The Impact of a Learning Centered Teacher Evaluation Approach on New Teacher Turnover in Wisconsin

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More satisfied employees are more productive (Judge, Thoresen, Bono, & Patton, 2001) and more satisfied teachers are more likely to stay in their school and continue in the field of education (Borg & Riding, 1991; Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012). Teacher turnover is a problem that drains school resources and lowers the quality of teaching, especially in urban and high-poverty schools (Lankford, Loeb, & Wychoff, 2002; Hanushek, Rivkin, & Schiman, 2016). Through these processes, teacher turnover has a negative impact on student achievement (Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013).

Since the passage of Act 10 in 2011, which greatly diminished the collective bargaining rights and benefits of teachers, Wisconsin districts have experienced increased teacher turnover, which has resulted in teacher shortages (Umhoeher, & Hauer, 2016). In 2012 Wisconsin passed Act 166, requiring schools implement standards-based evaluation systems. Although many Wisconsin teachers were suspicious of the intention of Act 166, given the negatively association with Act 10, the resulting Educator Effectiveness (EE) process focuses on formative rather than summative purposes. District and schools are strongly encouraged to use EE as a learning-centered process (Kimball, et. al, 2019) focused on educator development and support. Given new teachers, as a group, are at a greater risk of moving away from their school (Lankford, Loeb, & Wychoff, 2002), EE has the potential to either help or hurt the teacher turnover challenges facing Wisconsin schools, depending how it is implemented.

Given Wisconsin's unique teacher evaluation approach, the applicability of other studies on the impact of teacher evaluations is questionable. One study found that the implementation of teacher evaluations in Michigan did not impact teacher attrition, except in districts with a history of attrition challenges (Brunner, et. al., 2019). Another reported that the implementation of high-stakes teacher evaluation systems reduced teacher supply (Dougherty, Brunner & Schwegman. 2017). One ethnographic study of a middle school suggested that the evaluation process "demoralized" teachers (Bradford, C & Braaten, M., 2018). However, the implementation of

teacher evaluations in this school was not consistent with the goals of the Wisconsin EE process. None of these studies provide insight into how the implementation of learning-centered teacher evaluations may impact teacher attrition.

Objectives

We examine the prevalence of new teacher turnover, the effectiveness of teachers who leave their school, and how teacher perceptions of the EE process relate to perceptions of principal effectiveness and job satisfaction and their employment situation two years later.

Measures

Teacher Mobility – We measured teacher mobility using publically available data by comparing the school and district where new teachers worked in the 2016-17 and two years later in 2018-2019

The Feedback Process – We asked teachers the number of times their instruction was observed, they met with their evaluator for feedback, and they received written feedback. Teachers who indicated they received feedback completed the *Examining Evaluator Feedback Survey* (Cherasaro, Brodersen, Yanoski, Welp, & Reale, 2015), which measures their perceptions of the extent they used feedback to improve, the opportunity they have to use feedback, the accuracy of feedback, and the usefulness of feedback. The internal consistency of these scales is .903, .812, .840, and .938, respectively. Confirmatory Factor Analysis verifies the four factors of the measure (Chi^2 $p < .001$; RMSEA = .074; CFI = .995; SRMR = .047).

Teacher Perceptions of Principals – We applied two scales from the University of Chicago's *5Essentials Survey* (Klugman, Gordon, Sebring, & Sporte, 2015) to measure teacher perceptions of the trust between teachers and principals and principal leadership. The internal consistency of these two eight-item scales is .934 and .957 respectively.

Teacher Perceptions of their Job - We used the Brief Index of Affective Job Satisfaction (Thompson & Phua, 2012) to measure affective teacher job satisfaction. The internal consistency of this four-item scale is .937. One scale from the University of Chicago's 5Essentials Survey was used to measure teacher School Commitment. The internal consistency of this four-item scale is .885.

