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Stephen Sawchuk, a former federal education beat writer, turns his inner policy geek to digging around in the weeds of the teaching profession. Join him as he explicates the policy and the politics that surround legislation, teacher contracts, and the teacher-quality continuum from preparation to evaluation.



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Improvements, Challenges in Chicago's Teacher Evaluation System

By [Stephen Sawchuk](#) on June 15, 2010 8:41 AM | [No Comments](#) | [No TrackBacks](#)

Results from year one of a pilot teacher-evaluation system in Chicago show a much broader range of ratings under the new system than under the district's existing one, with at least 8 percent of pre-tenured teachers receiving at least one "unsatisfactory" rating, according to [a new paper out](#) from the Consortium on Chicago School Research.

Although Chicago is not the only district putting a new teacher-evaluation system in place, it is certainly one of the few that's paying a lot of attention to implementation, studying it, and documenting the results. The system, based on Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching, was rolled out in 44 schools in 2008-09 and expanded to 100 in 2009-10. The data here is from the first year of implementation and used "matched" observations to determine whether an administrator and external observer gave the same rating.

According to the data, over a third of teachers received all "proficient" or "distinguished" scores from their principals on the various strands of the observation framework, and about a third received a mix of "basic" and "proficient" scores.

Consistency among the parties performing the teacher observations was high in the aggregate, but less so on individual strands of the evaluations and in terms of outliers. For instance, at the high end of the ratings scale, principals were more likely than observers to give the highest rating of "distinguished" versus a rating of "proficient."

And before you go thinking that's an odd finding given all the rhetoric out there about principals, about 30 percent of principals were actually *more severe* graders on the whole than observers. Complicated stuff, and important to keep an eye on because of the high-stakes implications of inconsistent ratings.

Once you've digested the summary, read the much longer [full report](#) on the first year of implementation.

One thing to also keep in mind is that that the *policy* stakes here are huge. As I wrote [in this story](#), the reform of teacher-evaluation systems has in mind the goal of connecting the results to other aspects of the teacher-quality continuum

—things like pay, promotion, professional opportunities, tenure-granting, and dismissal.

So, if the teacher evaluation piece doesn't come together, the chances are these other elements won't, either.

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