Developing and Implementing Principal and Teacher Evaluation Systems in Mississippi

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DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING PRINCIPAL- AND TEACHER-EVALUATION SYSTEMS IN MISSISSIPPI

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Abstract

In 2013-2014, the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) implemented statewide the Mississippi Principal Evaluation System (MPES) and select components of the Mississippi Teacher Evaluation System (MTES). Now overseen by the Office of Educator Quality, these instruments and the professional development that accompanied them were originally developed collaboratively by the MDE's Office of Federal Programs, Teacher Center, and Office of Career and Technical Education in order to help identify best practices for their principals and teachers, as well as to illuminate areas for improvement. Elements of both the MPES and MTES were piloted in 2012-2013.

While offering an opportunity to reinvigorate the state's educational system, the MPES and MTES implementations have presented unique sets of challenges for the MDE and the agencies with which it contracted from 2012 to present. Beginning in 2012-2013, the MDE launched large, concurrent regional professional-development initiatives throughout the state to prepare district superintendents, school administrators, practicing teachers, and teachers in training for the new evaluation systems, both of which are aligned to the Common Core State Standards. Experiential evidence demonstrated the significance of a clear and comprehensive communication strategy when implementing training initiatives of this scale, as well as the importance of strong professional relationships between superintendents and principals and between principals and teachers when engaging in the goal-setting and evaluation processes. As revealed by survey, focus group, and interview data harvested from superintendents, principals, and teachers in independent studies by the Research and Curriculum Unit at Mississippi State University and the Southeast Comprehensive Center at SEDL, "buy-in" among educators has improved since 2012, though many initially struggled with and/or still lack confidence in navigating the new evaluation systems.

This paper explored the major influences that shaped Mississippi's principal- and teacher-evaluation systems and provides preliminary results of the efficacy of the new systems, the training that accompanied them, and the lessons learned during the first two years of implementation.

Introduction

In preparation for applying for a No Child Left Behind-requirements flexibility waiver and in response to national trends toward more uniform educator-evaluation practices, Mississippi began developing its most recent iterations of statewide principal- and teacher-evaluation systems in 2010, piloting the main component of the teacher-evaluation system, the Mississippi Statewide Teacher Appraisal Rubric (M-STAR), in the 2011-2012 school year and components of the principal-evaluation system in the 2012-2013 school year in select districts.

The Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) Office of Federal Programs spearheaded the Mississippi Principal Evaluation System (MPES), and the MDE Teacher Center oversaw the Mississippi Teacher Evaluation System (MTES). Because these two offices targeted separated objectives at the MDE, the two systems are discussed separately for ease of understanding, except when combined discussion will best benefit the reader. Both the MPES and MTES are now managed by the Office of Educator Quality, created by the MDE in 2014. Funding for this study was provided in part by these offices as well as the MDE Office of Career and Technical Education and Workforce Development.

The MDE contracted with several agencies in the initial development of the MPES and MTES, including the Research and Curriculum Unit (RCU) at Mississippi State University, the Southeastern Comprehensive Center (SECC) at SEDL, Joseph Murphy of Vanderbilt University's Peabody College of Education, the American Institutes for Research (AIR), Cambridge Education, and IMPACT of Mississippi. Although the RCU participated in the development and revision of the two systems, we have been particularly involved in the areas of implementation, training, and evaluation.

Principal Evaluation

Mississippi undertook comprehensive reform of the state's principal training methods in 1994, when the MDE formed the Task Force on Administrator Preparation focusing on improved administrator preparation methods (MDE, 2012). While the state implemented many reforms in principal training at that time (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007), comprehensive reform of the state's principal-evaluation system would not follow until 2003, when an early iteration, the Mississippi Principal Appraisal System, was first introduced by the MDE. The system required districts to evaluate principals based on structured interviews, observations, questionnaires, and an artifact portfolio. As Goldring et al. (2009) noted in their review of 65 principal-evaluation methods in use in the U.S. as of 2008, most evaluation tools, including Mississippi's, offered "very limited coverage on leadership behaviors ensuring rigorous curriculum and quality instructions…[and] in most cases, the practices of leadership assessment

lack[ed] justification and documentation in terms of the utility, psychometric properties, and accuracy of the instruments" (p. 1).

As best practices emerged regarding principal evaluation, Mississippi has adapted its system accordingly; however, as evaluation-systems researchers recently noted (Center on Great Teachers and Leaders, 2014), much more research on principal evaluation is needed to inform practices nationwide as states struggle to implement valid, reliable measures to tie to high-stakes personnel decisions.

