

Minnesota Principal Evaluation Pilot Study  
Preliminary Findings through the Mid-Year Conferences

**“Voices From the Field”**

Commissioned by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE)  
Sponsored by the Bush Foundation  
Conducted by FHI 360  
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**Introduction**

In 2011, the Minnesota State Legislature mandated that all districts annually evaluate principals with models that meet guidelines in Statute and “enhance a principal's leadership skills and support and improve teaching practices, school performance, and student achievement.” In the fall of 2011, the Principal Evaluation Working Group, appointed by the Commissioner and including representatives from the Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals and the Minnesota Association of Elementary School principals, submitted an example model to the legislature. The MDE is piloting this example model in 17 school districts during the 2012-2013 school year. Within the 17 districts are eight schools in seven districts receiving school improvement grants (SIG).

The example model consists of three components: 1) principal evaluation by the supervisor; 2) review of the longitudinal student growth data; and 3) feedback from other school community stakeholders, including students, parents, colleagues, and staff.

This report presents preliminary findings and recommendations from a study of the implementation of the Minnesota Principal Evaluation Model at the mid-year point. The study is designed to provide feedback from the 17 districts currently piloting the example principal evaluation model (hereafter referred to as the “example model”) that was developed by the MDE. The findings are based on an anonymous online survey requested of principals and evaluators in all 17 pilot districts, and interviews with principals and evaluators in four “case study” districts within the 17 pilot districts selected to be representative of other districts in Minnesota.

The purpose of this report is to provide *preliminary findings and preliminary recommendations* to the MDE leadership team and the working group to strengthen the example model, its implementation, and intended outcomes. A *summative report* following the collection and analysis of data from the end-of-year evaluation process will be submitted in the summer of 2013 to help further refine the findings and recommendations.

Key findings are summarized under each of the following 10 areas and are accompanied by illustrative quotations from the case study interviewees and data from the two surveys.

- 1) Overall perception of the evaluation model.
- 2) Concerns about the model.

- 3) Perceived quality and value of the orientation to the model offered by MDE.
- 4) Modifications made to the model at the district level.
- 5) Reactions to self-assessment and goal-setting components.
- 6) Activities between self-assessment and goal-setting and the mid-year conference.
- 7) Reactions to the mid-year conference.
- 8) Contextual conditions that support the example model.
- 9) Advice from evaluators and principals to MDE to strengthen the model or improve its implementation.
- 10) Recommendations from FHI 360 to MDE to strengthen the example state evaluation model or improve its implementation.

In many cases, findings are consistent for both evaluators and principals. However, there are important differences in their responses that are highlighted throughout. The report concludes with unanswered questions that will be pursued in the second half of the study.

At this mid-point in the pilot and the study, the findings are encouraging with regard to the initial reception of the model and the potential for its future impact, both short-term (the end of the school year) and beyond. Overall, there was a positive response to the example model, coupled with recommendations for changes or additions intended to strengthen its design or implementation. The recommendations section of this report will share these ideas. Some may be able to be completed quickly and others over a longer timeline.

### **Data Collection in Brief**

As noted above, the study is being conducted through interviews and online surveys that gather the experiences and perceptions of both principals and their evaluators (often, but not always, superintendents). Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed by a professional service. Districts and interviewees were promised anonymity. The survey and interview questions were designed to address each of the eight steps of the example model:

1. An orientation on the principal evaluation process.
2. Pre-planning by the principal, which comprises a self-assessment and identification of goals.
3. A goal-setting conference between the principal and his/her supervisor to agree on professional growth and school improvement goals for the year.
4. A period of evidence-gathering by the principal and the evaluator.
5. A mid-year formative review for the evaluator to provide feedback and for the principal to discuss progress achieved to date.
6. An end-of-year summative review to discuss all of the collected evidence of principal performance and professional growth.<sup>1</sup>
7. A summative performance rating signed by both the principal and the evaluator.

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<sup>1</sup> Some student performance data will not be available until the end of the summer.

8. Development of the professional growth plan and/or implementation of the consequences of a particular summative performance rating.

A second round of interviews and surveys is planned to capture the experiences of principals and evaluators after the summative principal evaluations. Additional information on the two data collection strategies appears in Appendix A. Appendix B includes the case study interview questions for principals and evaluators.

## **Key Findings**

### **Principals' and Evaluators' Perceptions of the Example Model and Orientation to It**

The majority of principals and evaluators embraced the example principal evaluation model as an opportunity to increase their leadership skills. Although principals and evaluators had some concerns about the initial design of the example model, many of these were addressed with district modifications. Orientation to the model by the MDE was well received in general and provided a framework and examples for district implementation.

#### ***Study Question 1: How did principals and evaluators view the example model?***

##### **Finding 1.**

Both principals and evaluators generally had a positive view of the example model, especially with regard to how it promotes principals' professional growth, defines the role of the principal as an instructional leader, keeps that as their focus, and holds them more accountable for results.

More specific findings on how the model is viewed include:

- It provides evaluators and principals with more opportunities to engage in authentic dialogue about principals' professional growth.
- It helps keep principals' focus on being instructional leaders and on progressing on their professional and school performance goals.
- It supports a school culture of learning and professional behavior.
- It helps create effective schools and improve school performance.
- It sets high standards for what principals should know and be able to do.
- It encourages setting high standards for student performance.
- It provides timely feedback for principals and the opportunity to meet and set new goals.

Comments from principals:

*"This is, by far, the most professional work that I've done for myself, ever, being a principal . . . Part of it is the rubric that was created . . . it has high standards and it made me have a target where I didn't have a target before . . . This helps me know what I am shooting for here instead of just thinking I am doing a good job."*

*“I think that we, as an administrative team, all recognize the value of regular, frequent evaluation, if for no other reason than you create an opportunity for professional dialogue with colleagues.”*

*“I think we need to be held accountable for the work we are doing . . . certain management tasks can waylay us from the purpose of being instructional leaders . . . this process will allow us to focus in on the instructional leadership component of our work and then it will require us to maintain that as our focus.”*

Comments from evaluators:

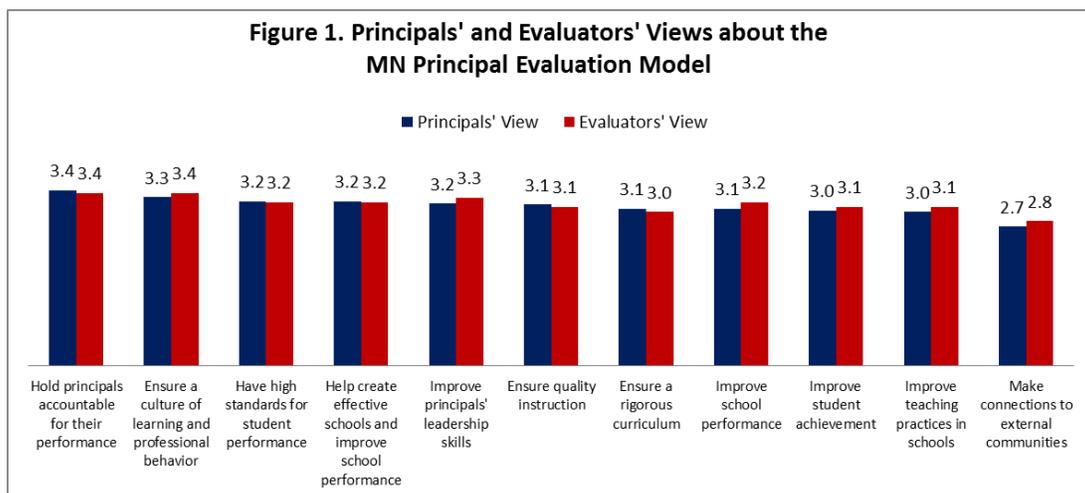
*“The difference between last year and now is that having these tools, protocols and structure is there’s a much higher level of conversation and there’s a much a higher level of accountability for the principals. . . I had principals come to their mid-year evaluation last year with nothing in their hands. Not one of the secondary and elementary principals came empty handed this year because I had a clear agenda and clear expectations based on the framework . . . Most of them had a packet for each one of my questions—the evidence—and they’d have the supporting documents too.”*

*“My sense is that principals appreciate this [the principal evaluation model]. Even though I thought they were not going to be happy about having to create the professional growth goals each year and do all the other pieces each year, we really didn’t see a push-back on the part of principals. They . . . jumped in and did it.”*

From the survey data:

*General Views about the Model: Principals vs. Evaluators*

Figure 1 summarizes both principals’ and evaluators’ general views about the example model. The principals generally agree that the example model will help them improve their professional practices and school performance. The highest-rated benefits of the principal evaluation model



include: (1) allowing principals to be accountable for their performance; (2) ensuring a culture of learning and professional behavior; (3) having high standards for student performance; and (4) helping create effective schools and improve school performance. Both principals and evaluators agreed that the model was least helpful in making connections to external communities.

***Study Question 2: What concerns did principals and evaluators voice about the example evaluation model?***

**Finding 2.**

Two primary concerns were raised by both principals and evaluators. The first was how they would shift from the rich professional dialogues about professional growth and meeting school improvement goals in the first half of the process, to a single, quantifiable, evaluative number as required by the summative review. The second major concern was what both saw as the “overwhelming” number of standards and indicators.

