

RESEARCH SUMMARY MAY 2022

# Reaching for Improvement

## Teacher Evaluation and its Role in Instructional Improvement



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*This research summary provides the key findings and interpretive summary—chapters 3 and 4—from the full report, **Reaching for Improvement: Teacher Evaluation and its Role in Instructional Improvement**. The full report contains additional details on the context, methodology, and findings of this study. This document has minor differences to ensure clarity in its shorter form. We thank our Steering Committee members for suggesting this briefer version of the full report.*

## Introduction

Improving the quality of instruction is one of the most significant and enduring quests in educational practice. Efforts to improve instruction are guided by years of educational research that identify teachers as the most influential *in-school* factor for improving student learning.<sup>1</sup> In recent years, policies and initiatives have been designed at all levels: schools, districts, and states have targeted supporting instructional improvement through teacher development.

Teachers' ability and willingness to engage, interpret, and construct implications for practice from teacher evaluation data happens in the context of schools with varied characteristics, resources, capacities, demands, and improvement goals. Similarly, school leadership and the relationships they have with staff may also shape implementation in meaningful ways.

Further, teacher evaluation is only one source of data and improvement messaging provided to teachers. Other external sources include messages from district, school, and instructional leaders, professional development providers, coaches, and even the news and social media. These sources and messages may vary or conflict, leaving teachers to decide which have more value or should be prioritized.

Despite the considerable resources dedicated to teacher evaluation reform, there is currently little evidence on the mechanisms **by which** evaluation translates into improvements in teachers' instructional practice. Similarly, the organizational conditions and capacities of schools shape if and how data generated by the teacher evaluation system are used to inform instructional development, yet this influence remains understudied.

If policymakers and school administrators hope to support teacher development, it is essential that they 1) understand how evaluation data-use for improvement occurs in schools, and 2) can identify the organizational conditions and capacities that may be leveraged to support improvement efforts.

This study examined teachers' experiences with instructional improvement in seven Chicago Public Schools from 2017–18 to ask:

*What organizational conditions and capacities supported evaluation-driven instructional improvement?*

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<sup>1</sup> Hanushek & Rivkin (2010); Nye, Konstantopoulos, & Hedges (2004); Wright, Horn, & Sanders (1997).

## Key findings

**How do school conditions and capacities impact teachers’ ability to leverage evaluation data for its developmental purpose, improving individual educator effectiveness and instructional quality?** Our key findings focus primarily on the last element: how school conditions shape REACH-driven instructional improvement. When fulfilling its developmental purpose, the data produced through teacher evaluation— particularly observations—are intended to be used to guide teachers’ instructional improvement efforts. However, evaluation data and feedback are rarely, if ever, the only formal or informal evidence which teachers receive about their practice. Teachers work with children who produce work and assessment data which can act as valuable data to inform instructional improvement efforts. They also work in schools with their own improvement agendas, expectations, and capacities. Accordingly, we spent over two years talking to teachers in seven schools to deeply understand REACH-driven instructional improvement in the multi-layered, dynamic, and complex realities in these schools.<sup>2</sup>

Through speaking to teachers in these schools, we recognized three broad categories of interwoven but distinct organizational conditions and capacities which supported or could be leveraged for evaluation-driven instructional improvement. First, teachers identified *colleagues and opportunities for collaboration* as essential as sources of support for instructional improvement, which were utilized for that purpose regularly. Second, *school leaders*, who frequently also served as evaluators, played an important role in making evaluation work. Leaders’ identity and relationship with teachers shaped the attitudes, expectations, and abilities of teachers to engage and use data for improvement. Third, teachers qualified some elements of the *school context and climate* as supportive of individualized improvement efforts, like having a learning-focused professional culture, and some as challenges like programmatic churn. Though the schools included in our study varied in many ways, teachers often articulated similar perspectives about what really mattered to their motivation and ability to make REACH-related practice changes, specifically, and instructional improvements more generally.

