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The Wisconsin Learning-Centered Teacher Evaluation Study: Informing Policy and Practice

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Major teacher evaluation changes have occurred across the nation during the past decade. Pressed by federal education initiatives and encouraged by research on promising teacher evaluation practices (Grissom & Youngs, 2016; Milanowski, Kimball, & Odden, 2005; Taylor & Tyler, 2012; Kane & Staiger, 2012), states and school districts have implemented evaluation systems using new measures of educator practice and student learning.

A growing body of research has examined teacher evaluation policies and related impacts, including state implementation (e.g., Wayne et al., 2016; Brown et al., 2016), district implementation (e.g., Anderson et al., 2016; Malen et al., 2015; Putman et al., 2018), measurement qualities (Grissom & Youngs, 2016), performance feedback (e.g., Garet et al., 2017; and Rowland et al., 2018), and linkages of teacher evaluation systems to other human capital management systems (e.g., Heneman & Milanowski, 2011). Relatively less implementation research focuses on the school level in a way that captures the multiple roles involved (i.e., principals, teachers, coaches, peers).

Wisconsin adopted a system for educator evaluation that includes common measures, similar training requirements, and an emphasis on educator growth and development. School districts have considerable flexibility to adapt local practices and use results for local decisions. The evaluation of the Wisconsin Educator Effectiveness (EE) System has provided informative [state, district and school reports](#) on teacher and principal perceptions of the system. There is much to learn, however, about how schools are carrying out evaluation practices to support educator improvement.

This report presents findings from the Learning-Centered Evaluation Study carried out during the 2017-2018 school year. We examine school-level educator effectiveness practices and outcomes within Wisconsin districts focusing evaluation efforts on educator improvement rather than accountability. The report includes four main sections. We first introduce the study by providing background on the EE system development in Wisconsin, an overview of the five principles of learning-centered evaluation, and the main study questions. In the second section, we summarize the study design. In the third section, we present findings on learning-centered practices in the schools, and observations on how evaluation affects teaching practice. The final summary section concludes with a policy response from the study sponsor and thoughts on future studies.

I. Background on EE System

In Winter 2010, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) convened an Educator Effectiveness Design Team to develop a state model for teacher and leader evaluation. Following multiple planning meetings over the course of 10 months, the Design Team produced a report outlining a teacher and leader evaluation framework ([Department of Public Instruction, 2011](#)) intended to provide a foundation for the state evaluation system. According to the report, “The

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primary purpose of the Wisconsin Framework for Educator Effectiveness is to support a system of continuous improvement of educator practice.” Following the report, DPI initiated work teams to develop the teacher and principal evaluation process, including measures of professional practice and student learning outcomes, and how those measures inform educator development and support.

Subsequently, the Wisconsin Legislature passed Act 166 in 2012. The state legislation reinforced the DPI evaluation approach and required all districts to implement the new system by 2014-15 using a state-developed model or equivalent model approved by DPI.¹ The time allowed the DPI to create training opportunities and pilot test the new system, while leveraging an external evaluation to inform potential changes and supports. The system was pilot tested over 2 years and fully implemented in the 2014-15 school year. Although a common evaluation system had potential to establish consistency in evaluation approaches, in keeping with local control, Wisconsin school districts have discretion in the use of evaluation for high stakes (e.g., employee retention, compensation) and low stakes (e.g., professional development) decisions.

Figure 1 illustrates the main EE system processes as described in the DPI User Guide for Teachers, Teacher Supervisors, and Coaches (Department of Public Instruction, 2018). The typical evaluation cycle spans three years, which includes a Summary Year and 2 Supporting Years. The figure represents the basic steps during the Summary Year. Educators first receive orientation information at the beginning of the process and engage in reflection and goal setting to develop an Educator Effectiveness Plan (EEP). The EEP includes the Student Learning Objective (SLO) and the Professional Practice Goal (PPG). Educators meet with evaluators and peers during the year to discuss goal progress and observations. At the end of the year, educators with their evaluator or peers discuss results and plan for the following year. The main steps represent an annual improvement cycle with the emphasis on educator-developed goals, feedback from peers and evaluators, and three meetings that occur across the year to discuss progress and needed support. DPI stresses using the EE system for learning rather than accountability.

¹ The present study focuses on districts implementing the state model for teacher evaluation that centers on Danielson’s Framework for Teaching. Other districts use equivalence models, including the approach by CESA 6 adapted from research by Stronge (2007; 2010). Both represent models of practice on which to center the evaluation process.

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Figure 1. Major Processes in the EE system Annual Cycle

AUG-OCT	NOV-APR	MAY-JUN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Orientation Meeting. Overview of the system measures and processes, identify who can provide support, discuss timelines and schedules. •Self-Review. Educator analyzes student, school, and personal data to determine areas of strength and areas for improvement. •Educator Effectiveness Plan. Educator creates an EEP, which includes an SLO and PPG. •Planning Session. Review EEP, discuss and adjust goals if necessary, identify evidence sources, actions, and resources needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Evidence Collection & Ongoing Improvement. Centered on the educators goals, evidence is collected on artifacts (i.e., teaching materials, student work) and classroom observations. Written and verbal feedback occurs following observations. Evidence collection takes place throughout the evaluation cycle. •Mid-year Review. Review PPG and SLO, receive feedback and discuss progress. Goals may be adjusted if necessary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Process and outcome determinations. Includes assessment of degree of success in achieving SLO and PPG based on evidence. SLOs are self-scored by educators. Evaluator assigns a holistic SLO score in Summary Years based on SLOs across the cycle. •End-of-Cycle Conversation and Conference. Educators receive feedback on PPG and SLO achievement, discuss results on components of the professional practice rubric and SLO results. Identify growth areas for upcoming year.

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Drawing from pilot stage experiences as well as the literature on performance management and adult learning, DPI emphasizes learning-centered teacher and leader evaluation practices. As articulated in the teacher effectiveness guide ([User Guide for Teachers, Teacher Supervisors, Coaches](#)), there are five principles associated with learning-centered evaluation: (1) a context of trust that encourages risk-taking and learning from mistakes; (2) a common model of effective practice (i.e., the Framework for Teaching [FFT]) to center conversations about teaching and inform professional learning within and outside the evaluation context; (3) educator-developed goals that are regularly referenced to frame the evaluation process; (4) cycles of continuous improvement guided by specific and timely feedback to drive practice; and (5) integration of evaluation practices with other school and district improvement strategies. We briefly elaborate these principles below.

Context of trust. Trust provides an essential foundation for student or adult learning (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Trust within the evaluation context includes transparency in the requirements and criteria, trained evaluators to ensure consistency, encouragement of rigorous goals, and the understanding that educators will not be punished based on results. School administrators play key roles in building trust and encouraging risk-taking in the evaluation process.

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Common model of effective practice. DPI selected the 2013 FFT by Charlotte Danielson as the basis for evaluating and supporting teaching practice. This framework has been the focus of a number of research studies demonstrating validity and reliability (see, e.g., Gates Foundation, 2013; Taylor & Tyler, 2012; Milanowski et al., 2005). Although primarily used as a tool to support professional growth and evaluation, the Framework may also apply to mentoring, and other human capital management practices (Heneman & Milanowski, 2004).

Educator-developed goals. To create greater relevance and promote acceptance, educators are encouraged to set goals based on analysis of student data as well as self-appraisal and reflection on their own practice. Goal setting can support professional learning and performance execution (see, e.g., Locke & Latham, 2013). Two educator goals center the Wisconsin evaluation and growth process: (a) the PPG and (b) the SLO. Together, these goals represent the annual EEP. Peers and evaluators are encouraged to support educator goals through dialog and feedback within a continuous improvement cycle.

Continuous improvement guided by feedback. Improvement cycles represent intentional actions that entail goal-setting, evidence collection, reflection, feedback and revision. The Wisconsin evaluation system may facilitate continuous improvement through three main phases, including beginning-of-the-year goal setting, middle-of-the-year revision, and end-of-year reflections. Throughout the cycle, educators collect evidence of practice, receive feedback and support from peers and evaluators, and revise goals based on this information.

Integration with school and district priorities. Integration of evaluation practices within larger school and district priorities can move what is typically an individual evaluative experience into an organizational improvement strategy. When classroom, grade-level, departmental, school, and district goals align, the evaluation process can be reinforcing and drive growth across the local education system.

Each of the five principles of learning-centered evaluation has potential to enhance leadership practice, educator acceptance, and use of the evaluation system for improvement. When all principles are in place, we hypothesize that the system can contribute to improved individual and organizational effectiveness. The present study represents an initial attempt to address the presence and impact of growth-oriented school-based evaluation practices within districts embracing the EE System as an improvement strategy. Two primary questions frame the study:

1. To what extent are schools implementing learning-centered teacher evaluation practices?
2. How do local evaluation approaches that include learning-centered practices contribute to changes in teaching?