Prior to the 2013-2014 school year, the state allowed districts and local education agencies (LEAs) the discretion to evaluate principals using locally determined criteria, and principal-evaluation data were not reported to the state department of education. Consequently, districts and LEAs lacked consistency in their evaluation methods in terms of rigor and alignment, if they chose to adopt an evaluation method at all.

The MDE's Office of Federal Programs prepared the policies pertaining to the state's formal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)-flexibility-waiver request regarding principal evaluation and assumed oversight of principal evaluation in 2012. The MDE recruited Joseph Murphy to assist in redesigning the state's principal-evaluation system. Mississippi Teacher Center (2012) laid the foundation for the MPES in its current iteration and was informed by work he did for states such as North Carolina and Kentucky in his Education Leadership Program Redesign. The MDE first piloted the MPES with 34 districts and 219 principals in 2012-2013, with principals evaluated using a multirater survey (30%) and student outcomes (70%), the latter consisting of organizational goals (20%) and student-learning goals (50%). The MDE required all piloting districts to use the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education (VAL-ED) to fulfill the multirater-survey component.

The MPES system was fully implemented statewide in 2013-2014, with 151 districts and approximately 1,300 principals and career and technical education (CTE) directors participating. MPES participation was required in the 2013-2014 school year for all head principals and CTE directors in Mississippi's public schools serving preK-12 populations; districts were given the discretion to include assistant principals and alternative-school principals in the evaluation process in 2013-2014, and many elected not to do so. MDE-formed advisory groups assisted in adapting the MPES for these populations and four special schools: Mississippi School for the Deaf, Mississippi School for the Blind, Mississippi School for the Arts, and Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science. Details of the implementation phases are provided in Appendix A.

MPES components. A principal's MPES summative assessment score is currently based on his or her achievement related to two school-wide language arts and mathematics goals (50%), a multirater survey regarding the principal's leadership (30%), and two organizational goals based on priorities selected by the principal and his or her supervisor (20%). CTE directors' summative assessment scores are calculated similarly; however, instead of using language arts and mathematics assessments, CTE directors base their school-wide goals on objectives for Year 1 and Year 2 students in

their CTE programs, all of which have mandatory statewide assessments. Based on the weighted calculation of the three components, principals will be rated as Distinguished, Effective, Emerging, or Unsatisfactory by 2016-2017.

Teacher Evaluation

In 2010-2011, the MDE began developing the MTES when Mississippi qualified for and accepted the federally funded Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grant. A well-defined evaluation method was needed to promote teacher effectiveness and to ensure that Mississippi students have both highly qualified and highly effective teachers. Research supports the influence of teachers on student performance (Reeves, 2004), so obtaining valid and reliable data on educator effectiveness is critical to ensuring that every student has access to the best education. To begin the process, the MDE contracted with American Institutes for Research (AIR) to develop a statewide evaluation tool. Following development, the MDE contracted with the RCU for training, implementation, and evaluation.

The M-STAR rubric was piloted in the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 school years in 10 TIF and 14 School Improvement Grant (SIG) schools. Statewide field testing of M-STAR began in 2013-2014 with plans for partial implementation of MTES in 2014-2015 and full implementation in 2015-2016. The 2013-2014 statewide field test of M-STAR required all 151 districts to participate and evaluate approximately 32,000 certified preK-12 public-school teachers. Details of the implementation phases from 2011-2012 to 2015-2016 are provided in Appendix B.

MTES components. When the MTES is fully implemented in 2015-2016, a teacher's summative performance rating in a state-tested area will be based on his or her M-STAR evaluation score (50%), individual student growth (30%), and school-wide growth (20%). For teachers in nonstate-tested areas, student growth will constitute student-growth percentiles (referred to as student-learning objectives by the MDE and throughout this paper, SLOs) on state or national assessments. Their evaluation will be based on the weighted calculation of the three components: M-STAR evaluation (50%), student-learning objectives (30%), and school-wide growth (20%). All teachers will be rated with the same designations as those used for the MPES: Distinguished, Effective, Emerging, or Unsatisfactory. As results are considered from the field-test year, modifications may affect the above percentages.

Objectives

Principal Evaluation

When developing the MPES, the MDE Office of Federal Programs was tasked by the United States Department of Education (USDE) with the main objective of enforcing a uniform system for supervisors (primarily district superintendents) to use when evaluating principals. The Office of Federal Programs developed three portions of the evaluation to help districts and LEAs gain a comprehensive understanding of each principal's effectiveness and to apply a fair personnel rating to that individual. The implementation timeline is provided in Appendix A.

