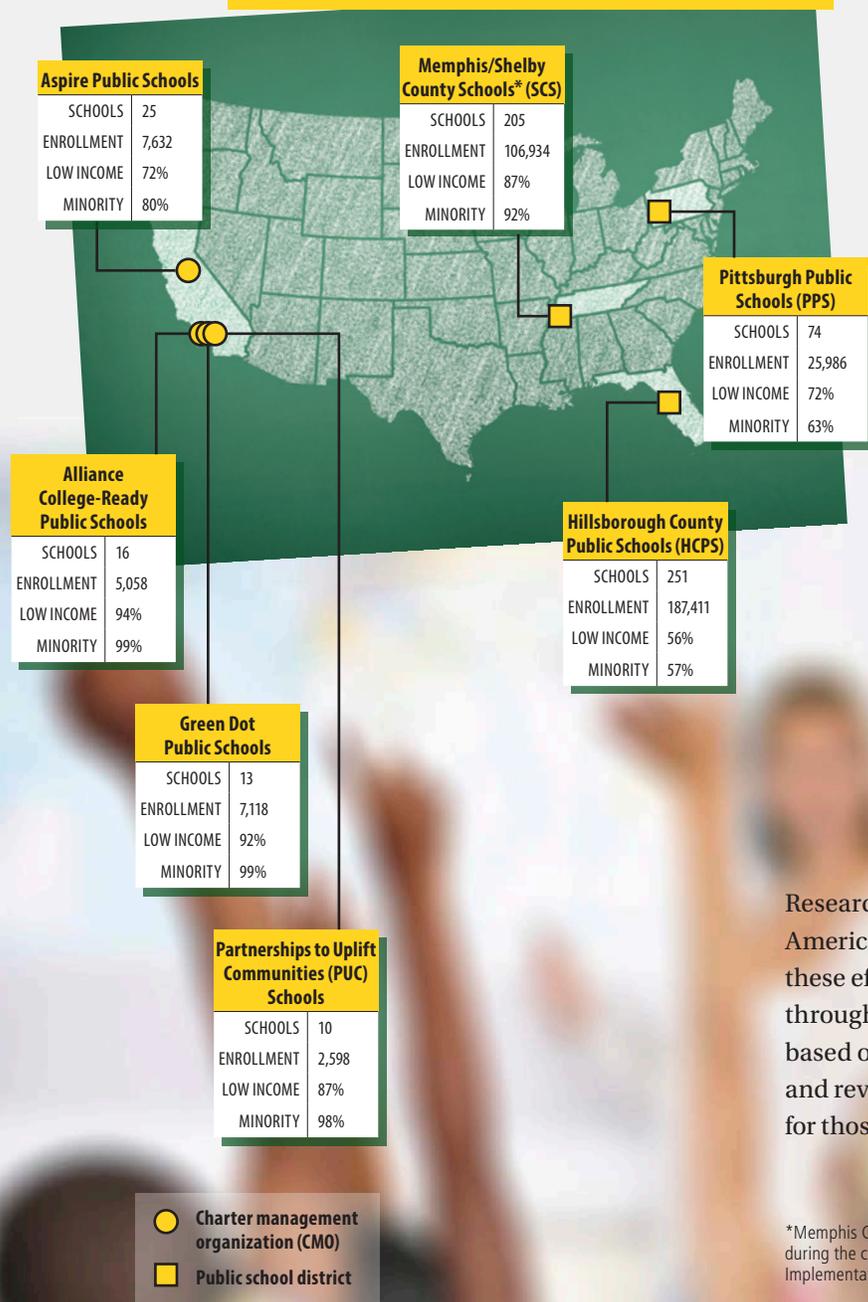# Trends in Implementation

The INTENSIVE PARTNERSHIPS *for* EFFECTIVE TEACHING *Through 2013–2014*

Intensive Partnership Sites
AT INCEPTION OF INITIATIVE, 2009–2010

Aspire Public Schools

SCHOOLS	25
ENROLLMENT	7,632
LOW INCOME	72%
MINORITY	80%

Memphis/Shelby County Schools* (SCS)

SCHOOLS	205
ENROLLMENT	106,934
LOW INCOME	87%
MINORITY	92%

Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS)

SCHOOLS	74
ENROLLMENT	25,986
LOW INCOME	72%
MINORITY	63%

Alliance College-Ready Public Schools

SCHOOLS	16
ENROLLMENT	5,058
LOW INCOME	94%
MINORITY	99%

Hillsborough County Public Schools (HCPS)

SCHOOLS	251
ENROLLMENT	187,411
LOW INCOME	56%
MINORITY	57%

Green Dot Public Schools

SCHOOLS	13
ENROLLMENT	7,118
LOW INCOME	92%
MINORITY	99%

Partnerships to Uplift Communities (PUC) Schools

SCHOOLS	10
ENROLLMENT	2,598
LOW INCOME	87%
MINORITY	98%

○ Charter management organization (CMO)

☐ Public school district

Can districts and charter management organizations (CMOs) use contemporary ideas about teacher evaluation, management, and support to spark big improvements in student outcomes? To answer this question, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation launched the Intensive Partnerships for Effective Teaching initiative with seven sites across the country that had diverse needs and student populations (see map).