Teacher Effectiveness - At the end of the year, new teachers receive performance ratings from their evaluator on either the 22 components of the Framework for Teaching (Danielson, 2013) or

the 6 standards of the Stronge Framework (2002). The performance of teachers receiving more "Proficient" than “Basic" ratings were classified as "Effective."

Sample

“New” teachers were in their first three years at a school. In 2017, there were 8,017 new teachers. 3,876 (48%) completed a survey. Of these, 3,335 were linked through to an individual school. These were 77% female, 91% White, and 74% with a bachelor’s degree. We excluded teachers who worked across schools.

Data Collection and Analysis

In the spring of 2017, surveys were sent to all classroom teachers across Wisconsin. Survey results were then linked with staffing data to identify employment status in 2016-17 and 2018-19. Survey and staffing data were merged with effectiveness ratings assigned at the end of the 2016-17 school year. Bivariate correlations, generalized linear modeling, and logistic regressions were used to explore the relationships between teacher perceptions of the feedback process, principal effectiveness, job satisfaction, and retention.

Results

- More than 40% of new teachers transferred or left public education (Figure 1).
- Most teachers who transferred were rated as effective. (Figure 2).
- Teachers who received verbal feedback from their principal or evaluator were more likely to view their principal as an effective leader (Figure 3).
- After controlling for school and teacher characteristics, feedback accuracy was the best predictor of principal trust, principal trust was the best predictor of school commitment, and school commitment was the best predictor of teacher retention (Table 4).
- All factors combined explained 11% of the variance in teacher retention, with feedback accuracy, use, and school commitment the only uniquely predictive factors explaining teacher retention (Table 5).

Conclusions

These results establish that the teacher evaluation process is closely connected to new teacher turnover through its impact on the relationship between teachers with their principal and their commitment to their school. A learning-centered teacher evaluation process, with teachers participating in at least two feedback meetings and receiving accurate feedback, promotes teacher retention (See Figure 4).

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Table 1

Feedback Questions – How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements…

Usefulness	My evaluator's feedback included specific improvement suggestions.
	My evaluator's feedback included specific suggestions to improve my content/subject knowledge.
	My evaluator's feedback included specific instructional strategies that I could use to improve my teaching.
	My evaluator's feedback included specific classroom management strategies that I could use to improve my teaching.
	My evaluator's feedback included recommendations for finding resources or professional development to improve my teaching.
	My evaluator's feedback was provided as frequently as I needed it.
	My evaluator's feedback was provided in time for me to use it to inform my practice.
Accuracy	The feedback I received was an accurate portrayal of my teaching.
	The classroom observations or walkthroughs that informed the feedback I received represented a typical day in my classroom.
	In our evaluation system, different evaluators reviewing the same evidence would likely give the same ratings.
Opportunity to Use Feedback	I had access to the professional development (formal or informal) that I needed in order to implement suggestions provided in my feedback.
	I had access to an instructional leader (e.g., peer, coach/mentor, administrator) who supported me in implementing suggestions provided in my feedback.
	I was able to observe expert teachers modeling skills that related to my feedback.
	I had time during the school day to plan for implementing new strategies based on my feedback (e.g., collaborative or individual planning time).
Use of Feedback	I tried new instructional strategies in my classroom.
	I tried new classroom management strategies in my classroom.
	I sought professional development opportunities (formal or informal).
	I sought advice from an instructional leader (e.g., peer, coach/mentor, administrator).
	I changed the way I plan instruction.