- **Mathematics and Language Arts Goals (50%).** With the shift to the Common Core State Standards coming in 2014-2015 and historically weak performance as a state in math and language arts (Mader, 2013; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2013), the MDE and Mississippi Board of Education chose to place the most emphasis for principals on improving and/or maintaining student achievement in these areas. Each principal is required to set one language arts and one math goal for the school population.

- **Multirater Survey (30%).** The MDE required a survey to be completed by both the principal's supervisor of record and the principal's certified staff, as well as the principal himself or herself. The results of these surveys are equally weighted. The MDE elected to develop its own 30-question survey, the MPES Circle Survey, for districts to use without a fee. The survey was designed by the RCU over a two-year period with input from various stakeholders via focus groups and was influenced by work and research findings related to past iterations of performance-appraisal questionnaires used by the MDE for administrators, faculty, and staff; the Tennessee Teaching, Leading and Learning Survey (TELLTennessee.org, 2013), the Cambridge Public Schools Teacher Performance Evaluation framework (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2013), and, perhaps most notably, James Stronge's principal-evaluation framework (Stronge, 2013; Stronge, Xu, Leeper, & Tonneson, 2013) also informed the survey creation. In the 2013-2014 administration of MPES, districts could use alternative multirater surveys, but the state-developed Circle Survey became mandatory in 2014-2015. Prior to 2014-2015, the MDE required that all multirater tools meet the following minimum guidelines, established by a report by Condon and Clifford (2012) regarding principal-evaluation rater tools:

  o Must be based on Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards

  o Must be designed for educational-administrator performance assessment

  o Must have published information regarding reliability (achieving a recommended reliability rating of 0.75 or greater) and validity (undergoing content and/or construct validity screening)

A noncomprehensive list of survey tools that meet the above requirements is available from AIR at http://www.air.org/files/Measuring_Principal_Performance.pdf.

- **Organizational Goals (20%).** Because individual schools have unique needs, a portion of the MPES rating was allocated for targeted school goals, which may be set school-wide or based on subgroups. Initially, the MDE encouraged two organizational goals, one of which would be set based on leading/lagging indicators and the other based on student-growth percentile targets; however, in 2014-2015 the MDE allowed both organizational goals to be set based on local priorities determined by the principal and his or her supervisor. The flexibility for organizational goals is quite broad, allowing principals some autonomy in the MPES process.

Implementation objectives. The primary objectives of the MPES implementation to date have been to (1) familiarize MPES participants statewide with the MPES requirements, particularly setting appropriate and quantifiable goals; (2) build a database of MPES participants throughout the state so that the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 datasets could be centrally captured and so that online implementation and reporting capabilities of the MPES could be further refined in the future; (3) train the MPES population in implementation procedures; (4) conduct qualitative and quantitative analyses of the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 data to identify training deficiencies; and (5) ensure that the MPES is appropriately adapted to assistant principals, alternative-school principals, and directors of special schools.

Teacher Evaluation

Like principal evaluation, teacher evaluation was lacking uniformity across the state and was even nonexistent in some districts. Therefore, an objective of the MTES was to standardize evaluations statewide to ensure best practices and fairness in appraising Mississippi's 32,000 teachers in preK-12 public schools. AIR was asked to streamline and redesign the state's teacher-evaluation instrument, and based on MDE-specified criteria, four components of the MTES were developed to measure performance in several areas vital to effective teaching (Minnici & Loignon, 2012). A phase-in schedule was determined to give teachers time to understand the MTES components described below. The implementation timeline is provided in Appendix B.

- **M-STAR (50%).** The first-developed and most-understood component of the MTES is the 20-standard teacher-evaluation rubric, which was designed to evaluate multiple aspects of classroom teaching. This rubric guides a minimum of three classroom visits: one announced, formal, full-length classroom observation and two unannounced, 10- to 15-minute walkthroughs. With this tool, evaluators rate teacher performance in five domains: Planning, Assessment, Instruction, Learning Environment, and Professional Responsibilities.

- **Individual Student Growth (30%).** To include the impact teachers have on their students, individual student growth will be calculated and applied to evaluation ratings. For tested-area teachers, this measure is student-growth percentiles on state and national assessments. For all other preK-12 teachers in nontested areas, SLOs and comparable assessments will be developed and applied for teachers' individual student-growth scores.

- **School-wide Growth (20%).** To account for the cumulative impact teachers have on students and to encourage collaboration among teachers and grade levels, a measure of school-wide growth based on the statewide accountability model is included in the MTES.