Other concerns mentioned in the interviews included:

- The timing of when the state MCA data arrive – too late to be used in an end-of-the-academic year summative review.
- Lack of timely and specific feedback from the evaluators.
- Inadequate support from districts to help principals meet their goals such as the lack of professional development aligned with the performances and indicators that would help principals address their professional growth goals.
- The possibility that this could be a “gotcha” model, leading to a principal’s dismissal without adequate direction and support for professional growth.
- Issues with the administration and interpretation of the results of the stakeholder surveys (covered in more depth later in this report).

Comments from principals:

*“ . . . there won’t be, for this year, a follow-up with any kind of professional development regarding those areas where I may have some deficiencies.”*

*“Once I began to feel that it wasn’t just a punishment kind of model, because that’s what it felt like at first, then I’m beginning to see that yes, it could be worth my time.”*

Comments from evaluators:

*“We’re still struggling through how to quantify the data at the end [summative review]. I just received a rubric from another district that’s piloting [this model] and I will bring it to the principals’ meeting in March and say, ‘What about a rubric like this to help us look at our results and say, ‘Okay, we made this much progress so that’s worth a two. Or we made a lot more progress and that’s worth a three or four’? I want them to be on the same page with that decision and we haven’t made it yet.”*

*“... the argument we’d always have is, in evaluation is, there’s science but there’s art there, too. If you are left having to reduce it to a number 1, 2, 3, or 4, you’re not going to get the quality that you want to get out of it. What ends up happening if that person is on the edge between a 2 and a 3, and what does that really mean, anyway?”*

**Study Question 3: What did principals and evaluators see as the quality and value of the orientation to the example model?**

### **Finding 3.**

Both principals and evaluators agreed that the MDE conducted an excellent orientation that introduced and explained the example model, its purposes, how it was designed to work, and how it could be implemented. The vast majority of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their orientation training provided them with a clear understanding of the model’s goals and components, and that the orientation adequately addressed the initial questions they had about the model and its implementation.

Specific reactions included both positive impressions and recommendations for improvement:

- Example documents were useful but both principals and evaluators would like even more examples for each specific level -- elementary, middle, and high schools,
- There was appreciation for the low-stakes nature of the pilot so they could work the “kinks” out.
- The one-on-one support provided to the districts by the MDE staff to answer questions was valuable.
- Orientation training helped some of the pilot districts to modify their existing principal evaluation model to align with legislated requirements (discussed in Finding 4).
- The Evaluator Checklist provided guidance to evaluators on their roles and responsibilities.
- The importance of having both evaluators and principals attend the orientation trainings so they are “on the same page.”
- An option for additional training on the model was recommended.
- A little over half of the survey respondents reported that they had promising practices related to their evaluation model that they would like to share with other districts.
- Several recommended creating a MDE web site that contains the legislation, example model, supporting materials, and additional trainings that principals and evaluators know about and have access to — including the opportunity to read materials in advance of the orientation session.

Comments from principals:

*“We initially were trained – Greg Keith, a representative for the Department of Ed came and had a work-through of what the process would look like. He shared with us some documents that would allow us to kind of flesh out the details and understanding of how the pilot would look in our district and also to reassure that it was a learning experience for the state as well as a*

*learning experience for us. . . What I appreciated from the state was a willingness to recognize it as a pilot and use the feedback that we shared with them to really hone in on what the details of the process, in our estimation, should look like to make it a valuable piece for the administrative staff.”*

*“I would have liked to have had samples that were level-specific. We were given one that was for high schools and it was hard to figure out how to make it work for an elementary school. I think that, without a specific sample, you're flying by the seat of your pants.”*

*“I don't think that I had [left the first orientation] with a clear understanding at that point. Pretty tough to have – six districts represented so six different lenses on what the current condition was in those districts versus where it was going to be with this pilot. I think for any presenter [MDE staff member] that's very difficult to be responsive to each of the groups because they're in such a different place. The written materials were very helpful and that's what made it more clear, having the chance to later go through and read those documents. But a half-day session should be looked at as requiring more [time] in the future for orientation.”*

Comments from evaluators:

*“I think the principals knew as much as they could know, given it was our first time through it.”*

*“I was handed a packet of paper and told, “We're going to be a pilot district.” . . . And so I quickly... worked to make the connections that I needed to with MDE and sat down and came up with a plan and became familiarized with that [evaluation] process. And then he [MDE staff member] came out, so he met with me and talked with me... and then we went from there. I had a good sense of the framework. But I could also tell that there was a lot of... questions that we needed to wrestle with locally before we actually had something that would be the actual model.”*

From the survey data:

### *Principal Orientation*

The great majority of principal respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their orientation provided them with a clear understanding of the principal evaluation model's goals and components (81%) and that the orientation adequately addressed the questions they had about the model and its implementation (77%). Table 1 provides a more detailed breakdown of principals' answers.

### *Evaluator Initial Training*

All of the evaluators who completed the survey agreed or strongly agreed that: (1) they were provided with sufficient training to help principals implement the new principal evaluation system with fidelity; (2) the training they received prior to the implementation of the new principal evaluation model provided them with a clear understanding of the model's goals and

components; (3) the materials provided to them were very helpful in implementing the new evaluation model with fidelity; and (4) the Evaluator Checklist provided by the MDE was a valuable tool to understand their roles and responsibilities as evaluators.

Five of the evaluator respondents stated that their district is either using their previous evaluation model or making significant adaptations to the model. All of these five respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the training the state provided in the new principal evaluation model helped their district improve the model they were using. Four out of five respondents thought that their district's principal evaluation model met or exceeded the state's model in terms of its effectiveness in supporting principals' professional growth and accountability for student results. Finally, three out of five respondents stated that their district had promising practices related to the principal evaluation that they would like to share with the rest of the districts in Minnesota.

***Study Question 4: What modifications to the example state model did districts make?***

**Finding 4.**

Districts implemented several different modifications to the principal evaluation model. These included the use of previously proven district practices that they believed increased the rigor and robustness of the process (e.g., using a principal's narrative in the self-assessment rather than a number); simplifying and focusing the performance measures (e.g., the development and use of "power standards"); and the use of available district interim measures such as MAP, AIMS Web or DIBELS to gauge progress on achieving goals for the mid-year conference.

Other modifications included:

- Scoring the stakeholder feedback component based on the principal's reflection on the survey results rather than the survey score itself (especially where there were issues with survey administration and validity).
- Linking principals' school improvement goals to their buildings' school improvement plan goals.
- Focusing primarily on the principals' selected professional growth goals.

These modifications appeared to improve the efficiency of the principal evaluation process and ensured the alignment between the evaluation process in place and principals' goals.

Comments from principals:

*"We've since decided to develop what we're calling "power standards." This was an idea that came from another pilot district. . .who actually credit us in the first place for coming up with the idea, because we do it with our teaching standards. So we said, 'Well, let's develop those same power standards for principals.' So we've gone from the 26 indicators that are listed down to 10."*

*“We have done a number of things as a principal group by looking at the rubric and trying to pare down the wording a bit to have it more understandable for us because it’s pretty “heavy” is what I would say.”*

Comments from evaluators:

*“Well... I would refer to what the state has created... as a more... explicit framework than is laid out in legislation. But I wouldn’t describe it as here’s the whole kit and caboodle. There’s still a lot of decisions that are being made by individual districts. And as I’ve listened to [others in] the pilot, I hear us doing some things, and this district doing something else, and this district [is] doing something else. . . So there’s a framework that we’re all following. But within that framework I sense a lot of variation among the districts. So your question of ‘do I think it’s going help principals perform better,’ I think really depends on how well districts are doing at taking that framework and making sure that they’re following best practices of evaluation within that framework.*

From the survey data:

### *Principals and Evaluators Perceptions of the Self-Assessment and Goal Setting*

Principals’ self-assessment and goal setting provided the basis for their ongoing growth, goal achievement and evaluation. Districts often used administrative team meetings to deepen their understanding of what the performance measures looked like in practice.

### ***Study Question 5: What reactions did principals and evaluators have to the self-assessment and goal-setting process and conference?***

#### **Finding 5.**

In general, principals and evaluators liked the self-assessment opportunity and appreciated that it helped them to identify strengths and weaknesses and select appropriate professional growth goals. Some principals also obtained evaluations from staff members or their school leadership teams and used the data in selecting their professional growth goal(s).

However, there are some important discrepancies to note between the principals and evaluators. Overall, 38% of principals surveyed encountered obstacles in the goal-setting process, yet most evaluators reported their role as helping principals develop SMART goals. In addition, more principals than evaluators did not find the self-assessment template useful and about a fifth of principals did not feel they left the conference with viable action plans—although all evaluators thought they had. Especially in high-poverty districts, principals were less likely to agree that evaluators had the knowledge and skills to guide them through the goal setting and self-assessment process and reported that supports for goal attainment were often left up to the principals to identify and secure.

In general, difficulties were encountered in setting realistic targets for improvement and helping principals set goals that would lead to significant outcomes. In at least one district, the

superintendent set the goals for the principals.

Other important perceptions from the principals and evaluators include:

- Principals using the rubric for their self-assessment (vs. Form A) had a better understanding of what different levels of performance on the indicators meant.
- Some districts streamlined the performance measures and indicators either by reducing their numbers or revising the wording so principals understood them better.
- Larger districts encouraged district assessment and instructional coordinators to work with principals to help set goals and measures; the evaluator signed off on goals.
- While principals found student achievement data, student growth data, and district goals most useful in helping them set school improvement goals, evaluators put a higher priority on district goals, principals' self assessment results, and student achievement data as most useful in setting principals' goals.
- Lack of stakeholder data used in the goal-setting process was likely the result of the timing of the survey data collection in the spring.
- Principals often focused on their two or three identified professional growth goals, with attention to developing skills in other performance measures coming through other district responsibilities, activities, and trainings.

