Teacher- Informed Solutions on Performance Evaluation (TISPE) Final Report Executive Summary

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Initiative Overview

The Teacher- Informed Solutions on Performance Evaluation (TISPE) Initiative was designed to create a platform by which teacher voices and experiences can be brought to the forefront of any new policy and implementation discussions and changes related to Colorado's Teacher Performance Evaluation legislation -- Senate Bill 10-191. TISPE was developed to go beyond discussion to implementation experience, by gathering teachers together to explore a variety of case examples on design and implementation in Colorado and beyond, and then to create funded opportunities for teachers to develop and implement micro-pilots that fit within and explore the possibilities and limitations of Colorado's teacher performance evaluation system in their home communities.

Teacher experiences were then developed into case studies, and participating teachers had the opportunity to share with one another and to build out a slate of teacher performance evaluation (TPE) design principles and insights to report to Colorado legislators and policy-makers to inform the 2020 legislative session.

Funded by Rose Community Foundation (RCF) and Gates Family Foundation, the Initiative's design, implementation and evaluation process was supported by a collaborative partnership between RCF, Teach Plus Colorado, Colorado Children's Campaign, the Public Education & Business Association (PEBC) and the strategy consultancy, Mission Spark. Organizers of TISPE did not support a particular viewpoint around what teacher performance evaluation should look like and were not driving to any particular outcome. TISPE was about creating a vessel or platform from which teachers can explore this topic, with adequate support in terms of funding and technical assistance.

Micro-Pilot Results

Ten teachers designed, implemented and reported on micro-pilot projects which engaged their home communities and schools in testing new aspects of TPE models and/or to gather feedback on existing TPE models as implemented. Surveys, focus groups, planning and peer coaching, and observation sessions were common methods for implementing and evaluating micro-pilots. Six of the ten projects experimented with the design and implementation of Peer

Observation or Peer-to-Peer coaching models. The remaining four explored current systems, rubric development, and other supportive approaches and tools.

Findings from Micro-pilots indicate the following:
- Teacher voice should be incorporated into all aspects of TPE design to ensure TPE is meaningful and motivating to teachers.
- Teachers see value in evaluation and want to be evaluated.
- Peer coaching and observation are viewed favorably by teachers and add additional value, including more frequent and balanced feedback.
- Teachers want evaluators to be well-trained, supported and skilled in the evaluation process, and to be able to provide reflective, timely, and actionable feedback. This would lead to more trust in the system.
- Teacher growth is viewed as important, and teachers want an evaluation process that supports continuous growth.
- Current design and approach for how teachers achieve a "highly effective" status is disincentivizing.
- Teacher evaluation tools should be somewhat customizable to the school environment, and differentiated.

Teacher-Determined Design Principles, Implementation Recommendations and Suggested Policy Changes

TISPE-participating teachers identified and prioritized a set of design principles and recommendations to put forth based on the results of the micro-pilots and their shared synthesis process at the final Summit. Nine design principles, thirteen implementation recommendations under the current structure of SB-191, and ten policy shifts were articulated. For summary purposes below, the top-ranked three to four recommendations are included for each category.

Design Principles
1. Ensure teacher voice and input is an integral component in the design and implementation of performance evaluation systems, at state and district level.
2. Strengthen the connection of the evaluation system to professional growth of the educator, including more time on coaching and mentoring with less time on evaluative rating.
3. Achieve trust and accuracy in the system, ensuring effective training, competency and accountability of evaluators.

Implementation Recommendations
1. Utilize peer coaching and peer supports, and increase opportunities for more frequent peer-to-peer observations and support.
2. Engage in effective training of evaluators, coaches and administrators to build greater integrity and consistency in the system, inclusive of ongoing professional development for leaders to build a positive climate and culture around evaluation.
3. Create a feedback loop for teachers to be able to evaluate and provide feedback to their evaluators.

Policy Change Recommendations
1. Provide resources to ensure all administrators receive training and ongoing support to be effective evaluators, for example by requiring training and evaluator ongoing professional development.
2. Allow for schools to customize their systems within state and district guidelines, with an accountability process in place (for example, by utilizing a peer review of the system by another school).
3. Differentiate evaluation systems for educators with a record of highly effective ratings (for example, by reducing the frequency of evaluations for highly effective teachers or allowing peer observation/coaching time to count towards professional development hours required for re-licensure).
4. Differentiate teacher performance evaluation rubrics based on content/subject and teacher classification/grade level.

Summary

The TISPE initiative sought to bring together a diverse group of highly-engaged teachers to explore Teacher Performance Evaluation and to inform -- through discussion, exposure to a variety of approaches, the experience and results of micro-pilots and shared sense-making -- the future design, implementation, and policy direction of TPE.

Through the TISPE process, teachers developed and prioritized a set of design principles, implementation recommendations and policy considerations that can be explored immediately and over time, in conjunction with other sources of information and feedback available to policy makers, to inform Teacher Performance Evaluation in Colorado, as well as inform larger national conversations.

Case studies and discussion summaries from TISPE have already begun to inform the Colorado policy landscape, including via the Colorado state TPE budget and accompanying narrative released by Governor Polis in Fall 2019. In addition, TISPE demonstrates a powerful process and mechanism for elevating teacher ideas and voices on critical education-related program and policy decisions.