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Reforming Teacher Evaluation:
Results from a Charter School Case Study
Using Union / Management Collaboration

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Education

by

Karlo B. Silbiger

2015

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Reforming Teacher Evaluation:
Results from a Charter School Case Study
Using Union / Management Collaboration

By

Karlo B. Silbiger

Doctor of Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2015

Professor Wellford Wilms, Chair

This study examined the role of union / management collaboration in producing meaningful teacher evaluation reform in one charter management organization. Given the importance of teacher evaluation to finding and retaining the best teachers and coaching others to their highest level of performance, this study provides a proven path towards improved evaluation, understanding the necessary role of union / management collaboration towards that goal. This study included 17 interviews with teachers,

administrators, union leaders, and managers at Green Dot Public Schools along with an observation of an evaluation committee meeting and document review related to the period when evaluation reform was being negotiated and implemented. My findings show that identifying shared values around ways to reform evaluation is key to any change. Because union leaders have an equal say with managers over whether reforms are negotiated, they are more likely to agree when the reforms match their shared values. What's more, involving teachers and union leaders in the decision making process (including communication) aids with co-building a reform to which agreement is possible. Finally, continuous review will ensure that potential issues with the evaluation system are addressed and corrected, creating a continuous process of reform and improvement based on that collaboration. These findings could provide a roadmap for other charter management organizations and potentially school districts wishing to reform their teacher evaluation system.

The dissertation of Karlo B. Silbiger is approved.

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2015

DEDICATION PAGE

I dedicate this dissertation to all who have been my teachers, in the broadest sense of the word, throughout my life. My classroom teachers and professors have broadened my knowledge, caused me to love learning, and provided examples of how to be a stronger practitioner. My mentors have provided a direction to my life by giving my work meaning. And my family have been forever supportive, teaching me that work is not worth doing unless it helps make society a better place. I hope that through this dissertation, I have made them all proud and contributed to the needed improvement of schooling.

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CHAPTER 1

The Difficulty of Negotiating Teacher Evaluation Reform

Education reformers throughout the country have focused their efforts heavily on improving the ways that teachers are evaluated, in hopes that such reform efforts would directly lead to improved instruction and better learning. While much of the research confirms the existence of established reform programs that have proven success (such as those in Tennessee, Delaware, and Colorado), many districts have yet to implement any changes and many states have not yet passed legislation that mandates such a reform. According to the National Council on Teacher Quality, there are 11 states that still do not mandate annual classroom observations, including seven that do not require any form of annual teacher evaluation system, and 41 states that provide tenure without requiring that it be performance-based (McGuinn, 2012). The problem that I investigated is how teachers unions can serve as a support in this process and how school administrators can create the collaborative environment necessary to foster that support. In addition, I focused on changing the evaluation process from one focused primarily on teachers who are least confident to a focus on coaching all teachers toward provable excellence (Duke and Stiggins, 1986).

Now, with a national focus on the need to do a better job of evaluating and coaching teachers, more research has to be done on how a fair and effective evaluation and coaching model can best be implemented and how local teachers unions can be

included in producing the best ultimate product. Without this collaboration, unions will continue to find themselves locked out from making important policy decisions (Bascia, 2009) and administrators could very well find themselves without the tools to improve teaching and learning for their students.

Evidence shows that an exceptional teacher can motivate a student and can even help to compensate for the educational deficiencies that existed before the student arrived in a class (Rivkin, Hanushek, and Kain, 2005). Seen this way, improving how teachers are evaluated to improve their practice is a promising means to even out wide disparities in educational quality that exist across the country. Finding ways to improve teacher quality with evaluation and support systems could be significant. Unions are often portrayed as an impediment to such reforms, so understanding how to successfully collaborate with them is essential.

Much of the research thus far has been limited to the problems with current teacher evaluation systems. For example, West and Mykerezi (2011) show that all traditional indicators used in teacher evaluation have been shown to be lacking in their reliability to identify and reward the best teachers. There is some evidence, also, to show a movement in this policy area from local decision making (primarily before 1983) to national decision making primarily after No Child Left Behind in 2001 (Hazi and Arredondo Rucinsky, 2009). In other words, greater control over teacher evaluation seems to be coalescing at the national level rather than the state and local levels, altering the types of decisions made and ability for unions to play a meaningful role in negotiating policy. Finally, there has been a substantial amount of research showing a connection

between teacher quality and student performance, including some that directly links teachers' evaluation quality and student performance (Wright, Horn, and Sanders, 1997).

However, the research is lacking in terms of the impact that productive collective bargaining between teachers' unions and administrators could have on producing environments that are most conducive to teacher evaluation reform. We know that better evaluation systems will likely lead to better teaching and learning, but that reform likely will not happen until both sides in the collective bargaining agreement understand and support a collaborative environment that will lead to meaningful change. Because unions play such an important role in the collective bargaining process and can block reform in some instances, many districts may never even attempt reform in evaluation. In fact, 96.5% of districts throughout the country maintain a traditional salary schedule, showing the great difficulty in negotiating any type of reform that might alter teacher evaluation or compensation. In those places where reform has been attempted, unions have used a variety of blocking techniques to hamper reform. One of the best examples comes from Cincinnati where, in 2002, a district proposal was sent to the district's teachers altering the evaluation system to provide more variety of evaluation methods and then giving those teachers who excel a pay bonus. The teachers voted down the proposal 1,892 to 73. What is most amazing about this example is that the teachers union was able to get a near unanimous 96% vote even though the proposed evaluation reform did not include student performance as one of its measures of teacher quality (Buck and Greene, 2011). This suggests that the only way to bring about real reform in this area is to find a way to work with unions.