Comments from principals:

*“We had the introduction of the self-evaluation and then we took some time and walked through it as a group. . . . The school goal is created to be used at the data retreat where . . . [we used] very purposeful questions about what are some things you're seeing? What are some strengths? What are some weaknesses? What are you thinking? What would be some action strategies for this? And then it's: okay, now that you've talked through all this data, we need to now create an achievement goal, a gap-reduction goal, and a growth goal and how are you going to do that? And what's bubbling to the top after you've reviewed all the data?”*

*“[It was] in that conversation that I felt it was a usable document, that it was a living, breathing piece; that it wasn't just simply fill it out, tuck it under my desk, and eight months later see how I did. There was really something that reflected truly where I am at and reflected . . . pieces that would get me to a place that I was improving as a leader in the building.”*

*“I really felt strongly from the get-go of becoming a principal that I saw myself as an educational leader and less of a manager. And for the last many years, I've been a manager more than an educational leader, and it gave me permission to be in classrooms, doing observations, not just with my probationary teachers, not just with my five-year teachers, but constantly.”*

Comments from evaluators:

*“We asked principals to really create more of a narrative, where they look at each indicator and each area of indicators, and then really describe more in general all the things that they're*

*doing there. . . I think by creating that narrative, they really had to articulate how they felt they were doing in that area, and looking at the indicators that were tied to that area, and really talk about and provide anecdotes or provide examples of those pieces.”*

*“We came together . . . in early September when I brought them [principals] in during workshop week and I said, ‘All right, let’s take a look at this self-evaluation process. Well, there’s 26 indicators here. Here’s the description for all of that. So you’re going to – as best you can – familiarize yourself with... the indicators and place yourself where you think you are.’ And we had some questions about what that means – ‘Do I put myself at a four if I’m missing... one [descriptor]? Do I put myself at a three on this thing if I’m missing one of four indicators? Or is it more of a holistic picture?’ For that particular decision we said it’s going to be holistically [scored, and] where do you think you are on average? . . . And so then from there, . . . I said, ‘Okay, now based on your self-evaluation I’d like you to set a goal in an area ... where you self-evaluated yourself at the lowest and then write up some activities ... that you would do over the course of a year that would support that.’ And we talked a little bit about, ‘Yeah, this would be a good one, this wouldn’t be a good one...’ It wasn’t really formal, but it was . . . a discussion that took place the first week back.”*

*“I took that on [helping principals develop professional growth goals]. I felt that was something that the principal and I should agree on and that is truly an area they should be working on. To prepare them for the fall meeting with me, I said do your self-assessment, look for opportunities for setting your professional growth goals within that self-assessment. Also look at your stakeholder data, specifically the questions around the principal and the leadership of the building and come to the meeting ready to say where you think your goals should be. Some of the principals really aligned their professional goals with their school improvement plan, which I was glad to see because they could see the correlation of their leadership and the success of their school improvement goals.”*

*“We spent about an hour and a half with each principal, and we went through both the professional growth components and the student performance components. We talked about the pieces that they’d come up with. We tried to ask questions about any pieces that we didn’t understand or didn’t really make sense of. We asked them to make any adjustments or modifications we needed to, from that, to make it clear. But that, then, kind of became the base that we started from.”*

From the survey data:

#### *Self-Assessment and Goal-Setting Conference: Principals vs. Evaluators*

While most principal and evaluator survey respondents held a positive view about the self-assessment and goal-setting processes, over a quarter (25.5%) of principals disagreed or strongly disagreed that the recording template was useful in guiding the development of school improvement goals. One hundred percent of the evaluators, on the other hand, thought that the recording template was a useful guide for principals in developing their school improvement goals. Additionally, nearly a fifth (17%) of principals disagreed or strongly disagreed that they

had a clear action plan to follow as a result of the self-assessment and professional goal-setting phase. Again, no evaluators expressed any concerns in this area. Finally, over a third of principals (38%) and 20% of evaluators stated that they encountered obstacles in the goal-setting process or in helping principals during the goal-setting process.

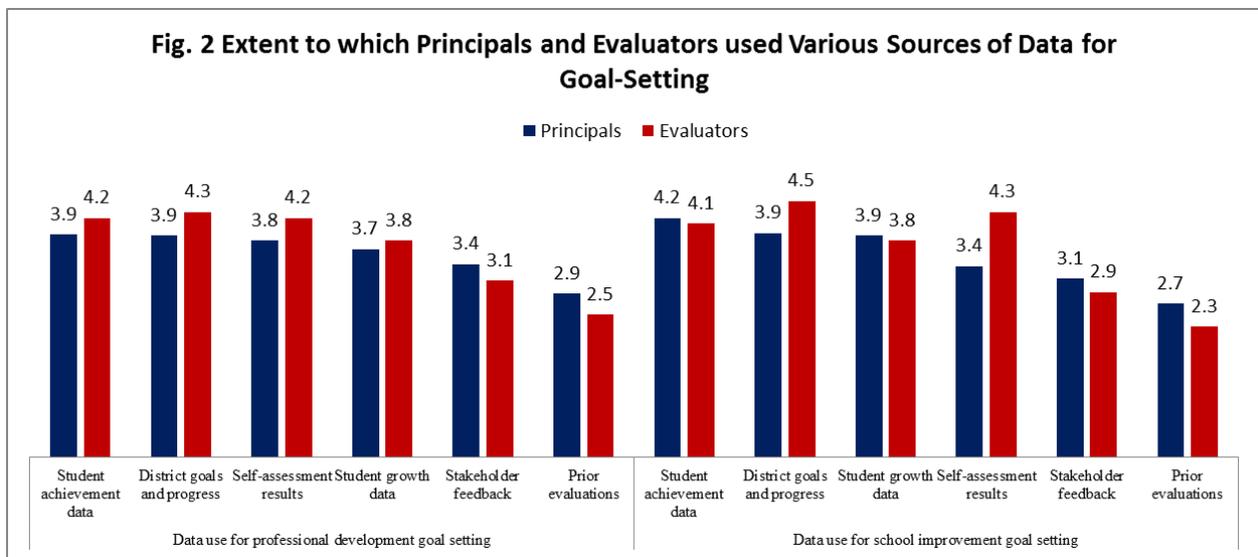
**Table 1. Self-Assessment and Goal-Setting Processes: Principals vs. Evaluators**

<b>Principals' Assessment of the Fall Self-Assessment and Goal-Setting Conference</b>	<b>Rate of Agreement</b>	<b>Evaluators' Assessment of the Fall Self-Assessment and Goal-Setting Conference</b>	<b>Rate of Agreement</b>
I was satisfied with the school improvement goals I agreed upon with my evaluator.	95.6%	I was satisfied with the school improvement goals that were identified and agreed upon with the principal(s).	100.0%
I was satisfied with the individual professional growth goals I agreed upon with my evaluator.	93.6%	I was satisfied with the individual professional growth goals that were identified and agreed upon with the principal(s).	100.0%
I had a sufficient amount of support available to me to make the self-assessment and goal-setting process useful and effective.	91.5%	I (or the district) provided a sufficient amount of support to principal(s) to help them understand self-assessment and goal-setting process and to make it useful and effective.	90.0%
I had adequate data and self-reflection opportunities to undertake my self-assessment and goal-setting opportunities.	89.4%	Our principals had adequate data and self-reflection opportunities to undertake my self-assessment and goal-setting opportunities.	100.0%
I found the recording template to be a useful guide for conducting my self-assessment.	89.4%	I found the recording template to be a useful guide for conducting the principal's self-assessment.	100.0%
My evaluator had the knowledge and skills to coach me through this process.	87.2%	I felt I had the knowledge and skills to coach me through this process.	90.0%
I am confident that my district will provide me with the opportunities and resources to achieve these goals.	85.1%	I am confident that our district will provide principals with the opportunities and resources to achieve their goals.	100.0%
I found the recording template to be a useful guide in developing individual professional goals.	85.1%	I found the recording template to be a useful guide in helping principal(s) to develop individual professional goals.	90.0%
As a result of the self-assessment and professional goal-setting phase, I have a clear plan of actions to follow to help me achieve my goals.	83.0%	I feel that the principal(s) developed clear plan(s) of actions as a result of the self-assessment and professional goal-setting conference.	100.0%

