Minnesota Department of Education

Stakeholder Feedback (Survey) Handbook for Principal Evaluation Example Model

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BACKGROUND

The Minnesota *Principal Evaluation Example Model* was developed by a work group and presented to the Legislature in February of 2012. During the 2012-13 school year, that model is being piloted by 17 Minnesota districts. A formal study of the pilot will be conducted by an organization named FHI 360, funded by a Bush grant. The Minnesota Department of Education will revise the model based on recommendations from the pilot study and feedback from a leadership team of work group members. An updated model reflecting those revisions will be published for district use in the 2013-14 school year, when, per statute, districts must annually evaluate school leaders.

The Minnesota *Principal Evaluation Example Model* has three components: supervisor evaluation ratings, school performance measures, and stakeholder feedback (survey). The purpose of this handbook is to offer districts guidance around the stakeholder feedback component of the model.

Stakeholder Feedback (Survey) Component

Component three of the model is the use of surveys and other feedback from teachers and other stakeholders. The surveys or feedback are to be designed to help identify a principal's effectiveness, leadership skills and processes, and strengths and weaknesses in exercising leadership in pursuit of school success.

The following terminology and definitions will be used:

> **Feedback** = perception data about a principal's leadership skills and processes, strengths and weaknesses in pursuit of school success.
>
> **Method** = the process for gathering feedback. Methods include questionnaires (online or paper/pencil), 360-degree surveys, focus groups, interviews, or other procedures for gathering stakeholder feedback.
>
> **Instrument** = the particular tool used to gather the stakeholder group feedback. This includes the set of questions, the structure of the responses, the rubrics or scoring of the responses, etc. The tool could be purchased, adopted or locally constructed.
>
> **Stakeholder Groups** = the people from whom you want to collect feedback. They may include but are not limited to: teachers, students, parents, community members, colleagues, self, direct reports, or other staff.

For the purposes of component three of the *Principal Evaluation Example Model*, the stakeholder feedback (survey) must include:

- A consistent method for collecting feedback.
- A consistent instrument to gather feedback.
- Teachers as a stakeholder group.

- A clear process for survey administration and reporting that can be repeated with reliability and validity over time.

The district must decide how to weight the stakeholder feedback (survey) component in the principal growth and evaluation model.

The stakeholder feedback (survey) process may include additional stakeholder groups such as: students, parents, community, other administration, other employee groups, and peers. Districts may revise their methods, instruments and processes over time; however, longitudinal data from surveys increases the confidence interval of the results. Changes to these items can reduce the confidence in the short term.

PROCESS RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to implement the stakeholder feedback (survey) component, the *Principal Evaluation Example Model* uses a process that is intended to help school and district leaders use feedback data for growth planning, school improvement, and evaluation.

1. Identify vision and goals for stakeholder feedback
2. Choose survey method(s) and instrument(s)
3. Plan the logistics of implementation
4. Set expectations
5. Administer the survey
6. Review the results
7. Assign a performance rating

The first four steps should happen before or during the fall goal-setting conference between an evaluator and principal. Principals and evaluators must have a clear plan for the entire process so that the outcomes provide feedback that is meaningful and acceptable.

1) **Identify Vision and Goals for Stakeholder Feedback**

Principals and other district leaders should discuss their goals for this component of the model. Different Minnesota districts have unique perspectives on the role of stakeholder feedback, falling somewhere on a continuum between feedback that is used strictly to inform leadership growth to feedback that is used strictly to evaluate performance. Districts should, therefore, identify their goals first so that their decisions support their vision for this component.

Districts should consider the following questions when determining their vision and goals:

- What is the role of stakeholder feedback in the overall growth and evaluation model?
- How much weight will the stakeholder feedback component carry in the local model?
- Will the data itself determine a performance rating for this component or will evaluators have room to apply professional judgment? If the latter, what are the factors where professional judgment comes into play?

