



The Impact of State and Local Human Capital Policies on Illinois School District U-46

September 2009



Contents

 **Background**

Findings

Recommendations

Appendix



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.

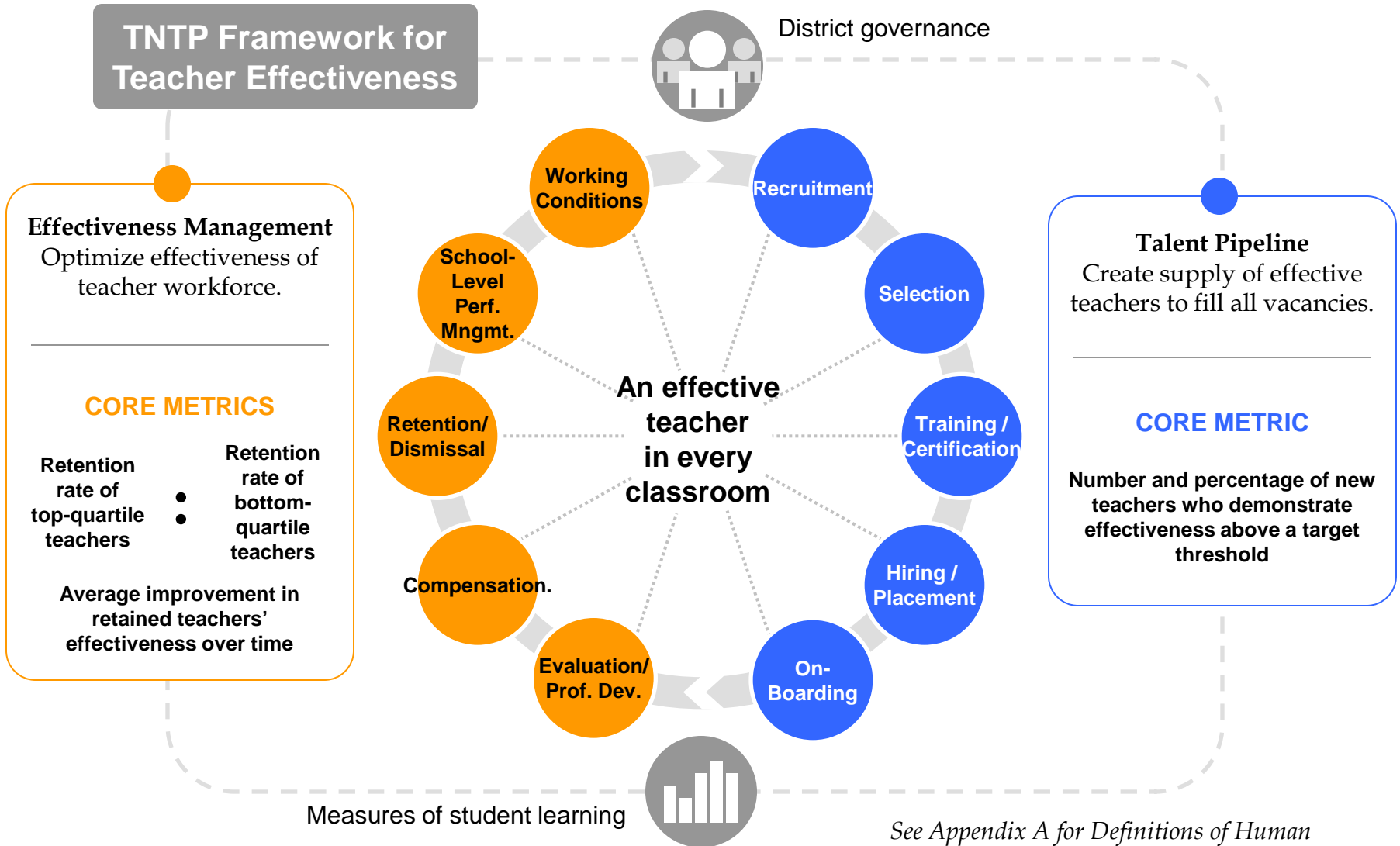
The purpose of this analysis is to increase the alignment of these systems to the ultimate goal of excellent instruction in every classroom.

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 have reliable mechanisms for evaluating and improving teacher performance?
- ▶ Is the district retaining its best teachers?



To realize sustainable improvement, effective teaching must be the guiding concern behind all elements of a district's human capital system.



