

# PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER: Educators on the New State Model Evaluation System



COLORADO  
Department of Education

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INITIATIVE

## Overview

In 2010, Colorado enacted [Senate Bill 10-191 \(S.B. 10-191\)](#), which requires annual educator evaluations based on statewide [Teacher](#) and [Principal Quality standards](#). In addition, at least half of an educator's evaluation must be based on student academic growth, or [measures of student learning \(MSLs\)](#). To help districts implement S.B. 10-191 and meet the new evaluation requirements, the Colorado Department of Education developed the [State Model Evaluation System](#); to date, at least 160 of the 178 districts in the state have opted in to the system.

The results of a recent survey conducted in 25 districts by The Colorado Education Initiative and the Colorado Department of Education suggest that the majority of teachers understand the Teacher Quality Standards and S.B. 10-191, support the State Model Evaluation System, and believe the feedback they receive from their evaluators is useful.<sup>1</sup> Despite the perception that feedback from the evaluation is useful, teachers remain skeptical about the effectiveness, fairness, and accuracy of the State Model Evaluation System, although principals generally have more positive perceptions overall. Analyses of open-ended responses suggest that many teachers think the State Model Evaluation System is on the right track, but they are concerned about the time burden placed on teachers and principals as well as the challenges of using the new evaluation system with certain groups of

teachers (e.g., elementary, special education, and nonclassroom teachers). Teachers and principals also express an interest in receiving more training on the State Model Evaluation System. Given these concerns, the Colorado Department of Education is rolling out a [new performance management system](#) to assist with the time burden and is creating practical implementation briefs to support specialized teachers in using the system.

## About the Findings

Twenty-five Colorado districts participated in a pilot of the State Model Evaluation System while also implementing the Colorado Academic Standards and new assessments aligned to the standards. As part of this pilot, The Colorado Education Initiative and the Colorado Department of Education surveyed teachers and principals in these districts in the spring of 2014 about their experiences with the State Model Evaluation System for teachers. Unless otherwise noted, the findings presented here reflect the percentage of teachers or principals who agree or strongly agree.<sup>2</sup>

*"The new teacher evaluation rubric is robust, thorough, and well-researched. We never had a tool like this before. The whole system ... has enabled me to implement SB 191 efficiently and effectively. I could not have done it without such a resource."*  
- Secondary principal

## Teacher Understanding and Support

Approximately two-thirds of teachers have a good or complete understanding of both the Teacher Quality Standards and S.B. 10-191. When a similar survey was administered in 2013, these figures were substantially lower, indicating that teachers' knowledge of the State Model Evaluation System has grown (see Figure 1).<sup>3</sup> Additionally, the majority of teachers (52 percent) support the State Model Evaluation System, although fewer believe that it is currently effective (29 percent).

Figure 1. Teacher Understanding of the Teacher Quality Standards and S.B. 10-191



<sup>1</sup> The findings presented here only represent the views of teachers who reported that they have participated in the State Model Evaluation System in the 2013-2014 school year.

<sup>2</sup> Most responses have a four-point scale: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. If responses also include a neutral option, all responses are presented in the accompanying figures.

<sup>3</sup> These percentages only reflect the responses of teachers who completed the survey in both the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years.

# Teacher Perceptions

Figure 2 presents teacher perceptions of various characteristics of the State Model Evaluation System, including whether it is fair and accurate.<sup>4</sup> While a majority of teachers (68 percent) believe that it sets high standards for the person being evaluated, fewer believe it documents changes in professional practice over time (44 percent) or encompasses all aspects of teaching (40 percent). Furthermore, less than half of teachers report that the system is fair, accurate, or based on current research. However, a large percentage of teachers also respond in the neutral category for each of these questions, possibly indicating that a relatively small percentage of teachers believe the system is inherently unfair, inaccurate, or not based on current research.

