
Thank you for your request to our REL Reference Desk regarding evidence-based information about the impact of rating systems on schools. Ask A REL is a collaborative reference desk service provided by the ten regional educational laboratories (REL) that, by design, functions much in the same way as a technical reference library. It provides references, referrals, and brief responses in the form of citations on research based education questions.

The information below represents the most rigorous research available. Researchers consider the type of methodology and give priority to research reports that employ well described and thorough methods. The resources were also selected based on the date of the publication with a preference for research from the last ten years. Additional criteria for inclusion include the source and funder of the resource.

Question: *What is the impact of rating systems (e.g., for school or teacher accountability) on teachers, schools, and communities (e.g., morale, teacher turnover, teacher recruitment, etc.)?*

Search Process

Key words and search strings used in the search: *rating system, rating, school districts, teacher accountability, schools, teachers, accountability, teacher turnover, teacher morale*

Search databases and websites:

1. ERIC, <http://www.eric.ed.gov/>
2. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/action/showAdvancedSearch>
3. Google Scholar, www.google.com/scholar
4. Institute of Education Sciences (IES) Resources, <http://ies.ed.gov>
5. What Works Clearinghouse, <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>

Sample Citations Retrieved:

Chingos, M. M., Henderson, M. & West, M. Grading schools. *Education Next*, 10(4), 60-67.
Retrieved from <http://educationnext.org/grading-schools/>

Abstract/Summary: Never before have Americans had greater access to information about school quality. Under the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), all school districts are required to distribute annual report cards detailing student achievement levels at each of their schools. Local newspapers frequently cover the release of state test results, emphasizing the relative standing of their community's schools. Meanwhile, new organizations like GreatSchools and SchoolMatters aggregate this information and make it readily available to parents online. But do all these performance data inform perceptions of school quality? Or do citizens base their evaluations instead on such indicators as the racial or class makeup of schools, regardless of their relationship with actual school performance? In discussions of parental choice in education,

researchers have frequently speculated that parents would base their evaluations of schools primarily on the characteristics of their student bodies. And even if some parents base their decisions on educational quality, many observers worry that low-income and minority parents will be less informed about or interested in school quality, placing their children at a disadvantage in the education marketplace. The evidence on these questions available to date comes from small-scale studies of specific school districts, making it difficult to reach general conclusions about the degree to which parents and the public at large are well informed about the performance of local schools. The authors are now able to supplement that research with data from a nationally representative survey of parents and other adults conducted in 2009 under the auspices of "Education Next" and the Program on Education Policy and Governance (PEPG) at Harvard University. Because they knew the addresses of respondents in advance of the survey, they were able to link individual respondents to specific public schools in their community and to obtain their subjective ratings of those schools. The authors also gathered publicly available data on student achievement in the same schools, making it possible to compare respondents' subjective ratings to objective measures of school quality. Results indicate that citizens' perceptions of the quality of their local schools do in fact reflect the schools' performance as measured by student proficiency rates in core academic subjects. Although citizens also appear to take into account the share of a school's students who are poor when evaluating its quality, those considerations do not overwhelm judgments based on information about academic achievement. (Contains 3 figures.)

Choi, K., Goldschmidt, P., Yamashiro, K. (2006). *Exploring models of school performance: From theory to practice* (CSE Report 673). Los Angeles, CA: National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST) and Center for the Study of Evaluation (CSE). Retrieved from <http://cse.ucla.edu/products/reports/r673.pdf>

Abstract/Summary: In this article, the authors aim to present and discuss competing accountability approaches, or models, designed to systematically indicate how a school's students are performing academically. Within the framework of the current federally mandated accountability legislation, increased interest in models measuring school performance has caused educational policymakers to consider several key issues. These issues include whether results from different accountability models yield different inferences about a school's performance, what assumptions underlie each of the models, how different models are implemented, and ultimately which model is best suited for a particular context. The authors address these issues by building a framework for accountability models and then explicitly comparing and contrasting these competing models. In order to accomplish this, the authors first examine two distinct pieces of the larger puzzle. With the first piece, they briefly summarize previous research on school performance. With the second piece, they present building blocks for accountability models. These building blocks include (1) important properties of assessments; (2) test metrics; (3) ways of summarizing student achievement; and (4) options for monitoring achievement growth over

time, all of which need to be considered before they are incorporated into an accountability model. The authors conclude with a brief summary and discussion of the salient issues surrounding accountability models. (Contains 4 figures, 2 tables, and 5 notes.)