### 1. Colleagues and Collaboration

Across the seven schools we studied, colleagues were the most cited influential resource supporting instructional improvement efforts. A strong sense of support and collaboration within the teacher community was a key support for teacher improvement and use of REACH. Positive, supportive relationships encouraged informal connections with other teachers, who were important facilitators of teacher sense-making and use of REACH data and other improvement efforts. Relatedly, teachers managed to make the most of informal moments of learning and collaboration when they had access to regular collaborative structures and experience with learning routines which encouraged practice change efforts and instructional improvement for most.

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<sup>2</sup> Recognizing Educators Advancing Chicago’s (REACH) Students is Chicago’s teacher evaluation system. More details in full report.

### **Collegial relationships and trust provided the basis for many teachers' willingness to share and discuss, reflect on, and use REACH data.**

Most teachers reported sharing REACH results or feedback with teachers at their grade level/subject, area/position, or with those whom they shared a personal relationship. Teachers discussed REACH results with others to understand calculation of scores, assess fairness, prepare for an observation, or reflect and consider instructional changes. Many teachers found discussions related to REACH-results or related practice change attempts happened organically and sporadically, normalizing continuous instructional improvement efforts in impactful ways. Though positive collegial relationships and trust facilitated this normalization, without regular access to formal collaborative structures and opportunities, these relationships were limited in the degree to which they were engaged in support of systematic instructional improvement efforts.

### **Schools in which teachers felt respected as knowledgeable professionals encouraged collaboration among colleagues and the leveraging of internal expertise to support REACH-related practice changes.**

When the culture of the school situated teachers as knowledgeable professionals it encouraged teachers to view their colleagues as beneficial resources for practice change. Teachers repeatedly described strategically utilizing the instructional experience and expertise of their colleagues to inform REACH-related instructional improvements. In each school we studied, teachers identified specific colleagues as experts or “go-to” support sources for particular skills or techniques. In schools where collegial collaboration was positioned as a norm, many teachers could more readily leverage formal and informal collaboration toward adult learning and practice change. Expectations of collegial cooperation inspired teachers to use informal opportunities to exchange and reflect on instruction and improvement. Such expectations also indirectly facilitated teacher’s collaboration across departments and grades.

### ***Formal Collaborative Structures/Settings***

#### **Teachers identified several formal collaborative structures and opportunities existing in their school which, when utilized for learning, supported improvement efforts.**

Teachers repeatedly described meaningful instances of instructional improvement, focused collaboration, and learning that occurred in formal settings like grade-level, course, department and vertical team meetings, peer observations, coaching and mentor partnerships, and professional development sessions. These spaces provided teachers with opportunities for collective sense-making about REACH ratings and feedback. It is important to note that while many teachers depicted collaborative structures as helpful to their instructional improvement efforts, not all teachers had regular access to formal collaborative opportunities, and some depicted this limited access as a barrier to instructional change. Similarly, many teachers who did have consistent access to collaborative opportunities did not experience them as being used to support adult learning and development. While regular access to formal opportunities for collaboration was important, successfully leveraging them in support of instructional improvement was more difficult because of logistical concerns, professional culture, and

programmatic churn. For many teachers, settings that allowed for one-on-one or small group, practice-focused collaboration were more helpful in supporting evaluation-related improvement efforts.

**Structures that facilitated personalized, practice-focused opportunities for teacher collaboration around classroom observations were particularly impactful to teachers' practice improvement efforts.**

Across schools, teachers repeatedly reported the value of or desire for opportunities to observe teachers who excelled in an area of practice they were trying to improve. Teachers characterized opportunities to observe other instructors or to be observed themselves as providing a space for meaningful and practical individualized learning and reflection. These spaces were also ideal for supporting teachers who were attempting REACH-related improvements, because they could request feedback on target areas. Teachers appreciated the opportunity to observe other teachers because it gave them a chance to see familiar strategies enacted in new ways or be exposed to new instructional approaches or classroom management techniques. On the occasions when observations were paired with opportunities to debrief the experience, ask questions, and generate actionable ideas about how to improve moving forward, the perceived benefit was even greater. These sessions allowed teachers to directly engage with each other over a shared, concrete experience, increasing the relevance and applicability of the learning.