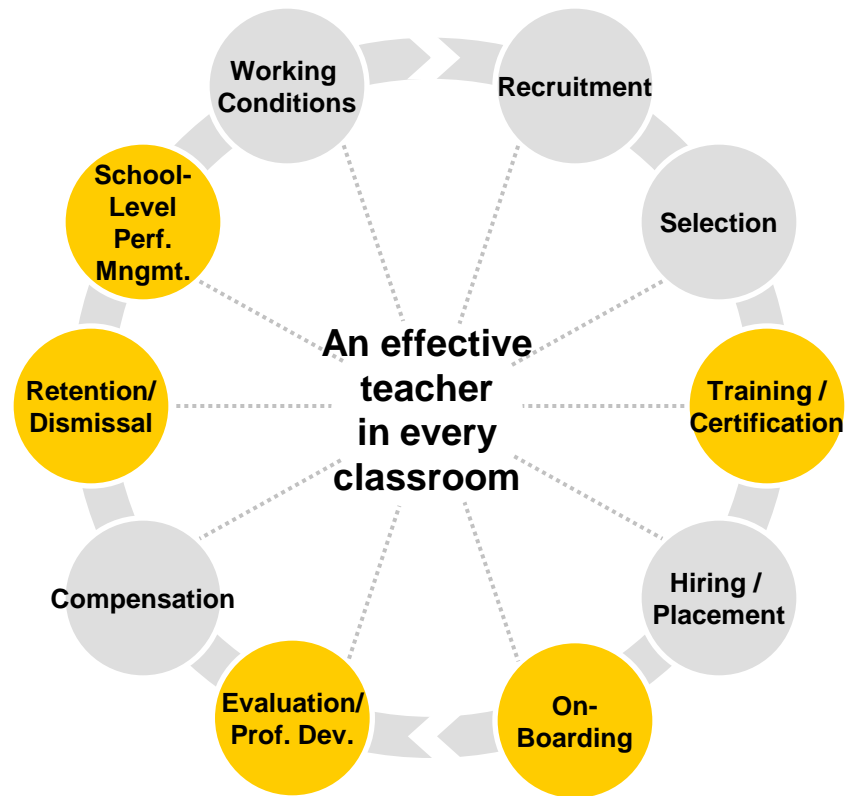
See Appendix A for Definitions of Human Capital System Elements



In 2008, TNTP investigated the impact of state and local policies on a range of human capital practices in Illinois School District U-46.

TNTP conducted its analysis using four primary methods:

- **Analysis of relevant state and local policy documents**, including state laws, Illinois State Board of Education regulations, current U-46 procedures, and the agreement between U-46 and the Elgin Teachers Association (ETA).
- **Stakeholder interviews** with union leaders, district administrators, HR staff, principals and teachers.
- **Survey data** collected from district teachers and administrators (principals and assistant principals). Surveys yielded a 84 percent teacher response rate and a 99 percent administrator response rate.
- **Extant data** collected from 2003-04 school year to the 2007-08 school year.





U-46 participated concurrently in TNTP's national report, *The Widget Effect*, which researched teacher 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.



Contents

Background



Findings

Recommendations

Appendix



Summary of School District U-46 Findings

- 1** State certification requirements **impede administrators from filling vacancies**, especially in high-need subject areas, and **teachers question the effectiveness** of the certification renewal process, which is confusing; yet, compared to other districts, many teachers report receiving a high level of support from U-46 when navigating the process.
- 2** Teachers and administrators are very satisfied with the mentor program in U-46, yet current practices lead to some **missed opportunities for new teachers to participate in and benefit from** the specific services that most improve teaching and learning.
- 3** Teacher evaluations, which are primarily based upon few classroom observations, **result in almost all teachers receiving the highest performance rating** and few receiving the support and feedback they need to improve their performance.



To ensure a high-quality teacher workforce, the state of Illinois and U-46 must both work to improve their human capital policies.



#1

▶ Finding

State certification requirements impede administrators from filling vacancies, especially in high-need subject areas, and teachers question the effectiveness of the certification renewal process, which is confusing; yet, compared to other districts, many teachers report receiving a high level of support from U-46 when navigating the process.



Illinois State Certification Rules: Overview



Illinois Certification Process

In 2000, Illinois instituted a three-tiered system, in which teachers hold one of three certificates:

Initial → **Standard** → **Master**

Teachers are required to at least gain and maintain a standard certificate in order to remain certified in Illinois.

Teachers who are transferring from out-of-state or seeking certification through an alternate route, hold a *provisional* certificate prior to receiving an initial certificate.

Teachers must hold an *endorsement* in the subject area they teach. Teachers may have multiple endorsements on one teaching certificate.

Requirements to Maintain Illinois Certification

Initial certificate holders must complete four years of teaching and professional development options,* which amounts to at least **60** professional development units in order to earn their standard certificate.

Standard certificate holders must renew their certificate every five years by completing professional development that amounts to at least **120** professional development units.

Master certificate holders must have gained National Board Certification and are required to renew their license every ten years based upon the standard certificate renewal requirements.

*See Appendix B for types of activities that qualify as professional development options.

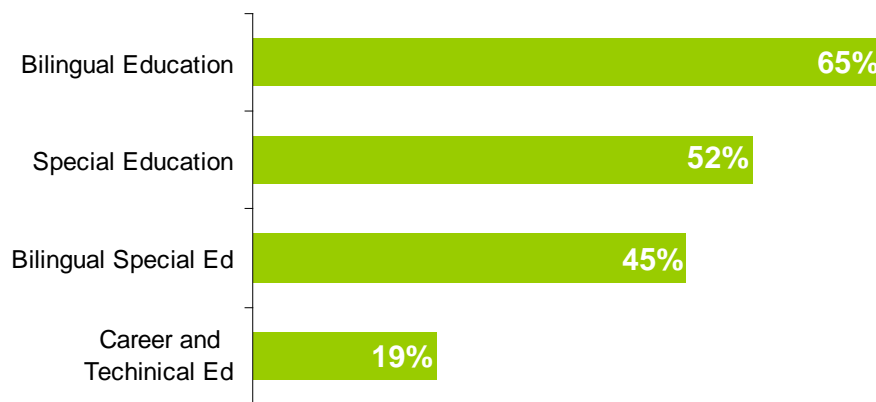


Illinois teacher certification requirements cause U-46 to lose desirable teacher candidates, especially for bilingual and special education positions.

