



Results of the 2017-18 Wisconsin Educator Development, Support, and Retention Survey of Principals

The Associations between How Schools use the Results of Teacher Evaluations, Principal Preparedness for Completing Teacher Evaluations, and Principal Perceptions of the Process

The state of Wisconsin implemented a statewide educator evaluation system in 2014. This system is designed to promote feedback to educators that leads to improved educator effectiveness and student learning. We report on the results of a statewide survey of 907 school principals, 52% of all Wisconsin principals, conducted in the spring of 2018. This survey captured a variety of aspects of the teacher evaluation process, including the time principals spend conducting teacher evaluations, the ways schools use the process, how prepared principals feel completing teacher evaluations, and what impact they feel they are having on the effectiveness of teaching. The results suggest that principals spend between 10% and 30% of their time completing teacher evaluations and that schools typically leverage the teacher evaluation process to inform a number of teacher development and human resource decisions. Also, the majority of principals felt that the teacher evaluation and the feedback process was positively impacting the quality of teaching in their schools. Further, principals who indicated they had received formal training in providing teachers performance feedback were more likely to believe the feedback process was positively impacting teaching quality. Principals were also more likely to believe that the teacher evaluation process had a positive impact on teaching when their school used to process to inform more decisions. The implications of these results for the implementation of teacher evaluations are discussed.

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Principal Impressions of the Teacher Evaluation and Support Process

As part of the ongoing statewide evaluation of teacher evaluation and support processes, or Educator Effectiveness (EE), conducted by the Office of Socially Responsible Evaluation in Education (SREed) at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, in the spring of 2018 all Wisconsin school principals and teachers were asked to participate in the annual Wisconsin Educator Development, Support, and Retention (WEDSR) Survey. This report summarizes principal responses to the WEDSR Survey regarding their experiences leading their school's teacher evaluation and feedback processes

The Wisconsin Teacher EE Process

Based on research establishing the quality of teaching as the most important factor for determining student learning^{1,2}, the Wisconsin EE process is intended to promote the use of effective performance feedback to enhance the quality of school leadership, teaching, and student learning across the state. EE requires schools to provide ongoing, formal feedback to teachers about their professional practice using standard teaching frameworks such as the Danielson Framework for Teaching (FFT)³ or the CESA 6 Effectiveness Project based on the Stronge Teacher and Leader Effectiveness Performance System.⁴ Veteran teachers are evaluated on a three-year cycle. Every third year, “summary year” teachers complete a structured evaluation process that involves a series of observations and feedback opportunities with their evaluator. First year teachers also must complete the summary year teacher evaluation process. In off years, or “supporting years,” teachers may receive feedback from a peer or coach instead of an evaluator. Throughout the evaluation cycle, teachers collect artifacts that represent their practice across the different components of their district's evaluation framework. Another aspect of the Wisconsin EE process involves teachers completing at least one Student Learning Objective (SLO) every year, which involves identifying, measuring, and tracking specific student learning

¹McCaffrey, J. R., Lockwood, D. F., Koretz, D. M., & Hamilton, L. S. (2003). *Evaluating Value Added Models for Teacher Accountability* [Monograph]. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. Retrieved from http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2004/RAND_MG158.pdf

² Rivkin, S. G., Hanushek, E. A., & Kain, J. F. (2005). Teachers, schools, and academic achievement. *Econometrics*, 73, 417-458.

³ Danielson, C. (2013). *The Framework for Teaching Evaluation Instrument: 2013 Instructionally Focused Edition*. Princeton, NJ: The Danielson Group.

⁴ Stronge, J. H. (2002). *Qualities of Effective Teachers*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

outcomes across the year. A third aspect involves the creation of a Professional Practice Goal (PPG), whereby teachers identify an area of practice they plan to work to improve during the school year. At the end of their summary year, teachers receive practice ratings based on observational evidence and collected artifacts; and ratings on their SLOs. In Wisconsin, the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) encourages schools to use the evaluation process in a learning-centered, growth focused manner that provides teachers with constructive and actionable feedback.

The Principal Role

School principals play a critical role in the teacher evaluation process, most often filling the teacher evaluator role themselves.⁵ Their effectiveness in leading the teacher evaluation process is dependent on a number of factors but in this paper, we focus on their capacity to complete the process, their attitudes regarding the process, their preparedness to implement the process, and what decisions schools leverage the process to inform.

With the advent of more comprehensive teacher evaluations systems, the principal role has changed considerably, with a much greater emphasis on leading the teacher evaluation process.⁶ To do this well takes a considerable investment of time and resources, with principals typically having to dedicate close to 25% of their time to complete the process.⁷ If districts do not modify the responsibilities of principals so that they are able to spend the necessary time to complete teacher evaluations, principals may have cut corners with the process, which would presumably reduce their attitudes about, and effectiveness of, leading the process.

Principal attitudes toward teacher evaluations are largely determined by their beliefs that the process has the potential to impact the quality of teaching and student learning in their school. Regarding their specific role in the process, principals who have high self-efficacy that they are able to manage the process so that the performance feedback they provide teachers will impact

⁵ Zimmerman, S., & Deckert-Pelton, M. (2003). Evaluating the evaluators: Teachers' perceptions of the principal's role in professional evaluation. *NaSP Bulletin*, 87(636), 28-37.

