

# Next Steps Forward: Teacher and School-Based Administrator Evaluation System

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Prepared for:



Prepared by:



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### Authors:

William J. Slotnik  
Guodong Liang, Ph.D.  
Margaret Sharp, Ed.D.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report examines the fidelity of implementation of the teacher and school-based administrator evaluation system in Howard County. Findings and recommendations are intended to help inform and strengthen the implementation of the evaluation system in the district. This report is made possible by the support of the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS), the Howard County Education Association (HCEA), and the Howard County Administrators Association (HCAA).

With mutual agreements with the education association and the administrators association, HCPSS developed its teacher and school-based administrator evaluation system based on state mandated guidelines. The system includes measures of both professional practice and student growth.

This evaluation uses a mixed-methods approach and collects both quantitative data and qualitative data from educators across the district. The multiple sources of data include district-wide survey responses provided by 2,883 teachers and school-based administrators; confidential interviews and focus groups with 101 teachers, principals, district administrators, and the education and administrators' association leaders; document reviews; and two years of evaluation data for teachers and principals.

The following questions guided the study:

- To what extent was Howard County's teacher and school-based administrator evaluation system implemented with fidelity?
- What contextual features supported or inhibited the fidelity of implementation of the evaluation system?
- What support do educators need for the implementation of the evaluation system?

## Findings

### *Overall Perceptions of the Evaluation System*

- School-based educators generally believe the evaluation system provides common expectations and language.
- Many teachers do not believe the evaluation system provides useful feedback.
- Administrators and teachers have substantial differences of opinion on whether the evaluation system is having a positive impact on their instructional practices or student learning.
- In schools where the evaluation system is implemented from a true professional growth and support perspective, teachers and administrators report positive results.

- Educators emphasize the importance of making the evaluation system more meaningful by having more opportunities for reflection, instructional conversation, and substantive feedback.

### *Teacher and Principal Evaluation Ratings*

- In both 2015-2016 and 2016-2017, all principals and almost all teachers in the district were rated *Highly Effective* or *Effective*.
- From 2015-2016 to 2016-2017, the percentage of teachers and principals rated *Highly Effective* decreased by approximately 13 percentage points, with a corresponding increase in the percentage rated *Effective*.

### *Quality, Consistency, and Manageability*

- Administrators and teachers have differing opinions on whether the evaluation system is being implemented with consistency.
- The quality of implementation is often a function of the instructional leadership skills of the school-based administrator.
- In some schools, the lack of consistency undermines perceptions of the validity of the evaluation system.
- Educators believe the district, under new leadership, wants to make the evaluation system more meaningful.
- Educators are concerned about the competing demands on time and capacity of school-based educators.

### *Capacity Building*

- School-based administrators want more support from the district to increase their effectiveness.
- Teachers have professional development needs in areas in which site-based administrators indicate similar and greater need.

### *The Framework for Teaching*

- Many educators believe the *Framework for Teaching* is an effective tool for promoting a common language around instruction and for assessing teacher performance.

### *Classroom Observations*

- The quality of the observation process varies between and within schools.
- There is agreement that many classroom observations are conducted by qualified observers.

- The three key observation elements—the pre-observation conference, the observation, and the post-observation conference—are followed most consistently during a full evaluation year.
- The pre- and post-observation conferences need to be more meaningful and timely.
- Teachers are divided on whether the observations are informing their professional development or helping to improve their instruction.
- Educators want more frequent, informal observations of teacher performance.

### *Artifacts*

- Teachers do not believe that the artifacts process improves their instruction or supports their professional growth.
- Educators feel there is significant inconsistency in the expectations for and the use of the artifacts process.
- Many educators question the value of the artifacts process. Their experiences with artifacts undermines their perceptions of the worth of the evaluation system.

### *The Student Learning Objective Process*

- There is a lack of understanding of the rationale for crafting Student Learning Objectives (SLOs).
- Many teachers report the SLO process is administrator-driven and teachers do not have ownership of their SLOs.
- Despite several years of implementing the evaluation system, it is still challenging for many educators to identify and craft high quality SLOs.
- Educators indicate that they need customized professional development to strengthen the quality and the consistency of SLO implementation.

### *Instruction and Integration of SLOs*

- Educators emphasize the importance of aligning SLOs with instruction, standards, and student assessments.
- In some schools, educators have experiences which underscore the value of SLOs in improving their craft, supporting their professional growth, and enhancing student learning. They see SLOs as a strong component of the evaluation system.
- In other schools, educators indicate that SLOs are not being used to inform or drive instruction. They see SLOs as a compliance activity.

## Recommendations

The Howard County Public School System is at a critical juncture. District and association leaders are jointly committed to improving the evaluation system for teachers and school-based

administrators. The challenge is to make changes which reinforce the connections between meaningful evaluation, effective instruction, and strategic support of school-based educators.

The following recommendations focus on ways to strengthen the implementation of the system and, in particular, reinforce the instructional emphasis of educator evaluation. They provide the Howard County Public School System with an actionable pathway for making continuing improvements.

### *Issue One: District Priorities and Instructional Integration*

- Reconfirm the purpose and importance of the evaluation system.
- Make the connections between the evaluation system and instructional support.
- Leverage content and professional development expertise in support of the evaluation system.

### *Issue Two: Professional Practice*

- Deepen understanding of the intent and application of the observation framework.
- Increase the depth and frequency of instructional conversations.
- Review the artifacts process.

### *Issue Three: Implementation of SLOs*

- Strengthen the overall SLO process.
- Provide an SLO Quality Rating Rubric.
- Provide a resource library of annotated SLOs.

### *Issue Four: Capacity Building*

- Provide advanced training to teachers and administrators.
- Use data from the evaluations to inform and drive professional development.
- Position principals for success.

### *Issue Five: Collaboration*

- Expand the collaboration of the district and the associations.
- Confer with the state on the revised weighting of SLOs.

## Summary

Howard County's educational leaders are focusing on implementing the teacher and school-based administrator evaluation system at a higher level of quality and fidelity. With an expanded emphasis on quality, consistency, and capacity building, the Howard County Public School System can increase the impact of the evaluation system to the mutual benefit of educators and students.

# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

## Purpose of the Report

This report examines the fidelity of implementation of the teacher and school-based administrator evaluation system in Howard County. Findings and recommendations are intended to help inform and strengthen the implementation of the evaluation system in the district. This report is made possible by the support of the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS), the Howard County Education Association (HCEA), and the Howard County Administrators Association (HCAA).

## Background of the Study

### *Teacher and Principal Evaluation in Maryland*

The state of Maryland began to implement a teacher and principal evaluation system statewide in 2013-2014. In this context, each of the 24 districts is required to construct evaluation models for teachers and principals, respectively, based on local interests and priorities, and the local models need to be mutually agreed upon by the district and the educator bargaining units. The Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) requires that a local evaluation system for teachers and principals include multiple measures, provide at a minimum an overall rating of *Highly Effective*, *Effective*, or *Ineffective*, and establish student growth as a significant component of the evaluation. When the local school system and the bargaining units cannot reach agreement on an evaluation system, COMAR requires the school system to use the state's default models.<sup>1</sup>

The state models for teacher and principal evaluation include measures of both professional practice and student growth, which are given equal weight.<sup>2</sup> The professional practice domains for teachers align with the Charlotte Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Each of the four domains (i.e., planning and preparation, instructional practices, classroom environment, and professional responsibilities) comprise 12.5%, totaling 50% of the total evaluation score. For principals, the professional practice measure consists of eight domains based on the Maryland Instructional Leadership Framework and four domains from the Interstate School Leaders and Licensure Consortium. The 12 domains are weighted individually to reflect the needs of principals at varying times in their careers.

Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) are the predominate measure of student growth for teachers and principals. The state models allot 30%-50% of the total evaluation rating to SLOs, depending on the assignment of the teacher and principal. No single SLO may count for more than 35% of the total evaluation score.

## Howard County's Teacher and School-Based Administrator Evaluation System

With mutual agreements with the education association and the administrators association, HCPSS developed its own teacher and school-based administrator evaluation system based on state mandated guidelines. Characteristics of the current teacher and school-based administrator evaluation system are described below.

### *Teacher Evaluation Framework*

During the 2017-2018 school year, the teacher evaluation model in Howard County consists of two major components: professional practice and student growth.<sup>3</sup> The professional practice component comprises 80% of the final evaluation. It includes four domains aligned with the *Framework for Teaching*: planning and preparation (Domain 1), classroom environment (Domain 2), instruction (Domain 3), and professional responsibilities (Domain 4). Each domain comprises 20% of the evaluation. Domains 1 and 4 are evaluated by artifacts, and Domains 2 and 3 are assessed by classroom observations. The student growth component comprises 20% of the total evaluation score and is measured by SLOs. The district also uses a variety of alternative evaluation models for some positions (e.g., instructional technology, library media specialists, speech and language pathologists, and school counselors). Many of the alternative models use a rubric specific to the position and do not include the SLO component.

Teachers are evaluated on a three-year cycle. Tenured teachers are evaluated on both professional practice (all 4 domains) and student growth in the full evaluation year (i.e., Year 1). If rated *Highly Effective* or *Effective* in Year 1, a teacher is evaluated in Year 2 using Year 1's professional practice rating, and Year 2's student growth based on the most recent available data. If rated *Ineffective* in Year 1, the teacher is evaluated on both professional practice and student growth in Year 2. Similarly, if rated *Highly Effective* or *Effective* in Year 2, a teacher's evaluation in Year 3 uses Year 2's professional practice rating, and Year 3's most recent student growth data. If rated *Ineffective* in Year 2, the teacher is evaluated on both professional practice and student growth in Year 3. Non-tenured teachers are evaluated on both professional practice and student growth components across the three years.

Principals are the primary evaluators of teachers and they sign off on the final evaluation document. Principals may assign an assistant principal to support the process. For some staff (e.g., psychologists, reading support teachers, math support teachers), the evaluator may be the appropriate program coordinator.

The teacher evaluation process involves the goal-setting conference, the mid-year review, and the final evaluation. In the goal-setting conference, the teacher and administrator discuss the teacher's specific area of focus, the plan or steps to accomplish the goals, and the plan to measure progress. During the mid-year review, the teacher shares artifacts and the administrator provides feedback and makes suggestions. The teacher and administrator review progress toward the established goals. In consultation with the primary evaluator, SLO targets may be

revised at this time. Before the end of the year, the teacher and administrator review progress in professional practice and SLOs. The teacher shares artifacts and other indicators of successful accomplishment of goals.

For professional practice, the evaluator assigns a value for each component in Domains 1 to 4 using the following scale: 1 point (*Unsatisfactory*), 2 points (*Basic*), 3 points (*Proficient*), and 4 points (*Distinguished*). Scores for individual components are then averaged to obtain an overall domain score. For student growth, a three-point scale is used: 1 point (*Insufficient Attainment of Target*), 2 points (*Partial Attainment of Target*), and 3 points (*Full Attainment of Target*). The points associated with the performance indicated are added and multiplied by the percentage weight of that factor. The final score results in an overall rating of *Ineffective* (less than 7), *Effective* (at least 7 and less than 10.0), or *Highly Effective* (10.0 and above).

HCPSS uses the *Frontline Employee Evaluation System* to record the goal-setting and final evaluation conferences, and feedback on targets for growth in professional practice and SLOs. *Frontline* is also the repository for data related to observations, artifacts, and SLOs.

### *School-Based Administrator Evaluation Framework*

All school-based administrators in Howard County are evaluated on a yearly basis on professional standards for educational leaders and student growth.<sup>4</sup> The professional standards comprise 80% of the total evaluation score, including 40% for *Equity and Cultural Responsiveness* (Standard 3, required for all administrators), 20% for *Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction* (Standard 4) or *School Improvement* (Standard 10), and 20% for another standard the administrator chooses. The student growth component comprises 20% of the evaluation.

School-based administrators are evaluated on a two-year cycle. When in the full evaluation year (i.e., Year 1), an administrator is evaluated on both professional standards and student growth. If rated *Highly Effective* or *Effective* in Year 1, the administrator is evaluated in Year 2 using Year 1's professional standards rating, and Year 2's student growth data. If rated *Ineffective* in Year 1, the administrator is evaluated on both professional standards and student growth in Year 2.

The final score, a combination of the professional standards rating and the student growth target attainment score, results in an overall rating of *Ineffective* (less than 7), *Effective* (at least 7 and less than 10.0), or *Highly Effective* (10.0 and greater).

The community superintendents evaluate the principals. At the beginning of the year conference, the administrator and community superintendent review the school improvement data and plan, student growth target, and professional standards. At the mid-year conference, the principal reflects on progress with professional standards and SLOs, and the community superintendent provides feedback on professional standards (full year), and the SLO.<sup>5</sup> At the end of the year conference, the principal submits artifacts related to professional standards (full year), and SLO attainment. The community superintendent provides feedback on professional standards and the SLO, and shares the final evaluation rating.

## Guidance on Implementing the Professional Practice Component

In the *Framework for Teacher Evaluation: The Teacher Evaluation Process Guide, 2017-2018*, HCPSS provides guidance on the implementation of classroom observations and artifacts. Some key requirements and instructions are listed below.

