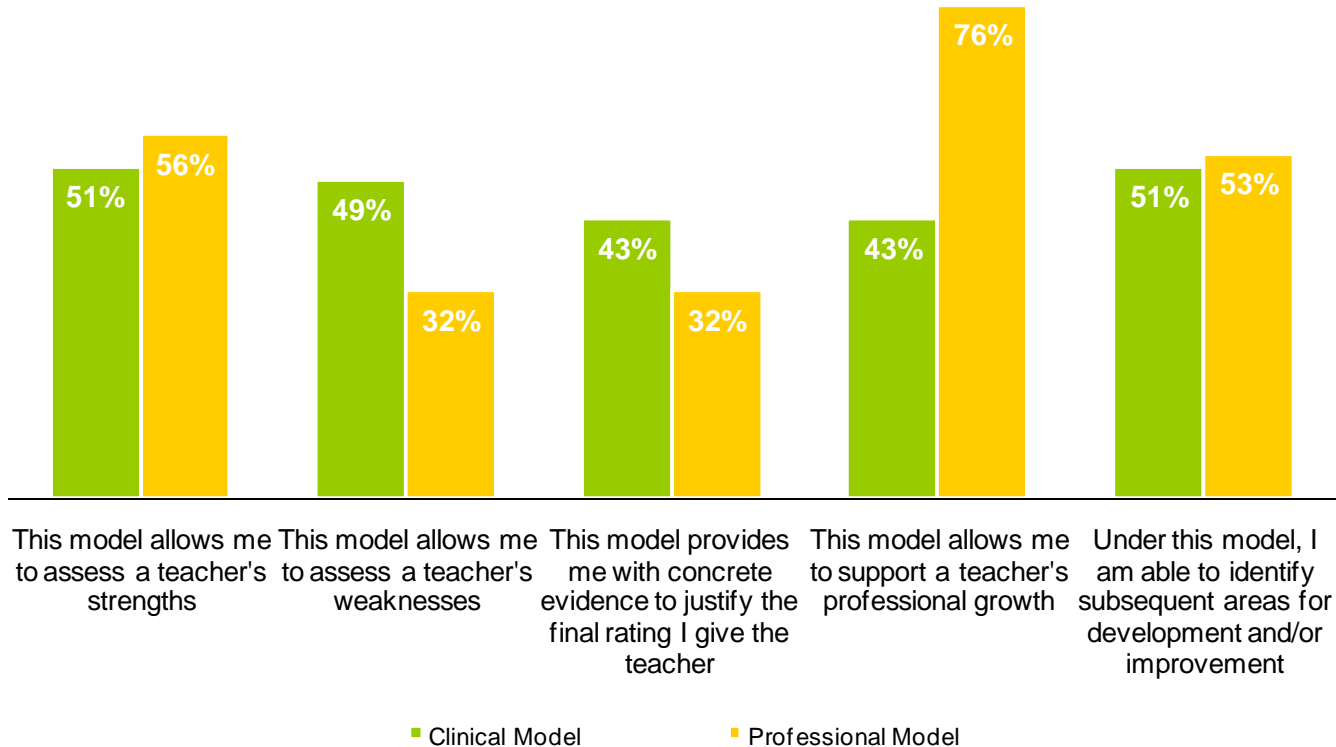


\*Percentage of school administrator survey respondents who agree or strongly agree with the statements provided.



Administrators report weaknesses in both the clinical and professional model, particularly in identifying areas of improvement for teachers.

### Principal Opinion on Effectiveness of SPS' Evaluation Models



\*Percentage of school administrator survey respondents who agree or strongly agree with the statements provided.



Inconsistent and infrequent observations are likely limiting the effectiveness of the evaluation process.

**39%**

of teachers have **never had an informal conversation** with their principal/evaluator about aspects of their instruction that could be improved

**26%**

of teachers received their last formal evaluation **more than three years ago**, or **never** had a formal evaluation ever

**32%**

of teachers were observed **zero or once** before being assigned their most recent evaluation rating



When it is actually provided, constructive feedback from school administrators helps teachers improve their performance.

96% of school administrators report having provided feedback to teachers.  
In addition,



**91%**

of school administrators report that providing constructive feedback **helped teachers improve their instruction**

69% of teachers report having received feedback from their principal or assistant principal.  
However,



**99%**

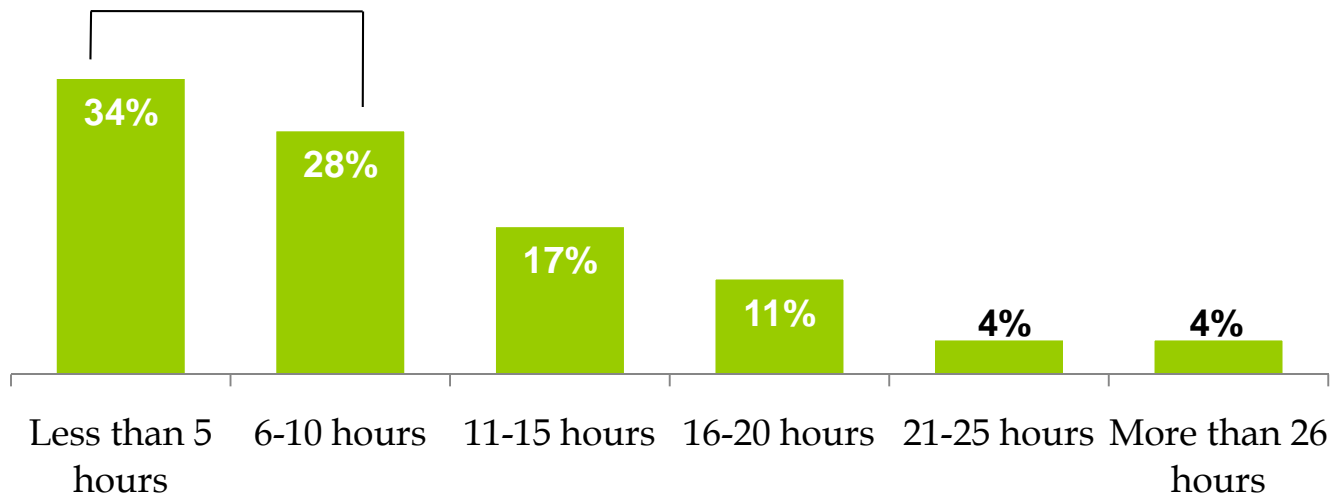
of the teachers who received constructive feedback, percentage who report the feedback **helped them improve their instruction**



Unfortunately, most principals take little time to provide teachers with constructive feedback.

