



January 19, 2012

In Support of a Principal Evaluation Process in Accordance with Minnesota Statute 2010, Section 123B.147

As representatives of our respective professional associations on the Principal Evaluation Work Group, many of us also had the privilege of serving in a similar capacity a year ago. During the 2010-2011 academic year, the Minnesota Association of School Administrators, the Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals, the Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association, and the Board of School Administrators convened a Task Force of practitioners drawn from districts representative of the geographic and demographic base of Minnesota. These individuals researched principal evaluation systems in place across the nation and examined the professional literature in the field of administrative evaluation.

The Task Force engaged in extended and often-intense discussions about the findings as participants developed *The Evaluation of Minnesota's School Principals*, a system of principal evaluation that has gained a strong foothold in Minnesota's schools since it was released in the winter of 2011. We now fear that this work, vested in best-practice research and a common-sense approach to evaluation, may have been for naught. We are concerned that the rush to demonstrate misguided notions of accountability may result in the abandonment of a rational system of evaluation that is dedicated to, as the forward to the model declares, "the importance of providing this state's children with world class school principals."

The efforts of the Principal Evaluation Work Group to date have been well intended. The fields of research referenced by the Work Group were in large part reviewed by the association Task Force that developed the earlier evaluation model. However, there has emerged in the current Working Group a growing insistence that some fixed percentage of a principal's evaluation must be strictly tied to student achievement numbers earned at the school the principal leads. The research advanced to support such a practice has cited similar practices that have been adopted in other states; these have not revealed any positive results. We are left with the reasoning that if other states support an evaluation system that requires 25%, 35%, 50%, or some other arbitrary percentage, then Minnesota must require a system that includes a percentage provision.

One argument advanced in favor of such a percentage provision seems to be vested in notions of fairness. Since Minnesota statute now requires the development of a teacher evaluation system that contains a 35% student achievement benchmark, the principal's system, in spite of the fact that statute does not contain this component, needs to have a like element. That the legislature discounted a volume of respected research that rejects using fixed percentages of student achievement data in teacher evaluation is not sound rationale for extending this mistake to principal evaluation as well. ("Problems With the Use of Students' Test Scores to Evaluate Teachers": www.epi.org)

Our rejection of the use of student data as a fixed percentage of educator evaluation is not a rejection of the importance of student achievement. *The Evaluation of Minnesota's School Principals* is clearly and intentionally aligned with the administrative competencies outlined in Minnesota's Administrative Rule.

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Minnesota's principals are responsible for being instructional leaders and for producing top student results.

We know that Minnesota's teachers take this same responsibility seriously as well. We argue instead that the sum total of factors that impact student success is far greater than can be revealed by test scores or growth measures. Both, of course, are centrally important. However, an evaluation system must be clear, consistent, and equitable. It will be difficult and time-consuming, at best, to implement an evaluation process for principals who are responsible for evaluating all professional staff, not just the reading, math, and science teachers who deliver instruction in the areas subject to state testing. And, insofar as individual school districts wish to place critical emphasis on student achievement results in the evaluation of personnel, those decisions are best left to the districts themselves rather than institutionalized in a state-generated evaluation plan.

We do support the continued development of an evaluation system for principals aligned with Minnesota's administrative competencies and professional preparation programs. We do support evaluation vested in sound research and best practice. We do support a process that is evidence-based and that promotes reflection on and the synthesis of that critical evidence. We do support a system that maintains a rational link between a principal using student data to drive instructional leadership and the student results that must be produced. While we reject notions that accountability can somehow be secured through an arbitrarily established, percentage-based metric, we do embrace a model of principal evaluation that holds Minnesota's principals to the highest standards of performance. Our children deserve to be served by the very best.



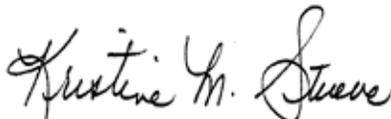
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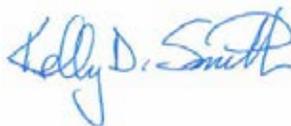
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