- Classroom observations are used to assess professional practice in Domains 2 and 3.
- Classroom observations may be announced or unannounced. Teachers are informed, in writing, if they are formally evaluated in a given year. An observation generally lasts an entire instructional period.
- An announced observation includes: (a) a pre-observation conference for a discussion of the lesson, activity, and professional learning goals, (b) an observation of the lesson or activity, including descriptions of observable evidence of teacher and student behaviors, and (c) a post-observation conference to share reflections and recommendations.
- An unannounced observation includes an observation of the lesson or activity, and a post-observation conference to share reflections and recommendations.
- There are a minimum of two observations for tenured teachers, one each semester, and a minimum of four observations for non-tenured teachers, two each semester.
- Artifacts are used to assess professional practice in Domains 1 and 4.
- At least one (1) artifact for each component in Domains 1 and 4 is uploaded in the *Frontline Employee Evaluation System*.
- Teachers may choose to use an artifact across multiple components.
- A teacher receiving an unsatisfactory rating in any component receives a written explanation of the reasons for the unsatisfactory rating and written recommendations for improvement.

## Guidance on Implementing SLOs

HCPSS provides guidance on the implementation of SLOs for teachers in the *Framework for Teacher Evaluation: The Teacher Evaluation Process Guide, 2017-2018*, and for school-based administrators in the *Framework for Evaluating School-Based Administrators, 2017-2018*. Some key requirements and instructions are as follows.

All classroom teachers complete annually the SLO form between September 20th and October 20th in the *Frontline Employee Evaluation System*, with revisions to be approved no later than October 31st. When possible, the target instructional group for SLOs must be more than ten students and typically includes a class of students. The roster of students for whom assessment data is collected includes students who received instruction from the teacher, at a minimum, between October 1st and May 31st. Teachers upload a data sheet, for each SLO, listing the

students identified in the SLO target and including a minimum of three data points as evidence of SLO target attainment: baseline, mid-year, and end-of-course data. Teacher SLOs focus on the curricular objectives being taught.

All school-based administrators select one student growth target each year that aligns with the school improvement plan. They can choose either a student growth target that focuses on the growth made by one or more student groups, or a student growth target that focuses on the growth made by a combination of all student groups, with specific acknowledgement of the need to decrease achievement gaps for identified student groups.

To support teachers on the implementation of SLOs, in addition to an SLO library, HCPSS has developed such materials as the "HCPSS Student Learning Objective Guide," the "HCPSS Student Learning Objective Form," and the "HCPSS Criteria for Approval of SLOs."

## District Support for Teachers

HCPSS provides multiple levels and types of support to teachers.<sup>6</sup> For new teachers, they are matched with an instructional mentor and receive consistent support throughout their first year of teaching. New teachers determine focus areas with the support of the instructional mentor and participate in non-evaluative classroom observations followed by critical feedback and support meetings. The instructional mentors receive extensive training and support to effectively serve new teachers.

In addition, every HCPSS school has a Teacher Development Liaison (TDL). The role of TDLs is to provide ongoing, school-based professional learning opportunities and support for all non-tenured staff. They facilitate school-based Focus on the Framework sessions and artifact sessions, and support SLO development and preparation for the mid-year and end-of-year conferences. TDLs also run Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and support experienced colleagues who work with new hires.

For all staff, the district provides both face-to-face and online learning opportunities, including:

- Focus on the Framework Modules (workshop series)
- Danielson Domains Self-Paced Modules (online learning modules)
- The Framework in Action Level One (2-day PD)
- The Framework in Action Level Two (3-day PD)
- *Framework for Teaching* Domain courses (course series)
- Continuing Professional Development (workshops/courses)
- Curriculum, Instruction, and Administration Support (Curriculum coordinators, Instructional facilitators, and resource teachers provide teachers with a variety of supports)

## District Context

It is important to note that the development and the implementation of the evaluation system has occurred during a period when there have been substantial changes at numerous leadership levels of the Howard education community, including the Board of Education, the superintendent and the executive leadership team, the education association (HCEA), and the administrators association (HCAA). Under the new executive leadership, the district created three K-12 areas.

## Layout of the Report

The remainder of this report is organized as follows. Chapter Two describes the methods of data collection and analysis. Chapter Three focuses on the overall implementation of the evaluation system in the district. Chapter Four discusses the implementation of the professional practice component. Chapter Five discusses the implementation of Student Learning Objectives. Finally, Chapter Six summarizes key issues and presents recommendations.

## CHAPTER TWO: METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

This evaluation uses a mixed-methods approach and collects both quantitative data and qualitative data from educators across the district. The multiple sources of data include (a) district-wide survey responses provided by teachers and school-based administrators, (b) confidential interviews and focus groups with teachers, principals, district administrators, and the education and administrators' association leaders, (c) document reviews, and (d) two years of evaluation data for teachers and principals.

The following questions guided the study:

- To what extent was Howard County's teacher and school-based administrator evaluation system implemented with fidelity?
- What contextual features supported or inhibited the fidelity of implementation of the evaluation system?
- What support do educators need for the implementation of the evaluation system?

### Teacher and School-Based Administrator Evaluation Survey

The CTAC study team developed a web-based confidential survey and launched the survey using the SurveyMonkey platform on May 1, 2018. The district sent an invitational email with the link to the survey to all the principals in the district, asking them to share this information with the teachers and other school-based staff and encourage them to respond. The study team alone had access to survey responses. The district updated the principals on the progress of survey participation. The HCEA and the HCAA also sent reminder emails, encouraging their member teachers and school-based administrators to share their perspectives. The survey was open three weeks until May 18, 2018.

The survey instrument included eight background questions on the respondents' previous training on SLOs and classroom observations, school level, position, subject area, teaching experience, tenure status, years as a principal, and highest educational degree. In addition, the survey had 35 multiple choice items, using a five-point Likert scale for responses. The questions centered on: (a) the systemic context for the implementation of the teacher and school-based administrator evaluation system in Howard County, (b) classroom observations, (c) Student Learning Objectives, (d) additional supports educators need, and (e) final thoughts. Furthermore, the survey contained an open-ended question, which provided an opportunity for the respondents to share any comments they had concerning the evaluation system.

A total of 3,484 survey responses were collected for an overall response rate of 67%. It included 3,305 responses from classroom teachers, non-classroom teaching staff, and special educators for a response rate of 66%, and 179 responses from principals, assistant principals and administrative interns for a response rate of 90%.

Most of the respondents have participated in SLO training (70.6%) or accessed other sources of information or experiences related to SLOs (57.8%). Nearly half of the respondents work at the elementary school level (47.8%). The majority are classroom teachers (64.8%) with 10 or more years of teaching experience (71.5%) and are tenured (82.8%). Most of the survey respondents have a Master's degree (82.3%). A total of 76 principals completed the survey, representing 100% of all schools in the county, as well as 99 assistant principals (see Table A in the Appendix for more detail on the characteristics of the survey respondents).

The survey analysis includes an examination of the responses by six categories: (1) classroom teacher, (2) non-classroom teaching staff, (3) special educator, (4) principal, (5) assistant principal, and (6) administrative intern. Since classroom teachers' responses are very similar to those of the special educators', they are grouped into one category, "Teacher," for the purposes of discussion of the survey findings and the open-ended comments in the report. For similar reasons, the principal and assistant principal responses, together with the four responses from the administrative interns, are grouped into one category, "Administrator," for the discussion of the survey tables and figures, and "Principal," for the open-ended comments. This study's survey analysis focuses on the 2,883 responses from teachers and school-based administrators as described above. Responses from the non-classroom teaching staff are included in Table B in the Appendix.

Cross tabulations and figures are used to display the survey findings. Mann-Whitney U tests were conducted to examine the statistical significance of the differences across groups.

## Key Stakeholder Interviews and Focus Groups

Confidential interviews and focus groups were conducted, using semi-structured protocols developed by the study team, in mid-May 2018. In total, the study team spoke with 101 key stakeholders in the district, as described in Table 1 below. Each interview was approximately 45 minutes long and each focus group was approximately one hour long.

Table 1. Interview and Focus Group Participants

Group	Position	#
Central Administrators	Superintendent	1
	Chief Academic Officer	1
	Chief Human Resources and Leadership Development Officer	1
	Chief School Management and Instructional Leadership Officer	1
	Community Superintendents	3
	Director of Teacher and Paraprofessional Development	1
	Director of the Office of Accountability	1
	Performance Officers	3
	Coordinators and Instructional Facilitators	7
Teacher Association Leader	HCEA Leaders	10
Administrator Association Leader	HCAA Leaders	5
Teachers	Elementary School Teachers	17
	Secondary School Teachers	25
	Teacher Development Liaisons	6
	Instructional Mentors	10
Principals	Principals	9
<b>Total</b>		<b>101</b>

The study team utilized a stratified random sampling process to select the participants for the principal interviews and the teacher focus groups. Factors considered for the selection of principals included school level, school enrollment, the percentage of ethnic minority students, and the principal's latest evaluation rating. Comparisons based on these observable characteristics suggest that the principals selected constitute a diverse cross-section of all of the principals in the district. Similarly, teachers chosen for the focus groups are representative in terms of grades and subject area (tested and non-tested), tenure status, special education status, and evaluation rating. Each of the five teacher focus groups had on average 8 teachers from elementary (2 focus groups), middle (1 focus group), high (1 focus group), and secondary schools—a combination of middle and high (1 focus group).

In presenting representative comments from the interviews and focus groups, interviewees have been grouped to protect their identity. The superintendent, chief officers, community superintendents, directors, performance officers, and coordinators and instructional facilitators have been grouped together in the "Central Administrators" category. Similarly, teachers, teacher development liaisons, and instructional mentors are grouped in the "Teachers" category.

The study team conducted thematic analyses to identify common themes and key issues in the discussion based on similarities across interview and focus group participants.

## Documents

The study team reviewed a variety of documents relating to the evaluation systems in the district and the state. Many of the relevant documents were provided directly by the district, while others were found on the district's and MSDE's websites. Representative examples of the documents reviewed are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Representative Examples from Document Reviews

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Framework for Teacher Evaluation: The Teacher Evaluation Process Guide, 2017-2018</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Framework for Evaluating School-Based Administrators, 2017-2018</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• HCPSS-HCAA Agreement (07/01/2015-06/30/2018)</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• HCPSS-HCEA Agreement (07/01/2016-06/30/2018)</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Maryland Teacher and Principal Evaluation Guidebook (Version 3)</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR)</li></ul>

## Teacher and Principal Evaluation Data

The study team analyzed teacher and principal evaluation data in the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school years. The data sets contained overall ratings for 4,431 teachers and 73 principals in 2015-2016, and 4,166 teachers and 73 principals in 2016-2017. The analysis included an examination of the overall distributions of the teacher and principal evaluation ratings, the disaggregated distribution by school level and teacher tenure status, and the changes of the distribution from 2015-2016 to 2016-2017.

## Limitations of the Study

To gain actionable information and timely insights to inform the implementation of the teacher and school-based administrator evaluation system in Howard County, data were collected and analyzed within a relatively short time frame. In addition, the data are perceptual in nature. An examination of the relationship between the evaluation system and student achievement is beyond the scope of this study.

Despite these limitations, consistent findings and trends emerged from the survey responses, interviews, focus groups, and teacher and principal evaluation ratings. Together they draw a clear picture of the strengths as well as areas for improvement of the evaluation system. These findings have important policy implications for the continued implementation and improvement of teacher and school-based administrator evaluation in the district.

## CHAPTER THREE: TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATOR EVALUATION IN HOWARD COUNTY

This chapter examines the implementation of the teacher and school-based administrator evaluation system in Howard County. It focuses on educators' overall perceptions, including expectations of the evaluation system, feedback to teachers and administrators, reflection and instructional dialogues, and the perceived impact of the evaluation system. This chapter also examines teacher and principal evaluation ratings, three key issues in implementing the evaluation system: quality, consistency, and manageability, and the support teachers and administrators need.

### Overall Perceptions of the Evaluation System

Table 3 shows educators' overall perceptions of the evaluation system. It covers the expectations, feedback that administrators and teachers receive, and reflection on instructional practices.

Table 3. Administrator and Teacher Views on the Systemic Context

Systemic Context	Administrators			Teachers		
	A	U	D	A	U	D
The expectations are clear for teachers in the evaluation system.*	90%	5%	6%	66%	9%	24%
The expectations are clear for school-based administrators in the evaluation system.*	80%	9%	11%	38%	40%	22%
The evaluation framework and processes provide useful feedback to teachers.*	79%	11%	10%	32%	15%	53%
The evaluation framework and processes provide useful feedback to school-based administrators.*	59%	22%	19%	22%	38%	40%
The evaluation system encourages reflection on instructional practices.*	79%	14%	6%	54%	12%	34%

Note: Throughout the survey tables and figures of this report, Administrators refers to school-based administrators, including principals, assistant principals, and administrative interns; Teachers refers to classroom teachers and special educators. A = Total Agree, a composite of strongly agree/agree. U = Undecided. D = Total Disagree, a composite of strongly disagree/disagree. \*Indicates statistically significant differences at the 95% confidence level between administrators and teachers. N (administrator) = 179; N (teacher) = 2,704. Percentages reported are "valid percent" when missing data are excluded from the calculations.

### *Expectations of the Evaluation System*

**School-based educators generally believe the evaluation system provides common expectations and language.** The majority of administrators agree that the expectations are clear for teachers (90%), and for the school-based administrators (80%). Also, two-thirds of teachers (66%) believe that the expectations are clear for teachers. Teachers tend to agree to a lesser extent (38%), however, that the expectations in the evaluation system are clear for administrators.

Interviewees indicate they appreciate having common understandings of the expectations across the district.

*The common expectations and language, that's been the best. When you get to different content areas, it is still grounded in the same framework.*

-Central Administrator

*There has been a shift of the county's expectations and there is more collaboration.*

-Principal

*Now we have a system of expectations when looking at instruction. At the core, it provides a way to talk about students and teachers. It enhances those professional conversations. At the personal level, it is helpful to have something that is research-based and well organized. It's a nice tool for talking about teaching...I love the high expectations.*

-Teacher

*There is greater consistency across schools in terms of expectations. There has been a development of school system expectations rather than school expectations.*

-Central Administrator

### *Feedback to Teachers and Administrators*

Teachers and administrators want constructive feedback from their evaluators. Such feedback helps to identify weaknesses and areas for growth and, when coupled with targeted professional development, can help improve teachers' pedagogy and school-based administrators' instructional leadership.