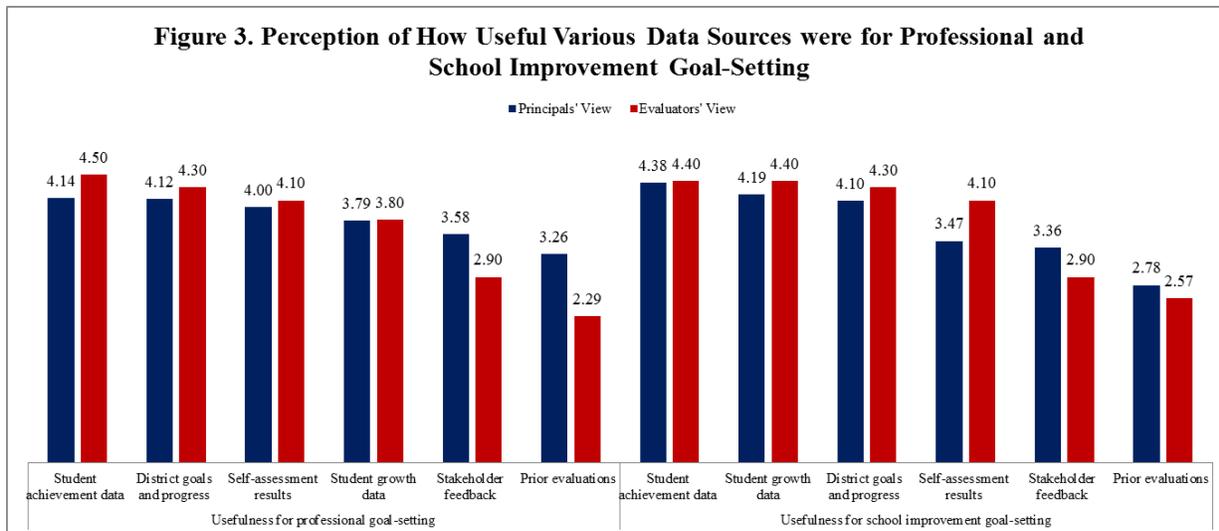
I found the recording template to be a useful guide in developing school improvement goals.	74.5%	I found the recording template to be a useful guide in helping the principal(s) to develop school improvement goals.	100.0%
I encountered obstacles in the goal setting process.	38.3%	I encountered obstacles in helping principals during the goal setting process.	20.0%

*Sources of data for goal setting*

To set their professional growth goals, principals mostly used student achievement data, district goals and progress, as well as self-assessment results. The evaluator responses support the same conclusion (see Fig. 2). In order to set their school improvement goals, principals mostly used students achievement data, district goals and progress, and student growth data. Both principals and evaluators were least likely to use data from stakeholder feedback and prior evaluations. Timing may be an issue behind the lack of consideration of the stakeholder feedback survey data. In their comments elsewhere in the survey, several principals noted that they had not yet completed the administering or analysis of the stakeholder feedback survey.



Similar patterns can be observed in the principals’ and evaluators’ responses to the questions about the perceived usefulness of various data sources for professional and school improvement goal-setting (see Fig. 3). Both principals and evaluators thought that student achievement data, district goals, self-assessment results, and student growth data were most useful in helping principals set their individual professional goals. Both principals and evaluators agreed that stakeholder feedback and prior evaluations were least useful for professional and school improvement goal-setting.



Note: This figure illustrates average usefulness score; the higher the score, the greater the perceived usefulness.

Overall, 71% of principal respondents and 90% of evaluators found the self-assessment and goal-setting phases of the principal evaluation model useful to the principals' professional practice and development.

***Study Question 6: What evaluation-related activities occurred between the self-assessment and goal-setting conference and the mid-year conference?***

In preparing for the mid-year conference, principals worked on their action plans and collected evidence. Most principals collected student assessment results (including growth measures) to show progress on their school goals and evidence of progress on their professional growth goals.

**Finding 6.**

During the period between the self-assessment and goal-setting conference and the mid-year conference, both principals and evaluators were often refining and deepening their understanding of the model while principals worked on their action plans, monitored school progress, and collected evidence to illustrate the progress they made on their goals. Evaluators conducted observations and school visits and set expectations for the mid-year conference. Evaluators' survey responses indicated the majority provided feedback to principals on the performance measures and indicators.

In addition:

- District principal/administrative team meetings were often used to discuss the performance measures and what they looked like in practice.
- One district created "power standards" to help focus principals' attention on the standards that are likely to have the most impact on teaching and learning.
- Principals used their professional learning communities (PLCs) to help make progress on school goals including SMART goals for PLCs to achieve.

- Conversations continued between the evaluator and principals, allowing principals to modify some of their goals and refine the data collected for their evidence of progress.
- Evaluators' greatest challenges were finding time to provide principals with useful evidence, review principals' evidence in advance of the mid-year review, and conduct observations of principals.
- Principals tapped their instructional coaches (such as in math and literacy) to help teachers improve instruction in these subjects.
- Principals sought to meet their professional goals by increasing their number of classroom observations, providing timely feedback to teachers using a tablet-based technology called ObserverTab, providing an administrative calendar to teachers, and communicating more frequently with teachers, parents, and community members.
- Districts either selected or developed stakeholder surveys. A commonly selected survey was the *Five Essentials* developed from research conducted by the University of Chicago's Consortium on Chicago School Research. Some surveys posed issues for many of the districts, including lack of alignment to the performance measures; lack of baseline data for surveys being used the first time; sampling issues (especially for parents); and lack of norms for how typical districts score and reporting inaccuracies. Districts addressed evaluation model issues as they arose, including sending memos and agendas, as well as scheduling meetings to help principals be ready for the mid-year conference.

Comments from principals:

*"From between the goal-setting conference and the mid-year conference . . . the things that I'm working on are more building specific – working with the student support team [SST] . . . and the teacher's professional learning communities so I'm finding out, 'Okay, what's working?' But I'm also finding out which students aren't making gains and what we're doing with those specific students? The . . . student support team is going in and actually coaching the teachers on the different interventions that we decide on at our meetings. So they work with the student on that intervention and then they teach the teacher how to do the intervention and then gradually release that to the teacher to work the intervention. But then they also help the teacher to progress monitor how the student is performing and then we meet back for SST and determine if it's making a difference with the student. If it is, great [that's good]. If it's not, then we need to switch interventions."*

*"I've been in classrooms more in the last three months than I've been in classrooms my whole principal career -- which has been absolutely thrilling to me because that's my passion... That was one of my goals... being in classrooms and giving feedback to teachers, and I was like, 'Oh my gosh, this is fabulous. I'm going to hang my hat on that one.' . . ."*

Comments from evaluators:

*"What I think, as evaluators, that superintendents and directors might do in the meantime is I see us being much more anecdotal, much more the individual interactions you have with*

*principals or the people in their building about how things are going, and what’s moving forward, and are projects getting done on time – all the kinds of things that we look at, as how the building is functioning and operating.”*

*“At every single [administrative] meeting we’re talking about one of two things. We’re either talking about this book which is about giving teachers feedback or we’re talking about the rubric and trying to clarify what principals should know and be able to do and what their job looks like.”*

From the survey data:

Following the fall principal self-assessment and goal-setting conference, the majority of principal respondents engaged in one or more of the following activities: (1) implementation of the action plan for professional growth and school improvement; (2) discussion of expectations for the mid-year conference with the evaluator; (3) receiving feedback from the evaluator on principals’ individual professional growth and school improvement progress, as well as implementation of the action plan; and (4) observations and school visits by the evaluator. A detailed review of the number of respondents who engaged in various preparatory activities is offered in Table 2 below.

On average, principals engaged in about half of the 11 activities listed in the table below. About one-fifth of the respondents stated that they engaged in one to four activities. Another fifth of the respondents engaged in five to seven activities. Two-fifths of the respondents engaged in eight or more activities in preparation for their mid-year review. An average evaluator, on the other hand, engaged in 7-8 activities listed in Table 3.

**Table 2. Activities that Principals Engaged in between the Fall Goal-Setting Conference and Mid-Year Review**

Preparatory activities for the mid-year conference	Principals who participated in a particular activity	
	Number	Percent of all respondents
I implemented the action plan(s) for individual professional growth and school improvement goals, collecting and organizing proper evidence.	39	72.2
The evaluator communicated the expectations for the mid-year supervisor conference to me.	33	61.1
The evaluator provided feedback on my individual profession growth.	32	59.3
The evaluator provided feedback on my school improvement progress.	31	57.4
The evaluator provided feedback on the implementation of my action plan.	30	55.6
The evaluator conducted school visits and observations.	29	53.7

I made revisions to my individual professional growth goals, school improvement goals, and action plan(s).	24	44.4
I collected interim assessment data on school improvement goals in preparation for the mid-year supervisor conference.	22	40.7
I created a portfolio of artifacts to document my individual professional growth.	20	37
The evaluator provided feedback on the evidence I had collected.	19	35.2
The evaluator helped me plan for the mid-year supervisor review.	19	35.2

The evaluators' responses are largely consistent with those given by the principals (see Table 3). Most evaluators stated that in preparation for the mid-year conference they engaged in: (1) conducting school visits and observations; (2) working with the principal(s) to monitor and adjust the individual professional growth goals, school improvement goals, or action plan; and (3) communicating the expectations for the mid-year conference to the principal(s).

