FELLOWSHIP REPORT BY

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2014 CHURCHILL FELLOW

ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEVEL OF INSTRUCTIONAL EXCELLENCE THROUGH EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT OBSERVATION, EVALUATION AND REFLECTION TO POSITIVELY INFLUENCE STUDENT OUTCOMES.

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Acknowledgements:

I take this opportunity to formally congratulate the individuals who significantly contributed to my Churchill Fellowship and studies. I feel humbled to have been allowed to spend 5 weeks in the United States undertaking research into an area that interests me greatly. This experience was made possible by the generous and professional support of the Churchill Trust and the vast array of outstanding individuals who have preceded me on fellowships around the world. It is a great honour to be associated with this organisation and past, current and future fellows.

My emotional well-being could not have been sustained if not for the enduring support of my loving wife, Sara and family. I am also extremely proud to be associated with the Western Australian Department of Education and thank its Director General, Ms Sharon O’Neill who supported me in undertaking this quest. Additionally, I would like to thank Professor Lyn Beazley, personal referee, who has inspired so many, as well as me, to pursue knowledge and understanding. Thank you also to my professional colleagues: Ms Keren Caple, Ms Judy Petch and the outstanding staff of Shenton College who have inspired me to be a life-long learner. Finally to all of the educators and researchers in the U.S. who generously gave up their time and knowledge to support me in my quest to understand more about my project’s aim. This project would not have been possible if not for those individuals who made significant contributions to my study and were so generous with their time:

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**Connecticut:** University of Connecticut / Neag School of Education - Dean Richard Schwab, Dr Del Siegle, Dr Suzanne Wilson, Dr Dorothea Anagnostopolous, Dr Morgaen Donaldson, Prof. Joseph Renzulli & Hartford Public Schools

**Illinois, Chicago:** University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research / Urban Education Institute - Al Bertani, Elliot Ranson, Jennie Jiang, Lauren Sartain; Learning Forward – Frederick Brown

**Massachusetts, Boston:** Harvard University / Center for Education Policy Research – Prof. Tom Kane; Prof. Corinne Herlihy, Prof. Miriam Greenberg; Tripod Education Partners- Rob Ramsdell; Panorama Education – Aaron Feuer

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**San Francisco:** Edthena – Erik Brown
Executive Summary:

In 2014 I applied for the Churchill Fellowship as Principal of Shenton College, Western Australia. Shenton College is a very successful public school whose teachers are generally both highly effective and highly reflective. As a result of recent changes across Australian schools in teaching standards and teacher expectations we have seen modifications to how classroom observations are conducted. Many teachers and administrators are keen to improve their level of reflection, the quality of teacher-to-teacher collaboration and construct meaningful classroom observation and feedback protocols. I conducted my Churchill Fellowship in April/May 2015 around the extensive research undertaken by the Gates Foundation, Seattle USA into the Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) project. The MET Project was designed to determine if effective teaching can be measured. The Gates Foundation released in January 2013 their third and final component report. It claimed that valid teacher evaluations should include “balanced” triangulations between teacher observations, student perception surveys and student achievement gains in standardised test scores. The MET project further highlighted Australian research that concluded: teachers differ dramatically in their performance, with large consequences for students; that quality teaching makes a significant difference on student learning; and that there is a need for effective teaching measures and teaching framework in schools. As a result of the support of the Churchill Trust I was able to visit and meet with educators and researchers involved with the MET study in the United States and observe how the key findings of the MET project had been implemented into schools in the United States (U.S) to improve student outcomes.

As a result of my Fellowship study I was able to ascertain that the MET findings have been significant in changing how teachers are evaluated and how evaluation is conducted in many schools in the United States. Furthermore, that classroom observation alone does not allow for accurate or precise measures of quality teaching or teaching effectiveness. My Fellowship study enabled me to ascertain that many researchers and practitioners felt that teacher classroom observation accuracy and reliability improved significantly when more than one observer was involved in the process. Furthermore, researchers, administrators and teachers alike stated that the evaluation process was deemed more reliable when multiple measures were used; when teachers were involved and trained as observers; and students could contribute to the evaluation and feedback process. Whilst I noted extensive difference exists between and within the various states that I visited, in terms of how they conducted observation, evaluation and reflection, there was a consistency amongst all education practitioners in that they placed importance on frameworks for teaching. Disagreement however, exists in the way these teacher-framework rubrics are used to improve teachers’ performance and improve learning outcomes for students. Finally, it became very clear that there is a need now to go “beyond accountability” and “evaluation” to a culture of teacher development, reflection, support and improvement. I believe that we have an opportunity in Australia to move beyond an evaluation system to systems that generate teachers and teaching that improve student outcomes by effectively improving teacher delivery, teacher collaboration and teacher self- reflection. Whilst it is vital we have a measure, it is clear that we have an opportunity to create more than a principal-generated measure of a classroom teacher's effectiveness. By empowering both the teacher and the student in the reflection and feedback process we create deeper understanding of a teacher’s practice and improve student outcomes.

I have already commenced the dissemination of my findings. I have been scheduled to meet with my professional referee and direct line manager Ms. Sharyn O’Neill, Director General of the Department of Education, Western Australia and with my Regional Executive Director Mr. Jim Webb. I have been invited to disseminate my findings to all Metropolitan Network Principals. I will provide a briefing of the findings of this report to my local professional networks and to the Independent Public Schools Advisory Group. I will deliver a presentation on my findings at the State’s Schools Teachers’ Union (WA) School Leaders Forum in August, and will present to principals and leaders associated with both primary and secondary schools via a range of forums including the Department of Education’s Workforce Policy and Coordination division.
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Summary, Findings and Discussions

1.

Designing teacher evaluation systems: Gates Foundation and Seattle Public Schools

The MET project, which was funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, was a collaboration between dozens of independent research teams and nearly 3,000 teacher volunteers from seven U.S. public school districts. In January 2013, the MET project released its third and final set of findings (Appendix A), which sought to answer three questions from practitioners and policy-makers: Can measures of effective teaching identify teachers who better help students learn?; How much weight should be placed on each measure of effective teaching when combining classroom observations, student surveys, and student achievement gains?; and how can teachers be assured trustworthy results from classroom observations?

Appendix A: third and final research report:

Evidence collected and analysed throughout my visit supports the claim of Vicki Phillips, Director of Education, College Ready Program at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, that the MET has provided “tailored feedback designed to help each teacher continuously grow and improve”. The MET project has further highlighted the importance of identifying great teaching by combining three specific types of measures: classroom observations, student perception surveys, and student achievement gains. The Gates Foundation’s work through this project has accumulated a valuable video resource bank of recorded lessons to provide teachers with feedback and support. Furthermore, it has attempted to answer the key teaching questions: What are the teaching skills needed to be developed by schools and systems? What is the specific help that teachers need to develop these skills and who and how should feedback be given? Bill Gates and the Foundation have been clear in their belief that teachers and aspiring teachers need real feedback in the form of classroom observations. Furthermore, that classroom observations are conducted against agreed teaching standards, conducted by certified observers and preferably recorded using video. This stated it seems that the current system in some Seattle Public Schools (SPS) was to use more in-person, non-recorded observations (Principal-Teacher) against a teacher evaluation rubric [the rubric most commonly discussed was Charlotte Danielson Rubric (Appendix B)]. Several educators and administrators commented on the potential inefficiencies of this methodology: It is resource intensive; it is expensive to get trained professionals to physically observe classrooms, provide relief and provide the time needed to effectively provide feedback.

