



The System for Teacher
and Student Advancement

TAP Research Summary

Updated April 2012

Highlights

1. TAP serves schools with high-need populations of students.
2. TAP schools show consistently high rates of student achievement growth.
3. TAP's classroom evaluation measures produce more valid performance ratings than do traditional teacher evaluations.
4. TAP teachers show growth over time in the quality of their instruction.
5. TAP increases the recruitment and retention of highly effective teachers.
6. Teachers and principals report high levels of support for TAP as well as a high degree of collegiality in TAP schools.

Background

For over a decade, TAP™: The System for Teacher and Student Advancement has pioneered a comprehensive approach to school reform focused on the quality of teaching and the advancement of effective teachers. This comprehensive system of reform is reaching about 20,000 teachers and 200,000 students in 347 schools and 80 districts across the country in the 2011-2012 school year.

TAP is based on four interrelated elements, designed to enhance not only teacher performance, but also teacher job satisfaction, recruitment and retention in high-need schools:

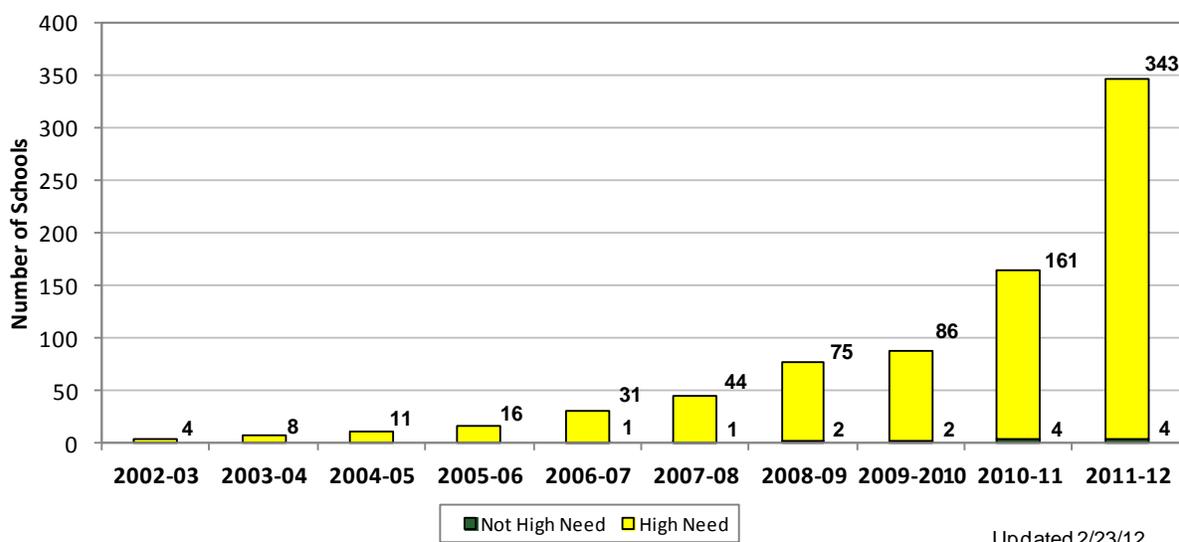
- **Multiple career paths.** In TAP schools, skilled teachers have the opportunity to serve as master and mentor teachers, receiving additional compensation for providing high levels of support to career teachers. Master and mentor teachers form a leadership team, along with administrators, to deliver school-based professional support and conduct evaluations with a high level of expertise. The more than 2,300 master and mentor teachers serving in TAP schools represent a major enhancement of the capacity for instructional support in those schools.
- **Ongoing applied professional growth.** TAP teachers participate in weekly cluster group meetings, led by master and mentor teachers, in which they examine student data, engage in collaborative planning and learn instructional strategies that have been field-tested in their own schools. Teachers benefit from a national TAP database of instructional strategies as well as their own colleagues' experiences and feedback. Professional development continues into each classroom as master teachers model lessons, observe classroom instruction and support other teachers to improve their teaching.
- **Instructionally focused accountability.** TAP teachers are observed in classroom instruction several times a year by multiple trained observers, including principals and master and mentor teachers, using rubrics for several dimensions of instructional quality. Evaluators are trained and certified, and leadership teams monitor the reliability and consistency of evaluations in their schools. These classroom evaluations are complemented by value-added analysis of student achievement growth, rounding out a multi-measure system of teacher evaluation. Evaluation results are used as formative feedback in one-on-one mentoring sessions, and guide planning for cluster group meetings.
- **Performance-based compensation.** Teachers in TAP schools have the opportunity to earn bonuses each year based on their observed skills, knowledge and responsibilities, their students' average growth in achievement, and the entire school's average growth in achievement. Master and mentor teachers receive additional compensation based on their added roles and responsibilities. Combining these sources, performance pay for a teacher in a TAP school can reach up to \$20,000.

The TAP system was developed by Lowell Milken and colleagues at the Milken Family Foundation, and was first implemented in the 2000-2001 school year. It is now promoted and coordinated by the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET). Researchers at NIET and elsewhere have studied TAP's effectiveness at raising student achievement, improving the quality of instruction and increasing the ability of high-need schools to recruit, retain and support teachers. This document describes some of the most important results that have emerged from the research to date. Data collection and analysis efforts are ongoing, and the findings described here will be updated as new information becomes available.

1. TAP serves schools with high-need populations of students.

TAP has grown steadily in the number of schools participating. By far, most of this nationwide growth has come from the involvement of high-need schools¹. As shown in Figure 1, **nearly 99% of TAP schools in the 2011-2012 school year are high-need schools.**

Figure 1: Net Growth of TAP



This graph only includes schools remaining in TAP as of the 2011-2012 school year.

In three states where TAP has been highly successful with a statewide support structure (Louisiana, South Carolina, and Texas), the percentage of students in poverty and minority students served by TAP schools greatly exceeded their state averages in 2011-12 (Table 1).²

Table 1: Students in TAP Schools: Louisiana, South Carolina, and Texas

	TAP	3-State Average	Difference
Minority students	74.2%	64.5%	9.7%
Students eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch	75.5%	52.4%	23.1%

The benefits of TAP are especially appropriate for schools serving needy populations of students. Historically, these schools are the hardest to staff with high-quality teachers. High turnover means that there are more new teachers every year to be mentored and developed, while at the same time there are fewer highly skilled teachers available to provide peer support at the school site. The comprehensive approach of TAP provides a way to break this cycle and improve the quality of teaching and working conditions for teachers in challenging schools. TAP provides ongoing, on-site support for teachers serving disadvantaged students, and it recognizes and rewards such teachers for effectiveness when they help low-achieving students gain academically.

¹ A “high-need” school has been defined by the U.S. Department of Education for some programs as a school where 30% or more of the students qualify for the federal free or reduced price lunch program due to low family income.

² The data in this table come from 2010-2012 which was the most recent year with data available.