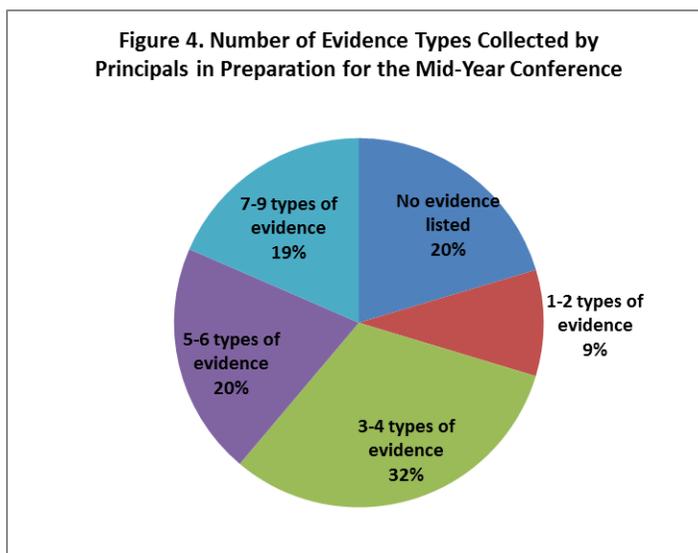
**Table 3. Activities that Evaluators Engaged in between the Fall Goal-Setting Conference and Mid-Year Review**

<b>Preparatory Activities for the Mid-Year Conference</b>	<b>Number of respondents who engaged in a particular activity</b>	<b>Percent of respondents who engaged in a particular activity</b>
I conducted school visits and observations.	10	90.9
I worked with the principal(s) to monitor and adjust the individual professional growth goals, school improvement goals, or action plan(s).	8	72.7
I communicated the expectations for the mid-year conference to the principal(s).	8	72.7
I provided feedback on instructional leadership to the principal(s).	7	63.6
I provided feedback on resource management to the principal(s)	7	63.6
I helped the principal(s) plan for the mid-year conference.	7	63.6
I provided feedback on mission and vision to the principal(s).	6	54.5
I provided feedback on adult learning and professional development to the principal(s).	6	54.5

I worked with the principal(s) to help implement the action plan(s) for individual professional growth and school improvement goals, collecting and organizing proper evidence.	5	45.5
I provided feedback on professional and ethical relationships to the principal(s).	5	45.5
I provided feedback on human resources to the principal(s).	5	45.5
I provided feedback on community engagement to the principal(s).	5	45.5
I provided student assessment data to the principal(s) in preparation for the mid-year conference	5	45.5

### Preparing for the Mid-year Conferences

In preparing for the mid-year conference, about a third of all the principal respondents (32%) collected three to four types of evidence, another two-fifths of the respondents collected five or more types of evidence listed in Table 4.



**Study Question 7: What Types of Evidence were Gathered and Used to Prepare for the Mid-Year Conferences?**

**Finding 7.**

Few of the principals collected parent and student feedback in preparation for the mid-year review. Likewise, evaluators were least likely to provide principals with or make available parent and student feedback. The vast majority of the principal respondents did, however, collect student assessment results, interim progress on meeting school goals, student growth data, and evidence of the professional development completed in the course of the year.

On average, evaluators provided principals with or made available to principals three pieces of evidence. The majority provided principals with evaluator observations and feedback, as well as student growth and student assessment data. Evaluators were least likely to provide evidence of professional development and interim progress on meeting school improvement goals.

Few of the principals collected parent and student feedback in preparation for the mid-year review. The vast majority of the respondents, however, collected student assessment results, interim progress on meeting school goals, student growth data, and evidence of the professional development completed in the course of the year. The majority of the evaluators provided principals with evaluator observations and feedback, as well as student growth and student assessment data. Evaluators were least likely to provide principals with or make available parent and student feedback, evidence of professional development, and interim progress on meeting school improvement goals. On average, evaluators provided principals with or made available to principals three pieces of evidence.

**Table 4. Types of Evidence Principals Collected and Evaluators Made Available to Principals in Preparation for the Mid-Year Review**

Types of evidence collected in preparation for the mid-year conference	Share of principals who collected a particular piece of evidence		Share of evaluators who provided a particular piece of evidence to principals	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Student assessment results	33	61.1	7	63.6
Interim progress on meeting school improvement goals	32	59.3	3	27.3
Student growth data	30	55.6	7	63.6
Evidence of the individual professional development complete	29	53.7	3	27.3
Teacher feedback	25	46.3	6	54.5
Artifacts or a portfolio	18	33.3	2	18.2
Evaluator observations and feedback	17	31.5	8	72.7
Student feedback	9	16.7	1	9.1
Parent feedback	8	14.8	0	0

From the survey data:

*Mid-year Conference: Principals vs. Evaluators*

On average, principal respondents discussed three to four sources of evidence listed in Table 5 with their evaluator during the mid-year review. Most of the principals stated that they discussed their interim progress on school improvement goals, evidence of students’ growth and success, and documentation of professional development. Few principals stated that they discussed parent, student, or other stakeholder feedback with their evaluators during the mid-year review.

An average evaluator discussed four sources of evidence with the principal(s) during the mid-year review, which is consistent with principal responses. Similarly to the principal responses, the vast majority of evaluators stated that they discussed their interim progress and evidence of students’ growth and success. The majority of evaluators also said that they discussed results and feedback from principal observations prior to the mid-year conference, a response that somewhat contradicts principals’ view.

**Table 5. Types of Evidence Principals and Evaluators Discussed During the Mid-Year Review**

Types of evidence principals discussed with their evaluator during the mid-year conference	Principals who stated they discussed a particular piece of evidence with the evaluator during their mid-year review		Evaluators who stated they discussed a particular piece of evidence with the principal during their mid-year review	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Evidence of student growth and success measured over time	34	63	9	81.8
Interim progress on school improvement goals	34	63	10	90.9
Documentation of the professional development achieved during the year	33	61.1	5	45.5
Interim student assessments	24	44.4	5	45.5
Evaluator’s notes from interactions with teachers and other members of the school community	20	37	2	18.2
Results and feedback from principal observations prior to the mid-year conference	19	35.2	8	72.7
Student feedback	12	22.2	2	18.2
Parent feedback	10	18.5	1	9.1

Feedback from non-teaching staff (e.g., counselors)	10	18.5	3	27.3
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When asked about which types of evidence provide the most accurate and fair assessment of their performance, principals selected self-assessment, evaluators' observations and feedback as well as artifacts or portfolios. Some have also noted that student growth and achievement data provide a rather fair and accurate assessment of principals' performance. Respondents gave the lowest ratings to the focus groups with stakeholders and their capacity to assess principals' performance in an accurate and unbiased fashion.

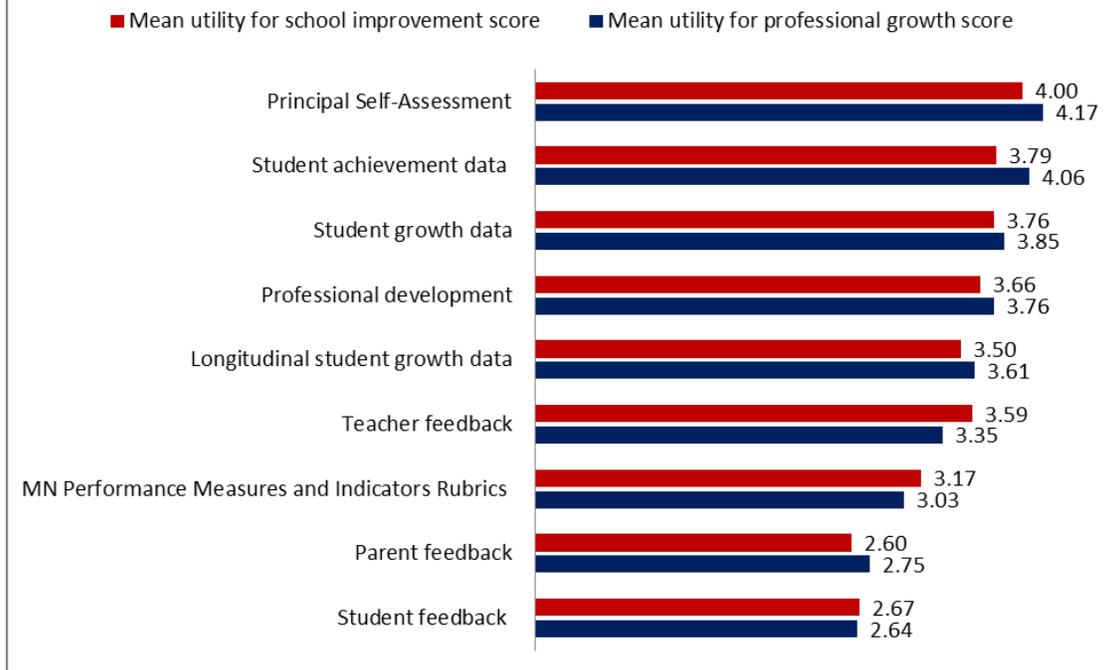
**Table 6. Principals' Assessment of Types of Evidence Used During the Mid-Year Review with regard to their Ability to Accurately and Fairly Capture their Performance**

Evidence considered during the Mid-year review	Mean "accurate and fair" score	Number of responses	Percent of responses
Principal self-assessment	4.38	42	77.8
Evaluators observations and feedback	4.26	35	64.8
Artifacts or my portfolio	3.91	34	63
Student growth data	3.83	40	74.1
Student achievement data	3.78	40	74.1
Parent survey	3.44	23	42.6
Teacher survey	3.43	30	55.6
Student survey	3.26	19	35.2
Community partner survey	3.13	15	27.8
Focus group with community partners	2.57	7	13
Focus group with students	2.57	7	13
Focus group with parents	2.33	6	11.1

