

Replacing Teacher Evaluation Systems with Systems of Professional Growth: Lessons from Three California School Districts and Their Teachers' Unions

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March 2016



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SRI Education

Introduction

It is hard to find many teachers or principals who believe that traditional teacher evaluation systems are of much value. Typically, they neither identify struggling teachers nor contribute to improving practice for any teachers. While there may be some exceptions, most teacher evaluation systems are simply a series of sporadic events designed to gauge practice in the moment. On-going professional growth and improvement rarely enter into the equation. This report draws lessons from three California school districts and their teachers' unions that have charted a different course and determined that the purpose of evaluation should be to improve teaching in order to advance student learning.

California policy on teacher evaluation has not changed since 1971 despite some legislative appetite for change. In anticipation of future legislative efforts to revise California's teacher evaluation system, the Stuart Foundation made a modest grant to J. Koppich & Associates and SRI International to document the work of the San Juan, Poway, and San José school districts as they developed and implemented professional growth systems to replace their old teacher evaluation systems.

In the process, we learned a few basic lessons. First, there is no one perfect teacher evaluation system. Policy makers seeking a uniform system that will improve teaching and learning in all local contexts are certain to be disappointed. Second, labor-management collaboration is essential to developing new and innovative teacher evaluation systems. Third, "evaluation" is a loaded word. Educators (both teachers and principals) view evaluation as a tool to remove ineffective teachers, but not to improve all teachers' professional practice. Fourth, successful implementation does not happen all at once. The work of developing a new system is bound to encounter problems that will test teachers' and administrators' dedication and commitment to a set of values. Re-invention takes time as old attitudes, limited expertise, and other simultaneous initiatives make implementing a new teacher evaluation system a challenge. Beginning with small scale experimentation and successive refinements, rather than instituting a totally new system throughout the entire school district, is likely to have a greater chance of realizing meaningful improvement.

The San Juan, Poway, and San José school districts and their teachers' unions have, each in their own way, demonstrated new thinking about how best to re-invent teacher evaluation. (At the end of this paper, we briefly describe each of the new systems). Each variation on a professional improvement system provides important lessons for state policy makers and districts across California. But, as they will tell you, there is no quick fix. These new approaches are very much works-in-progress and likely will continue to face implementation challenges as they mature. However, the examples from these three districts clearly point to the wisdom of allowing local districts and unions to tackle the difficult work of improving teaching quality through new forms of evaluation. While this hard work needs to be done at the local level, the state has an important role to play in providing guidance by developing an operating framework that emphasizes the goal of the system as professional growth and improvement for all.

State Policy Context

California is in the midst of a number of seismic education policy changes. The new finance law, the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), shifts responsibility for consequential education decisions on governance and resource allocation from the state to local school

districts and places special emphasis on improving the achievement of historically underserved students. The LCFF soon will lead to a new statewide accountability system. At the same time, schools are implementing the Common Core State Standards and are about to take on the Next Generation Science Standards. Effectively implementing these new initiatives will require substantial changes in teachers' knowledge, skills, and strategies. Teaching quality and effectiveness will be more important than ever.

California is also on the cusp of what promises to be a substantial statewide teacher shortage. Some districts are already operating without enough credentialed teachers for all classrooms. According to a new report from the Learning Policy Institute, the supply of new teachers is at a 12-year low and the state began the 2015–16 school year with 3,900 open teaching positions. As the teacher shortage increases, the shortages are likely to be disproportionately in schools serving large numbers of students in LCFF-targeted groups, including low-income students and English learners. It is clear that California's need for highly effective, well prepared teachers who can meet the challenges state policy presents will only continue to grow. Where does evaluation fit in this scenario?

As we previously noted, the state's teacher evaluation law, the Stull Act, dates back to 1971. In the more than four decades since it was enacted, periodic legislative efforts have been undertaken to alter the law. But nearly all of these attempts, including the most recent ones, take the view that teacher evaluation is nearly singularly about high stakes decisions—determining if a teacher should be granted permanence (tenure) or if an egregiously poorly performing one should be dismissed.

Yet increasing evidence strongly suggests teacher support often is the missing link in comprehensive appraisal systems. Our 2013 study, "California's Beginning Teachers: The Bumpy Path to a Profession," for example, found that the current evaluation system neither provides beginning teachers with actionable feedback to improve their practice nor principals with adequate data on which to make tenure decisions. Our 2011 study on peer review in Poway and San Juan, "Getting Serious About Teacher Support and Evaluation," demonstrated how blending support and evaluation for both beginning and struggling experienced teachers results in a system of growth and improvement that encompasses high stakes decisions.