Table 3 shows that nearly eight out of ten administrators (79%) agree that the evaluation framework and processes provide useful feedback to teachers. However, only one-third of teachers (32%) agree while 53% disagree. **Simply put, many teachers do not believe the evaluation system provides them with useful feedback.** In contrast, three-fifths of administrators (59%) found the feedback they receive from their own evaluation to be useful.

Interviewees emphasize the importance of receiving meaningful feedback for purposes of professional growth.

*I hope some changes are made, because I would love to have real, true, and meaningful feedback on my teaching, and more often than every third year as well! I have not had any critical or productive feedback from administrators during my three years of evaluation.*

-Teacher

*The score I get at the end of year does not make me a better leader. What makes the difference is the feedback.*

-Principal

*Telling teachers that the purpose of the evaluation is to provide continuous feedback is important, but then scheduling observations before breaks and towards the end of the year doesn't align. Timely observations and feedback do not happen.*

-Teacher Association Leader

*I want feedback on strategies. I have always wanted meaningful feedback in a timely fashion for growth.*

-Central Administrator

### *Reflection and Instructional Dialogue*

Reflection is critical for improving teaching. It helps teachers to examine what happens in the classroom, and make improvements in their teaching strategies. Findings from the survey and the interviews indicate that **administrators and teachers have differing perceptions on whether the evaluation system is supporting reflection on instructional practices.**

As Table 3 shows, 79% of administrators agree the evaluation system encourages reflection on instructional practices, while only 54% of teachers agree, and one-third of teachers (34%) disagree. In interviews, teachers express a desire to have more opportunities for reflection.

*The purpose is to get us to reflect, but we don't get the chance to reflect. I remember when it was initially rolled out, I was pretty excited. The very detailed framework is comprehensive and we teachers can constantly improve. I don't like the fact that its implementation depends on the person conducting the observation.*

-Teacher

*I feel that the evaluation system pushes us to prove that we are doing our job on top of doing our job. I would love to have an evaluation system that stresses growth and reflection on my practice...I don't think the process leads most teachers to reflect, which is the purpose.*

-Teacher

*I care very much about reflecting on and improving upon my teaching. I would love for continued examination of how we can make the evaluation process most useful for everyone.*

-Teacher

Another key objective of the evaluation system is to promote meaningful dialogue between teachers and school-based administrators. In interviews, **central administrators, principals, and teachers emphasize the importance of having high quality conversations about instruction.** They appreciate the system provides a framework for conversations. However, due to insufficient time, inconsistency in principal expectations, and gaps in instructional leadership at some schools, rich conversations about instruction occur at some schools and not at others.

*The critical piece to the entire process is the conversation with the teacher and feedback, rather than scoring each individual piece of evidence.*

-Principal

*The system, as implemented, is more of a perfunctory crossing items off a list, as opposed to being a useful tool to engage in quality conversations about instruction, instructional delivery, and curriculum...But I want that dialogue. I value the dialogue. I want their feedback.*

-Teacher

*Due to insufficient time, inconsistency in principal expectations, and gaps in instructional leadership at some schools, rich conversations about instruction occur at some schools and not at others.*

*Some administrators will tell you what they want, and some don't tell you anything. Some administrators want this, and some do not. Some teachers take easy ways and get it done, because administrators don't have conversations with them. Some administrators are very serious and rigorous.*

-Teacher

*I want principals to have good quality conversations about instruction.*

-Central Administrator

### Perceived Impact of the Evaluation System

According to the district's guidance documents,<sup>7</sup> the evaluation process for teachers is designed to "promote rigorous standards of professional practice and encourage professional learning" and is expected to "assist teachers in becoming more effective practitioners and lead to increased student achievement." The framework for evaluating school-based administrators, by design, is to "promote leadership expectations and professional learning" and "connect an administrator's evaluation to student growth."

Research shows that when the implementation of evaluation focuses on improving instruction and student achievement, educators see the process as more meaningful. In contrast, when evaluation is driven by complying with mandates, the professional growth dimension is lost and evaluation becomes a compliance-driven activity.<sup>8</sup>

Table 4 indicates that **administrators and teachers have substantial differences of opinion on whether the evaluation system is having a positive impact on instructional practices or school performance.** More than half of the administrators (54%) believe the evaluation system leads to improved instruction, yet only 23% of teachers agree. While 37% of administrators report the evaluation system for administrators leads to improved school performance, only 14% of teachers agree.

Table 4. Administrator and Teacher Views on Evaluation System Impact

Systemic Context	Administrators			Teachers		
	A	U	D	A	U	D
The evaluation system leads to improved instruction.*	54%	28%	18%	23%	22%	55%
The evaluation system for administrators leads to improved school performance. *	37%	40%	23%	14%	44%	42%
The evaluation frameworks and processes are helping to improve my performance.*	51%	23%	26%	22%	18%	60%
The current evaluation system is an improvement over what we had before in Howard County.*	52%	32%	16%	15%	34%	51%

*“The previous system was old and very ambiguous.”*

In addition, 51% of administrators agree that the evaluation frameworks and processes are helping them to improve their performance, but only 22% teachers agree. While administrators are more likely to agree (52%) than to disagree (16%) that the current evaluation system is an improvement over what the district had before, teachers are much more likely to disagree (51%) than to agree (15%).

In interviews, educators note the importance of making the evaluation process meaningful by encouraging instructional conversations and providing high quality feedback.

*I think it is an improvement because it causes people to be reflective. It has specific feedback you can provide teachers when the principal/ assistant principal have conversations with them.*

-Principal

*The previous system was old and very ambiguous. The Danielson Framework provided in-depth understanding of good teaching. For the first time in the county we can define state of the art teaching and learning. It puts words to what we already knew. It is very student focused.*

-Principal

*I found through the process I have a closer relationship with my administrators. They see more of what I am doing.*

-Teacher

*We had a system prior where teachers could go decades without being observed, but it's no longer the case.*

-Central Administrator

Many interviewees believe the district should build on the work to-date of the current evaluation system and make further improvements in the quality of its implementation.

*We can't change this model now. We have a common language around it. We can tweak it, make it better, and take out some of the angst, but we cannot just get rid of it...There are so many good things...This is what you should be doing for good instruction. I really like this!*

-Teacher Association Leader

*The evaluation system, along with other tools we are using, will have an impact on student achievement. Keeping this evaluation system and people knowing what the expectations are, will help improve student achievement... People have some ownership. I want to stay the course with tweaks.*

-Central Administrator

*To try to bring something new would be an enormous mistake. We have invested heavily in this for hours and hours, tens of thousands of dollars on these tools, making principals and teachers aware of the expectations. It will create another huge curve if we try something different.*

-Central Administrator

*I like the framework – it is solid and now that we have had it for several years, it is firmly rooted and provides language we use all of the time.*

-Principal

In schools where the evaluation system is implemented from a true professional growth and support perspective, teachers and administrators report positive results.

*I think it does have an impact. It is that ownership of student learning across the building... Teachers are much more a part of the conversation than before. They are thinking about overall student achievement rather than their own classroom... Teachers that have been teaching for 25 years are being forced to grow. That is why the evaluation is great! Changing the methodology a bit has caused the teachers to be more reflective. It has been a journey, but I think it has been positive.*

-Principal

*I am fortunate to work with some wonderful administrators who not only implement the evaluation process but use it as one of many tools to help support the staff.*

-Teacher

*The community superintendent asked tough questions. It's definitely a huge growth opportunity for me.*

-Principal

However, in some other schools, the quality of the implementation is compromised and educators feel evaluation becomes a compliance-driven activity. Interviewees are concerned that the evaluation system is not helping teachers and administrators to improve at these schools.

*I believed in the framework, but now it's a compliance activity.*

-Principal

*I think that the evaluation system we use is one that, if used effectively, can lead to great instructional opportunities for both our teachers and their students. I think that our administrators are not consistently utilizing the system to help inform instruction and improve teachers. They are just checking another box in the list of things to do rather than using it as a tool to help the teachers in their building improve.*

-Teacher

*Teachers are in compliance. What teachers don't get is that it is about student growth...If teachers don't see the value, then they just check boxes.*

-Administrator Association Leader

*When we get observed and have the scores, then what? What do we do with them? Are we using them to go back to see clearly we are not strong here? How do I use the data to be a better teacher and help my students learn better? I don't see professional growth as a result of the evaluation.*

-Central Administrator

## Teacher and Principal Evaluation Ratings

### *Teacher Evaluation Ratings*

Table 5 presents the distribution of teachers' overall performance ratings in 2015-2016 and 2016-2017. In both years, the vast majority of teachers were rated *Highly Effective* (i.e., 91.9% and 78.9%, respectively), and almost all teachers were rated either *Highly Effective* or *Effective*. This holds true across all school levels and teacher tenure statuses.

In addition, the table shows that in both 2015-2016 and 2016-2017, elementary school teachers received higher ratings than middle school teachers, who in turn, had higher ratings than high school teachers. Across the two years, tenured teachers received higher ratings than non-tenured teachers.

Table 5. Teacher Evaluation Ratings

	2015-2016					2016-2017				
	n	% HE	% E	% I	Difference	n	% HE	% E	% I	Difference
<b>District</b>	4,431	91.9%	7.7%	0.4%		4,166	78.9%	20.5%	0.6%	
By School Level										
Elementary (E)	2,160	93.9%	5.9%	0.1%	E vs. M*	1,969	85.1%	14.3%	0.6%	E vs. M*
Middle (M)	981	91.9%	7.6%	0.4%	E vs. H*	966	78.8%	20.7%	0.5%	E vs. H*
High (H)	1,204	88.3%	10.9%	0.8%	M vs. H*	1,201	68.9%	30.4%	0.7%	M vs. H*
Edu. Center	86	90.7%	9.3%	0.0%		30	73.3%	26.7%	0.0%	
By Tenure Status										
Tenured (T)	3,219	92.9%	6.7%	0.4%	T vs. N*	3,302	79.7%	19.7%	0.6%	T vs. N*
Non-Tenured (N)	1,212	89.3%	10.3%	0.4%		864	75.7%	23.5%	0.8%	

Note. HE = Highly Effective. E = Effective. I = Ineffective. \* indicates statistically significant differences at the 95% confidence level.

Further, from 2015-2016 to 2016-2017, the percentage of teachers rated *Highly Effective* decreased by 13 percentage points, while the percentage of teachers rated *Effective* increased by 12.8 percentage points.

### Principal Evaluation Ratings

Table 6 shows the distribution of principal evaluation ratings. Consistent with the patterns observed above on teacher ratings, the vast majority of principals were rated *Highly Effective* (i.e., 90.4% for 2015-2016, and 78.1% for 2016-2017), and all principals were rated either *Highly Effective* or *Effective*. This holds true across all school levels.

Table 6. Principal Evaluation Ratings

	2015-2016					2016-2017				
	n	% HE	% E	% I	Difference	n	% HE	% E	% I	Difference
<b>District</b>	73	90.4%	9.6%	0.0%		73	78.1%	21.9%	0.0%	
By School Level										
Elementary (E)	40	87.5%	12.5%	0.0%	E vs. M	41	68.3%	31.7%	0.0%	E vs. M*
Middle (M)	19	94.7%	5.3%	0.0%	E vs. H	17	94.1%	5.9%	0.0%	E vs. H
High (H)	12	91.7%	8.3%	0.0%	M vs. H	13	84.6%	15.4%	0.0%	M vs. H
Edu. Center	2	-	-	-		2	-	-	-	

Note. HE = Highly Effective. E = Effective. I = Ineffective. \* indicates statistically significant differences at the 95% confidence level. - indicates the data were suppressed because there were less than 10 cases for the subgroup.

In both years, middle school principals received higher ratings than high school principals who, in turn, had higher ratings than elementary school principals.

Furthermore, from 2015-2016 to 2016-2017, the percentage of principals rated *Highly Effective* decreased by 12.3 percentage points, while the percentage of principals rated *Effective* increased by 12.3 percentage points.

In summary, in both 2015-2016 and 2016-2017, all principals and almost all teachers in the district were rated *Highly Effective* or *Effective*. From 2015-2016 to 2016-2017, however, the percentage of teachers and principals rated *Highly Effective* decreased by approximately 13 percentage points. This change might indicate that the district is using the evaluation system in a more rigorous way or there may have been changes in performance at specific schools.

## Quality, Consistency, and Manageability

Three pivotal and inter-related constructs jointly affect the implementation of the teacher and school-based administrator evaluation system. They are the quality of the evaluation process, the consistency of the quality of implementation within and across schools, and the manageability of the evaluation system.

### Quality

The role of quality is central to the implementation of the evaluation system. It covers all facets of the evaluation components (i.e., observations, artifacts, and SLOs). Previous research has shown that quality matters when conducting observations and implementing SLOs. When conducted effectively, classroom observations can both identify effective teaching practices and predict student achievement.<sup>9</sup> High quality SLOs developed by teachers are found to be positively associated with higher student achievement.<sup>10,11</sup>

### Consistency

Closely connected to quality, consistency is also key to maintaining the integrity of the evaluation system. Survey respondents and interviewees describe the challenge of achieving consistency in the implementation of the evaluation system.

Table 7 shows that a significant majority of administrators (77%) believe the evaluation system is being implemented with consistency at their respective schools. However, teacher responses, as with other survey items, are lower than the administrators. Slightly less than half of teachers (49%) agree the evaluation system is being implemented with consistency, while 17% are undecided and one-third (35%) disagree.