2. TAP schools show consistently high rates of student achievement growth.

The TAP system, several state education agencies, and many contemporary researchers use a statistical method called “value added” or “growth modeling” to measure the contributions of teachers and schools to student achievement during a school year.

This method requires matching each student’s test scores to his or her own previous scores in order to measure the student’s progress during the year—not merely the student’s attainment at the end of the year. Value added separates the impact of a school year on a student from the student’s prior experiences in and out of school, individual characteristics, socioeconomic status and family conditions. As a result, schools and teachers can become more accountable for how well they teach rather than how advantaged or disadvantaged their students were at the beginning of the year.

To put it another way, value added tells you how much the school and teacher have contributed to student learning compared to other schools and teachers in the same state with similar students.

In TAP, value-added results are identified on a 1-5 scale, with a 3 representing one year’s growth in student achievement for the students in a school or classroom:³

- 5: Much more than** a year’s growth
- 4: More than** a year’s growth
- 3: One** year’s growth
- 2: Less than** a year’s growth
- 1: Much less than** a year’s growth

The following results showing the high performance of TAP schools are based on this definition of effectiveness in terms of value added, *i.e.*, student learning or achievement growth.

With experience in TAP, schools achieve greater student growth

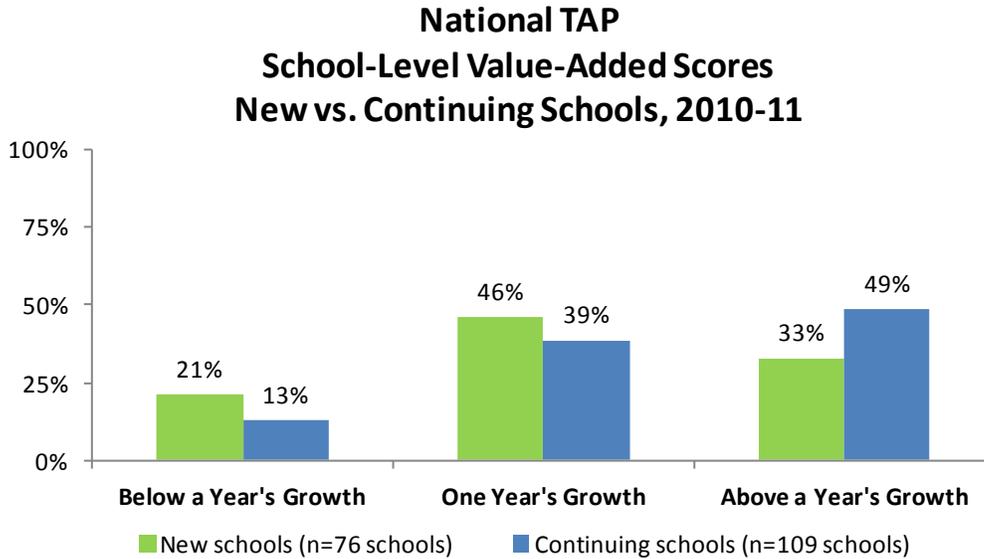
TAP brings about systemic change in schools and instruction. Thus, the *full* impact of TAP on student achievement may show up in the data only after sufficient time has passed for the change to be implemented in the school, incorporated by teachers into their classroom instruction, and reflected in annual student assessments.

Figure 2, shows that experienced TAP schools substantially outperformed new TAP schools in terms of achievement growth. Among experienced TAP schools, about 88% achieved at least a year's growth (scores of 3, 4 and 5) and 49% exceeded a year's growth (score of 4 or 5). At the same time, 79% of new TAP schools achieved at least a year's growth (scores of 3, 4 and 5) and 33% exceeded a year's growth (score of 4 or 5)--remarkably good results even if those for experienced TAP schools are higher.

³ In statistical terms, a 5 is significantly higher than average at about the 95% confidence level, a 4 is significantly higher than average at about the 70% confidence level, a 3 is indistinguishable from the average, a 2 is significantly lower than average at about the 70% confidence level and a 1 is significantly lower than average at about the 95% confidence level. Data for value-added in Reading and Math provided by SAS® EVAAS®

Figure 2: Student Achievement Growth is Greater for Schools with Experience in TAP

(TAP Schools, 2010-2011; schools continuing in TAP for more than one year versus schools in their first year of implementation)



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Note: Percents do not add to 100% because of rounding.

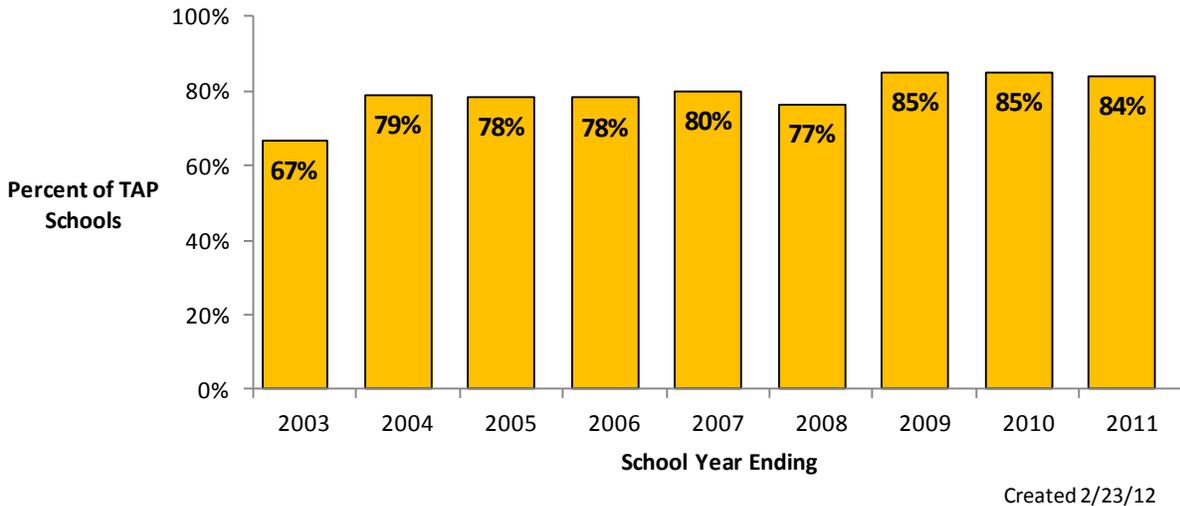
Since these schools have predominantly minority and low socioeconomic status students, a high level of student growth in these schools as compared to other schools and students in the same state shows that TAP has contributed to closing achievement gaps for disadvantaged students.

TAP achievement results have remained stable at a high level

In 84% of TAP schools nationwide, students gained a full year or more of achievement growth during the 2010-2011 school year (i.e., value-added scores of 3 or higher). Remarkably, in spite of TAP's growth (especially in the number of high-need schools), TAP schools are able to maintain consistently strong results. Figure 3 shows this stable high performance.⁴

⁴ Results are only shown for schools with schoolwide value-added scores in the data.