The Danielson Framework for Teaching clearly identifies those aspects of a teacher’s responsibilities that have been documented through empirical studies and theoretical research as promoting improved student learning. The Danielson Framework seeks to define what teachers should know and be able to do in their profession. Several editions of the Framework are in existence and used by schools in the U.S. The 2013 edition of the Danielson Framework for Teaching Evaluation Instrument was developed to respond to the instructional implications of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) within the United States. Due to a common philosophy between the CCSS and the Danielson Framework,
Danielson made modifications to the language within the Framework to bring it into alignment with The Standards (CCSS). The Danielson Framework is a well-developed and generic instrument that has placed significant effort into identifying key components of the complex task of teaching. Originally developed in 1996, the Framework is now used nationally to document and develop teaching practice. In all states that I visited, an edition of the Danielson Framework or a modified versions of the Framework was used in by teachers and/or principals as part of teacher evaluation or feedback. Most states visited, used a modified version of the Danielson Framework as part of their own default classroom observation rubric. Several districts within these states used a variety of other tools to evaluate and reflect on teaching practice.

Appendix B: Danielson’s Framework for Teaching Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Performance/Rating</th>
<th>General Description</th>
<th>Specific Rubric for 3B: Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unsatisfactory</td>
<td>Teaching is below the standard of “do no harm” and requires immediate intervention.</td>
<td>Teacher’s questions are low-level or inappropriate, eliciting limited student participation and recitation rather than discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>Teacher understands the components of teaching, but implementation is sporadic.</td>
<td>Some of the teacher’s questions elicit a thoughtful response, but most are low-level, posed in rapid succession. Teacher attempts to engage all students in the discussion are only partially successful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td>Teacher has mastered the work of teaching.</td>
<td>Most of the teacher’s questions elicit a thoughtful response, and the teacher allows sufficient time for students to answer. All students participate in the discussion, with the teacher stepping aside when appropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distinguished</td>
<td>Teacher has established a community of learners with students assuming responsibility for their own learning.</td>
<td>Questions reflect high expectations and are culturally and developmentally appropriate. Students formulate many of the high-level questions and ensure that all voices are heard.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I believe that teacher reflection, pre-service teaching, teacher certification, teacher accreditation, and teacher evaluation would all benefit from an Australia-wide online video portal for recording and observing lessons. These recorded lessons could be evaluated against a rubric (AITSL standards) stored and shared via a portal and with capabilities that allow for classroom observations to be time-stamped recorded and enabling teachers, peers...
and administrators to evaluate the lesson against this rubric. If this video bank had generic lessons across phases of learning, linked to AITSL standards and the AITSL continuum, with direct links to professional learning and areas for improvement, it would provide teachers with verifiable, timely, longitudinal and valuable feedback. This use of video technology could also allow for multiple observers, including peer observation and allow the teacher to review specific parts of the lesson to focus on key areas of development. Finally, a video recorded methodology and central portal would be more cost effective and have the advantage of portability and support in remote and rural schools. This could provide greater support for teachers in regional areas across Western Australia.

2.

2.1. Teacher Evaluation in Chicago Schools - The University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCSR), The Illinois Education Research Council (IERC) and Chicago Urban Education Institute

The University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCSR) is a unit of the University of Chicago Urban Education Institute and was created in 1990 after the decentralised governance of the city of Chicago's public schools system. Researchers at the University of Chicago joined with researchers from the school district and other organisations to form the CCSR. The aim of the organisation is to study decentralised restructuring and its long-term effects. CCSR has undertaken research on many of Chicago's school reform efforts, many of which have been embraced by other cities and states in the United States. CCSR studies have clearly informed broader national movements in public education across the U.S. and have had significant influence on the discussion on how teachers are evaluated, how teachers reflect on their lessons and teaching practice and what professional development is accessed by teachers. CCSR have a vast array of trained investigators and have accumulated a wealth of data and findings on teacher evaluation and teacher effectiveness. Most importantly, CCSR is clearly viewed by educators within Chicago and across the United States as making important contributions to national school policy reform around teacher evaluation. I focused my time in Chicago looking at how CCSR has used research findings and data to inform and drive school and teacher evaluation reform and build capacity for policy makers, schools, leaders and teachers.

Trained investigators at the CCSR and in the Urban Education Institute (UEI) highlight the recent and increased attention policymakers in Chicago public schools have placed on teacher evaluation. Whilst researchers comment on the technical reliability of the evaluation tools used, most of the discussion from teachers and administrators was on their perceived benefit of the current evaluation system. The system in Chicago Public schools (CPS) focuses on principal and/or trained raters’ evaluations of a teacher’s classroom practice (observations). Additional focus is placed on student achievement gains (value adding). One of the stated benefits of using classroom observations as part of an evaluation system is that they can have a duality of purpose: they have the potential to meet the needs of supporting professional development and differentiating teacher practice and effectiveness. Trained investigators within CCSR commented that when observations are reliable, valid, comprehensive and meaningful they provide teachers with timely and specific feedback on their teaching practice. Observations conducted in this manner are deemed to be highly
beneficial by teachers and principals. Additionally, observation feedback should be linked to peer coaching and professional development.

Studies conducted by CCSR concluded that principals felt that observation ratings provide administrators with “standardised and defensible evidence for making personnel decisions” [CCSR Report S.E. Sporte et al (2013) - Teacher evaluation in Practice (Research Report)]. However, using classroom observations for both punitive and developmental purposes can result in confusion and mistrust from teachers. Healy (2013) [CCSR Report S.E. Sporte et al (2013) - Teacher evaluation in Practice (Research Report)] concluded that some teachers were less likely to seek instructional support from administrators if exposing their weaknesses could result in a poor evaluation, further highlighting that teachers do not respond positively to encouragement from administrators after receiving low ratings or disciplinary actions from them. Mead et al (2013) [CCSR Report S.E. Sporte et al (2013) - Teacher evaluation in Practice (Research Report)] concluded that some teachers were less likely to seek instructional support from administrators if exposing their weaknesses could result in a poor evaluation, further highlighting that teachers do not respond positively to encouragement from administrators after receiving low ratings or disciplinary actions from them. Mead et al (2013) [CCSR Report S.E. Sporte et al (2013) - Teacher evaluation in Practice (Research Report)] concluded that some teachers were less likely to seek instructional support from administrators if exposing their weaknesses could result in a poor evaluation, further highlighting that teachers do not respond positively to encouragement from administrators after receiving low ratings or disciplinary actions from them.

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) started down the teacher evaluation process earlier than most states in the U.S. and has done extensive reviews on the teacher evaluation process. CPS started implementing classroom observation rubrics as early as 2008 under former CPS chief Arne Duncan, who is now U.S. Secretary of Education. The standard teacher evaluation system used by CPS for over 30 years compared with evidence-based evaluation is referenced in the table below [Evaluation Systems Across the Country Are Changing]. The traditional teacher evaluation based on classroom observation used a standard observation checklist. The principals rate teacher performance against a number of areas as either a strength, a weakness, or does not apply. At the end of the school year, principals provide teachers with a final performance evaluation rating. In this traditional approach, the America teacher evaluation, teachers were provided little to no feedback. No pre- or post-meetings were conducted, observations times and frequencies varied, no opportunity for peer or accredited observations was provided and there was no capacity for flexibility based on the tenure of the teacher, permanency of the teacher, specialisation or content of the class (eg. Special needs, Mathematics). Teachers evaluated against this traditional evaluation methodology were rarely identified as Unsatisfactory (0.3 percent) or not meeting a standard. Furthermore, 93 percent of teachers in the district of CPS were rated as Excellent/Superior.
Policymakers in Chicago responded to imperfections in the traditional evaluation systems by demanding that districts use a great array of data in the evaluation of a teacher to meet a standard, specifically requesting that data on student academic growth be part of the evaluation process. The U.S. Department of Education advanced this agenda by requiring states competing for $4.35 billion in federal “Race to the Top” funds to remove any existing legal barriers to linking student achievement data to teacher evaluations [U.S Department of Education (2009)].

