

An Interesting Idea

Research confirms professional development for school principals is less about formal training and more about building intentional habits that compound over time.

Research consistently shows that most principals spend the majority of their day on administrative, managerial, and reactive tasks leaving little time for the instructional leadership work that improves teacher practice student achievement.

The SAM Process is built to fix that structural problem.

Two decades of experience with school leaders engaged in the SAM process reveal significant increases in time spent with teachers to improve practice, greater job and mission satisfaction.

➤ *SAM principals spend two times more time in classrooms than non-SAM principals.*

➤ *SAM principals spend three times more time in feedback conversations with teachers than non-SAM principals*

➤ *SAM principals spend four times more time focused on improved teaching and learning than non-SAM principals.*

➤ *95% of SAM principals can connect their time with improved teacher practice.*

2025 SAM Team Annual Performance Report: <http://bit.ly/44MbQ8t>

SAM practitioners report frustration with the requirement to complete district and state formal teacher evaluation. Instead, they advocate for more formative work based on their experience in the SAM process.

Leaders report summative, or formal evaluation, tends to detract from the formative work they engage in with teachers. Leaders complain that the time they are required to engage in formal evaluation would be better used in coaching, observing, and targeting professional development.

versus formative coaching and instructional leadership work. Most research tools would have to build that data collection capacity from scratch. SAM already has it.

NSIP has a long relationship with the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, MDESE. The SAM Process is included in the state's Leadership Development System and the MDESE Associate Commissioner, Paul Katnik, is vice president of the NSIP Board.

NSIP will work with the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to identify two groups of school principals in three separate districts:

- a. a control group of principals who will continue using required summative evaluation
- b. a treatment group in which summative evaluation requirements are waived

All participants will be active in the SAM Process, so TimeTrack data is consistently collected. Random assignment by school or district would strengthen causal claims, though a matched comparison design might be more practical given the policy constraints involved.

TimeTrack data will determine whether principals in the treatment group reallocate the time previously spent on summative evaluation toward formative work: walkthroughs, coaching conversations, instructional team facilitation, professional development, and data review with teachers. Critically, it could also reveal whether principals actually use that reclaimed time for formative purposes or simply absorb it into other management tasks.

Improved teacher practice could be assessed by pre-and-post interviews with principals, classroom teachers, and randomly selected parents.

Student outcome measures could include achievement data, growth measures, or other indicators depending on what the participating schools already collect. The challenge in any study is isolating the effect of the evaluation change from other variables. In this case, TimeTrack® longitudinal data would help control for principal behavior as a variable.

The SAM Process's emphasis on reflective use of TimeTrack data means you could also examine whether principals who are more reflective and intentional about how they use reclaimed time produce stronger outcomes than those who simply have

the time available. That would add a qualitative dimension to what is essentially a behavioral and outcomes study.

Getting districts or states to waive summative evaluation requirements, even experimentally, would be a significant hurdle. Missouri, however, is a feasible starting point given its flexible evaluation requirements and lack of specific frequency rules. We believe NSIP and MDESE can successfully work with Missouri districts, and the relevant employee associations and unions, for approval of the study as outlined. NSIP currently works in districts throughout Missouri: large, small, rural, and urban.

NSIP's existing relationships in Missouri, and across 26 states, provides a network and the data infrastructure to design something rigorous.

We can find no studies testing whether removing required summative teacher evaluation will increase principal formative work and improve outcomes.

The Race to the Top era saw many attempts at evaluation reform. A large study co-authored by UNC researcher Matthew Springer, which its authors describe as providing the broadest and most generalizable evidence of the efficacy of teacher evaluation reforms in the U.S., concluded that despite billions of dollars spent changing teacher evaluation systems, the reforms had almost zero positive effect on student outcomes across 44 states.

At the federal level, by 2015 the core idea of linking teacher evaluation to student outcomes was effectively abandoned when ESSA was reauthorized, explicitly prohibiting the federal government from prescribing any aspect of a teacher evaluation system.

In the first decade of this century, The Wallace Foundation helped NSIP prove that, with the right tools, principals can both manage their school successfully and spend the majority of time each day on tasks designed to improve teacher practice and student outcomes.

In this second decade, NSIP invites the Wallace Foundation to partner on a study that could have major policy implications and, perhaps, increase the positive impact of time principals spend with teachers.

If the study determined that removing or reducing required summative evaluation increased formative work and improved teacher practice and outcomes, it would provide evidence that compliance-driven evaluation systems consume principal time in ways that are net negative for schools. Such a finding would be transformative.

168.128. Teacher records, how maintained — evaluations, how performed and maintained. — The board of education of each school district shall maintain records showing periods of service, dates of appointment, and other necessary information for the enforcement of sections [168.102 to 168.130](#). In addition, the board of education of each school district shall cause a comprehensive, performance-based evaluation for each teacher employed by the district. Such evaluations shall be ongoing and of sufficient specificity and frequency to provide for demonstrated standards of competency and academic ability. All evaluations shall be maintained in the teacher's personnel file at the office of the board of education. A copy of each evaluation shall be provided to the teacher and appropriate administrator. The state department of elementary and secondary education shall provide suggested procedures for such an evaluation.

5 CSR 20-400.375 Districts Effectively Evaluating Educators PURPOSE: The growth and learning of children is the primary responsibility of those who teach in our classrooms and lead our schools. Student growth and learning can be observed and measured. Educators, in partnership with students, parents, and community, are accountable for ensuring the improvement of student achievement. Effective educator evaluation systems promote the improvement of professional practice resulting in the improvement of student performance. (1) Pursuant to section 168.128, RSMo, the board of education of each school district shall maintain a comprehensive, performance-based evaluation for each teacher employed by the district. It is required that these evaluations shall be ongoing and of sufficient specificity and frequency to provide for demonstrated standards of competency and academic ability. With the primary goal of improving educator quality to promote high levels of student learning, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (department) establishes the following principles of effective evaluation: (A) The evaluation process should use research-based performance targets aligned with state model teacher and leader standards; (B) The evaluation process should establish indicators of performance articulated across differentiated levels with standards specifying expectations at all levels of practice; (C) The evaluation process should be aligned with the probation period for the educator as specified in

state law and provide for the accurate and appropriate accumulation of performance data; (D) The evaluation process should use student growth in learning as a significant contributing factor in the evaluation of practice at all levels, using a wide variety of student performance measures; (E) The evaluation process should assess performance on a regular basis, providing timely feedback from multiple sources that promotes formative development at all career stages and supporting overall improvement; (F) The evaluation process should be designed to ensure that evaluators who collect evidence of performance and provide feedback are highly trained and objective, ensuring that ratings are fair, accurate, and reliable; and (G) The evaluation process should be designed to guide district decisions regarding determinations of status, recognition, development, interventions, and policies that impact student learning in the system. (2) These essential principles outlined here are the overall framework of Missouri's model Educator Evaluation System. School districts not electing to adopt the state model shall align their local evaluation process to these same principles and shall submit their process to the department for review and approval.