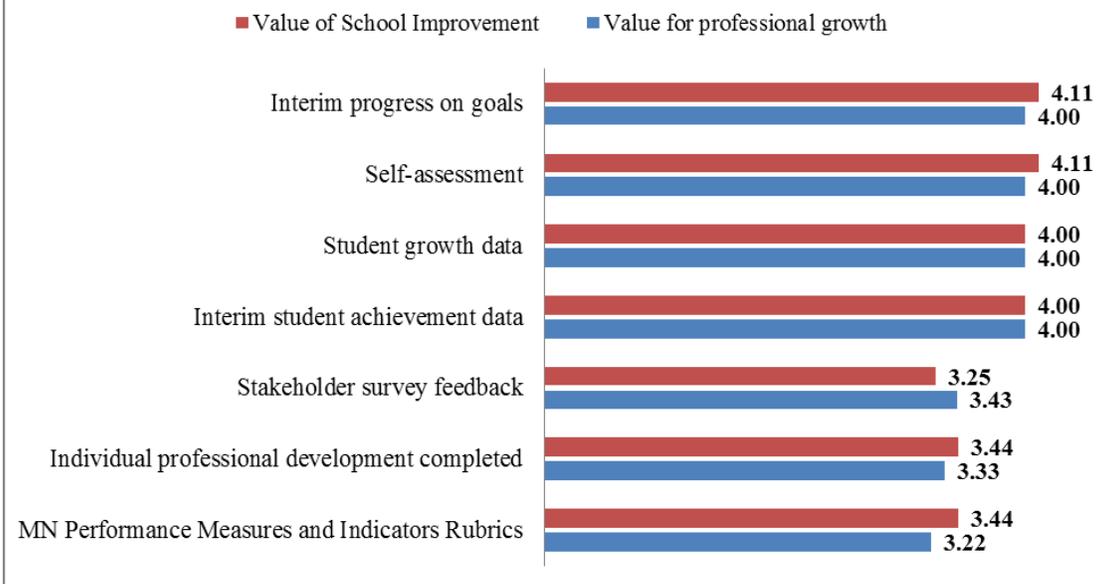
Consistent with earlier responses, principals selected self-assessment, student achievement and growth data, as well as individual professional development as the most useful data elements for both making school improvement progress and achieving individual professional growth. Teacher feedback was also selected as rather useful for school improvement progress (see Fig. 9 for more details).

When assessing the types of data that were most useful in helping principals make progress on their individual professional and school improvement goals, evaluators similarly valued principals' self-assessment student achievement and student growth data most. Evaluators also thought that interim progress on goals was highly useful for assessing principals' progress in meeting school goals (see Fig. 10 for more details).

**Fig. 9 Principals' Perception of Utility of Various Data Sources Used in the Principal Mid-Year Review for Professional Growth and School Improvement**



**Fig. 10 Evaluator's Perception of Utility of Various Data Sources Used in the Principal Mid-Year Review for Professional Growth and School Improvement**



Nearly three-fourths (74%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had sufficient support to prepare for the mid-year conference. Near 80% of respondents stated that their evaluator provided them with additional support when necessary during the mid-year conference process. About 77% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the results of the mid-year conference will help them improve their professional practice before the end of this academic year. While the majority of principals were satisfied with the amount of support received throughout the mid-year conference process, concerns remain about the rest of the respondents who did not experience sufficient support throughout the mid-year review process.

Table 7 summarizes what principals perceived to be the value of various types of feedback they received during the mid-year review. It also notes the number of principals who indicated that they received no feedback in certain areas. On average, principals thought that the most valuable feedback they received on instructional leadership and professional and ethical relationships. (Note: the higher the mean score, the more valuable the feedback was perceived to be).

**Table 7. Principals’ Assessment of the Value of Various Types of Feedback Received During the Mid-Year Review**

<b>Feedback Area</b>	<b>Mean value score of feedback for professional growth</b>	<b>Number of respondents who received no feedback in a given area</b>	<b>Percent of respondents who received no feedback in a given area</b>
Instructional Leadership	3.95	38	70.4
Professional and Ethical Relationships	3.89	38	70.4
Human Resources	3.71	35	64.8
Adult Learning and Professional Development	3.65	37	68.5
Mission and Vision	3.64	33	61.1
Resource Management	3.5	34	63
Community Engagement	3.26	34	63

Overall, about 69% of principals agreed or strongly agreed that the outcomes of their evaluation would be worth the invested time and effort. Another 31% of the respondents, however, disagreed with this statement.

### **Contextual Conditions that Support the Principal Evaluation Process**

Throughout the interviews it became apparent that districts had certain infrastructures to support principals’ goal setting, monitoring and goal attainment. The most obvious of these was a data warehouse that could be accessed by principals. Other supports included things like district or school coaches to help improve instruction and supportive, trusting relationships with their evaluator.

**Study Question 8: What supportive conditions did districts have in place to support the example evaluation model?**

**Finding 8.**

The most supportive district condition for implementing the principal evaluation model was a district data infrastructure that provided student achievement data on multiple (and often interim) measures that a principal could access (or someone could access for them) and aggregate and report in different ways that informed their decisionmaking. Data were used to set meaningful goals; the evidence was used to review progress toward school improvement goals and enabled principals and evaluators to engage in evidence-based discussions.

Other important district conditions mentioned in the interviews included:

- The capacity of the evaluator to create a relationship of trust with principals and provide feedback (often through a cognitive coaching model) that would help principals take responsibility for their own professional growth.<sup>2</sup>
- Central office staff (especially those familiar with data) to work with principals on goal setting.
- School instructional coaches either at the district level or school level gave principals access to instructional expertise that could be shared with their teachers to improve teaching and learning in their schools.
- The alignment of the principal's school improvement goal with the school's improvement plan promoted focus and reinforced the principal's motivation to meet the school improvement goals.
- Specific, timely, and periodic feedback from the evaluator to the principal was highly valued, especially when followed-up with a dialogue about strategies for improvement.

Comments from principals:

*"We use a data warehousing system that is fabulous. All our teachers have access to it. I see myself as a data person so I push that as well. ...It really is at our fingertips and if we need a particular poll, data wise ... I can either do it myself or I can ask someone at the district office to do it and it's just like that. So I think I would say we have a very effective system."*

*"My other professional goal was looking at – I'm working with the job coach [provided by the district as a support] this year and trying to hone in on, 'Okay, how do I get things done without spending 15, 16 hours a day, trying to get that done?' And part of it is trying to use my resources better and knowing that our resources were not plentiful here. It would be nice to have a counselor in the building. It would be nice to have an assistant principal or data students, but I don't."*

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<sup>2</sup> Cognitive coaching is a model developed by Arthur Costa and Robert Garmston that advocates for self-managing, self-monitoring, and self-modifying behaviors to achieve individual goals.

*“Some buildings have a literacy coach. My literacy coach teaches every single day. She doesn’t pull the data, I do. I think that – I don’t know – it’s hard because I know what my counterparts do and we all do it differently because of the different amounts of funding we have and we have that autonomy as well to meet the needs of the population that we have. So – and I think if I needed something, I think we have that structure within our district, with our coordinators.”*

Comments from evaluators:

*“Principals have assistance in creating their school improvement plans. . . . A cabinet member helps them with their academic goals and their stakeholder goals and they truly are an area that is an opportunity for improvement. Data supports are identified to make some progress in those areas.”*

*“We actually took them through the process of how would you bring a group to creating the mission and goals and we use protocols, quality tools like brainstorming, we used affinity and we modeled that. We showed them how to use brainstorming and affinity [grouping] to get a bunch of ideas down to some key categories and then how do you get those key categories down to some key words and how do you build consensus around those key ideas to turn it into a mission statement and a vision. Then just differentiating what is a mission versus what is a vision. A vision is what we hope to become versus a mission is what is our purpose and so really making sure that they had all that fresh in their minds ... they had the tools in hand that they could go back to their key staff members or all of their staff members and create their [school’s] mission and vision and recommit to that mission and vision. So again, that was very highly supported and there were some that were pretty behind in that area and really weren’t using a mission and vision to guide their work versus now. And what we have really hammered home is whenever you’re making a decision you have to go back and say does that align to our mission and vision.”*

### **Advice about strengthening the Example Model or its Implementation**

These last two sections provide advice collected from principals and evaluators, followed by a set of recommendations from FHI 360. Some of this advice may not be new to the MDE principal evaluation leadership team, but it is worth mentioning as part of this report because it comes from a representative sample of the pilot districts which are implementing the model. The FHI 360 recommendations are designed to highlight some system-wide issues where coordination and timing could help support implementation of the model.

***Study Question 9: What advice did evaluators and principals give to MDE to strengthen the model or improve its implementation?***

#### **Finding 9: Advice to the MDE**

The pilot districts primarily wanted more specificity and guidance in the examples first provided by the MDE; principals also wanted a timeline of events and activities. One evaluator described the model a “framework” that needs to be fleshed out into a more complete model with guidance, examples, and best practices from pilot districts. At the same time, the lack of model specificity

and the low-stakes nature of the pilot also prompted districts to tailor the model to their particular district context.

Other advice offered by principals and evaluators included:

- Create a master calendar of evaluation model events and processes and identify roles of principals and evaluators (or ensure each district does).
- Ensure that districts help principals understand the model and what will be expected of them and what they should expect of the evaluator.
- Encourage evaluators to provide *timely* and *specific* feedback to principals.
- The MDE should continue to send out reminder emails to districts about the key evaluation events along with the documents they will need at each step in the process.
- Develop a statewide stakeholder survey aligned to the performance measures.
- Create a master list of state trainings and growth opportunities related to the model.
- Collaborate with the state administrator associations to take on a training role in the components and processes of the principal evaluation model.
- Accelerate the reporting of the state MCA data to better fit the timing of the evaluation model and state SIP reporting requirements.