**Coach and mentor teacher relationships were highly supportive for teachers attempting REACH-related instructional changes.**

While access to these types of partnerships was limited, those who participated benefited from the individualized, improvement-focused support and feedback provided. These partnerships were most often reported by new teachers and were designed to assist them in their induction into the profession, as well as to further develop their instructional and classroom management skills. Teachers often characterized the duration, typically at least a year, as providing multiple opportunities for relationship building that was trusting and collegial. For most teachers in these partnerships, the personal relationship—coupled with regular, learning-focused interactions—made for a particularly potent form of instructional change support. Teachers not only reported discussing REACH ratings and related instructional changes with their partners, but also reflected on their enactment of these changes in ways that helped them hone specific instructional skills. At times, the growth teachers attributed to these relationships was attributed to the alignment of grade or subject taught between the partners. Teachers with mentors or coaches who worked in the same grade level or subject area said the specificity of their practice discussions augmented their usefulness. While coaching and mentor partnerships were quite fruitful in their ability to support REACH data use and instructional improvement, the scope of this impact was frequently limited to new or struggling teachers.

**Departmental, grade, course, and vertical team meetings were by far the most common collaborative structure teachers had access to, however teachers' ability to productively use them to support REACH-related practice changes was limited.**

These meetings were most often described as spaces dedicated to addressing pressing logistical and behavioral concerns which occasionally provided an opportunity for collaborative planning



or review of student data. While it was often difficult for these opportunities to guide learning and support around practice change, they helped build the professional community generally while increasing trust between individuals. Teachers who described these meetings as regular sites for reflection and learning were frequently working in schools or departments with strong data use capacities and/or shared goals around instructional improvement or student learning. The norms and routines of these schools and departments smoothed the way for productive review of student and teacher data for the purpose of adult learning and improvement.

**Teachers' ability to leverage learning from large scale professional development for evaluation-related improvement was generally predicated on individual teachers' ability to connect and transfer professional development learning to those efforts.**

Several teachers identified these larger scale professional development sessions as providing regular opportunities for learning and thinking about their work. However, these professional development sessions typically focused on a curriculum or program, which often offered narrow learning opportunities specific to the topic. As a result, some teachers felt professional development sessions were a temporary support to their work, but rarely of long-term value in terms of facilitating substantive pedagogical improvements. Larger scale professional development opportunities had the limitation that they did not provide for the individualized or granular feedback possible through other collaborative structures more highly valued by teachers. Despite the noted constraints to teacher learning, professional development sessions remained a stalwart structure in schools' instructional improvement support systems, though one that was rarely cited as a source of REACH-related improvement support.

## **2. Leadership**

School leaders shaped teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward REACH. Leadership also impacted teachers' use of evaluation data to guide improvement. Observation for teacher evaluation in the district is typically conducted by a school's administrators. As a result, teachers and leaders have preexisting knowledge, perceptions, and expectations of one another that can influence the evaluation process and its potential to improve teacher practice. The way teachers perceive school leaders and the tenor of the relationships between administration and teachers can explicitly and implicitly influence teachers' engagement in the evaluation process. School leaders can also enable and constrain teachers' abilities to make REACH-related practice improvements through how they design and provide structural supports, the culture they cultivate, and the expectations they set in their school. Simply put, school leaders have a significant and multi-faceted influence on teachers' use of evaluation data for improvement.

**Principals' attitudes toward REACH shaped teachers' attitudes toward REACH.**

Principals' attitudes toward and framing of REACH mattered for teacher engagement in the evaluation process. The principal's perspective on and approach to REACH affected teachers' expectations that evaluation could provide helpful and usable data to guide their improvement efforts. Consequently, the importance of making and pursuing the specific practice changes suggested was similarly influenced. As would be expected, teachers reported less engagement

with evaluations in schools led by principals who were either explicit in their dislike for or took a compliance approach to REACH. Often teachers in these schools expressed a “*if they don’t care why should I?*” perspective toward REACH observations. If a principal was not invested in the evaluation process and its potential as a source of data, teachers were less likely to be as well.