II. Study Design

At the request of the Educator Development and Support (EDS) office within the DPI, this report builds on the external evaluation of the EE system by providing a deeper look at school and district practices supporting educator growth and development. The study is primarily

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qualitative, allowing for an extended exploration of how teachers, leaders, and instructional coaches are carrying out the evaluation process.

In 2016-17, the study team initially reached out to districts thought to be carrying out growth-focused evaluation practices. Ten geographically diverse districts were included based on the results from the 2016 Wisconsin Educator, Development, Support, and Retention (WEDSR) Survey² and recommendations from educational leaders. The visits led to district-level case studies. We selected five districts from the initial 10 for a school-level study during the 2017-18 school year. At that time, we also added schools from Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) to provide insight into learning-centered practices within a large urban school setting.

Within each district, we selected 2-3 schools, including schools at the elementary, middle and high school level when available. We reviewed WEDSR survey responses on perceived trust and feedback quality to identify schools where learning-centered practices were most likely occurring. Comparing schools based on teacher WEDSR survey responses helped narrow the selection when there was more than one school at a grade level. The process of selecting schools in Milwaukee was slightly different. Evaluation team members met with MPS staff to identify a list of schools believed to promote a learning-centered culture around EE and in which teacher responses on the WEDSR survey reflected this culture. Through this process, two schools agreed to participate, one K-8 school and one middle school with Grades 6-8. The final sample included 16 schools.³ Appendix A lists the districts and schools in the final sample and Appendix B further describes study methods.

In each school, we interviewed teachers, evaluators (i.e., principals or assistant/associate principals) and coaches. Interview protocols are included in Appendix C. We collected documents, such as school improvement plans, and evaluation tools when available. We also asked teachers to complete logs following feedback interactions with their evaluators or coaches. For all schools except the Milwaukee schools⁴, we collected SLOs from the prior academic year for a sample of teachers.

This study aimed to examine EE implementation and results in schools and districts deeply engaged with the EE system. We selected a small sample of districts, schools within districts, and educators within schools to permit in-depth data collection within limited resources and to minimize study burden. We used purposeful sampling (Patton, 2008) to select the districts and schools rather than using random selection. Therefore, while the data provide rich descriptions of practice within the study schools and districts, the results may not be representative of other schools and districts.

² www.uwm.edu/wsedsr

³ One district, Cashton, is comprised of only two schools, an elementary school and a combined middle/high school.

⁴ SLOs were not part of the data requested from the MPS schools.

III. Findings

The study design allowed for in-depth examination of how teachers, principals and instructional coaches described their experiences with local evaluation practices. We next present findings on the main study areas of (1) school evaluation practices that reflect the learning-centered principles, and (2) how learning-centered evaluation contributes to changes in teaching practice.

How Local Evaluation Practices Reflect Learning-Centered Principles

Context of trust. Leaders in the study districts and schools emphasized an environment of trust within and outside of the EE process. Building trust has been an intentional process of getting staff comfortable with the change in policy that includes greater focus on instructional practice. Each district communicated early about the growth orientation of the evaluation system, made available training and resources to address questions and support the process, and set the tone for formative uses.

The study districts conducted extensive district-wide training at the initial system implementation stages. Much of the training focused on system structure, the FFT, and the technology platform. Most of the initial training occurred within the districts, but some districts also sought trainings from their local Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA). With a basic knowledge base developed, training moved to other aspects of the system—for example, components within the Framework, artifact collection, and technology. Each district and participating school includes some level of basic EE System training for beginning educators, including guidance on how to develop SLOs. In most districts, once trained in the process, principals trained their staff.

The DPI requires evaluators to participate in ongoing calibration training on the FFT, which occurs twice a year. In addition to the calibration training, several districts hold team calibration walks for evaluators in order to build consistency between schools. Evaluators also meet regularly to discuss the evaluation process, concerns raised by teachers, district evaluation trends, and how to improve instructional feedback. In Wausau School District, evaluators attended in-depth training on teaching skills and related feedback based on the book, *The Skillful Teacher*, by Jon Saphier and colleagues (2008). In Baraboo School District, district EE leads provided sample feedback to evaluators, and as a group, they reviewed and discussed the types of feedback and focus that they wanted as a district. In another district, training for evaluators concentrates on creating non-judgmental observation statements and action-oriented feedback.

Across the schools, administrators were available, responsive, and transparent about the evaluation process. As a teacher explained, “our administrators are visible, that helps build trust.” Evaluators in each school in another district described avoiding excessive note taking during observations or post-observation discussions to create an inviting process and build relationships. Evaluators sought to provide formative feedback rather than summative assessments of teaching practice. They also tried to visit classrooms outside of the formal evaluation process to maintain visibility and get both teachers and students comfortable with their presence. An assistant principal emphasized the importance of structuring formative conversations: “The conversations have to be coaching conversations. If they’re feeling attacked,

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or that you're always pointing out the negative, you're never going to have the same trust." Further, in most of the schools, teachers expressed that their professionalism is respected; as reflective of other comments, one teacher mentioned that administrators "honor and believe in and value education and our opinions as teachers."

An essential component of trust across the schools stems from the fact that the evaluation process is not punitive. Rather, administrators conveyed, and teachers affirmed, the process is one of professional growth that permits risk-taking in furtherance of that goal. Teachers do not fear reprisal if they are unable to meet their goals, as one teacher said: "Nobody here feels a stigma attached with not doing well at something... [I]t's much more of a learning culture... [W]e do a really good job of making it about the kids." Teachers in several districts indicated that they are able to modify their goals mid-year if they are too challenging, as one said: "If [teachers] get to mid-year, look at the goal and realize it's too challenging, they can change their goal. The administration does a good job reinforcing the idea that they would rather have teachers set high goals and work to achieve them."

Collaboration can also foster trust. In this context, trust-building collaboration occurred between evaluators and teachers and between teachers themselves. One principal stated, "They [teachers and evaluators] don't always agree but it is a good conversation regarding evidence as to how they got there." In multiple districts, teachers are encouraged to collaborate in professional learning communities (PLCs) or observe their peers during class time, and administrators will offer to fill in for teachers so that they are able to do so.

Use of a common framework. Schools within districts adopting the state model for evaluation use the FFT as the foundation for evaluation goal setting, discussions, and performance determinations. Educators and leaders across the study schools spoke positively of the Framework as a model of professional practice. The extent to which the FFT informed school-based induction, mentoring, coaching, and professional development varied.

Each school utilized the FFT as a common framework of effective teaching practice. One principal stated that his school integrates the FFT "completely, [by building] our conversations at a leadership level around that, we've done calibration around that, and then compared and had conversations between us about scoring a teacher in those areas." As another administrator said it provides "fences for conversation around instruction." A coach also mentioned referencing the FFT when conducting class visits and providing formative feedback. According to an assistant principal, "I would struggle to provide meaningful feedback without the Framework." Further, several of the districts used the FFT to identify district priorities, which ranged from practices such as questioning and discussion, checking for understanding and communicating learning targets, to broader district initiatives such as personalized or project-based learning. Many schools also encouraged the use of the FFT in the development of SLOs and PPGs.

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The Cashton School District embraces the common model of practice represented by the Framework for Teaching. In addition to forming the foundation for evaluation discussions and goal setting, district and school leaders make connections between the FFT and the district's approach to PLC meetings and Positive Behaviors Interventions and Supports implementation. These connections help teachers and leaders create coherence around improvement efforts.

The extent to which the FFT is explicitly referenced throughout the districts varied. At one school, a teacher indicated that “we talk a lot about the different domains,” while a teacher in different school said, “it’s not like we walk around and reference Danielson,” and another said that the FFT is “almost second nature.” Respondents from a different district indicated that the FFT is “always there” and “ingrained in conversations,” but may not be systematically referenced during conversations. This variation may result from increased familiarity with the FFT over time, with conversations more “behind the scenes” now than they were in the system’s early years. Interviewees in multiple districts mentioned that outside of the evaluation process, the FFT tends to be largely utilized through support provided by school leaders and coaches to new teachers.

Educator-developed goals. To explore the extent to which educators developed their own goals and the quality of the goals, we asked teachers and leaders to describe the goal setting process, use of goals to inform practice and evaluation discussions. We also explored the qualities of the goals and related plans by collecting and analyzing a sample of SLOs and PPGs.

Although most educators had flexibility in setting goals based on the classroom data and personal reflections on practice, school and district leaders encouraged goal alignment between individual, school and district priorities. Educators were allowed to support one another with goal development and many collaborated in doing so. School and district leaders said that they encouraged educators to pursue “stretch” goals, but a separate analysis of SLOs suggests that the development of rigorous, hard to reach goals was not common.