**“About how much time have you taken, on average, per non-probationary teacher, to provide constructive feedback this school year?”**

62% spend an hour per month or less with any given teacher providing feedback





## Finding #2

**The evaluation process fails to differentiate teacher performance and produce information that helps principals address poor instructional performance.**

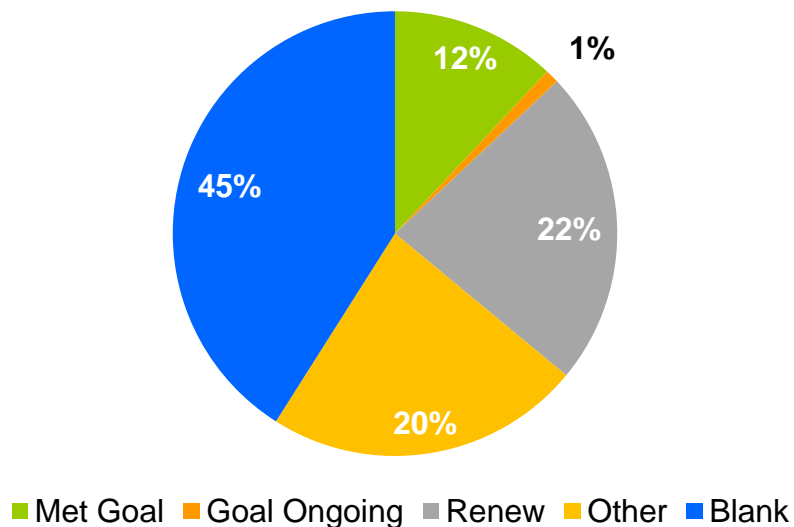


Most SPS teachers do not receive a rating for their instructional performance or their progress towards their professional goals.

64% of SPS teachers are on the professional growth model, which does not provide ratings that actually measure teacher performance.

Over half of all teachers on this model do not even receive a progress rating.

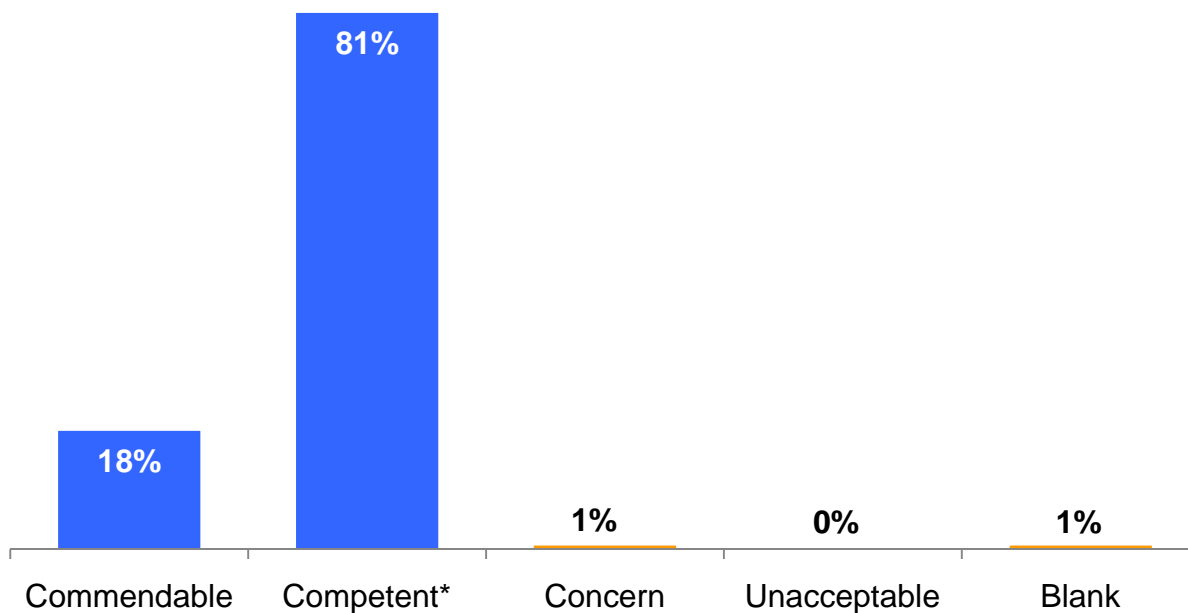
Teacher Ratings – Professional Model





Of those whose performance has been evaluated through the clinical model, nearly all received the highest two ratings.

Teacher Ratings - Clinical Model



**99% of all teachers on the clinical model have been rated commendable or competent.**



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But both teachers and principals believe there are teachers in their school who should be dismissed for poor instructional performance.

**46%** of school administrators believe there are **teachers in their school who deliver poor instruction.**

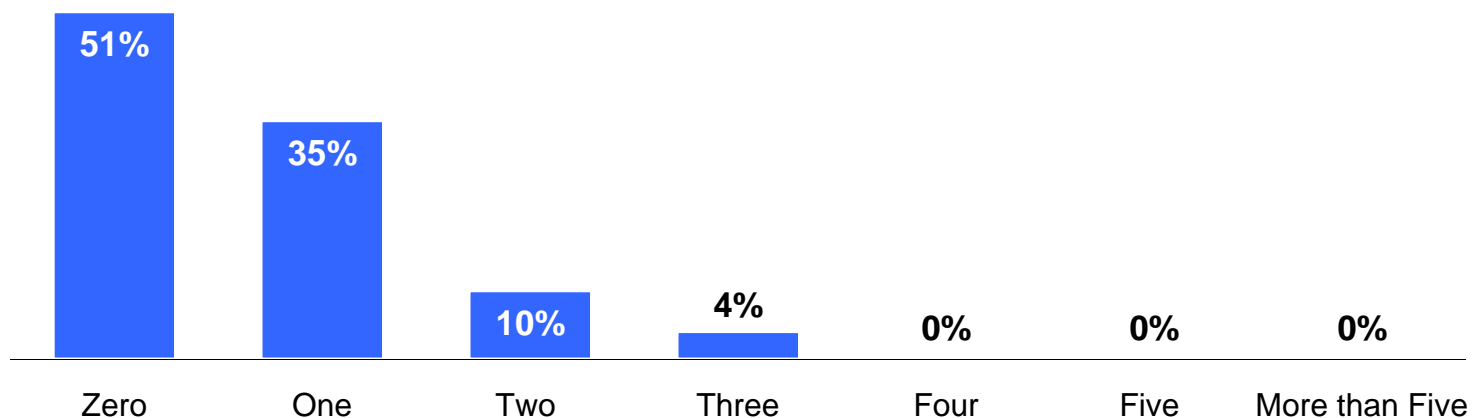
**32%** of school administrators believe that up to **10 percent of their teaching staff should have been dismissed for poor instructional performance.**

**64%** of SPS teachers believe that there are teachers in their school who should have been **dismissed for poor instructional performance but have not been.**



In the last five years, however, the majority of administrators have placed zero teachers on a formal remediation plan.