51%

of administrators report **having difficulty filling vacancies** at their school because of the state certification requirements.

Administrators have difficulty staffing shortage subject areas due to certification requirements.



Percent of administrators who report difficulty filling vacancies in these subjects due to certification requirements

53% of administrators have **lost a desirable teacher candidate** because they were **unable to meet the state's certification requirements** for the position.



While U-46 teachers find the renewal process confusing, they feel more supported by the district when navigating the process than teachers in other Illinois districts.

In open responses where teachers commented on the certification process,

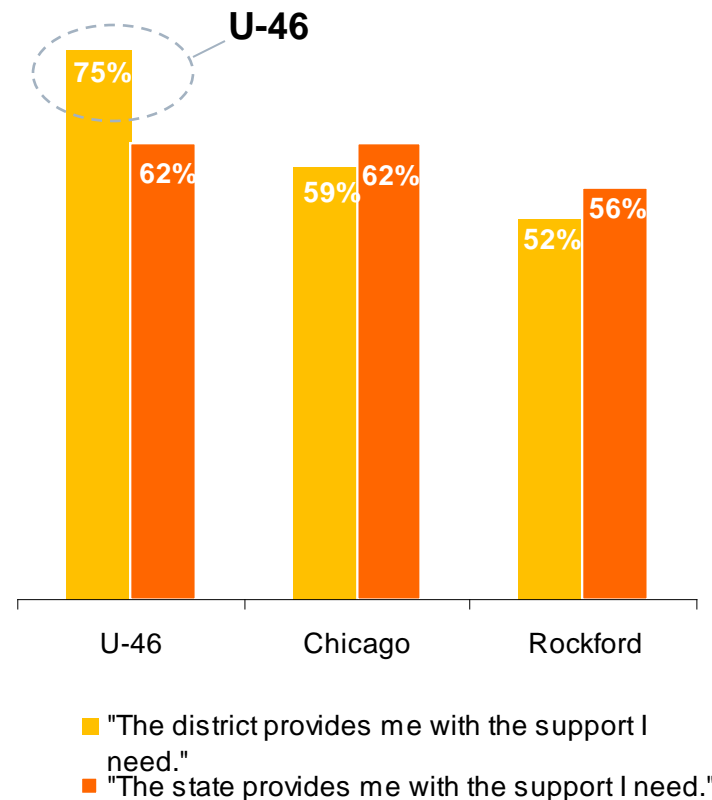
42%

reported that the renewal process is confusing and that they are unsure of what they need to do.

"Sometimes it is difficult to know where to start and who to start with if I have a question. ISBE is not the easiest place to get answers."

U-46 Teacher

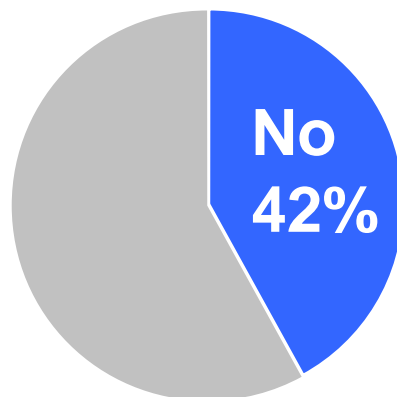
Percent of teachers who agree that they receive the support they need from the district and state to obtain their standard certificates, by district





Most importantly, many U-46 teachers question the positive impact the renewal process has on their classroom performance.

“Do you think that completing the Continuing Professional Development Units (CPDUs) to maintain your certificate has helped improve your performance in the classroom?”



“I find the process just to be ‘hoops’ that teachers have to jump through that has absolutely nothing to do with becoming a better teacher. Once in a while, there is decent training but it is usually a complete disappointment and an utter waste of time.”

U-46 Teacher



#2

▶ Finding

Teachers and administrators are very satisfied with the mentor program in U-46, yet current practices lead to some missed opportunities for new teachers to participate in and benefit from the specific services that most improve teaching and learning.



New Teacher Mentoring in District U-46



Illinois State Rules

- **Article 21A** of the Illinois School Code calls for the development of Induction and Mentoring programs for new teachers.
- Due to limited funding to support programs across the state, Illinois has developed the “Beginning Teacher Induction Pilot Program.” Districts may apply for grant funds by developing an induction plan that includes mentoring for new teachers.
- Approved programs include a mentoring component that provides teachers new to the profession (not to the district) with at least 1.5 hours of contact with his/her mentor a week.
- Mentoring programs may count toward the teachers’ professional development if they meet an additional set of standards.*

*See Appendix C for such requirements.

**Beginning with the 2009-10 school year, teachers new to the district, yet who have prior teaching experience, will be offered one year of mentoring support.