Teachers across the study described a similar process of developing SLOs aligned to school and district instructional priorities and PPGs based on self-reflection. In most cases, when developing SLOs, the district conveyed district-wide priorities to staff early in the year, either as part of a staff professional development day or through other communications. One district compiled a large slide deck containing summaries of assessments to share priority areas. Another created a “heat map,” or data matrix with values represented with colors, to identify areas of concern or strength related to learning, attendance, and behavior goals. Teachers in most districts were strongly encouraged to set goals that align with district and school priorities, and most teachers did so without being required. The aligned goals frequently included teachers’ classroom- or grade-level data.

The rest of the SLO process typically unfolded similarly. Teachers often developed SLOs with grade level or departmental teams. Nearly all of the districts in the study had schools in which setting tiered SLOs is either in practice or encouraged, in an effort to be more inclusive and help focus on student sub-groups. Tiered SLOs help educators identify a goal and set targets for groups of students so that all students are represented. While evaluators and coaches were

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available to work with teachers on developing their SLOs and identifying strategies, most requests were limited to questions about the electronic platform for uploading goal statements and evidence. Teachers also reported little use of the DPI SLO quality criteria and SLO rubric to guide goal development. For example, one teacher mentioned that they knew about the quality criteria and rubric, but felt that teachers newer to the profession use these tools more regularly.

As part of the Learning-Centered Study, we closely examined SLOs from the participating schools.⁵ We collected and reviewed 81 SLOs completed during the 2016-17 academic year on the following dimensions: SLO completion, the focus of student learning goals, instructional emphasis, and goal qualities using the DPI SLO Quality Indicator Checklist. The analysis found that most SLO elements were completed, but quality varied. Based on the DPI SLO Quality Indicators, we found quality highest in alignment and evidence sources, and lowest in targeted growth and baseline data. When breaking out SLO quality ratings according to where teachers were in the evaluation cycle (Summary Year vs. Supporting Year), we found that Summary year teachers' SLOs were of higher quality for each of the Quality Indicators, although differences between Summary and Supporting teachers' SLOs were larger for some of the Quality Indicators (such as Alignment) and smaller for others (such as Interval). Regarding content focus, nearly half of the SLOs were in English Language Arts, reading, or writing. The remaining SLOs were in science, math, physical education, and Social Studies. Almost all educators reported plans to collaborate on their SLOs. Most stated they would collaborate with their evaluator, while the other educators stated they would collaborate with a coach or a peer.

In contrast with our SLO analysis, many of the teachers in the study reported that they are comfortable setting stretch goals that include all of their students. Evaluators for the most part also felt that teachers were setting rigorous goals. Evaluators reported providing feedback to teachers during the planning sessions on how to set more rigorous goals if the goals were not challenging. For example, an evaluator in an elementary school had an all-staff meeting to discuss how teachers could establish goals that were more rigorous and discussed how each teacher should be setting tiered goals. Goals perceived to be less rigorous were described as focusing on students who are already close to proficient, or including only a subset of the class.

PPG development tended to be an individualized process with teachers identifying their own practice areas and setting their own goals. Areas of focus typically emerged from the teachers' self-review using the FFT or other self-identified areas of interest. Few PPGs aligned with the teachers' SLOs. Additionally, PPGs were sometimes described in very general terms (e.g., "learn more about computer science and apply learning in the classroom") or quite specifically (e.g., "students will utilize differentiated sight word games and the use of flash cards with the folding in strategy at least 2 times a week"). Some teachers carried over their PPG from one year to the next, with modifications following end-of-year reflections. In a couple of instances, teachers did not have time to implement their PPG as intended and perceived it as a lower priority than other teaching practices.

⁵The SLO study is summarized in a separate report.

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Continuous improvement guided by feedback. Across the year, we asked teachers about how they received and used evaluation feedback as well as collegial and coaching conversations. Additionally, we asked teachers to complete feedback logs following conversations with evaluators or coaches. Teachers reported a number of sources from which they received feedback and how they used feedback to inform practice and revise goals.

Goal-specific feedback and feedback related to the components of the FFT and district instructional priorities tended to come early in the school year, and primarily from evaluators and coaches. This feedback was usually shared as part of a meeting with a coach or evaluator, or documented as part of the EE process in an email or other electronic format.

Most teachers described feedback during the goal setting stage or revision process that helped them make some changes to their goal statements or led them to think of different strategies to goal implementation. Teachers also described observation-related feedback that helped them refine practice. When describing feedback from her evaluator, one novice teacher said, “[T]he biggest way evaluations help is through reflection and feedback. That’s the biggest part I get out of it. As an initial educator, I look for feedback to stay on track and improve. That’s the biggest encouragement. So they can see how I improved and used feedback and adjusted.”

In Baraboo School District, Educator Effectiveness leads gather written mini-observation feedback from all of the evaluators, black out names for confidentiality, and circulate the feedback statements to all evaluators. The group, along with the district EE leads, then critiques the feedback individually and discusses the types and areas of feedback that as a district they want to provide. Evaluators reported that it was helpful to see what feedback others were providing and discuss the results as a group. One evaluator shared that it “completely changed how I wrote my feedback, [I] would love to continue to do that.”

Teachers and evaluators typically viewed feedback as being given in the main evaluation milestones of goal setting, post observation discussions, mid-year review meetings, and end-of-year conversations that lead to possible insights for the following year. It was rare to hear about fine-grained approaches to continuous improvement, with feedback and action steps taking place in a shorter period. This finding reinforces evidence from the feedback logs completed by participating teachers. According to the feedback log analysis, few teachers report specific next steps based on their feedback within a determined period.

In addition to seeking support from evaluators, teachers reported relying on peers, grade-level/content-area teams, and PLCs for support. Teachers commonly reported that the feedback from peers was highly valuable and, in some cases, more readily available than evaluator feedback. One teacher shared, “I appreciate the feedback from my administrator, but that is only twice a year. I meet with my team once a week, that’s where I think a lot of my growth is happening.”

Coaching activities. Coaching structures vary across the districts, and at times, across schools within a district. In the study districts, coaching was categorized as (a) EE

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implementation support or (b) coaching on instructional strategies and feedback on professional practice.

Educator effectiveness implementation coaching was typically the function of EE coaches, usually classroom teachers who had the additional role of providing assistance with the online evaluation system, initial goal development, and artifact collection. EE coaches typically provided support during professional development days or outside of the regular school day. Teachers frequently initiated contact with the EE coaches. In two districts, the EE coach role was limited to supporting basic EE implementation tasks. In these districts, coaches and teachers expressed the desire for the coaching to include direct interactions on classroom practice. With each year of system implementation, EE coaches were called upon less for technical support on the system. Teachers newer to the profession were more likely to seek such support.

Franklin invests in coaching as a districtwide professional improvement support where “everyone is coached.” District leaders coach principals and one another. Thirteen district-based system specialists provide coaching to teachers in several district priority areas: math, literacy, personalized learning and technology. The math specialists are assigned to a school while the literacy, personalized-learning, and technology specialists work across schools. Specialists apply a gradual release coaching model. Following an initial visit to learn what supports teachers would like, the specialists create a plan with the teacher, then model practice using an “I do,” “we do,” “you do” approach. Specialists check back with teachers later to see how well practices have taken hold and to discuss transfer to other instructional practices as well as stretch activities to continue growth. System specialists do not play a formal role in the EE process, but they complete training on the Danielson FFT. Each coach takes training to be certified in the FFT as the Framework served as the foundation for dialog about and planning for instruction. They felt the process was valuable and powerful. As one specialist said, “[I]t made me rethink everything.”

Content experts (i.e., reading specialist, literacy coach, math coach) who were school- or district-based typically provided instructional coaching. Instructional coaches often supported teachers on an area of practice identified by the teacher, which may or may not have included their SLOs or PPGs. In one district, teachers were encouraged to work with school-based instructional coaches to help refine goals, develop strategies supporting their goals, and for ongoing goal monitoring. In two districts, the instructional coaches conducted observations and provided teachers with feedback. In one particular school in a different district, coaches and the leadership team identified a component of the FFT to focus on monthly; the team, including the coach, then conducted non-evaluative walkthroughs focused on that component twice during the month. Coaches also supported teams of teachers during PLC or other grade-level/content-based collaborative work time. As described above, in many schools, instructional coaches facilitated professional development activities.