- How will longitudinal data be treated in the local model?
- If major changes in job description, district leadership, staffing or other conditions change, how will those changes be considered as principals and evaluators look at the data?
- What kinds of information will best help the principal and evaluator create a meaningful leadership development plan and assess performance accurately?
- Are principals or evaluators interested in targeted feedback about a certain initiative being launched?
- Are principals or evaluators interested in generalized or specific feedback about overall leadership qualities and dispositions?
- Which stakeholder groups does the model wish to survey? In what order of priority?
- How will you know if this component is working for the district?

2) Choose Survey Method(s), Instrument(s) and Stakeholder Group(s)

With a foundation about the roles and uses of stakeholder feedback, districts will be better prepared to choose survey method(s), instrument(s) and stakeholder group(s) to meet their vision.

Methods

Numerous approaches – all of which have been considered by districts in Minnesota – can provide access to multiple viewpoints on leadership performance. For any data collection method, the primary concerns are reliability, validity, cost, and the value of the data to be used in creating a professional development plan. Other concerns may include the ease of implementation, the burden on staff and respondents, and guarantees of anonymity.

We identify four feedback collection methods: questionnaires (online or paper/pencil), 360-degree feedback; focus groups; and individual interviews with stakeholders.

A combination of these methodological approaches will provide principals and their districts with the most comprehensive and useful feedback. Multiple methods help to ensure the greatest number of stakeholders participate in ways that allow them to provide the most extensive and authentic feedback to provide a full picture of principal performance. While greatly increasing the richness and depth of the feedback for growth and evaluation, gathering feedback using multiple approaches is time and resource intensive. Therefore, districts are encouraged to select a method they can use with fidelity.

As an overview, the pros and cons of each of these data collection methods are highlighted in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Stakeholder Feedback Methods

Data Collection Method	Pros	Cons
Questionnaire – A stakeholder group responds to a targeted instrument for their group. Administration is typically paper/pencil or online questionnaire.	• Provides data from many stakeholders in one or several groups. • Can allow targeted feedback from unique stakeholder groups. • Is anonymous, which may increase participation and objectivity. • Instrument can be targeted to stakeholder groups (one questionnaire for teachers, a different questionnaire for parents).	• Results provide a general picture but may lack depth. • Analysis can be elaborate and take more time. • Can be costly and time consuming if surveys administered to multiple stakeholder groups and high response rates are necessary.
360-Degree Survey – Multiple stakeholder groups respond to *the same survey instrument.* Respondent groups are compared to self-assessment and to each other to discover consistent and inconsistent responses.	• Includes multiple stakeholders and thus multiple perspectives. • Principal can discover blind spots and/or hidden strengths.	• Responders should be familiar with principal and observe practices. • Difficult to get a representative response. • Principal may be able to trace comments to individuals which may bias the feedback they receive (depending on implementation). • Instrument must fit all stakeholder groups (jargon free, for example).
Focus Groups – An interview of a group of stakeholders. The instrument of questions is targeted to elicit specific feedback.	• Allows non-diverse stakeholder feedback on a key set of issues (members are selected based on similar interests). • Occurs in a group setting with interaction among members providing a combined perspective. • Can provide important insights. • Identify repeated themes. • Results are usually qualitative and yield descriptive reports.	• Results may not be generalizable to similar stakeholder groups. • Doesn't determine an individual's authentic point of view. • To get diverse perspectives multiple focus groups should be hosted. • Focus group leaders need to be trained.

Data Collection Method	Pros	Cons
Stakeholder Interviews – An interview of an individual stakeholder. The instrument of questions is targeted to elicit specific feedback.	• Allows tailored data collection from various stakeholders. • Interviewees are typically asked the same open-ended questions. • Follow-up questions allow more in-depth data collection. • Reports generally identify common themes with some diverging opinions for possible follow-up.	• Time consuming. • Report requires cross-individual analysis. • Sample selection may be difficult as well as responsiveness. • Interviews generally need to be short. • Interviewers need to be trained.