We suggest in the next section of this report the principles on which a professional growth and evaluation system for teachers in all stages of their career might be based. These principles, derived from the experiences of San Juan, Poway, and San José, could form the basis for a new state policy that is constructed on evidence-based guidelines and conceives of evaluation as locally grown and focused on continuous teacher growth and development.

Key Components of Professional Growth and Improvement Systems

Insights from the experience of the San Juan, Poway, and San José school districts do not point to a clear recipe for overhauling teacher evaluation systems. Instead, the districts' efforts suggest a set of key components that are important considerations for other school districts that are seeking to transform their current teacher evaluation systems to systems of professional growth and improvement.

1. Collaborative Creation

In each of our three study districts, developing new professional growth and improvement systems was a joint effort of the local teachers' union and the district leadership. Importantly, the local teachers' union played a lead role in initiating discussions and spearheading development work. The teachers' unions' central role gave teachers a sense of ownership of the new system. That sense was not automatic. For union leadership, teacher buy-in required a substantial and consistent communications effort with members and plenty of opportunities for teachers to express their concerns.

Similarly, the districts' wholehearted support for the effort was critical. Given the multitude of initiatives underway at any given time, it was not always easy to keep the development of a new evaluation system at the top of the priority list. In each of the three study districts, district leaders demonstrated a willingness to share decision-making authority and a commitment to collaboration. In addition, both the district and the union had to be honest about what was and was not working with the old system and avoid defensiveness. As one district official said, "You have to have trust. You have to have collaboration. It becomes about the relationship."

Poway, San Juan, and San José were also careful to keep principals in the loop as the new systems moved forward. Principals, who long have been central to teacher evaluation, would become partners with teachers in these new systems. Principals might have viewed relinquishing long-held authority as a threat to their ability to lead their schools. Instead, principals were part of the development process from the beginning, thus paving the way for their buy-in as well.

While building new systems required a collaborative effort, it was critically important to have a person from both the teachers union and the district take responsibility for the daily details associated with the development process. Without daily attention to the organizing, communicating, and planning work, it would have been easy for the new system to become just one of many initiatives underway. Moreover, each of the districts found themselves stuck on various difficult issues (usually related to time and resources) and it took leaders from the union and the district to keep the development process moving.

2. Purpose and Branding

As in most districts across the country, few educators in San Juan, Poway, or San José found much value in their old evaluation systems. Typically, both teachers and principals reported that the system did little to help improve instruction, entailed little meaningful or helpful feedback, was based on just a few classroom observations, and generally was a compliance formality. Overall, evaluation had very negative connotations for educators. Teachers believed it was a "gotcha" tool and principals were frustrated by the limited time they had available to make it meaningful.

Each district began the development process with the intention of fixing their existing evaluation system. But what distinguishes the new systems was a shift in their thinking about the purpose of the new system and asking the question, "Who are we designing the system for?" The districts and unions came to realize that just improving the observation skills of the principals or increasing the amount of evidence used to measure a teacher's performance was not enough. They needed to reset the system so its purpose was to support teachers in their professional growth and improvement, rather than just measure performance.

In addition, each of the three districts had to grapple with the negative perceptions associated with the word “evaluation.” Both San Juan and Poway decided to rebrand their systems to put an emphasis on support, growth, and improvement. San Juan’s new program is called “The System of Professional Growth,” Poway’s is “The Teacher Professional Learning and Effectiveness System.” In all three districts, the new systems came with new procedures, strategies, roles, and purpose.

Research on the implementation of other new evaluation systems underscores the importance of branding. For example, Massachusetts has been implementing a new educator evaluation system for more than 4 years. Although the system is designed to emphasize growth and improvement, many teachers still believe, at least in part because it is named “The Educator Evaluation System,” that it is little changed from the old system and that its fairness depends on who evaluator happens to be.

3. Peer Review

As we documented in “Peer Review and Assistance: Getting Serious About Teacher Support and Evaluation,” Poway and San Juan have had exemplary and longstanding Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) systems. In those two districts, PAR is designed to provide teachers who have received consistently poor evaluations a structured and intensive improvement program. The PAR experience provided a foundation for thinking about combining professional growth with appraisal in a systematic and expanded way.

PAR in Poway and San Juan also set the stage for the collaborative labor-management relationship that was essential to developing a new evaluation system. This collaborative relationship came about because of the joint development of the PAR program and continues with the ongoing work of the PAR Governance Board. Composed of unions officials, teachers appointed by the union, and district representatives, the Governance Board oversees the PAR program and makes high-stakes decisions about PAR practitioners based on evidence from principals and from Consulting Teachers, highly skilled experienced teachers selected jointly by the district and union to provide support for PAR participating teachers and then contribute to their evaluations.