⁶ Cosner, S., Kimball, S., Barkowski, E., Carl, B., & Jones, C. (July, 2014). Principal roles, work demands, and supports needed to implement new teacher evaluations. *UIC Research on Urban Education Policy Initiative*, 3(3). Retrieved from: http://www.cpre.org/sites/default/files/other/2021_ruepifinalcopyjuly2014.pdf

⁷ Halverson, R., Kelley, C. & Kimball, S. (2004). Implementing teacher evaluation systems: How principals make sense of complex artifacts to shape local instructional practice. In C. Miskel (Ed.) *Theory and Research in Educational Administration*, Volume 3. 153-188.

teacher effectiveness and student learning are more likely to complete their role and do it well.⁸ A number of factors including their capacity to complete teacher evaluations, their understanding of the process, their skills providing feedback, and their relationships with teachers, determines their expectations that their role in teacher evaluations will impact their school.

School Use of Teacher Evaluations

Generally, the specific ways schools and districts use the process fall along a continuum from teacher development to informing human resources decisions.⁹ Where the approach to teacher evaluation employed by a school or district falls along that continuum, can potentially result in very different teacher and principal experiences of the process. A study of eight districts found that the focus of EE on improving teaching most often involved informing professional development and support, but also involved more “high stakes” decisions like informing performance pay or the removal of teachers.¹⁰ The use of the process to inform more high stakes decisions focuses the process more on measuring teacher effectiveness, which may aggravate the power dynamics within schools and complicate the relationships between teachers and principals. Two studies have demonstrated this connection. One, using the 2013 Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), reported a connection between teacher perceptions of how supportive they perceived the evaluation process to be and their job satisfaction.¹¹ Another found a causal connection between the effectiveness ratings assigned to teachers and their job satisfaction; rating a teacher as more effective resulted in increased job satisfaction.¹²

⁸ Wahlstrom, K., Seashore, K., Leithwood, K., & Anderson, S. (2010). Investigating the Links to Improved Student Learning. Retrieved from <https://conservancy.umn.edu/handle/11299/140884>

⁹ Marzano, R. J. (November, 2012). Teacher evaluation: What's fair? What's effective? *Educational Leadership*, 70, 14-19.

¹⁰ Anderson, L. M., Butler, A., Palmiter, A., & Arcaira, E. (November, 2016). *Study of Emerging Teacher Evaluation Systems*. U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, Policy and Program Studies Service. Washington, D.C.

¹¹ Ford, T. G., Urick, A., & Wilson, A. S. P. (2018). Exploring the effect of supportive teacher evaluation experiences on U.S. teachers' job satisfaction. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 26(59). <http://dx.doi.org/10.14507/epaa.26.3559>

¹² Koedel, C., Li, J., Springer, M. G., & Tan, L. (2017). The impact of performance ratings on job satisfaction for public school teachers. *American Educational Research Journal*, 54, 241-278. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831216687531>

Current Study

The current study reports on the results of a statewide survey of principals regarding both their role in the evaluation of teachers and what decisions their schools are using the process to inform. It also explores the relationships between how schools are using teacher evaluations with the principal role in doing teacher evaluations, and principal perceptions of the process.

Principal Survey Methods

Principal survey administration

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) provided principal contact information. The Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) also provided a list of its principals. For the statewide administration, except for MPS, the survey was open from late March 2018 through the end of May 2018. Survey invitations were emailed directly to principals. For MPS, principals could participate by responding to email invitations or through a link on our website. The MPS survey was open from Feb 2018 through early April 2018.

Principal survey participation

Of the 1,848 principals invited to participate, 115 did not participate because their contact information was invalid, they were no longer in their position, or they had opted out of receiving invitations from our survey program, Qualtrics. Of the remaining 1,730 principals, 907 completed a survey from 337 school districts, which represents a 52% response rate. Of these, 321 were in schools using CESA 6 Effectiveness Project based on the Stronge Teacher and Leader Effectiveness Performance System and 586 were in schools using the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Regarding the communities represented, 188 schools are in urban areas, 203 in suburban, 316 in rural, and 200 in towns. Regarding school types, 536 are elementary schools, 134 middle schools, 209 high schools, and 28 combined elementary/high schools.

Principal demographic and experience characteristics were obtained from DPI WISEstaff data files. Gender, race/ethnicity, and education were obtained from the 2017-18 file. Experience as a principal data were obtained by identifying which respondents were principals in 2017-18, 2016-17, 2015-16, and 2014-15. Table 1 presents the demographics of responding principals compared to principals statewide. There were no apparent differences in the characteristics of principal

respondents and the statewide population of principals, suggesting that the results from the WEDSR Survey are likely representative of principals statewide.

Table 1: Demographic comparison of survey respondents and the statewide population of principals during the 2017-18 school year

		Respondents	Respondent Percent	Statewide Percent
Gender	Female	445	49.1%	47%
	Male	462	50.9%	53%
Race/ethnicity	Asian	3	0.3%	0.6%
	Black or African American	52	5.7%	6.6%
	Hispanic/Latino	25	2.8%	2.3%
	American Indian or Alaska Native	2	0.2%	0.2%
	Two or More Races	4	0.4%	0.5%
	White	821	90.5%	89.8%
Education	Bachelor's degree	46	5.1%	4.2%
	Master's degree	774	85.3%	86.5%
	6-year specialist's degree	29	3.2%	2.7%
	Doctorate	45	5.0%	4.7%
	Other	11	1.2%	0.9%
Experience	First year principal	92	10.1%	9.9%
	2nd	107	11.8%	11.2%
	3rd	109	12.0%	11.7%
	4+	599	66.0%	67.3%

Principal survey items

The principal WEDSR Survey captured a number of important aspects of school implementation of teacher evaluations related to the principal role and what decisions schools use their teacher evaluation process to inform. Unless otherwise indicated, scales for each surveyed domain were created by averaging responses for the set of statements within each topic area. Question responses were on a four-point scale ranging from 1 – disagree to 4 – agree.