### **Teachers who trusted their principals were more likely to welcome and use REACH feedback.**

Positive, trusting relationships between teachers and evaluators lessened anxiety around teacher evaluation and encouraged engagement in the process. Anxiety and fear associated with the evaluation experience was reported far less by teachers who identified relationships with their evaluator as trusting or supportive. These attributes encouraged teachers to take a “benefit of the doubt” view of REACH. They were more open to feedback and less defensive. Several teachers described having fewer accountability and misuse concerns about teacher evaluation because they had positive and trusting relationships with their evaluator. Relatedly, teachers regarded feedback data as having potential for use more often. Some of these teachers expressed a willingness to attempt suggested practice changes because they trusted that their principal would have reasonable expectations.

### **The clarity, communication, and coherence of school-wide professional expectations and instructional priorities provided by school leadership could promote or hinder REACH data use for improvement.**

School leaders who clearly identified and communicated expectations about professionalism and instructional practice primed teachers for the expectations of the Framework for Teaching (FFT).<sup>3</sup> Alignment of leader expectations with the definition of distinguished practice in the FFT promoted use of REACH-related feedback for teachers. For some teachers, this was because making REACH-related improvements furthered two complementary aims. Changes addressed an area identified for improvement at the personal level, while also representing progress toward a school-level instructional vision. For other teachers, the presence of clear leader-communicated practice change goals established expectations around the practice improvement process. In contrast, in schools where teachers reported their leaders held inconsistent or conflicting goals and expectations, some teachers felt unmotivated to undertake REACH-related improvement efforts.

### **Teachers who had evaluators they perceived as knowledgeable instructional leaders or as having relevant classroom experience were often more open to evaluation feedback.**

Teachers shared multiple explanations as to why this evaluator characteristic was so meaningful. They believed that the feedback provided could be practical and applicable in the classroom and that it would align with other on-going improvement work. This alignment could be related to school improvement initiatives or individualized, REACH-related improvements. Some teachers who perceived administrators’ instructional knowledge as weak or misaligned to their specific instructional position—this was especially common for teachers who did not teach core academic subjects—reported frustration over the quality of the feedback and the potential for

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<sup>3</sup> CPS Framework for Teaching (FFT), a modified version of the Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching. More details in full report.



later administrative support for improvement. Occasionally teachers found that REACH feedback encouraged them to attempt a specific instructional improvement, prompting them to reach out to their administrators to secure direct, internal support for this improvement work. Several teachers noted that in these instances their administrators were not helpful because they did not possess adequate instructional knowledge. Often, teachers who taught non-academic subjects or worked in co-teaching environments found that their administrators also lacked the skills to connect them with the content specific learning resources to meet their needs to support instructional improvement. As a result, these teachers were often left to locate resources and professional development opportunities to support REACH-related instructional improvement on their own.

### **Principals who employed an “open door policy” supported teachers’ ongoing instructional improvement through intermittent, informal coaching and collaboration.**

Leaders who employed an “open door policy” toward staff provided informal support opportunities which some teachers reported using when attempting practice changes. Teachers who attempted REACH-related practice changes often did so in an ad hoc way, making efforts whenever the opportunity presented. As such, some attempted a practice change without access to another person to sense-make and reflect on the experience with. In some of these cases, teachers made use of a person in school leadership to reflect on their efforts, as well as being introduced to new and potentially helpful ideas.