The PAR programs clearly revealed the value of Consulting Teachers in supporting and evaluating their colleagues. Their work in Poway’s and San Juan’s PAR programs was so compelling that both district administrators and union officials recognized that they could play key roles in a new and rigorous growth and improvement system for all teachers. San José adopted some aspects of PAR, taken from the San Juan and Poway experiences, for its own new evaluation system.

4. Evaluator Expertise and Capacity

One of the major challenges of building and implementing new systems of educator evaluation is the dependence on already overburdened principals to do more. In some cases, principals and other administrators charged with evaluation lack the skills to conduct observations and provide meaningful feedback and support to teachers. In most cases, principals lack the time required to conduct rigorous evaluations through multiple observations and other data gathering activities. All three districts devoted extensive time and resources to training for principals and peer evaluators to ensure consistency and build observation and feedback skills.

While districts occasionally promise to reduce some of principals' responsibilities to allow more time for working with teachers, we have rarely seen those promises realized. In each of the three districts in this study, the new systems utilize the existing expertise and capacity of exemplary teachers to supplement the work of the principals.

5. Joint Governance

As we mentioned earlier, experience with PAR Governance Boards reinforced the collaborative relationship between the district and the teachers' union. A key component of the new evaluation system in each of the three study districts is a teacher-administrator governance board (or panel) that oversees the system and makes key decisions about how teachers move professionally through their careers.

Governance boards play a crucial role in the new systems as they provide a forum for sophisticated conversations about teaching and learning and establish a precedent for future collaborative work. The governance boards signaled a commitment to working together to improve practice and to maintaining objectivity. While the membership and configuration of the governance panels in each of the study districts varies, the commitment to collaboration and joint ownership is essential to the success of the new systems.

6. Prototyping and Piloting

The imposition of a new evaluation system at the state or district level typically has been undermined by a lack of capacity at the school level to achieve implementation fidelity. One result is that many teachers do not understand how their evaluation system works and often report that it is unfair and ineffective.

The experience of our case study districts strongly suggests the critical steps of prototyping and piloting prior to full implementation. One district tried out (prototyped) several variations of its new professional growth and development system with small numbers of educators, made modifications based on those experiences, and tested the changes again with a small group before attempting a larger pilot with several schools. The school pilots also resulted in modifications to the new system before the still-to-come roll out to the entire district. Another district used small groups of teacher volunteers to develop, pilot, and refine individual components of their evolving system.

7. Role of Student Learning

Many education reformers have for several years viewed valued-added measures (VAM) of teacher performance as an accurate way to differentiate degrees of effectiveness among teachers. VAM calculates the difference between what a student is expected to learn in a year based on his or her previous performance on a standardized test with what the student actually does learn. The difference is said to be the "value" a teacher adds to the student's learning. More recently, researchers have documented weaknesses of using VAM for high stakes decisions. In fact, the new version of the federal Elementary and Secondary Act, now called the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), removes the requirement that states and districts seeking federal dollars ensure that test scores are part of their teacher evaluation systems. Nevertheless, many policy makers still believe that student test scores are a valid way to measure teacher effectiveness.

Establishing a fair and accurate way to incorporate some measure of student learning in teacher evaluation largely has eluded policy makers. Our case study districts recognized the problems of using student test scores to measure teacher performance and have replaced reliance on test scores with multiple sources of evidence.

Other districts and states have been wrestling with the challenge of including student test score results in their evaluation systems. Massachusetts' solution offers a sensible approach that reflects the strategies of the three case study districts. In Massachusetts, student test scores are used to confirm an educator's ratings. Those ratings are based on multiple classroom observations (ideally with more than one observer), and documentation of performance using student work, lesson plans, non-instructional duties, and teachers' activities to enhance parent and community involvement. After the evaluator has determined a rating, he or she examines the teacher's students' test scores (on multiple tests) to see if those scores are consistent with the rating. If the test scores are lower than the teacher's performance rating would suggest, the teacher's professional development plan becomes a 1-year instead of a 2-year plan. The intention is to emphasize professional growth and better understand the causes of weak student performance on the tests.

Conclusion

San Juan, Poway, and San José school districts and their teachers unions have taken pioneering steps towards reinventing teacher evaluation in California. While there is much left to do as they work to refine and implement their new systems, each approach to teacher evaluation redefines the central purpose as professional growth and improvement. These districts have also provided the state and other districts with insights about how to replace ineffective teacher evaluation systems with locally developed new and more effective professional growth systems. Our research has distilled those insights into seven key components of professional growth and development systems.