Researchers from the RAND Corporation and the American Institutes for Research (AIR) are evaluating these efforts. Although the initiative will continue through the 2015–2016 school year, interim results—based on extensive surveys, interviews, site visits, and reviews of fiscal records—offer valuable insights for those considering or adopting similar reforms.

*Memphis City Schools in Tennessee merged with Shelby County Schools, or SCS, during the course of the initiative. We refer to the district as SCS here and in the Implementation report.

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FIGURE 1

The Intensive Partnership initiative's strategy for improvement

| Teacher evaluation (measure of effective teaching) | → | Staffing (hiring, placement, retention, dismissal) | Professional development | Compensation and career ladders | Level and distribution of effective teaching | → | Achievement, graduation, and college enrollment |

This report examines these four components of the initiative.

Theory of the Intensive Partnership Initiative

Figure 1 illustrates the theory behind the Intensive Partnership initiative. The initiative rests on the premise that the first step in the reform process is to adopt an improved teacher evaluation system, including the adoption of a teaching effectiveness measure. This measure is used in managing the teacher workforce over time, including decisions about staffing, professional development, and compensation and specialized positions (so-called career ladders). These decisions, in turn, should increase the effectiveness of teaching and the distribution of effective teachers throughout schools. More-effective teaching should improve student performance, including student achievement, graduation, and college enrollment.

The RAND/AIR study examines the extent to which districts and CMOs are implementing four sets of reform practices:

1 **Teacher evaluation** using a measure of effectiveness that includes classroom observations by principals and possibly others, student achievement and growth, and (in some sites) student or parent input

2 **Staffing** including expedited recruiting, training administrators to make good hiring decisions, incentives to work in high-need schools, and linking tenure and retention decisions to effectiveness ratings

3 **Professional development** including use of evaluation data to identify needs, linking coaching or mentoring to evaluation components, and having supervisors systematically oversee teachers' professional development

4 **Compensation and career ladders** including additional pay based on effectiveness measures, incentive pay for desired teacher behavior (e.g., lower absenteeism), and instructional leadership positions (e.g., mentor teacher, data fellow, or curriculum developer) for effective teachers.
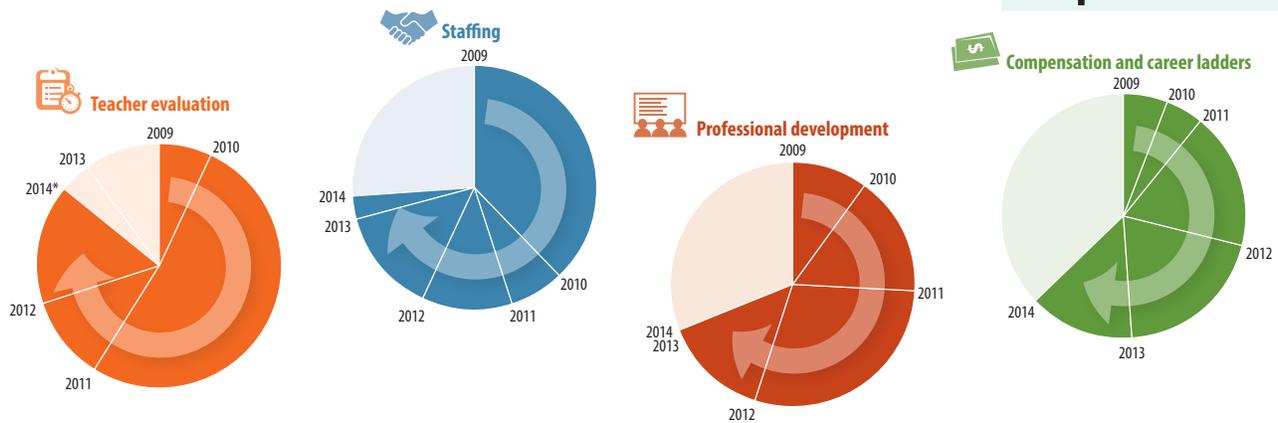
The first step in the reform process is to adopt an improved teacher evaluation system.

FIGURE 2

When were the reform practices implemented?

Proportion of practices implemented overall, by spring of each year

Teacher evaluation

Staffing

Professional development

Compensation and career ladders

*In 2014, California temporarily stopped statewide tests, so student achievement growth measures could not be calculated in the California sites.

Timeline for Implementation

The foundation selected sites that were interested in implementing these kinds of reforms; in fact, when the initiative started, some of the sites had already made some changes in each area of the initiative—in particular, to their staffing practices. Although the sites shared the goal of improving student achievement by improving teaching, there was no expectation that they would enact identical policies on the same schedule. Sites differed in timing of implementation, and the specific details of implementation reflected local context, as well as input from teachers and school leaders.