Comments from principals:

*“[My evaluator said], ‘Know what this is.’ They gave it to us and said, ‘Just read through this. These are some of the things’ But I don’t think it was clear to me that I was going to be measured on every one of these [indicators]. That was the other thing. Let’s pick three of the five for a year and say, ‘This is what we’re going to look at’” You’re still expected to do these things, but we’re going to set goals around two of them, which is what we did. I don’t remember that being communicated in the beginning of the year when we had the training – the orientation.”*

*“The immediate feedback and specific feedback is really – I don’t know if that needs to be reiterated to the evaluators, but I think that’s critical, providing some resources for growth and development in any of the areas of need. The stakeholder feedback piece, I mean that really needs to be worked so that it’s valid and reliable.”*

*“I would say at the beginning of the year, when we have our training . . . he [evaluator] gives us a timeframe, ‘In September, I’m going to be doing this. In October, I’m going to be doing this. Here’s when the mid-conference and the final year conference is going to be.’ Just give us some better feedback as far as the timeline goes, so that I know what the expectation is for myself as far as getting the feedback.”*

Comments from evaluators:

*“I feel like the Department of Ed set me up very well to do the mid-year. That just in time e-mail was the greatest because he included just the documents that were most helpful for the mid-year*

*so I didn't have to back digging through [a notebook]... I think that was something they did very excellently!"*

*"There are times when I look at this and say that we haven't really been given a pilot. We haven't really been given model. We've been given a framework and there's pros and cons to that. I think that since we've been given a framework, the districts have a large amount of flexibility to do – to tailor it to the needs of their individual district. So that's a pro. The con is that there is going to be an extreme lack of consistency as to what this looks like even with two districts that are in name using the MDE evaluation process. So that would be the advice that I would give. Just make sure that you are aiming for what you want to aim for, or what you want to hit."*

### **What recommendations would FHI 360 make to the MDE to strengthen the example state evaluation model or improve its implementation?**

The case study and survey findings suggest several recommendations that could strengthen the design of the model and create more district implementation supports.

#### Strengthening the Model

1. Create several possible models/strategies for calculating the summative evaluation score and share them with district evaluators and principals to give them high-quality options.
2. Accelerate the reporting of the MCA data so that it fits within the model timeline for the evaluation process. If possible, create predictive MCA scores from other interim assessments such as AIMS Web, MAP, READ 180 that can be used in mid-year conferences.
3. Continue to work with McREL to develop brief, yet valid and reliable stakeholder surveys for teachers, parents, and perhaps students aligned to the performance measures and indicators. Create statewide norms and norms by district size and demographics.
4. Encourage the use of district interim measures (such as MAP, DIBELS, AIMS) to assess progress on goals for the mid-year conference.
5. Promote flexibility in the implementation of the model, such as allowing districts to identify power standards to help focus principals' attention on the leadership skills most likely to improve student achievement.
6. Refine the language used in the rubric descriptors so the practices described by indicators are better understood by principals.
7. Encourage principals to set their own school improvement goals aligned to their school improvement plan.
8. Create an ideal timeline for each component of the evaluation process to be shared with both evaluators and principals. Align other state policies and supports with this timeline.

9. Continue to engage evaluators and principals in streamlining and improving the evaluation system, perhaps using focus groups in meetings of the administrators associations.

### Creating Supports for Principal Evaluation

1. Better understand and address the additional needs that high poverty districts and schools face in implementing the evaluation model.
2. Help evaluators and principals understand the link between the performance measures and indicators and the research on these skills in raising student achievement.
3. Create a calendar of training opportunities across the state aligned with the performance measures or the components of the example evaluation model.
4. Create a cadre of evaluators who can work with rural districts, especially in districts where the principal is also the superintendent.
5. Provide guidelines to districts on how to coordinate the MDE training for school improvement grant schools (SIG) with the principal evaluation model.
6. Create an online clearinghouse of evaluation handbooks, recording forms, documents, training modules, and best practices organized by the model components and, where applicable, by level of the system (elementary, middle and high schools).
7. Work with the state administrator associations to provide training on implementing different components of the model.
8. Engage regional service centers in creating supports and training for the model.

### **What unanswered questions remain regarding the example evaluation model?**

During the FHI 360 analysis of the data, the following questions were raised.

1. How can the model be used to both evaluate principals and empower them to improve their skills as instructional leaders? The evaluation culminates by assigning a summative rating, but the real growth of the principal occurs through goal setting, feedback, coaching, and other supports. (From the survey: *“Downplay the evaluative part of this [process], it just gets in the way. Principals are by nature extremely accountable and naturally work hard to improve. Trying to box that up as a number just hurts them and the organization, leading to false accountability.”* From the case study: *“Many principals are more into management and less into instructional leadership. The evaluation will measure how effective they are, but we’re [aiming for] professional growth.”*
2. How can the example model be used to help growth for principals all along the experience continuum, from a veteran principal to a new principal, and those in between? For example, a case study interviewee cautioned: *“I think that [to assume that] this skill is just [going to] develop because we have the instrument is not true for the emerging principal.”*

3. What level of fidelity to the model is essential for the evaluation process to produce the desired results? How can the MDE ensure that evaluators implement the model with that level of fidelity? Is there a possible school board role to ensure implementation along a timeline that uses effective evaluation practices and supports?
4. How can one ensure rigorous goal setting with realistic and attainable targets? Can guidelines be developed?
5. How should the evaluation model be translated into and supported by district policies?
6. What supports and resources are needed to scale this evaluation model up statewide, from 17 districts to 519?

## Summary

FHI 360 has appreciated the opportunity to study and provide feedback on the implementation of the Minnesota Principal Evaluation Model. Clearly, the model is thoughtfully designed and headed in the right direction based on best practices of principal evaluation models. It has the potential to substantially improve the effectiveness of and supports for principals to be instructional leaders that raise student achievement.

The next steps for MDE, both leading up to and following the summative report from FHI 360, will include:

- strengthening the design of the model,
- modifying some of the tools used to evaluate principals, and
- aligning the model with other state policies, partners and supports.

These steps would be followed by creating a strategy and locating resources to implement the model across the state.

As summarized by a principal: *“I would say, yes, there is more of a time burden [to engage in the principal evaluation model]. But I think it’s worth it. And I’m going to say, again, I feel that the work that I’ve done this year with my school improvement plan, with my connection to my teachers and professional development, my own self-evaluation, I believe is making me a better principal. And I guess my question would be: Is that not the goal? I feel it is.”*

## Appendix A

### Study Design and Methodology

#### The Pilot Study: Goals and Methodology

For the 2012-2013 school year, the Minnesota Department of Education is piloting the new Principal Evaluation Model in 17 school districts. The purpose of the pilot study is to document the implementation of the principal evaluation model in these districts and to provide feedback to the MDE and its leadership bodies that can both inform refinements to the model and inform planning for its state-wide implementation in the 2013-2014 school year. The central framing questions for the study are as follows:

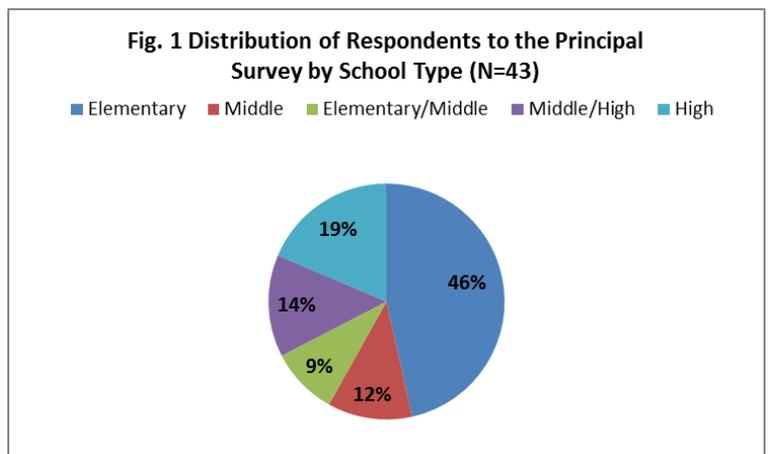
- How was the pilot model implemented by individual schools and districts? Were the purpose and procedures clear to the pilot districts and schools?
- What obstacles and challenges were encountered by the pilot districts and schools and how were these obstacles and challenges addressed?
- What promising practices were noted that could be replicated or adapted in other districts or schools?
- What are the implications of the pilot for state-wide implementation of the principal evaluation example model?
- Did the pilot provide sufficient support to help the districts and schools implement the principal evaluation example model?

In order to answer these questions, the Minnesota Department of Education commissioned FHI 360 to design, administer, and analyze surveys of the principals and evaluators in the pilot districts, as well as conduct interviews with principals and evaluators in a subset of districts and school.

Below is a more detailed description of the pilot study methodology.

#### Surveys

FHI 360 designed and administered a confidential survey to measure both principals' and evaluators' satisfaction with the implementation and outcomes of the new principal evaluation model. The survey asked respondents to identify their school and district to allow the research team to examine variations across different kinds of districts and schools. In order to protect the privacy of the respondents, the results of the survey are only reported in an aggregate.



The principal survey was distributed electronically to a total of 106 principals, program directors, ALC coordinators, assistant principals and deans. The vast majority of the recipients (70%), however, were principals and school directors. A total of 54 responses were received, which represents a 51% response rate, which is an adequate response rate given the sensitive nature of the survey and the mode of survey dissemination. Figure 1 depicts the type of school where principal respondents are currently employed. Out of 43 respondents who identified the school of their employment, nearly half (46%) of the sample is working in an elementary school, while only one-fifth of the respondents (19%) is employed at a high school.

The evaluator survey was also administered online. A total of 18 superintendents and other leaders in the pilot districts received the evaluator survey. With 11 evaluator surveys collected, the response rate among district leaders was higher than that among principals: 61%.