Principal EE Workload – Principals answered three questions about the number of teachers they were responsible for evaluating this year, the number of teachers they were responsible for evaluating overall, and the percent of their time they spent completing the EE process.

Principal Feedback Impact Efficacy – Ten items assessed principal efficacy to provide teachers effective feedback that impacts the quality of instruction and student learning. Sample items include, *The feedback I provide my school's experienced teachers (more than 5 years of experience) is used by them to improve* and *The feedback I provide teachers improves the quality of teaching in my school*. The internal consistency of these items is .862.

Teacher Development Use of Results – Six items assessed their school's use of their teacher evaluation process to inform formative teacher and development processes. Some ways schools might use the results include: to guide professional learning communities, plan individual professional development, and support school-wide strategies for improvement. The internal consistency of these seven items is .877.

Human Resources Use of Results – Two items assessed their school's use of the teacher evaluation process to inform teacher retention and compensation decisions. The internal consistency of these two items is low (.577), suggesting that using the process to inform one does not mean a district is likely to use it for the other. In this paper, we still combine the two questions. In future surveys, we will include additional questions about the extent that teacher evaluations inform school human resource decisions.

Teacher Evaluation Process Impact – Four items measured principal beliefs about the impact their teacher evaluation process is having on teacher effectiveness, principal effectiveness, and the effectiveness and accuracy of feedback provided to teachers. The internal consistency of these items is .896.

Teacher Time/support – Two items assessed if teachers are provided planning time to complete evaluation steps and if they have a coach to help teachers were used to assess the degree that schools provide teachers planning time and coaching support to complete the steps of the teacher evaluation process. The internal consistency of these two items is low (.536), suggesting that schools providing one do not necessarily provide the other. In future survey, we will also explore how schools support teachers more fully.

Preparedness to Implement Teacher Evaluations – Four items measure principal feelings of their preparedness to implementing teacher evaluations. These items captured their general feeling of

preparedness along with specific aspects of the process including providing feedback, professional practice goal setting, and reviewing evidence of effectiveness. This four item scale has an internal reliability of .738.

Student Learning Objectives (SLO)/ Professional Practice Goals (PPG) – Six items assess aspects of the SLO and PPG processes. The results for these questions are presented descriptively and are not scaled.

Principal Survey Results

How much time do principals spend completing the teacher evaluation process?

The first set of questions ask principals how many teachers they evaluate, each year and overall, and the percentage of their time they spend conducting the evaluation process. Only principals who indicated they were engaged in teacher evaluations were asked to respond to these questions. Interestingly, only 332 principals (36% of respondents) indicated they were involved in the evaluation of teachers.¹³ Thus, the results presented in Figures 1, 2, and 3 reflect the responses of 332 principals.

Based on their responses, the typical principal was responsible for evaluating between five and 15 teachers each year (Figure 1) and 20 to 40 overall (Figure 2). It typically takes about 10% to 30% of a principal's time to complete these evaluations (Figure 3). Some principals, however, indicated that they spend the majority of their time completing teacher evaluations and providing feedback. It was somewhat surprising that there was only a small correlation between the amount of time principals indicated it took them to complete teacher evaluations and the number of teachers they were responsible for evaluating this year ($r = .135, p = .013$), and no correlation with the number they were responsible for overall. This may indicate that principals responsible for evaluating more teachers are typically provided more support to help them complete the process or that they spend less time completing the process with each teacher.

¹³ It is not clear why so few indicated they were involved in the evaluation of teachers. Although respondents were asked to indicate which role (s) they had in their district, and Evaluator of Teachers was an option, it is possible that some did not read the question carefully, saw principal as an option, and chose it without reading the other options.

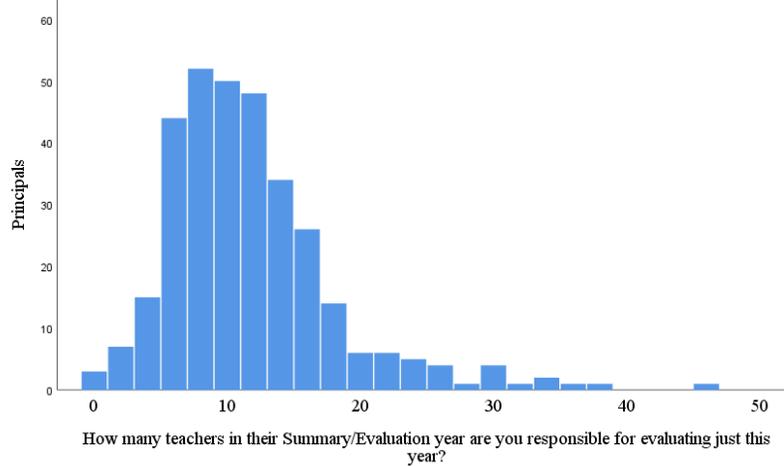


Figure 1: How many teachers in their Summary/Evaluation year are you responsible for evaluating just this year?

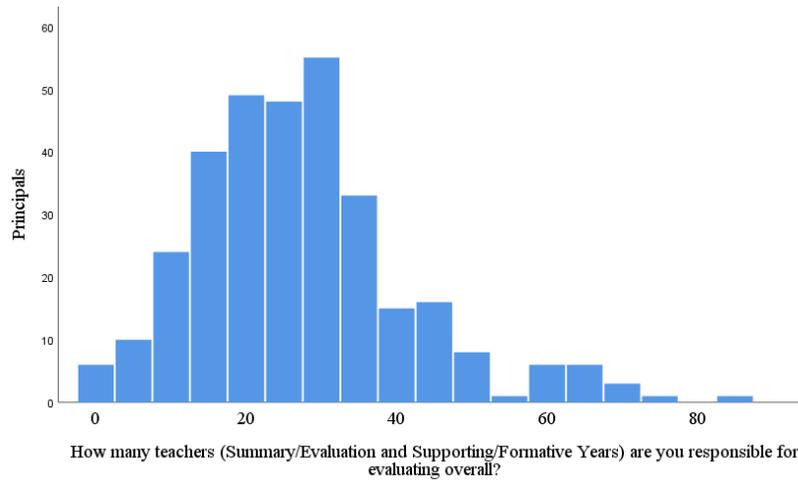


Figure 2: How many Teachers (Summary/Evaluation and Supporting/Formative Years) are you responsible for evaluating overall?