The Need for a More Collaborative Environment

Given the value of teacher evaluation reform and the lack of success in negotiating such reforms, more attention should be paid to the collaborative environment necessary to achieve true progress. To understand the evolution of adversarial labor-management relations in education, it is useful to look back at its history. Collective bargaining rights were first extended to public employees in Wisconsin in 1962 when they passed a law with many of the same rights as were included in the preceding national law. Numerous states followed suit and by 1974, 37 states included public sector bargaining in their statutes. Teachers signed up for unions at a furious pace, often much faster even than other public sector employees. This could be the result of the financial uncertainty that has become commonplace in public education and a focus on organizing within teacher ranks by the two competing unions, the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association (Eberts, 2007). By 1988, over 80% of teachers were union members, a stark comparison to 36% among all public sector workers and less than 20% of workers across all industries (Becker, 1990). It is exactly this departure from the societal norm that has caused teachers and their unions to be targeted for criticism. Most of the workforce does not have access to the protections that teachers have retained in those 37 states. So today there is understandable pressure on the profession to demonstrate the value of collective bargaining and its uses not only to help union members, but also to assist society in the spirit of the economic arguments made by Congress nearly 80 years ago.

In California, the law that established collective bargaining rights for teachers is known as the Rodda Act, which was signed into law by then (and now) Governor Jerry

Brown in 1975. The Rodda Act had as one of its stated goals the “improvement of ... employer-employee relations within the public school systems.” The act provides teachers with the power to choose one organization to bargain exclusively on behalf of all members. It also created the Public Employees Relations Board to oversee union elections, mediation between districts and employees, and to rule on charges of unfair practices (Mendel, 1990).

However, some are arguing that there needs to be a new approach to union / district relations. Barry Bluestone (2011), the Dean of the Northeastern University School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs, calls it a “21st Century Labor Relations System for the Public Sector.” Among the tenets are interest based bargaining, a process whereby contract negotiations are collectively thought through using common interests rather than positional bargaining, and shared responsibility for problem solving. In essence, the concept is to work as a team, both unions and district administrators, to solve the joint issues surrounding the needs of the students rather than work in opposition.

Rubenstein and McCarthy (2014) took this concept of a more collaborative union / management environment one step further calling for a partnership that is “focused on teaching quality and educational improvement for students” (p. 7). They have identified common elements of that strong partnership, such as increased communication and joint skills training, that can actually lead to increased student performance. For example, they find that high partnership schools build structures for regular communication between site administrators and the union, generally on a daily or weekly basis, rather than relying only on irregular formal communication that occurs when there are problems that need a contractual resolution. This increased communication was found to create environments

where mentorship, cross-subject integration, and evaluating student performance data was more likely to occur, leading directly to better instructional practices. This concept of a new type of management / union partnership in order to bring about meaningful teacher evaluation reform and improved teaching and learning is at the center of this dissertation.

The Difficulty of Reform in Traditional School Districts

While the research suggests that an active, collaborative conversation about reforming educational practices (including teacher evaluation) would be healthy, most traditional school districts have avoided those conversations. As previously mentioned, 96.5% of school districts have a traditional step and column schedule for determining teacher salary and 41 states provide tenure without a required evaluation of teacher performance. This difficulty in producing meaningful reform likely stem from the history of collective bargaining in the public school system. Since 1962, teachers unions have shifted towards an industrial-union model with a more confrontational style. This has led to a collective bargaining focus more on bread and butter issues (such as pay and benefits) and protecting their members from punitive action (Urbanski, 2001).

There is no question that the industrial-union model has served teachers well over the past 50 years, helping to provide stable jobs, better benefits and working conditions, and a boost to middle class status. However, that same organizational focus has left teachers in those districts out of the important conversations surrounding student performance and teacher quality. Unions functioning under this model have not yet chosen reform in the manner described above because of tradition and a leadership

structure controlled primarily by older teachers who have become accustomed to that style of management. School districts too have become used to focusing their collective bargaining energy on bread and butter issues, leaving important conversations around teacher evaluation out of contract conversations. However, where unions have been led by younger teachers more interested in reforming this structure, the conversation has been quite different.

Charter Schools and Union Reform

According to the California Legislative Analyst's Office, Charter schools were first authorized by SB 1448 in 1992. This legislation created the authorizing criteria, the renewal and appeals process, and the conditions under which charters could be revoked. Changes since have been made to the funding mechanism, facilities requirements, and authorization process. While charter schools are publicly funded, similar to their district counterparts, they are run by a non-profit or for-private private organization rather than by a democratically-elected school board. Charter schools are also schools of choice, providing parents and students with an alternative to their local district-run school. What's more, charter schools are exempt from some state laws, including some union and collective bargaining requirements.