Figure 2 shows the proportion of the planned reform practices implemented, for each year since the initiative was launched, separately for each of the four main reform areas: teacher evaluation, staffing, professional development, and compensation and career ladders. The sites implemented teacher evaluation reforms most rapidly. In most sites, most planned elements were implemented by the spring of 2012. Changes in staffing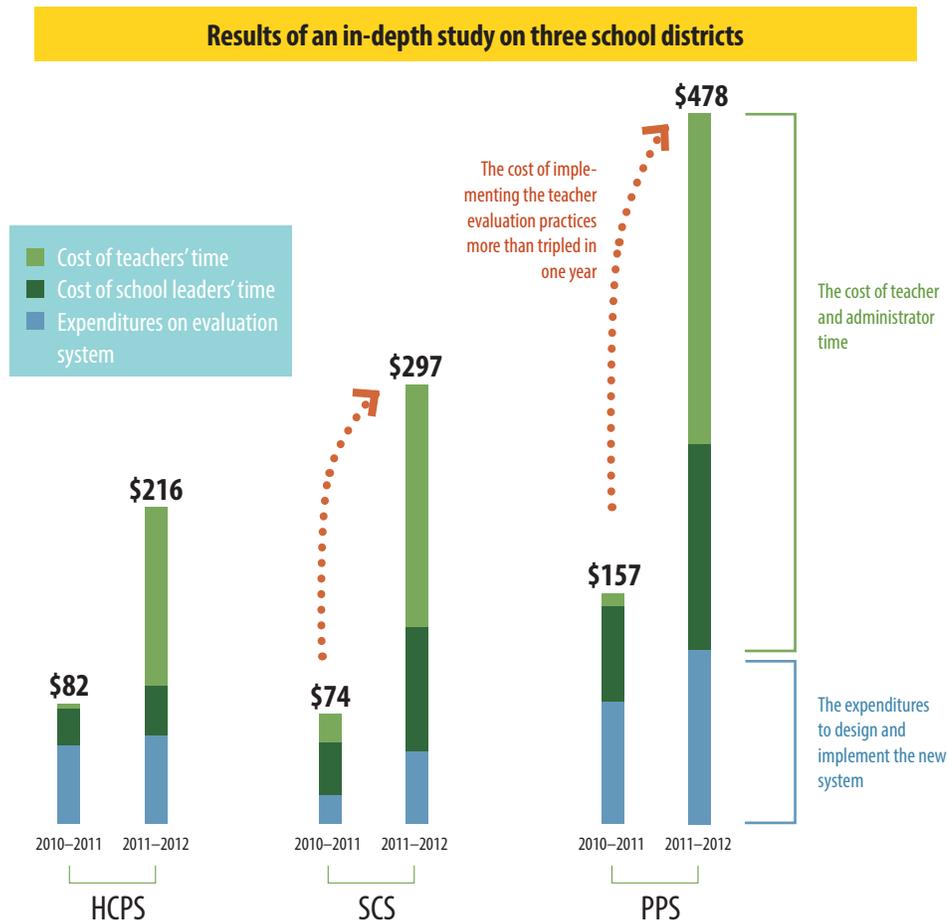 practices were the second–most rapidly implemented. Compensation and career-ladder practices were the slowest to change, and some practices were still awaiting implementation in the spring of 2014.

Sources of Funding for the Initiative and Costs of Implementing the Teacher Evaluation System

From November 2009 through June 2014, the foundation awarded more than $160 million to the seven sites. It also required each site to provide matching funds from other sources. Depending on the site, Gates Foundation funding accounted for 40 to 74 percent of the total initiative expenditures during this period. Federal funds were a significant source of funding in PPS, Aspire, and PUC Schools, and district or CMO funds were a large source in HCPS, SCS, and Green Dot. Local philanthropic funding, which the sites were committed to raising, ranged from 1 percent in HCPS to 13 percent in SCS. The foundation also provided expertise to the project, convening cross-site meetings for learning and sharing and assigning each site a program officer to help keep the initiative on track.

FIGURE 3

What does it cost to implement the new teacher evaluation practices?

Estimated total cost per pupil per school year of teacher evaluation system

Results of an in-depth study on three school districts

- Cost of teachers' time
- Cost of school leaders' time
- Expenditures on evaluation system

$82 $216 $74 $297 $157 $478

The cost of implementing the teacher evaluation practices more than tripled in one year

The cost of teacher and administrator time

The expenditures to design and implement the new system

2010–2011 2011–2012 2010–2011 2011–2012 2010–2011 2011–2012

HCPS SCS PPS

SOURCES: Jay Chambers, Iliana Brodziak de los Reyes, and Caitlin O'Neil, *How Much Are Districts Spending to Implement Teacher Evaluation Systems? Case Studies of Hillsborough County Public Schools, Memphis City Schools, and Pittsburgh Public Schools*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, WR-989-BMGF, 2013; RAND/AIR teacher and school-leader surveys, 2011, 2012, and 2013.

We did in-depth studies in three school districts to estimate the costs of implementing the new teacher evaluation practices **(Figure 3)**. During school years 2010-2011 and 2011-2012, districts spent between $21 and $118 per pupil to design and implement their new evaluation systems. These expenditures represented between 0.2% and 0.5% of total per-pupil district expenditures. The differences had to do with district size and different approaches to evaluation. The greatest costs for implementing the new practices were not direct costs but the value of teacher and administrator time that was shifted to evaluation activities, including training to conduct teacher evaluations, classroom observations, preparing and providing feedback to teachers, and other teacher evaluation activities. Accounting for such time meant that the estimated cost of implementing the teacher evaluation practices more than tripled in school year 2011–2012.