District Program

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Mentees | Prior to the 2009-10 school year, mentees were only those teachers who are new to the profession.** |
| Mentors | Mentors are current classroom teachers. |
| Pilot Program? | Prior to the 2009-10 school year, U-46 was not a participating pilot district, but the program was approved by ISBE for teachers to gain professional development credit. |



U-46 teachers and administrators believe the mentor program is helpful and are more satisfied than their peers in other districts.

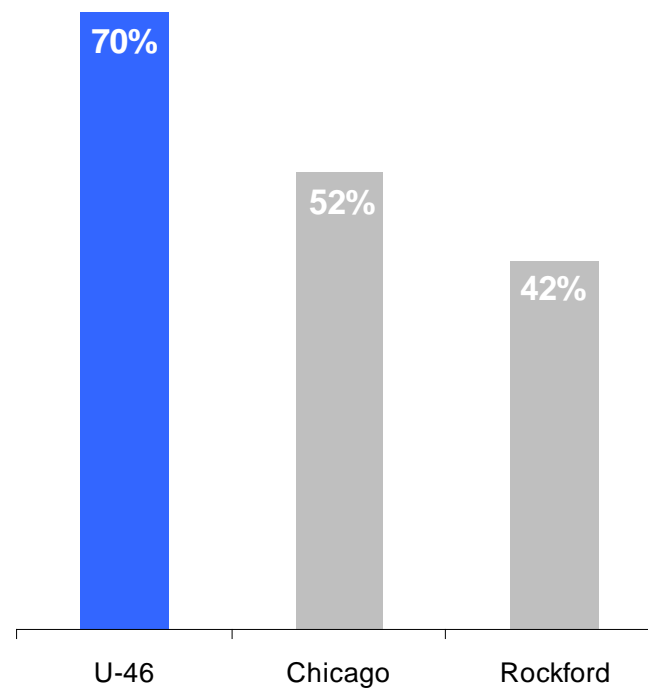
84%

of administrators believe the mentor program has been “very helpful” or “helpful” in building a **strong instructional team** at their school.

64%

of mentor program participants “strongly agree” or “agree” that having a mentor helped **improve their instructional performance** during their first year of teaching.

Percent of teachers
“very satisfied” or “satisfied” with
their mentor program,
by district





Yet, many teachers new to the district, but not new to teaching, miss out on participating in the program, which they believe could have helped improve their performance.

41%

of teachers new to U-46 since the 1999-00 school year report that they **did not work with a mentor** during their first year of teaching.

Among these teachers,

54%

report having taught in another school district.

Of those teachers who did not work with a mentor, more than two-thirds,

66%

agree that working with a mentor **would have helped improve their performance** in their first year of teaching in U-46.

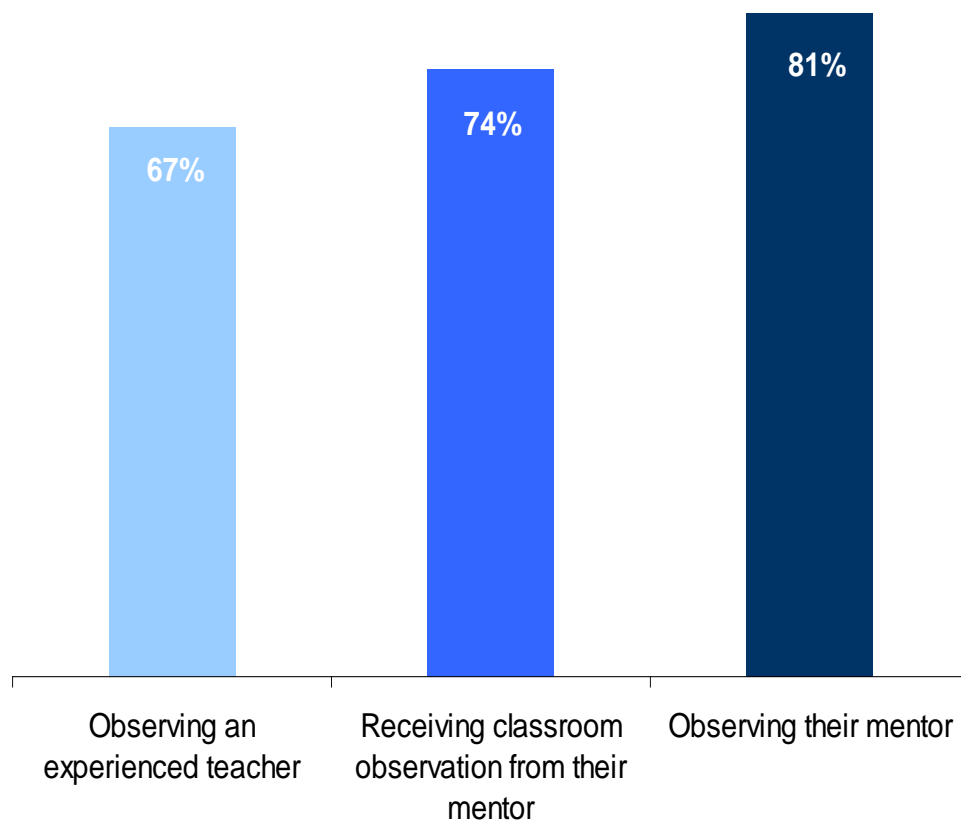


And, those activities that teachers deem most helpful to improving their performance occur infrequently.