Charter school growth in California has been rapid. As of 2014, the California Charter School Association reports that there are 1,130 charter schools in operation educating over 500,000 students, making this movement a significant part of the public school landscape. Charter schools are also on the cutting edge when it comes to union/management collaboration and teacher evaluation reform. According to the Center

for Education Reform's Charter School Survey (2014), only seven percent of national charter schools have a unionized corps of teachers, and they are generally in states where teacher unionization is required by law. However, that small group of unionized charter schools may provide us with a model for how to build a more collaborative relationship between teachers unions and management due to the demographics of charter school teachers. While traditional public school district teachers average 14 years of service, the New York Times found that two to five years teaching is now the norm at many charter schools. Without the predisposition towards the traditional union focus on bread and butter issues, the newness of both the charter school operators and the union leaders can lead to a focus on union/management reform in a way that has not traditionally taken place in district-run public schools.

Green Dot Public Schools is a charter management organization based in Los Angeles with a unionized corps of teachers. Charter Management Organizations (CMO's) are the not-for profit private organizations that create and run charter schools. They are responsible for central administrative support to schools, such as finance, facilities, educational services, and human resources. They are also responsible for negotiation and managing the collective bargaining contract with the Asociacion de Maestros Unidos (AMU), Green Dot Public Schools teachers union. Since Green Dot is among the largest charter management organizations, and one of the first to have a fully unionized teaching corps, this dissertation looks at the relationship that has been developed between Green Dot and AMU in search of ways to improve their relationship and provide guidance to other CMOs attempting to work collaboratively with their teachers unions. While this dissertation focuses on charter school relationships, there

may also be lessons for traditional public school districts wanting to accomplish the same goal.

I studied how union and management relations at a California Charter Management Organization can reform the effectiveness of teacher evaluation and develop models of effective teacher coaching and improved student performance. The following questions guide my study:

- What were the preconditions in building a collaborative relationship prior to negotiating teacher evaluation reform?
- What successful practices do administrative and union leaders say they utilized during the transition to gain teacher approval?
- How do administrators and teachers feel that improved collaboration and new teacher evaluations have improved teaching and student learning?
- To what extent has collaboration between unions and administrators persisted after implementing the new teacher evaluation system?

In order to study these research questions, I conducted a qualitative action research case study at Green Dot Public Schools. Green Dot and their teachers union negotiated a new evaluation system into its contract in 2012 after instituting interest based bargaining. I began by investigating how the union and administration created a positive relationship prior to negotiating a reform to their evaluation system. Since negotiating this particular portion of the contract has proven so difficult, it is likely important to develop a mutual trust and a strong working relationship prior to beginning these potentially contentious negotiations. I then analyzed the methods that the CMO used to gain buy-in from teachers during the negotiation process. Since teachers have historically been opposed to

such reforms, administrators may need to work collectively with their employees to build support. What specific acts did they take to earn a positive vote? And finally, I examined the years between implementation and the present to determine the impact that teacher evaluation reform has had both on teaching and learning at the school site and also on the enduring relationship between the CMO and the union

My experience with collective bargaining both in charter schools and traditional districts allows me to understand the important dynamics associated with collaboration. I have been a teacher at Animo Venice Charter High School, one of the Green Dot Public School's founding five campuses, for eight years. I served as a member and Chair of my union's bargaining team during the two year period where teacher evaluation reform was being negotiated. I also am a former School Board Member and President in the Culver City Unified School District where part of my responsibility was to direct management staff in contract negotiations. Given my positions on both sides of the bargaining table, my focus is not in support of one negotiating team or the other, but instead in the idea that support of building positive relationships between union leaders and district leaders will improve cooperation and teacher evaluation, helping all.

Every school district throughout California is different and Green Dot has its own unique qualities, including their working relationship with their teachers union. However, by studying Green Dot as a case study of a collaborative approach to teacher evaluation reform through contract negotiation and collaboration, it may provide guidance to other school systems and teachers unions wanting to reform their relationship. I interviewed stakeholder groups to better understand the process that they used to bargain successfully. I identified and evaluated trends in that process as a model

for those districts interested in moving in this direction. I looked at relevant data to find evidence of successful teaching associated with this reform. And I established a research team made up of teachers and administrators to analyze the evidence collected throughout this research project in hope that the findings can serve a springboard for continued organizational improvement. In the end, this should provide a roadmap to those interested in future reform efforts of how to work collectively toward a successful end product. Given the importance of teacher quality, establishing a proven process for supporting teacher improvement will hopefully aid districts and unions in their common interest of delivering the highest quality education possible to their students.

CHAPTER 2

Bodies of Research

While most actors in the educational system agree that current methods of teacher evaluation are not effective (Donaldson, 2009), little movement has been made to improve evaluation systems because of the necessity for such changes to be negotiated and the contentious relationships that tend to permeate these negotiations. However, if districts and their unions are able to improve their relationships, they may be able to create a stronger evaluation system and, through it, improved student performance. To review the current literature related to this problem, I will first provide an overview of teacher evaluation systems, paying especially close attention to the problems with the current evaluation systems in improving student performance and models of effective practice. I will then look at the critical role that teachers unions play in the collective bargaining process, including both legal requirements (in California) and the impact that has on evaluation. This will include models of effective contract negotiations. Finally, I will look at how cooperation between unions and districts has been shown to be beneficial, paying close attention to lessons from management research literature. Throughout the chapter, I will include case studies from the literature that will illustrate the process and impact of evaluation reform on education professionals and students in the field.

