

Impact of Providing Teachers and Principals With Performance Feedback on Their Practice and Student Achievement: Evidence From a Large-Scale Randomized Experiment

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Journal of
Research on
Educational Effectiveness

What is the intervention tested in this study?

The 2-year intervention consisted of three components that were designed to provide educators with performance feedback on classroom practice (four times per year), student growth (once per year), and principal leadership (twice per year), respectively. The intervention targeted principals and teachers of reading and mathematics in grades 4–8, whose participation in the intervention was voluntary with no consequences for tenure or employment.

How did we assess the impact of this intervention?

This study is a multisite school-level randomized controlled trial taking place in eight districts in five states. The study included 127 elementary and middle schools in total, 63 of which were randomly assigned to the treatment group and 64 to the control group. Schools in both groups continued to implement their district’s existing educator evaluation systems, but treatment schools also implemented the intervention during the 2012–13 (Year 1) and 2013–14 (Year 2) school years. We assessed the intervention’s impact on teachers’ classroom practice based on video-recorded observations at the end of Year 2. We assessed the intervention’s impact on principal leadership based on a teacher survey and assessed the intervention’s impact on student achievement based on students’ scores on state standardized tests in reading and mathematics in the spring of each intervention year.

What did we find?

Findings from this large-scale randomized controlled trial show that providing additional performance feedback to teachers and principals had significant impacts on certain aspects of teachers’ classroom practice, principal leadership, and student achievement, as summarized below.

- The intervention had a positive impact on teachers’ classroom practice in Year 2 as measured by one of two measures of classroom practice.
- The intervention had positive impacts on both measures of principal leadership—instructional leadership and teacher-principal trust—in Year 2 and a positive impact only on teacher-principal trust in Year 1.
- The intervention had a positive impact on students’ mathematics achievement in Year 1, amounting to about four weeks of additional learning, and a positive impact on students’ mathematics achievement in Year 2 that was similar in size but not statistically significant. The intervention did not have a significant impact on students’ reading achievement.

For further information about the study and its findings, please visit: <https://www.air.org/resource/impact-providing-performance-feedback-teachers-and-principals>.

Full article citation:

Song, M., Wayne, A. J., Garet, M. S., Brown, S., & Rickles, J. (2021). [Impact of Providing Teachers and Principals with Performance Feedback on Their Practice and Student Achievement: Evidence From a Large-Scale Randomized Experiment](https://www.air.org/resource/impact-providing-performance-feedback-teachers-and-principals). *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19345747.2020.1868030>.