**“In the past five years, how many non-probationary teachers have you placed on a formal remediation plan?”**

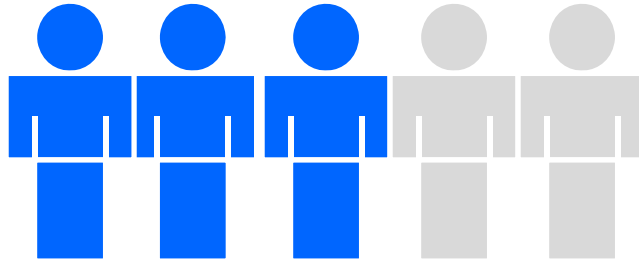


**86% of school administrators have placed only one or zero teachers on a remediation plan in the last five years**

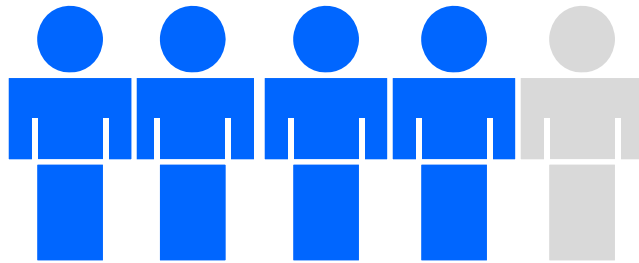


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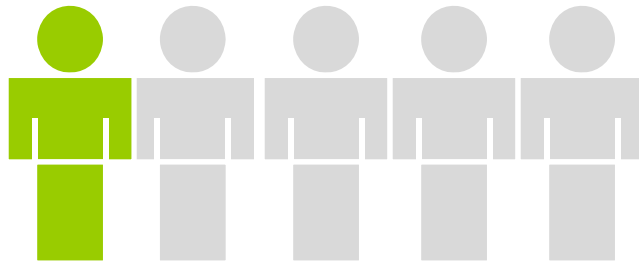
Few administrators attempt to dismiss poor-performing teachers, even though teachers believe it's important that they do so.



62 percent of teachers believe that dismissing teachers for poor instructional performance is **an important part of maintaining and developing a high-quality teaching staff**



81 percent of teachers believe that **school administrators fail to dismiss poor performers.**

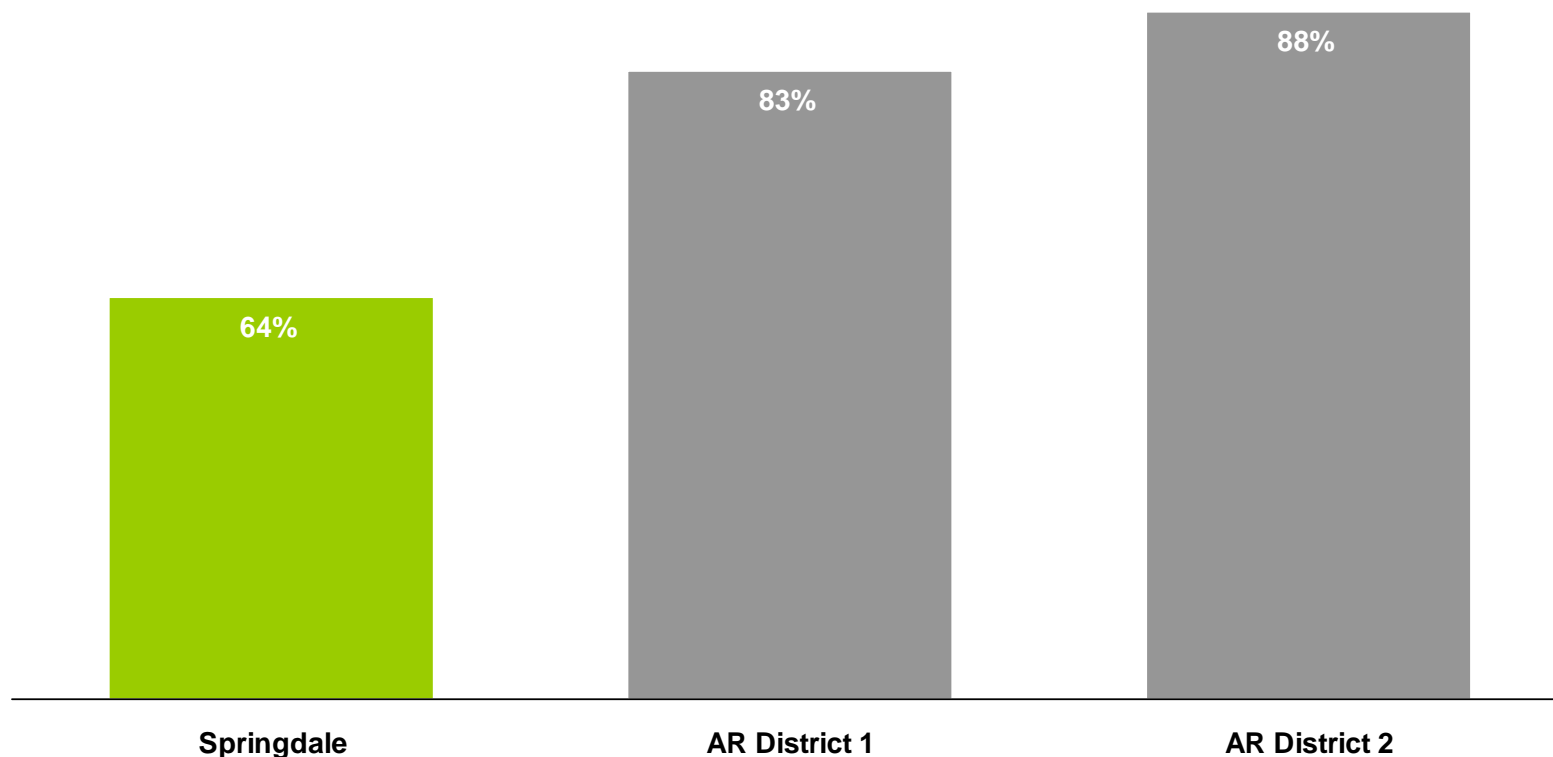


20 percent of school administrators have **ever initiated the dismissal of a non-probationary teacher for poor instructional performance in the last five years**



In addition, compared to school administrators in other Arkansas districts, SPS principals do not believe they have enough discretion around employment decisions for probationary teachers.