Table 2: Data Collection Methods

Caveats to keep in mind with any survey method are:

Survey fatigue: Districts need to make sure that the stakeholders are getting surveyed at a time that does not overlap with (or is close to) other surveys and standardized tests. Otherwise, the stakeholders may fail to provide thoughtful responses on the survey, thus yielding data that is of poor quality.

Response rate: The major concern with surveys is stakeholder response rate. Districts should consider the best timing for conducting a survey as well as a follow-up system (a staff person who can follow up via email and phone asking respondents to complete their surveys).

Anonymity: Teachers and staff will be reluctant to provide authentic feedback if they believe their responses could be traced back to them. Ensuring that the survey process has guarantees of anonymity (i.e., the principal does not administer and collect if it is a paper-and-pencil survey) is important to getting valid and reliable results.

Instruments

Data collection instruments are considered reliable when they are expected to elicit consistent answers from the respondents if they were to take the same survey more than once. Valid data collection instruments measure what they purport to measure; that is, an instrument designed to measure principal leadership should measure those qualities of leadership. Sound data collection also involves cost, which refers to the financial, time, and human resources necessary to collect the valid and reliable data.

In order to support model implementation, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) partnered with FHI 360, a research organization funded by a Bush grant, to review two dozen available survey instruments. FHI 360 was tasked with recommending a short list of surveys that:

- Aligned with the performance measures for the model.
- Had high levels of reliability and validity.
- Were not overly burdensome in time or money.

FHI 360's study identified five surveys for teachers that best met the criteria above:

- TELL—Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning
- 5Essentials
- PIMRS—Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale
- Tripod
- DPASII—Delaware Performance Appraisal System, version 2

MDE convened a cohort of principals, evaluators, and other leaders who were involved in the development of the *Principal Evaluation Example Model* or were participants in the pilot districts. This cohort reviewed the work of FHI 360 and looked at each of the recommended

surveys to identify the survey instruments that would provide the best opportunity for feedback for Minnesota principals. After compiling their opinions using an open-ended questionnaire, the cohort made the following recommendations:

1. The MDE should seek the talent and resources to develop a state survey for use in this example model.
2. Of the five they reviewed, the DPASII survey is the only one the cohort would recommend.

As a result of this cohort's recommendation, MDE is seeking a partnership with Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Midwest to develop, pilot, and confirm the validity and reliability of a new state survey of principal leadership. In the meantime, pilot districts were offered the DPASII survey.

The state example model for principal evaluation does not name a survey instrument that districts must use, nor will MDE certify or approve instruments for use in this model. Districts are free to use instruments of their own choosing. Based on the recommendations of FHI 360 as well as current educational leaders in the state, the MDE's recommendations for a survey instrument are as follows:

1. **Administer a state-developed survey**. The cohort of principals and evaluators showed a strong preference for a tool that was directly aligned to the Minnesota performance measures, was short in length, and featured well-crafted language. The cohort also shared concerns that a new survey would lack reliability and validity data. If this is not a district's preference, the next recommendation is:

2. **Administer DPAS II 2012.** Of the five surveys that were reviewed, the DPAS II 2012 survey stood out as being focused on principal leadership, not overwhelming in length, and highly aligned with performance measures. If this is not a district's preference, the next recommendation is:

3. **Select any of the remaining four surveys**: Each of the four remaining surveys forwarded by FHI 360 had pros and cons. While the survey review cohort did not favor these as they are currently constructed, they are used widely across the nation and could have a place in a district's evaluation process. If this is not your district preference, the next recommendation is:

4. **Create or select your own measure**. Districts may select their own instruments to collect teacher stakeholder feedback.

Some of the survey instruments discussed above could be used in a 360-degree method, though districts should be sure each stakeholder group understands the content, vocabulary and structure of the survey in order to gain reliable data. Instruments for use in focus groups, interviews or specific to 360 -degree methods were not reviewed for this handbook.