In 2008 CPS launched the Excellence in Teaching Pilot, focused on instructional improvement through the use of an evaluation rubric that clearly defined the components of effective teaching and guided classroom observations and pre- and post-meetings (conferences) between principals and teachers. This Excellence in Teaching pilot consisted of training and support for principals (Table – Principal Training), as well as training for teachers (Table - and Teacher Training) around how to conduct pre- and post-meetings with teachers and how to effectively use the Danielson Framework.
### Principal Training

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal Training</th>
<th>When</th>
<th>What</th>
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<tr>
<td>Summer Institute</td>
<td>Three days in the summer prior to</td>
<td>Initial overview of the pilot system and the Danielson Framework. Principals attended with their assistant principal and 1–2 teacher leaders of their choosing. Day 1: Framework Domain 2 (Classroom Environment) and the levels of performance (Unsatisfactory, Basic, Proficient, Distinguished). Principals watched a video of a lesson and rated it in Domain 2. Day 2: Framework Domain 3 (Instruction), as well as Domains 1 (Planning and Preparation) and 4 (Professional Responsibilities). The afternoon was devoted to cognitive coaching strategies. Day 3: Logistics of implementation, including observation and conference requirements, guidelines for gathering evidence and entering data, how the pilot aligns with district goals, and information about the CCSR study.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>summer implementation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Half-Day Refreshers</td>
<td>Four times throughout the school year</td>
<td>Session 1 (October): Strategies for time management in response to principal concerns about observation scheduling and documentation. Principals also watched a video of a lesson, wrote down evidence, and assigned Danielson levels of performance. Session 2 (November): Charlotte Danielson spoke at this session. She provided a lot of specific guidance in response to principal concerns. CCSR also shared early results from the classroom observation data, looking at principal ratings and observer ratings. Session 3 (February): This session was the last session before principals gave non-tenured teachers final evaluation ratings for the year, so trainers offered guidance in this area. Each principal received a detailed report from CCSR showing how their ratings compared to the observer ratings, and half of the session was devoted to analyzing these reports. Principals also watched a video of a lesson, wrote down evidence, and assigned Danielson levels of performance. Session 4 (March): A wrap-up session in which principals brainstormed effective ways to improve teaching practice by planning school-level professional development on components that were taught for teachers to master. They reviewed gathering evidence for Domain 1 and 4. Principals revisited interview questions for new hires based on the Framework expectations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional Learning</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>Principals attended those meetings with other principals clustered in the same geographical area. The content of these sessions was driven by the principals’ needs. Principals brought samples of classroom observation notes, conference forms, and completed Frameworks to discuss with other principals. Administrators also shared shortcuts and tips.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>One-on-One Technical</td>
<td>By request</td>
<td>Principals received one-on-one support from a highly trained observer. The principal and the observer co-observe a lesson, and the observer provides support in using the Framework to document that lesson.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
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### Teacher Training

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<th>Teacher Training</th>
<th>When</th>
<th>What</th>
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<tr>
<td>School-Based In-Service</td>
<td>Two 1.5-hour sessions in the fall</td>
<td>Session 1 (August before school started): The principal introduced the session to all teaching staff, while district staff conducted the rest of the in-service. Initial overview of the Danielson Framework and the levels of performance. Session 2 (October/November): District staff led the session, which went deeper into Domain 3 (Instruction). Teachers also watched a video lesson, collected evidence, and rated the lesson.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sessions</td>
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In 2010, the State of Illinois passed the Performance Evaluation Reform Act requiring all districts to implement a standards-based teacher evaluation system with a student achievement indicator, as well as teacher evaluation based on classroom observations using a “best practice” rubric. The legislation also specified all districts in the State of Illinois adopt classroom observations evaluations against a teacher framework and teacher evaluation methodologies that, in part, are determined by student achievement gains [Performance Evaluation Reform Act, Illinois Public Act 096-0861]. This reform act has had significant implications on other states and national teacher evaluation reform agendas in the United States.

Key findings of the research conducted by CCSR into teacher evaluation validity and reliability against a Teacher Rubric (Danielson Framework) and value-added measures identified there was a strong relationship between classroom observation ratings and value-added measures, and the relationship holds for math and reading test scores. Furthermore, CCSR state that in the classrooms of highly rated teachers, students showed the most growth and in the classrooms of teachers with low observation ratings, students showed the least growth. Trained investigators also highlighted the discrepancies that exist between raters and observer. CCSR state that principals rate teaching practice “reliably” at the low end and the middle of the scale. However, it also stated that principals were more likely to rate teaching practice as Distinguished when external observers rated practice only as Proficient against the Framework [Figure 2: Principals and observers gave similar proportions of Unsatisfactory and Basic ratings in most components, though principals were more likely to call practice Distinguished].
The use of value added measures or prescribing teacher effectiveness based on student achievement, student performance and/or student progress is controversial within schools in the United States. CCSR have done extensive research into this area in CPS and make some enlightening comments on the use of these metrics to determine teacher effectiveness and/or improve teacher reflection. The Consortium identifies the problem that relates specifically to limitations in Value-Added data system, highlighting the issue of identification. A problem arises when using student achievements against standardised test in identifying which students are actually taught by which teachers. Baker et al (2010) comment on the limitations of evaluating teachers based on the achievement of their students, as measured by standardised tests. Baker et al state that if this is to occur the system must be able to identify which teachers have taught which students and what their direct level of influence has been on those individual students. In a time where more and more schools are using collaborative teaching and team teaching sets and where we see split classes in a number of primary schools, it may become more complicated to establish direct accountability and responsibility. The added problem of matching students to teachers becomes more complicated in Australia with the existence of standardised test in only Mathematics and English (NAPLAN) and only across 4 stages of development (Year 3, 5, 7, 9).

Further to recommendations made by the MET study and supported by the Consortium, classroom observation is only one part of the evaluation process. If the focus is on teacher reflection, responsibility and improvement, the observer/teacher conversations become vital to the process. As we move beyond accountability to teacher reflection on practices against an agreed developmental framework, the manner, style, tone and level of instruction provided in the pre- and post-meetings (conferences) will become more important [Table – Examples of principal-dominated and teacher-driven conversations].
In summary, the key challenges identified by Chicago Public Schools in establishing teacher evaluation and reflection methodologies that improve student outcomes were in the way that the methodology used builds buy in; ensures reliability and provides flexibility. This has been clearly articulated by CCSR in 4 key challenge areas:

**CHALLENGE 1: Cultivating Buy-In and Understanding**

*Gather All Perspectives:* Stakeholders may be more likely to buy into evaluation systems — and the evaluation policy is more likely to improve — if they play an active role in developing its components, and if their feedback is incorporated throughout implementation.

*Develop a Shared Vision of Quality Instruction:* Creating clear, common, and high standards for teacher performance can facilitate productive collaboration between teachers and administrators. It can also help focus principals and teachers on what matters most for improving student learning.

*Train Teachers Early, Consistently, and Continuously:* Early and continuous training can help ensure that personnel throughout the district receive consistent information about the evaluation system. Training can also help facilitate teachers’ understanding of the importance of the system and how it works.
**Align Evaluation Reforms with Other District Initiatives:** Thoughtful and intentional alignment can reduce the perception that the new evaluation system will be burdensome or undercut other important district initiatives.

**Start Soon and Implement Gradually:** Early and gradual exposure to new teacher evaluation systems can reduce anxiety and promote general understanding about its components.

**CHALLENGE 2: Using Evaluation for Instructional Improvement**

**Build Evaluator Capacity:** Well-trained observers can more effectively and more accurately distinguish between levels of teacher performance, set clear expectations for teachers, and provide productive feedback on practice.

**Link Observations to Professional Development:** Coupling evaluation with professional development can drive improvement goals and focus support for teachers at all levels of performance.