**“I have enough discretion to recommend the non-renewal of probationary teachers at the end of their probationary period.”**





SPS principals rarely exercise their option to non-renew probationary teachers for poor performance.

**4%**

of school administrators have  
non-renewed more than one  
probationary teachers for  
poor instructional  
performance in the last five  
years



Instead, principals use informal means to address poor performance, which ultimately leaves poor instructional performers in SPS schools.

34% of school administrators have encouraged a teacher to seek a transfer when they thought the teacher was not performing well.

57% of school administrators describe the amount of time, effort, and resources required to dismiss a teacher as “too high.”



### Top Alternatives to Dismissal That Principals Have Utilized

- **Transfer teachers** - 67% of school administrators who have used alternative strategies have encouraged a teacher to seek a transfer to another school
- **Reassign teachers** - 85% of school administrators who have used alternative strategies have reassigned a teacher to a new teaching position within their school
- **Encourage teachers to leave teaching** - 80% of school administrators who have used alternative strategies have encourage a teacher to resign or retire



Regardless of the approach that principals take with poor performers, very few of these teachers actually leave the district.

**15%**

of school administrators report that more than one non-probationary teacher chose to resign or retire in response to their making them aware of their own poor instructional performance in the past five years.

**67 percent report having had ZERO non-probationary teachers leave the district.**



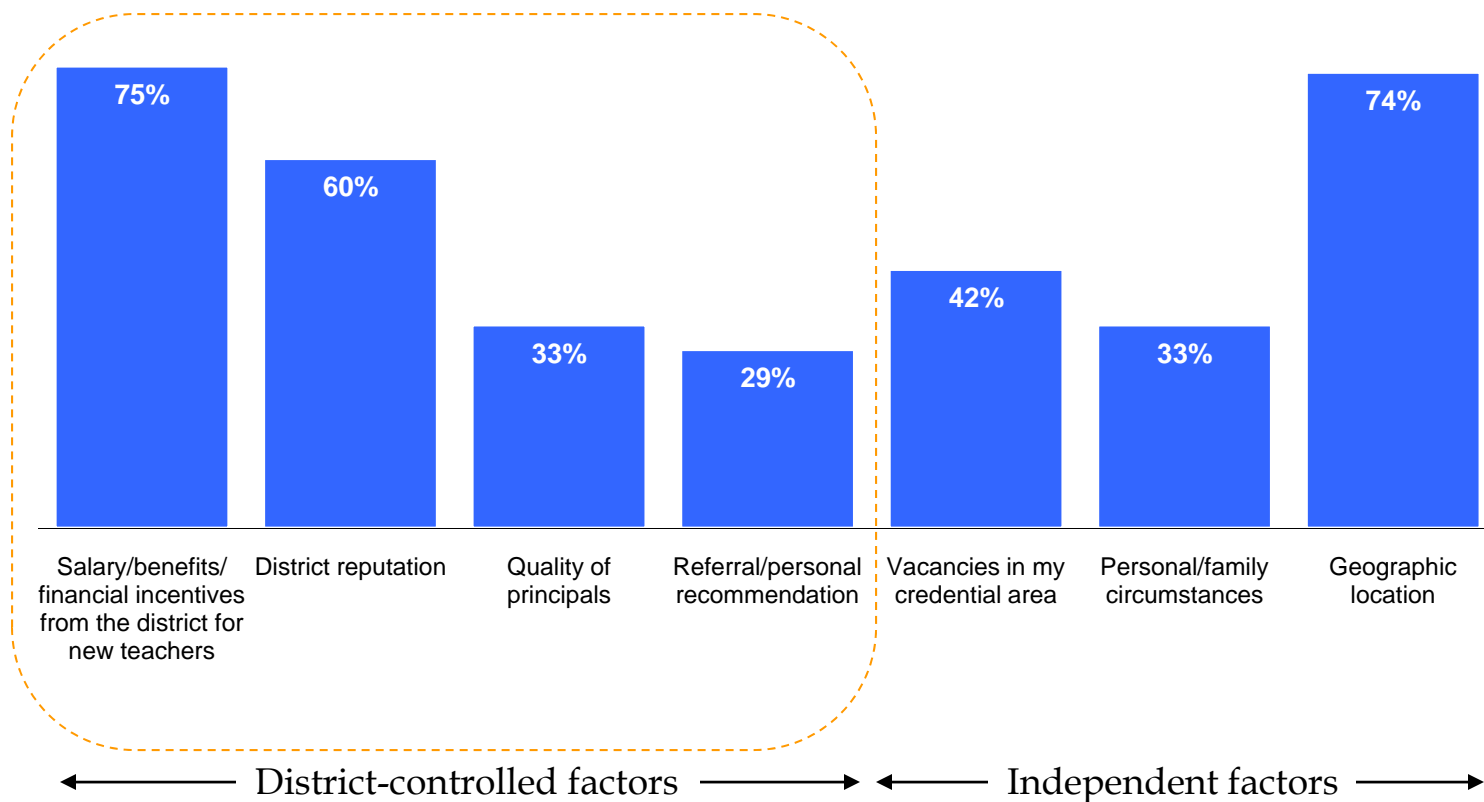
## Finding #3

**SPS successfully attracts a large teacher applicant pool, but delayed hiring timelines prevent schools from consistently hiring the highest quality candidates.**



## Teachers express a desire to work in SPS, citing its reputation and incentives for new teachers as highly attractive factors.

“When you first considered where to apply for teaching positions, which of the following factors attracted you to teach in SPS?”