Teacher and School-Leader Views on the New Teacher Evaluation System

When the initiative began, sites made concerted efforts to involve teachers in the design of the evaluation system, keep them informed about new procedures, and address their concerns. These efforts achieved mixed results in generating teacher support. Most teachers thought that their overall evaluation ratings were moderately or very accurate, but they did not think that all the pieces were equally valid. In particular, teachers thought that classroom observations were more-valid measures of effectiveness than the other components **(Figure 4)**. Most teachers reported that they understood the observers' rating criteria, that their observers were qualified, and that they received useful feedback from the observations. Some teachers, however, had concerns about changes in the way

FIGURE 4

Most teachers thought that classroom observations were a valid way to measure effectiveness.

Percentage of evaluated teachers viewing evaluation components as valid at least to a moderate extent, 2014
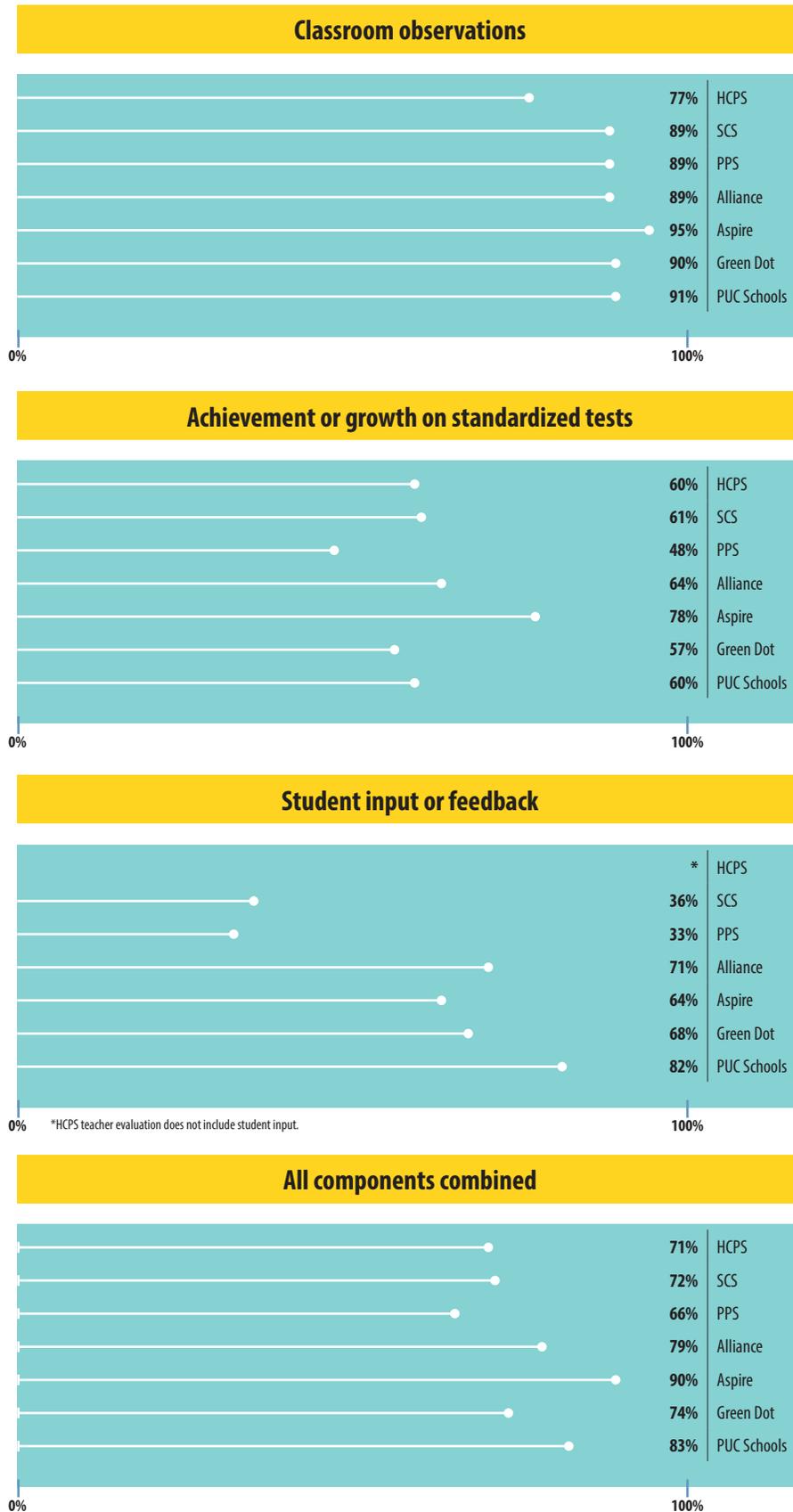
Classroom observations

77%	HCPS
89%	SCS
89%	PPS
89%	Alliance
95%	Aspire
90%	Green Dot
91%	PUC Schools

0%   100%

Achievement or growth on standardized tests

60%	HCPS
61%	SCS
48%	PPS
64%	Alliance
78%	Aspire
57%	Green Dot
60%	PUC Schools

0%   100%

Student input or feedback

*	HCPS
36%	SCS
33%	PPS
71%	Alliance
64%	Aspire
68%	Green Dot
82%	PUC Schools

0%   *HCPS teacher evaluation does not include student input.   100%

All components combined

71%	HCPS
72%	SCS
66%	PPS
79%	Alliance
90%	Aspire
74%	Green Dot
83%	PUC Schools

0%   100%

FIGURE 5

Most teachers thought the evaluation system was fair to them but not fair to all teachers.