Most effective mentoring activity, according to teachers:

- #1** Observing an experienced teacher teaching.
- #2** Receiving feedback from my mentor on my teaching practice.
- #3** Being observed teaching by my mentor.

Percent of teachers reporting **three or fewer** instances of the following activities





Additionally, teachers who are given more opportunities to observe and be observed report higher rates of satisfaction with the program.

60%

of teachers who are “very dissatisfied” or “dissatisfied” with the mentor program report **never receiving a classroom observation from their mentor,** *while only...*

12%

of “very satisfied” or “satisfied” teachers report the same.

60%

of teachers who are “very dissatisfied” or “dissatisfied” with the mentor program report **never observing an experienced teacher,** *while only...*

7%

of “very satisfied” or “satisfied” teachers report the same.



#3

▶ Finding

Teacher evaluations, which are primarily based upon few classroom observations, result in almost all teachers receiving the highest performance rating and few receiving the support and feedback they need to improve their performance.



Teacher Evaluation in District U-46



Illinois State Law

Evaluation Frequency	One per year for probationary teachers. One every two years for tenured teachers.
Observations Required	One observation per evaluation cycle for both probationary and tenured teachers.
Duration of Observation	No minimum time requirement for observations of both probationary and tenured teachers.

Source: Article 24A-5 of the Illinois School Code, 105 ILCS 5.



District Rules*

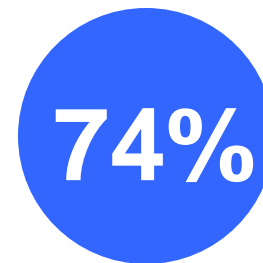
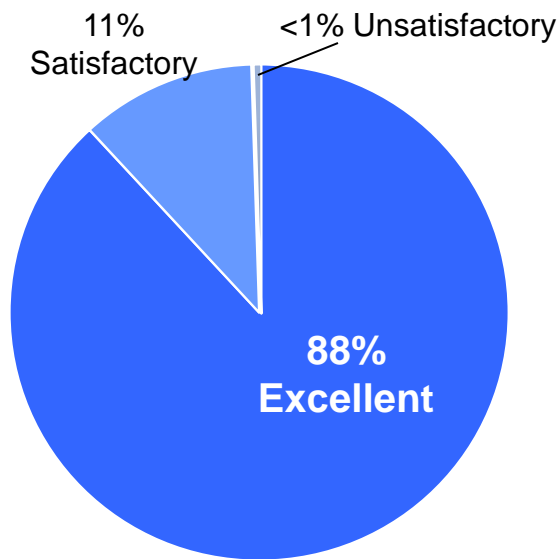
Evaluation Frequency	One per year for probationary teachers. One every two years for tenured teachers.
Observations Required	Three observations per evaluation cycle for probationary teachers. At least one and no more than three for tenured teachers.
Duration of Observation	Each observation must be 30 minutes in length for both probationary and tenured teachers.
Rating Scale	“Excellent,” “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory.”

*The rules and data shared within this section refer to the evaluation process utilized by U-46 prior to the start of the 2009-10 school year. The district is currently beginning to implement a new Teacher Appraisal system that roughly half of all teachers will participate in during the 2009-10 school year.



U-46 performance evaluations result in almost all teachers being rated excellent.

Tenured Teacher Evaluation Ratings, 2003-04 through 2006-07



of U-46 *probationary teachers* report receiving an “**excellent**” on their last performance evaluation.

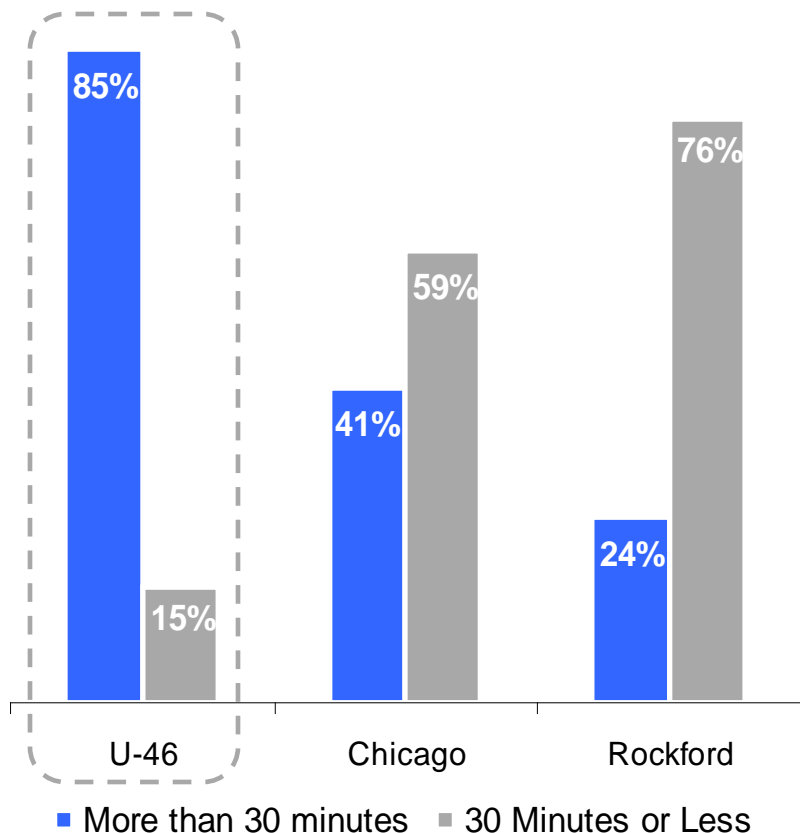


In 2006-07, U-46 had the **highest percentage of tenured teachers receiving the district’s top evaluation rating** among all three IL districts studied: RPS awarded 76 percent of its tenured teachers their highest rating, and CPS awarded 50 percent of its tenured teachers their highest rating.