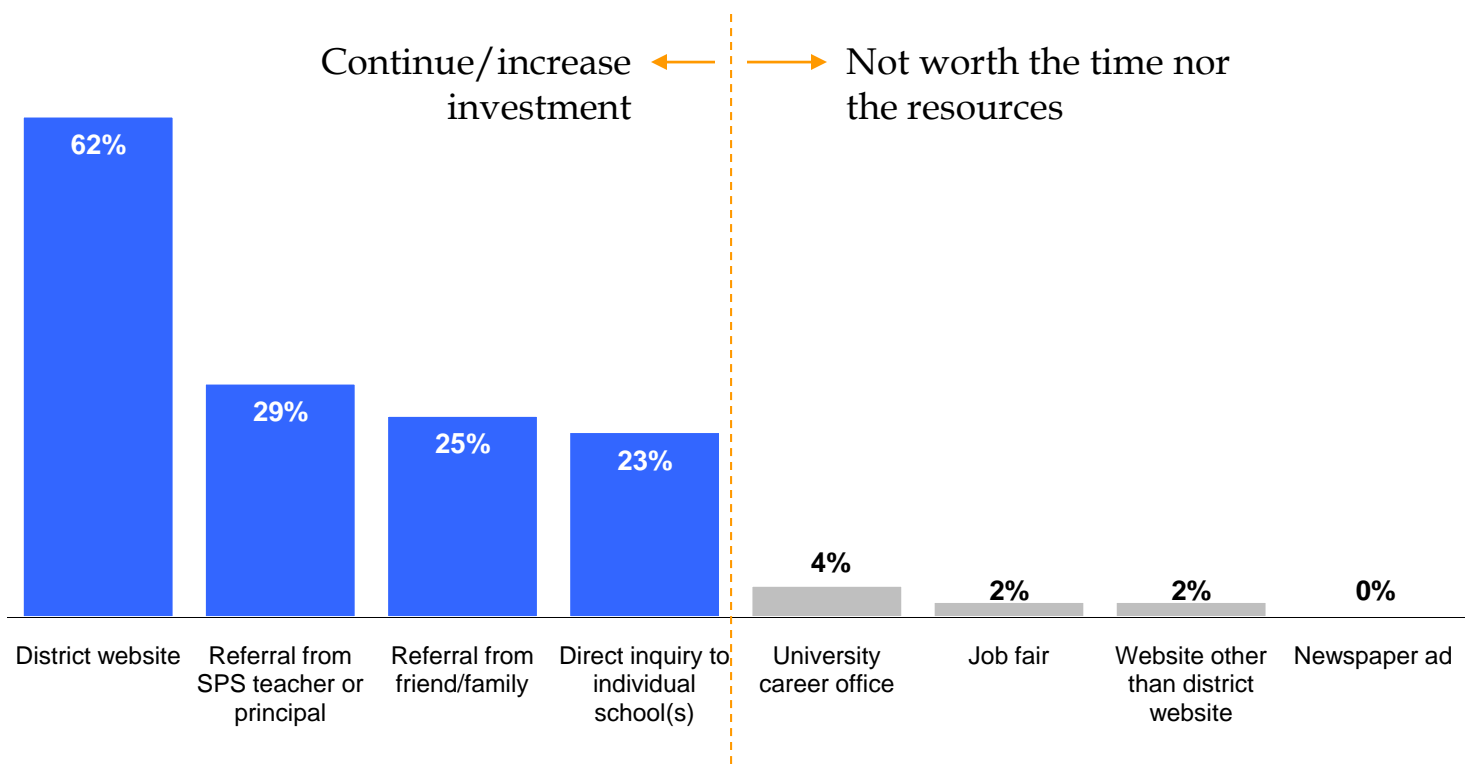
Source: Online survey of new SPS teachers conducted in Feb-March 2009; n=280.

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A large majority of new hires learn about SPS through the district website and online application process, making it a worthwhile investment.