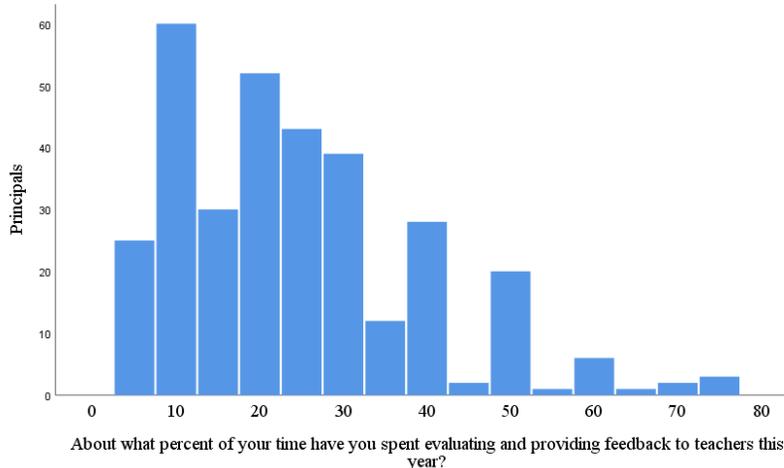


Figure 3: About what percent of your time have you spent evaluating and providing feedback to Teachers this year?

How do schools use the teacher evaluation process?

Principals were asked about a variety of ways that their school might use the teacher evaluation process. Generally, most principals indicated their school used teacher evaluations to inform a variety of formative and developmental processes (Figure 4). The most common ways the teacher evaluation process was used included planning individual professional development and supporting school-wide strategies for improvement. Most also indicated they used the process to support teacher retention decisions. Only a minority of principals indicated they used it to make teacher compensation decisions.

In my school we are using information from our Teacher Evaluation, Development, and Support process to...

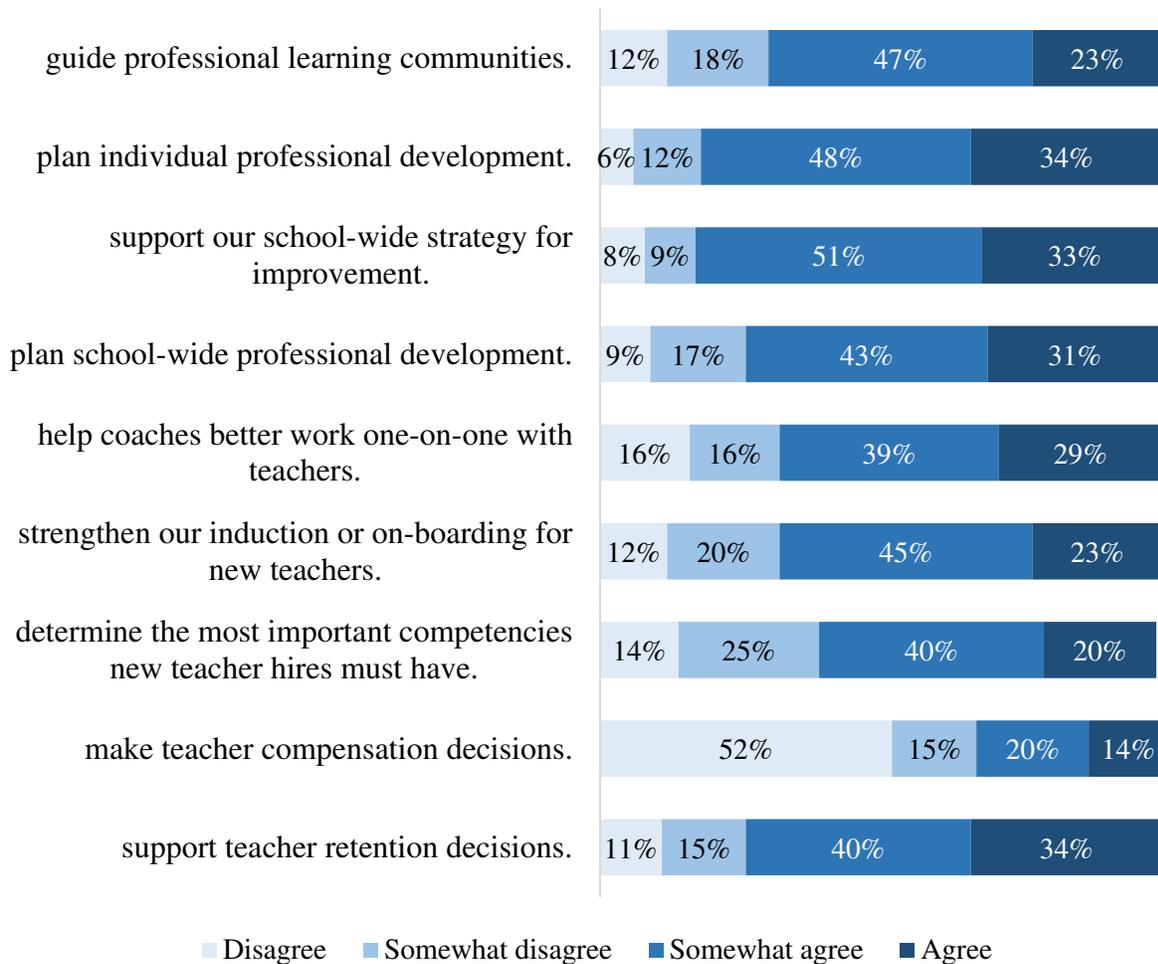


Figure 4: Use of teacher evaluation process by schools

How prepared are principals for completing teacher evaluations?