Percentage of evaluated teachers agreeing at least somewhat that the evaluation system is fair, 2014

Fair to all teachers

20%	HCPS
29%	SCS
20%	PPS
48%	Alliance
52%	Aspire
30%	Green Dot
43%	PUC Schools

0%   100%

Fair to *me*

54%	HCPS
67%	SCS
64%	PPS
71%	Alliance
74%	Aspire
66%	Green Dot
68%	PUC Schools

0%   100%

they were evaluated. For example, a few expressed concerns that judging effectiveness based on observations led teachers to put on "a dog and pony show," that there were too few formal observations to measure teaching effectiveness, and that observers sometimes adopted a mind-set in which they "purposely only find things wrong."

Although teachers had general concerns about evaluation systems' fairness to "all teachers," most felt that they, themselves, were treated fairly **(Figure 5)**. Not surprisingly, teachers with high ratings were much more likely than those with low ratings to report that their evaluations were accurate. Large majorities of teachers were rated "effective" or "highly effective" over time, while very few were rated in the lowest category.

The disparity between teachers' opinions about the system's fairness to themselves and to all teachers might reflect the fact that most teachers received high ratings but were aware that some teachers did not. They might also worry about getting low ratings in the future—particularly given their concerns about some of the evaluation components, as noted above.

The sites described the reforms primarily as ways to support teacher improvement, but they also intended to use the effectiveness measures for removing persistently low-performing teachers. Teachers and school leaders thought that evaluation results would inform professional development and improvement efforts, but they were less likely to anticipate use of the results for decisions about probation and dismissal. Even so, less than
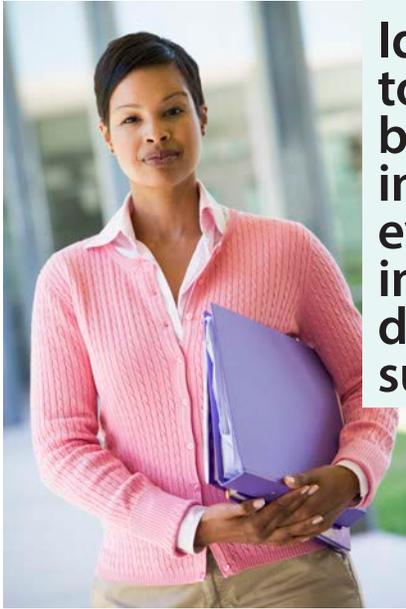
Ideally, according to the theory behind the initiative, teacher evaluation should inform professional development and support.

40 percent of teachers thought that the consequences tied to evaluation results were "reasonable, fair, and appropriate."

Changes in Staffing Practices

The sites made several changes in recruiting, hiring, placing, granting tenure to, and dismissing teachers. These changes included earlier identification of vacancies, more-aggressive recruitment, better screening of candidates, more-strategic referrals to high-need schools, interview training for principals, and more-effective orientation and initial training for new hires. By 2012, most sites had many of these practices in place.

Except in PPS, which did little hiring of new teachers, most school leaders at each site reported that the processes for hiring teachers worked well. Similarly, most school leaders were satisfied with new teachers' performance and (except in PPS) agreed that they had "a sufficient amount of control over who comes to teach" in their schools.

At the same time, many leaders, particularly in the CMOs, indicated that, "more often than is good for my school, good teachers leave my staff because they perceive better opportunities elsewhere."

Involuntary teacher-transfer policies, meanwhile, caused problems for some school leaders in the three districts. Less than half at each district site said that they were satisfied with "teachers transferring from elsewhere in the district who were assigned to my school based on district policy," but most said that they were satisfied with transfers "who were selected by administrators at my school."
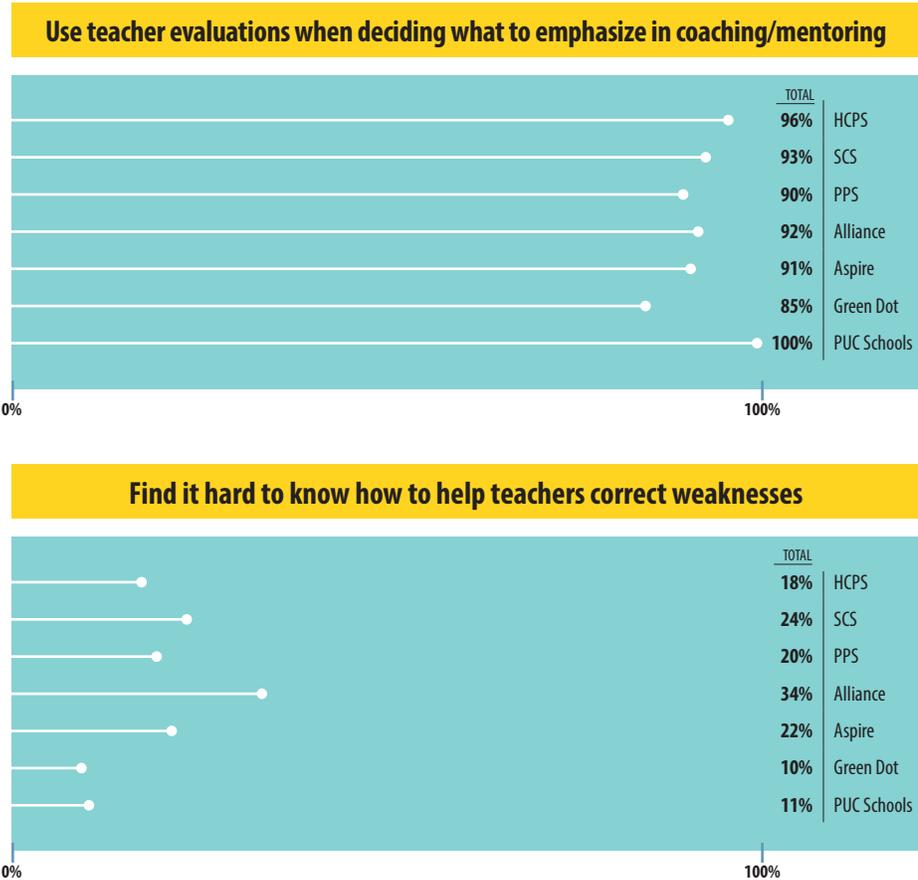
Professional Development for Identified Needs