San Juan, Poway, and San José have also demonstrated the potential of local solutions to complex educational problems. Their efforts are consistent with Governor Brown's principle of subsidiarity as embodied in the Local Control Funding Formula. We are hopeful that districts across the state will draw upon the experience of San Juan, Poway, and San José to devise their own professional growth and improvement systems.

While the hard work of replacing ineffective teacher evaluation systems should occur at the local level, the state has a critical role to play. First, the state can signal its priority for making teacher evaluation's purpose primarily to be about the growth and improvement of all teachers. Second, the state can establish a competitive grant program to support local district efforts to transform their teacher evaluation systems. These grants should be awarded based on the districts' plans and their consistency with the key components for developing professional growth and improvement systems identified in this research. Third, the state can refrain from mandating a uniform teacher evaluation system as has been attempted elsewhere.

Ultimately, improving the effectiveness of California's teachers is the critical lynchpin to addressing many of the challenges facing the state's education system. With the ambitious effort to implement new standards, reinvent the state's accountability system, and confront the looming teacher shortage, nothing is more important than redirecting the wasted

resources devoted to current teacher evaluation systems to new systems designed to support and improve teaching and learning.

Profiles of the Three Districts

San Juan, Poway, and San José have each taken a different path to reinventing teacher evaluation. Yet each has come down essentially in the same place: Evaluation needs to be a comprehensive system that emphasizes professional growth and development. The stories of their paths are both complex and nuanced. The three descriptions that follow provide just a taste of these districts' work but offer readers a sense of their deliberations, thoughtfulness, and the care they took building new systems to enhance teaching in order to improve student learning.

SAN JUAN TEACHERS ASSOCIATION AND SAN JUAN UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT'S SYSTEM OF PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

San Juan Unified School District (SJUSD) in Sacramento County is California's 11th largest district and serves about 46,000 students in 35 elementary schools, 8 K–8 schools, 7 middle schools, 9 high schools, and several alternative schools, early childhood centers, and adult education centers. San Juan employs about 2100 teachers. The district enjoys a reputation as a forward-looking district, often on the cutting edge of new programs.

The San Juan Teachers Association (SJTA) and SJUSD set the stage for rethinking teacher evaluation in 1999 with the establishment of a Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) program for struggling experienced teachers and a revamped Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) program. Their experience with PAR and BTSA revealed that struggling veteran teachers and beginning teachers could be well supported by their expert peers (Consulting Teachers) and that the union and the district could work collaboratively to solve meaningful educational issues and problems.

The success of San Juan's PAR and BTSA programs, and especially the work of the Consulting Teachers, stood in sharp contrast to the broader teacher evaluation system. Both the teachers' union and the district recognized that teacher evaluations were compliance-based, ineffective, and largely meaningless. In 2011, the union and the district agreed to begin designing a system whose central purpose is to support teachers' continuous professional growth. In January 2013, the district identified development resources and the district and union convened a joint evaluation committee.

Joint Evaluation Committee Work

The Joint Evaluation Committee consists of the President of the SJTA, three classroom teachers, a Consulting Teacher, the district's Assistant Superintendent of Secondary, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, and three site administrators. The Committee began by examining the research on evaluation and professional growth. It examined a variety of documents including the California Department of Education's *Greatness by Design*, Linda Darling-Hammond's *Getting Teacher Evaluation Right*, the Measures of Effective Teaching Project's *Gathering Feedback for Teaching*, the California Teachers Association's *Teacher Evaluation Framework*, and various SJUSD documents.

Next, the Committee developed and administered surveys to teachers and principals designed to capture their views of the strengths and weaknesses of the existing evaluation system. On the positive side, many teachers reported that they appreciated the freedom to choose their own goals, the feedback they received from principals, and the opportunities they had to collaborate with their colleagues. However, most teachers also reported that the process was often superficial, narrow and inflexible, and that their evaluator lacked the training and content knowledge needed to conduct meaningful evaluations. Teachers reported that they wanted more frequent and meaningful feedback, the involvement of peers in the evaluation process, and the use of multiple indicators of their performance. Principals generally agreed with the teachers' responses. While principals appreciated the flexibility in the existing system and the opportunities teachers had for collaboration, they also reported that the system was superficial, inconsistent, and lacked accountability.

Features of the System of Professional Growth

Based on the review of the research and the results of the surveys, the Joint Evaluation Committee developed a set of guiding principles for a new evaluation system. Notably, the Committee unanimously agreed that the new system should drop the word “evaluation” and re-brand it as the “System of Professional Growth.” In addition, the Committee decided to drop the term “evaluator,” replacing it with “facilitator,” and replace the term “evaluatee” with “practitioner.” Facilitators can be either administrators or qualified peer teachers. The Joint Committee also established professional standards—called Nine Essential Elements, derived from the California Standards for the Teaching Profession—and rubrics to measure the Elements.