In short, getting feedback and reflecting on practice throughout the school year is a formal part of the EE process through milestone meetings between educators and evaluators and through educator self-assessment. Feedback also informally occurs through peer collaboration, EE goal

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alignment and school-wide instructional priorities tied to the FFT. Feedback on goals and practice was intended to generate change or affirm practice and inform improvement; however, given limited evidence of planned next steps and follow up, feedback does not fully represent a continuous improvement process. Instructional coaches also provided educators with feedback and, in some cases, those coaching relationships also allowed for continuous improvement discussions.

Integration with school and district priorities. To learn about the potential integration of the evaluation process with school and district priorities, we asked school administrators, teachers and coaches to share their school's main instructional priorities and describe whether and how the evaluation process helps them address those priorities. Instructional priorities ranged between content areas like literacy and mathematics to instructional practices like questioning and discussion techniques and assessment and grading. Some administrators described priorities as they relate to the FFT. More often, school priorities were translated into School Learning Objectives and Student Learning Objectives. The study districts also integrated the evaluation process with PLC time.

One administrator stated that they work to make sure there are “clear connections between priorities, practice, etc., making sure that teachers see that everything is connected.” Another administrator said that collaboration around the evaluation process helps build staff capacity:

My mantra is that I don't need to hire mentors for teachers because everyone on campus should be a mentor. It almost sounds like it's too good to be true, but EE is at the center of our collaboration opportunities, and it's directly connected to our conversations about professional growth.

Another administrator stated that the building improvement goal and School Learning Objective are the same, that they talk about the “action steps that teachers generate around school improvement goals” in terms of their own SLOs, and that “there is a direct link between evaluation process and school priorities.” At another school, the administrator said that school improvement plans are “always tied to the Framework for Teaching” and “tied to the observation and feedback connected to the EE process.” Similarly, an administrator shared that the instructional priorities “help ... gauge what we are looking for in the classroom.”

In several districts, school level SLOs were developed and then teachers, either individually or in teams, developed aligned SLOs using their own classroom data. A teacher in one of the districts with such a process stated, “[T]he evaluation process supports the instructional priorities.... [O]ur administration likes to say we are working smarter, not harder. It does make a lot of sense, we are all focused on the same things so our discussions can be really high level around the same topics.”

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Kettle Moraine implemented a district-wide initiative on personalized student learning that grounds their school and district priorities and approach to EE. The district uses the EE process, including goal development, observations, and the FFT, to help teachers receive feedback in relation to the district's personalized learning approach. The process is reinforced by the application of teacher developed and district approved micro-credentials. As explained by a district leader, through the use of micro-credentials, PPGs and SLOs, they are personalizing learning for teachers while meeting district instructional goals.

Professional development purposefully aligned with school and district priorities, SLOs, and the FFT is another way districts work to integrate EE. Several districts used the FFT as a guide for professional development by, for example, connecting specific instructional strategies to practices, breaking down the components of the FFT so that educators further understood the Framework, and demonstrating what practice looked like at each of the FFT levels and what evaluators were looking for when observing.

In one district, EE leads reviewed observation feedback and practice ratings to identify professional development needs. Related professional development was then offered during district-wide PLC time. In each of the districts, teachers had dedicated PLC time to work on EE activities and attend professional development. Respondents also referenced professional development that supports SLOs, which occurred during district-wide, school-wide, or team-based activities. SLO-related PD was typically led by school-based or district-based coaches. Teachers also reported that they used feedback from the EE system to help them identify their own professional development. In one district, teachers used EE feedback to inform their micro-credential selection.

How Evaluation Contributes to Changes in Teacher Practice

To address the question of how the local evaluation practice contributes to changes in teacher practice, we examined interview notes from discussions with teachers, coaches, and evaluators in the participating schools, teacher feedback logs, and feedback log survey results. We found that learning-centered practices across schools help: (a) promote sustained instructional focus, (b) provide a common instructional language, (c) contribute to feedback from evaluators, and (d) support collaboration among peers.

Promotes sustained instructional focus. Teachers commonly reported that the evaluation process encouraged them to sharpen and maintain their focus on student achievement goals and instructional practice. Although in some cases teachers indicated their practice may have included a focus on similar student learning goals regardless of the evaluation process, the SLOs and PPGs formalized their goal setting and reminded them to check in and be more systematic. It helped them make explicit connections between monitoring student progress and their own instructional practices, particularly practices related to the SLO. As one teacher explained, “the biggest thing [is that it] gives you something to focus on. So many things come at you all the time, but the SLO and PPG allows me to narrow my focus and helps keep me from being distracted.”

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Common instructional language. In addition to the evaluation process encouraging reflection, providing regular checkpoints, and allowing opportunities for conversations among peers and between teachers and evaluators, the FFT was described as providing a common foundation for instructional dialog and goal setting. As a teacher explained, “[The FFT] helps me think about having balance in the classroom and to identify strengths and areas to improve. I used it in college so had knowledge.” Another elaborated on her use of the FFT with her team teaching colleague:

I can think about it when [my team teacher] and I do self-reviews together as part of our collaboration. I would say we are pretty close in what we do for our job. When we did it this year, we saw other things to add. We talk about it in the Framework. And when we talk about our PPG, what to improve on, when we talk about notes home, goal setting, parent conferences, that constantly comes into play because that’s the piece we are working on within the Framework.

The common language of the FFT also helped support feedback during interactions between teachers, their peers and evaluators.

Feedback, interactions with evaluators. Most teachers were receptive to feedback and suggestions for changes to practice based on observations or goal-related discussions during check-ins at the beginning, middle or end of the year. Although few teachers described dramatic changes to practice due to evaluator feedback, and some mentioned no change, most described examples of feedback that provided ideas for possible changes as well as encouraging reflection. The following descriptions provide examples of evaluator feedback as described by teachers.

The biggest thing that we have focused on ... was questioning, not that he would criticize my questioning, there was a lot of good, positive feedback into the questions that I do use, but he does a fabulous job in getting me to think more about, ‘Okay, how could you have reworded that question to make it even more open-ended for that student,’ and that’s what I’m constantly trying to improve on, to get the kids to do the thinking. And not just be the answer.

And another teacher described how she applied the observation feedback:

In beginning of the year, one thing related to how to get students more engaged in leading activities or showing ownership of the activities. So, I did make that change and incorporated into morning routines. I also got feedback on pacing of the lesson during math—I think it was after the long observation, when I went around and gave feedback to small groups, but he noted that I could provide the same feedback to others, even the students who could complete the tasks independently... I was touching base with those students but not the students who were doing well. [The principal] thought providing feedback to all students would be valuable. He wanted me to give feedback to students on task as well as others so everyone gets a personal touch.

Through their feedback log responses, teachers also noted feedback and related recommendations they received and how they would act on the feedback. Table 1 includes examples of feedback described in the log entries.

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Table 1. Feedback Log Responses

<p>What, if any, were the recommended steps to improve?</p>	<p>How, if at all, will you apply the feedback and recommendations?</p>
<p>I was recommended to change my SLO to make it more rigorous... [It] wasn't rigorous enough after it was written because it didn't allow for students to be at proficiency, but rather just gain one point on the district rubric.</p>	<p>I made changes to my SLO as were suggested. My team and I continue to problem solve ways to help the students that we serve this year catch up to their grade level peers.</p>
<p>Do higher questioning with my guided reading group. Increase my wait time when asking a question.</p>	<p>I will look into having the students do more discussing during guided reading instead of me doing all the work. I would like to provide them with jobs to do this. I will approach my literacy coach to help me find resources to do this.</p>
<p>One area that I also asked my evaluator to look for was my wait time. That is an area that I have always had a difficult time with. She had several recommendations to help me increase my wait time. Additionally, she noted that although my wait time is quick, the students remain actively engaged because of the quick turn-around time.</p>	<p>I have already taken steps to increase wait time. I continue to look for ways to increase student discussion.</p>
<p>In what ways might you monitor student understanding and progress toward the related NGSS evidence statements in the project during the work time? How might students self-assess their understanding? How might you structure the closure of the lesson for students to consolidate their understanding and collectively share what was learned during the class?</p>	<p>I reflected on the feedback and am looking at incorporating it in future lessons.</p>
<p>We discussed the importance of hands on activities and trying to get students to understand misconceptions in science so that understanding can result. We discussed how this could be done by having smaller groups to enhance one-to-one learning. Also, continuing conferencing with all students to ensure learning.</p>	<p>I will for sure apply all that we discussed. For instance, I will look not only at the ACT scores but reflect on classroom learning.</p>

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Another teacher spoke of multiple aspects of the system, including feedback, supporting individual practice, and school goals:

The evaluation process is driven by feedback, how that addresses our strategic plan and the achievement gap. We focus on the students and student outcomes. When we set an SLO we make sure it is data-driven; when we check it, we review data and when we received feedback and we are encouraged to collaborate with other professionals [we are also] addressing our strategic plan, maximizing the potential of all learners.