Implementation objectives. The MDE's main objectives with the MTES are to enhance teacher performance and improve student achievement. The primary objectives of the 2013-2014 M-STAR field test were to (1) familiarize principals statewide with the rubric and allow them to practice using it to evaluate their teachers; (2) familiarize teachers statewide with the rubric and encourage them to shape their teaching practices around the 20 standards; and (3) determine areas of the rubric and process that can be improved upon to serve teachers' and administrators' needs and to influence student outcomes. The objectives of subsequent implementations were to (1) phase in the additional components of the MTES and (2) analyze pilot and field-test data prior to full implementation to shape the model to best capture teachers' effectiveness levels, while making needed modifications throughout the process.

Theoretical Framework

Principal Evaluation

The MPES was designed to fulfill both federal and state requirements, the latter of which were governed by the *Mississippi Standards for School Leaders* (MDE, 2013a).

As this paper has previously established regarding federal requirements, the MDE submitted an ESEA-flexibility waiver in 2012 in response to the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act, with an accountability addendum submitted in 2013. Under federal guidance, the MDE agreed to develop and require all principals in the state to conform to one statewide principal-evaluation model. The addendum, approved by the USDE in December 2013, allows school districts and LEAs to postpone using educator-evaluation and student-growth data to inform personnel decisions until the 2016-2017 academic year.

Federal requirements stated that a school's performance in language arts and mathematics—as calculated by state-determined annual measurable objectives—must factor *significantly* into a principal-evaluation model, although the USDE has permitted

states to define *significance*. Mississippi chose to allocate 50% of the MPES summative assessment score to goal achievement related to language arts and mathematics.

In response to federal requirements, the MPES required principals to establish school-wide language arts and mathematics goals based on statewide assessments, such as universal screeners in Grades K-2, the *Mississippi Curriculum Test, 3rd Edition* in Grades 3-8, and subject-area tests in Grades 9-12. For principals of Grades 9-12 students, language arts and mathematics goals may also be established based on ACT performance. In 2014-2015, the MDE began offering a free attempt at the ACT for every high school junior.

The second basis of the MPES was the *Mississippi Standards for School Leaders*. Detailed components of the Mississippi Standards for School Leaders are available through the MDE (2013a). These standards were originally prepared by the MDE's Office of Leadership Development and Enhancement and adopted by the Mississippi Board of Education in 1995. The *Mississippi Standards for School Leaders* were then updated and approved by the Mississippi Board of Education in 2012. They are closely adapted from the ISLLC 2008 Standards. As the *Mississippi Standards for School Leaders* change, the MPES will mirror those changes accordingly.

The guiding principles upon which the MPES framework was based are clustered into three categories: Foundational Principles, Process Principles, and Outcome Principles. Specific principles in these categories are available through the MPES Process Manual (MDE, 2013b).

Teacher Evaluation

The MTES was founded on the federal and state theory of action that an improved evaluation system would lead to improved educator quality, which would lead to improved student outcomes (Partee, 2012). Additionally, the state needed to develop a system that complied with its ESEA-flexibility-waiver requirements; specifically, the MTES was required to use multiple measures and to ensure that a significant portion of the evaluation was based on student growth.

The MDE-contracted agencies worked closely with the newly established State Teacher Evaluation Council (STEC) and reviewed research, innovative practices, and the existing appraisal instrument to ensure that the MTES was a rigorous, transparent, and fair evaluation system aligned with national standards and reflective of Mississippi's priorities and practices. Following this review, the revised instrument included a rubric with descriptors of expectations for each standard at each level, increasing the objectivity of the instrument (Minnici & Loignon, 2012).

The approach to the M-STAR and other MTES components focused on the demonstration of student learning rather than teacher behavior in an effort to prevent evaluation from being considered a tool to measure a teacher's one-time performance.

Rather, the MDE wanted teachers and principals to view the system as a cumulative evaluation of yearly performance. Specific measures taken in this effort are as follows:

- **The M-STAR defines instructional improvement on a continuum rather than a simple checklist.** Each standard comprises indicators that denote specific teaching requirements for each effectiveness level. Evidence that a practice exists is no longer enough; teachers must demonstrate that they regularly use certain techniques and strategies, which are much easier for administrators to identify when they are more regularly in the classrooms, as M-STAR requires.