The guiding principles for the new System of Professional Growth hold that the process should:

- Provide differentiated supports for teachers at different stages of their careers;
- Attend to the support needs of educators in core and non-core subjects, as well as non-classroom educators (resource teachers, counselors, nurses);
- Be based on a continuum of professional standards;
- Provide for timely and meaningful formative and summative feedback and the resources needed for improvement;
- Use evidence of performance based on multiple sources;
- Include opportunities for collaboration, including options for peer review;
- Acknowledge the multiple responsibilities of teachers;
- Insure fairness through training and calibration of facilitators, transparency, adequate resources and time; and,
- Build in mechanisms to review, evaluate, and modify the new system as needed.

These guiding principles framed a structure for the new system and provided a foundation for developing varied prototypes for the emerging system. During the 2014–15 school year, 90 educators, including practitioners and facilitators from early childhood education and elementary, middle, and high schools across the district participated in prototyping activities, for which district committed \$150,000. During the prototyping, the Joint Committee learned that scheduling observations and conferences was difficult, that the planned five or six observations were too time consuming, and that the number of trainings to build inter-rater reliability needed to increase. The Joint Committee conducted a series of focus groups with the practitioners and modified the system based on practitioners’ experiences.

The still-developing system utilizes facilitators (administrators or peers) who receive extensive training, including calibrating on the Essential Elements rubrics and how to conduct learning-focused conversations. Peer facilitators receive release time and continuing education credit. The main work of the facilitator is to ask thoughtful questions to support the practitioner to reflect on his or her practice based on evidence.

In the Professional Practice Phase, the facilitator and practitioner meet initially to review the rubrics, identify the practitioner’s selected focus areas, and schedule observations. Each observation includes both pre and post debriefings. Facilitators conduct two observations (followed by debriefs based on evidence collected during the observations) and two reflective conversations focused on additional evidence the practitioner may choose to

include. Finally, the facilitator and the practitioner hold an end-of-year meeting to reflect and plan for continuing improvement.

The new system also includes a mechanism for providing additional supports for teachers whose performance may not be on track for meeting standards. The facilitator who has concerns about the practitioner's performance gathers evidence from two observations and a reflective conversation and submits the evidence to the Advisory Team for review. Once the Advisory Team confirms the Practitioner may not be on track to meet standards, the Advisory Process begins. An advisor is assigned to the practitioner and together they create a support plan that includes weekly contacts to assist the practitioner in meeting standards. If a Practitioner meets standards after the Advisory Process, he/she returns to the Professional Practice Phase the following year. When a practitioner has not met two or more standards after participating in advisory, the practitioner, the advisor, and a Consulting Teacher create an improvement plan and the practitioner is referred to the Peer Assistance and Review program for the next school year.

Piloting the System of Professional Growth

During the 2015–16 school year, the district is piloting the new system in five schools (and individuals at various sites) with a budget of \$500,000. Importantly, the district suspended the old teacher evaluation during the piloting, except for those teachers whose evaluation is required by the Education Code (or other special circumstances). The pilot includes training for facilitators (administrators and peers) to calibrate their observation skills, build their understanding of the rubrics based on Nine Essential Elements, and hone their communication skills to emphasize an inquiry approach that promotes reflective conversations.

Communications by the SJTA and the district have been an important component of the development of the new system. Recognizing what a significant change the new system is, the SJTA has distributed newsletters, held meetings, and had practitioners in the prototyping explain the new system to their colleagues. San Juan just recently has produced and distributed a series of short videos that explain the new system (<http://www.sanjuan.edu/Domain/7227>). Recently, the SJTA distributed the summary below that describes the difference between the old and new systems to all district staff:

Existing Evaluation System and the System of Professional Growth Compared

	Existing Evaluation System	System of Professional Growth
Primary Goal of the System	Measure performance to determine proficiency on standards (pass/fail)	Support the process of reflection and improvement of practice (identify next steps for growth)
Role of Evaluator	Evaluator captures evidence to determine whether or not the practitioner is or is not meeting standards (only administrators' role)	Facilitator uses an inquiry process to support the Practitioner's reflection base on evidence to identify next steps for improvement (administrator or peer)
Role of Practitioner	Passive – Receives information regarding the evaluator's determination of his/her performance	Active – Provides, presents, and discusses evidence and reflects to determine next steps for improvement and deepening of practice
Standards	Six California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP) (38 Elements in all)	Nine Essential Elements based on the CSTPs and the Continuum of Teaching Practice with descriptions of practice rubrics
Forms of Evidence	Observation notes (formal and informal)	Observation notes and evidence determined by the Practitioner that demonstrates professional practice
Time Per Cycle	Average time spent on Evaluation for Option A and B: 2 to 4 hours	Average time spent on the SPG process: 10–12 hours (Any hours spent beyond the school day counted for continuing education credit)
Cycle	1–4 year practitioners = every year 5+ year practitioners = every other year	Practitioners w/ temp/prob status = every year Practitioners with permanent status and 3-9 years experience = every other year Practitioners with permanent status and 10 or more years experience = every third year