Table 7. Administrator and Teacher Views on Consistency of Implementation

	Administrators			Teachers		
	A	U	D	A	U	D
The evaluation system is being implemented with consistency at my school.*	77%	9%	14%	49%	17%	35%

Interviewees describe the inconsistency of implementation at the schools. They indicate the quality of implementation of the evaluation system is often a function of the instructional leadership skills of the school-based administrator.

*My biggest challenge is consistency...The quality of the evaluators varies. More continuous calibrations are needed.*

-Central Administrator

*There are different practices. Some use it as a “gotcha” and others use it truly as a growth tool for teacher development. So I think it varies from building to building. You can still do a good job, making sure the culture is there. It’s okay to take risks. We encourage that. It depends on the principal and how evaluation is used in every school.*

-Administrator Association Leader

*There is a wide range of administrators. Inter-rater reliability is a problem.*

-Teacher Association Leader

*Consistency is an issue. I’ve been through three administrators, and each has different expectations of what to look for...Expectations are not consistent across the county and between administrators.*

-Teacher

In some schools, the lack of consistency undermines the perceived validity of the evaluation system.

*It is supposed to be a reflective process but the implementation across schools causes it not to be reflective. The system changes the mindset from a growth mindset to an anxiety mindset.*

-Teacher Association Leader

*I strongly value the process of reflecting on practice and growing as an educator. The current system is meant to do just that, but it is implemented so subjectively throughout the school system that in my view, it no longer holds validity. I am split between multiple schools, giving me a first-hand view of the inequitable administration of the evaluation system.*

-Teacher

Some interviewees believe the district, under new leadership, wants to make the evaluation system more meaningful.

*Now teachers are reflecting on their practices and sharing their best practices, principals are conducting walkthroughs, and schools are becoming more vibrant learning communities. That is all starting to happen. We are not there yet.*

-Central Administrator

*We have a lot of flexibility and openness to what we started last year. I hope this will increase the consistency. We need to make it more doable for the professionals.*

-Teacher Association Leader

### Manageability

HCPSS has been implementing the evaluation system concurrently with other major initiatives in instruction and equity. These initiatives jointly increase the demands on time and capacity of school-based educators.

*On manageability, the challenge for administrators is just the sheer number of staff members they are trying to evaluate every year. When they are in the full evaluation year, it is challenging with the number of goal-setting, mid-year, and end-of-year conferences. If you have non-tenured teachers, that meeting time is significant. The process is very powerful and very worthwhile, but very time consuming. I don't think anything has been taken off the principals' plates.*

-Central Administrator

*This system is tedious. I am not sure it needs to address every component, every time, in a full evaluation year, except maybe for the non-tenured teachers. I think a more effective evaluation year would be to choose an area of focus or one domain and develop that deeply through the year.*

-Principal

*I find my administrators less and less able to provide useful constructive feedback as their caseloads grow.*

-Teacher

*Teachers need to spend large amounts of time proving that they provide quality instruction and better the education of students, which takes time from their ability to actually do those things. Teacher workload is tremendously impacted by the evaluation system currently in place.*

-Teacher

Some teachers are particularly concerned about the workload for new teachers. They believe that instead of putting the high demands for evaluation on new teachers, the district should focus on providing more time and support to enhance the quality of instruction.

*The expectations for teachers in years 1-3 are tremendously high. Instead of focusing on developing quality instruction, they are torn in many directions with little support. The fact that for 3 years teachers are expected to collect artifacts for Domains 1 and 4, attend monthly professional development after school (in addition to faculty meetings), be observed 4 times, and complete SLOs is insane. There needs to be more time and opportunity to watch peer teachers and implement good teaching practices instead of focusing on proving that we are doing our jobs.*

-Teacher

*I have concerns for non-tenured teachers. This is a lot to ask of a first year teacher. Perhaps in the future it can be tiered. First year – 4 observations and SLO; second year – 4 observations, SLO, and artifacts for Domain 1; and third year – 4 observations, SLO, and artifacts for Domains 1 and 4. The first year of teaching is overwhelming and I feel that HCPSS is unintentionally making it worse by placing these high demands on new teachers.*

-Teacher

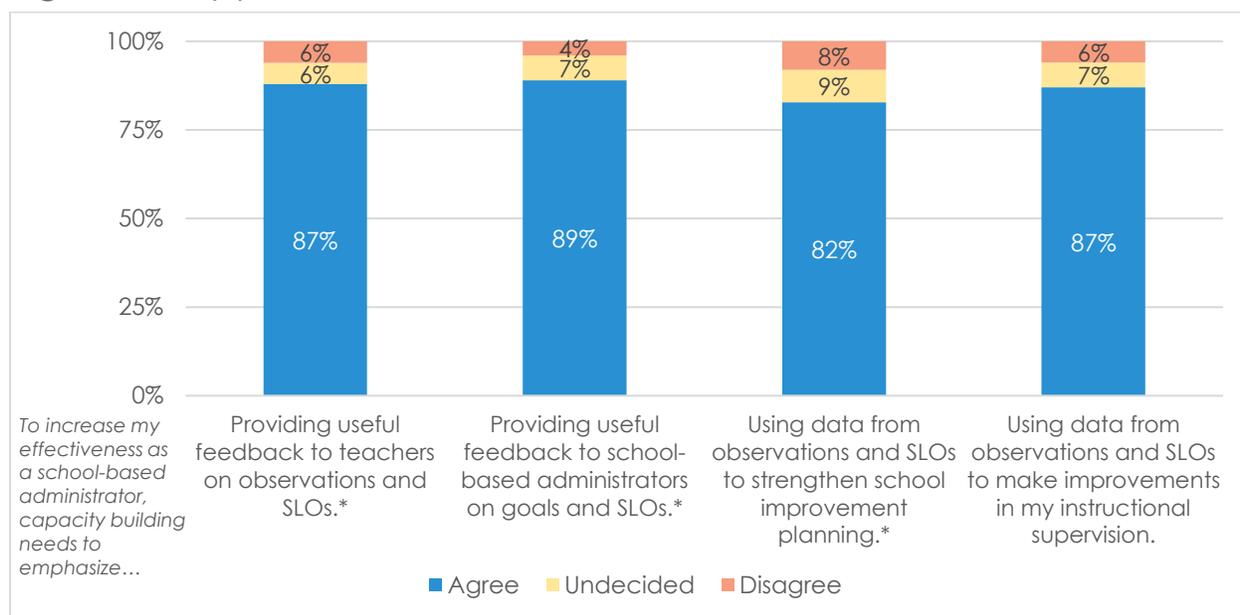
## Capacity Building

The ability of school-based administrators and teachers to effectively manage the evaluation process, engage in instructional conversations, and use evaluation results to support professional growth is key to the successful implementation of the evaluation system.

### *Support for School-Based Administrators*

To a large extent, it falls on the school-based administrators to ensure the evaluation process is implemented consistently and leads to improved instruction and student learning. It is important for school-based administrators to receive continuous support from the district so that they can enhance their capabilities to lead the process with quality and consistency.

Figure 1. Support Administrators Need



*If the needs of principals in key capacity building areas are not met, it can adversely affect their professional growth, and their effectiveness in leading the evaluation process and supporting the teachers.*

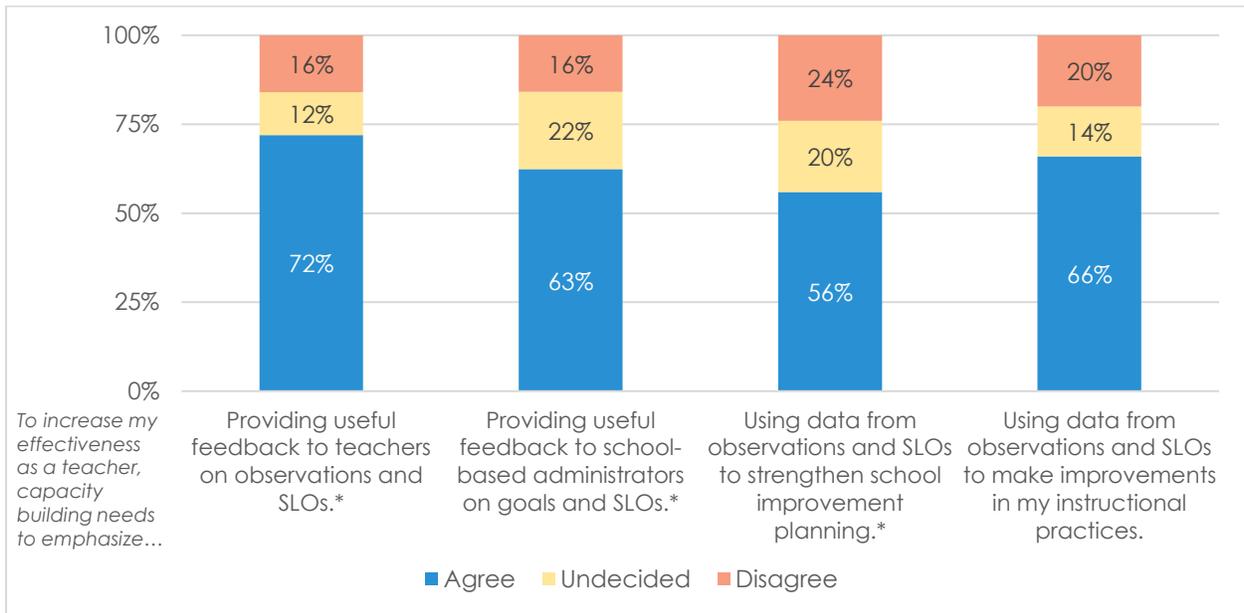
Survey responses show that **school-based administrators want more support from the district to increase their effectiveness.** Figure 1 indicates there are significant percentages of administrators who identify professional needs related to providing useful feedback to teachers on observations and SLOs (87%), receiving useful feedback on goals and SLOs (89%), using data from observations and SLOs to strengthen school improvement planning (82%) and making improvements in their instructional supervision (87%).

These survey responses are important because school-based administrators have the primary responsibility for managing the evaluation process at the school level. If the needs of principals in key capacity building areas are not met, it can adversely affect their professional growth, and their effectiveness in leading the evaluation process and supporting the teachers.

### Support for Teachers

It is noteworthy that **a large percentage of teachers have professional development needs in areas in which site-based administrators indicate similar and greater need.** Specifically, 72% of teachers want to receive useful feedback on observations and SLOs. Also, 66% of teachers believe that capacity building should emphasize using data from observations and SLOs to improve their instructional practices.

Figure 2. Support Teachers Need



The areas identified above can guide the district to better target professional and leadership development efforts. These needs for capacity building also help to explain the variances and inconsistencies that exist in implementation between and among schools.

### Summary

School-based administrators and teachers appreciate the common expectations of the evaluation system. However, teachers do not believe the system provides useful feedback. Administrators and teachers have differing perceptions on whether the evaluation system is supporting reflection or having a positive impact on instructional practices and student learning. Educators emphasize the importance of having richer conversations about instruction between administrators and teachers. In 2015-2016 and 2016-2017, all principals and almost all teachers in the district were rated *Highly Effective* or *Effective*. Meanwhile, large percentages of both administrators and teachers report they need advanced training to increase their effectiveness.

## CHAPTER FOUR: PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

This chapter probes further into the evaluation system and focuses on the four domains of professional practice embedded in the *Framework for Teaching*.

### The Danielson Framework for Teaching

As indicated in Chapter One, the four domains of professional practice comprise 80% of a teacher's final evaluation in Howard County. The *Framework for Teaching* serves as the foundation for this component of the evaluation system.

While acknowledging that it was not developed for the purpose of teacher evaluation, **many educators believe the *Framework for Teaching* is an effective tool for promoting a common language around instruction and for assessing teacher performance.** They report the framework promotes teacher and administrator dialogues, helps teachers to improve their instruction, and supports teachers' professional growth.

*I don't know if I have seen a better model yet. Danielson said it's not for the evaluation purpose. Until I see something radically better, perhaps this is the best we can have. It is a good quality tool. I think we should stay the course.*

-Central Administrator

*The Danielson framework is an effective structure for both teachers and administrators to refer to as a guide when planning instruction and setting personal professional goals. It is less subjective than what we had before and it grounds us across the district.*

-Principal

*I do believe that the Danielson model provides a solid framework for quality teaching. I believe many of those elements can help a struggling teacher to improve and can help to inform professional learning.*

-Teacher

*Many educators believe the Framework for Teaching is an effective tool for promoting a common language around instruction and for assessing teacher performance.*

Some interviewees hope the framework can be adapted to meet the needs of administrators and teachers in specialty areas and in elementary schools. They also believe more high quality professional development for both administrators and teachers on the use of the framework would be helpful.

*The Danielson rubric is very secondary-based. It's difficult for elementary teachers. My principal told me that there is no way to get a 4 in all areas because of the age of the children that I am teaching.*

-Teacher

*The Danielson Framework should be adapted to reflect specific jobs such as Special Education. That's doable and the district is moving in that direction.*

-Principal

*The Danielson Framework benefits curriculum-based content areas but it does not help administrators, who have not been special educators, to evaluate special educators for what they are professionally responsible for doing.*

-Teacher

*I think there is still the disconnection between what it should be and what it is. I was in a "Digging Into Danielson" cohort. Doing that was so eye-opening. It turned my understanding around. You want feedback and this is what should happen. For a lot of teachers, it ends up being more chores they don't understand.*

-Teacher

## Implementing Classroom Observations

Classroom observations are used to assess professional practice in Domains 2 and 3, and comprise 40% of a teacher's final evaluation rating. The district's framework for teacher evaluation<sup>12</sup> requires that classroom observations be conducted by certificated-supervisory personnel who have completed training. It also specifies that an announced observation should include a pre-observation conference, an observation of the lesson or activity, and a post-observation conference. For an unannounced observation, it includes an observation of the lesson or activity and a post-observation conference.