Stakeholder Groups

In the state example model for principal evaluation, districts must, at a minimum, survey teachers. Teachers are the stakeholder group most directly connected with principal leadership and have daily interactions that can provide feedback for professional growth and evaluation.

Districts may elect to solicit feedback from other stakeholder groups, including: parents, students, staff, other district office administration, or community members.

To validly and reliably survey various stakeholder groups, considerations must be made regarding the methods and instruments used, the resources available to apply those methods and instruments, and the type of perception data the evaluators and principals desire from the process to serve the dual purposes of growth and evaluation.

Teachers

Methods
The population of teachers in schools can be very diverse. Teachers vary in terms of their demographics, educational and professional background, tenure, and leadership experience within the school. There is likely to be a high level of variability in teachers' classroom experience, relationships with the principal and colleagues, challenges faced, perceptions of principal performance, roles in affecting the instructional process, and impact on student achievement. A good survey method should aim to provide principals with data useful in their professional growth, vision-setting, strategic planning, and relationship building with the teachers. It should also adequately assess their performance along the five Minnesota principal performance measures. Therefore, a thorough method includes collecting feedback that is representative of all teachers in the school.

Such representation of teachers' diversity can be achieved either by collecting feedback from all teachers (through a questionnaire method) or by drawing a random sample of teachers that will produce representative findings (through a 360-degree survey, a focus group, or an interview method).

However, representative sampling is a significant implementation challenge for most practitioners. Especially considering the potential for high-stakes decisions being based on the data produced from this component, sampling could be perceived as an entry point for litigation.

We recommend that districts strive as much as possible to survey all teachers. Districts should establish a targeted response rate that would represent good, dependable data for use in their models. In order to reach as many teachers as possible, districts could use a questionnaire or 360-degree survey method. Districts may choose to conduct focus groups or interviews as an additional method, provided a comprehensive survey of teachers is conducted as well.

Instruments
The options for survey instruments are many. As education professionals, teachers are more familiar with the industry jargon that is prevalent in many survey instruments as well as the principal performance measures than other stakeholder groups. However, to get the most accurate data, teachers should understand the instrument thoroughly. In order to get quality results, districts should consider survey administration and implementation, including question content or design, timelines for survey completion, anonymity of responses, and how the data will be used, to name a few.

Other Stakeholder Groups

Methods

When collecting feedback from several stakeholders, many schools opt to conduct 360-degree evaluations. The goal of the 360-degree feedback is to provide the individual being assessed with feedback from multiple stakeholders, including the peers, subordinates, customers and supervisors. Additionally, this method requires the individual to conduct a self-evaluation based on the same criteria being asked of the others. This method provides not only a report of the performance ratings from multiple sources, but also allows the evaluator to conduct a gap analysis that shows the differences between self-perception and the perceptions of different groups.

Although 360-degree evaluations allow schools to collect feedback from multiple stakeholders, some applications of this method allow the principal to solicit feedback from a small and non-representative sample of stakeholders (10 teachers, 10 parents, 10 students, for example). Although still informative, the results of the 360-degree evaluation may be biased if sampling is used inappropriately. To reduce this bias, a 360-degree evaluation could invite participation from entire stakeholder groups (all teachers, educational assistants, direct reports).

Whereas collecting perception data from all teachers is a priority, districts may find it difficult, if not impossible, to get the same response rate from other stakeholder groups. Districts who wish to include other stakeholder group feedback in their data set should establish protocols for sampling (who will participate in the survey) and a targeted response rate.

Districts may choose to conduct focus groups or interviews of other stakeholders as an additional method. This feedback data may complement the information collected from teachers.

If only one survey is undertaken, we recommend surveying all teachers using a questionnaire. If additional time and resources allow, then a 360-degree survey would add complementary information to a principal's evaluation.