Teacher Evaluation: Identifying Those Things that Make Teachers Great

Teacher evaluation has historically been measured primarily or exclusively by administrator observation while teacher compensation has relied on formal education and experience. Unfortunately, all of those traditional indicators have been shown to be lacking in their reliability to identify and reward the best teachers (West and Mykerezzi, 2011). Teacher evaluation has traditionally had two distinct purposes: an accountability purpose to ensure some base level of competency in order to be in the classroom and an improvement purpose to coach teachers through the process of professional development (Koppich, 2005). However, due to a long list of factors that include poorly trained administrators, poorly constructed evaluation metrics, and a one size fits all approach that fails to distinguish between new and veteran faculty, teacher evaluation has lacked demonstrated success in supporting teacher improvement or identifying teachers unfit to be in the profession (Bridges & Gumport, 1984; Coker, Medley, & Soar, 1980; Iwanicki, 1990; Manatt & Daniels, 1990; Wise, Darling-Hammond, McLaughlin, & Tyson-Bernstein, 1984). What's more, when it comes to teacher evaluation, there is a "lack of agreement about what constitutes good or effective teaching" (Cruikshank and Haefele, 1991, p. 34).

Among the concerns related to the current teacher evaluation system is that the standards against which teachers are being measured and held accountable are lacking in their validity. Danielson and Magreal (2000), in fact identify the criteria used by most districts that is supposed to define what it means to be a good teacher as "trivial, simplistic, and not relevant to what teachers should be doing." If the standards are unclear or irrelevant, then the evaluation, no matter how well-executed, will lack true

meaning. Another concern is that the evaluation system has attempted to meet two disparate goals simultaneously: assessing teacher effectiveness and providing professional growth to participants, a difficult task (Papay, 2012). Papay (2012) suggests that too much focus has been on the first goal of removing poor practitioners, causing districts to develop tools that have not adequately been used to model and support the development of great teachers.

Numerous ideas have been espoused over the years for how to improve the teacher evaluation and compensation system. Some argue for more rewards tied to professional development, assuming that better prepared teachers will teach better. However, this has the potential to emulate the current credit given for educational attainment (West and Mykerezi, 2011). Another form of compensation rewards teachers based on the merit inherent in their evaluation, often called performance pay. While performance pay is not used by many districts, it is equally as popular in unionized and non-unionized districts, although unionized districts were more likely than their counterparts to focus merit on something other than student test scores (West and Mykerezi, 2011). This is significant because most policy makers equate performance pay with test score-based evaluation. However, by separating the two, districts may be able to implement a performance pay system that rewards teachers for a host of characteristics much more likely to measure their effectiveness than the traditional step and column.

For those districts using the traditional observation model of measuring teacher effectiveness, the key element in reforming the evaluation system is adopting an observation instrument that is valid and appropriate while simultaneously training evaluators to use the instrument correctly (Goe, Bell, and Little, 2008). A model of just

such an evaluation instrument that seems to be gaining prominence amongst those district who are looking for reform is the Framework for Teaching created by Danielson (1996). The Danielson Framework evaluated teacher performance in four domains: planning and preparation, the classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities. Listed under each of the domains are a variety of elements detailing the roles that teachers have, with performance standards for each of these roles. The language is written in such a way that it provides a guide to teachers of those actions that they could take to be more effective and those things on which teacher evaluation should be based. While not all researchers agree as to the effectiveness of the Danielson model, Milanowski and Heneman (2001) found that the standards were understandable to teachers and that the language used to describe what good and bad teaching looks like was consistent with their own beliefs. In addition, observations provide an effective tool for using teacher evaluation as a coaching mechanism to help develop professionally and grow towards effectiveness (Goe, Bell, and Little, 2008).

Another common reform to the evaluation system is using a “value-added” model that measures student test score gains as a comparison to the gains of the average peer in order to measure the effectiveness of a teacher. It is becoming even more common in its’ usage due to a requirement for access to American Recover and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) money that districts measure teacher effectiveness as part of their evaluation system. While many practitioners cite this as the most reliable evaluation system, the studies that has been done to date raise as many questions about its’ reliability as it does answers. Schochet and Chiang (2010) find through a quantitative simulation of value-added test scores that the small sample size used by most districts as part of their

evaluation system could lead to error rates of at least 20%. They further find that those developing evaluation systems could limit error rates by collecting data on students for multiple years to increase the sample size and/or by analyzing school-level, rather than teacher-level, data. A significant concern with value-added evaluation systems is that they, by definition, provide a measurement of student growth, but provide no direction to teachers as to how they can improve their practice or to administrators on how to guide professional development (Papay, 2012).

In addition to the question of how evaluations are conducted, another important consideration relates to which policy setters have been tasked with regulating teacher evaluation. The two most significant historical turning points occurred after the release of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 and the passage of *No Child Left Behind* in 2001. Prior to 1983, most teacher evaluation decisions were left up to individual districts (Hazi and Arredondo Rucinsky, 2009). However, with the then newfound push towards improving education as a national security issue, many states began to mandate evaluative criteria and processes, including some attempts at evaluation based on performance (Furtwengler, 1995). And with *No Child Left Behind*'s mandate of a highly qualified teacher in every classroom, some decisions regarding teacher evaluation were pushed up to the federal government level (Hazi and Arredondo Rucinsky, 2009).