## Quality of the Evaluator

In Table 8, responses show that that **93% of principals and 73% of teachers agree that classroom observations are conducted by qualified observers**. Principals are the primary evaluators of teacher performance and they sign off on the final evaluation documents. Educator confidence in the qualifications of the evaluator helps to build the credibility of the observation process.

Table 8. Administrator and Teacher Views on the Implementation of Classroom Observations

	Administrators			Teachers		
	A	U	D	A	U	D
Classroom observations...						
Are conducted by observers qualified to do the observations.*	93%	6%	1%	73%	10%	17%
Have the same observer/evaluator conducting the conferences and the observations.*	89%	3%	8%	85%	3%	13%
Classroom observations (when conducted by an observer/evaluator as part of the formal evaluation system)...						
Include a pre-observation conference, the observation, and a post-observation conference (in year 1 of the evaluation cycle).*	94%	3%	3%	78%	6%	16%
Include a pre-observation conference, the observation, and a post-observation conference (in years 2 and 3 of the evaluation cycle).*	83%	6%	10%	58%	12%	30%
Include the observation and a post-observation conference (in year 1 of the evaluation cycle).*	85%	6%	10%	75%	11%	14%
Include the observation and a post-observation conference (in years 2 and 3 of the evaluation cycle).*	78%	8%	14%	61%	14%	25%
Classroom observations (when conducted by a non-evaluative observer)...						
Include a pre-observation conference, the observation, and a post-observation conference.*	31%	41%	28%	23%	30%	47%
Include the observation and a post-observation conference.*	38%	40%	22%	35%	29%	36%

## Observations

The standard practice for observations is based on three key elements—the pre-observation conference with the teacher, the actual observation of the teacher in the classroom, and the post-observation conference with the teacher, all conducted by the same evaluator.

Educators indicate that the three key observation elements are followed most consistently during a full evaluation year. Table 8 shows that 89% of principals and 85% of teachers agree that the observations have the same observer/evaluators conducting the conferences and the observations. When observations are conducted by an observer/evaluator as part of the formal evaluation system, 94% of principals and 78% of teachers believe the observations include the

three components of a pre-observation conference, the observation, and a post-observation conference in Year 1 of the evaluation cycle.

Meanwhile, 13% of teachers do not agree that their observations have the same observer/evaluator conducting the conferences and the observations. This suggests that the standard of practice is not followed consistently in all schools. In some cases, a teacher is observed by multiple observers and the observers give the teacher mixed and sometimes differing messages. This indicates more trainings on inter-rater reliability are needed. This inconsistency can diminish the potential impact of the observation process. As teachers explain,

*In some cases, a teacher is observed by multiple observers and the observers give the teacher mixed and sometimes differing messages. This inconsistency can diminish the potential impact of the observation process.*

*It is confusing to be given positive feedback with no negative comments from the head of the elementary department, but hear negative comments from my own administrator. I had two observations in one week (an unannounced and a scheduled non-evaluative observation from the county) and heard two completely different things.*

-Teacher

*The current process is highly subjective. Even with the calibration training, administrators in different (or even the same) buildings have different interpretations and expectations when scoring observations and artifacts within the domains.*

-Teacher

In addition, and equally as important, the table shows the pre-observation conference, the observation, and the post-observation conference are not always happening as intended, especially in years 2 and 3 of the evaluation cycle, and when conducted by a non-evaluative observer. Interviewees indicate that it is often the pre-observation conferences that do not take place.

*In my non-evaluative year, I have not had one visitation from my school administrator.*

-Teacher

*Administrators don't have time to meet with teachers to provide meaningful feedback. Again, it's more of a check to see what was done and how many kids "passed" (or met their targets). This extends to the pre-conference for observations. It is optional and there oftentimes is not time for administrators to have these meetings.*

-Teacher

*I have never had a pre-observation meeting in the 10 years I have been in the county.*

-Teacher

Numerous interviewees indicate that the pre- and post-observation conferences need to be more meaningful and timely.

*To the extent pre- and post-observations happen, I believe it is at a very cursory level.*

-Teacher Association Leader

*Based on my observations and conversations with other staff, I don't think the pre- and the post-conferences are always occurring. If they are, they are basically doing checkboxes, not anything meaningful.*

-Teacher

*I would really like to meet with my administrator and tell her what is happening in the classroom, what we can do better, and how things are going. Instead, I meet with her to press buttons and accept—without her ever asking how things are going. This does not seem helpful for anyone, including the students.*

-Teacher

*As one in the full evaluation year, I waited for weeks before having my post-observation meeting. It was not timely at all.*

-Teacher

Educators suggest that sometimes the inconsistency in the quality of feedback from the observations results from different evaluators having different levels of content knowledge. Also, in some instances, the culture of the school may make it easier for external observers to be more forthright in analyzing teachers' pedagogy.

*One of my biggest issues with observations is that none of my administrators were teachers in my content area. I spent a lot of time in my post-observation conference explaining my content area and justifying what I was doing, instead of having conversations on my lesson.*

-Teacher

*I see a lot of discrepancies between administrators' and curriculum experts' observations because those building administrators have to consider culture and relationships in the building, while the curriculum office does not have that direct tie. They are going to be a little more critical and realistic.*

-Central Administrator

### **Formal and Informal Observations**

Interviewees recommend having more frequent, informal observations of teacher performance. They believe that infrequent, formal observations are often not sufficient to capture the whole scope of teachers' instruction in an authentic and accurate way. Frequent, informal observations better support principals to provide real-time feedback and promote instructional conversations between teachers and principals.

*I receive more information pertaining to instructional strengths and needs by visiting classrooms often.*

-Principal

*It has been my experience that most teachers put on a dog and pony show for the observations—so no real discussions can be had. This is a completely inaccurate view of the classroom. My recommendation is to have more informal observations, and come to see me teach more often.*

-Teacher

*An observation is only a single "snapshot" where the development of instruction and knowing the learner cannot always be observed; therefore, it becomes a judgement... Why can't there be more informal observations conducted when the administrator can provide actual feedback and supports to improve the level of instruction?*

-Teacher

### **Perceived Impact of the Observation Process**

Effectively linking observations to instructional improvement is integral to the credibility of the new evaluation system with teachers. Both school-based administrators and teachers highlight the importance of being purposeful and focusing on instructional improvement in the observation process. Findings from the survey and interviews, however, show that **teachers are divided on whether the observations are informing their professional development or are helping to improve their instruction.**

Table 9 shows that while just 38% of teachers agree that classroom observations are used to inform their professional development, 39% disagree. This suggests that some schools either are not using observation results to inform professional development for teachers, or the administrators have not yet clearly communicated how they are using that information to support their teachers.

Table 9. Administrator and Teacher Views on the Impact of Classroom Observations

	Administrators			Teachers		
	A	U	D	A	U	D
Classroom observations...						
Are used to inform teacher professional development.*	73%	15%	12%	38%	23%	39%
Classroom observations (when conducted by an observer/evaluator as part of the formal evaluation system)...						
Help to improve instruction.*	70%	20%	10%	37%	24%	39%
Classroom observations (when conducted by a non-evaluative observer)...						
Help to improve instruction.*	58%	34%	7%	34%	35%	31%

## Implementing Artifacts

As indicated in Chapter One, teachers are required to submit at least one artifact for each component in Domain 1 (Planning and Preparation) and Domain 4 (Professional Responsibilities). Teachers can choose to use one artifact across multiple components.

In this report, the discussion of artifacts is referring explicitly to their use in Domains 1 and 4 as a part of the professional practice component of the evaluation system.

Interviewees indicate that the collection and submission of artifacts takes too much time. The expectations from administrators are also sometimes inconsistent within and across schools. Most importantly, **teachers do not believe that the artifacts process improves their instruction or supports their professional growth.**

### *Demands of the Artifacts Process*

Educators are concerned that the artifacts process is cumbersome, and takes too much time away from the planning and review of instruction.

*Artifacts consume too much energy and time to prove you are an effective teacher. We should focus on conversations, debriefs, and discussions about instruction instead of proving you are a good teacher.*

-Central Administrator

*Teachers are disgruntled with the busy work with Domains 1 and 4.*

-Teacher Association Leader

*If you follow the micro-management of artifacts, they are required to upload at least one artifact for each component in Domains 1 and 4. It is simply a master's thesis, way too much time on collection. Administrators don't have the time and teachers do not have the time.*

-Principal

*Taking the time to gather all of the artifacts needed is taking away the time that teachers have for planning for instruction in the classroom.*

-Teacher

### *Inconsistent Expectations for Artifacts*

Teachers feel there is significant inconsistency in how the artifacts process is used in schools. They and their principals need more guidance so that the expectations of the artifacts process are clear and consistent across all schools.

*The submission of artifacts needs to be consistent. Some upload them to the system, and some use emails. The number of artifacts vary greatly from school to school.*

-Central Administrator

*There is a lot of inconsistency across buildings in terms of the number of artifacts to collect.*

-Teacher Association Leader

*My overall frustration with the current evaluation process is of the artifacts collection and descriptions that some administrators want while others don't.*

-Teacher

*Please strongly consider adding clear, specific, and direct language with regards to the evaluation in terms of number of artifacts—including a maximum number—in an effort to make all administrators accountable for doing it in an equitable and consistent manner.*

-Teacher

## Perceived Impact of Artifacts

**Many educators question the value of the artifacts process. Their experiences with the artifacts process undermines their perceptions of the worth of the evaluation system.**

*Having to produce artifacts to show evidence of Domains 1 and 4 is a futile task as a good building leader knows whether a teacher is effective in those components. I don't feel the artifacts process improves instruction.*

-Principal

*The collection of artifacts and the process of having them uploaded is time consuming and generally unrelated to planning or designing quality instruction.*

-Teacher

*The task of completing Domain 1 and Domain 4 artifacts to support the teacher evaluation tool is not an effective means to evaluate teacher practices. This task is simply a task that has no real value in creating a reflective teacher.*

-Teacher

*The process could be reflective but the other elements like artifact collection and scoring don't allow for this. It is like "You've put me in a box."*

-Teacher Association Leader

Some teachers believe observations and SLOs are better approaches to evaluating teachers. They recommend having a project/portfolio component instead of artifacts in the evaluation system.

*The SLO and observation portions of the evaluation system are straight forward and greatly improve instruction. The artifact portion is tedious and serves no purpose for either instruction or feedback.*

-Teacher

*Many educators question the value of the artifacts process.*

*The need to gather multiple artifacts for each standard, defend them in writing and enter them into the given electronic system is an unreasonable expectation. We already have enough on our plates as teachers. Having observations and using SLOs should be enough to evaluate tenured teachers.*

-Teacher

*Many teachers feel as if this Danielson artifact presentation is similar to a graduate school project. Teachers who are evaluated should choose one or two priorities for the school year and create a portfolio that shows how they worked on the skill throughout the year, rather than create a full PowerPoint and presentation of 12 various, specific artifacts. This would benefit teachers because they would choose what they want to improve on and they would have the opportunity of more personal reflection, rather than simply meeting demands of Danielson artifacts.*

-Teacher

## Summary

Interviewees generally believe the *Framework for Teaching* is a helpful tool for evaluating teacher performance. Many educators report, however, that the quality of implementation of observations and artifacts varies between and within schools, the processes are not promoting instructional conversations, and not enhancing professional growth for teachers. A lack of quality and consistency undermines the credibility and usefulness of the evaluation system.

## CHAPTER FIVE: STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The state law of Maryland requires that student growth be a significant component in a local education agency's evaluation system for teachers and principals (COMAR 13A.07.09.04). In the state's teacher and principal evaluation models, student growth is measured by Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) which comprise 50% of the final ratings for teachers and principals. Different from other growth measures (e.g., VAMs), SLOs are based on the premise that increased student academic growth comes from improvements in teachers' instructional practices and principals' instructional leadership.

This chapter focuses on the implementation of SLOs in Howard County. It reviews the research base for SLOs and the role SLOs play in the district's evaluation system. It then examines the quality of the SLO process, SLO-related professional development for school-based educators, and the importance of instructional conversations and feedback.

### The Research Base for SLOs

**When implemented with fidelity, research shows that the SLO process is associated with improved instructional practices and increased student achievement.** Research from Denver and Charlotte-Mecklenburg shows that positive changes in instructional practice and student academic growth result from SLOs that are crafted at a high level of quality. These results come, in part, from allowing ample opportunity for teachers and their supervisors to engage in authentic conversations and reflect on best practices for improving student learning.<sup>13</sup>

In Austin, research finds a number of positive impacts of the SLO process on teachers' instructional practice: teachers who crafted high quality SLOs had more collaboration with colleagues, felt the SLO process positively changed their instructional strategies, believed SLOs had improved their teaching, and reported greater use of data. The researchers concluded that "...the SLO process was linked with improvements to desirable instructional practices."<sup>14</sup>

Simply put, research shows that **it is the quality of SLOs and the thinking process associated with SLOs that matter.**

### SLOs in Howard County's Evaluation System

In Howard County, SLOs are the sole tool for measuring student growth for teacher and school-based administrator evaluation. The weighting of SLOs for teacher evaluation has decreased from 50% to 20% of the evaluation score; the number of SLOs has been reduced from two to one. According to the district's guidebook, teacher SLOs are "developed by teachers" and "focus on student learning, promote critical conversations about instruction and assessment, and use evidence of student growth to guide professional learning that targets instructional improvement."<sup>15</sup>

School-based administrators select one SLO that aligns with the school improvement plan. This SLO comprises 20% of their final evaluation rating. The SLOs are intended to provide “a direct link between the leadership actions of school-based administrators and school improvement” and guide “data analysis and conversations to impact instructional decisions and adjustments.”<sup>16</sup>

The district’s evaluation system intends for SLOs to be used as a vehicle for having conversations about instruction between school-based educators and their evaluators. SLOs are also expected to catalyze reflection on ways to use instructional and leadership practices to improve student achievement.