Instruments

When surveying other stakeholder groups, particular attention must be paid to the instrument selected. For example, giving parents the same survey instrument as teachers may be problematic if the design of that survey instrument is targeted towards an educator. While teachers may be able to provide feedback aligned with the human resources performance measure, parents or community members would not have the experience with the principal or context to provide relevant data for that question set. Therefore, districts should avoid surveying multiple stakeholders using a questionnaire developed for teachers.

A quality 360-degree feedback instrument should provide reliable and valid data from every stakeholder group. In order to do that, the question set and design should be accessible and understood by those taking the survey.

3) Plan the Logistics of Implementation

In order to collect consistent, reliable stakeholder feedback, districts must plan for the implementation of their survey. This plan should be shared with principals so they can help execute the plan, offer feedback on implementation design or concerns, and encourage participation from stakeholder groups. The following questions may be considered as districts plan for the survey of stakeholders.

- When will the survey instrument be administered and data collected and organized for review?
- Does the survey timeline prohibitively interfere with other district and school priorities?
- How will administration best fit into the existing calendar of events so as to not interfere with other activities as well as to provide the best opportunity for feedback?
- Could the survey be completed during a faculty meeting or during a teacher's prep time?
- What is the predicted impact of the response rate depending on when you give the survey and when you expect teachers to complete it?
- How will anonymity of respondents be preserved?
- How will you ensure that reliable data will be developed?
- How will rubrics be developed to distinguish levels of performance?
- How will the data, which is personnel data that must be kept private, be reported to the principal?
- If you are conducting focus groups, who will organize the groups and facilitate the discussion? (Note: This should not be the principal being evaluated, and would ideally not be the evaluator.)

4) Set Expectations

Principals deserve to know what the evaluators are looking for and expect when they see the results of the stakeholder feedback process. This clarity helps to increase a perception of fairness and validity in for the measure. Also, having clear expectations on the front end gives principals a clearer sense of direction for their work. Finally, the expectations shared in the beginning of the process should make the conversation on the back end focus on the leader's growth.

Many survey instruments have, if they have been studied across multiple applications and over time, scoring guides that could be used to determine levels of performance. That is, scores that fall within a certain range represent distinguished performance and the next range down represent accomplished performance, and so on. If the instrument selected does not offer scoring guides, then the district must develop such guides or rubrics to assist in determining levels of performance.

Fundamentally, the setting of expectations falls back to the vision and goals of the model. If, as part of the vision, districts are seeking results that can be plugged directly into a performance rating for the principal, then they must find instruments and methods to support that priority and set expectations accordingly. On the other hand, if the vision allows for the data to guide the

discussion but not determine the performance rating, other survey methods and instruments could be used to support those expectations.

The bottom line is that the evaluator and principal should agree on what data or feedback would demonstrate certain proficiency ratings. That is, how will you delineate between Distinguished, Accomplished, Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory feedback?

Districts may consider the following as they set expectations:

- How will the data from the survey be used to determine a performance rating for this component?
- Will the rating be "computed"?
- Will the rating be "interpreted"?
- How will longitudinal data be used?
- Will the rating be based on meeting a standard of achievement in the survey?
- Will growth over time be considered? If so, how?
- If interviews or focus groups are used, how will that information be collected, examined and used for a performance rating?

5) Administer the Survey

Steps 1-4 of this process should be completed no later than the fall of each year and communicated during the fall goal-setting conference.

When surveys are administered, districts and principals should follow the plan that was laid-out in step three. This plan can be revised in following years. Districts may wish to monitor administration, document what works and what could be improved, and bring those items up for future years.

6) Review Feedback

The evaluator and principal meet and discuss the results of the surveys, either during the formal end-of-year conference or in a separate conference, when the data is available for review. While the feedback is used to determine a performance rating for the stakeholder feedback (survey) component, this perception data from stakeholders can serve many other purposes, including:

- Identify perceived strengths and weaknesses in principal leadership.
- Determine priorities for future growth plans.
- Discover hidden strengths or blind spots.
- Make hypotheses about why respondents rated the leader a certain way.
- Review and reflect on the year.