While U-46 teachers are observed for longer periods of time than their peers in other districts, classroom observations are still infrequent.

Length of Classroom Observations,
Reported by Teachers



48%

Nearly half of U-46 teachers report being observed *only 1 time* during their most recent evaluation,

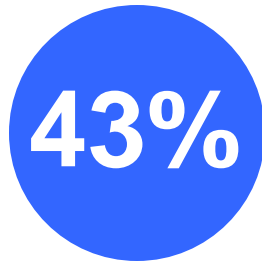
while only

6% of teachers in RPS and **24%** of teachers in CPS report the same.

"My evaluator emailed me dates he would evaluate me, but failed to show up."
U-46 Teacher



Few U-46 teachers and administrators believe that the evaluation process helps teachers improve their performance.



Teachers

Percent of teachers and administrators who “strongly agree” or “agree” that the current evaluation process **helps teachers improve** their performance



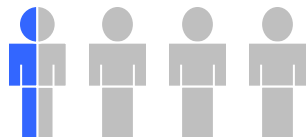
Administrators

“The current system has done very little to improve my teaching. I receive a written record of the lesson that was observed with very little feedback. The meeting after the evaluation involves signing the form with little conversation. There is not an opportunity for reflection or discussion about improving instruction.”

U-46 Teacher



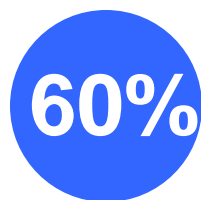
Most U-46 teachers receive little feedback; however, the few that do receive feedback believe the support helped improve their instruction.



Less than 1 out of 4 U-46 teachers report **having an area identified for improvement** on their last evaluation.



Among those teachers that had areas identified for improvement,



“strongly agree” or “agree” that the support they received from their evaluator to address the areas of weakness **helped improve their instruction.**

Only

25%

of U-46 administrators “strongly agree” or “agree” that the evaluation process allows them to accurately assess a teacher’s performance.

“I have found the evaluation process very frustrating. I don’t feel like the feedback is focused enough on the most important things for me to do to improve my teaching.”

U-46 Teacher



And poor performance goes unaddressed in U-46 schools.

➔ **43%** of teachers believe that there are tenured teachers in their building that **should be dismissed for poor instructional performance**, but have not been.

➔ **77%** of U-46 administrators report that there are tenured teachers in their school that are performing at an **unsatisfactory level**.

“Some tenured teachers are weak and would not keep a job as a non-tenured teacher, but they feel protected and are therefore unmotivated to improve and teach at a high level.”

U-46 Teacher

Between the 2003-04 and 2007-08 school years in U-46,

4

tenured teachers have been placed on remediation,

0

were successfully remediated, and

0

tenured teachers were dismissed for poor performance.



Contents

Background

Findings



Recommendations

Appendix



While significant changes are required at the state level, there are four key strategies that U-46 can employ independently.

U-46 Goal: Improve the district's human capital systems related to teacher certification, mentoring, evaluation and dismissal.

Four Key Strategies

- 1 Develop a cohesive district certification strategy that works to ensure high-quality candidates gain certification in hard-to-staff subject areas and continue to provide teachers with enhanced support throughout the certification process.
- 2 Increase new teachers' access to desirable mentoring activities.
- 3 Ensure teacher evaluations are rigorous, accurately differentiate performance, provide meaningful feedback and are used to inform key human capital decisions.
- 4 Provide increased support and training for administrators on the evaluation process and hold them accountable for implementing the system correctly.



Strategy 1: Ensure that high-quality candidates gain certification in hard-to-staff subject areas and provide teachers with enhanced support.

42%

of teachers reported that the certification renewal process is confusing and they are unsure of what they need to do.

Recommendations

- Seek out and work with local universities to develop alternate-route to certification programs for the district's hardest-to-staff subject areas, and actively promote those programs to potential teacher candidates.
- Enhance teacher recruitment efforts in hard-to-staff subject areas.
- Conduct information sessions, develop and distribute information packets and host drop-in office hours on the certificate renewal process.
- Conduct surveys of teachers and principals to identify professional development opportunities they find most useful and tailor district offerings to reflect findings.
- Provide district-wide professional development offerings that respond to specific developmental needs of teachers identified through the evaluation process.



Strategy 2: Increase new teachers' access to desirable mentoring activities.

60%

of teachers who are “very dissatisfied” or “dissatisfied” with the mentor program report **never receiving a classroom observation from their mentor,**

while only...