Based on the experience with prototyping and piloting the new system, the Joint Committee will draft new contract language codifying the system and submit it to a vote of the union membership in Spring 2016. The SJUSD Board will then vote on it. Full implementation is expected during the 2016–17 school year.

Poway Federation of Teachers and Poway Unified School District's Teacher Professional Learning and Effectiveness System

San Diego County's Poway Unified School District (PUSD) has a long history of innovation. The district, third largest in the county, has nearly 35,000 students in 39 schools. A hallmark of Poway's often path-breaking work is that, for more than a quarter of a century, advances in education programs often have been constructed on a foundation of labor-management collaboration. Now once again, PUSD and its teacher union, the Poway Federation of Teachers (PFT), are working together to build the Teacher Professional Learning and Effectiveness System.

As its name suggests, the new system is meant to integrate ongoing teacher professional growth with performance appraisal. Designed to replace the district's decades-old teacher evaluation system, the Professional Learning and Effectiveness System, once fully implemented, is intended to create a seamless career-long path for Poway teachers, providing continuous opportunities for professional growth and development and ensuring only high quality teachers are in the district's classrooms.

Paving the Way for a New System

In 1986 Poway became one of the early national pioneers of peer review. The PUSD and PFT together developed the Poway Professional Assistance Program (PPAP) for beginning teachers and the Permanent Teacher Intervention Program (PTIP) for struggling experienced teachers. Well-trained, carefully selected Teacher Consultants work with novices and underperforming experienced teachers to provide intensive, one-on-one support and then assess their performance. The programs are overseen by a joint labor-management Governance Board. The experience with PPAP and PTIP built the PUSD's and PFT's collective understanding of successful strategies to support new and veteran teachers, effective ways to use evidence to assess professional growth and development, and strategies for having hard conversations about professional practice when support does not result in sufficient improvement.

A second district-union initiative, the Teaching and Learning Cooperative (TLC), expanded the district's capacity to shape professional development to meet the needs of individual teachers so that they are better able to meet the needs of their students. Created in 2003, the TLC is guided by a joint labor-management board, the Professional Development Advisory Board. The Board approves all professional development. Responding to teacher proposals, the board determines if a suggested learning strategy or activity is likely to advance the teacher's professional growth in a way that is linked to improving student learning.

Peer review and the TLC laid the foundation for Poway's more expansive Teacher Professional Learning and Effectiveness System.

Why a New System?

Like most California school districts, Poway has long structured its evaluation system using the framework in the state's 1971 Stull Act. With the exception of the peer review programs for beginning and struggling teachers, evaluation in Poway had come to be what interviewees for this study described as "pro forma," "unserious," and "just something we had to do."

As they began to rethink the system in Poway, district and union officials were well aware that teacher evaluation was high on policy agendas around the country. As they explained, “We wanted to create a system that fit our needs before someone imposed something on us.”

In addition, district and union leaders had a keen sense that Poway’s longtime evaluation system was out of alignment with the philosophy, and indeed the rigor, of the peer review programs and the TLC program.

Developing the Teacher Professional Learning and Effectiveness System

Work on the Teacher Professional Learning and Effectiveness system began in 2013. Still a work-in-progress, development of the new system is guided by the Core Evaluation Team that, in keeping with Poway’s tradition, is composed of representatives of the district and the union and reflects core constituencies (central office, principals, and teachers). Through an agreement early on between the district and union, money was appropriated from the general fund to release a teacher full-time for three years to lead the work of the Team.

The Core Evaluation Team undertook a number of preparatory activities to gather information that would help frame the architecture for a new professional growth and evaluation system. The Team reviewed research on teacher evaluation, consulted with experts, and conducted a teacher survey to gain teachers’ sense of what a new system should look like. After much deliberation and review of materials, the Team settled on a set of criteria that has bounded its work:

- Teacher evaluation should be standards-based, developmentally appropriate, and include multiple measures.
- Trained evaluators who know how to give productive, actionable feedback linked to professional development are integral to an effective system.
- Teachers must be partners in the assistance and review process.
- Appraisal and development work should be ongoing, collaborative, and overseen by panels of teachers and administrators to ensure quality and consistency.