Ideally, according to the theory behind the initiative, teacher evaluation should inform professional development and support. In practice, the sites are attempting to individualize professional development, but they have encountered several challenges. For example, much formal professional development has traditionally been provided in a group format, rather than individualized to teachers' needs. In addition, existing professional-development offerings did not always align with the dimensions of practice captured by the new teacher-observation rubrics. Sites found it difficult to implement information systems to link specific professional-development opportunities to dimensions of practice. Some sites expanded their professional-development offerings to include

FIGURE 6

Nearly all school leaders reported using evaluation results to help teachers improve.

Percentage of school leaders agreeing with statements about coaching and mentoring, 2014

Use teacher evaluations when deciding what to emphasize in coaching/mentoring

TOTAL	
96%	HCPS
93%	SCS
90%	PPS
92%	Alliance
91%	Aspire
85%	Green Dot
100%	PUC Schools

0%   100%

Find it hard to know how to help teachers correct weaknesses

TOTAL	
18%	HCPS
24%	SCS
20%	PPS
34%	Alliance
22%	Aspire
10%	Green Dot
11%	PUC Schools

0%   100%

nontraditional options, but not all teachers or school leaders knew of them. Other strategies are being tried to help teachers improve their effectiveness, including centralized professional development targeting common challenges, customized workshops, local coaching and mentoring, and collaborative communities of practice.

Although there were difficulties in matching formal offerings with identified professional needs, most school leaders reported that needs identified in teachers' formal evaluations influenced their professional-development opportunities. Further, nearly all school leaders agreed (either strongly or somewhat) that they used teacher evaluation results in their coaching and mentoring efforts. Few said

that they found it difficult to help teachers correct weaknesses **(Figure 6)**.

From the teachers' perspective, school-based teacher collaboration was the most useful type of professional development, with at least 66 percent of teachers at each site finding it useful or very useful **(Figure 7)**. Teachers might view collaboration favorably because it can be tailored to specific circumstances. As one teacher noted, "working with colleagues, we both teach biology; when we have time to work with each other or share resources, it's more useful than a lot of the professional-development time we spend waiting for someone to finish talking."

FIGURE 7

Most teachers find school-based teacher collaboration to be a useful type of professional development.

Percentage of teachers reporting different forms of professional development as moderately or very useful, 2014

Legend:
- School workshops
- District/CMO workshops
- Teacher collaboration

70%	HCPS
78%	SCS
71%	PPS
69%	Alliance
77%	Aspire
66%	Green Dot
80%	PUC Schools

0%   50%   100%
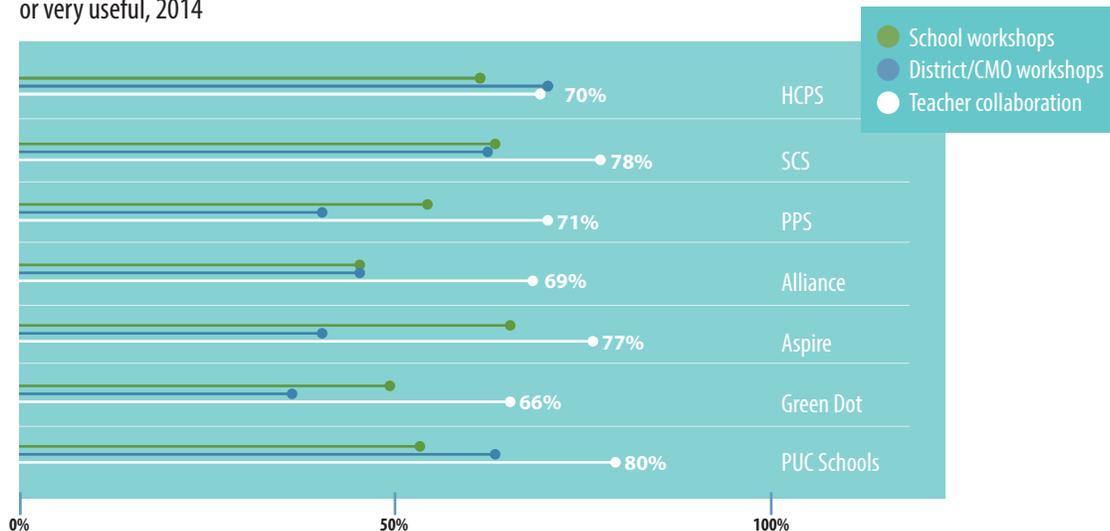
Implementation of Reforms Related to Compensation and Career Ladders