12% of “very satisfied” or “satisfied” teachers report the same.

Recommendations

- Require that mentees are observed by their mentor at least three times a semester.
- Increase the amount of release time given to new teachers to observe their mentor, as well as other teachers in their building and other schools, to at least twice a semester during their first year of teaching.
- Permit teachers new to the district, but not new to the profession, to participate in the mentor program.
- Continue to increase the number of new teachers participating in the mentor program by actively promoting the program through induction events, upon hire and during district-wide and school-based meetings.



Strategy 3: Ensure teacher evaluations are rigorous, accurately differentiate performance, provide meaningful feedback and are used to inform key human capital decisions.

Recommendations

- Require that all teachers be evaluated on an annual basis, regardless of tenure status.
- Revisit the new evaluation process to ensure that it:
 - Bases evaluations upon a set of teaching standards developed with teacher input and designed to measure teacher effectiveness at promoting student achievement;
 - Utilizes multiple sources of data throughout the evaluation process, including student assessment data, daily student work, feedback from department chairs, student and parent survey data and multiple unannounced observations of varying length.
 - Consistently identifies and communicates strengths and weaknesses in teachers' instruction.
 - Provides for informal and formal conversations between teachers and administrators about classroom instruction.
- Norm evaluation ratings to ensure consistent and fair implementation of the process across the district.
- Task school leaders, instructional coaches and department/grade-level chairs with providing every teacher with individually differentiated tools and support, based upon development needs identified during the evaluation process.
- Train teachers in the standards and evaluation process, with special focus on the need for feedback for effective professional growth.
- Utilize ratings to inform key decision-making related to hiring, tenure, layoffs, displacements, compensation, dismissal and professional development.



Strategy 4: Support and train administrators on the evaluation process and hold them accountable for implementation.

Recommendations

- Train and support administrators consistently throughout the school year on how to:
 - Conduct rigorous evaluations of teachers based on the extent to which teachers promote student achievement.
 - Provide all teachers with frequent, meaningful and actionable feedback, which clearly articulates where their individual performance falls in contrast to district teaching standards.
 - Utilize legitimate means to address performance concerns fairly, objectively and efficiently.
- Hold quarterly meetings for all administrators in which key strategies are reinforced and principals can share and reflect upon their practice in this area with their peers.
- Provide administrators with additional resources so that they have the time to increase the frequency and duration of classroom observations and provide ongoing feedback and development to teachers.
- Provide targeted support for principals in identifying poor performers before teachers are granted tenure and after, implementing the remediation process and removing those who do not improve.
- Make teacher performance management a primary component of administrator evaluation, using teacher feedback as a data source in this domain.
- Hold administrators accountable for fairly developing and evaluating teachers so that ratings are accurately distributed across the rating spectrum.



Contents

Background

Findings

Recommendations



Appendix



Appendix A: A comprehensive approach to managing human capital will ensure that every classroom has an effective teacher.

Working Conditions

- Safe, healthy learning environments.
- Sufficient resources and technology to facilitate effective instruction.

School-Level Human Capital Management

- Informed, accountable decisions on hiring and retention
- School-level performance management (direction-setting, coaching, peer to peer collaboration).
- Accountability of principals and other personnel who affect teacher effectiveness

Retention / Dismissal

- More effective teachers are rewarded non-monetarily.
- Probationary periods last long enough to assess effectiveness comprehensively.
- Tenure based on effectiveness.
- Fair but efficient process for exiting poor performers throughout career.