Figure 3: Consistency in Performance: TAP Schools with 1+ Year of Student Growth per School Year



Value-added analysis measures the school's contribution to student growth within a school year *starting from* the achievement of each student in prior years. A student who accomplishes a full year of growth in one year must *also* accomplish a full year of growth in the following year for the school to continue getting the same value-added score for that student. Therefore, the consistently high *schoolwide* value added shown in the above graph means that the *students* in these high-need schools are *growing in achievement from year to year* over multiple years. Consistently strong instructional performance by schools results in consistent growth for students.

Another indicator of consistency in performance comes from the track record of specific schools over time. There were 82 TAP schools with at least three consecutive years of value-added data available covering the years 2008-2009 through 2010-2011. Of these, 76% either maintained more than one year of growth per year or showed an increase in the rate of student growth per school year.

Results from Independent Studies of TAP's Impact

- A recent independent quasi-experimental study (Hudson, 2010) used statistical models to control for self-selection of schools into TAP.⁵ The study examined all TAP schools nationally, as well as by state for Minnesota, South Carolina and Texas. The study found that students in TAP schools outperformed students in comparison schools in Math by roughly 0.15 standard deviations on average each year. This finding was statistically significant, and was robust to various modeling specifications. Results for Language were positive and significant as well, although less robust to alternative analyses.
- An independent evaluation of TAP schools in Louisiana found that TAP schools in 2008-2009 at least doubled state gains in the percent of students scoring Basic or above in eight of 16 grade-subject tests studied, and met or exceeded gains in all but two of the grade-subjects (Kirby, 2009). Averaging over all grades, this represents a TAP effect of more than two-thirds higher than statewide gains. The TAP schools had more minority (87%) and low socioeconomic status (87%) students than the state average (51% and 65%, respectively), while outperforming state gains.⁶
- Researchers at the National Center on Performance Incentives (NCPI) conducted an independent analysis of the impact of TAP.⁷ They examined mathematics test score results for 28 TAP schools and a control group of about 1,200 non-TAP schools from two states over the period of school years from 2002-2003 through 2005-2006. The authors employed several complex statistical models in an attempt to correct for the hypothesis that schools choosing to join TAP were different in motivation and leadership from schools not choosing to join TAP, and that test score gains should be attributed to these differences rather than to TAP as such. *Even with these adjustments, the results were positive for TAP in most grades.* Combining all grades, TAP schools demonstrated higher overall growth than did control group schools. (See the Appendix for an additional discussion of the NCPI report.)

⁵ Hudson, S. (2010). *The effects of performance-based teacher pay on student achievement*. Stanford, CA: Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research. Available online at <http://siepr.stanford.edu/publicationsprofile/2175>

⁶ Kirby, P. C. (2009). *The TAP system in Louisiana schools*. Unpublished report.

⁷ Springer, M.G., Ballou, D., & Peng, A. (2008). *Impact of the Teacher Advancement Program on Student Test Score Gains: Findings from an Independent Appraisal*. Nashville, TN: National Center on Performance Incentives. Available online at http://www.performanceincentives.org/data/files/news/PapersNews/Springer_et_al_2008.pdf

Differences between High- and Low-Performing TAP Schools

It is useful to consider how high-performing TAP schools differ from their lower-performing counterparts in TAP. Are the differences due to school and community characteristics, such as school size or demographics? Or are there differences in how TAP has been implemented and supported? To begin answering these questions, NIET researchers conducted a preliminary investigation that involved statistical analysis of existing data, review of teacher and principal survey findings and interviews with TAP leaders who have personal experience of working with a variety of TAP schools across the performance spectrum. This revealed the value of studying the differences among TAP schools, and more detailed research is underway. Meanwhile, here are some preliminary findings about what distinguishes high-performing schools from lower-performing schools within TAP:

- ***Consistently high-performing TAP schools implement all four key elements of TAP—multiple career paths, ongoing applied professional growth, instructionally focused accountability through classroom observations and value-added results, and performance-based compensation—more fully and consistently than do low-performing TAP schools.*** They reserve sufficient time for teacher cluster meetings; their master and mentor teachers use these meetings for guided discussion of quality in teaching as informed by the TAP instructional rubrics, and for teamwork in analyzing student data and developing strategies for improvement; their master teachers are diligent about field-testing innovative strategies to recommend for use in the school; and their mentor teachers have sufficient time to provide ongoing support to career teachers. According to statewide leaders with exposure to a spectrum of TAP schools, these processes are weakened in lower-performing schools by a lack of commitment and the distraction of other priorities.
- ***Consistently high-performing TAP schools have principals who communicate and demonstrate full support for TAP,*** especially in terms of protecting the time and resource priorities needed to implement TAP well. In other words, they refrain from encroaching on teacher cluster group time with administrative and operational needs, and they ensure that their master and mentor teachers are not burdened with tasks irrelevant to supporting teachers and instructional improvement. In many cases, the original initiative to bring TAP to the school was led by a principal who saw it as a comprehensive way to bring about much-needed change in the school.
- ***Consistently high-performing TAP schools are recognized by state leaders and by their own principals as having high-quality master and mentor teachers on the staff.***
- ***Consistently high-performing TAP schools tend to be found in states with well-developed statewide support structures*** and larger than average numbers of TAP schools in the state. Some of this may be due to chance, since a larger pool of schools is statistically more likely to include exceptions. However, the support provided by the state TAP infrastructure—the training and consulting support led primarily by state directors and executive master teachers—appears to be a critical factor in implementing and sustaining TAP at a high level of rigor and effectiveness.
- School size, student demographics, and community socioeconomic status do not appear to make any difference in whether a school is highly effective or less effective.

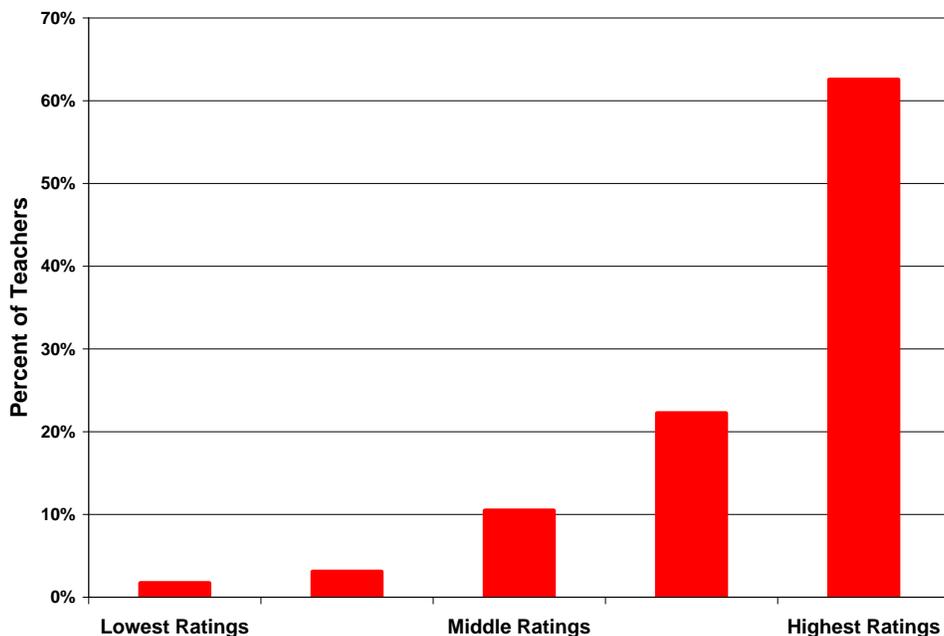
A common theme of these findings is that ***the most effective TAP schools provide teachers with a high level of both support and accountability for growth in the quality of instruction,*** starting with a committed principal and a skilled team of master and mentor teachers. In these schools, TAP is the essential driver of change in instruction, culture and teacher community. To put it another way, high-