Recent studies of policy decisions around teacher evaluation have found a large amount of discrepancy throughout the country. Six states (12%) require districts to use evaluation tools and measurements created at the state level while an additional 12 states (24%) have a universally set evaluation criteria based on which districts must create their own tools (Hazi and Rucinsky, 2009). Given the tradition towards local decision making

in education and the near universal role that local policy setters played in teacher evaluation a mere three decades ago, this is a substantial shift in one of the most central issues in education. Of course, with the centralization of decision-making, there is a parallel path towards less use of alternative methods of assessing teacher performance. Only 12 states (24%) allow any use of peer evaluation or portfolios (Hazi and Rucinsky, 2009).

But will a better teacher evaluation system lead to improved teacher quality and, through that, impact student success? Danielson and Magreal (2000) have found that teacher quality and performance are the key determinants of student success. What's more, teacher evaluation has the potential to drive school reform efforts if evaluation tools are linked to professional development, training programs, and other school assessments (Milanowsky and Heneman, 2001). And teachers impact not just what happens in the classroom, but the entire culture of schooling and the interactions that students have with each other and with all adults on campus. Goe, Bell, and Little (2008) have developed a research-based criterion for measuring teacher effectiveness that is divided into five distinct categories. While they have found that effective teachers do things in the classroom that one would expect (including having high expectations, helping students to learn, planning engaging lessons, and adapting instruction), they have also found that effective teachers connect with families and communities, develop appreciation for diversity and civic-mindedness, and build self-efficacy and cooperative behaviors. Doing all that is necessary to be an effective teacher is very difficult. Measuring all that it takes to be an effective teacher is even harder.

The Vaughan Next Century Learning Center:

A Model for Effective Evaluation and Compensation Reform

Before looking at the role of unions in this process, it might be instructive to look at the path for reform and its impact on both students and employees at a school unencumbered by unions: the Vaughan Next Century Learning Center, a charter school in Los Angeles. Eileen Kellor (2005) conducted just such a study in the first 10 years after Vaughan's charter conversion in 1993. Vaughan converted from district to charter at the behest of its teachers, who petitioned for a change in governance while keeping their same principal. This change increased the grade levels served from traditional elementary to a pre k-12 model, brought class size down to a maximum of 25 students in any class, and increased parental involvement by requiring it at every grade level. However, the largest change came from a wholesale reform of the evaluation and compensation system for Vaughan's 75 teachers.

The initial changes to school policy included a School-Based Performance Award (SBPA), a \$1500-\$2000 bonus given to all certificated staff, including administrators, if certain performance goals are met. The goals, which were set based on the growth areas identified in their charter application, included an increase in standardized test scores, an increase in average report card grades, and an increase in the re-designation rate for English Language Learners. For each of the first four years under the SBPA incentive, Vaughan teachers far exceeded state-mandated growth targets by 33, 70, 8, and 32 points respectively. In all, the SBPA not only compensated teachers for student improvement aligned with school-wide goals, not only encouraged collaboration by rewarding all

certificated staff members, but also led to a remarkable 276 point API increase in just four short years (Kellor, 2005).

In addition to the school-wide bonuses, Vaughan developed an alteration to the traditional step and column pay scale that they called the Performance Pay Program (PPP). The PPP mixed traditional compensation markers (like years teaching and advanced degrees) with an added \$4100 in pay for new markers, such as a score of 3 or higher by peers and administrators in planning, classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibility (based on the Danielson model of teacher effectiveness). There was a purposeful process envisioned by school leaders that wanted this implementation to serve as a pilot and be continually evolving as more data became available. Therefore, only teachers new to Vaughan were included in the PPP evaluation and compensation program while veteran teachers retained their traditional pay scale. However, after just one year, some veteran teachers were so jealous of those new teachers eligible for added bonuses that the school leadership had to open up the PPP to all who wanted to join (Kellor, 2005).

According to the researcher, the mix of the SBPA and PPP created a substantially different environment around teacher evaluation and compensation at a school that just a decade earlier was quite traditional in terms of their systems. The researcher credits the inclusive process of shared decision-making around designing such a change and the pilot-type design that limited veteran educators from being forced into a new system. However, one may ask of the study, does the data point to any major improvements in student success as a result of this change? Kellor (2005) offers a value-added analysis to see if there was a connection between Vaughan's increased test scores and the new

teacher evaluation and compensation system (as opposed to the many other reforms mentioned previously). She found a statistically significant relationship between teacher scores on their observation (using the Danielson model) and the amount of improvement that that teacher's students showed on their standardized test scores. In other words, those teachers who were shown to be successful (and, therefore, more heavily compensated) using the evaluative criteria developed as part of Vaughan's observation tool were the same teachers who were responsible for producing the incredible API growth at the school. What's more, Kellor (2005) was interested in teacher perception and response to the changing evaluation and compensation system. She issued surveys each year and had at least an 84% response rate. Each year, at least 80% of Vaughan's teachers felt that it was fair to hold teachers responsible for student achievement, with that number increasing as the pilot continued to a remarkable high of 98%. By the end, 72% of teachers felt that the new evaluation and compensation systems should be continued. Teacher evaluation reform occurred successfully in this model, both in terms of matching an evaluation system to demonstrated student performance and developing teacher buy-in to the change. But does this process become more difficult when teacher evaluation reform must be achieved through collective bargaining, as is the case in nearly every California public school?