- **The MTES focuses on professional conversations and setting two professional-growth goals** by requiring at least one face-to-face conference per year and written feedback for all M-STAR visits. At the post-conference with the teacher and evaluator, two goals are set for the teacher to enhance his/her effectiveness. These goals become the teachers' focus until the next formal observation. Most district-developed evaluation tools used across the state in the past have lacked these components, leaving many teachers to wonder about the rationale behind their performance ratings and how to improve their teaching.

- **The MTES overall score links student achievement to teacher-performance ratings**, information that was not correlated in previous evaluation systems. In the past, most teacher evaluations were only focused on what the teacher did, often in a single classroom visit. The MTES contains not only elements in the M-STAR that point to student performance in the classroom, but also components of the overall system that consider student growth and achievement in the teacher's evaluation rating.

Multiple methods were designed to evaluate teachers on all standards and to obtain a comprehensive understanding of each teacher's areas of strengths and challenges. The full M-STAR process is shown in Table 1.

Methods

Principal Evaluation

The MDE collaborated with the RCU and the SECC (Southeast Comprehensive Center) at SEDL to revise and implement the MPES process as needed. Primarily, the RCU has assisted the MDE with implementation, reporting, and evaluation, and the SECC has partnered with the MDE for development and training; however, all parties involved have provided feedback and insight throughout the MPES process to ensure cohesion and consistency in communication and reporting of all MPES-related content.

MPES development and training. The SECC was involved in the initial development of the MPES evaluation forms based on criteria established by the MDE upon recommendations by Joseph Murphy. The SECC spearheaded efforts to create MPES

training materials and seminars offered statewide in summer 2013, and the SECC has continued to be heavily involved in the MPES development and training initiatives at the state level. Starting in fall 2013, the Southern-Regional Educational Service Agency also partnered with the MDE to develop and lead additional MPES training for administrators throughout the state. In spring 2014, the Regional Educational Laboratory Southeast (REL-SE) also began contributing to the MDE's efforts to tailor the MPES for alternative-school directors.

MPES implementation. In 2013-2014, the primary roles of the RCU during the first year of MPES implementation were to coordinate the MPES process using Canvas by Instructure, a learning-management system licensed by the MDE, and to report regularly to the MDE regarding compliance with each step of the MPES process. The RCU also assisted the MDE by attending statewide MPES training sessions and offering MPES help desk services for the MDE.

MPES evaluation. To date, four major evaluation efforts have taken place, two by the RCU, one by the SECC, and one by the REL-SE.

1. **Rigor of Principal Goals (Fall 2013).** Once most principal goals were uploaded to Canvas, RCU staff pulled a random sample of approximately 300 principals, or approximately 30% of submitted goals, from the system and qualitatively evaluated their math, language, and organizational goals for completeness, relation to student population, and rigor. This evaluation was used to inform the MDE of general trends in the goals to inform future training and policy regarding MPES and the goal-setting process.

2. **Focus Groups (Spring 2014 and Fall 2014).** In spring 2014, the RCU, with assistance from the SECC, conducted regional focus groups for principals and superintendents to gain feedback on the first year of implementation, including the goal-setting process, multirater survey, and future training needs. These focus groups were held in four regions of the state. In each region, the RCU hosted one principal and one supervisor focus group, for a total of eight groups statewide. The results from these focus groups informed the MDE of summer 2014 and future training needs. In fall 2014, the RCU, with assistance from the SECC, also convened two regional focus groups to assist in revising the Circle Survey criteria for 2014-2015. Suggested revisions were proposed from both groups, and based on their feedback and revisions proposed by the MPES Advisory Board, the RCU and the MDE revised the 2014-2015 Circle Survey indicators to reflect better alignment with the *Mississippi Standards for School Leaders*.

3. **Training Survey (Fall 2013 and Fall 2014).** Following MPES training initiatives in summer-fall 2013 and summer-fall 2014, both of which included several virtual and face-to-face sessions, the SECC conducted statewide surveys to gain principal and superintendent feedback on the training and initial steps of the MPES process (particularly goal setting and quantification, as well as the

use of technological platforms to manage the MPES process). Each survey was administered for approximately two weeks in late fall (October-November), and customized versions of each survey were sent to approximately 1,600 principals and supervisors. This information is being used to evaluate the first two years of MPES implementation as well as to inform future training for new and incumbent principals and superintendents.

4. The RCU, with assistance from the REL-SE and the SECC, conducted focus groups to assist the MDE in tailoring the MPES to alternative-school administrators. This data was submitted to the REL-SE for analysis and used in the agency's report to the MDE on adapting the MPES for alternative-school leaders.