## Quality of the SLO Process

Educators suggest that **there needs to be marked improvement in the quality of the SLO process in the district.** Many teachers neither have a solid understanding nor feel ownership of the SLO process. The district lacks an SLO quality rating rubric to support teachers to craft high quality SLOs and school-based administrators to approve SLOs. Most importantly, many educators do not believe the SLO process is currently helping them to have valuable instructional conversations or to receive high quality feedback from their evaluators to support their professional growth.

### *Understanding and Ownership of the SLO Process*

**Interviewees indicate a lack of understanding of the rationale for crafting SLOs.** Many report the foundational understanding of why the district does SLOs is missing, even though some teachers and principals appreciate the instructional focus of the SLO process.

*Why do we do SLOs? We lost the foundation of why we are doing it.*

-Administrator Association Leader

*They gave us exemplars. Then our curriculum staff here took them and published them as resources. Nobody understood what SLOs are. They used them verbatim. The majority of the staff saw it as compliance.*

-Principal

*SLOs are expected to develop student-centered learning, gather data, and make pedagogical decisions based on the data.*

-Teacher

*Setting goals using SLOs, collecting data, and discussing student progress is where most of our time should be spent.*

-Principal

Interviewees report the expectations of the SLO process are inconsistent between schools.

*I feel there is not a lot of consistency or direction when it comes to the SLO process. I have recently changed elementary schools, and things are done completely differently at my new school. This leads me to believe that all teachers are not being measured in the same way. Teachers need to be provided with more consistent expectations for SLOs.*

-Teacher

To support the implementation of SLOs, the district developed an SLO library years ago. The intent was to get the SLO process up and running. This practice was helpful at the early stage of SLO implementation as it acquainted teachers with the components and procedures of SLOs.

*With the SLOs in the library, at the beginning, we were just trying to have something to build on and get teachers started. Some SLOs in the library were not great.*

-Central Administrator

In practice, some principals tell teachers, individually or as a group, to choose an SLO, sometimes verbatim, from the SLO library. This practice differs in substance and spirit from the intent of SLOs which are to encourage teachers to go through an instructional thinking process and to craft their own SLOs based on the specific learning needs of the students.

Educator ownership of the SLO process is critical. Research suggests that to develop high quality SLOs, teachers and school-based administrators need, on an ongoing basis, to identify gaps in student learning in targeted areas, focus on content and apply effective instructional strategies to address those gaps, assess student progress, and make adjustments in instructional practices needed to help students learn better.<sup>17</sup> However, many interviewees report the SLO process is administrator-driven and teachers do not have ownership of their SLOs.

*SLO selection is administratively driven... Teachers just copy SLOs from the district library. The administrators want teachers to use them because it is easier. Teachers are made to use the SLO models.*

-Teacher Association Leader

*What you have to learn is to write SLOs not only for you, but also for your evaluator. If they don't understand or like it, you have to change it. It is more about giving the persons who conduct the evaluation what they want to see, rather than something that provides an opportunity for you to grow. It should be both. But the first thing that goes to mind is what they want.*

-Central Administrator

*I don't think I have seen one teacher create an authentic SLO. The libraries probably need to be reviewed and revised. Not everything in the library is of high quality. They have not been reviewed since they were developed.*

-Principal

*For my SLO, I was told what I had to do for my SLO. I was not allowed to pick my topic. I do not feel like SLOs are directly related to classroom instruction.*

-Teacher

Although less common, some teachers choose to craft their own SLOs, which are subject to the approval of their evaluator. This practice supports teachers to have more instructionally relevant SLOs and promotes instructional dialogue between teachers and school-based administrators. Some principals report that it is often the high achieving teachers in the school who develop their own SLOs. The teachers believe having ownership is a benefit of the SLO process.

Meanwhile, changes made to the weight and the number of SLOs might have had an adverse impact on the quality of the SLO process. When the district reduced the weighting of SLOs in the evaluation system from 50% to 20%, an intent was to encourage teachers to set rigorous goals and enhance the quality of SLOs. Actual practice, though, sometimes deviated from this intent.

*When SLOs accounted for 50% of teacher evaluation, teachers felt if you picked a robust SLO and you did not make appropriate growth, your evaluation would suffer.*

-Central Administrator

Reducing the weighting from one-half to one-fifth of the final evaluation rating might also have unintentionally sent a message to educators in Howard County that the SLO process is of less value and significance, thus leading some educators to not take it seriously.

*You can pretty much do anything you want with SLOs. We were able to get rid of one SLO and take the weight of the SLO down to 20%. There were a lot of teachers rated satisfactory who should not get that. Their SLOs and the weight of the SLOs took them to that area.*

-Teacher Association Leader

*The theory behind the evaluation process using SLOs and Danielson may be valid but the implementation is so haphazard, and in many instances presented as insignificant, that it is not taken seriously. Also, the lack of training for what is expected is unnerving, as well.*

-Teacher

## High Quality SLOs

As Table 10 shows, only 61% of school-based administrators agree they have received information about what distinguishes high quality SLOs from low quality SLOs, and 12% are undecided and 26% disagree. This is noteworthy given that the SLO process has been formally implemented for several years in the district, and school-based administrators are the individuals responsible for approving SLOs and supporting teachers through the process. The responses are even less positive for teachers. Only 54% of teacher respondents agree that they receive such information while one-third of teachers do not believe they do.

*Despite several years of implementing the evaluation system, it is still challenging for many educators to identify and craft high quality SLOs.*

Table 10. Administrator and Teacher Views on SLOs Development

Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) As a teacher or school-based administrator, I receive...	Administrators			Teachers		
	A	U	D	A	U	D
Information about what distinguishes high quality SLOs from low quality SLOs.*	61%	12%	26%	54%	11%	35%
Guidance in selecting learning content for SLOs.*	67%	14%	19%	57%	10%	33%
Guidance in selecting research-based instructional strategies for SLOs.*	51%	19%	30%	38%	13%	49%
Recommendations for selecting pre/post assessments for SLOs.*	53%	15%	31%	46%	12%	42%
Valid and reliable approaches to setting growth targets for SLOs.*	47%	19%	34%	42%	17%	41%
Opportunities to review and refine my SLOs.	76%	10%	14%	71%	11%	18%

Interviewees also indicate that, **despite several years of implementing the evaluation system, it is still challenging for many educators to identify and craft high quality SLOs.**

*I don't think it's very clear what high quality SLOs are. We don't have an SLO quality rating rubric. There is a library of SLOs and they are of varying quality especially at the elementary level. We talk about what and how useful the tools are, but the point really needs to be made that it depends on whether the principal implements the process with fidelity. My teachers are working on this to align their SLOs to the school improvement plan.*

-Administrator Association Leader

*I don't think I have seen one teacher create an authentic SLO. We have room for improvement with SLOs.*

-Principal

In fall 2014, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) introduced an SLO quality rating rubric to all 24 districts through state-sponsored regional training sessions. Drawing on national best practices, the rubric is designed to support the rigorous and consistent implementation of high quality SLOs. The rubric provides guidance on crafting a high quality SLO, including: assessing baseline data and the student population to be targeted, determining the learning content to be covered, selecting appropriate instructional strategies, selecting the assessment to be used, setting rigorous and realistic growth targets, and providing the rationale for the SLO selections.

Interviewees indicate that **Howard County is not using an SLO quality rating rubric**. Yet educators report they would like to have more guidance on determining the quality of SLOs.

*The SLO process is extremely frustrating. Not the monitoring of student growth, but what is deemed quality or not quality SLOs. There is no clear direction...The current evaluation system causes anxiety.*

-Teacher

*Setting SLO goals and the process for determining high quality versus low quality SLOs is an issue. When SLOs were first introduced, guidance was provided through the curriculum office. In the last few years, there has been very little guidance, including the appropriate assessments to use for pre/post. I find it interesting that teachers can select their SLO objective, the group of students, etc. but administrators cannot.*

-Principal

Table 10 also presents SLO-related findings regarding the guidance and support administrators and teachers receive in selecting learning content, identifying research-based instructional strategies, selecting pre/post assessments, and setting growth targets. **School-based educators need customized professional development to strengthen the quality and the consistency of SLO implementation.**

### *Learning Content and Instructional Strategies for SLOs*

Research shows that the learning content and instructional strategies are both critical and should be the drivers of the SLO process.<sup>18</sup> The learning content reflects the standards that students need to master, and the utilization of research-based instructional strategies helps students to master the standards.

As Table 10 shows, two-thirds of administrators (67%) and three-fifths of teachers (57%) believe that they receive guidance in selecting learning content for SLOs. Still, one-fifth of administrators (19%) and one-third of teachers (33%) do not think so. The percentages are lower for instructional strategies. Only half of administrators (51%) and two-fifths (38%) of teachers report that they receive guidance in selecting research-based instructional strategies for SLOs, while 30% of administrators and 49% of teachers disagree.

### *Assessments and Student Growth Targets*

In a similar pattern, Table 10 indicates that 53% of school-based administrators and 46% of teachers believe they receive recommendations for selecting pre/post assessments for SLOs. Yet one-third of administrators (31%) and two-fifths of teachers (42%) do not believe they receive this guidance.

Consistent with the survey responses, many interviewees report they are not adequately prepared to select valid assessments. Moreover, some believe the targets should be based on growth instead of benchmarks.

*I don't think SLOs always encourage us to look for the best objective assessments because you are told you have to reach this level of achievement...The validity of the assessments is not scrutinized. It's totally subjective.*

-Teacher

*I believe that the SLO system we currently have could use some improvement. At this point in our school, any child who doesn't meet the benchmark is seen as not having met even if they made tremendous progress. In the past we had a target which focused on growth, not a benchmark. I believe that is better as it focuses more on meeting the child where they are and taking them further rather than having a child "count against" you because they began at such a deficit and, even though they made tremendous growth, it wasn't enough to meet the predetermined benchmark...I think it makes sense to look at student growth so I don't have a problem with the SLO model, I just think it should be focused on growth and should be individualized like our instruction, not some flat goal every child must hit.*

-Teacher

Setting rigorous yet realistic student growth targets is a challenging part of the SLO process for many teachers and administrators. Less than half of school-based administrators (47%) and teachers (42%) believe they have valid and reliable approaches to setting growth targets for SLOs (Table 10).

When trying to strike a balance between rigor and realism, some educators chose less rigorous and more attainable targets in their SLOs. This practice undercuts the thinking process and compromises the quality of SLOs.

*We need to consider the quality of SLOs. During goal-setting meetings we need to ensure that we are not letting folks get away with low level goals. To ensure SLOs are rigorous, we believe there needs to be conversations between teachers and the principal.*

-Central Administrator

*I find the SLOs to be somewhat of a waste of time. I find that teachers select SLOs that they are easily able to achieve and are scared to challenge themselves.*

-Principal

*Teachers choose targets they know they can reach because choosing ambitious targets will likely lead to failure under this system. It's damaging to creativity, ambition, and the risks necessary for growth.*

-Teacher

*At the end of the day, when I have the SLO results to show to my administrator, the data is not that meaningful. I feel a lot of us pick the ones that are attainable for the goals and the types of questions we ask.*

-Teacher

It is noteworthy that in some schools, the principal and teachers are challenging themselves to set more rigorous growth targets as a consequence of having better instructional dialogue. They believe that having rich conversations contributes to better results, including instructional improvement and professional growth.

*My teachers are willing to take risks. I encourage my teachers that partial attainment is fine because you are setting a rigorous target. It's not a shame. They are high achievers. I feel the most growth happens when they don't get full attainment. They ask, what could I have done differently?*

-Administrator Association Leader

*For me, it goes back to the reflection. It teaches me a lot about how I am teaching. Again, it's that conversation with SLOs that is important. So here are the activities I did to meet the targets. It's that good focus for educators to see that progress.*

-Teacher

*I picked a rigorous target. They grew but not as much as I predicted with my target. What is good is that my supervisor knows it is one piece of data. We discussed overall progress. The conversations with my supervisor are very valuable. They can see what we are doing.*

-Principal

*I spend a lot of time with my teachers changing targets to set high expectations for students and I don't think there is consistency in how the targets are set.*

-Principal

The district's Framework for Teacher Evaluation specifies that during the mid-year review, teachers can revise their SLO target in consultation with their primary evaluator. Table 10 shows that the majority of both the school-based administrators (76%) and teachers (71%) agree that they have opportunities to review and refine their SLOs. While some teachers appreciate the flexibility to make mid-course adjustments, others are concerned that this practice may undermine the rigor and validity of the SLO process.

*What I love about SLOs is that we have good conversations...I really want the SLO to be an important goal so I let them reset the SLO so that it is meaningful and doesn't scare them.*

-Principal

*I do appreciate that the goals can be adjusted for individual students, based on the mid-point data.*

-Teacher

*If you are not meeting SLOs, you can just change your target, and then you meet it.*

-Teacher

The state-sponsored training in 2014 introduced six approaches to setting growth targets which are commonly used across the nation. The survey and interview responses show that additional training is needed to adequately support school-based administrators and teachers in this area.