Similarly, an EE coach also explained that evaluation practices, including evaluator feedback, aligned with building goals to impact instructional practice: “I think a combination of the evaluation practices and the building goals have driven some new student engagement strategies ... those two things and administrators being able to give feedback on engagement.”

Teachers were also asked to rate the quality of feedback received when they completed their logs after feedback interactions. In an analysis reported separately, teachers rated feedback quality highly for accuracy, specificity, and timeliness and substantially lower for actionability (i.e., expedient use), whether it included strengths and weakness or next steps toward improving performance. These last findings could help explain some of the moderate perceived impact of the evaluation process on teaching practice reported by teachers and also suggests limitations with the use of the local EE processes for continuous improvement.

Collaboration with peers and coaches. Teachers commonly discussed the positive impact of the collaboration facilitated by the EE process on goal setting, data review, and feedback from colleagues. Teachers frequently collaborated with colleagues during grade-level, cross-grade or departmental PLC meetings. During these meetings, they reflected on practice, and shared data, strategies and resources. One teacher shared an example of the collaborative aspect of the EE process when describing work with peers on a common SLO:

So, during PLC time we have come together as a department on growth [with our SLOs] and whether we were seeing it or not seeing it. We tried strategies about what was working or not.... [It was about] repetitive practice with vocabulary and deliberate focus on topics that showed growth but depended on passing the ACT and question types. We were able to single out conflicting viewpoints, and thought about how to get at that, like the main idea of researcher and comparing and contrasting.

In another school, a teacher shared that the school administration, “[encourages] us to collaborate with each other around our goals. That’s really significant. Teachers work so much in isolation, it’s great to work together, to get ideas and have a discussion. It’s a very collaborative building. That’s the most powerful part of the EE process.”

School administrators encouraged collaboration and created opportunities for teachers to share their work on their SLOs and PPGs. Collaboration and feedback was also evident through discussions of coaching interactions. In two of the districts, coaches had a more hands-on role providing direct feedback with teachers. In these districts, there was a greater opportunity to collaborate with coaches. One teacher explained that she had more collaboration with the math

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and literacy coach than her evaluator, sharing the following example: “[I] just had the literacy specialist in, which was an optional sign up, but was something she puts out as an option and I wanted to see her to be ready for the fall. So, I take opportunities to do it, but couldn’t say there is a lot of collaboration with [my principal].”

IV. Summary

This study closely examined school-level practices with the intent of informing district and state efforts to enhance the potential positive impact of teacher evaluation practice.

Evaluation practices in the study schools contributed to a sustained focus, provided a common instructional language, encouraged a cycle of feedback and revisions, and enhanced peer collaboration. The evaluation process has also built upon and contributed to a climate of trust. Largely, teachers were encouraged and willing to embrace a common framework for teaching, set rigorous goals, collaborate with peers, and incorporate feedback into practice through the evaluation process. The evaluation approaches in the participating schools have gone beyond basic compliance, with each school trying to emphasize ongoing professional growth and development. In addition, the districts have adapted the evaluation process to meet local priorities and context, thereby increasing the potential to positively impact individual, school and district performance.

Even with the positive overall findings, each school can improve its processes. Implementation appeared most meaningful in schools where the five principles were present, but schools (and even districts as a whole) varied on the extent to which this was the case. For instance, most schools could strengthen the use of the evaluation process as a cycle of continuous improvement, with additional training and time required to generate the feedback required for rapid improvement cycles. Better communication about the intent of artifacts and examples of high-leverage evidence sets could help educators narrow in on evidence that is not only streamlined to collect, but that also has value to professional practice. Moreover, district priorities outside of EE, while integrated with EE to some extent, in some cases tended to take priority over the purposeful implementation of the system.

Recommendations for Enhancing Learning-Centered Evaluation with a Response and Policy Perspective by EDS Director

This section provides suggestions for DPI, other state education stakeholders, and district and school leaders to build on successes and strengthen learning-centered teacher evaluation. Based on the study findings as well as discussions with district leaders during briefings on the school and district reports, these recommendations relate to state level communication and engagement, professional learning opportunities, and local process improvements. A response from the DPI EDS Director, Katharine Rainey, follows the recommendations.

State level communication and engagement

- Provide topic-specific briefs and links to resources on EE implementation and rapid cycles of continuous improvement for districts, schools, and other organizations. These briefs could

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include stories or vignettes demonstrating effective practices, followed by selected tips and tools for additional information.

- Create district guidance on how the EE process and products can facilitate the educator career trajectory from initial educator to master educator and National Board Certification.
- Provide guidance to teacher and leader preparation programs on how they can better set up pre-service teachers and educational administrators for success with the EE system. This includes, but is not limited to, training in all aspects of developing and implementing effective SLOs and PPGs, and coaching and feedback.
- Engage professional associations to consistently message about opportunities to enhance learning-centered evaluation.
- Illustrate how districts can align human resource management systems with the research-based framework (i.e., FFT or equivalent) at the center.
- Hold an annual EE conference or regional events to highlight learning-centered practices across districts.

Professional learning opportunities

- Create online learning opportunities for initial educators. This can supplement orientation materials and help build on district induction strategies.
- Enhance current and future statewide professional learning offerings in collaboration with other state education stakeholders, such as professional associations and the CESA Network, to build educator and leader understanding of the EE system and ways in which they can leverage the system to improve learning at the individual, school and district levels. The Leading for Learning series is one such opportunity to create consistent messaging and jointly develop shared resources.
- Develop in-person and online SLO, coaching, continuous improvement and feedback learning tools. These opportunities would be especially valuable to districts with limited capacity to provide or develop within-district training. CESAs are well positioned to support districts with these tools.
- Educators would benefit from training and related resources on high-leverage evidence sets. Additionally, new as well as more experienced educators could benefit from ongoing training on the components of the FFT. Artifact training can be incorporated in orientation trainings, reiterated in meetings throughout the year with evaluators, and supported by coaches. In many cases, current school and district professional development can be aligned to the FFT. Drawing connections for teachers will help reinforce the use of the FFT as the common language related to instructional practice.
- SLO training related to developing rigorous SLOs based on classroom level data, developing tiered SLOs that address equity, SLO monitoring, and SLO assessment that utilizes the SLO

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Quality Indicator Checklist and SLO Scoring Rubric. Districts can utilize DPI's updated SLO training: [“Writing Quality Student/School Learning Objectives \(SLO\).”](#)

Local process improvements

- Create dedicated time for teachers to complete EE activities successfully with support from peers and coaches. Provide time for peers to collaborate on goal planning, monitoring, refining related instructional strategies, and assessment development. Providing educators with this time can set educators up to succeed, convey that leaders place value on and importance in the system, and help build trust in system uses.
- Provide district-specific calibration training and feedback training for evaluators. Including calibration training beyond the required minimums builds evaluators' confidence and skill in conducting evaluations and providing feedback that in turn supports educator confidence and trust in the system.
- Take advantage of implementation flexibility to experiment with different approaches to observation cycles, such as substituting longer, formal observations with more frequent, shorter observations. These could be structured as a short-cycle improvement process with evaluators or peers identifying practice goals with teachers, observing that practice in frequent, unannounced visits, setting small goals based on observation-based dialog, then following up to see how the practice worked or whether it needs refinement.
- Provide instructional coaching that reinforces school and district improvement goals, as well as individual and school EE goals, and is available to teachers during EE time, PLC time, planning periods and classroom visits. Allow coaches to observe teachers and provide formative feedback related to EE goals and practice.
- Related to the above point, coaches need regular training to enhance skills related to goal setting, feedback, and building relationships based on trust and confidentiality.
- Consider other ways to integrate EE into district and school priorities, professional development, hiring practices, and induction and mentoring. For instance, as an example of alignment between an initiative and the system, one school focused on project-based learning drew connections to two FFT components—3c: engaging students in learning, and 2e: organizing physical space.
- Provide opportunities for cross-district collaboration on goal development and monitoring for educators in similar roles who lack within-district collaborative partners (i.e., educators in rural contexts or highly specialized fields).
- Leverage district-level EE evaluation reports (i.e., the EDSR survey results created by the office of Socially Responsible Evaluation in Education [SREed] at UW–Milwaukee) through participation in the EE Exchange.

Policy Perspective and Response by DPI EDS Director

DPI committed to an evaluation of the EE System more than 6 years ago to inform ongoing improvements to the design, as well as the development of aligned training and implementation supports. The resulting partnerships with WCER and SREed out of the University of Wisconsin–Madison and the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, respectively, produced real-time, ongoing information regarding the EE System. DPI deeply values its partnership with WCER and SREed because of the key information it affords and the resulting impact on the design and delivery of the EE System.