quality TAP implementation in a school appears to promote consistently high student achievement growth. Additional research is underway to further substantiate these preliminary findings.

3. TAP's classroom evaluation measures produce more valid performance ratings than do traditional teacher evaluations.

In order to identify improvement in the quality of classroom instruction, it is necessary to assess the quality of that instruction. Such assessment is also essential if teachers are to be held accountable for their work and for professional improvement. Traditional school systems have not been successful at measuring and assessing classroom instruction. The New Teacher Project published a report in 2009 showing that schools fail to evaluate their teachers in any meaningful way.⁸ As seen in Figure 4, by far most teachers are rated at the very highest levels, despite the fact that most schools are not educating their students at the very highest levels. It is clear that differences in the quality of instruction are not being measured by traditional methods of evaluating teachers. Given that differences in teacher effectiveness represent the single most important school-related factor affecting student learning, accurately measuring differences in teacher performance is critical to the improvement of teaching and learning.

Figure 4: Inflated Teacher Evaluations in Traditional Systems



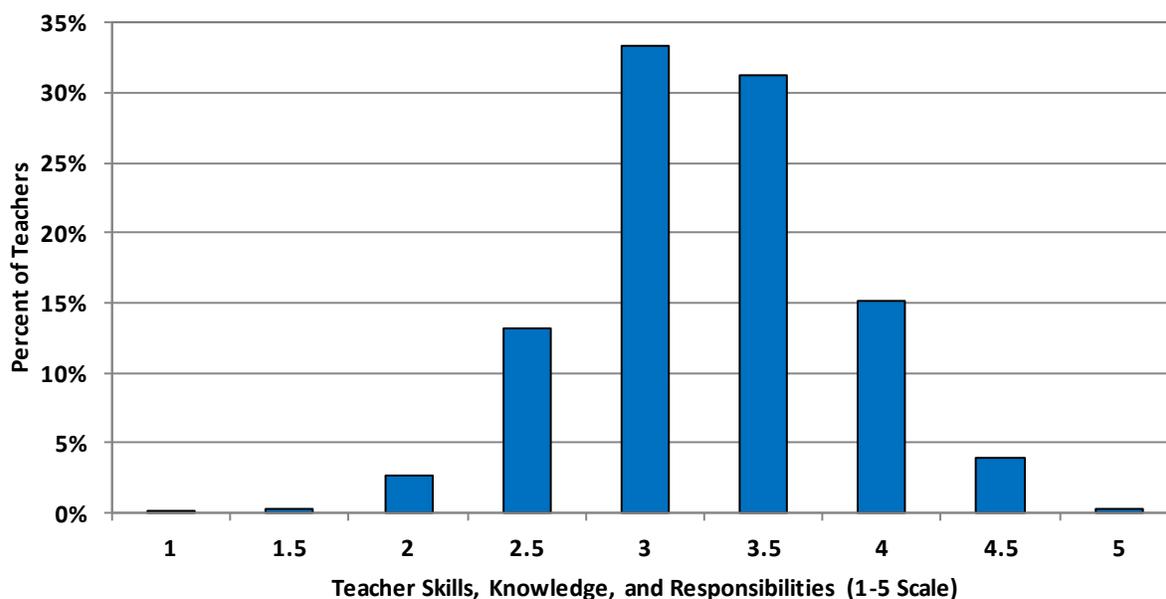
Teacher evaluations in five urban school districts, based on data taken from <http://widgeteffect.org/downloads/TheWidgetEffect.pdf>. Scores on 3-point and 4-point scales have been interpolated to a 5-point scale using a cumulative probability density function based on reported data.

⁸ Weisberg, D., Sexton, S., Mulhern, J., Keeling, D. (2009). *The Widget Effect: Our National Failure to Acknowledge and Act on Differences in Teacher Effectiveness*. Brooklyn, NY: The New Teacher Project. Available online at <http://widgeteffect.org/>

TAP performance measures differentiate among levels of performance

In contrast to traditional evaluation methods, TAP has developed a comprehensive approach to teacher evaluation and incentives that depends on multiple measures of both teaching practice and teaching outcomes. This system provides **differentiated** feedback for teacher improvement, in contrast to the apparently inflated ratings found in many status quo evaluation systems. Figure 5 shows that the classroom evaluations of TAP teachers follow a bell-shaped distribution that much more closely matches what we know about how teachers differ from each other in effectiveness, and offers more useful feedback to teachers and administrators.

Figure 5: Observational Ratings in TAP Schools Differentiate among Levels of Performance



Distribution of teacher evaluations in TAP using 1-5 scale with half-point increments.

The above ratings are based on the **classroom evaluation component** of the TAP System. Teachers are observed several times a year by multiple trained and certified raters who consider 19 areas of effective instructional practice. These observers use a multi-dimensional, research-based set of standards and rubrics that are fair, transparent, and curriculum-independent. Results are provided immediately as feedback to the teacher in post-observation mentoring sessions. The scores from all observations of these 19 classroom indicators are combined with seven responsibility indicators at the end of the school year to create an overall Skills, Knowledge, and Responsibilities (SKR) score for each teacher. On a scale of 1 to 5, **1** represents unsatisfactory performance in a certain standard, **3** represents proficiency in that standard, and **5** represents true excellence above and beyond what is expected of a proficient teacher on that standard. Scores of **2** and **4** represent intermediate levels between the other scores.