Unions: Partner or Impediment?

If research shows that current models of teacher evaluation are not successful, then why has it been so difficult for changes to be realized? Much of the difficulty can be traced to the relationship between districts and their teachers unions, who legally must

join together to approve any such change. The National Labor Relations Act was passed by Congress and signed into law in 1935. It detailed the importance of collective bargaining rights for employees, employers, and even the entire national economy. It highlights the “inequality of bargaining power” inherent in any circumstance where employers have all power and their employees are denied their “full freedom of association [and] actual liberty.” It further lays out the rights of unions including the right to form a union, the right against discriminatory treatment by an employer because of union membership, and the right against the refusal to allow collective bargaining. It laid out the case for collective bargaining as an economic and civil liberties need, developed in great detail a method by which collective bargaining rights can be fairly distributed and practiced, and set up the National Labor Relations Board to enforce these rights. However, in section 2.2, the act specifically exempts government employees (including school districts) from these regulations. Instead, it leaves public sector collective bargaining decisions to each individual state government (National Labor Relations Act of 1935).

Unions almost always play an important role in the enactment of any change in the evaluation or compensation systems in one of three ways: blocking through collective bargaining, lobbying, or diluting the reform. While there are many ways that teachers unions can exert political influence, the two that have been found to be most successful are through their membership numbers and their collective bargaining rights (Hartney and Flavin, 2011). Because unions have essentially veto power over any changes to their collective bargaining agreement, the vast majority of districts never even attempt reform in evaluation. In fact, 96.5% of districts throughout the country maintain a traditional

salary schedule, showing the unanimity of tradition. In those places where reform has been attempted, unions have used a variety of blocking techniques to hamper reform. One of the best examples comes from Cincinnati where, in 2002, a proposal was sent to the district's teachers altering the evaluation system to provide more variety of evaluation methods and then giving those teachers who excel a pay bonus. The teachers voted down the proposal 1,892 to 73. What's most amazing about this particular example is that the teachers union was able to get a near unanimous 96% vote even though the proposed evaluation reform didn't include student performance as one of its measures (Buck and Greene, 2011).

In contrast to Cincinnati and so many other districts where unions have refused to even consider reform at the bargaining table, some unions are using a "labor-management calculus different from traditional agreements" (Koppich, 2005, p 94). Using collaboration rather than an adversarial environment at the bargaining table, districts and unions have been able to create a partnership in which finding agreement on goals leads naturally to a negotiated compromise (Fisher and Ury, 1981). "Hard on the problem, not hard on each other" is the slogan of the movement (often called interest based bargaining), but both management and union leadership have been slowly learning that the benefits extend far beyond mere cooperation to addressing consequential matters in education, including the quality of teaching in the classroom. So while the Cincinnati teachers union voted nearly unanimously to block negotiation on any change to their evaluation system, the teachers union in Montgomery County, Maryland came to their district seeking to implement interest-based bargaining and the inclusion of teacher evaluation as a topic of negotiations. Because of these union-initiated reforms, formative

evaluation results of teacher and administrator attitudes have shown support from both groups and more emphasis on professional growth (Koppich, 2005). Unions have the power to largely determine the pace and course of reform in this area and while many are slow to instigate change, those who are interested have the power to lead the way.

The second union role involves the lobbying of politicians to pass only those laws that the unions support. Unions have an incredible amount of political power, resulting from their massive campaign accounts and ability to organize their members to vote in critical elections. Hartney and Flavin (2011) have found that in states where teachers unions have contributed heavily to political candidates, there is a substantial decrease in the likelihood of that state passing teacher evaluation and teacher pay reforms. In Massachusetts, a state with a substantial number of union employees, then-Governor Mitt Romney proposed a merit pay system in 2005, basing teacher pay on an evaluation that included student performance. Even though the proposal was couched with an increase in educational funding from the state government, both teachers unions opposed it strongly and the legislature felt enough pressure to defeat the measure (Buck and Greene, 2011).

The final form of union power in teacher evaluation is in using pressure to “water down” reform proposals to the point where they no longer truly measure teachers based on the original intended measurement, student performance. In Arizona, the state has been encouraging districts to alter their evaluation and compensation systems by providing district with Classroom Site Fund (CSF) grants and requiring that 40% be used for teacher compensation based on performance. However, the law allowed each district to determine, in concert with their unions, how to properly judge teacher performance.

The idea of using this decentralized process was to “[allow] districts the freedom to determine performance pay goals” and to “help gain district and teacher buy-in” (Buck and Greene, 2011, p. 29). However, a 2010 report from the state auditor found that only 13% of the districts were using their CSF monies to compensate teachers for teaching quality based on student performance. By providing districts and their union’s flexibility, Arizona was offering them an opportunity to significantly water down the impact of the reform (Buck and Greene, 2011).