In the pilot stages and early years of implementation, DPI utilized these findings to make timely adjustments to the design of the System to meet the needs of educators and to improve the System’s ability to support continuous improvement in a meaningful and authentic manner. As changes to the System design have diminished, evaluations have shifted towards implementation quality and its impact on educator perceptions and practices within schools and districts. With this new focus, evaluation findings have primarily informed the design and development of resources, training, and supports to increase understanding of the EE System and improve implementation quality in a manner that positively influences adult practices and student outcomes across the state.

The Learning-Centered Study exemplifies this valuable partnership. Study findings reinforce existing efforts and will inform the development of future supports. The following sections describe how DPI specifically intends to utilize findings from the Learning-Centered Study.

Marketing and communications resources about the system. Many districts, including those described throughout the study, immediately believed in the potential of the EE System and worked to implement it as a continuous improvement process embedded within all aspects of authentic daily practice for teachers and leaders. However, many districts did not understand the EE System or its intended use and, as a result, implemented the system in a cursory manner to comply with minimal state requirements. While DPI has developed resources and supports to improve understanding and implementation of the EE System over the years, we understand that some districts may not engage with these resources (or the System) unless it has proven to be worth the time and effort (i.e., impact on adult practices, student achievement, and/or other outcomes).

Recent evaluation efforts have focused on the quality of implementation of the EE System and the resulting impact (i.e., school climate and culture, educator satisfaction and retention, and changes in educator practice to improve student outcomes) in order to provide information to these districts about how educator effectiveness can be foundational to improvement efforts within their schools and districts. The Learning-Centered Study furthers that goal by providing specific examples from districts implementing with a learning-centered focus and the benefits they have realized as a result. With these findings, DPI will:

- work with its internal Communications team to design and publish a series of informational and marketing resources to increase understanding of the EE System and

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its positive benefits including, but not limited to, infographics, summaries, case studies, blogs, and podcasts;

- ask WCER and SREed to continue evaluation efforts with a focus on the relationship between implementation quality and student outcomes after 5 years of statewide implementation to continue to inform impacts of implementation;
- work with the DPI communications staff to create engaging resources intended to provide examples of promising practices from the Learning-Centered Study to schools and districts across the state;
- ask WCER and SREed to develop a similar Learning-Centered Study focused on the implementation of principal evaluations within the EE System across the state to further this learning with regards to the principal evaluation process;
- continue current efforts to create coherent training supports with statewide partners, including the Wisconsin Association for School District Administrators, the Association of Wisconsin School Administrators, and the 12 regional centers for educational services to ensure consistency in messaging and intended outcomes with regards to the EE System;
- redesign any existing resources that do not immediately increase understanding of the intended use of EE (e.g., a focus on the adaptive nature instead of the technical aspects of the System) and its role in systematic continuous improvement efforts in order to improve the general perception of the work in the field; and,
- continue efforts to increase understanding of the System and its intent internally and to work with other DPI teams to integrate EE meaningfully into their programs and initiatives (and vice versa) to increase opportunities for consistent messaging. Current cross-agency efforts include:
 - redesigning the DPI-designed statewide data inquiry tool to explicitly connect the queries to the principal and teacher SLO processes, resulting in a high-quality SLO goal and associated educator practices/strategies;
 - writing a statewide definition of high-quality professional learning that describes EE as the definition of high-quality professional learning opportunities;
 - including EE as an evidence-based strategy with regards to ESSA requirements in order to focus local efforts on improving an existing high-quality strategy, rather than adding new strategies upon identification; and,
 - including EE throughout communications to ESSA and IDEA identified schools and districts regarding the alignment of the required continuous improvement processes and the existing SLO requirements, as well as the ability for Targeted Support and Improvement schools to write a school learning objective targeting the gap for which they were identified as a means to meet state requirements for identified schools and districts.

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Resources to improve skills necessary for learning-centered evaluation. With regard to observing practice and providing feedback, initial training focused comprehensively, but exclusively, on evaluators' ability to identify current levels of educator practice effectively. Evaluation findings (reported separately) indicate most educators agree their evaluators are qualified to observe them and provide consistent and accurate feedback regarding their current levels of practice. However, due to this focus on identifying current levels of practice, evaluators struggle to bridge the gap between identifying where practice is and where it should go, and creating a detailed and strategic plan to help educators move there. Recommendations from the Learning-Centered study back this finding and confirm DPI must create training that improves evaluators' coaching skills. The Educator Development and Support Team will:

- work with its partners to collaboratively design training that the partners will deliver. The training will build skills required of all coaches (e.g., building trust), as well as skills specific to the evaluation observation frameworks (i.e., FFT and the Wisconsin Framework for Principal Leadership), such as a detailed plan to improve current levels of practice along the continuum of indicators within a given component that incorporates specific suggestions for additional training and learning to support the educator in successfully implementing the plan; and,
- work with the cross-agency team that developed the Wisconsin Coaching Competencies Profile to inform the design and delivery of coaching training.

The evaluation of the EE System has consistently identified a need for additional training and supports to improve data and assessment literacy. The Learning-Centered Study confirms this ongoing need, specifically within the findings associated with SLO practices. In response, the Educator Development and Support Team will:

- continue to plan a 3-year professional learning series with national experts in instructional and assessment practices to support learning in these areas;
- work with the DPI Office of Educational Assessment to integrate their training resources on formative assessment practices into existing and new EE training opportunities to improve SLO practices;
- work with the DPI Office of Educational Assessment to design additional resources, as necessary, to improve SLO practices;
- continue to work with the DPI Title I, Special Education, Data, and Office of Educational Assessment Teams to revise the statewide data inquiry tool to make explicit connections to the teacher and principal SLO processes so that use of the tool results in the development of a high-quality SLO and associated practice strategies;
- increase educators' awareness of the updated SLO training resource: [“Writing Quality Student/School Learning Objectives \(SLO\)”](#) and help partners brainstorm how to utilize the tool (or the content of the tool) within their own training opportunities for educators; and,

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- make improvements to the SLO rubrics and guidance with feedback from DPI SLO, assessment, and continuous improvement experts, and from users in the field to improve clarity within the resources regarding how to develop and implement a rigorous and high-quality SLO process.

The Learning-Centered Study confirmed that many districts, including districts focused on the five principles of a learning-centered evaluation, struggle to implement EE as part of a high-quality continuous improvement cycle based on ongoing “mini-cycles” within a larger, annual cycle. In response, the Educator Development and Support Team will:

- continue to design and deliver statewide professional learning opportunities that not only address continuous improvement but are designed to model continuous improvement (e.g., Working on the Work and Leading for Learning);
- increase coordination with the Title I and Special Education teams as they roll out statewide supports for continuous improvement through the regional service centers, as a means to assist identified schools; and,
- design new training resources (e.g., modules and offerings through the service centers) that focus on the EE System as a continuous improvement process as opposed to a series of technical requirements, similar to the revisions made to the teacher and principal evaluation user guides.

Additional resources to improve implementation of learning-centered evaluations. The Learning-Centered Study finds that many districts still struggle with aspects of implementing a learning-centered evaluation. Two years ago, DPI realized it could not expect schools or districts to improve implementation if they could not accurately identify their current levels of implementation. As a result, DPI, in partnership with WCER and SREed, developed the EE Exchange, which is designed to provide district, school, and teacher leaders with unique insights and a rich opportunity for planning and growth in EE implementation. Districts come together to review reports based on their local WEDSR survey data. District teams learn about how to interpret the data from the team of SREed researchers that developed the survey and reports. District teams also learn about what climate and culture factors influence effective EE implementation and vice versa. This process helps schools and districts identify their current levels of EE implementation as compared to a state average to determine areas of strength and areas for growth.

Much like the EE process, identifying current levels of practice is only the first step. The most important step is determining a specific and effective plan to improve levels of practice. DPI has struggled to provide specific guidance on how to improve levels of implementation in the past. The Learning-Centered Study offers some suggestions to improve this process. Based on these recommendations, DPI will work with WCER to identify examples from the Learning-Centered study to develop guidance and training on how to:

- create the systems and the time necessary to develop effective teaming, observation, and coaching structures;

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- integrate EE effectively into hiring, mentoring, induction, professional development offerings and other HR processes; and,
- integrate EE effectively into existing school goals and initiatives.

DPI will support local implementation by removing the need for schools and districts to create some communications and resources for EE locally. Specifically, DPI will create customizable templates with important and necessary EE information for districts to use within their local systems, such as EE orientation materials.

DPI will help focus local implementation efforts on achievement gaps and supporting the needs of traditionally marginalized students through revised guidance and forms. Additionally, DPI is considering including a requirement regarding the use of EE information to inform equitable practices, which would be included in all monitoring efforts.