Most sites did not adopt changes in compensation and career ladders until recently because these changes depended on having teaching effectiveness measures in place and because, in many sites, they involved changes in negotiated contracts. By the 2013–2014 school year, all sites had adopted some form of effectiveness bonus; in most sites, this entailed awarding extra compensation to teachers with the highest effectiveness ratings. Most teachers in the districts thought base pay should be based on seniority, and a majority thought additional compensation should be given for outstanding teaching skills and for working in low-performing schools. Teacher responses were mixed on the fairness of their sites' compensation systems and whether those systems motivated them to improve their teaching, with CMO teachers being more positive about these reforms.
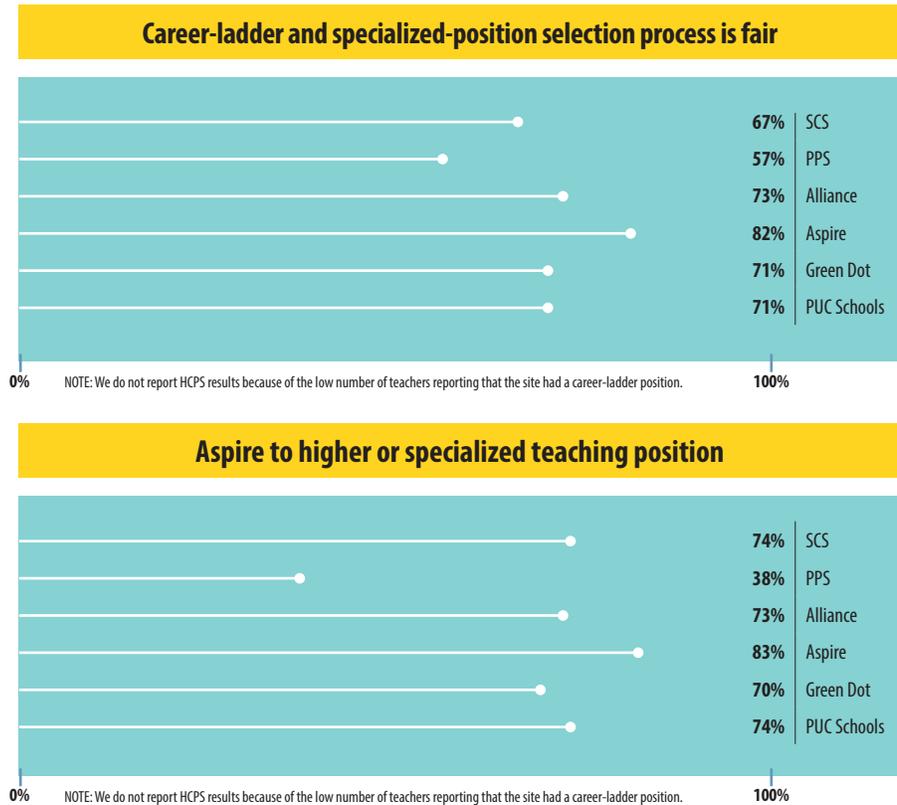
All of the sites have developed some form of career ladder in which effective teachers take on new roles, such as coaching or mentoring, and receive addi-

By the 2013–2014 school year, all sites had adopted some form of effectiveness bonus; in most sites, this entailed awarding extra compensation to teachers with the highest effectiveness ratings.

FIGURE 8

Most teachers thought that career-ladder positions were fairly assigned and hoped to advance in their teaching career.

Percentage of teachers agreeing at least somewhat with statements about career-ladder positions, 2014

Career-ladder and specialized-position selection process is fair

67%	SCS
57%	PPS
73%	Alliance
82%	Aspire
71%	Green Dot
71%	PUC Schools

0%   NOTE: We do not report HCPS results because of the low number of teachers reporting that the site had a career-ladder position.   100%

Aspire to higher or specialized teaching position

74%	SCS
38%	PPS
73%	Alliance
83%	Aspire
70%	Green Dot
74%	PUC Schools

0%   NOTE: We do not report HCPS results because of the low number of teachers reporting that the site had a career-ladder position.   100%

tional salary or stipend for these responsibilities. Most teachers thought that the selection process for these specialized positions was fair and, in most sites, reported aspiring to higher or specialized positions **(Figure 8)**. Lower support among PPS teachers might be due to few career-ladder positions being available, as well as concerns about increased workload and long-term sustainability of these positions.

Conclusions

Although it is too soon to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of the Intensive Partnership initiative in improving student outcomes—the sites' implementation grants extend through the

2015–2016 school year, and the sites are still modifying policies and procedures—we can describe the implementation of new policies and procedures and offer observations that might be useful to those who are considering similar changes. Teachers and school leaders have found value in the new evaluation systems, albeit more in some components than others. Most teachers think that the evaluation systems are fair to them individually. Sites have struggled to match professional-development offerings to teacher needs, and some school leaders are using coaching to individualize support. Most teachers in the districts favor pay based on seniority.