## **3. School Culture and Context**

Teachers across schools described the ways in which the school culture and context could function as a support or a hindrance to their REACH-related instructional improvement efforts. Both the programmatic stability and the professional culture of a school heavily shaped teachers’ willingness and ability to attend to the type of individualized instructional improvement efforts stimulated by evaluation feedback. When teachers experienced less programmatic churn, it opened opportunities to use professional development and formal collaborative opportunities to engage with data for reflection, learning, and improvement. Similarly, formal collaborative opportunities in all forms were more likely to be leveraged in support of adult learning and improvement when schools had professional cultures that held those as fundamental expectations. Consequently, the quality of these two organizational conditions could constrain or enable the individualized instructional improvement efforts of teachers on multiple levels. Some teachers also highlighted how context-specific considerations, particularly the students they served, shaped their motivation and capacity to attempt the specific instructional changes identified in REACH feedback. Teachers almost always discussed REACH feedback and improvement efforts in the context of the particular students they served. As such, it was relatively unsurprising to find that teachers’ beliefs about their students and the nature of the connection of the school to the community it served were pertinent factors in shaping teachers’ engagement with evaluation data.

### **Consistency and stability of school programs and initiatives facilitated teachers' ability to make individualized practice improvements.**

Teachers repeatedly lamented that they had neither the time nor focus to systematically pursue personalized or REACH-related practice improvements because their learning and change efforts needed to be focused elsewhere. Teachers at several schools raised frustrations over what they framed as a constant turnover of curriculums, programs, and initiatives. These new initiatives were typically paired with professional development designed to support teacher implementation. Though teachers often appreciated this support, the scope of impact was viewed as limited as it was often program specific. As such, when a new curriculum or program was employed much of that previous learning was now perceived as somewhat inapplicable. Teachers whose instructional course-load changed frequently faced similar challenges to their personal instructional improvement trajectory as they were often focused on learning new content and curricula. Teachers also highlighted how the need to constantly focus their learning and development energy on programs and curriculums reduced their bandwidth to take on and attend to personalized practice change efforts. It follows that teachers in schools with relatively more programmatic stability faced fewer challenges in personalized improvement efforts like those intended to stem from evaluation feedback. For some, stability also allowed teachers to feel more comfortable trying new instructional techniques when the content and curricula were familiar.

### **Schools with improvement or learning-focused professional cultures promoted teachers' confidence to make REACH-related practice improvements and collaborate with colleagues to the same ends.**

Teachers typically described schools with improvement or learning-focused professional cultures as having had a defined instructional improvement agenda which was connected to the work occurring in formal collaborative settings and coupled with expectations for professional growth. These types of professional cultures were particularly supportive for instructional improvement if they occurred when high performance expectations were explicitly paired with supports associated with them. Teachers working in these cultures often described feeling confident in their ability to access support for improvement efforts, whether they were REACH-related or not. This access, combined with their positioning as a learner, helped some teachers attempt instructional improvement efforts which seemed difficult or out of their comfort zone because they felt that it was a safe environment to experiment and try new things. Teachers who engaged in this supported experimentation often reported making progress toward their practice change goals. Across schools, teachers identified aspects of the professional culture of schools which supported individualized improvement efforts, including positioning them as professionals, holding collaboration as a norm, and being improvement or learning focused.

### **The population served by the school or classroom was, at times, perceived as limiting potential REACH-related practice changes teachers considered.**

When reflecting on the usefulness of REACH feedback for guiding instructional change, some teachers described the suggested changes or expectations in the FFT as not appropriate or would not work for the students they served. Teachers cited a variety of ways in which students'

skill level, background, or identity made it difficult to meet the instructional expectations as defined in the FFT or by student growth measures. The extent to which teachers felt secure in their framing of students as a challenge to instructional improvement sometimes reflected the relationship between the school and community. Teachers working in schools that had close connections to the community acknowledged the challenge of making achievement gains, but also often held an asset-based perception of students that encouraged their own improvement efforts.

## Interpretive Summary

As states, districts, and schools rethink how to leverage their existing teacher evaluation systems as a tool to support instructional improvement more holistically, this study offers several specific observations that could inform their efforts. The findings from this study have important implications for districts' and schools' instructional improvement systems, as they highlight organizational conditions that facilitated teacher learning and contributed to instructional improvement.