Finally, DPI will continue preliminary discussions with Wisconsin principal preparation programs to include EE training within their programs to reduce time spent with on-the-job EE training. This would include, but is not limited to, training in all aspects of developing and implementing effective SLOs and PPGs, and coaching and feedback.

Conclusion and Future Studies

Although the schools and districts in the study may not be representative in the state in how they have implemented the teacher evaluation process, the study helps to illustrate the potential benefits of a learning-centered evaluation approach. Study-based recommendations and policy responses by DPI speak to near-term change to communicate about and provide resources supporting learning-centered evaluation practices in Wisconsin.

Future analysis will examine student learning trends in participating schools compared with schools matched for similar characteristics to address if and how implementation may impact student performance. Follow-up research could also identify promising EE practices for enhancing educator retention. Finally, the study authors plan a complementary principal learning-centered study to identify how districts support school leadership development through the principal evaluation process.

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Learning-Centered Teacher Evaluation

Appendix A: Districts

Phase 2 Learning-Centered Districts and Schools, 2017-2018

DISTRICT	SCHOOL	ENROLLMENT	DPI REPORT CARD RATING
Baraboo	Al Behrman Elementary	349	Exceeds Expectations
Baraboo	Jack Young Middle School	636	Meets Expectations
Baraboo	Baraboo High School	969	Meets Few Expectations
Cashton	Cashton Elementary	302	Exceeds Expectations
Cashton	Cashton Middle & High School	310	Exceeds Expectations
Franklin Public	Country Dale Elementary	502	Significantly Exceeds Expectations
Franklin Public	Forest Park Middle School	721	Exceeds Expectations
Franklin Public	Franklin High School	1,512	Exceeds Expectations
Kettle Moraine	Wales Elementary	358	Exceeds Expectations
Kettle Moraine	Kettle Moraine Middle School	878	Significantly Exceeds Expectations
Kettle Moraine	Kettle Moraine High School	1,021	Significantly Exceeds Expectations
Milwaukee	Oliver Wendell Holmes School	284	Meets Few Expectations
Milwaukee	Wedgewood Park International School	922	Meets Expectations
Wausau	Grant Elementary	220	Exceeds Expectations
Wausau	John Muir Middle School	1,000	Exceeds Expectations
Wausau	Wausau West High School	1,308	Meets Expectations

Source: DPI District Report Card, 2016-17, Summary

Appendix B: Study Methods

Teacher, Evaluator, and Coach Selection

For the non-Milwaukee districts, after receiving permission to conduct the case studies, we selected three core content or special education teachers per school for interviews during each of the case study visits. Interviews also included evaluators and coaches. A total of 46 teachers, 31 evaluators, and 18 coaches participated in the study.

In MPS, permission to conduct the case studies was delayed until December 2017. To expedite the process of recruiting participants, we asked the two MPS schools to assist in identifying teachers in their Summary Year during the 2017-18 school year for possible participation. In addition, we asked evaluators and coaches to participate. The evaluation team then conducted site visits during Winter and Spring 2018 at each school.

Interview Process

Semi-structured interviews represented the primary data collection method using protocols for teachers, evaluators/principals, and coaches (see Appendix C). In-person interviews occurred in Fall 2017 and Winter and Spring 2018. This timeframe aligned with three EE cycle milestone meetings: planning session, mid-interval review, and end-of-cycle conference. Interview content focused on EE implementation, the five learning centered principles, and teaching practice impacts. One to two team members conducted interviews at each site. Each participant allowed audio recordings of interviews, which supported extensive notes and verified quotations. Interviews ranged from 30 to 60 minutes in duration. Across the year, we conducted 251 interviews.

Document Review

School and district documents obtained during visits from district staff, principals, coaches, and teachers, and from the district website, provided additional EE context. Examples include annual district and school strategy/improvement plans and descriptions of supporting practices such as professional development.

Feedback Logs

In addition to interviews and documents, we asked teachers to reflect on and complete logs on the nature of the feedback they received during the EE process, especially after announced and unannounced observations, mini-observations, and mid-interval and end-of-cycle conferences. We also asked teachers to rate (using a 1-4 scale) the quality of each feedback instance on its accuracy, specificity, timeliness, actionability, inclusions of strengths/weaknesses, relationship to the FFT, and next steps. Teachers were provided a small individual or school stipend to participate in the log reflections and were compensated regardless of whether they completed the logs. A total of 44 teachers across the six districts provided responses on about 109 interactions.

Learning-Centered Teacher Evaluation

SLOs and PPGs

We obtained 653 SLO and PPG goal plans from all schools except Milwaukee. The plans were from 2016-2017, the year prior to the school visits. Of those, we randomly selected 10% (5 per school), yielding a total of 81 SLOs and PPG statements for review. The SLO quality review focused on the seven dimensions from the DPI SLO Quality Indicator Checklist: baseline data, learning content, student population, targeted growth, time interval, evidence sources, and instructional strategies. PPG goal statements were also rated for quality. Using a four-point rating scale, two reviewers assessed each factor. Inter-rater agreement was acceptable, with 92% of the ratings within one level of agreement (perfect agreement for 45.6% of the ratings and 46.3% agreement within one rating scale point).

Few 2017-2018 PPGs were provided by educators during the site visits, thus prohibiting meaningful analysis of PPGs. Instead, we relied on descriptions of practice goals provided during interviews and in feedback logs for some of the goal and feedback analysis.

Analysis and Reports

For each school, the major analysis focused on identifying themes contained in the interviewees' responses, supplemented by other supporting information. Site leads analyzed interviews and prepared analytic memos following each visit. At the end of the year, site leads prepared a tentative summary report. Another team member reviewed the report for clarity and understanding. We sent draft reports to school principals for review and asked them to correct inaccuracies and clarify perceived ambiguities.

The school reports served as the foundation for final summary district reports. The district reports contained sections on basic EE implementation, consistency of EE practices with the five learning-centered principles, positive/promising practices, challenges, and questions for school and district consideration. One team member drafted each report and another team member reviewed the report for edits and clarifications. We sent a copy of the district report to the district administrator for review and feedback. A meeting occurred with a district administrator and other district and school leaders from each site to review and discuss the report. District administrators were asked to raise questions, present clarifications, or correct inaccuracies. A few minor clarifications were provided about district structures and supports, which were incorporated into the final reports. Because of the nature and generalizability of a large urban district, we did not draft for MPS a separate district report. Instead, school reports were sent to each school and to the district, with follow-up meetings held to discuss findings.

Learning-Centered Teacher Evaluation

Appendix C: Interview Protocols

Teacher Questions: Fall

School context/priorities

1. What are your school's main instructional priorities?
2. What are the key student equity concerns in your school? (For example, any sub-groups [special education, socio-economic, or race-based] that require targeted interventions.)
3. How does your evaluation process help address the main priorities and equity issues?

Learning-centered features

4. How does your principal try to establish a trusting relationship with teachers around the educator evaluation process?
5. How does your principal encourage collaboration among teachers around the educator evaluation process? (Probe: Collegial feedback, collaborative examination of practice.)
6. How does the principal encourage use of the Danielson Framework for Teaching as a model of good teaching? (Probe: In conversations outside of the evaluation context, i.e., professional development, instructional planning.) Please provide examples.
7. Can you think of examples where teachers use the Framework for Teaching as a model of good teaching? (Probe: In conversations about practice; during professional learning opportunities.)
8. How does your principal encourage you to use the educator evaluation system as a process of continuous improvement?

Evaluation process/support

9. How does your principal integrate the educator evaluation process into other practices that support teachers?
10. What supports are made available to help you get the most benefit from the evaluation process? (Probe: Training, coaching, dedicated time.)
11. Do you have anything else you would like to add?

School Administrator/Evaluator Questions: Fall

School context/priorities

1. What are your school's main instructional priorities?
2. What are the key student equity concerns in your school? [For example, any sub-groups (special education, socio-economic, or race-based) that require targeted interventions]
3. How does your district evaluation process help address your school's main priorities and equity issues?

Learning-Centered Teacher Evaluation

Learning-centered features

4. In what ways do you try to establish a trusting relationship with your teachers around the educator evaluation process?
5. In what ways do you encourage collaboration among teachers around the educator evaluation process? (Probe: Collegial feedback, collaborative examination of practice.)
6. To what extent do you use the Danielson Framework for Teaching as a model of good teaching practice in your work with teachers? (Probe: Outside the evaluation context, i.e., professional development, instructional planning.) Please provide examples.
7. In what ways do you encourage teachers to use the educator evaluation system as a process of continuous improvement for their teaching practice?
8. How do you integrate the educator evaluation process into other practices that support teachers?