Four questions were used to assess the preparedness of principals to implement teacher evaluations, whether they understand how to review evidence of teacher effectiveness, and whether they have received training on how to provide effective feedback. The results suggest that principals feel they are well prepared to review evidence of effectiveness and, more generally, to implement teacher evaluations (Figure 5). The majority of principals also indicated they had received training to provide effective feedback.

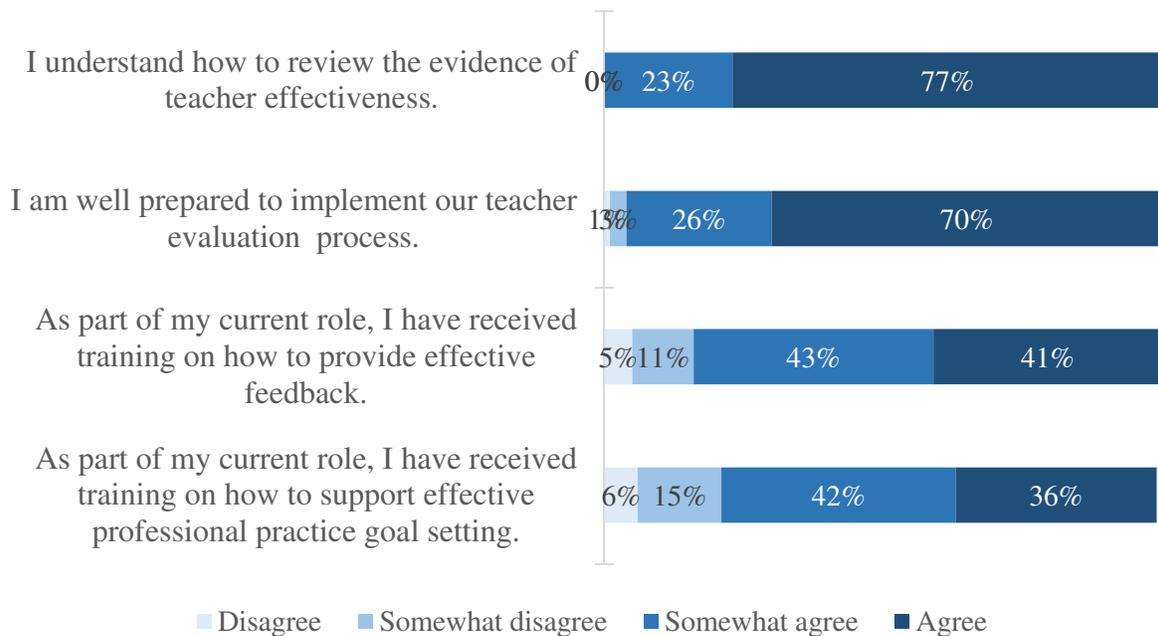


Figure 5: Principal preparedness for completing teacher evaluations

A closer look at the question regarding whether principals received training on providing feedback suggests that the more principals felt they had received feedback training the greater impact they felt they were having on teacher instructional quality (Figure 6).

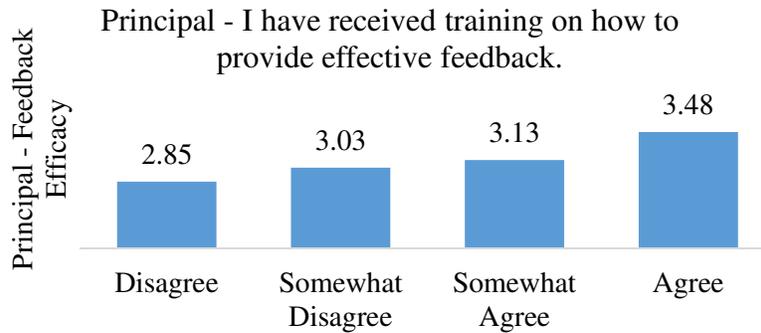


Figure 6: Principal Feedback Efficacy (ability to impact instructional quality) according to how much principals agree that they have been trained to provide effective feedback.¹⁴

Do principals believe the teacher evaluation process is having an impact on educator effectiveness?

Four questions assessed principal perceptions of the overall impact that teacher evaluations have on principal and teacher effectiveness (Figure 7). There was general agreement by principals that the EE process can lead to improved principal and teacher effectiveness. It is clear that principals understand that improvement occurs through the feedback they provide to teachers; there was a strong correlation between their perceptions of the impact of the teacher evaluation process and their feelings of *Feedback Efficacy* ($r = .690, p < .001$). Principals who feel that their feedback can improve the quality of instruction in their school believe that the overall system can improve principal and teacher effectiveness.