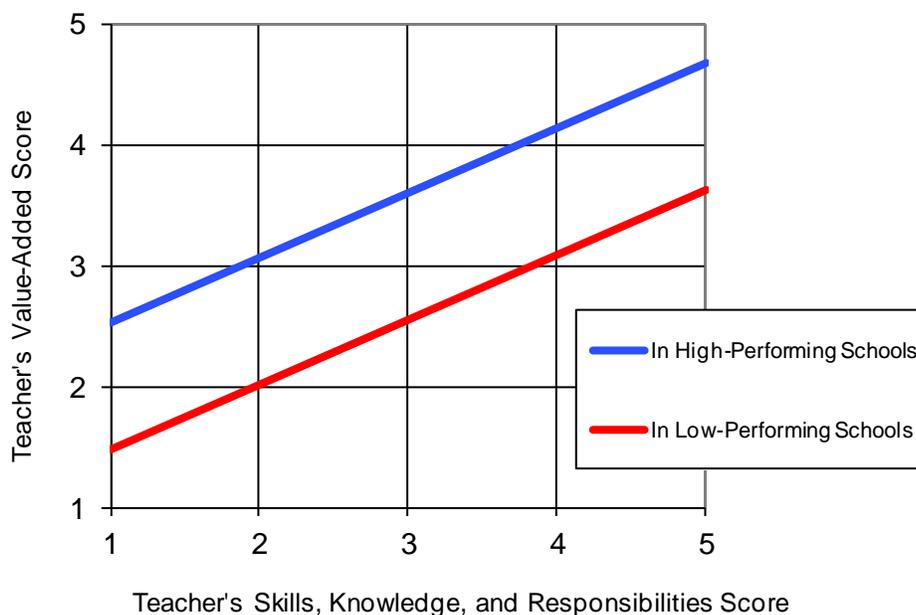
The **value added component** of the TAP System assesses student growth in achievement from one year to the next, as described above on page 4. In grades and subjects where learning gains can be reliably calculated, each teacher receives a value-added score that measures the teacher's impact on student growth. In addition, each school receives a schoolwide value-added score that includes all teachers at the school. On the 5-point value-added scale used by TAP schools, **1** represents much less than one year of

student growth for students of similar previous achievement, **3** represents one year of expected academic growth for similar students, **5** represents much more than one year of growth for similar students, with **2** and **4** representing intermediate levels between the other points on the scale. Value added results become available after the end of the school year, and are combined with classroom observation scores for an overall evaluation based on multiple measures and dimensions.

TAP performance measures are aligned and complementary

A higher quality of instruction in the classroom would be expected to lead to greater student gains on standardized achievement tests. In fact, TAP’s evaluation ratings of teacher skills in the classroom are positively correlated to value-added scores showing the teacher’s impact on student achievement gains. Using data for TAP teachers in ten states for school years 2007-2008 to 2009-2010, we have identified a positive relationship between a teacher’s score from classroom evaluations and the same teacher’s score from value-added assessment of student learning. As shown in Figure 6, higher classroom evaluation (SKR) scores for teachers during the school year are associated with higher value-added scores for their students at the end of the year.

Figure 6: In TAP Schools, Teachers with High Classroom Evaluation Scores Demonstrate High Value Added to Student Achievement



High-Performing Schools: n=1259 teachers, with schoolwide value added 4 or 5
 Low-Performing Schools: n=481 teachers, with schoolwide value added 1 or 2
 Scores are from 2007-2008 to 2009-2010 school years.⁹

As Figure 6 shows, the slope of the relationship between *individual* classroom evaluation (SKR) scores and student achievement growth (value added) holds true regardless of the school’s *overall* level of

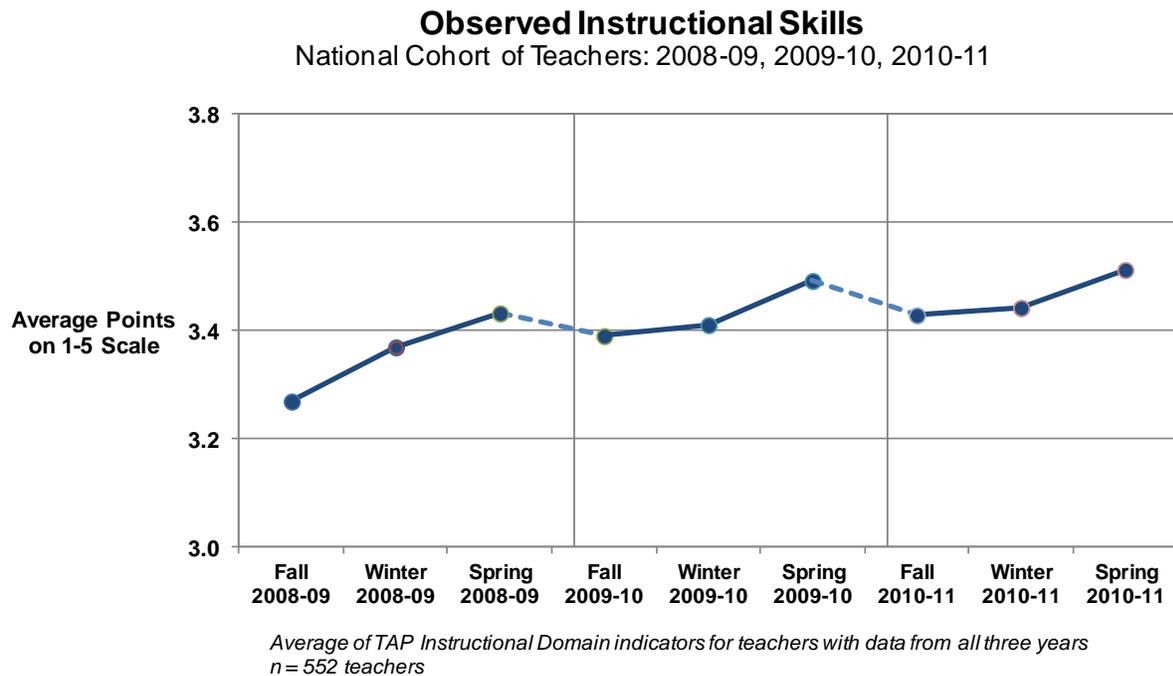
⁹ Trendlines from linear regression at teacher level with crossed random effects for school and year. The regression as a whole is highly significant, as is each factor in it (p<0.01). Note that only teachers who received classroom value-added scores can be counted.

performance. At the same time, teachers at each level of instructional skill are more effective, as measured by value added, in high-performing schools than in low-performing schools.

4. TAP teachers show growth over time in the quality of their instruction.

Data show that teachers in the TAP System improve their skills throughout the year due to the effective support provided to them. This is shown by results from a national cohort of teachers over a three year period--in other words, tracking the skills of the *same teachers* from year to year over that period. As shown in Figure 7, despite a slight dip over the summer, teachers demonstrated an overall path of improvement that continued over all three years. The quality of instruction does not necessarily improve in a straight line every year, nor does each successive year of TAP participation impact a teacher's skills in the same way as the year before. However, on average, instructional skills are not only higher at the end of each year than at the beginning of the same year, but also higher than at the end of the previous year.