**Conduct More Observations:** Observing teachers multiple times per year can help alleviate concerns about the accuracy of ratings, build teacher trust, and promote improvement.

**CHALLENGE 3: Reducing the Burden on Principals**

**Streamline the System:** Reducing the logistical demands placed on evaluators can help them conduct more observations, be more efficient, and focus on improvement.

**Use Multiple Observers:** Using multiple trained evaluators can reduce the time demands placed on principals and improve the reliability of ratings.

**CHALLENGE 4: Incorporating Student Growth into Teacher Evaluation Systems**

Although the majority of case study districts have not yet integrated student growth measures into their evaluation systems, the plans, experiences, and concerns of districts help illustrate the most challenging aspects of this issue: ensuring fairness and rigor across all subjects, incorporating multiple assessments that are reliable and valid, and helping teachers and principals understand how to use assessment data for school improvement.

Whilst trained investigators within the Consortium (CCSR) identified key concerns and questions for Chicago Public Schools, I believe the challenges raised have significant transference to Western Australian (WA) schools. Schools, principals and administrators will need to consider how they support teachers in the evaluation and reflection process and ensure fluid and open communication about the process. Schools will also need to focus on the way they build a reflective/evaluative culture to ensure shared ownership and buy-in occurs. Additionally, schools will need to ensure that the ratings and evaluation measures are accurate, consistent and informative. I believe we can learn from the Chicago case studies, how they have historically dealt with classroom observations and teacher evaluations and how they have implemented change into Chicago schools. Specifically, I believe they have lessons for us to learn about the challenges a school will encounter when implementing a new teacher evaluation and classroom observation performance management process. These challenges can be mitigated by ensuring:

- That all the stakeholders involved in the evaluation system play an active role in developing components of the system.

*Source: Research Brief (Nov 2012) Designing and implementing the next generation of teacher evaluation systems. B.R. White, J. Cowthy, W.D. Stevens, S.E. Sporte*
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• That the school has collaboratively formed and clearly articulated high expectation standards for teacher performance as part of their vision statement and has directly linked quality teaching to improving student learning.
• That once schools have provided an opportunity for teacher buy-in and ownership, they should start gradually and diversify the process. The timeliness, duration and frequency can vary depending on the stage, tenure, context and experience of the teacher. Commence now and implement slowly and gradually to reduce anxiety and always allow for flexibility.
• That staff are trained and certified in the process and build trainer capacity across a network of schools. Training and, more importantly, certification allows for greater trust, superior accuracy, improved judgment, clearer expectations and more effective feedback on practice.
• That teacher evaluation and feedback are linked to quality professional development.
• That teacher evaluations, classroom observations, student perception surveying and data analysis are cost and time effective.
• That where possible multiple observers and multiple observations are used to alleviate concerns of “rater-reliability”. The effective use of video also allows for peer and self-review, flexibility, and cost effectiveness.

2.2 Quality Professional Learning & Reflection on Practice: Learning Forward

In Chicago I spent time with Fred Brown, Learning Forward, an organisation that has recently revised Standards for Professional Learning, and Al Bertani (UEI), discussing the importance of professional learning in school settings and its direct link to teacher evaluation, reflection and improving student outcomes. Mr. Brown drew attention to the 2008 Paper from the Commonwealth of Australia that stated: “It is time for all stakeholders in schooling, in all jurisdictions and sectors, to engage in a vigorous dialogue and to take action to ensure that every child gets an excellent education and that every school is a great school.”

Commonwealth of Australia, 2008

Throughout the discussion Mr. Brown linked great schools to schools that have measures that allow teachers to be clear and reflective about their performance and have quality professional development and learning. An OECD 2009 review of evaluation and assessment in education confirmed the important link between teacher learning, clear performance expectations and progression and has recommended better alignment of professional development with teaching standards and career development (Santiago et al, 2011).

Mr Brown stressed that any effective evaluation of teaching must empower teachers to clearly reflect on their practice and must ensure that improvement avenues are linked to quality professional learning. Quality professional learning was highlighted by Mr Brown as fundamental to improving teacher capacity and teacher effectiveness. Learning Forward has outlined key components of quality professional learning, stating that the professional development must:
• Build the capability of teachers so that it continually improves teachers’ professional practice and, consequently, outcomes for school students.
• Contribute to the confidence and ability of teachers to apply their knowledge and skills flexibly and creatively in response to different and changing contexts.
• Support the development and retention of high quality, effective teachers.

Mr Brown highlighted work done by Learning Forward on observing variance between professional learning in schools within the United States and in other countries around the world. Specifically, Learning Forward focused its research on countries where school students were experiencing high levels of academic achievement. Learning Forward have identified patterns in those countries which have improved student learning outcomes and high academic achievement. Those common patterns were:

• Allowing significant time for professional learning and collegial discussion.
• Highlighting the importance of teacher planning in collegial settings (where teachers’ desks are located to facilitate collegiate work).
• Providing meeting times for departments and year / grade-level teams to meet and discuss student learning and learning outcomes.
• Ensuring graduate teachers and beginning teachers receive extensive mentoring and induction support. This further highlights the importance of graduate induction programs that focus on the development of teaching practice. Same-subject teacher groups and beginning teachers work either within or across different schools and collaborating in peer observation, coaching/observation of more experienced colleagues, and self/peer evaluation. Induction programs favoured were those that that clearly identified and provided quality mentor teachers and/or coaches to support each new graduate teacher into the profession and enabled them to have facilitated meetings in reflective groups.
• Ensuring teachers were empowered in the decision making process.

These patterns of success were highlighted the importance of empowering teachers in broad ranges of decision making process within the school context. By allowing great teacher buy-in Mr. Brown and Mr. Bertani commented on how this results in the formation of functional collaborative teaching teams which meet during regular working hours to discuss and make decisions on common matters of their work, planning and welfare of their students. This team structure could support the manner in which teachers reflect and evaluate practice. Furthermore, these teams could negotiate the frequency of observation, the potential format of peer observations, the structure of student perception surveys and the effective use of data to determine teaching effectiveness.

Senior Advisor from the Urban Education Institute, University of Chicago, U.S.A, Al Bertani added further insight into the constructs of quality professional learning and its direct relationship to improving student learning outcomes. Mr Bertani stated that If metrics are to be used to evaluate teachers then it is vital we use quality research-based frameworks. He highlighted earlier work published in 2010 by The University of Chicago Press; Organizing Schools for Improvement: Lessons from Chicago. In this publication, the five essentials for improving student learning and organisational performance in a school were highlighted:

• Effective Leaders: The Principal works with teachers to implement a clear and strategic vision for school success.
• Collaborative Teachers: The staff is committed to the school, receives strong professional development, and works together to improve the school.
ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

- Involved Families: The entire school staff builds strong relationships with families and communities to support learning.
- Supportive Environment: The school is safe and orderly. Teachers have high expectations for students. Students are supported by their teachers and peers.
- Ambitious Instruction: Classes are academically demanding and engage students by emphasizing the application of knowledge.

Source: The 5 Essentials [https://uchicagoimpact.org/5essentials]

This research drew on many years of data from over 675 schools, 300,000 plus students, and 20,000 teachers, and correlated student learning gains with the strength of performance in each of the Five Essentials. What I found particularly interesting was the importance placed on drawing on a broad range of data mechanisms when striving to provide greater clarity. In our effort to enhance the quality of teaching and level of instructional excellence we must be reminded of the different forms of data that can be collected and the how these methods of observation, surveying, achievement gains can be used individually or in combination with one another to provide a teacher, an administrator or an education system greater insight into teaching practices. By employing a mixed-methodology, both quantitative and qualitative, to data collection, evaluation and analysis and by empowering teachers and peers in the process, the information gathered can be used for summative evaluative purposes as well as for formative purposes. Thus the methodology for quality professional learning and quality teacher reflection share similarities.