Given the important role that unions have played in shaping (or blocking) policy in this area, reform-minded educational leaders have had to walk a tightrope so as not to draw the ire of the unions. President Obama, a traditional union ally who has also advocated teacher evaluation reform, has attempted such a balancing act in the creation and implementation of his Race to the Top (RTTT) and Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) programs. Not only did the TIF program support differentiated pay based on teacher performance, but it further encouraged states to build systems to increase teacher effectiveness and distribute effective teachers more equitably. While at first glance this may seem to be just the type of reform effort that would have elicited the types of union activities mentioned previously, President Obama incorporated into the law numerous safeguards that have allowed him to, if not gain union support, at least not awaken their active condemnation. First and foremost, TIF forces all changes in evaluation and compensation to be decided at the local level through collective bargaining rather than at the federal level through government edict, allowing unions ample opportunities to put their stamp on potential policy changes. In addition, TIF was an optional program, making it possible for those unions interested in supporting new forms of evaluation to

receive funding for those efforts while allowing those still uncomfortable to wait and see what successes, if any, come to the districts of their colleagues. And finally, TIF put federal education funding directly in the hands of poor districts at a highly disproportional rate, making it difficult for urban unions to criticize it. While union members can still be critical of the reform efforts, the President has integrated the concepts into the establishment at a more rapid pace than was the case prior to his taking office (Smarick, 2011).

However, there seems to be a growing consensus, including from union leaders, that teacher evaluation reform is a necessary point of discussion for improving education. American Federation of Teachers president Randi Weingarten said “our system of evaluating teachers has never been adequate” (2010).

Charter School for Applied Technology:

A Model of Union and District Collaborative Reform

While Vaughan’s reform efforts were proven successful because of collaboration, extensive piloting, and an evaluation method proven to correlate with student success, they had no union and were, therefore, able to implement said program without needing official agreement through collective bargaining. Given the important role that unions play in approving or denying such reforms, it may be instructive to look at a model where necessary collaboration has produced equally significant results. The Charter School for Applied Technology is the largest charter school in New York, serving over 1500 students in grades k-12. With a motto of “every day is career day,” this school has developed a comprehensive model of a school-to-career program. Even though this

school has a non-selective admissions process (through lottery), they have a 100% graduation rate (as compared to 50% for the Buffalo Public Schools) and proficiency rates higher than the surrounding school district in each tested area for math and English for 2008, 2009, and 2010. The school has an average class size of 25, almost 50% added to the length of the school day (as compared to the state requirement), and a 6% longer school year. While charters are often associated with being anti-union, this school was legally obligated to be unionized based on their size from its inception (Tryjankowski, Henry, and Verrall, 2012).

Immediately upon its founding, this charter school prioritized creating a new evaluation system that rewarded teachers for those areas in which they excelled. After extensive negotiations, a collaborative stakeholder team (including union and grade level representatives) met yearly to refine the evaluative criteria and to ensure that the system met all of the goals set by both administrative and union leadership at the inception. Sixty percent of the assessment was based on student achievement scores as measured against a standard of growth developed collaboratively by the stakeholder team. What's more, every teacher on the grade level team was evaluated based on the assessment of all students in the grade level, encouraging collaboration. Another 20% of the assessment was based on the number and quality of career experiences that each team planned for their students, as a measure of meeting their school-wide career preparatory goal. And finally, 20% of the assessment was based on an administrator observation, using a rubric. However, what makes this performance pay different from most is that every teacher on staff received a raise every year; only the amount of the increase was altered based on one's assessment score (Tryjankowski, Henry, and Verrall, 2012).

Tryjankowski, Henry, and Verrall (2012) conducted a qualitative study attempting to measure through semi structured interviews the perceptions among certificated staff of this evaluation and compensation system. They interviewed a mix of teachers, administrators, and union leaders asking them to comment on the model of performance-based compensation, the benefits of said model, and the problems inherent in its use. Not surprisingly, the two highest cited descriptors of the model were the collaboration used in its creation and implementation and its use to guide the work of the school and discuss collaborative improvement. While the design is heavily weighted towards attaching teacher evaluation and compensation to student test scores, a practice so often vilified by teachers unions, this school's unionized teachers described the practice as a positive influence on their school because of its collaborative nature, a hallmark of progressive-thinking unions and their members. When asked about positive implications, most cited the fairness in the system and the transparency of the evaluative criteria, again a hallmark of a collaborative environment and union involvement. But the most significant finding is that when asked about the negatives, many respondents could not identify anything, an unthinkable reaction for most unionized teachers to a pay for performance system (Tryjankowski, Henry, and Verrall, 2012).

Towards Effective Union / District Cooperation

Given the importance of teacher evaluation along with the critical role that unions play in determining whether reforms take place, is it possible for districts and unions to work side-by-side to create meaningful reforms to broken constructs? While such reforms are still uncommon, research has been done that shows numerous models for just

such a reform effort. Districts and unions who follow these proven techniques will find it more likely that a new consensus will emerge regarding the use of student success for teacher evaluation and compensation.

First, reform is most likely achievable when both sides have an interest in reform (sometimes called progressive leadership), have a history of good working relationships, and have developed a culture of negotiations that is expansive in terms of the items negotiated and the scope of interest. Denver was one of the first district's to attempt such a reform as a partnership between district and union leaders in 1999. Both sides wanted reform, but their respective visions of a new system were quite different. With the help of a mediator, they collaboratively created an evaluation and compensation system that contained enough components important to both sides that it was approved with little opposition. Even though the reform differed substantially from what the district had originally wanted, the results were undoubtedly positive. Student achievement, as measured by standardized testing rose among those who were taught by participants and those who participated for a longer time saw even more growth. But most importantly, both sides were able to come together to agree on a reform. Had the Denver Public School district insisted on their reform rather than negotiating with the union, nothing would likely have changed and the benefits herein described would have been lost. Meaningful negotiation is a prerequisite for change in this area of education policy (Koppich, 2005).