Clotfelter, C. T., Ladd, H. F., Vigdor, J. L., & Diaz, R. A. (2004). Do school accountability systems make it more difficult for low-performing schools to attract and retain high-quality teachers? *Policy Analysis and Management*, 23(2), 251-271.
doi: 10.1002/pam.20003

Abstract/Summary: Administrative data from North Carolina are used to explore the extent to which that state's relatively sophisticated school-based accountability system has exacerbated the challenges that schools serving low-performing students face in retaining and attracting high-quality teachers. Most clear are the adverse effects on retention rates, and hence on teacher turnover, in such schools. Less clear is the extent to which that higher turnover has translated into a decline in the average qualifications of the teachers in the low-performing schools. Other states with more primitive accountability systems can expect even greater adverse effects on teacher turnover in low-performing schools.

Darling-Hammond, L. & Rustique-Forrester, E. (2005). The consequence of student testing for teaching and teacher quality. *Yearbook of the national Society for the Study of Education*, 104(2), 289-319. doi: 10.1111/j.1744-7984.2005.00034.x

Abstract/Summary: While some proponents of testing rest their hopes for stronger learning on the expectation that tests alone will motivate students to work harder, most posit that better learning will result primarily from better teaching--due to curriculum changes, greater attention to student needs, stronger teacher motivation, or focused investments in professional development, the hiring and retention of more expert teachers, and other school resources. This article examines the consequences of student accountability testing for: (1) the nature and quality of teaching, including the curriculum emphases and teaching strategies adopted in the classroom; and (2) the teaching workforce, including the quality of teachers who are recruited and retained in teaching in different schools and districts. The authors' review of the evidence on the consequences of various systems and approaches to accountability finds that the use of student assessment as a strategy for improving education has had positive influences on teaching and teacher quality; however, unintended negative consequences have also been found in systems that use limited measures and that emphasize sanctions without attention to improving school and teaching quality. The authors describe this evidence in relation to the characteristics of specific systems. They examine the various rationales for using students' tests to shape teaching and the teacher workforce, and they discuss recent research that has examined both the positive and negative consequences of using different approaches to using student testing. They evaluate

these findings with attention to the nature of tests, the use of tests, and the stakes that are attached to test results. They conclude with a discussion of policy recommendations for the design and use of assessment systems that are likely to enhance rather than to undermine the quality of teaching.

Jackson, S. A. & Lunenburg, F. C. (2010). School performance indicators, accountability ratings, and student achievement. *American Secondary Education*, 39(1), 27-44.

Abstract/Summary: Researchers have been challenged to find school-level characteristics that make a difference in student achievement. This study focused on a diverse sample of 24 middle schools to examine differences between schools rated Exemplary, Recognized, Academically Acceptable, and Academically Unacceptable on four performance indicator dimensions: academic excellence, developmental responsiveness, social equity, and organizational structures. The study also examined relationships between performance indicators and student achievement. A random sample of teachers from each school and the principal provided data on the school's performance indicator dimensions. School accountability ratings, student achievement scores, and demographic characteristics were obtained from the state department of education. Significant differences were found on all four performance indicator dimensions based on school accountability ratings, as well as relationships between performance indicators and student achievement. (Contains 7 tables.)

Rice, J. K, Malen, B. Baumann, P., Chen, E. & Dougherty, A. (2012). The persistent problems and confounding challenges of educator incentives: The case of TIF in Prince George's County, Maryland. *Educational Policy*, 26(6), 892-933. doi: 10.1177/0895904812465708

Abstract/Summary: While education accountability systems emphasize teacher quality as a prerequisite for student learning, education administrators have struggled to staff low-performing schools with effective teachers. Fueled in part by the federal Teacher Incentive Fund, compensation reforms have gained center stage status among strategies aimed at improving human capital in schools. This article presents findings from a formative evaluation of the initial year of implementation of the Financial Incentive Rewards for Supervisors and Teachers (FIRST) program in the Prince George's County Public School System. Our review of the relevant theoretical and empirical literature on financial incentive systems in public school systems identified four sets of implementation challenges: securing and maintaining stakeholder support; developing and implementing accurate and credible measures of educator performance; developing the district and site capacity required to implement and sustain the initiative; and aligning the reform with human resource goals, school improvement initiatives, and features of the work environment. Our field research on the formulation, implementation, and initial impact of the FIRST initiative demonstrates that even when an educator incentive initiative reflects

"lessons learned" from the empirical and theoretical literature, challenges that undermine the initiative's potential to realize its major goals persist. We argue that this case extends our understanding of the key challenges identified in the literature and we highlight implications for policy and research. (Contains 1 table and 28 notes.)

Referrals

Organizations:

- GreatSchools: <http://www.greatschools.org/>
- Center for Education Policy Analysis: <http://cepa.stanford.edu/>
- WestEd: www.wested.org

Federal Agencies:

- Institute of Education Sciences Resources (IES), <http://ies.ed.gov>
Publication search engine available at: <http://ies.ed.gov/pubsearch/>

Other Federally Funded Resources:

- U.S. Department of Education: <http://www.ed.gov>
- What Works Clearinghouse, <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>.

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