Both professional learning and teacher reflection on practice benefit from surveying, interviewing, peer collaboration and observations. Surveys can provide a valuable source of evidence in assessing the impact of professional learning programs and the impact of the teacher on student learning. A survey can help track progress as well as identify implementation challenges that need to be addressed. Surveys can be customised for particular initiatives; there are also several commercial survey tools available that can be used. Interviews provide a highly personalised method of collecting information about the impact of professional learning, as well as the desired impact of the teacher on student learning. Collaborative groups, peer observations or leader-led observations serve both as a source of evidence in evaluating the teacher and as a source of the specific need the teacher has for tailor professional learning. Furthermore, it links the observation, evaluation or reflection to a standard or set of domains in a standard. It is vital that evaluation and reflection are linked to quality professional learning and assessed against the impact that the feedback and professional learning has had on modifying practice. For teacher evaluation, teacher reflection and for professional learning, all observations must be focused, clear in intent, and include pre- and post-observation conversations that provide direction for improvement, are linked to professional development and are reviewed for efficacy.
Effective Use of Technology to Assist Teacher Evaluation and Reflection: New York City: Torsh Talent Video Portal

Throughout my time in the United States there was on-going discussion on how to improve the quality of teaching and how new technologies can be used in classrooms to enhance teaching quality and improve student outcomes. Cost effectiveness was identified in American schools as an important factor in considering any accountability or evaluation system of teachers. The effective use of video cameras and video platforms were highlighted by the MET project as having significant effects on improving the reflective capabilities of teachers and on improving student achievement gains. The research and findings of the MET project in the United States are supported by a study conducted by The World Bank (2007). This study in Indonesian classrooms, examined teaching practices and teaching activities. The World Bank study used video technology to document what was happening in classrooms across Indonesia in schools that participated in the 2007 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMMS). In 2010 the World Bank released Inside Indonesia’s Mathematics Classrooms: A TIMSS Video Study of Teaching Practices and Student Achievement and drew conclusions based on comparisons with practices in other countries that could inform teacher reform in Indonesia. The study using video technology to observe teaching and practices in classrooms concluded that:

“The video study approach provides many unique advantages for understanding classroom activity. Video study is [like live classroom observation] also an intrusive methodology, and some argue that it may be even more intrusive than live observation, especially when it is done in a community where video-taping is not common. But experience has shown that while students (and their teachers) may be distracted by the video-taping equipment in the beginning of the lesson, this distraction may lapse soon after the lesson begins; if video-taping is done in consecutive lessons, then the presence of the camera is negligible from the second lesson onward. In this sense, videotaping may be less intrusive than live observation, especially if the latter involves more than one observer. The advantages of video study are many and make it an extremely powerful methodology for studying the instructional practices of teachers. Different observers may focus on the same video as the basis of a shared analysis. This increases inter-rater reliability, and if the required level of reliability is not achieved initially, further training of observers may be conducted to increase the reliability. The use of multiple cameras may allow different aspects of the classroom to be captured simultaneously, and synchronization and the use of a mixer will enable the different aspects to be related to each other. Since the videos are permanent records of classroom activities, multiple analyses may be performed. The videos may be analyzed repeatedly, at any time and in any placed. The videos may be paused, rewound, fast-forwarded, etc., for further analysis.”


The modern day American classrooms, like the modern day Australian classrooms, are similar and complex environments. Several American entrepreneurs that I met with had developed a range of video platforms (Edthena and Torsh). Research from several universities endorsed the use of video to enable teachers to go back and analyse classroom exchanges in depth. I met with Courtney Williams and discussed Torsh, a video platform for
teachers, based in New York City. Torsh was founded in 2011 by Courtney Williams. Mr. Williams stated that he started Torsh to build a tool that would leverage the power of video to deliver real time-data on how teachers are improving in their practice. Torsh’s product, **Talent**, allows teachers to upload videos from their classroom anywhere in the world and share it with colleagues for informal or formal feedback. The Torsh Talent platform, like several other video teaching platforms (e.g. Edthena), allows teachers to reflect on practice, receive coaching, mentor others and build teaching and learning and reflection communities. These video based platforms are generally cloud-based and supports the capture, upload, storage, retrieval and management of user generated, in-classroom video content. The Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) project, [Harvard Center for Education Policy Research](https://www.harvard.edu/edpolicy), [Relay Graduate School of Education](https:// RelayGraduateSchoolOfEducation.com) and others have highlighted the value of using video technology to enhance teaching practice. In my discussions with Mr. Williams, he highlighted the importance of a quality cloud based video platforms. Mr. Williams stated that the technology platform must be able to help teachers, administrators, schools and organisations effectively increase teacher instructional capacity and improve the delivery of teacher professional development. Mr Williams outlined that these systems work best when they compliment the school’s already well-established internal coaching and peer to peer reflection programs. The MET project findings identified the potential of using video and other innovative coaching strategies for giving teachers feedback. Video can also be used to provide exemplars to enable teachers to expand their repertoire of instructional techniques. Mr Williams and Professors Prof. Romina Piersanti & Brooke Buerkle from Relay Graduate School of Education in New York City highlighted how video recording of classroom teaching can also provide a more unbiased observer’s view of a teacher’s practice and allow the teacher to observe their practice in more detail. Furthermore, videoing and video platforms can be utilized to scrutinize how the teacher has carried out a particular aspect of a class, teaching domain, questioning technique or strategy.

The portability of videoing classroom practice enables the teacher, mentor and coach to focus on different aspects of classroom interaction, to pinpoint cause and effect and to enable a more detailed analysis of aspects of teaching e.g. questioning, framing, student understanding. Collaboratively watching videos with peers, colleagues and/or teaching teams can enhance professional dialogue and inform planning and assessment. Furthermore, web / cloud-based professional learning videos can reduce the need to schedule off-site professional development and one-on-one coaching sessions. The use of video platform technology has many possibilities to be both more cost effective and more effective, enabling teachers to collaborate more often, be flexible with their time, use networks across vast distances, and minimise the need for principal driven interactions.
4.

The Infrastructure of Accountability: University of Connecticut (Neag School of Education) & Hartford Public Schools

The Neag School of Education is a significant contributor to instructional and research excellence at the University of Connecticut (UConn) and is considered to be one of the nation’s leading public higher education institutions. The Neag School of Education ranks among the top 25 public graduate schools of education in the nation and has three specialty programs ranked in the top 20 nationally: Special Education, Educational Psychology, and Educational Administration & Supervision (2016 U.S. News & World Report rankings). My time at the University of Connecticut Neag School of Education focussed around the use, misuse and importance of data as it relates to teacher evaluation and student improvement.

In his book, Leverage Leadership: A Practical Guide to Building Exceptional Schools, Paul Bambrick-Santoyo (2012) identifies the importance of data and provides prescriptive lessons on how it should be used and effectively implemented into schools by school leadership. Doug Lemov, a renowned research and educator in his own right, identifies potential challenges for any principal trying to implement a reflective culture based on data and driven by classroom observation, student perception surveys and analysis of data. Statistically, in American schools, it is stated by Lemov (2010) Teach like a Champion, that school leaders spend 47% of their day on managing administrative and organisational tasks (compliance, schedules, budgeting, responding to concerns etc) and only 6% on leading instruction (observing, coaching, training, co-planning etc). Bambrick-Santoyo clarifies his seven most important instructional and cultural levers that leaders must have for helping teachers improve learning, reflect on practice and develop. He categorises these in two broad areas: Instructional levers and Cultural levers.