In the reviewing feedback step, evaluators and principals are encouraged to engage in a coaching and reflective conversation about the principal's leadership and growth. This conversation can be a part of the overall end-of-year meeting where the multiple measures of principal effectiveness (feedback from the evaluator's observations, the student data and the survey) are referenced.

Goal Setting with Survey Data

As the conversation pivots from reflecting on the past year's accomplishments to goal setting for the following year, districts should use caution about using survey data as a goal (i.e., the principal's survey scores will improve in a certain domain by a certain percentage or standard deviations).

The New Teacher Center, authors of the Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning (TELL) survey, dedicate a section in their survey's handbook to the handling of feedback data. They state that data from a survey or 360-degree survey should be used as an indicator to assess progress toward achieving goals, not as a goal in and of itself.

The results of a survey should not be used to set goals or benchmarks. For example, inappropriate goals could include setting a school goal of improving 10 percent on any question or survey area or standardizing growth results and requiring that a school have at least "average" growth on survey results relative to other schools.

An appropriate goal could include changes in response rates within the school–for example, moving from a 60 percent response rate to an 80 percent response rate as more of the faculty become comfortable participating in the survey. A goal anchored in response rate may account for more positive or negative results over time, but is focused on improving survey implementation and, thus, the reliability and validity of the data.

There are other reasons to use caution if districts choose to set improvement goals using survey data. Given teacher turnover, small changes in the composition of the faculty could result in significant improvements in survey data without actual improvements in teacher responses. Even a few teachers retiring can influence results, depending on school size. In smaller schools, one or two respondents being more positive or negative can have a large impact on results. In a small elementary school, for example, one or two teachers moving from a "2" to a "3" on an item could result in a 10 percent change in agreement that a condition is present. The results can be manipulated and teachers may feel pressured to be less than forthright on the survey if they know high-stakes decisions on the results (either positive or negative) are being made.

Instead, survey data should be used to identify conditions within the influence of an administrator that are lacking, as well as to acknowledge positive conditions. Discrete strategies should be created and incorporated into improvement planning. Principals then should be assessed on their progress toward achieving these goals and evaluated on their individual contributions toward implementing those strategies. The survey is one indicator, but not the only means of demonstrating effective leadership.

Perceptual data are real data, but multiple data artifacts should be used to set and measure goals.

While survey results are perceptual data from educators about the performance of an administrator, it does not mean it is not "valid" or as important as other data sources. Educator perceptions of the leadership of their school have been linked in a number of studies to student

learning, future employment plans, efficacy and motivation. Educators' perceptions are their reality.

For the state example model, principals and evaluators are invited to consider the following:

- Determine what the perception data says about the principal in terms of the performance measures and overall job performance and growth.
- Identify and celebrate the positive, and consider areas for improvement.
- Distinguish between evidence that is directly tied to a principal's realm of influence and evidence that is broadly tied to factors outside of the principal's influence. For example, federal, state or local mandates are not typically in the control of the principal.
- Consider and discuss the context in which the survey was given. For example, if a principal leads a reform effort that breaks the status quo, survey results may be affected differently than during another year.
- Consider how data compares with data from past years.
- Consider and discuss trends in data, unpredicted changes, or possible events which may have impacted the data.

7) Assign a Performance Rating for Component Three (Stakeholder Feedback)

Assessing administrators' professional practice requires evaluators to constantly use their professional judgment. No survey, however detailed and psychometrically reviewed, can capture all of the nuances in how administrators interact with stakeholder groups and demonstrate effective leadership, and synthesizing multiple sources of information into a final rating on a particular evaluation is inherently more complex than checklists or numerical averages. Accordingly, while the ***data collected is the primary basis for the principal's evaluation***, evaluators must use professional judgment when assigning a final performance rating in this component.