Teacher Evaluation

The MDE collaborated with the RCU to revise and implement the MTES process as needed. Primarily, the RCU has assisted the MDE with training, implementation, reporting, and evaluation.

MTES development. As previously stated, the MTES was initially developed over the 2010-2011 school year. In May 2011, a decision was made to group standards into five domains, revise existing teacher-performance standards based on the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards, Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium recommendations, and Common Core State Standards. In addition, the MDE conducted 20 focus group meetings across the state, elicited e-mail feedback, and posted the MTES for public comment through the Administrative Procedures Act. The information collected from focus and feedback groups was used to make modifications after the 2013-2014 school year.

MTES training and implementation. The first group of evaluators trained were the principals from the 10 TIF and 14 SIG schools. Training was divided into two components: (1) January 2012 training on classroom observation using the M-STAR rubric and (2) March 2012 training on artifact review. During the January training, participants heard an overview of the evaluation rubric and performance levels, watched and rated videos of classroom teachers, and discussed these ratings. The initial training was followed by small-group and individualized sessions provided by Cambridge Education. The March training component consisted of a two-day training, which included a review of the previous training and practice sorting and scoring sample artifacts. An additional day of training took place in April 2012 to review the evaluation process, examine the evaluators' experiences, and address questions and concerns.

To prepare administrators for the field-test year of 2013-2014, two-day trainings were held across the state during the fall and spring of 2012-2013. The sessions were led by a cadre of 25 experienced educators, all trained by the MDE and/or its approved contractors, including the RCU and IMPACT of Mississippi. Training has continued across the state as requested by districts. Additionally, two-day training sessions are

held for all new administrators, the MDE has updated its website to include detailed information and videos for all educators, monthly webinars are held on evaluation topics, and the RCU has developed calibration videos for evaluator practice and reliability purposes.

MTES evaluation. Two validation sessions for the M-STAR instrument were held by AIR with groups of subject-matter experts in Chicago, Illinois, and Jackson, Mississippi. Feedback was gathered to evaluate (1) the importance of each performance standard and (2) the relevance of each standard to a teacher's job. Evaluation of the process was obtained from the aforementioned focus groups. In addition, the RCU has conducted preliminary analysis of M-STAR data from the TIF schools and six districts piloting performance-based pay in the state. From this data set, the RCU has calculated basic descriptive statistics on M-STAR domains and standards, performed an ANOVA to understand measurement error in M-STAR ratings, and performed a generalizability study to determine reliability of the M-STAR tool and process. Additionally, the RCU was in the process of performing several regression analyses to understand the relationship between teacher and student performance, especially the relationship between teachers' M-STAR domain averages with school accountability scores to learn the correlation between (a) teachers' M-STAR domain averages and school-wide student performance and (b) teachers' summative M-STAR ratings and school-wide student performance. Finally, the RCU also performed regression analyses to understand better the relationship between school demographics, teaching practices, and school accountability scores, specifically using demographic data from the National Center for Education Statistics to understand the relationship of socioeconomic status and parent income to school performance.

Results

Principal Evaluation

In 2013-2014, the major steps that MPES participants completed were to create 2013-2014 goals with their supervisors; conduct formative, midyear conferences with their supervisors to assess goal attainment; upload the results of the aforementioned meetings into the learning-management system Canvas; and complete the multirater survey. In fall 2014, the districts were then asked to report MPES summative assessment scores for all 2013-2014 MPES participants via the MDE's document-management system, SharePoint.

Overall, the goal submission step was a success, with 98% of approximately 1,300 MPES participants uploading goals by November 2013. Despite the participation success, the MDE and RCU encountered two major obstacles:

1. Despite extensive training opportunities offered throughout the state in summer 2013, many MPES participants still struggled to understand how to set appropriate, quantifiable, statistically significant school-wide goals.

2. MPES participants have been frustrated by technological platforms put into place to monitor the MPES process. Early in the process, participants were frustrated by the initial technology platform, Canvas, which was utilized during the 2013-2014 year. Canvas was new to almost all participants, and the system experienced some early downtime spanning approximately one week, which undermined administrators' confidence in Canvas and led to a large number of help desk tickets and complaints. The issue has since been largely resolved by transitioning the MPES process to the MDE's online data portal, the Educator Licensure Management System (ELMS), with which the state's educators are more familiar. Nevertheless, training administrators to use ELMS for MPES purposes has been logistically challenging.

MPES participants completed the multirater Circle Survey in March 2014, and upwards of 36,000 unique survey responses were received. The RCU generated and disseminated reports for each principal in spring 2014 so that MPES participants could conduct survey conferences with their supervisors. Districts and LEAs opting for an alternative multirater survey than the state-developed option were required to upload their survey results to Canvas by April 30, 2014.