¹⁴ For a breakdown of response selections in Figure 6 refer to Figure 4

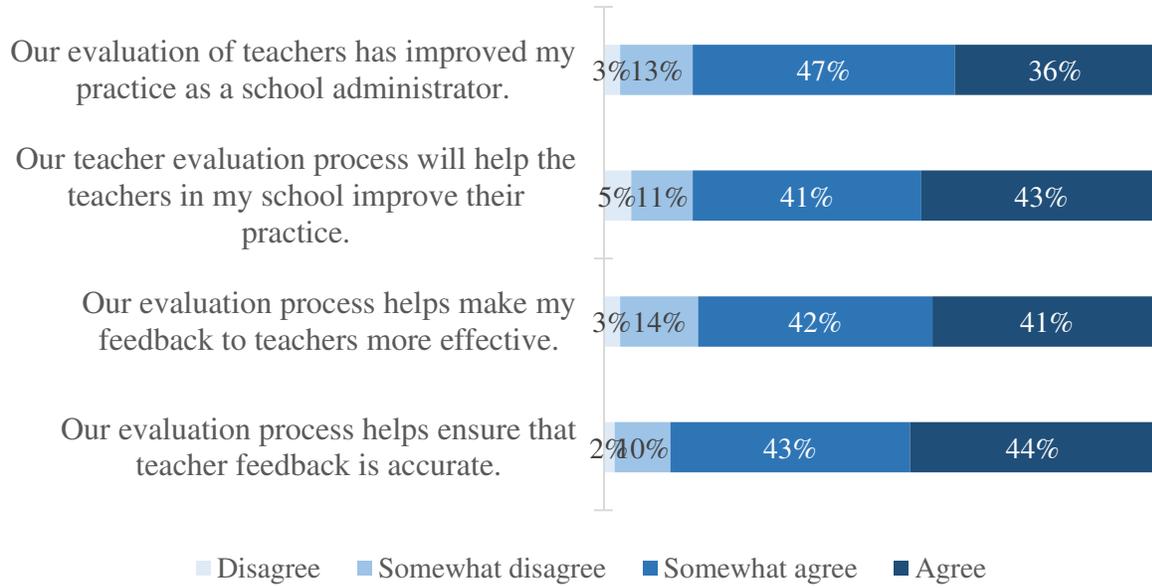


Figure 7: Principal perceptions of the overall impact of teacher evaluations on principal and teacher effectiveness

How much time/support do schools provide teachers to complete the steps of the teacher evaluation process?

Two questions were used to assess the degree that schools were providing teachers with coaching support and planning time to complete the steps of their evaluation process. Considering that 37% and 33% at least somewhat disagreed with the statements respectively, there appears to be variability between how much schools support teachers to complete evaluation work (Figure 8).

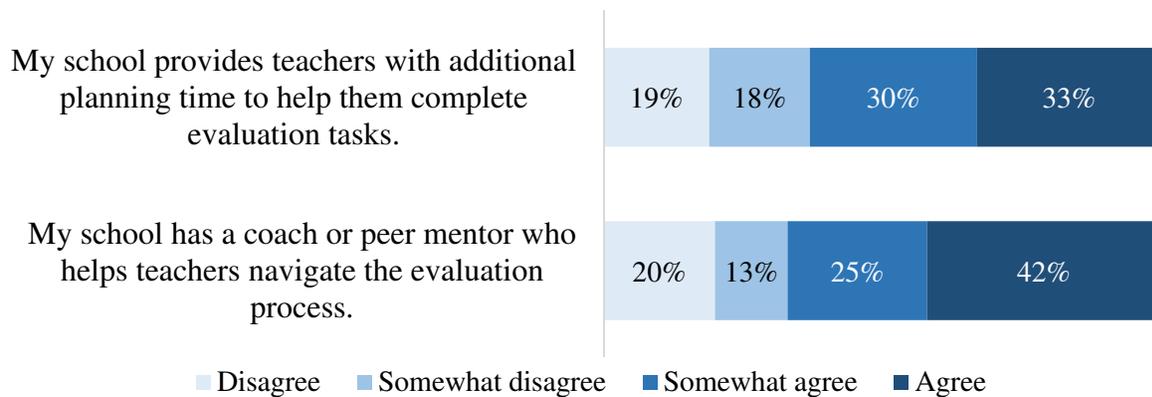


Figure 8: Principal perceptions of the time and support provided to teachers to complete the evaluation process

To what extent is the implementation of the teacher performance feedback process impacting teacher effectiveness?

Ten questions were asked about different aspects of the feedback process. There was general agreement that principals understand how to provide teachers with effective feedback and that the feedback they provide early career teachers is used by them to improve (Figure 9). There was somewhat less agreement that the feedback provided to veteran teachers is used by them to improve. Most principals also seem to recognize that the evaluation process helps make their feedback more effective. Possibly reflecting challenges principals face fitting teacher evaluations into their workload, a minority of principals suggested that they were not always able to provide verbal (14%) or written (17%) feedback soon after conducting observations.