Sources Used by Applicants to Learn about District Vacancies

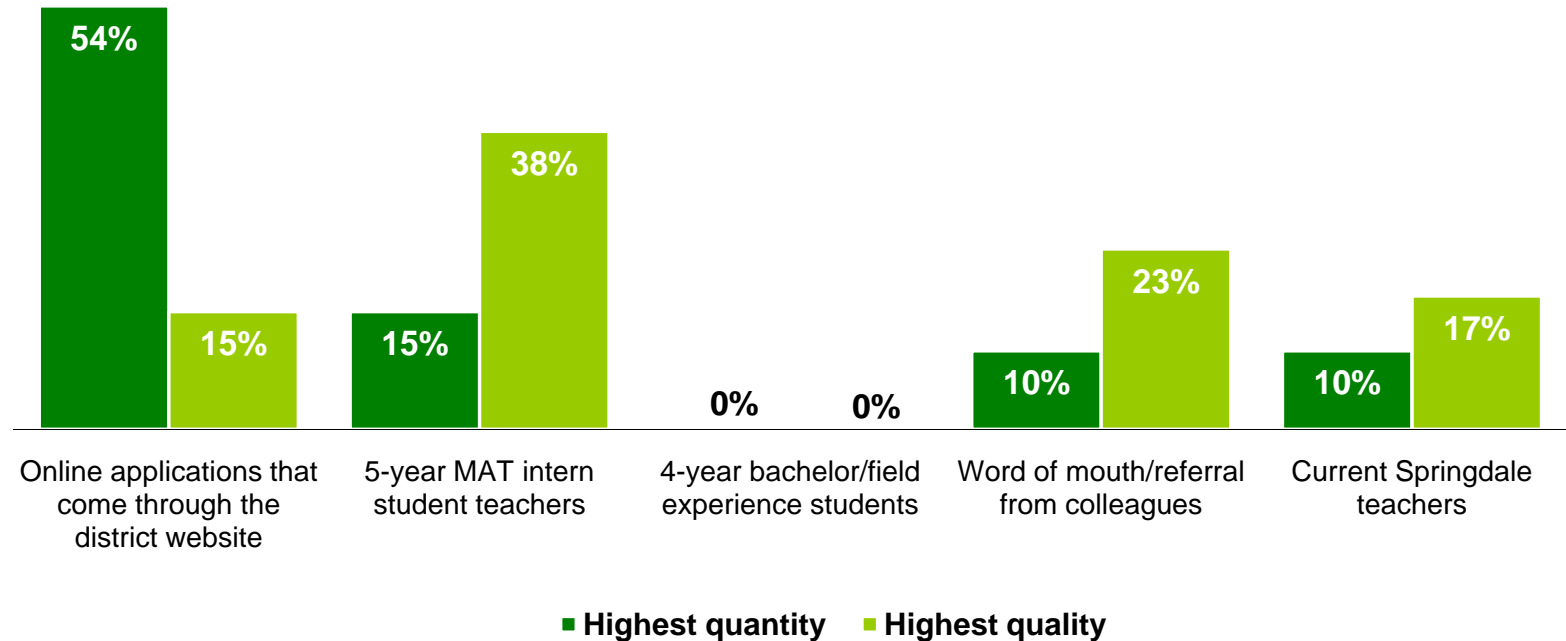


Source: Online survey of new SPS teachers conducted in Feb-March 2009; n=280.  
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# Online applications provide school leaders with the largest pool of candidates, while internal sources produce higher quality applicants.

## Recruitment Sources that Produce the Highest Quantity and Highest Quality Teacher Applicants, as Reported by Administrators



Source: Online survey of SPS school administrators conducted in Feb-March 2009; n=48.

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While principals are satisfied with the teacher applicant pool overall, they report that it could be more diverse.

**96%**

of school administrators are satisfied with the **QUANTITY** of the applicant pool

**89%**

of school administrators are satisfied with the **QUALITY** of the applicant pool

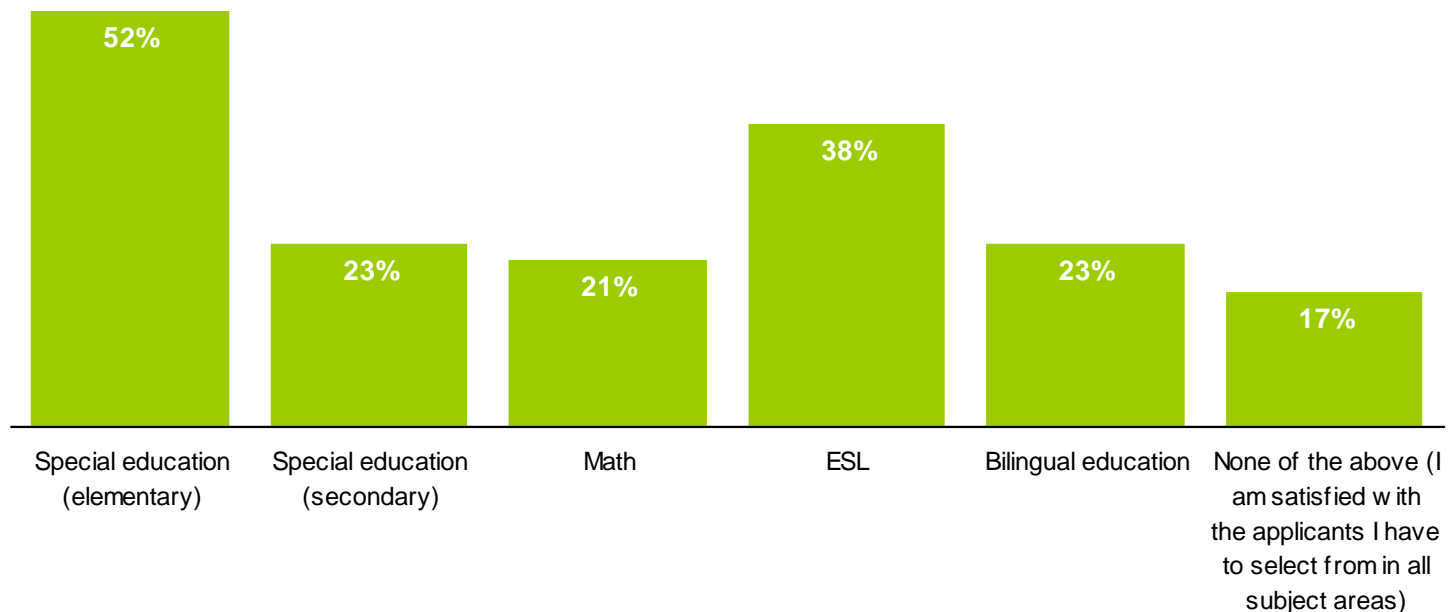
**30%**

of school administrators agree that the pool of available new hires **adequately reflects the racial diversity** of Springdale's student population



Principals also indicate the applicant pool in certain subject areas is lacking.

“In which subject areas do you wish you had more qualified applicants to select from?”