Table 2

Descriptive statistics of study factors

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Useful feedback*	2931	2.92	0.86
Accurate feedback*	2947	3.24	0.76
Opportunity to use feedback*	2846	2.80	0.83
Feedback use*	2821	3.05	0.79
Principal trust	3078	3.15	0.76
Principal leadership	3078	3.10	0.67
Affective job satisfaction	3040	3.15	0.69
School commitment	3080	3.03	0.74

* Only teachers who received feedback answer these questions

Table 3

Correlations of study factors

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	Retention in school	1								
2	Usefulness of feedback	.084**	1							
3	Accuracy of feedback	.141**	.593**	1						
4	Opportunity to use feedback	.049*	.611**	.482**	1					
5	Use of feedback	-0.028	.464**	.249**	.469**	1				
6	Trust between teachers and principals	.151**	.499**	.510**	.446**	.235**	1			
7	Principal leadership	.132**	.567**	.505**	.516**	.314**	.869**	1		
8	Job satisfaction	.188**	.363**	.372**	.344**	.192**	.437**	.440**	1	
9	Commitment to school	.263**	.449**	.458**	.399**	.199**	.627**	.616**	.712**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Listwise N=2646

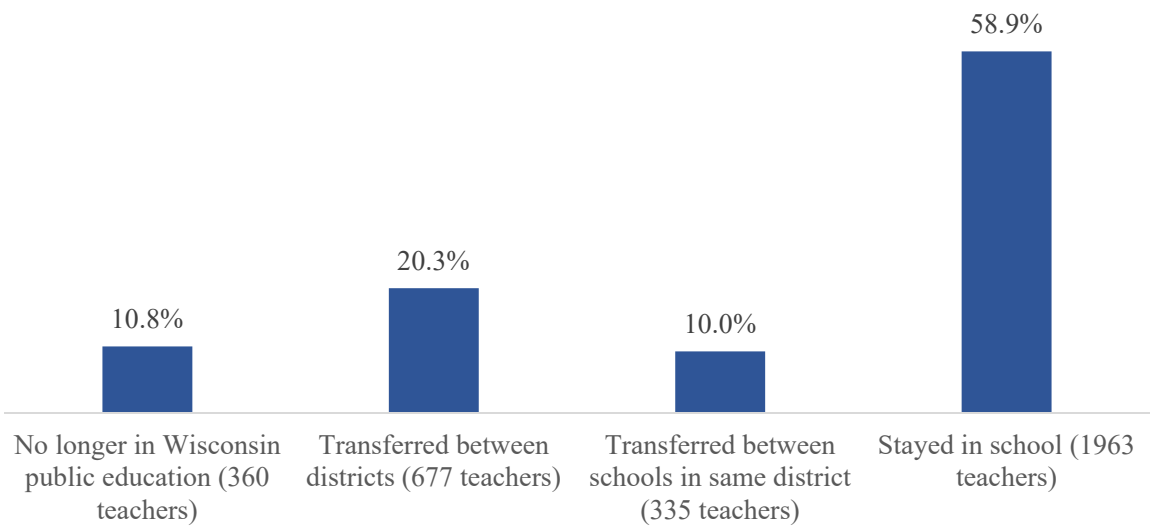

Figure 1: New teacher employment status changes from 2016-17 to 2018-19

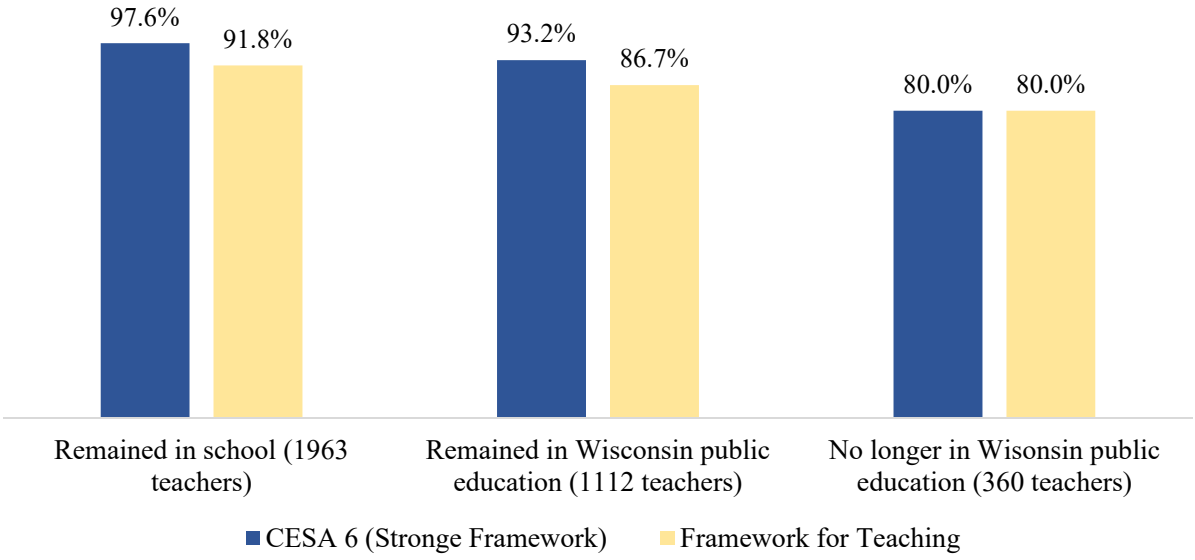

Figure 2: Percentage of new teachers rated as effective according to their employment status in 2018-19

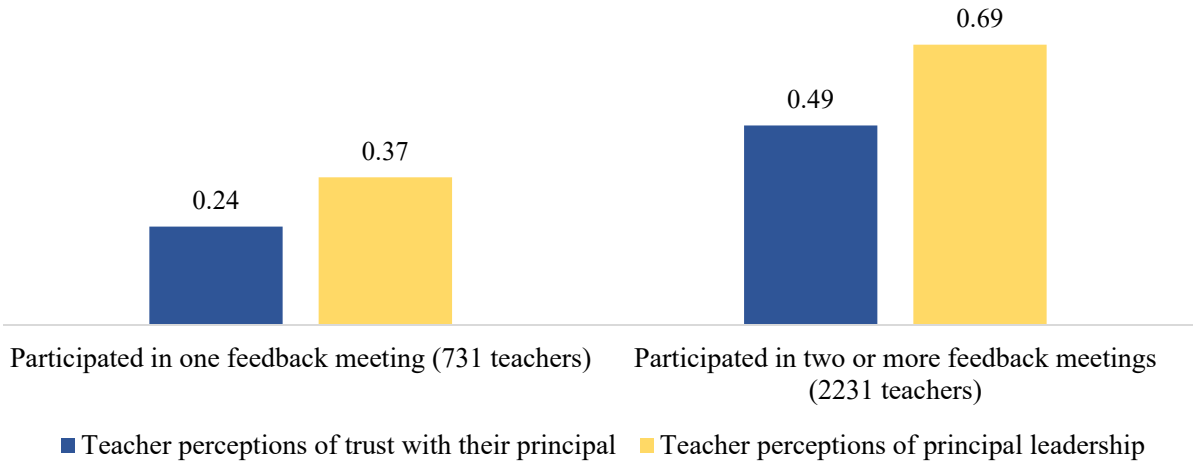

Figure 3: Standardized differences between the principal perceptions of new teachers who did not participate in any feedback meetings with their evaluator and those who participated in one or two.

Table 4

Modeling results predicting principal effectiveness, job satisfaction, and retention

	B	Std. Error	sig	Exp(B)
Model 1: Feedback predicting principal trust (adjusted R^2 = .405)				
Usefulness	0.230	0.023	< .001	
Accuracy	0.276	0.025	< .001	
Opportunity	0.176	0.023	< .001	
Use	-0.007	0.021	0.756	
Model 2: Principal effectiveness predicting school commitment (adjusted R^2 = .202)				
Principal leadership	0.284	0.031	< .001	
Principal trust	0.357	0.031	< .001	
Model 3: School commitment predicting retention (adjusted R^2 = .07)				
School commitment	0.593	0.062	< .001	1.810
Job satisfaction	0.059	0.059	0.319	1.061