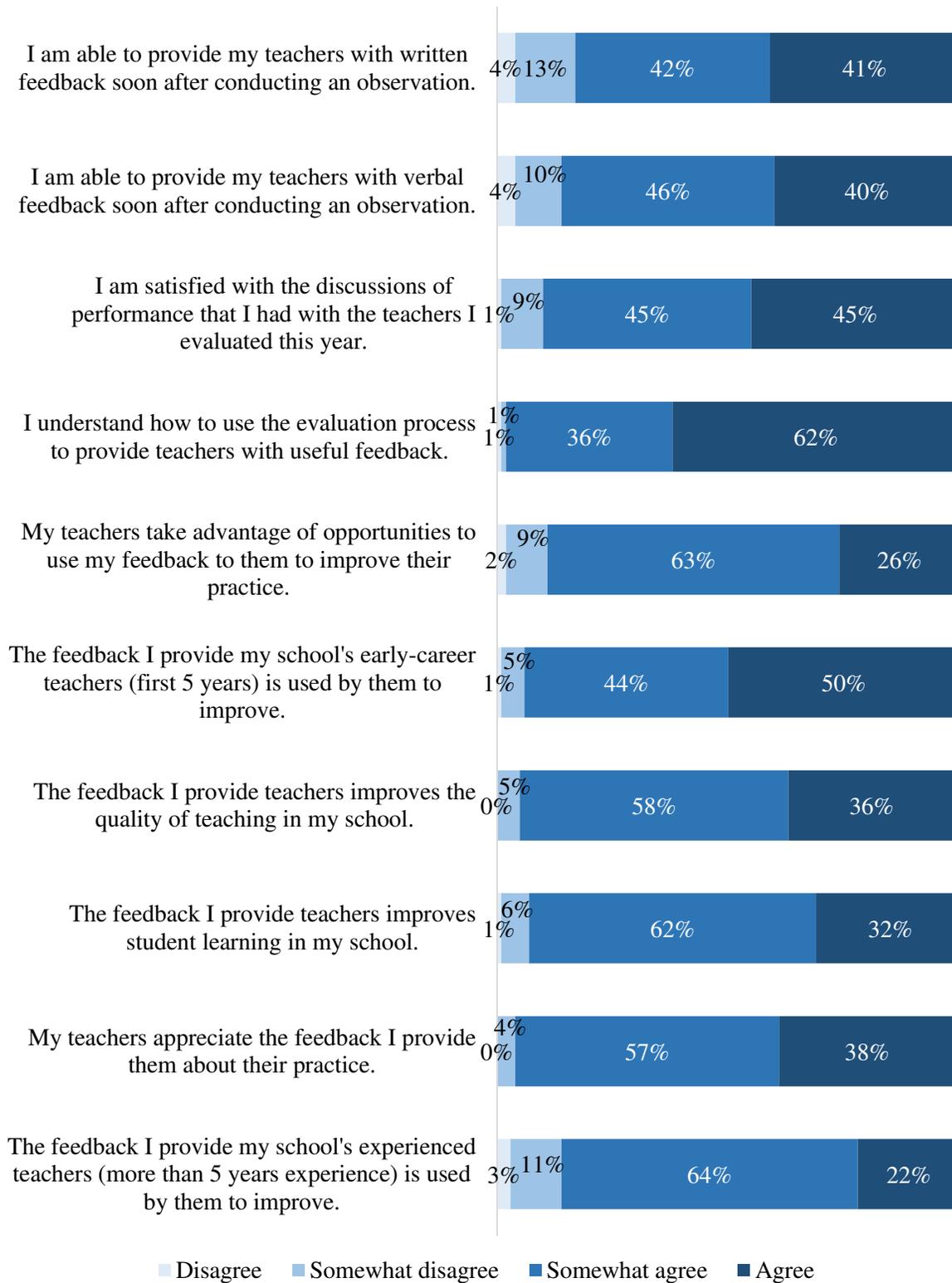


Figure 9: Principal perceptions of the implementation and impact of the feedback process

To what extent are schools effectively utilizing the SLO/PPG process to promote educator growth?

The final set of questions asked principals about the Student Learning Objectives (SLO) and Professional Practice Goal (PPG) setting process. Nearly all principals indicated they encourage teachers to develop ambitious goals (Figure 10). However, there was less agreement whether the results of the SLO process accurately measures the teacher’s impact on student learning.