## Professional Development on SLOs

Previous discussions have identified the needs of many school-based administrators and teachers to receive customized, high quality professional development on SLOs to strengthen both the quality and consistency of the SLO process. Survey and interview responses show that many needs are still unmet.

Table 11 presents the survey results related to the professional development that educators receive during the SLO process. School-based administrators agree that they receive professional development when developing SLOs (50%), or during and after the implementation of SLOs (42%). One-third or more of administrators do not believe so (33% and 40%, respectively).

Table 11. Administrator and Teacher Views on SLO-Related Professional Development

Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) As a teacher or school-based administrator, I receive...	Administrators			Teachers		
	A	U	D	A	U	D
Professional development when developing SLOs.*	50%	17%	33%	38%	16%	47%
Professional development during and after the implementation of SLOs.*	42%	18%	40%	30%	16%	54%

Teachers' responses are even lower. Only 38% of teachers agree they receive professional development when developing SLOs, or during and after the implementation of SLOs (30%). Many more teachers feel they do not receive that support (47% and 54%, respectively).

Consistent with survey findings, interviewees report **there is a lack of high quality training on SLOs for teachers and administrators.**

*I have received zero assistance with creating and implementing my SLO this year. I am new to the county, not new to teaching.*

-Teacher

*I don't think we are providing SLO specific trainings. There are models. At some point, it becomes compliance.*

-Central Administrator

*Administrators know it's a jumping hoops process, so they don't want to spend a lot of time doing professional development on SLOs.*

-Teacher

*I have never gotten SLO training. I have been guided by fellow teachers but no one has ever talked about SLOs, it was never done in new teacher orientation, PDs, or with my administrator, because everyone is too worried about Danielson.*

-Teacher

The lack of high quality SLO-related training for school-based administrators is noteworthy as the quality of SLO implementation is a function of the capacity and belief of the school-based administrators who are expected to lead the process and support teachers.

*SLOs are something my teachers do to have their boxes checked off. They put the approved SLO on the shelf and it does not inform instruction. It's a shortcoming of leadership on my part.*

-Principal

*Administrators seem disdainful that SLOs are a useful exercise. Very little discussion is ever given about my SLO.*

-Teacher

*The SLO, in theory, is a great tool. However, this is subjective as well, depending on the evaluator.*

-Teacher

*Mostly we do SLOs as a team and we use the same one. We don't get help from the administrators.*

-Teacher

## Instructional Dialogue and Integration of SLOs

*"We need guidance on how to design instruction based on SLOs."*

The strength of the SLO process comes from engaging school-based educators and their evaluators in conversations on pedagogy and leadership practices. In particular, **educators emphasize the importance of aligning SLOs with instruction, standards, and student**

**assessments.** Some report the SLO component, though, is siloed in their schools. Moreover, most interviewees indicate that the SLOs are not being used as continuous reference documents.

*SLOs can be great if there is more flexibility, and if used as a conversation tool, conversations with other colleagues, meaningful conversations. The SLO must be an integral part of instruction.*

-Central Administrator

*SLOs need to be revisited so they are more organic. We have a formula for SLOs but we need guidance on how to design instruction based on SLOs.*

-Teacher Association Leader

*Teachers often see SLOs as an isolated teaching target instead of an important part of a bigger picture.*

-Principal

*I would love to be in a school where the data conversations are tied to SLOs and instruction. I haven't been in one building long enough to make this happen, and to align the school improvement plan, SLOs, and instruction.*

-Principal

### **SLOs and Instructional Dialogue**

In some schools, **school-based educators and their evaluators cite the value of SLOs in improving their craft, supporting their professional growth, and enhancing student learning.**

*Having SLOs is a positive. I like having conversations on SLOs which are more instructive and constructive, and lead to better teaching. These are opportunities we did not take full advantage of. For administrator evaluations, I like the SLO component. Having a student achievement component is important.*

-Central Administrator

*Our focus is more on the discussion of the SLO. How did you help the students? How did you change your instruction? The biggest point is the conversation, using the SLO to help teachers be reflective on their practice. How did I expand my practice? Conversations about SLOs have made the biggest change with instruction.*

-Principal

*The great part of evaluation for me is to dig deeper into the progress of individual students.*

-Principal

*The information I gather from my SLOs is very helpful in determining next steps for my students.*

-Teacher

**In schools where educators have experiences which underscore the instructional value of SLOs, they see SLOs as a strong component of the evaluation system.**

*The SLO component is really good! It gives a teacher and an administrator a goal and holds people accountable for that goal. The SLOs should stay.*

-Principal

*Now that we are adept at working with the SLO process of evaluation, we should stick with it and continue to refine it. Nothing frustrates me more than spending so much time over a 3-5-year period learning a new system, only to have it replaced with a brand new system. I hope we continue using and refining it in the next 5 years.*

-Teacher

*The SLOs are good – something to keep. They target accountability and student growth. They cause teachers to work together and connect to the observation. Maybe we can tweak it a little bit, and make the SLO process more rigorous.*

-Principal

**However, in some other schools, SLOs are not being used to inform or drive instruction.**

*I think it's very artificial. When it first came onto the scene, my department did a wonderful job developing some workable SLOs with us. Now it's just kind of gone. Just seems the same ones year after year...SLOs in our school is definitely not driving instruction.*

-Teacher

*My administrators never do walk-throughs. When it is time to meet for SLOs, they are quick to critique without even knowing who we are as teachers. It is merely a checklist.*

-Teacher

## SLOs and Feedback

Table 12 shows that **the connection between SLOs and improved instruction is often not made**. Only three-fifths of school-based administrators (60%) and two-fifths of teachers (40%) believe they receive feedback from their supervisors on the connection between SLOs and improved instruction. In other words, there exists a large percentage of administrators (22%) and teachers (44%) who do not believe they receive feedback from their supervisors on connecting SLOs and instruction.

Table 12. Administrator and Teacher Views on SLO Feedback

Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) As a teacher or school-based administrator, I receive...	Administrators			Teachers		
	A	U	D	A	U	D
Feedback from supervisors on the connection between SLOs and improved instruction.*	60%	18%	22%	40%	15%	44%

## Summary

School-based administrators and teachers report they need a better understanding of the rationale for SLOs. They also need a rating rubric to increase the quality of SLOs. Many school-based educators need more SLO-related professional development. They emphasize the SLO process should facilitate instructional conversations and feedback, promote rigor, and encourage teachers to reflect on their instructional practices and principals on their instructional leadership. Administrators and teachers believe that when implemented effectively, SLOs can be a valuable tool to support teachers and administrators to improve their instruction and leadership practices. When implemented poorly, educators see SLOs as a compliance activity.

## CHAPTER SIX: ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Howard County Public School System is at a critical juncture. District and association leaders are jointly committed to improving the evaluation system for teachers and school-based administrators. The challenge is to make changes which reinforce the connections between meaningful evaluation, effective instruction, and strategic support of school-based educators.

The following recommendations focus on ways to strengthen the implementation of the system and, in particular, reinforce the instructional emphasis of educator evaluation. They provide the Howard County Public School System with an actionable pathway for making continuing improvements.

### Issue One: District Priorities and Instructional Integration

#### *Overview*

A coherent approach to educator effectiveness depends on the ability to integrate evaluation with district goals for instruction and student learning. Rather than treating evaluation as an add-on or compliance activity, the districtwide focus needs to be on using the evaluation system to help strengthen classroom practice. In turn, this means that the district has to provide the necessary support to the schools so that quality and consistency are the underpinnings of the evaluation system.

#### *Recommended Action*

*Reconfirm the purpose and importance of the evaluation system.* Inconsistencies in implementation reflect different understandings at the school level of the value of the evaluation system. There needs to be a clear statement from district leaders, backed up by coordinated actions, of the intent of the evaluation system and how it is going to be used to help more teachers and school-based administrators be more effective with more students.

*Make the connections between the evaluation system and instructional support.* This should be a cabinet level priority. Major initiatives in evaluation, instruction, and equity are stronger when integrated. To the extent that their implementation is siloed or disconnected, their overall impact lessens as does their potential to be mutually reinforcing.

In this context, the cabinet should regularly examine how well best practices in observations and SLOs are understood and acted upon in the schools, and ascertain the extent to which the schools and district support units are implementing the evaluation system with fidelity. Moreover, the cabinet is an appropriate forum for identifying recurring issues across multiple schools, emerging from the use of observations and SLOs, which require a district support response.

*Leverage content and professional development expertise in support of the evaluation system.* Due to the inter-woven relationship of the evaluation system, the district's overall instructional and equity priorities, and school leadership capacity, the district needs to provide a carefully integrated set of supports to the schools. In practical terms, this means that true responsibility for ensuring the effective implementation of the evaluation system has to be shared among several divisions, not just those with line responsibility for evaluation.

Despite recent budgetary and staff reductions, the district has extensive expertise in content areas and in professional and leadership development. The Division of Human Resources and Leadership Development, Division of School Management and Instructional Leadership, and Division of Academics all have resources which, used in careful coordination, can markedly enhance the implementation of observations and SLOs, and increase the depth and usefulness of instructional conversations at the schools.

### *Impact*

The more that teachers and site-based administrators see and trust that the district is using the evaluation system to actively help them to strengthen instruction, and is respecting them as professionals in the process, the greater the improvements in professional growth and student results.

## Issue Two: Professional Practice

### *Overview*

Teachers and school-based administrators must have a clear and shared understanding of high quality instructional practices and the most effective ways to use observations and artifacts to strengthen those practices. The benefit of the observation and artifacts process lies in the dialogue that the teacher and observer have about instruction and the supported opportunities teachers have to build on strengths and improve practice.

### *Recommended Action*

*Deepen understanding of the intent and application of the observation framework.* Teachers and school-based administrators need greater practical understanding of the interrelationship among the four domains within the framework and the underlying components so that teaching and learning are viewed as connected rather than a checklist of observable behaviors. Establishing and building on this understanding provides the foundation for improved teacher-administrator interactions and greater consistency in how the evaluation system is being used at the school level.

*Increase the depth and frequency of instructional conversations.* Principals and teachers must be able to have instructionally-focused conversations that are substantive, reflect a deep understanding of pedagogy, and result in improved practice. In this context, principals need to be vigilant in conducting more frequent, informal classroom visits to ensure that they have a

broader and more in-depth picture of a teacher’s actual instructional practices. Further, by conducting more frequent, informal observations, principals have greater opportunity to provide real-time feedback to teachers.

*Review the artifacts process.* Reflection is critical for professional growth. The artifacts process is intended to provide an opportunity for teachers to reflect on their pedagogy. It is also meant to provide evidence—rather than proof—of a teacher’s practice. The current use of artifacts in the district is time consuming and is perceived as falling short of providing an accurate measure of a teacher’s work. In contrast, the artifacts process is stronger when it occurs on an ongoing basis with principal support and guidance. The dialogue between the teacher and principal needs to focus on the teacher’s instruction rather than the ability to assemble and present artifacts. The district must provide clarification on the purpose and process for the collection and use of artifacts.

### *Impact*

The district is using the *Framework for Teaching* as an anchor component of the evaluation system. Moving forward, it needs to be used more consistently and effectively to improve instruction at all schools, and not used as an activity checklist at some schools.

## Issue Three: Implementation of SLOs

### *Overview*

Howard County needs a thoughtful reset of its SLO process. Nineteen years of national research and practice emphasize the importance of implementing SLOs at a high level of quality. High quality correlates to increases in student academic growth. Simply put, this is an area where Howard County has to make significant improvements.

### *Recommended Action*

*Strengthen the overall SLO process.* In a pedagogically-focused SLO implementation, more is involved than crafting high quality SLOs alone. An effective SLO process includes examining standards and instructional strategies, developing deeper understandings of approaches to growth target setting, customizing professional and leadership development, and using learnings from implementation to improve teacher and administrator practice and student learning. Howard County needs to emphasize these areas, at school and central office levels, as it moves forward with SLOs.

*Provide an SLO Quality Rating Rubric.* Quality is key when implementing SLOs. National practice shows that the effective use of a 4-level quality rating rubric advances the thinking process of teachers and principals regarding content, instruction, and student learning. The rubric provides a field-proven vehicle for facilitating dialogue on instructional planning and quality, and determining the quality of individual SLO components and the overall SLO.

*Provide a resource library of annotated SLOs.* Again, it's the thinking process that counts for teachers and administrators in a meaningful SLO process. Rather than providing "model" SLOs, Howard County needs to promote a deeper understanding of quality in the crafting of SLOs by providing content for and electronic access to annotations of SLOs from diverse grades and subject areas.

### *Impact*

HCPSS needs a better SLO process. Research shows that the quality of SLOs is positively and significantly associated with improved student academic growth. High quality SLOs make a difference for students and school-based educators. The district's approach needs to be recast to advance and increase the quality of SLO implementation.

## Issue Four: Capacity Building

### *Overview*

School-based educators indicate clear needs for customized support and professional development. The district has the opportunity to use data from the evaluations to guide and steer an effective response to these needs.

### *Recommended Action*

*Provide advanced training to teachers and administrators.* This training needs to focus on detailed analyses of instructional practice and leadership, gaps, and ways to improve the planning and delivery of instruction.

The professional development related to observations and artifacts needs to provide greater clarity and support regarding high quality practices, calibration, and two-way feedback. The SLO-related professional development must provide practical guidance in the main instructional elements of identifying pivotal standards, linking standards to research-based instructional strategies, and using formative and summative measures to determine student progress in meeting growth targets.