Elements of the New System

Once fully in place, Poway’s new teacher growth and evaluation system will be a multi-measure system composed of three key elements:

1. *Standards-based evidence of practice* gathered through observations by trained teachers and administrators, review of classroom videos, data from student perception surveys, and examination of instructional artifacts;
2. *Teacher’s impact on student learning* as measured by teacher-developed student learning objectives (SLOs) that use classroom, department, grade level, or district assessments for benchmark and summative measures of student learning; and,
3. *Teacher’s contribution to the profession* based on teachers’ individual professional learning goals, measured progression toward meeting those goals, and teachers’ contributions to school site goals.

Collected data will inform teachers’ ongoing professional development and will be used by the district to make key personnel decisions, including awarding permanence (tenure) and appropriate disposition of teachers not meeting standards.

Poway will leave in place its peer review programs, PPAP for beginning teachers and PTIP for struggling experienced teachers. These will serve as “bookends” for the new evaluation and professional growth system, targeting specific categories of the district’s teaching population.

Still a Work-in-Progress

Poway has systematically and strategically engaged teachers in developing the Professional Learning and Effectiveness system. Peer review Teacher Consultants took the lead in revising the district’s Continuum of Teaching Standards. Based on the Danielson Framework, National Board Standards, and California Standards for the Teaching Profession, the Continuum has evolved since it was first introduced in the early days of peer review.

Following the Teacher Consultants’ initial work to revise the Continuum, teachers and administrators from across the district reviewed the document, suggested revisions, and added a new section called, “Possible Teacher Observation Evidence”. More than 150 of the district’s teachers contributed to the document. The new revision takes into account research findings about measuring effective teaching as well as consideration of standards and criteria that will to move teacher professional practice to successively higher levels. The Continuum has been used by Teacher Consultants in the PAR program and is being used at five pilot schools during the 2015–16 school year in anticipation of final revisions before the system’s district-wide rollout.

Under the TLC umbrella, teacher volunteers have investigated various multi-measure system elements, such as SLOs and formative assessments, and provided feedback to the Core Evaluation Team on the efficacy of various proposals.

The district is piloting the full system in a small number of schools during the 2015–16 school year. Next year, 2016–17, Poway will expand the pilot to half the schools in the district. Full implementation is planned for 2017–18. By intimately involving teachers as partners in development of the new system, the district and union have simultaneously made use of home grown professional expertise and strengthened crucial early buy-in for a comprehensive and complex system.

In sum, Poway has employed its history and experience to construct a new, comprehensive system for teacher professional growth and evaluation. The collaboratively developed Professional Learning and Effectiveness System is research-based and adapted to the district’s context, needs, and circumstances.

San José Teachers Association and San José Unified School District's Teacher Evaluation System

From the early 1990s through the early 2000s, the San José Unified School District, located in Santa Clara County's Silicon Valley, embarked on a plan to raise academic expectations for all of its 32,000 students. Focusing specific reform efforts at the high school level, the district entered into a partnership with the College Board, launched an equity initiative, realigned resources to de-track classes and increase minority participation in honors and Advanced Placement courses, and adopted UC and CSU A-G requirements as official high school graduation requirements.

Work on these changes sowed the seeds of an increasingly collaborative relationship between the San José Unified School District and the San José Teachers Association. Both the district and union acknowledged that implementing more challenging expectations for students required new and expanded resources and supports for teachers. Among the issues that surfaced repeatedly was administrator and teacher concern about the validity and usefulness of the teacher evaluation system. Initial labor-management exploration of evaluation options began a decade ago. That effort stalled but work began anew in 2009 with the establishment of an Evaluation Working Group. The Working Group, composed of teachers appointed by the union, principals, and district central office administrators, was tasked with identifying alternatives to San José's traditional teacher evaluation system.

The Working Group spent two years reviewing research on teacher evaluation and examining non-conventional models around the country. In addition, the district developed a strategic plan in 2012 that included strategy 4.2—professional growth system development for all district employees as a top priority. Results of the working groups efforts formed the basis for 2012 contract negotiations on a new evaluation system, along with other key components such as coaching, framework development, and Common Core Standards implementation, and associated professional development. Agreement reached, phased implementation began in the 2013–14 school year.

The Teacher Evaluation System (TES)

The new system, called simply The Teacher Evaluation System, is organized around five professional standards. "Teacher" as used here includes all members of the bargaining unit such as counselors, nurses, coaches, speech clinicians, and others.