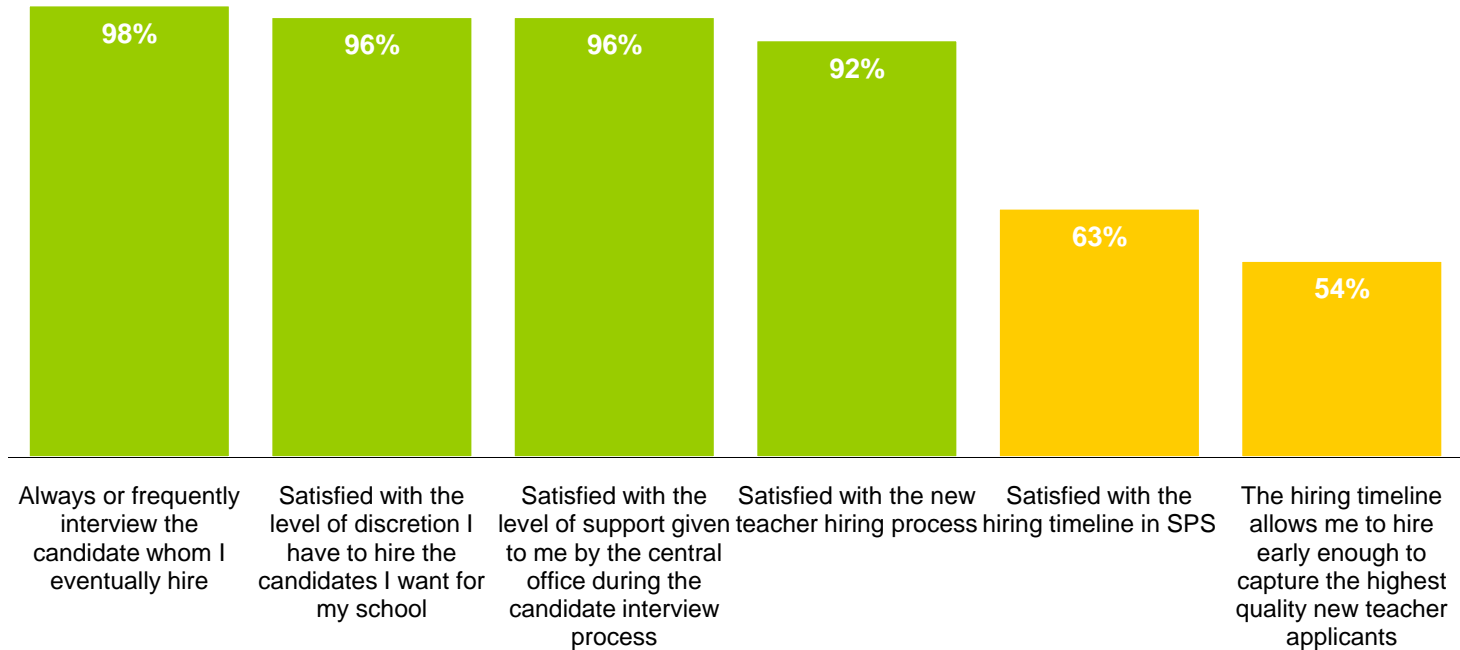


Less than 10 percent of principals selected science, English/Language arts, social studies, foreign language, art, and physical education.



SPS generally provides principals with the necessary tools and discretion to hire teachers, but hiring timelines could be earlier.

### School Leader Opinions\* on SPS' New Hire Process



\*Administrators who responded “agree” or “strongly agree”.

Source: Online survey of SPS school administrators conducted in Feb-March 2009.

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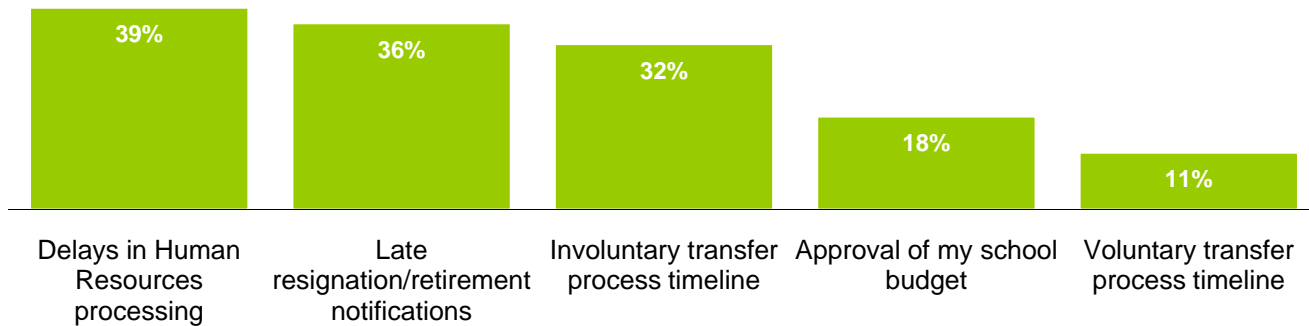


Over half of all school administrators report losing out on teaching talent because of processing and notification delays.

**56%**

of school administrators have **lost a desirable teacher candidate** from outside the SPS system because they were **“unable to make an offer in a timely fashion”**

Top Factors Cited by Principals that Contribute to Hiring Delays of New Teachers

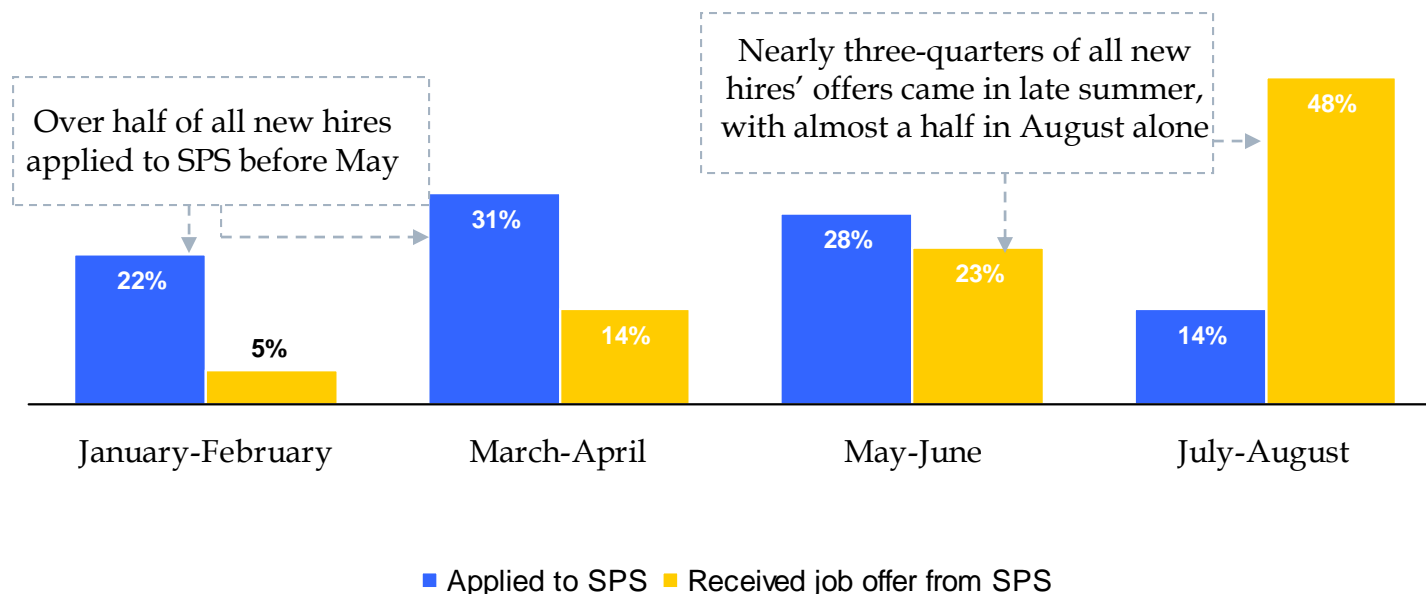




Newly-hired teachers also report that hiring timelines are somewhat delayed.