*Use data from the evaluations to inform and drive professional development.* The teacher and school-based administrator evaluation system provides specific information on the factors affecting educator performance and student learning. The learnings drawn from observations, artifacts, and SLOs need to be readily available and used to inform professional development offerings at both the district and school levels. By using evaluation data to inform professional development, the district reinforces the connection between the evaluation process and improved instructional practice. Moreover, taking this step demonstrates the district's respect for educators as professionals by enabling the needs of the schools to drive the district agenda for professional development.

*Position principals for success.* The leadership of principals is key to the effective implementation of the evaluation system. Their impact depends on their ability to leverage the use of observations, artifacts, and SLOs to provide evidence of and improve the instructional practice of teachers. In addition to providing principals with professional development, the district needs to recognize that time—where it is spent and how it is used—also contributes to successful implementation. If principals are expected to use the components of the evaluation system as powerful levers for instructional improvement, then that use of time needs to become the priority; it cannot be an add-on responsibility. Therefore, district and school leaders need to seriously consider what other responsibilities can be taken off of the plate of principals so this priority for their time becomes a school-based reality.

### *Impact*

Increasing the capacity of teachers and school-based educators is pivotal to the future success of the evaluation system. Part of the capacity building needs to focus on advanced skills training and the use of data from the evaluation system; part must also address the leadership support needs of principals.

## Issue Five: Collaboration

### *Overview*

Under its current leadership, the district has a renewed commitment to collaboration. Such collaboration provides a building block for fortifying the next phase of implementation of the evaluation system.

### *Recommended Action*

*Expand the collaboration of the district and the associations.* The collaboration of the district, HCEA, and HCAA in examining the implementation of the evaluation system is exemplary. Building on these efforts, this collaboration should expand to focus on targeting district and school resources to directly support the improvements to the evaluation system.

*Confer with the state on the revised weighting of SLOs.* This modification in the HCPSS evaluation system resulted from internal reviews, dialogue with the associations, and the building of trust between the district office and the schools. While this is a change for the district, the revised weightings differ from the expectations of COMAR and state guidance. Although Maryland is a local control state, it would nonetheless be the better part of wisdom for the district to engage with the Maryland State Department of Education to review the rationale for this revision.

### *Impact*

Continued and expanded collaboration is pivotal to both improving and protecting the HCPSS evaluation system.

## Summary

Howard County's educational leaders are focusing on implementing the teacher and school-based administrator evaluation system at a higher level of quality and fidelity. With an expanded emphasis on quality, consistency, and capacity building, the Howard County Public School System can increase the impact of the evaluation system to the mutual benefit of educators and students.

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- <sup>1</sup> <http://www.dsd.state.md.us/comar/comarhtml/13a/13a.07.09.04.htm>
  - <sup>2</sup> Source: The Maryland Teacher and Principal Evaluation Guidebook, Version 3, [http://archives.marylandpublicschools.org/tpe/TPE\\_Guidance\\_Version3\\_092013.pdf](http://archives.marylandpublicschools.org/tpe/TPE_Guidance_Version3_092013.pdf)
  - <sup>3</sup> Source: *Framework for Teacher Evaluation: The Teacher Evaluation Process Guide, 2017-2018*.
  - <sup>4</sup> Source: *Framework for Evaluating School-Based Administrators, 2017-2018*.
  - <sup>5</sup> School-based administrators are evaluated on Student Growth Targets. For the purposes of discussion, SLOs are used broadly in this report to include both Student Learning Objectives for teachers and Student Growth Targets for school-based administrators.
  - <sup>6</sup> Source: *Framework for Teacher Evaluation: The Teacher Evaluation Process Guide, 2017-2018*.
  - <sup>7</sup> Source: *Framework for Teacher Evaluation: The Teacher Evaluation Process Guide, 2017-2018* and *Framework for Evaluating School-Based Administrators, 2017-2018*.
  - <sup>8</sup> Slotnik, W. J., Bugler, D., & Liang, G. (2015, September). *Change in Practice in Maryland: Student Learning Objectives and Teacher and Principal Evaluation*. A report for the Maryland State Department of Education by the Mid-Atlantic Comprehensive Center at WestEd. Available at <https://www.wested.org/?p=68513> and <http://www.ctacusa.com/?p=2755>
  - <sup>9</sup> Kane, T. J., Taylor, E. S., Tyler, J. H., & Wooten, A. L. (2011). *Evaluating teacher effectiveness: Can classroom observations identify practices that raise achievement?* *Education Next*, 11(3).
  - <sup>10</sup> Slotnik, W., Smith, M. *et al.* (2004). *Catalyst for Change: Pay for Performance in Denver*. Boston, MA: Community Training and Assistance Center. Available at <http://www.ctacusa.com/?p=2747>; Slotnik, W., Smith, M. *et al.* (2013). *It's More Than Money: Teacher Incentive Fund—Leadership for Educators' Advanced Performance, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools*. Boston, MA: Community Training and Assistance Center. Available at <http://www.ctacusa.com/?p=2753>
  - <sup>11</sup> Schmitt, L. N. T. (2014). *Summary of REACH Findings, 2007–2008 Through 2012–2013*. (DRE Publication No. 12.96). Austin, TX: Austin Independent School District.
  - <sup>12</sup> Source: *Framework for Teacher Evaluation: The Teacher Evaluation Process Guide, 2017-2018*.
  - <sup>13</sup> Slotnik, Smith, *et al.*, *Catalyst for Change* and *It's More Than Money*.
  - <sup>14</sup> Schmitt, *Summary of REACH Findings*.
  - <sup>15</sup> Source: *Framework for Teacher Evaluation: The Teacher Evaluation Process Guide, 2017-2018*.
  - <sup>16</sup> Source: *Framework for Evaluating School-Based Administrators, 2017-2018*.
  - <sup>17</sup> Love, N., Stiles, K., Mundry, S., DiRanna, K. (2008). *The Data Coaches' Guide to Improving Learning for All Students*. California: Corwin Press.
  - <sup>18</sup> Slotnik, Smith, *et al.*, *Catalyst for Change* and *It's More Than Money*.



## APPENDIX

Table A. Characteristics of the Survey Respondents

	n	%
I have*		
Participated in classroom observation training(s)	1,533	44.0%
Participated in Student Learning Objectives (SLO) training	2,459	70.6%
Accessed other source(s) of information or experiences related to observations	1,844	52.9%
Accessed other source(s) of information or experiences related to SLOs	2,013	57.8%
The school level I work in is:		
Elementary school	1,665	47.8%
Middle school	847	24.3%
High school	835	24.0%
Special Education Schools/Education Centers	103	3.0%
No Response	34	1.0%
My position is described by this educator category		
Classroom teacher	2,257	64.8%
Non-classroom teaching staff	601	17.3%
Special educator	447	12.8%
Principal	76	2.2%
Assistant principal	99	2.8%
Administrative intern	4	0.1%
In my position, the majority of my work is in the following subjects and/or area(s):*		
Arts	245	7.0%
Career and Technical Education	132	3.8%
Elementary (multiple subject areas)	984	28.2%
English/Language Arts	677	19.4%
English as a Second Language	119	3.4%
Health and Physical Education	204	5.9%
Math	594	17.0%
Science	397	11.4%
Social Studies	383	11.0%
Special Education	447	12.8%
World Languages	157	4.5%
Other (e.g., music, technology)	399	11.5%

	n	%
My years of teaching experience are (n = 3,305)**		
0-3	261	7.9%
4-6	341	10.3%
7-9	287	8.7%
10+	2,364	71.5%
Not Applicable / No Response	52	1.6%
As a teacher (currently teaching), I am (n = 3,305)**		
Non-tenured	507	15.3%
Tenured	2,736	82.8%
No Response	62	1.9%
My years of experience as a principal (currently in this role) are (principals only, n = 76)		
0-3	17	22.4%
4-6	23	30.3%
7-9	8	10.5%
10+	27	35.5%
Not Applicable / No Response	1	1.3%
The highest educational degree I have attained is:		
Bachelor's degree	517	14.8%
Master's degree	2,866	82.3%
Doctoral degree	51	1.5%
No Response	50	1.4%

Note: Due to rounding, percentages may not always appear to add up to 100%; \*Denotes multiple choice survey items; percentages do not add up to 100. \*\*Classroom teachers, non-classroom teaching staff, and special educators only. N = 3,484.

Table B. Responses from Principals, Teachers, and Staff

	Administrators			Teachers			Staff		
	A	U	D	A	U	D	A	U	D
Systemic Context									
The expectations are clear for teachers in the evaluation system.*	90%	5%	6%	66%	9%	24%	72%	11%	17%
The expectations are clear for school-based administrators in the evaluation system.*	80%	9%	11%	38%	40%	22%	42%	44%	14%
The evaluation framework and processes provide useful feedback to teachers.*	79%	11%	10%	32%	15%	53%	37%	20%	43%
The evaluation system encourages reflection on instructional practices.*	79%	14%	6%	54%	12%	34%	56%	16%	28%

	Administrators			Teachers			Staff		
	A	U	D	A	U	D	A	U	D
The evaluation system leads to improved instruction.*	54%	28%	18%	23%	22%	55%	27%	26%	48%
The evaluation framework and processes provide useful feedback to school-based administrators.*	59%	22%	19%	22%	38%	40%	27%	44%	28%
The evaluation system for administrators leads to improved school performance.*	37%	40%	23%	14%	44%	42%	16%	50%	34%
Classroom Observations									
Classroom observations...									
Are conducted by observers qualified to do the observations.*	93%	6%	1%	73%	10%	17%	74%	11%	16%
Have the same observer/evaluator conducting the conferences and the observations.*	89%	3%	8%	85%	3%	13%	80%	10%	10%
Are used to inform teacher professional development.*	73%	15%	12%	38%	23%	39%	38%	26%	35%
Classroom observations (when conducted by an observer/evaluator as part of the formal evaluation system)...									
Include a pre-observation conference, the observation, and a post-observation conference (in year 1 of the evaluation cycle).*	94%	3%	3%	78%	6%	16%	74%	13%	13%
Include a pre-observation conference, the observation, and a post-observation conference (in years 2 and 3 of the evaluation cycle).*	83%	6%	10%	58%	12%	30%	55%	18%	27%
Include the observation and a post-observation conference (in year 1 of the evaluation cycle).*	85%	6%	10%	75%	11%	14%	72%	14%	14%
Include the observation and a post-observation conference (in years 2 and 3 of the evaluation cycle).*	78%	8%	14%	61%	14%	25%	54%	21%	25%
Help to improve instruction.*	70%	20%	10%	37%	24%	39%	40%	25%	36%
Classroom observations (when conducted by a non-evaluative observer)...									
Include a pre-observation conference, the observation, and a post-observation conference.*	31%	41%	28%	23%	30%	47%	28%	43%	30%
Include the observation and a post-observation conference.*	38%	40%	22%	35%	29%	36%	34%	42%	25%
Help to improve instruction.*	58%	34%	7%	34%	35%	31%	37%	39%	24%
Student Learning Objectives (SLOs)									
As a teacher or school-based administrator, I receive...									
Information about what distinguishes high quality SLOs from low quality SLOs.*	61%	12%	26%	54%	11%	35%	54%	11%	35%
Guidance in selecting learning content for SLOs.*	67%	14%	19%	57%	10%	33%	57%	11%	32%
Guidance in selecting research-based instructional strategies for SLOs.*	51%	19%	30%	38%	13%	49%	36%	18%	45%

	Administrators			Teachers			Staff		
	A	U	D	A	U	D	A	U	D
Recommendations for selecting pre/post assessments for SLOs.*	53%	15%	31%	46%	12%	42%	46%	16%	37%
Valid and reliable approaches to setting growth targets for SLOs.*	47%	19%	34%	42%	17%	41%	43%	17%	40%
Opportunities to review and refine my SLOs.	76%	10%	14%	71%	11%	18%	73%	15%	12%
Professional development when developing SLOs.*	50%	17%	33%	38%	16%	47%	39%	19%	43%
Professional development during and after the implementation of SLOs.*	42%	18%	40%	30%	16%	54%	30%	21%	50%
Feedback from supervisors on the connection between SLOs and improved instruction.*	60%	18%	22%	40%	15%	44%	39%	21%	40%
<b>Capacity Building</b>									
To increase my effectiveness as a teacher or school-based administrator, capacity building needs to emphasize...									
Providing useful feedback to teachers on observations and SLOs.*	87%	6%	6%	72%	12%	16%	77%	12%	11%
Providing useful feedback to school-based administrators on goals and SLOs.*	89%	7%	4%	63%	22%	16%	69%	21%	10%
Using data from observations and SLOs to strengthen school improvement planning.*	82%	9%	8%	56%	20%	24%	64%	19%	17%
Using data from observations and SLOs to make improvements in my instructional practices (for teachers only).	N/A	N/A	N/A	66%	14%	20%	71%	15%	14%
Using data from observations and SLOs to make improvements in my instructional supervision (for school-based administrators only).	87%	7%	6%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Final Thoughts</b>									
The evaluation system is being implemented with consistency at my school.*	77%	9%	14%	49%	17%	35%	52%	22%	26%
The evaluation frameworks and processes are helping to improve my performance.*	51%	23%	26%	22%	18%	60%	29%	17%	54%
The current evaluation system is an improvement over what we had before in Howard County.*	52%	32%	16%	15%	34%	51%	21%	30%	50%

Note: Administrators refers to school-based administrators, including principals, assistant principals and administrative interns; Teachers refers to classroom teachers and special educators; Staff refers to non-classroom teaching staff. A = Total Agree, a composite of strongly agree/agree. U = Undecided. D = Total Disagree, a composite of strongly disagree/disagree. \*Indicates statistically significant differences at the 95% confidence level between administrators and teachers. N (principal) = 179; N (teacher) = 2,704; N (staff) = 601. Percentages reported are "valid percent" when missing data are excluded from the calculations.