A: Instructional Levers

Data-Driven Instruction: ‘After spending ten years observing school systems, I am convinced that data-driven instruction is the single most effective use of a school leader’s time’. School leader assessments and teacher evaluations must inform and affect teacher instruction. If teacher observations are the windows that enable us to look into the classroom, then potentially informed teacher self-analysis and reflection could be seen as ways to remove the walls of the classroom. Detailed data reports that inform areas of strength and weakness and areas for potential change are tools that make the classroom walls more translucent.

Observations and Feedback: ‘By receiving weekly observations and feedback, a teacher develops as much in one year as most do in ten’.

Bambrick-Santoyo further highlights that the primary purpose of any observation should not be to judge the quality of teachers, but to find the most effective ways to help them to improve student learning. Give less feedback, however give it more often, and more precisely. Every teacher needs to access feedback regularly. This methodology supports what is becoming evident in several American schools: the importance of short observations, less formal observations, peer to peer observations, use of video to record and discuss observations. Paradoxically, this methodology of greater flexibility and feedback was stated by teachers and administrators in Hartford schools to be less, not more stressful and removed the “one bad lesson / Dog and Pony Show paradigm”.

Instructional Planning: ‘Leaders set the foundation for great lessons through great planning.’
Bambrick-Santoyo stresses the importance of ensuring planning is at the foundation of the lesson and that every teacher has taken the time to ensure that he or she has asked the right questions in planning: what should the students be able to know, do or master by the end of the lesson, course etc?

**Professional Development and Training** ‘Professional development only matters if it translates from principle to practice, driving real improvements in student learning.’

**B: Cultural Levers**

**Student Staff Culture:** ‘Create a strong culture where learning thrives and build and support the right team for your school.’ This further highlights the importance that leaders need to place on building cultures of trust, responsibility and flexibility into their schools.

**Managing School Leadership Teams:** ‘Train school leaders as instructional leaders and in coaching leaders at all levels need to schedule regular time for conversations, observations, and review.’ Bambrick-Santoyo

Researchers at the University of Connecticut discussed and highlighted the importance of leadership and data in transforming schools, improving teaching practice and improving student outcomes. We discussed how data has been used to support policy and transform education and evaluation processes in American schools. Researchers at Neag commented on the importance of accountability and how collection of data on teacher effectiveness is integral to policy makers and education policy making within American schools. How schools and system collect this information, what they collect and how they present it publically, locally and nationally was stated as being important, as it will determine how the system reshapes and defines learning in schools. Discussion with researchers from the Neag Graduate School provided me with deep insight into the role accountability systems play and the challenges that poor accountability measures can present in schools and within education systems. Dr. Anagnostopoulos, researcher now at UConn and previously from University of Michigan, states that “accountability measures are poorly introduced when:

the accountability measure are too fine grained and based solely on teacher evaluation to a standard.” Several education reforms in the U.S were stated to have introduced an evaluation system that failed to recognise the reciprocal responsibilities of all stakeholders and contributors: governments, systems, regions, networks, schools, teachers, communities and parents. Reforms were stated as being unsuccessful if the accountability measures and collection of data failed to recognise the broad functions of schooling across the different phases of learning and different contexts of learning. Our conversation highlighted the importance of considering that whatever reflective practice and evaluation system we introduce into Australian schools, it is imperative that a teacher evaluation methodology empowers teachers to reflect on practice and be accountable to a teaching practice that improves student learning. The evaluation methodology must do more than manage behaviours, it must change them to improve student learning. America seems to have placed on-going focus around high performance in standardized test scores. Neag Graduate school researchers highlighted how the test scores or teacher classroom observation rubrics used in different districts and schools may not correlate to a more socially just school or classroom environment.

In any evaluation or accountability measure, equity and support were stated to be inextricably linked. Accountability of a teacher against practice may highlight inequities in the classroom, school or region. Broad evaluation tools were raised as an aspect that was needed to facilitate more equitable educational outcomes. Whatever teacher evaluation tool was used,
Neag Graduate School researchers discussed the preference to encourage self-reflection of a teacher and their own practice. The accountability measure was stated as needing to focus instruction and the use of data to transform practice. Furthermore, teacher evaluation data was seen as evaluating more than teachers, it has potential to evaluate the quality of teaching, schools and systems and it has the potential to provide incentives, rewards and punitive sanctions. Current education policy and national reform efforts in the U.S. promote data use to improve school efficiency and effectiveness. Most of the focus within schools in the U.S. seems to have been directed towards developing teachers’ and administrators’ capacity to interpret data and validate data. However, less effort and resourcing seems to have been directed toward understanding the contextual nature of data collection systems and the larger technical and political implications of the use of this data. This is best summarised by a statement by one of the Neag Graduate School researchers who highlighted in her book *The Infrastructure of Accountability*: “The relentless focus on standardised test scores and the production of ever more precise performance metrics threatens to displace effort to fulfil the broad-ranging goals that Americans have historically ascribed to their schools – building character, ensuring physical and emotional well-being, providing social opportunity, transmitting culture, fostering new ways of thinking, and preparing citizens committed and capable of sustaining a vibrant and just democracy – with a single focus on raising standardised test scores as a means to promote individual and national economic competitiveness.” D.Anagnostopoulos, S.A Rutedge, R.Jacobsen (2013): The Infrastructure of Accountability.

5. Context Specific Observation & Importance of Student Surveying: Harvard University (CEPR) and Tripod Education

I met with the Center for Education Policy Research (CEPR) Faculty Director Professor Thomas Kane, best known for directing the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation’s Measures of Effective Teaching study and Project Director Miriam Greenberg. They discussed with me aspects of their recent finding from the Best Foot Forward Project about the need for context specific observations and using video as a tool to support classroom observations and teacher evaluations. The Best Foot Forward (BFF) project at the Center explored whether video technology can make the classroom observation process easier to implement, less costly, and more valid and reliable. Director Miriam Greenberg highlighted that “by putting video cameras in the hands of teachers and allowing them to select their best lessons for evaluation, the study aimed to learn whether digital video could make the observation process more acceptable to teachers.”

In 2013, the BFF project piloted in 100 classrooms in three states: New York City, Georgia, and North Carolina. Teachers and their principals in these States examined whether digital video can improve teaching practice and student outcomes, and ultimately transform the way classroom observations are implemented in classrooms around the country. CEPR Faculty Director Thomas Kane and Project Director Miriam Greenberg highlighted some of their findings on the use of digital video to make classroom observations more helpful and fair for teachers. The directors stated that the effective use of digital video has potential for time effectiveness and has been seen as less burdensome for administrators, leaders, teachers and supervisors. Their comments were made on the findings in the pilot where teachers were
given special video camera and accessories and invited to digitally record multiple classroom lessons. Teachers were then able to self-select a subset of their lesson videos to submit for their classroom observations. A secure software video platform was set up to allow administrators, as well as external observer, to watch the videos and provide time-stamped comments against a teaching framework. These video recordings were then used as a basis for feedback discussions between teachers and administrators and between teachers and the external content specific experts. Preliminary findings reported by both directors stated that:

“Despite teachers’ initial discomfort with collecting and watching video of their own instruction, the intervention did shift the mode of classroom observations, from in-person to video.” Furthermore, several teachers highlighted the value of video against face-to-face and administrator driven classroom observation. Teachers using the video technology commented on aspects of their class after reviewing the video recordings, noting aspects such as providing students with insufficient time to answer questions or poor teacher pacing.

The Center for Education Policy Research (CEPR) has observed conclusively how several districts are now seeing the importance of using digital videoing of classroom teaching. These districts are commenting on video platform technology as emerging as a flexible, effective and cost efficient tool for standardizing and evaluating teaching practice and improving the sometimes perfunctory ritual of principal-driven classroom observations.

The MET project, that CEPR Professor Tom Kane directed, further commented on the importance of multi-measure, multiple metrics in determining classroom teacher effectiveness: use of classroom observation, student perception surveying and achievement gains.