*"I feel that the new evaluation system is effective, however, it is extremely time-consuming for teachers and administrators. Also, I think it is very difficult for administrators to observe each and every one of the teacher quality standards throughout the year in order to give accurate ratings for all the teachers in a building."*  
 – Elementary teacher

**Figure 2. Teacher Perceptions of the State Model Evaluation System Characteristics**



# Feedback for Teachers

Providing teachers with high-quality feedback is one of the primary goals of the State Model Evaluation System. As demonstrated in Table 1, the vast majority of teachers receive feedback from their evaluator that is informative. Twenty-nine percent of teachers receive more feedback with the State Model Evaluation System than they did with the previous system. Most teachers (55 percent) receive feedback at the same frequency.

**Table 1. Teacher Perceptions of Evaluator Feedback**

Survey item	Teachers who agree
<i>I have meaningful opportunities to confer with my principal/evaluator about my practice.</i>	76%
<i>The information I receive from my principal/evaluator helps me identify areas for improvement.</i>	75%
<i>My principal/evaluator helps me identify professional development opportunities to address my specific areas for improvement.</i>	67%

<sup>4</sup> Percentages in Figures 2 and 3 may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

## Teacher Understanding of Measures of Student Learning Used in Evaluation

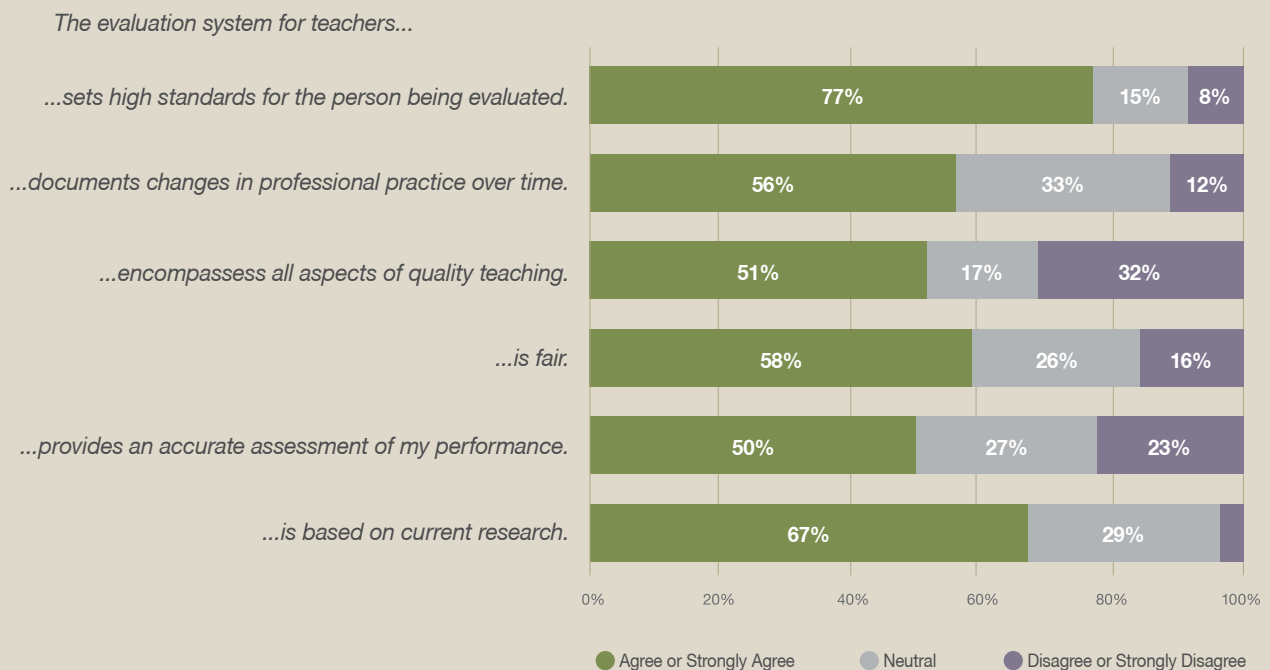
The 2013-2014 school year was the first year measures of student learning were implemented, even in the 25 districts that piloted the State Model Evaluation System. Nearly three-quarters of teachers report that they know what measures of student learning are included in their evaluation, which indicates that, for the most part, districts are communicating this information to their staff. Furthermore, educators and other stakeholders were heavily engaged in developing systems for incorporating measures of student learning in evaluation. The majority of teachers (63 percent) participated in selecting the measures of student learning included in their evaluation, which can have substantial positive effects on their perceptions and use of the measures (see [Putting the Pieces Together: Educators on New Assessments](#)).