Teacher Evaluation

Focus group data, training feedback, and evaluation activities indicated that there has been overall positive feedback on the M-STAR rubric from teachers and administrators and that educators began to view the rubric as a guide for effective 21st-century teaching. Additionally, administrators reported seeing more student engagement and higher order thinking activities as well as hearing higher quality conversations among colleagues and in professional learning communities. Using the aforementioned teacher- and student-performance data and data collected through focus groups, the RCU evaluated the MTES; however, it is too soon to draw conclusions upon this work.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Principal Evaluation

Preliminary data indicated that Mississippi's four biggest obstacles regarding the MPES include (1) implementing a new evaluation system that requires principals to set goals based on current statewide tests despite the fact that the state is transitioning its curriculum and assessments to the new 2014 Mississippi College- and Career-Readiness Standards, which are aligned to the Common Core State Standards; (2) training principals and their supervisors to set clear, quantifiable, and statistically significant goals; (3) transitioning districts to using an online platform for MPES data entry; and (3) identifying the best way to gear the MPES toward special populations, such as assistant principals, alternative-school principals, and special-school directors. Research about practical and cost-effective strategies other states are employing to address these challenges is urgently needed.

Teacher Evaluation

Although the field-test year for the MTES presented challenges at times, those are expected to lessen as the state moves into the third year of implementation and as educators become more familiar with the process and tools. Many administrators have not used an appraisal rubric before and/or rarely visited classrooms, so the MTES has required that they rethink their approach to being an instructional leader and how they spend their time. This change has taken some aback, but with the process being modified based on their feedback, the response has been positive and the process easier for this group. The MTES is a dramatic change in teacher-evaluation protocol and will take several years to become an accepted practice. In addition, for many teachers, frequent evaluation was a new experience and, as they learn more about the rubric and the standards for a 21st-century educator, their comfort zone likely will widen.

As the student - and school-wide - growth components are implemented in the coming years, the resulting paradigm shift is expected to create some dissent among all involved, requiring additional training and communication to support educators across the state. The fewer the trainers, the more direct and consistent the message conveyed; hence, the development of archived webinars and training sessions is essential in reaching the states' teacher population.

Significance of Work

As in many states, the principal- and teacher-evaluation work ongoing in Mississippi is being closely scrutinized by lawmakers and various advocacy groups. The impact that the new evaluation systems have on Mississippi administrators, teachers, and students likely will influence the next 10 to 20 years of education policy and educator-preparation programs. Already, the state legislature is looking to tie both evaluation systems to high-stakes decisions, such as forms of performance-based funding for schools and performance-based pay for teachers.

The MPES links the performance of the students in the building to the building-level administrator, a practice that directly speaks to the duty of principals to ensure student success. Too often, principal effectiveness is based on the ability to avert crises or handle difficult behavioral issues. The MPES brings the focus back to two key functions of any principal: (1) ensuring students' academic progress and (2) ensuring that teachers' classroom and professional progress result in student success. For perhaps the first time, Mississippi's principals and teachers recognize and value the explicit link between the success of both parties.

Statistically, the results of these large-scale implementations will yield abundant data to identify areas of improvement in the two systems as well as patterns that point to findings about Mississippi educators and processes. Already, preliminary analyses show the vulnerability of teacher ratings to the school-wide-growth measure for the MTES. For policy makers and practitioners, the findings from quantitative and qualitative

studies associated with the MPES and MTES will inform communication strategies, best practices regarding training and implementation, and improvement possibilities.

With the shift to the Common Core, new legislation changing teacher-compensation structures, and new evaluation systems all overlapping in implementation timelines, the MDE and other stakeholders are cognizant of the intersecting variables' impact on our future findings. To study the effects of the MTES and MPES carefully and fully, several years' worth of accurate, comprehensive data are needed for longitudinal analyses to minimize misleading statistical anomalies.