1. Teachers maintain appropriate student learning environments,
2. Teachers demonstrate knowledge of the subjects they teach,
3. Teachers design high-quality learning experiences,
4. Teachers constantly assess student progress and adapt instruction to promote student achievement, and,
5. Teachers continuously develop and improve as professional educators.

The system differentiates the appraisal process for probationary teachers, experienced teachers who are performing satisfactorily, and struggling experienced teachers. For each, the evaluation process is somewhat different, targeted to particular needs. Probationary teachers and underperforming experienced teachers participate in a peer review-like process; evaluation for all other teachers is based on a continuous cycle of professional growth and appraisal.

At the heart of the new system is the Teacher Quality Panel (TQP), a joint labor-management panel composed of three teachers appointed by the union and three administrators appointed by the district. Two full-time release co-chairs—one appointed by the superintendent and the other appointed by the union president—lead the TQP. The TQP is responsible for ensuring evaluation is carried out fairly, consistently, and in accordance with the processes and procedures developed collaboratively by the district and union.

Probationary Teachers

Probationary teachers are automatically assigned to the TES while they earn permanent status. Under the program, administrators and Consulting Teachers, experienced teachers selected by the TQP, jointly evaluate beginning teachers' professional practice for the two years of probation. All educators responsible for evaluation—administrators and CTs—must complete Analyzing Teaching for Student Results, an eight-day course provided to San José by Research for Better Teaching of Acton, Massachusetts.

Consulting Teachers are released full-time from their regular professional responsibilities while serving as CTs. Different from other peer review programs, CTs in San José do not provide support to the teachers they evaluate. Support for probationary teachers comes through the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) program.

During the first year of probation, each teacher is observed formally and informally by the principal and CT throughout the year. Administrators and CTs observe separately and prepare reports of their observations. The TQP reviews all of the documentation in redacted form so that the identity of the practitioners is known only to the TQP co-chairs. If the administrator and CT do not reach the same conclusion about a probationary teacher's professional practice, the TQP will so notify them and ask that they observe the teacher together.

At the end of the first year, the TQP reviews the evaluation documentation gathered for each probationary teacher by the administrator and the CT. The TQP then makes a recommendation to the superintendent either that the teacher should be continued for the second year of probation or the teacher's contract should not be renewed. If teacher is renewed, the evaluation process for the second year mirrors the first year process. At the end of the second probationary year, the TQP again reviews all of the accumulated evidence and recommends to the superintendent that the teacher be granted permanent status (tenure) or be non-re-elected and not maintain a position in the district.

Experienced Teachers Who Are Meeting Standard

Teachers in San José who have earned permanent status enter a three-year evaluation cycle that persists as long as the teacher continues to "meet standard." The first year of the cycle consists of a formal evaluation by a site administrator. The administrator observes the teacher (or nurse, counselor, or other member of the bargaining unit) to appraise professional practice. The administrator can also use additional kinds of evidence, such as samples of student work, lesson plans, evidence of communication with parents, and information from participation in professional growth activities to arrive at a rating of "Meets Standard" or "Does Not Meet Standard." During the two subsequent years, when the teacher is not being formally evaluated, she develops and implements a professional

growth plan. The district encourages teachers to link their professional growth plan with evidence from the formal evaluation.

Evaluating Struggling Experienced Teachers

Permanent teachers who receive a rating of “Does Not Meet Standard,” after completing two evaluation cycles with a support plan targeting issues identified in Round 1, are referred to the Teacher Assistance Program where each is assigned an administrator and a CT who are responsible for formal and informal observations. Once again, the CT does not provide support to the struggling teacher. That is provided by a TAP mentor, an exemplary teacher selected by the TAP Panel. The TAP Panel, an expanded version of the Teacher Quality Panel, deals specifically with permanent teachers who are at risk.

Permanent teachers in TAP are observed three times in their first semester in the program by their administrative evaluator and an assigned Consulting Teacher. Teachers who are not rated as meeting standard are evaluated a fourth and final time, again by the administrator and CT.

After each observation, the administrator and CT present a progress report to the TAP Panel. At the end of the year, the TAP Panel reviews the accumulated evidence and makes one of three recommendations to the superintendent: (1) the teacher is now meeting standard and should be returned to the regular evaluation cycle, (2) the teacher is not yet meeting standard but has made progress and should be offered an additional semester in TAP, or (3) the teacher does not meet standard and is recommended for dismissal.

San José rolled out its new evaluation system in phases. The complete new system, now fully in place, emphasizes enhanced support and supervision for probationary teachers and struggling permanent teachers and focuses on continuous professional growth for all other teachers in the district.