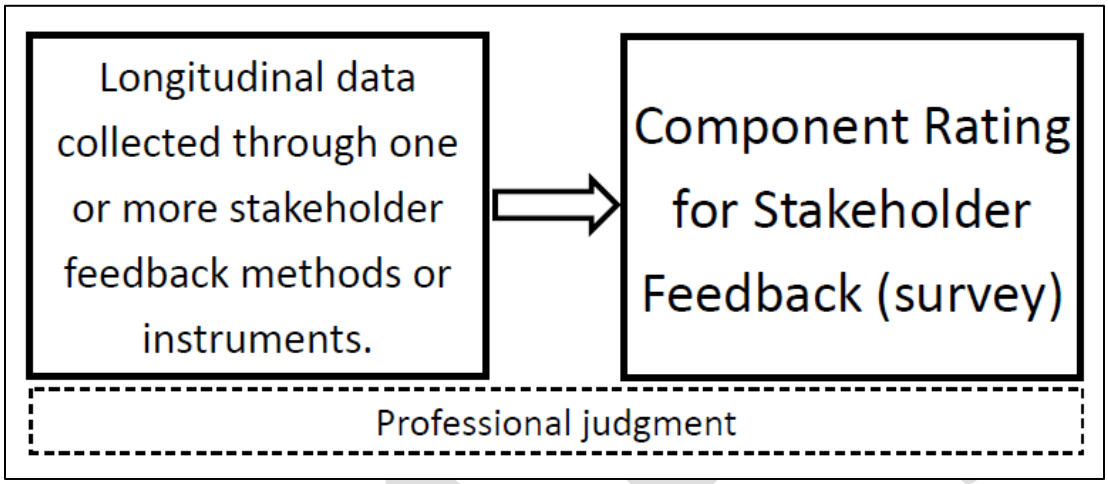
Given the evidence collected (including not just the data but also the conversation about the data when the evaluator and principal reviewed feedback together), the evaluator will assign a performance rating. The following are considerations for the assigning a performance rating for this component:

- Stakeholder perception data is the primary but not the sole consideration. Evaluators may include contextual evidence, the administrator's goals and reflections, and other relevant information and apply professional judgment when assigning the performance rating.

- Use the collected data and any norming scales (if they are available for the chosen instrument). Should the results of a survey place a principal's performance right in the middle of a certain performance level, the evaluator would need to bring significant evidence forward to suggest that the principal should be rated higher or lower than that level. However, if the survey results fall in a gray area between performance levels, an evaluator's professional judgment, along with complementary evidence, may be used to determine the performance rating.

Evaluators may also consider survey evidence over an extended period of time and across multiple forms of survey feedback. Longitudinal performance on surveys may increase the confidence in the data, provided the surveys were administered in a similar fashion. See Figure 1.

Figure 1: Component Rating for Stakeholder Feedback (Survey)



Conclusion

When using any stakeholder feedback data gathered with any method for growth or evaluation, we recommend that evaluators and principals:

- Establish a clear, comprehensive process for gathering and interpreting stakeholder feedback data for use in local principal evaluation models.
- Use a combination of methods to provide principals and their evaluators with the most comprehensive and useful feedback.
- Strive as much as possible to survey all teachers using a questionnaire (paper/pencil or online survey) method.
- Administer the stakeholder questionnaire measure in every school. If additional time and resources allow, then a 360 degree survey would add complementary information to a principal's evaluation.
- Consider the broader context in which the evidence was collected. For example, if a principal leads a change that breaks the status quo, survey results may be lower in the short term while the aim is to increase achievement results in the long term.
- Use the stakeholder feedback data as a primary consideration but apply professional judgment before determining a performance rating in this area.
- Delineate between factors that are within principals' realms of influence and those factors that are not.
- Consider stakeholder feedback data over a period of time.
- Identify what can inform or be addressed in the principal's growth plan.
- Identify and celebrate positives as well as consider areas for improvement.