Director Tom Kane also stressed the valuable aspect of quality student surveys. Whilst many education systems across most states in the U.S. have legislated the use of classroom observation and student growth data, several education districts seem to be cautious about the use of student surveys. Whilst in Massachusetts, I met with Rob Ramsdell, CEO and Co-founder of Tripod Education Partners. Tripod Education Partners constructed the Tripod student perception surveys, originally in collaboration with teachers in Ohio in 2001, and these have been refined over more than a decade. The student perception surveys have been completed by more than 1,994,555 students, in more than 144,483 classrooms and in more than 6,562 schools, across 33 states. The MET project highlighted the importance of student perception surveying as part of triangulating information of teacher effectiveness and Tripod surveys were deemed the only classroom-level surveys studied and validated by the landmark Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) project, sponsored by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and completed in 2013.

The MET project found that Tripod surveys were the most reliable of the measures studied and predictive of year-to-year gains in test scores. CEO and co-founder Rob Ramsdell shared with me modifications that have been made to the Tripod on-line student survey. He states that these surveys were designed to give students all students in the classroom a voice. Rob Ramsdell highlighting that the Tripod survey was not a test, but more a tool for students to provide teachers with structured feedback and communicate with teachers about their teaching, their well-being, and their perception of the teaching and level of instruction occurring in the classroom. Student perception surveys, of which there are many in the United States, allow teachers to seek feedback in great depth and with more concentrated focus than would be available through the standard open-ended questions that commonly exist within a classroom and are no more than a general climate survey. Mr. Ramsdell
highlights the importance of schools and teachers undertaking systematic, well-structured, confidential student surveys, that are regularly given to every student and linked to teaching frameworks of developmental continuums. The advantages stated by Mr. Ramsdell and supported by MET findings is that student perception surveying gives the student a voice and helps ensure that a teacher can receive timely, high quality, student-based insight into their students’ perspectives of their teaching. Whilst several student perception survey tools exist across the United States, it is clear from the MET project that an effective survey tool must equip teachers with tailored feedback that can inform, modify and change their instructional practice and must be linked to a validated teacher framework. Rob Ramsdell highlighted the earlier research from his colleague Ronald F. Ferguson, PhD, Harvard Kennedy School, & Tripod Education Partners as key to any successful student perception survey. Professor Ferguson stressed the importance of trusting students and ensuring that the survey had multiple measures. He clarified that educators know that most students appreciate the opportunity to provide input, and that empirical evidence supports that student perception survey results provide valid and reliable information for teachers. Mr Ramsdell acknowledged that no measure was entirely accurate or perfect, and this is why Tripod advocate multiple measures, across multiple times throughout the year and across multiple years. I see many advantages in the use of student perception surveys and advocate that teachers and school leaders, whilst aware of their own practices, need their perceptions and their students’ perceptions to match. It is in the analysis of the gap and the understanding of the differences between student and teacher perceptions that the action learning and changes can be applied. I was impressed by the modified Tripod surveys and how they captured key dimensions of classroom culture and teaching practices. The Items of the Tripod’s 7Cs framework are:

1. Care: Show concern and commitment.
2. Confer: Invite ideas and promote discussion.
4. Clarify: Cultivate understanding and overcome confusion.
5. Consolidate: Integrate ideas and summarize key points.
7. Classroom Management (Control): Sustain order, respect, and focus.

Questions vary for age groups and are across a 5 point Likert scale. Examples from the Upper Elementary 7C Tripod survey format, grades 3-5 are included below:

**CARE**

- I like the way my teacher treats me when I need help.
- My teacher is nice to me when I ask questions.
- My teacher in this class makes me feel that he/she really cares about me. • If I am sad or angry, my teacher helps me feel better.
- My teacher in this class encourages me to do my best.
- My teacher seems to know if something is bothering me.
- My teacher gives us time to explain our ideas.

**CONTROL**

- My classmates behave the way the teacher wants them to.
- Our class stays busy and does not waste time.
- Students behave so badly in this class that it slows down our learning. • Everybody knows what they should be doing and learning in this class.
ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

<table>
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<th>CLARIFY</th>
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<tr>
<td>• My teacher explains things in very orderly ways.</td>
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<td>• In this class, we learn to correct our mistakes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• My teacher explains difficult things clearly.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• My teacher has several good ways to explain each topic that we cover in this class. • I understand what I’m supposed to be learning in class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• My teacher knows when the class understands, and when we do not.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• This class is neat – everything has a place and things are easy to find. • If you don’t understand something, my teacher explains it another way.</td>
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<th>CHALLENGE</th>
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<td>• My teacher pushes us to think hard about the things we read.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• My teacher pushes everyone to work hard.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• In this class, we have to think about the writing we do.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• In this class, my teacher accepts nothing less than our full effort.</td>
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<th>CAPTIVATE</th>
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<td>• School work is interesting.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• We have interesting homework.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Homework helps me learn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• School work is not very enjoyable. (Do you agree?)</td>
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<th>CONFER</th>
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<tr>
<td>• When he/she is teaching us, my teacher asks us whether we understand.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• My teacher asks questions to be sure we are following along when he/she is teaching. • My teacher checks to make sure we understand what he/she is teaching us.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• My teacher tells us what we are learning and why.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• My teacher wants us to share our thoughts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students speak up and share their ideas about class work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• My teacher wants me to explain my answers – why I think what I think.</td>
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<th>CONSOLIDATE</th>
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<tr>
<td>• My teacher takes the time to summarize what we learn each day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• When my teacher marks my work, he/she writes on my papers to help me understand.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In many American schools it seems that the primary methods currently used to evaluate teacher performance are classroom observations and value-added factors such as standardized test scores. Therefore, research on determining the validity of student surveys is important. The majority of the research I discussed seems to have been focused on benchmarking student feedback against these well-established methods of observation and achievement. Researchers generally concluded that survey results could accurately predict student achievement gains. Several detailed studies conclude that student feedback can be used as a reliable measure of teacher effectiveness. MET Project Researchers and findings, however, emphasized that the validity of student perceptions was dependent on the instrument used. Research also highlighted that content valid and predictive valid student surveys could reduce the emphasis on achievement tests by providing another source of diagnostic information. Ensuring content validity in a survey has resulted in most student perception surveys typically being structured around core constructs that are affiliated with effective teachers or against agreed teaching frameworks: CLASS (Dean B. Painta, University of Virginia Curry Graduate School) or Danielson Framework. Wilkerson, et al. (2000) conducted a study of nearly 2,000 K-12 students and found that student ratings were significantly more accurate in predicting student achievement than teachers’ self-ratings,
principal ratings, and principal summative ratings. Peterson, K., Wahlquist, C., and Bone, K. in the research titled “Student Surveys for School Teacher Evaluation”, Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education, 14:2, June 2000, pp. 135-153, found that student surveys were valid and reliable for teacher evaluation at elementary, middle, and high school levels.

A further study of schools in Cyprus, Goe, et al. Op. cit., p. 40 cites Kyriakides, L. “Drawing from Teacher Effectiveness Research and Research into Teacher Interpersonal Behaviour to Establish a Teacher Evaluation System: A Study on the Use of Student Ratings to Evaluate Teacher Behaviour.” It concluded that student ratings of the student-teacher relationship and degree of cooperation were highly correlated with achievement gains. Balch, R. “The Validation of a Student Survey on Teacher Practice”, Vanderbilt University. 2012, p. 7., whilst developing a student perception survey for a pilot program in Georgia, found that high survey ratings correlated with high academic achievement, engagement, and self-efficacy. The body of research supporting the effective use of student perception surveying to not only evaluate teachers but also empower teachers to reflect and improve on their practice is significant. In a research synthesis of teacher evaluation methods, Balch ultimately concluded that previous studies “provide convincing evidence that student ratings of teaching are worth considering for inclusion in teacher evaluation systems.”