**28%** of new hires were contacted by an individual from SPS for the first time **more than a month** after applying to the district, or were **never contacted at all**\*

### New Hire Applications and Offers



\*Question specifically states “contacted by an individual from SPS, not including automated email responses.” “I was never contacted” was a stated answer choice.



# Agenda

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Background

The Widget Effect

Findings



**Recommendations**



## To improve teacher effectiveness, SPS must adopt a comprehensive approach to teacher evaluation and support.

### **Establish Rigorous Evaluation Criteria**

Teacher evaluations should be based on:

- (1) Objective measures of student learning
- (2) Observed measures of teacher performance (assessed using clear standards that enable inter-rater reliability)
- (3) Performance expectations based on experience, subject taught and grade level.

### **Invest in Evaluator Training and Support**

Provide training and ongoing support that:

- Establishes, monitors and maintains uniform implementation of the evaluation system
- Empowers evaluators to provide critical feedback and individualized support to teachers

### **Ensure School Administrator Capacity and Accountability**

- Clearly defined roles as to which school leaders own the evaluation and development of which teachers and how often each teacher should be evaluated.
- School leadership team staffing levels that allow school leaders to dedicate the time necessary to observe and evaluate teachers.
- Oversight to hold school leaders accountable for making accurate performance evaluations.
- Incentives and consequences for school and district leaders that hold them accountable for improving teacher effectiveness, retaining high performers and replacing persistently low effectiveness.

### **Revise District Policies**

- Policies must ensure that teacher evaluations results drive key personnel decisions such as contract renewal, placement and professional development/support.



## Recommendation #1: Design and implement a teacher evaluation system that differentiates teachers based on student learning outcomes.

- ✓ Create a teacher evaluation system that uses objective measures of student learning outcomes as the primary criteria and evaluate all teachers annually.
- ✓ Include multiple rating categories (e.g. highly-effective, effective, developing and ineffective) in the evaluation tool that account for a teacher's experience. Ratings should allow administrators to clearly and accurately describe differences in instructional performance.
- ✓ Align the evaluation tool to teacher performance standards.
- ✓ Incorporate multiple demonstrable measures of teacher performance into the tool, such as progress toward individual development goals, setting high expectations for students, planning and professional engagement and demonstrating instructional excellence.
- ✓ Design district models to objectively measure student growth in all grades and subject areas:
  - In tested grades and subjects, measures might include teacher-level value-added data, state standardized test scores and district specific end-of-course test results.
  - In non-tested grades and subjects, use assessments of student work using standard rubrics aligned to learning standards.



## Recommendation #2: Hold school administrators accountable for accurately differentiating and improving teacher effectiveness.

- ✓ Use the school administrator evaluation process to hold administrators primarily accountable for effectively and accurately differentiating and improving teacher effectiveness.\* Criteria to be used include:
  - Fair and accurate ratings of teacher instructional effectiveness, normed regularly through third-party or peer assessments;
  - Improvement of teacher instructional effectiveness through targeted professional development and access to necessary resources;
  - Retention of effective teachers; and
  - Timely exiting of ineffective teachers who do not improve after sufficient time and support.
  
- ✓ Modify the evaluation process to include 360-degree reviews, that incorporate feedback from teachers on:
  - Overall administrator performance;
  - Ability to provide strong actionable feedback for growth; and
  - Quality of working conditions.

\*Focusing administrator accountability on evaluation and growth of teacher effectiveness shifts the locus of administrators' attention from student outcomes to teacher effectiveness. This shift provides administrators with direct and actionable feedback on their own performance.



## Recommendation #3: Provide administrators with the training and resources needed to effectively evaluate and support teachers.

- ✓ Require intensive and ongoing teacher performance management training for administrators. Training should enable administrators to:
  - Set and measure rigorous yet achievable performance standards for teachers;
  - Conduct fair and accurate evaluations of teacher performance;
  - Provide frequent constructive and actionable feedback to individual teachers;
  - Support teams of teachers on using student data to inform instruction; and
  - Provide differentiated support to teachers so they are equipped to meet or exceed the standards.
- ✓ Provide resources and support to administrators to ensure the evaluation process is implemented consistently. These resources and supports should allow administrators to:
  - Establish a culture of accountability in their school;
  - Clearly articulate the goals and process associated with informal and formal observations to teachers;
  - Share constructive feedback with teachers and connect teachers with the necessary support opportunities.
- ✓ Hold monthly or quarterly meetings designed to reinforce key performance management strategies, and allow administrators to discuss their practice with their peers.
- ✓ Realign school-level responsibilities to ensure administrators invest the majority of their time in regularly observing and providing feedback to teachers.
- ✓ Dedicate a full time central office staff person to provide targeted support and professional development to individual school administrators.



## Recommendation #4: Use teacher effectiveness data to make key personnel decisions.

- ✓ Use teacher effectiveness data, collected through evaluations, to:
  - Align individual teachers with targeted support and professional development opportunities.
  - Provide immediate and intensive support for teachers who fall below performance standards.
  - Inform personnel decisions, such as contract renewal, differentiated compensation for effective teachers (or step freezes for ineffective teachers), leadership opportunities and transfer priority.
  - Dismiss consistently ineffective teachers (through nonrenewal or termination) who fail to improve despite remediation efforts.



## Recommendation #5: Collect, centrally maintain, analyze and leverage all relevant personnel data.

- ✓ Institute a master database that is maintained centrally and collects longitudinal data in an electronic format, including:
  - Employee data (e.g., basic information and all teacher movement within and out of the district);
  - Teacher performance data (e.g., observation notes and outcomes, evaluation ratings, and professional development records and results);
  - Applicant data; and
  - Student performance data.
- ✓ Use the database to match teachers and administrators to school locations, students and student performance data, and track all personnel movement/outcomes starting from initial entry into the district.
- ✓ Ensure the collected teacher performance data:
  - Includes date evaluated, evaluator identifier, summative performance rating, feedback details, performance goals, suggested support/professional development information and its ensuing results (as measured by the evaluation system)
  - Is readily accessible in electronic format, for district administrators, a teacher's current (or receiving) principal and the teacher
- ✓ Link data so that it can be used to inform decisions related to recruitment, staffing, professional development, remediation and dismissal.
  - For example, linking a teacher's performance history to their recruitment source, SPS can determine which recruitment sources produce the most effective teachers and then use the information to determine where and how to invest recruitment resources.