Figure 7: Improvement in Skills for the Same Teachers over Three Years



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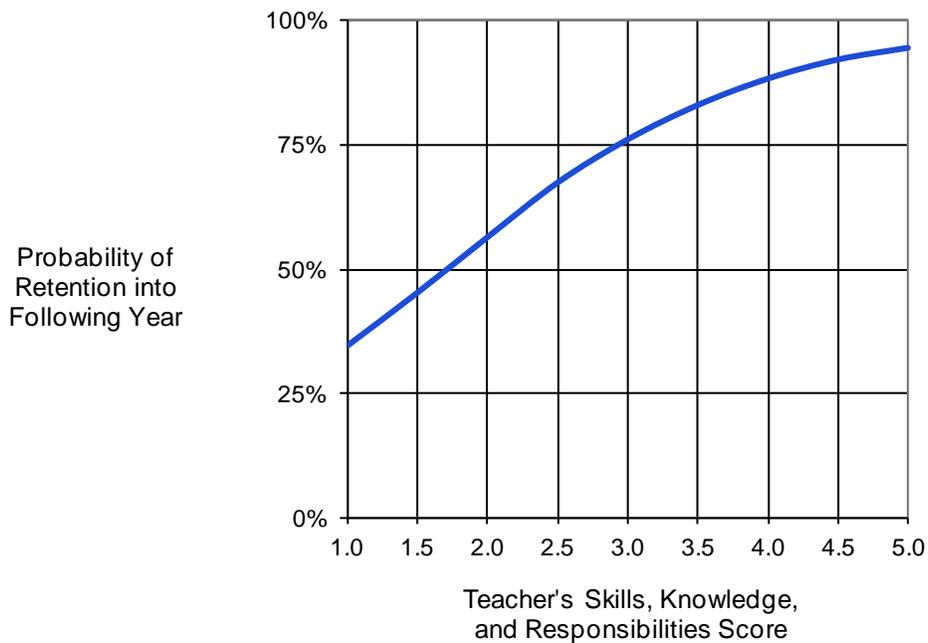
The evidence shows that the support structures TAP puts in place for teachers do create change in classroom practice. Through the observation process, teachers have the opportunity to identify and address areas that need improvement at several points during the year. Growth in teacher skills over time increases the level of effectiveness of the entire school, and leads to growth in student achievement.

5. TAP increases the recruitment and retention of effective teachers.

One of the most costly challenges facing schools is the need to attract and keep quality teachers at the school. This is especially difficult at high-need schools where instability in the faculty contributes to an ineffective learning environment. Nationally, over 50% of new teachers leave before they have been teaching five years. High turnover presents a drain on dollars which could be otherwise allocated, and negatively impacts student learning as new teachers must be trained each year. However, retention alone is not the solution, but rather the recruitment, development, and retention of effective teachers.

TAP has a positive impact on the quality of teachers in a school. Data show that teachers who remain in TAP schools tend to have higher evaluation scores, while those with lower scores are more likely to leave a TAP school, as shown in Figures 8 and 9.¹⁰ TAP schools demonstrate a pattern of both higher retention of effective teachers and higher turnover of less effective teachers.

Figure 8: Higher Retention of Highly Effective Teachers in TAP Schools



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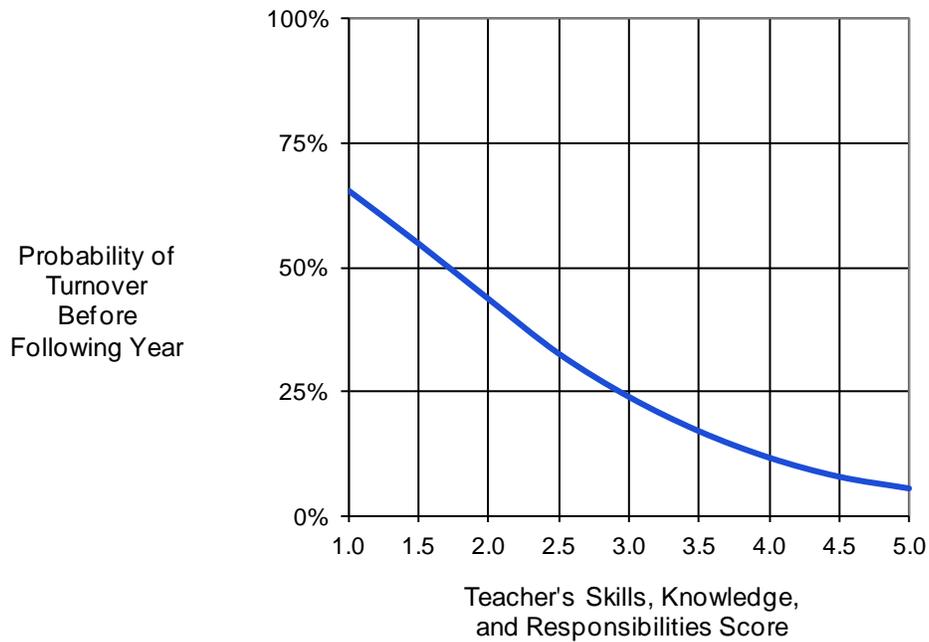
n = 4487 teacher-year cases from 2009-2010

Retention includes teachers who stayed in TAP, including master and mentor teachers.

Retention does not include teachers who became administrators, moved to non-TAP schools, or left teaching.

¹⁰ This analysis is based on logistic regression, with results that are highly significant ($p < 0.001$).

Figure 9: Higher Turnover of Ineffective Teachers in TAP Schools



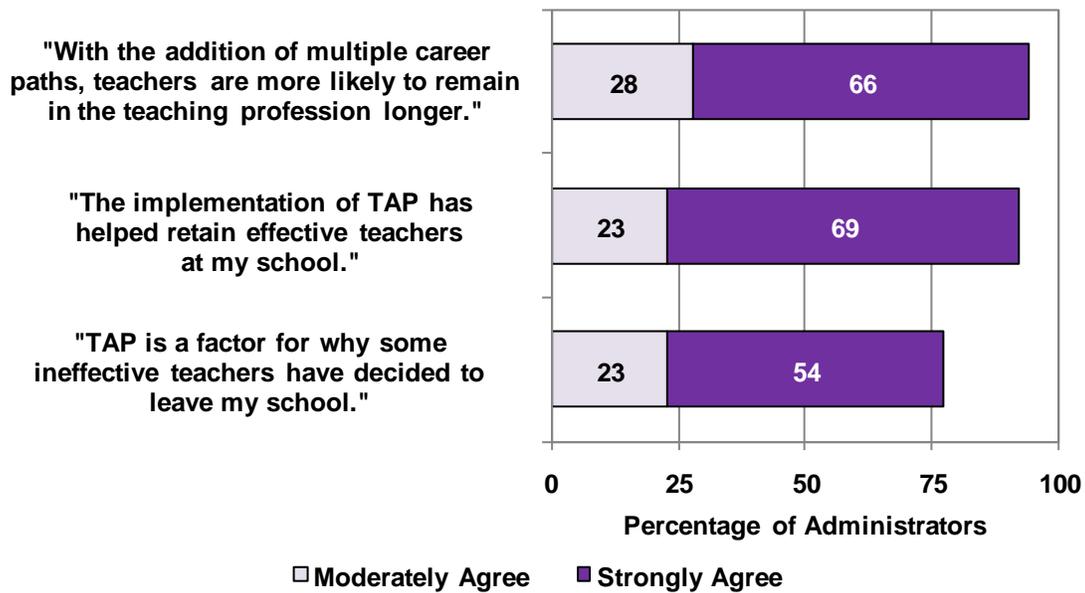
Updated 2/3/2012

n = 4487 teacher-year cases from 2009-2010

Turnover includes teachers who became administrators, moved to non-TAP schools, or left teaching. Turnover does not include teachers who stayed in TAP, including master and mentor teachers.