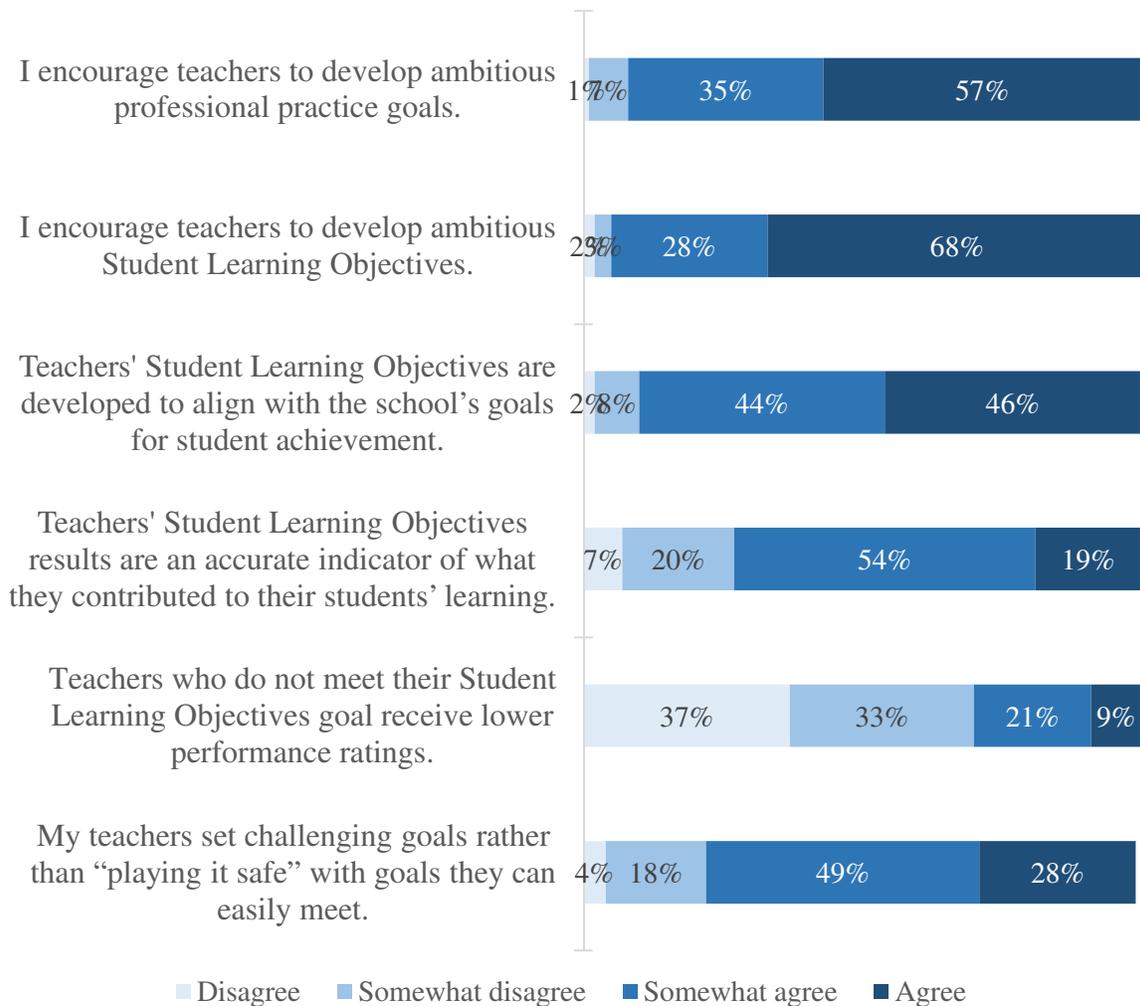


Figure 10: Principal perceptions of the SLO and PPG process

Principal Survey Results Summary

Survey results for 907 principals, representing 52% of Wisconsin principals, demonstrated a number of important findings, both regarding the role of principals in implementing teacher evaluations and how schools are using the process.

- Principals were typically responsible for evaluating 5 to 15 teachers each year and 10 to 30 overall. Most principals spend 10% to 30% of their time completing these evaluations. These results are consistent with what has been reported elsewhere.¹⁵
- Most principals indicated that their school used teacher evaluations to inform a number of teacher development processes, such as planning individual professional development (82%) and supporting school-wide strategies for improvement (84%). The more that schools used teacher evaluations to inform teacher development efforts, the greater impact principals felt that teacher evaluations were having on teacher practice and student learning.
- Most principals indicated their school used teacher evaluations to support teacher retention decisions (74%), suggesting that the schools typically use teacher evaluations to inform both teacher development and employment decisions.
- Nearly all principals felt prepared to conduct teacher evaluations and roughly three-fourths indicated they had received formal training in providing teachers performance feedback. Principals who indicated they had received feedback training were more confident that their feedback would result in improvements to teacher effectiveness and increased student learning.
- Nearly all principals reported high levels of self-efficacy that the teacher evaluation process and their teacher feedback improves the quality of teaching and increases student learning in their school.

¹⁵ Halverson, R., Kelley, C. & Kimball, S. (2004). Implementing teacher evaluation systems: How principals make sense of complex artifacts to shape local instructional practice. In C. Miskel (Ed.) *Theory and Research in Educational Administration, Volume 3*. 153-188.

Implications for Practice

The results of this study suggest some specific ways that schools and districts can improve their implementation of teacher evaluations to maximize the potential for the process improving teacher effectiveness and student learning:

- First, principals involved in teacher evaluations should receive formal training on providing teachers effective performance feedback. Principals who indicated they had received training were much more confident that their feedback was improving teacher effectiveness and student learning. Further, teachers in schools where their principal received feedback training also viewed the feedback provided to them as more useful.
- Another implication is some principals may need support and training so they can complete the teacher evaluation process more efficiently. Some principals are spending a disproportionate amount of their time completing teacher evaluations. This issue may be somewhat addressed by training principals to provide teachers more effective feedback.
- Lastly, schools should use the teacher evaluation process to inform teacher development and support decisions. The more that schools are able to integrate teacher evaluations into their teacher development processes, the more principals view the process as impacting teacher effectiveness and student learning, which fundamentally is the ultimate purpose of the Wisconsin Educator Effectiveness process.

Appendix: Survey Scales Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of principal survey results

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
About what percent of your time have you spent evaluating and providing feedback to teachers this year?	321	5	75	24.55	14.82
How many teachers in their Summary/Evaluation year are you responsible for evaluating just this year?	322	0	45	11.34	6.48
How many teachers (Summary/Evaluation and Supporting/Formative Years) are you responsible for evaluating overall?	319	0	83	27.43	14.23
Principal Feedback Impact Efficacy	327	1	4	3.31	0.48
Teacher Development Use of Results	904	1	4	2.89	0.69
Human Resources Use of Results	900	1	4	2.46	0.88
Teacher Evaluation Process Impact	330	1	4	3.22	0.69
Preparedness to Implement Teacher Evaluations	330	1.75	4	3.49	0.52
Teacher Time/support	329	1	4	2.82	0.94

Table 3: Correlations of principal WEDSR Survey responses

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1 About what percent of your time have you spent evaluating and providing feedback to teachers this year?	1								
2 How many teachers in their Summary/Evaluation year are you responsible for evaluating just this year?	.135*	1							
3 How many teachers (Summary/Evaluation and Supporting/Formative Years) are you responsible for evaluating overall?	0.076	.605**	1						
4 Principal Feedback Impact Efficacy	0.107	-0.017	0.002	1					
5 Teacher Development Use of Results	0.098	-0.037	-0.067	.486**	1				
6 Human Resources Use of Results	0.035	0.044	-0.1	.274**	.336**	1			
7 Teacher Evaluation Process Impact	0.082	0	-0.044	.690**	.541**	.293**	1		
8 Preparedness to Implement Teacher Evaluations	.138*	-0.019	-0.078	.513**	.339**	.154**	.455**	1	
9 Teacher Time/support	.138*	-0.056	-0.065	.360**	.456**	.171**	.328**	.319**	1

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$