In most sites, it has taken multiple years to implement this broad set of reforms; of necessity, changes to teacher evaluation systems must precede
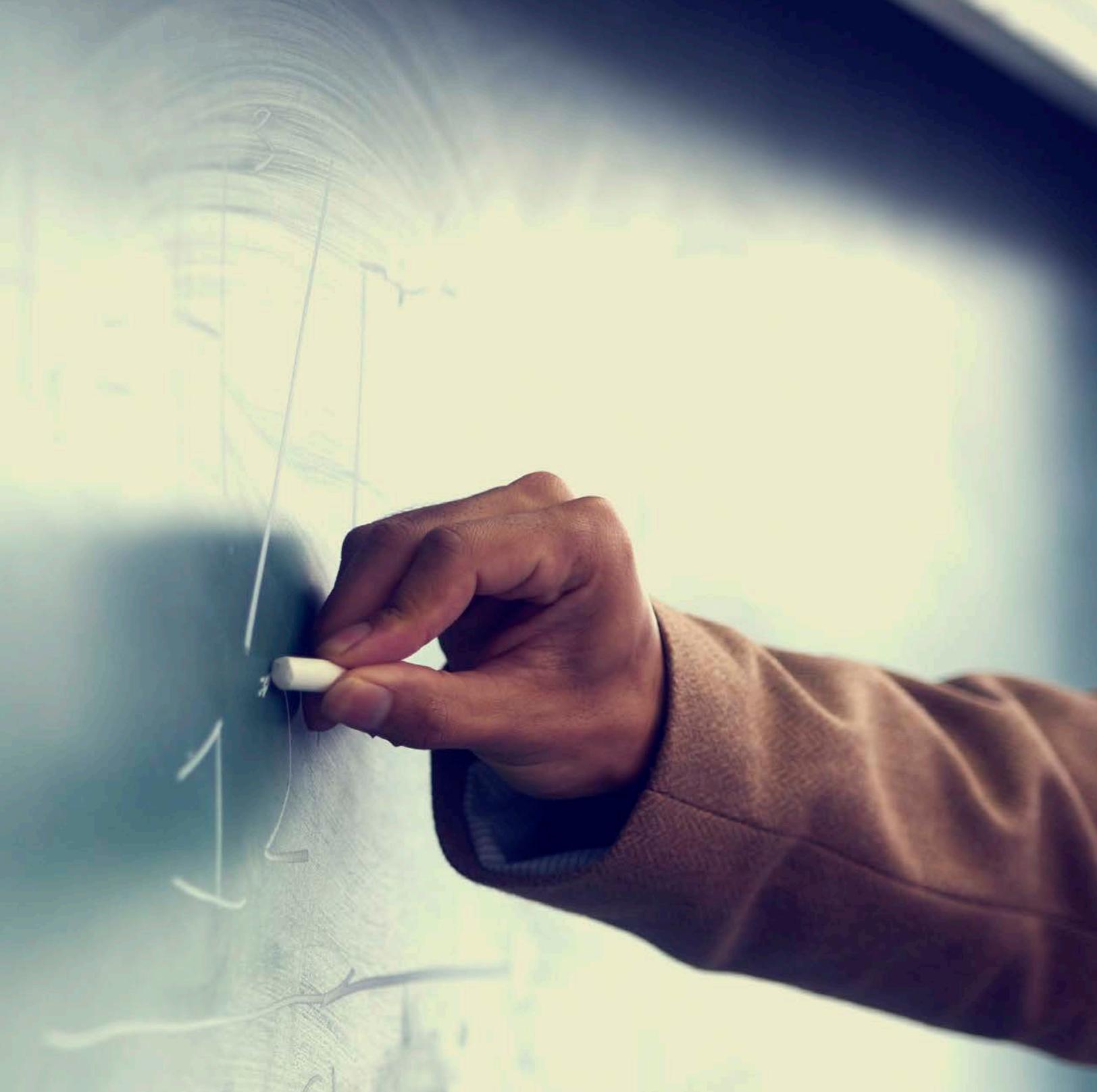
The Intensive Partnership sites can already offer lessons to others adopting similar reforms.

changes to staffing, professional development, and compensation and career-ladder policies that rely on them. Local circumstances have also shaped implementation, and site-specific modifications have been made in response to teacher and school-leader feedback. The sites have also struggled with developing data systems to monitor teacher participation in these diverse activities. Although the reforms will continue to evolve, enough change has occurred that the Intensive Partnership sites can serve as a reasonable test of the theory that rigorous teacher evaluation, coupled with changes in workforce-management practices, can lead to big improvements in student performance. The Intensive Partnership sites

can already offer lessons to others adopting similar reforms related to defining effective teaching, training observers, combining multiple measures into a single effectiveness score, creating specialized positions, and implementing professional development to support identified needs.

RAND and AIR researchers will continue evaluating this initiative's implementation and impact. Future reports will include updates on implementation and its cost, specific steps sites are taking to sustain the reform, and the reform's impact on teaching effectiveness and student outcomes.

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