The majority of TAP school administrators report that TAP has made it easier for them to hire effective teachers. Furthermore, they report that the TAP system makes it attractive for effective teachers to stay at a school rather than leaving the school or leaving the profession. The positive impact of TAP on teacher retention is shown by the following administrator survey results from 2011:

Figure 10: Principal Survey Results on Teacher Retention and Effectiveness



n = 471 school administrators from 165 schools responding in 2011 (77%)

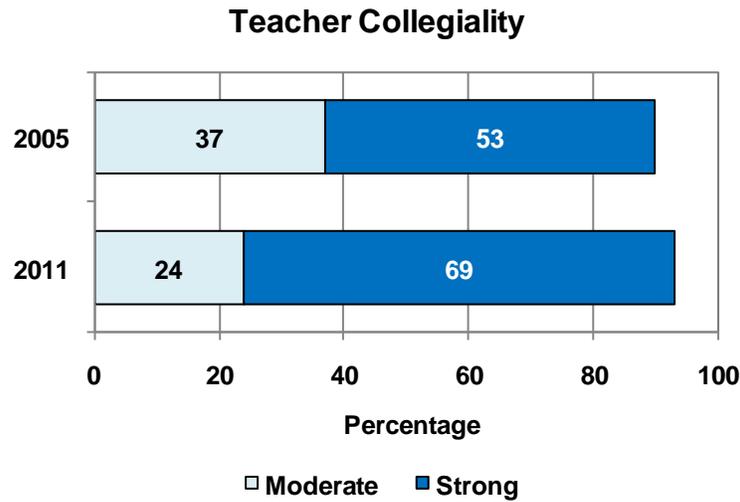
These positive effects on recruitment and retention are especially notable because TAP primarily serves high-need schools, historically the hardest schools to staff. Evidence suggests that TAP attracts high-quality teachers to low-socioeconomic-status (SES) schools. One TAP district reported that 75% of teachers in master teacher positions transferred from higher-socioeconomic-status schools to lower-socioeconomic-status TAP schools. Another district reported that the majority of their master and mentor teachers have consistently chosen to work at TAP schools located in the lower-socioeconomic-status sections of the district. To an effective teacher, a TAP school stands out from other high-need schools because the TAP system provides rigorous teacher evaluations, offers incentives for teachers who show effectiveness, and supports those who are willing to develop their instructional skills.

6. Teachers and principals report high levels of support for TAP as well as a high degree of collegiality in TAP schools.

Critics of performance incentives for teachers claim that they will result in competitiveness and a loss of collegiality among teachers. In fact we find evidence of a **high degree of collegiality in TAP schools**. In the 2011 TAP national survey of teacher attitudes, 93% of teachers in TAP schools agree with statements reporting a high level of collegiality in their schools, and 69% report strong agreement. This evidence for collegiality has grown from year to year, as shown in Figure 11.¹¹

¹¹ The five dimensions represented in this and the next figure are constructed from multiple teacher survey items using factor analysis. Most items in the survey are based on a 5-point Likert scale indicating agreement (1=Not at All and 5=Very Much). For reporting purposes on collegiality and the four TAP elements, the results are presented as Moderate (weighted average of 3 on the items for that factor) and Strong (weighted average of 4 or 5 on the items for that factor).

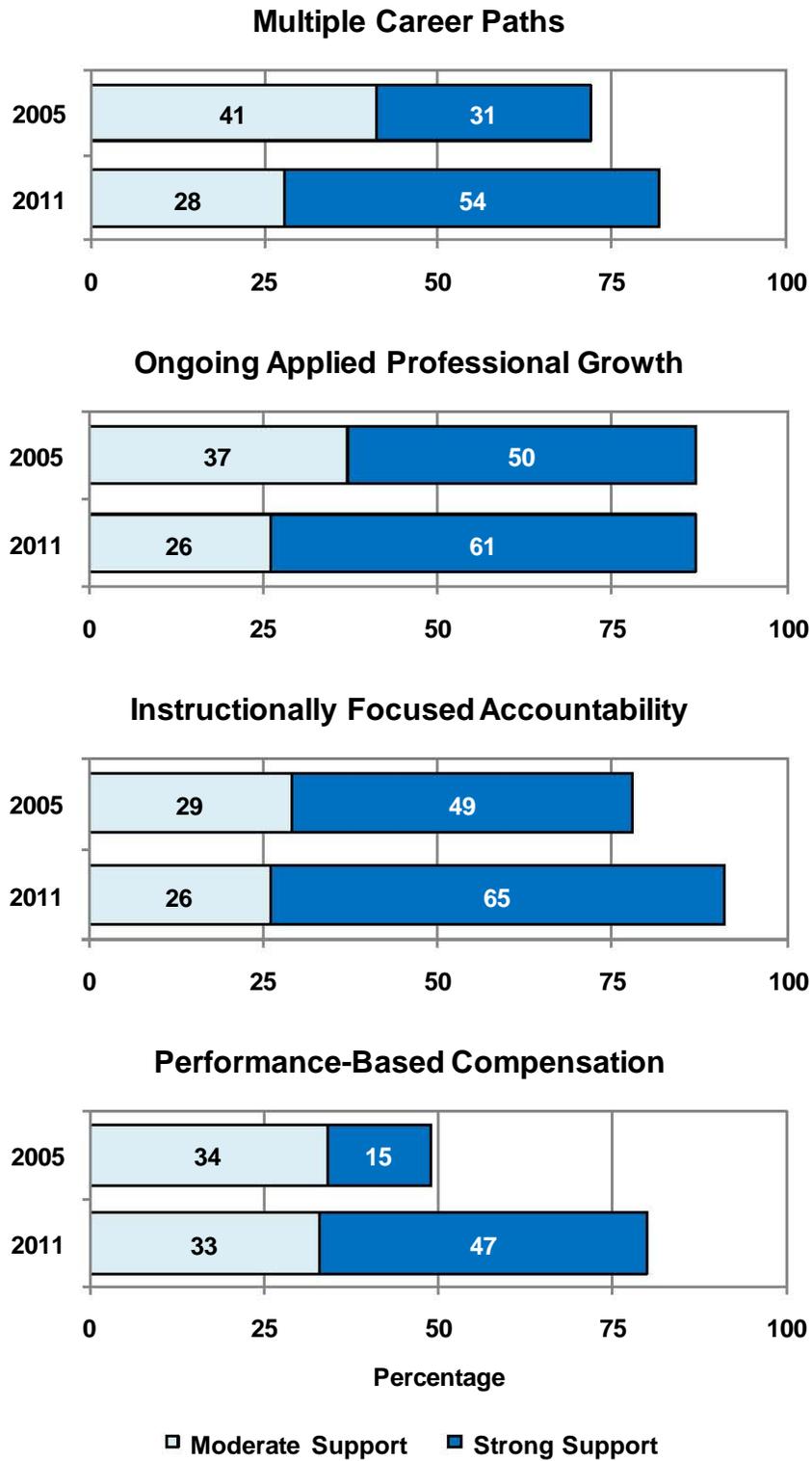
Figure 11: The Presence of Collegiality in TAP Schools