### *Case Studies*

In addition to the principal and evaluator surveys, FHI 360 selected four districts for case study research. The selected districts vary according to the following characteristics: (1) district size as measured by the total number of students enrolled; (2) location of the district measured as urban, rural, suburban; (3) student achievement; (4) superintendent tenure in a given district; and (5) racial/ethnic and socioeconomic diversity. Two schools were identified within each of the selected districts. FHI 360 staff conducted both in-person and phone interviews with principals and superintendents in schools and districts identified as case study sites. The goal of the case study analysis is to gather deeper insights about how well the pilot was implemented, the kinds of challenges encountered in using the new model and how they were overcome, and potential changes or promising practices that should be recommended before the model is implemented state wide. As with the surveys, all information gathered through the interviews is used solely for analytic purposes and the identity of respondents is not going to be disclosed.

This report shares preliminary findings from the principal and evaluator surveys as well as interviews. The report addresses the following areas: (1) general views about the MN principal evaluation model and its implementation at the district level; (2) perception of the quality and value of orientation, principal self-assessment, and goal-setting conference; (3) evidence collection and mid-year conference; and (4) variation in MN principal evaluation model implementation and perception of its value-added for principal professional growth by district characteristics. Each section also contains a discussion of the similarities and differences in the perceptions of principals and evaluators. Finally, the quantitative data in each section is supplemented with the analysis of the qualitative data that helps contextualize the quantitative findings.

### Pilot Districts and Their Characteristics

#	District	# schools	Total Students	% White	% Am. Indian	% Af. American	% Latino	% Asian	% ELL	% SpEd	% FRPL	Supt. Tenure (years)	4-yr Graduation Rate	% students meeting or exceeding standards in math	% all students meeting or exceeding standards in reading
1	Austin	13	4,520	64.2	0.2	7.5	24.8	3.2	13.8	14.8	55.1	3	73.5	57.4	66.1
2	Braham	3	899	95.8	0.8	1.2	1	1.2	1.6	13.1	50.1	0	87.8	65.9	79.6
3	Brooklyn Center	3	2,109	29.9	2.2	38.2	16.8	12.9	18.6	15.5	68.9	0	37.5	38.5	57.1
4	Cass Lake-Bena	4	1,119	10.2	88.2	0.3	0.3	1.1	0	25.7	80	1	33.8	45.2	54.2
5	East Central	5	777	85.5	8.1	2.8	2.8	0.8	0	12.5	55.3	1	66.7	48.5	66.2
6	Farmington Area	10	6,664	86.3	0.4	4.1	4.3	4.9	3.9	12	16.5	1	93.9	68.3	80.7
7	Lakeville	16	10,990	87.2	0.5	3.9	3.9	4.5	2.8	13.5	12.2	1	91.7	80	88
8	Montevideo	4	1,334	86.5	1.6	1	10	1	5.4	17.5	38.6	3	87.3	54.8	72.5
9	Morris	2	1,000	89.7	1.5	2.2	5.1	1.5	2.5	17.6	27.6	8	86.8	72	80.8

#	District	# schools	Total Students	% White	% Am. Indian	% Af. American	% Latino	% Asian	% ELL	% SpEd	% FRPL	Supt. Tenure (years)	4-yr Graduation Rate	% students meeting or exceeding standards in math	% all students meeting or exceeding standards in reading
10	Northfield	8	3,221	83.3	0.2	1.9	12.2	2.3	8	13	25.2	8	83	74.4	82
11	Ogilvie	1	567	98.9	0.9	0	0.2	0	0	22.4	55.7	1	91.3	54.6	68
12	Red Lake	7	1,377	0.1	99.8	0	0.1	0	5.4	17.6	84.1	1	8.7	27.2	35.1
13	Roseville	14	6,848	57.4	0.8	13.3	9.7	18.8	14.9	12.2	42.8	1	80.7	54.8	73.3
14	South St. Paul	6	3,321	66.7	1.1	9.4	21	1.9	6.5	15.3	42.5	1	80.5	53.5	72.2
15	St. Peter	9	1,913	81.8	0.3	6.8	9.2	1.9	4.3	17.7	41.7	1	86.2	69.2	84.6
16	Waseca	7	1,895	86	0.5	2.7	9.8	0.9	4.3	14.6	38.4	2	82.5	66	84.5
17	Waubun-Ogema-White Earth	4	591	25.2	73.8	0.5	0.2	0.3	0	15.7	68.4	1	72.3	46.8	63.1

Source: MN Department of Education Data Center for Parents and Educators (2012)

## Appendix B

### Case Study Interview Questions

#### Principal Mid-Year Review Interview Questions

**1. Purpose and Design of the Principal Evaluation Model**

- A. Please briefly describe the key elements of the evaluation model being piloted in your district.
- B. Do you think the evaluation process will improve your skills? If yes, how? If no, why not?
- C. Do you think the results and outcomes for principals will be worth the time and effort put into this process? If yes, why? If no, why not?

**2. Minnesota Principal Performance Measures**

- A. Do the Minnesota principal performance measures adequately and accurately reflect what an effective principal should know and be able to do? Why or why not?
- B. Have you seen the rubrics for evaluating principals? If yes, do they effectively and clearly discern different levels of a principal's performance? Why or why not?

**3. Orientation to the New Evaluation Model**

- A. Briefly, what orientation training have you received in the new evaluation model?
- B. Would you say the orientation training provided you with a clear understanding of how your district's model will be implemented? Why or why not?

**4. Fall Self-Assessment and Goal-Setting**

- A. Would you briefly walk us through the process you used for goal-setting?
- B. Did you feel you were prepared to do the goal-setting process? Why or why not? Did your evaluator appear prepared to do the goal-setting process? Why or why not?
- C. Were you asked to identify strategies, resources and evidence? Action steps? How well did this process work to help you begin to implement your goals?
- D. What information was most useful for the goal-setting process and why? Least useful and why?
- E. Were there additional supports/information you needed to make your goal setting process more useful and effective? What were they?

- F. What advice would you give to your evaluator or to the Minnesota Department of Education to make the goal-setting process more useful and valuable to you and to other principals?

**5 Evidence Collection and Observations to Prepare for the Mid-year Conference**

- A. What evaluation activities took place between the goal-setting conference in the fall and the mid-year conference to help you achieve your individual and school improvement goals?
- B. What types of information and evidence did you and/or your supervisor collect for the mid-year conference?
- C. What types of supports were available to help you achieve your goals? Were there supports you needed but didn't get?

**6. Mid-Year Conference**

- A. Briefly, would you please walk us through the process of the mid-year conference?
- B. What information and evidence was the most valuable for the mid-year conference and why?
- C. Were there data or information that you wished you had to make your mid-year conference more useful? As input to the conference? As feedback? Other?
- D. What kind of feedback did you receive related to the five Minnesota principal performance measures and was it useful to improve your professional growth? Why or why not?
- E. Have you made any mid-course corrections to your practice or leadership based on the mid-year conference? What are they?
- F. What advice would you give to your evaluator and/or to the Minnesota Department of Education to make the mid-year conference more useful and valuable to you and to other principals?

## Evaluator Mid-Year Interview Questions

### 1. Purpose and Design of the Principal Evaluation Model

- A. What are the key elements of the evaluation system being piloted in your district?
- B. Are district supports being put in place to implement this model? If yes, which ones? Are there other supports that the district is considering?
- C. Do you think the evaluation process will improve principals' skills? If yes, how? If no, why not?
- D. Do you think the results and outcomes for principals will be worth the time and effort that you, as an evaluator, are putting into this process? If yes, why? If no, why not?

### 2. Minnesota Principal Performance Measures

- A. Do the Minnesota principal performance measures adequately and accurately reflect what an effective principal should know and be able to do? Why or why not?
- B. Do the rubrics effectively and clearly discern different levels of a principal's performance? Why or why not?

### 3. Orientation to the New Evaluation Model

- A. What orientation have you received in the new evaluation model?
- B. Would you say the orientation training provided you with a clear understanding of how the sample evaluation model should be implemented? Why or why not?

### 4. Fall Self-Assessment and Goal-Setting

- A. Would you briefly walk us through the process you used for goal-setting with the principal(s)?
- B. Did you work with principal(s) to set individual professional goals and school improvement goals? What role did you play?
- C. Did you feel you were well prepared to work with principals to undertake the goal-setting process? Why or why not?
- D. Did you work with the principal(s) on identifying strategies, resources, and evidence? Action steps to be taken? How well did this process work?

- E. Were there additional supports you needed to make the goal-setting process more useful and effective for principals? What were they?
  - F. What advice would you give to the Minnesota Department of Education to make the goal-setting process more useful and valuable to principals across the state?
5. **Evidence Collection and Observations to Prepare for the Mid-Year Conference**
- A. What evaluation activities for principals took place between the goal-setting conference in the fall and the mid-year conference?
  - B. What type of information and evidence did you provide and/or the principal collect for the mid-year conference?
  - C. What types of supports were available to the principal(s) between the goal-setting and the mid-year conference?
6. **Mid-Year Conference**
- A. Briefly, would you please walk us through the process of the mid-year conference?
  - B. What information and evidence was most valuable for you, as an evaluator, for providing feedback to principals during the mid-year conference?
  - C. Were there data/ information/or skills that you wished you had to help make a principal's mid-year conference(s) more useful? As input to the process? As feedback? Other?
  - D. What type of feedback did you provide to guide the principal(s)' professional growth on the state performance measures?
  - E. What elements of the mid-year conference did you find the most difficult to carry out? Why?
  - F. What advice would you give to the Minnesota Department of Education to make the mid-year conference more useful and valuable to principals across the state?