I see that there are a number of advantages in using student perception surveys in Australian schools. Specifically they are cost effective, require minimal training to administer or analyse, can be tailored to the context and needs of the school and classroom, are reflective, summative and formative, and can track changes over time. Additionally, as was stated by several educators in the U.S., no amount of administrative driven classroom observations can improve on the amount of information that students observe and experience of their teachers every day. Educators and researchers questioned how many walkthroughs we needed to have content and predictive reliability compared to a well administered student perception survey. This stated, it needs to be raised that student perception survey do have potential risks that we need to be aware of. Specifically, when students might not be adequately “trained” to rate certain teachers on curriculum, competency and content knowledge. Some teachers and unions have highlighted that student perception surveys could place students under pressure and motivate teachers to strive for popularity over effectiveness. Surely though, a well formed survey tool that focuses on aspects of standards and teaching frameworks, a survey tool that is administered properly and regularly and with teacher input, a survey tool with proven content validity and cross checked against predictive validity, should remove this perception and allow for a cost effective, highly reflective teaching tool that can enhance teaching and improve student outcomes.
6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Teachers across all education systems have always wanted better feedback and greater support to improve practice. The Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) project highlights the importance of classroom observation and quality feedback and how tools like student perception surveys and classroom observations have allowed teachers to take control of their own development and focus on specific aspects of their teaching to improve their craft. The combination of quality data focussing on progress over performance, classroom observations by trained and accredited observers and student feedback against quality criteria creates precise information that teachers can trust and therefore is actionable. The feedback must empower teachers to change and modify practice.

Australia has moved to the full implementation of Teacher and Principal Standards with a strong focus on performance management linked to classroom observation. The evaluation model in Australian schools must be sustainable and therefore it needs to be cost effective and move away from a single school administrator model. The Hay report recommends averaging observations from more than one observer, such as another administrator in a school or a peer observer. This can be implemented into Australian schools in a manner that empowers the teacher to engage and reflect on the observations and the feedback. Whatever evaluation and observation methodology used, it must be constructed so it provides objective and constructive feedback on teacher performance by highlighting areas of strength on which the teacher can build, and identifying areas for development to be addressed through targeted professional development and training and other developmental support. Accountability linked to quality teaching practices are key. This statement, however, places importance on ensuring a performance management and development process that ensures improved learning outcomes for teachers and students.

As Australia endeavours to implement national education reforms and introduce new methodologies of evaluating teacher performance catalysed by a desire to improve student outcomes, we undoubtedly will see on-going debates from the various stakeholders: Regional Directors, principals, school administrators, teachers, parents, union leaders and policy makers. Surely, however, we all seek to share a common goal to improve the quality of instruction and learning of our students. Therefore we need to ensure the use of clear, fair, reliable and transparent metrics that can calibrate more than workforce and system developments. Specifically, we are all seeking an evaluation methodology that is adhering to the principles of sound assessment. Accountability to the functions of the job and evidence of individual teacher effectiveness is important and needs to be conducted in a manner that is reliable, valid, fair, flexible and comprehensive. This, however, can not be achieved without significant focus on pre-service teachers and on current university teacher preparation programs.

In Australia we need to have a system that guarantees that fixed term teachers or teachers that are seeking permanent tenure within our system are equitably, but thoroughly reviewed against reliable evaluation processes to ensure that they are at a standard. We must have an evaluation system that discerns:

- Those who should teach and those who should not;
- Progress towards effectiveness and progress towards mastery.
The evaluation processes and the methodologies that we choose to use in schools in Western Australia must learn from the extensive knowledge that has been acquired within the United States over recent years. The role of the school and the school Principal is key; however, they will need the support and focus of the regions, the networks and The Centre if they are to develop a system that moves beyond accountability to a culture of informed teacher evaluation and reflection. It is imperative that we answer the following questions:

- How can schools, administrators, regions and The Centre clearly communicate evaluation expectations to teachers that ensures all teachers understand and value the evaluation/ reflection methodologies? It is imperative we build a culture of trust beyond accountability.
- How will principals, administrators, regional offices and The Centre, develop principal/leader preparation programs to provide support for all principals to build the skills required for instructional leadership and performance management/development based on classroom observation, student perception surveys and student progress and performance data?
- How will schools be resourced to develop, implement and sustain quality teacher evaluation/reflection systems that can provide differentiated supports for all teachers at the various levels of experience, tenure, location and skill development?
- How can schools be empowered to create methodologies that ensure that all observers and evaluators are consistent, so teachers can trust the accuracy, validity and fairness of the evaluation process?
- How can schools and networks within regions find the time and opportunity to learn from one another and to make use of each other’s expertise and promote and disseminate best practices around student surveying, classroom observation, feedback, collaboration, peer evaluation and building reflective cultures around teaching performance?

We must remind ourselves of the purpose of teacher evaluation and reflection, namely, to improve student learning and understanding. Educators and researchers in the United States prompt us that if we implement a methodology that does not answer the questions above and forgets to create ownership and trust amongst teachers and administrators then the evaluation system will maintain perfunctory measures, poor performance management processes and see no causal change in student outcomes. Furthermore, we will have done it at a significant cost of time, energy and goodwill. To implement a principal-instructed classroom observation system, without peer observations, video recordings, the use of student perception surveys and student performance and progress gains would be a disservice to the majority of Western Australian teachers who are seeking quality feedback and opportunities for professional development. To not learn from our American schools and U.S. researchers would also be detrimental to our Western Australian student population who rely on our teachers for quality planning, preparation, instruction, reflection and professionalism.

At the school level I plan to disseminate my findings and action key areas that are directly within my control. Locally, within my own school setting, I intend to enhance the quality of teaching and the level of instructional excellence through building on a culture of trust across the school, in all learning areas and among teaching peers that goes beyond evaluation and accountability. My efforts will be on ensuring that the leadership team and teachers support and advocate reflective practices, student perception surveys, analysis of data and teacher observations against an agreed standard and linked to meaningful professional development. It is paramount that we establish and communicate a school-wide commitment to our
approach of teacher reflection, observation, surveying and data analysis. To ensure that we discern between the need to evaluate and the need to reflect we must differentiate the methodology of classroom observation and the teacher evaluation process between non-tenure, permanent and proficient teachers whilst maintaining flexibility and staff input into the process. The challenge will be to allow teachers adequate time to observe others through scheduling observation and pre- and post- meetings. The observation sessions need to be specific and focused around aspects of teaching, planning, preparation, classroom instruction or professionalism and observers need to be accredited so we can ensure that observations are valid and reliable. Locally, we need to effectively use quality video platforms and reliable student surveys to enhance the reflective process and monitor the effectiveness of the change process.

I have already commenced the dissemination of my findings. I have scheduled a time to meet with my professional referee and direct line manager Ms. Sharyn O’Neill, Director General of the Department of Education, Western Australia and with my Regional Executive Director Mr. Jim Webb. I have been invited to disseminate my findings to all Network Principals via their Network Principals forum in August, 2015. I will provide a briefing of the findings of this report to my two local professional networks (Shenton Network, North West Secondary Principals’ Network) and to the Independent Public Schools Advisory Group. I have been booked to deliver a presentation on my findings at the States Schools Teachers’ Union (WA) School Leaders Forum in August, and will present to principals and leaders associated with both primary and secondary schools via a range of forums including the Department of Education’s Workforce Policy and Coordination division.

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“There's no word for accountability in Finnish. Accountability is something that is left when responsibility has been subtracted.” Pasi Sahlberg, director of the Finnish Ministry of Education's Center for International Mobility and author of the new book Finnish Lessons: What Can the World Learn from Educational Change in Finland?