### Key Takeaways

First, the impact of teacher evaluation was limited when it was isolated and separated from any broader school-wide IISS.<sup>4</sup> Thus, identifying and leveraging opportunities to build coherence between the FFT—the district's vision of instructional excellence—and school-level instructional goals could connect evaluation feedback and a teacher's ongoing improvement efforts. Policy and program churn at the district and school levels was also disruptive to teacher improvement efforts because the lack of stability reduced teacher buy-in for related professional learning and redirected energy from other instructional improvement. Coherence of instructional vision and programmatic stability within a school protected against disruptions to teachers' instructional improvement process. **Therefore, district and school leaders who endeavor to support instructional improvement might benefit from coordinating systems of support for teacher learning and instructional goals.**

Second, our case studies<sup>5</sup> highlighted how variation within schools' IISSs impacted teacher learning and instructional improvement. Though all the schools in our study offered some supports for professional development and teacher learning, the elements and quality of support provided varied significantly. Variation in schools' IISSs reflected their nature as a largely undefined expectation of the district, other than the FFT. Schools were expected to support teacher learning and professional development; the district provides some resources for this purpose. But ultimately the design of the IISS is primarily determined by school leaders and, to a lesser degree, instructional leadership teams and teacher leaders and school capacity. This resulted in teachers in some schools having access to more resources and learning opportunities.

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<sup>4</sup> The individual, decentralized, Instructional Improvement Support System (IISS) of a school. More details in full report.

<sup>5</sup> See full report for four case studies that highlight how schools' organizational conditions shaped the developmental use of evaluation data specifically and the instructional improvement process more generally.

Third, no matter where teacher learning and improvement efforts stemmed from—the districtwide REACH evaluation process or the school’s own IISS—the organizational conditions and capacities that meaningfully supported those efforts were largely similar across all schools. This is positive news for policymakers and district leaders who seek to have teacher evaluation leveraged more effectively as a developmental tool. Any related organizational capacity-building efforts should serve instructional improvement comprehensively. Unfortunately, many of the conditions and capacities that were most influential and supportive of teacher learning and improvement are not simple to achieve. Instructional improvement remains a complex and multifaceted challenge for educators, schools, and districts. For key organizational considerations and capacities which were essential in supporting adult learning and instructional improvement, see the next section, *Essential Organizational Conditions and Capacities for Consideration for Supporting Instructional Improvement*.

Given the district’s intent to move REACH implementation “from compliance to coaching”<sup>6</sup>—shifting from simply evaluating teachers to helping them develop or deepen their practice—**district leaders, network chiefs, school leaders, and teacher leaders will need to ask themselves how they can best support development of these complex organizational conditions and capacities.** Schools will require additional district assistance and resources to make this shift initially and to aid development of internal capacities to continue the substantive work of supporting teacher learning and improvement over time. And some schools will require more assistance than others. Our findings illustrate that schools with weak IISSs will face the biggest challenges in this shift to provide more instructional support for teachers as part of REACH implementation; they will need to build the conditions and capacities that already exist at other schools. **District leaders must be prepared to provide increased levels of assistance in these schools to avoid exacerbating existing cross-school inequalities in support for teacher learning and instructional improvement.**

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<sup>6</sup> See <https://www.cps.edu/about/departments/talent/>

## Essential Organizational Conditions and Capacities for Consideration for Supporting Instructional Improvement

Staff relationships and collegial trust in schools are key organizational conditions which school and district leaders may want to consider as they seek to support teacher learning.

The internal expertise of staff at a school and the relationships among staff played an important role in shaping instructional improvement.

- Across almost all schools, teachers identified colleagues as their first and most influential source of support for improvement. They described the instructional experience and expertise of colleagues as a valuable and often-utilized improvement resource. Teachers routinely identified specific individuals in their schools as the “go-to” person when seeking support for a particular issue. Sometimes this was a recognized teacher leader, but that was not always the case. Consequently, the existing human capital within a school was remarkably impactful not only for student learning but for adult learning as well. **These findings highlight an existing resource in schools that could be developed and leveraged to support instructional improvement more broadly.**
- The presence of trusting relationships influenced the set of collegial resources that teachers accessed during their improvement process. Collegial trust not only shaped teachers’ willingness to be vulnerable and engage in informal and formal learning opportunities, but it also influenced the set of colleagues’ teachers typically accessed as learning resources.