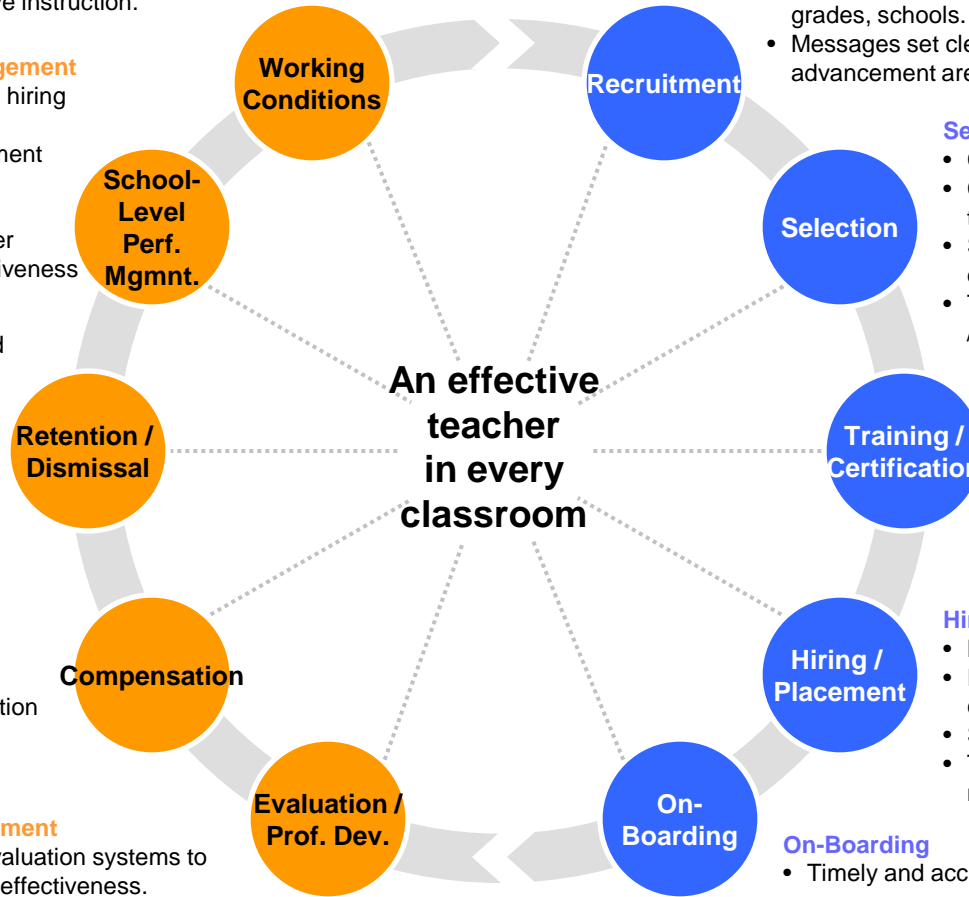
Compensation

- Responsive to supply/demand.
- Differentiated to drive strategic retention of top performers and attrition of less effective teachers.

Evaluation / Professional Development

- Assess teachers using credible evaluation systems to differentiate levels of instructional effectiveness.
- Link effectiveness to key decisions such as development, compensation, job security, and career ladder.
- Recognize excellence and immediately offer support-focused interventions when there is evidence of ineffectiveness.
- Development tailored to each teacher's unique performance challenges.

District Governance
Timely and coherent governance and budget decisions aligned with HC goals.



Recruitment

- Prioritizes sources of most effective teachers.
- Cultivate candidates who have the qualities linked to effectiveness and are qualified for high-need subjects, grades, schools.
- Messages set clear expectation that employment and advancement are based on performance.

Selection

- Competency-based selection model.
- Criteria aligned with research findings on teacher effectiveness.
- Standardized tools and rubrics to support differentiation of candidates.
- Training and periodic norming for HR staff / principals.

Training / Certification

- Backwards design approach that explicitly emphasizes instructional effectiveness.
- Student growth data a primary factor in recommendation for certification.
- Tailored to district needs

Hiring / Placement

- Based in mutual consent – no forcing.
- Early, efficient hiring to avoid loss of top candidates.
- Selection training and norming for principals.
- Technology supports and facilitates effective matching of candidates and schools.

On-Boarding

- Timely and accurate payroll, benefits and other new-hire processes.
- Induction differentiated by subject, grade, and school and that drives internalization of objectives, behavioral norms, and performance expectations.

Measures of Student Learning
Accurately measures student mastery of important standards (including those that can't be measured on multiple-choice tests).



Appendix B: Potential Professional Development Activities

- Advanced degree
- Induction and mentoring program
- National Board for Professional Teacher Standards certification
- Education-related coursework (undergraduate- or graduate-level)
- Education-related professional development certificate
- Subsequent Illinois certificate or endorsement
- Requirements for becoming NCLB “highly qualified” in another area
- Graduate-level coursework in self-assessment or NBPTS certification preparation
- Continuing professional development units (peer mentoring, district workshops, etc.)



Appendix C: Requirements for Mentoring Programs that Serve as Professional Development for State Certification Purposes

In order for a district's mentoring program be considered as professional development for a teacher holding a initial certificate:

- New teachers must receive and participate in two years of mentoring support.
- New teachers who participate in an approved induction and mentoring program will receive:
 - formal mentoring from an experienced teacher;
 - three observations with prior preparation;
 - a response from the mentor with feedback, suggestions and techniques for each observation;
 - opportunities for contact so that the new teachers have professional and social support in the school environment;
 - orientation to the school improvement and professional development plans that apply;
 - help in understanding their employer's expectations regarding the Illinois Professional Teaching Standards and the relevant content-area standards;
 - at least one opportunity each semester to observe experienced teachers and discuss aspects of teaching practice with these teachers or to participate in workshops, conferences or similar events or trainings to increase the teacher's skills relative to the Illinois Professional Teaching Standards or their area of certification or assignment; and
 - a review from the mentor with written feedback on at least one of their written reflections on their teaching practice for each quarter of a school year.



Appendix C: Requirements for Mentoring Programs (Cont'd)

- New teachers must have at least one opportunity each semester to participate in professional development activities that involve:
 - observing experienced teachers and discussing with them aspects of their teaching practices; and
 - participating in workshops, conferences, symposia, seminars or other similar training events designed to increase their knowledge and skills with respect to the Illinois Professional Teaching Standards or the content-area standards relevant to their areas of certification or teaching assignment.
- The program must collect and maintain information for evaluation that will contribute to an overall assessment of the effectiveness of the induction and mentoring programs.
- Mentor teachers must hold or have retired while **holding a standard or master** certificate that should, to the extent possible, be the same type of certificate held by the new teachers to whom they are assigned. Mentors cannot be assigned to more than five new teachers during any given school year and must complete a training program that addresses topics such as adult learning theory, content knowledge and pedagogy, verbal and non-communication skills, etc.