n = 5,839 teachers responding (78%) in 2011

Simultaneously, levels of support for the elements of TAP *including accountability and performance-based compensation* are also high and growing, as shown in Figure 12. When combined with professional growth in an applied, collaborative setting, accountability and performance-based compensation are compatible with collegiality. Whatever concerns teachers may have once had over the shift in culture to performance-based compensation and accountability are tempered by the TAP cluster groups that provide teachers with a shared path toward improvement and naturally facilitate collegiality.

Figure 12: Teacher Support for TAP Elements

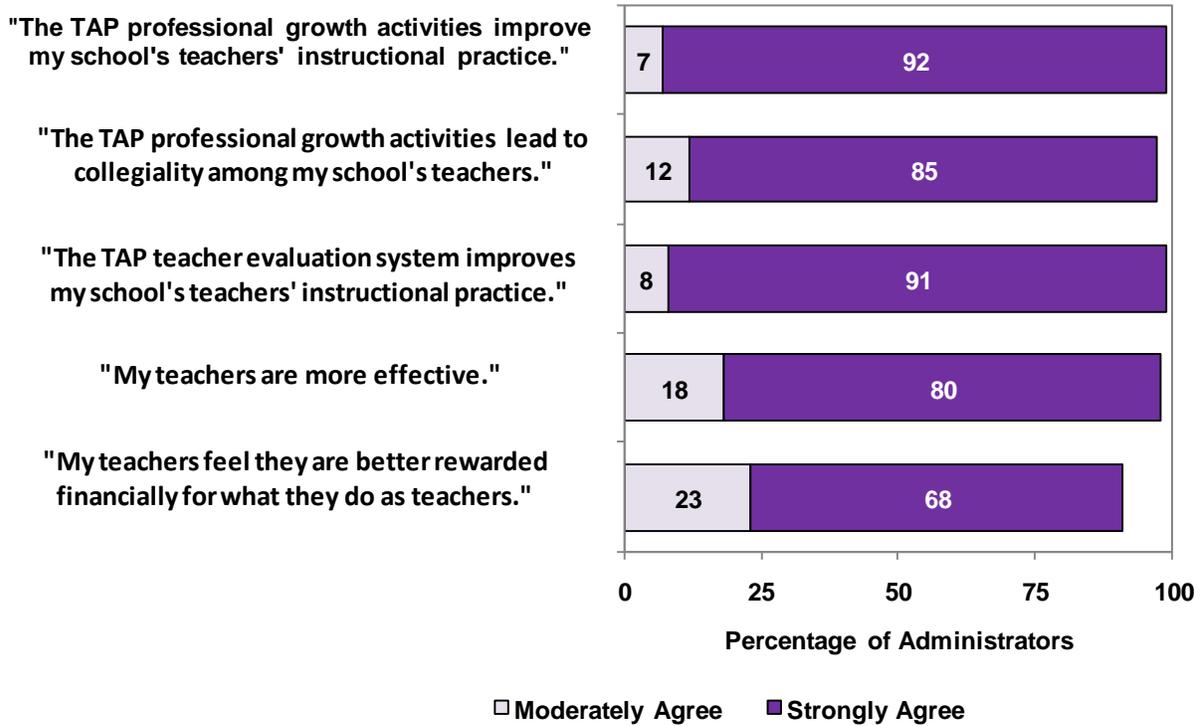


n = 5,839 teachers responding (78%) in 2011

Principal Survey Results

The above results from the TAP teacher survey are echoed by results from the 2011 TAP principal survey. Principals have overwhelmingly reported that TAP has a positive effect on collegiality, *along with teacher practice, effectiveness and satisfaction*, as shown in Figure 13.

Figure 13: Principal Survey Results on TAP Outcomes



n = 471 school administrators from 165 schools responding in 2011 (77%)

Conclusion

The TAP system stands out because of its more than a decade-long track record of growth and success in raising student achievement in high-need schools. The research evidence also reveals some of the reasons for that positive impact: an evaluation system capable of differentiating teacher performance levels and providing detailed feedback for improvement, ongoing professional growth in classroom practice using student and teacher data to guide improvement, recruitment and retention of effective teachers, and the creation of a challenging, rewarding, and collegial environment focused on high-quality instruction and student learning.

APPENDIX A

Comments on the 2008 NCPI Report

The 2008 working paper published by the National Center for Performance Incentives (NCPI) reports positive results for TAP in elementary schools. Secondary school results were mixed. However, the results for high schools were apparently based on only two schools, and with test data for only a handful of teachers in each of those schools.

The authors of this study made some important modeling assumptions that were questionable. First, they assumed that all TAP schools in the study had voluntarily chosen to enter TAP and *when* to enter TAP. Second, they assumed that schools implementing TAP in earlier years were more highly motivated than those entering in later years. Finally, they assumed that there were no cohort effects for schools entering TAP in different years for any reason *other* than motivation to enter TAP. The combination of these assumptions led the authors to discount results from schools that entered TAP earlier as being due to selection bias.

The history of TAP implementation calls all three of these assumptions into question. In one district, all schools were required to enter TAP over a multiple year period, so there was no teacher vote (contrary to recommended TAP guidelines). Some of the more motivated schools with stronger leadership chose to wait until later to enter TAP, so they would be better prepared to hit the ground running. In many districts, schools with higher historical teacher turnover were encouraged to enter TAP earlier than other schools. So it is incorrect to make broad assumptions about selection of schools and the timing of their entry into TAP.

In addition, the TAP theory of action includes ongoing support for instructional improvement over time, so genuine TAP results might improve over a period of several years. To discount schools that have been in TAP longer may be to ignore some of the strongest TAP effects for the wrong reason. Nevertheless, even after modeling these questionable assumptions, the authors found positive effects for TAP in most grades. In fact, given an alternative assumption about the time factor in implementation, these results stand as evidence that TAP schools increase their positive impact over time.

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