Both personalized learning opportunities and collaborative structures provided natural opportunities to align the IISS of schools and the evaluation system to benefit teacher learning and instructional improvement.

Regularly-scheduled, clearly-defined collaboration opportunities explicitly connected to a shared vision of instructional excellence to bolster teachers’ improvement efforts, as did personalized learning opportunities like observations.

- Most teachers described personalized learning opportunities as highly impactful in guiding and informing their instructional improvement process. The type of feedback provided during observation opportunities was typically viewed as more usable than other data sources, because it was grounded in the realities of the classroom. As this type of learning opportunity is particularly impactful for its specificity and ability to transfer feedback and enable discussion directly to practice changes, **it may be beneficial to consider how to include these opportunities as a regular part of schools’ IISSs.**
- For many teachers, the characteristics of the collaborative structures (including frequency, duration, and purpose) determined their potential to support learning and development. Several teachers found that increased frequency of meeting opportunities allowed them to resolve administrative issues (such as meeting and scheduling issues), without overtaking time for collaboration around instruction. Meetings with overly general or ill-defined agendas often resulted in unproductive use of teachers’ time.

Similarly, teachers frequently dismissed the impact of whole school professional development opportunities to their practices because the techniques were not easily transferable to other areas of practice or that they were not relevant to their current area of improvement work. Each of these issues was somewhat ameliorated when professional development learning was explicitly connected to a shared vision of instructional excellence be that the FFT or something else.

### **A strong professional learning culture and shared vision of instructional excellence supported teacher improvement and data use.**

In fact, the ability of these collaborative opportunities to be leveraged for teacher learning and improvement was largely dependent on the professional culture of the school.

- Teachers who identified their school as having a culture that centered learning and improvement were more willing and able to utilize teacher evaluation data for improvement purposes. Teachers in schools with a culture of adult learning or strong culture of data use leveraged formal collaborative settings for adult learning and development more often than those in other schools. Teachers in schools or on teams that regularly employed facilitated collaboration and data routines felt more comfortable and had more tools when engaging in individualized improvement efforts. **Leaders may want to consider how best to integrate data protocols and routines to facilitate teacher learning.**
- Teachers in schools that had a shared vision of instructional excellence or clearly held high instructional expectations were more likely to engage with data for developmental purposes. Shared vision and expectations not only provided teachers a common language to discuss practice change—they also engendered a feeling of collective responsibility and support. In schools with distinctly separate IISS and evaluation systems, the shared vision encouraged general engagement in instructional improvement but did not typically serve the same purpose for REACH-related improvement. In contrast, teachers in schools who utilized the FFT as a guide for instructional excellence were often able to connect improvement efforts to elements of the FFT, whether the effort was directly connected to evaluation feedback or not. **For schools trying to develop a shared vision for instructional excellence, the FFT offered several benefits as a model, especially as it established consistent expectations across the two systems aimed at teacher development.**



## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**ANDRIA SHYJKA** is a Qualitative Researcher and Survey Specialist at the UChicago Consortium. In this position she has worked on a variety of research projects which examine how schools and teachers use data for improvement. Currently, Andria's work focuses on building equitable learning environments through research and strategic partnerships with districts, schools, and support organizations. She believes her decade of teaching experience provides a valuable background to research of teacher improvement via formal evaluation, professional development and student feedback, assessment of school culture and climate, and organizational change. Daughter of a teacher, Andria grew up immersed in learning and still enjoys opportunities to work with aspiring teachers and school leaders as she pursues a doctorate of policy studies in urban education, with a concentration in educational organization and leadership at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

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*This report reflects the interpretation of the authors. Although the UChicago Consortium's Steering Committee provided technical advice, no formal endorsement by these individuals, organizations, or the full Consortium, should be assumed.*

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