*"We could use more professional development to understand the processes and expectations. ... I would like to see training occur at the beginning of the year to truly make the evaluation system a tool that benefits student progress."*  
 - Elementary teacher

## Principal Perceptions of the State Model Evaluation System for Teachers

Overall, principals have more positive perceptions of the State Model Evaluation System for teachers than teachers themselves. Eighty-nine percent have a good or complete understanding of the Teacher Quality Standards, and 92 percent have a good or complete understanding of S.B. 10-191 — more than 20 percent higher than teacher understanding. Additionally, nearly 70 percent of principals support the State Model Evaluation System for teachers, and 43 percent think that it is effective — substantially more principals than teachers. As shown in Figure 3, principals also have more positive perceptions of various characteristics of the State Model Evaluation System for teachers.

**Figure 3. Principal Perceptions of State Model Evaluation System Characteristics**



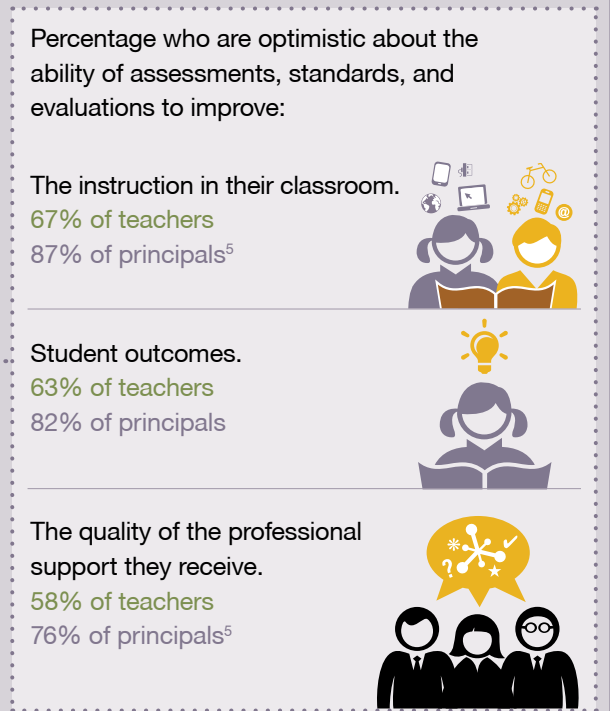
## Connection with Other Initiatives

It is also important to highlight the connections between the evaluation system and standards and assessments. The findings suggest that districts that integrate their work in these three areas are also able to build more responsive systems for their educators and students. To better understand this dynamic, both teachers and principals were asked about their overall perceptions of the interconnectedness of assessments, standards, and evaluation systems in their districts. As shown in Figure 4, the majority of teachers and principals believe their district policies are aligned with assessments, standards, and evaluation systems, with the strongest perceived alignment between the new standards and assessments. A majority of teachers and principals also report that they are optimistic about the ability of these initiatives to positively impact instruction, student outcomes, and the quality of professional support for teachers (see Figure 5).

**Figure 4. Educator Perceptions of Alignment in District Policies Regarding Assessments, Standards, and Evaluation**



**Figure 5. Educator Optimism about Initiatives**



*"Thank you for the opportunity to voice feedback. I feel your work will eventually, when trimmed and tuned, provide a positive, valuable system to help instruction improve in Colorado."*  
 - Elementary teacher

<sup>5</sup> The principal versions of these two items are slightly different: "instruction in their school" rather than classroom and "professional support they can provide teachers in their school" rather than what they receive.