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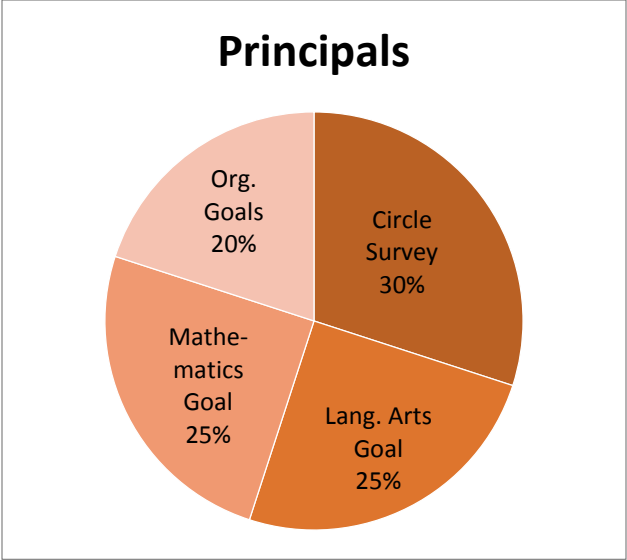http://telltennessee.org/uploads/File/TN13_survey_prin.pdf

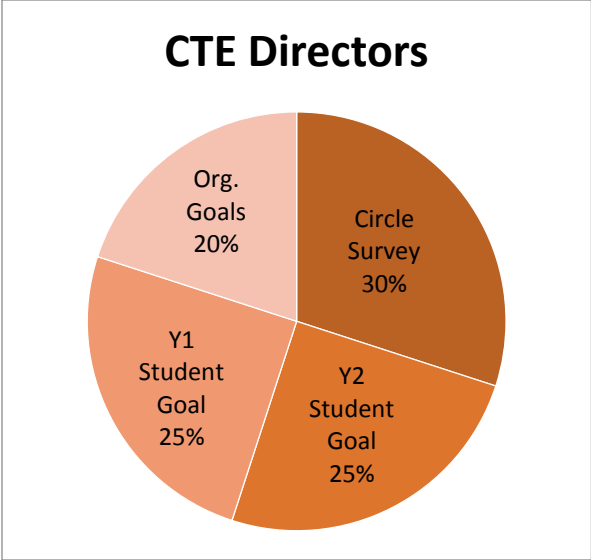Figure 1. Principal percentage contributing to overall MPES ratings starting in 2013-2014.

Figure 1a. CTE Director percentage contributing to overall MPES ratings starting in 2013-2014.
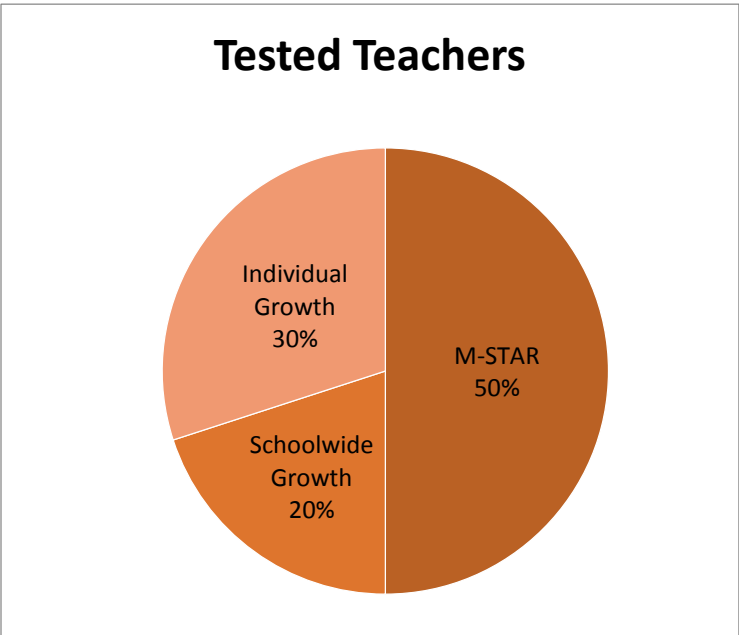
Figure 2. Tested teacher percentages contributing to overall MTES ratings starting in 2015-2016.

Nontested Teachers

SLOs
30%

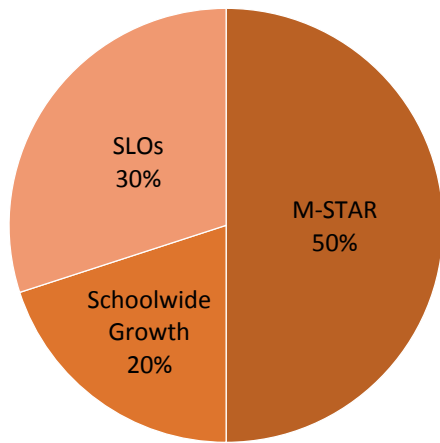M-STAR
50%

Schoolwide
Growth
20%

Figure 2a. Nontested teacher percentages contributing to overall MTES ratings starting in 2015-2016.