Evaluation process/support

9. What educator evaluation supports are offered to the teachers in your school (i.e., training, coaching, dedicated time)?
10. What supports are still needed in order to strengthen the evaluation process? (Probe: to support teacher and school priorities, including equity issues.)
11. What educator evaluation supports are offered to you as an evaluator (i.e., training, coaching, dedicated time)?
12. What evaluator supports are still needed to strengthen the evaluation process? (Probe: to support teacher and school priorities, including equity issues.)
13. What educator evaluation supports are offered to the coaches in your school (i.e., training, coaching, dedicated time)?
14. What coaching supports are still needed to strengthen the evaluation process?
15. Do you have anything else to add?

District/School Coach Questions: Fall

School context/Priorities

1. What are this school's main instructional priorities?
2. What are the key student equity concerns in your school? (For example, any sub-groups [special education, socio-economic, or race-based] that require targeted interventions.)
3. How does your district evaluation process help address the school's main priorities and equity issues?

Learning-centered features

4. How does the principal at this school try to establish a trusting relationship with teachers around the educator evaluation process?
5. In what ways does the principal encourage collaboration among teachers around the educator evaluation process? (Probe: Collegial feedback, collaborative examination of practice.)

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6. To what extent do you use the Danielson Framework for Teaching as a model of good teaching in your work with teachers here? Please provide examples.
7. In what ways does the principal encourage teachers to use the educator evaluation system as a process of continuous improvement?
8. How does the principal integrate the district evaluation process into other practices that support teachers?

Evaluation process/support

9. What educator evaluation supports are offered to the teachers in this school (i.e., training, coaching, dedicated time)?
10. What teacher supports are still needed in order to strengthen the evaluation process? (Probe: To support teacher and school priorities, including equity issues)
11. What educator evaluation supports are offered to the coaches (i.e., training, coaching/feedback, dedicated time)?
12. What coaching supports are still needed to strengthen the evaluation process?
13. Do you have anything else you would like to add?

Teacher Questions: Winter

1. What information did you receive at the start of the year about your Summary Year evaluation? (Probe: Was there an orientation meeting? who conducted? when did it occur?)
2. Did you meet with your evaluator to discuss your Educator Effectiveness Plan (professional practice and student learning objective goals) and the evaluation process? If so, what was discussed?
3. Please describe the process you went through to develop your Student Learning Objective (SLO) and Professional Practice Goal (PPG).
4. How, if at all, did you use the SLO quality criteria and SLO rubric? (Probe: Do you reference these references at other times during the year?)
5. How were you encouraged and supported in setting challenging goals? (Probe: From principal, coaches or peers?)
6. Are your SLO and PPG aligned with school goals and priorities? How so?
7. How, if at all, does your SLO or PPG address student equity issues?
8. What, if any, supports are available to help you achieve your SLO and PPG goals?
9. In what ways does your evaluator provide you with instructional feedback? (Refer to their feedback form [if completed] for probes.)
10. How have you used the feedback provided by your evaluator? (Probe for why they may not have used the feedback.)
11. Have you received any feedback from your school's coach or peers? Please provide examples of the feedback you received and how you used the feedback. (Probe: Related to student equity goals or issues.)
12. Have you had your mid-year review? If so, when did it occur? If not, is the date set?
13. Do you have anything else you would like to add?

Learning-Centered Teacher Evaluation

Evaluator Questions: Winter

1. What information did teachers receive at the start of the year about their Summary Year evaluation? (Probe: Was there school or district orientation meeting? Who conducted? when?)
2. How did you help teachers develop their Student Learning Objectives (SLOs)?
3. How, if at all, do you use the SLO quality criteria and rubric to help teachers with their SLOs? (Probe for example.)
4. How did you work with teachers on their Professional Practice Goals (PPGs)?
5. How do you encourage your teachers to set challenging or “stretch” goals?
6. What evidence do you have that teachers are setting challenging goals?
7. How do you try to align teachers’ SLOs and PPGs to school goals and priorities? (Probe about school SLO.)
8. In what ways do you support teachers in trying to achieve their goals?
9. In what ways do you try to give specific instructional feedback to your teachers? (Probe: Related to student equity goals or issues.)
10. I’d like to hear about example of feedback you may have provided to the teachers in this study (teacher 1 _____, teacher 2_____, teacher 3_____). Can you talk about examples for each teacher?
11. How do you know teachers are using the feedback you provide?
12. Do you have anything else you would like to add?

District/School Coach Protocol: Winter

1. Please tell me about the types of coaching activities you have participated in with teachers since we last spoke.
2. Have you worked with the teacher’s (insert names) in the Learning-Centered Study? If so, please reference those interactions when answering the following questions.
3. How do you support teachers’ efforts to align SLOs and PPGs to school goals and priorities?
4. How do you support teachers’ efforts to structure SLO’s and PPG’s to address student equity issues?
5. In what ways do you give specific instructional feedback to your teachers? (Probe: frequency of these activities.)
6. How do you work with teachers on their SLO and PPG goals?
7. How, if at all, do you use the SLO quality criteria and SLO rubric in your work with teachers?
8. How do you encourage teachers to set challenging or “stretch” goals?
9. How do you know teachers are setting challenging goals? Can you give an example?
10. Do you have the opportunity to follow up with teachers after you provide them feedback? Can you share examples?
11. To what extent do your conversations with teachers address student equity goals or issues?
12. Do you have anything else you would like to add? (Probe: How else do you support teachers in the school [beyond EE]?)

Learning-Centered Teacher Evaluation

Teacher Questions: Spring

1. How has the SLO and PPG process impacted your practice? (Probe for changes to instruction, assessment, collegial interactions.)
2. How often were you observed? Did you receive feedback after each observation?
3. How have you applied instructional feedback from your evaluator? Have you used the feedback for setting personal goals for improvement?
4. Add follow-up probe for specifics related to feedback log responses.
5. Looking back over the year, how has your local EE process involved collaboration (with peers, with coaches, with evaluators)?
6. What other new or revised teaching practices are you implementing? How have they helped your practice? How has the evaluation process supported these practices?
7. Have any of these changes you have discussed related to your school's improvement priorities? Please elaborate. (Probe for any impact on school or classroom equity priorities.)
8. How are your SLOs scored? (Probe for self-scoring and administrator scoring in summary and supporting years.)
9. Have you had your end-of-cycle conference yet? What do you hope to gain from the end-of-cycle conversation?
10. Based on the evaluation process you went through this year, how are you going to use the information to inform your goals for next year?
11. Reflecting on the year, what additional supports would have helped you get the most benefit from the evaluation process?
12. Do you have anything else you would like to add?

Evaluator Questions: Spring

1. Thinking about the overall evaluation process, what new or revised teaching practices have you observed in teacher ____, ____, and ____? (Probe for changes related to SLO and PPG process.)
2. Since we last spoke, can you summarize your feedback to teachers ____, ____, and ____ about their practice? (Probe for examples.)
3. How have the teachers applied your feedback? (Probe for whether it led teachers to change practices to improve instruction.)
4. How many other teachers do you evaluate this year? (Confirm if you already know.)
5. How has the evaluation process contributed to addressing your school's improvement priorities?
6. Have any of these changes related to the equity concerns in your school? Please explain.
7. Can you describe the process you use to score teacher SLOs (i.e., use SLOs from all three years or just the Summary Year; how teacher self-scores are considered)?
8. Have you scheduled your end-of-cycle conferences yet? What are your goals for these conversations?
9. Reflecting on the year, are you going to make any changes to your evaluation approach next year? (Probe: What is the rationale for any changes?)

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10. What would you change about the local evaluation process to increase the potential to improve teaching?
11. In general, are there any supports that would help you improve your leadership practice? Would any of those be especially helpful in improving the EE process?
12. Do you have anything else you would like to add?

District/School Coach Questions: Spring

1. Since we last spoke, can you summarize your coaching activities with teacher ____, ____, and ____? (Probe for examples and feedback specific to their SLOs and PPGs.)
2. If your work with these teachers has involved feedback about their practice, can you talk about examples?
 - a. How have teachers applied your feedback to their practice? (Probe for nature and depth of changes.)
3. How helpful do you believe teachers in this school find the overall evaluation process? (Probe for SLO and PPG process, feedback.)
4. What do you believe would improve the evaluation process (including the SLO and PPG process)?
5. Are you aware of new or revised teaching practices that have come about from the overall evaluation process? Can you provide examples?
6. How has the evaluation process contributed to addressing your school's improvement priorities?
7. Have any of these changes related to the equity concerns in your school?
8. Are there any forms you use to support your coaching that we could collect? (If you haven't already.)
9. Are there any changes to your coaching role that would better support teachers in your school?
10. Do you have anything else you would like to add?