*models control for school type (HS, ES, or MS), percent free/reduced lunch, EE model (FfT or Stronge), teacher education (Bachelors or Higher), race (White, Black, Latinx, Asian, Other), and gender

Table 5

Model results predicting teacher retention including all study factors

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Percent_Econ_Disadv	-0.002	0.002	0.918	1	0.338	0.998
School_type			5.408	3	0.248	
School_type=Combined Elementary/Secondary School	0.445	0.277	2.577	1	0.108	1.56
School_type=Elementary School	0.11	0.132	0.69	1	0.406	1.116
School_type=High School	0.21	0.141	2.212	1	0.137	1.234
Model			0.653	2	0.721	
Model=Other	0.053	0.107	0.248	1	0.619	1.055
Model=Stronge	-0.254	0.451	0.318	1	0.573	0.776
race			14.483	3	0.07	
race=Asian	-0.13	0.429	0.092	1	0.761	0.878
race=Black	**-1.069**	**0.353**	**9.149**	**1**	**0.002**	**0.343**
race=Hispanic/Latinx	-0.379	0.239	2.502	1	0.114	0.685
Gender=Female	0.044	0.113	0.149	1	0.699	1.045
High Degree			1.395	3	0.966	
High Degree=Bachelor's degree	0.254	0.313	0.656	1	0.418	1.289
High Degree=Doctorate	1.17	1.24	0.891	1	0.345	3.223
High Degree=Master's degree	0.214	0.325	0.435	1	0.51	1.239
Feedback usefulness	-0.031	0.069	0.198	1	0.656	0.97
Feedback accuracy	**0.196**	**0.061**	**10.314**	**1**	**0.001**	**1.217**
Opportunity to use feedback	-0.093	0.064	2.162	1	0.141	0.911
Feedback use	**-0.189**	**0.056**	**11.552**	**1**	**0.001**	**0.828**
Principal trust	0.019	0.094	0.043	1	0.836	1.02
Principal leadership	-0.076	0.099	0.587	1	0.444	0.927
School commitment	**0.683**	**0.079**	**73.767**	**1**	**<.001**	**1.979**
Job satisfaction	0.02	0.065	0.094	1	0.759	1.02

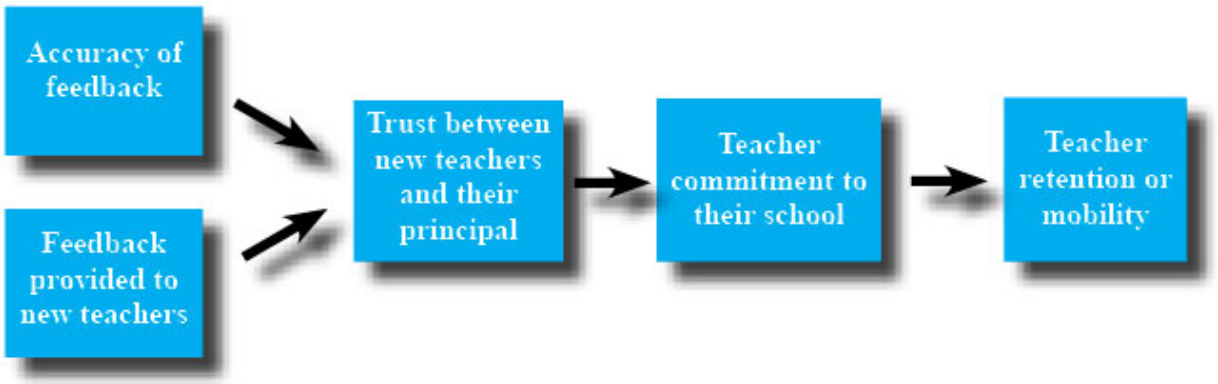

Figure 4: The EE feedback process path to teach retention