While teachers want to be a part of the process used to create the new evaluation and compensation system, they also want to ensure that said system provides clear and consistent direction as to what they need to do to be judged as successful teachers. In

addition, they want to ensure that the criteria on which they are evaluated are fair and supported by ample research. Among the largest fears associated with teachers is that of ambiguity related to accountability measures (Cibulka and Derlin, 1998). Teachers want clarity on the expectations set for them, the way those expectations will be measured, and rewards/punishments depending on the results. Milanowski and Heneman (2001) study just such a movement in a Midwestern district that transitioned from a vague series of evaluative criteria administered inconsistently to one based on the Danielson model (1996) complete with a rubric that describes exactly what is evaluated as good teaching. While some might assume that teachers and their unions would oppose any measure to add rigidity to the tools used in their evaluations, teachers in this district approved the change and in large measure supported this system after experiencing its effect. In fact, the majority of criticisms cited by teachers related to a lack of training by evaluators and/or a lack of coaching on how to improve within the goals of the rubric, not about any inherent methodology. Teachers often support strong evaluations if they are conducted properly.

However, in addition to having reliable measurement tools in which teachers can place their trust, teachers routinely suggest that they would be most in favor of an evaluation system that measures those things over which they have control (Cooley and Leinhardt, 1980). In fact, multiple studies have found a significant correlation between teachers' sense of control over something and their willingness to consent to its use in their evaluation (Cooley and Leinhardt, 1980; Paulin, 1980; Langer, 1983). These studies found that certain parts of teaching were universally hailed as falling under the teacher's control, such as planning and pacing classroom activities. Therefore, if districts

suggested creating an evaluative tool that incorporated classroom pacing and planning, teachers would likely consent because they believe that they can control the outcome. However, for an area in which teachers feel a lack of control, such as maintaining student discipline, most teachers would feel uncomfortable including it as a criteria in evaluation because even a gifted teacher cannot control what is not under their purview. One of the stumbling blocks in incorporating student test scores as a measurement of teacher effectiveness is that some teachers do not view test scores as an area over which they have control, arguing that a substantial portion of the impactful factors relate to socio-economic status and home life. However, if districts and unions were able to connect evaluations and compensation to efficacious criteria, research shows a better chance of cooperation and support.

Even when teachers feel as if their work in the classroom can directly impact the quality of their evaluation, questions remain over whether they are receiving the support necessary to be successful. Evaluation alone does not improve student achievement; it must be combined with effective coaching and professional development (Tryjankowski, Henry, and Verrall, 2012). Even teachers motivated by the financial reward associated with a positive evaluation or the associated pay increase may be unable to provide the instruction necessary to move students towards proficiency. And while much continues to be said about teacher evaluation and pay, it is not connected nearly enough to the training necessary for them to be successful. Teachers and their unions would likely be much more apt to support reform in this area if they felt like their professional support and coaching matched the rigors of the expectations placed on them.

CHAPTER 3

Introduction

This chapter describes the research design and methods to study the following questions:

- What were the preconditions in building a collaborative relationship prior to negotiating teacher evaluation reform?
- What successful practices do administrative and union leaders say they utilized during the transition to gain teacher approval?
- How do administrators and teachers feel that improved collaboration and new teacher evaluations have improved teaching and student learning?
- To what extent has collaboration between unions and administrators persisted after implementing the new teacher evaluation system?

Philosophical Worldview

In shaping my approach to answering these questions, I pulled on two overarching philosophical worldviews as a basis for my research design. First, I believe in the social constructivist worldview which holds that “meanings are constructed by human beings” (Creswell, 2009, p. 8). In dealing with highly charged issues that impact one’s livelihood, perception is often reality. The decisions reached by administrators and unions during the negotiations of teacher evaluation reform are less important than the

way those decisions are perceived by classroom teachers and site administrators. Throughout this dissertation great deference was given to the way that actors within the school system perceive collaboration and change, understanding the importance that the meaning constructed by their perceptions are to any and all attempts at collaboration and reform. Second, my work was shaped by the advocacy and participatory worldview, which holds that “research contains an action agenda for reform” (Creswell, 2009, p. 9). I make no secret of the fact that I am trying to use this dissertation to change the conversation around teacher evaluation reform from one which pits teachers unions and school systems against each other to one that understands the value of collaboration.

Research Design

I used a qualitative action research case study design. Qualitative research is “a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2009, p. 4). Management / union relationships are built by human interactions. The ways in which both sides create (or fail to create) collaboration is determined by human perceptions of the pros and cons of such actions. The perceived effectiveness of the new teacher evaluation articles negotiated based on that collaborative environment can be measured through talking to the employees on both sides of negotiations table. Qualitative research helped to answer these research questions because it can best measure the actions that teachers and administrators took, the reasons for those actions, and the impact that those actions have had on their relationship.

This dissertation does not address the positive and negative qualities of different teacher evaluation reforms, instead focusing on the collaboration needed between teachers unions and administrators in order to change the evaluation system in any given direction. Through a qualitative action research case study, I am able to show how a charter management organization has used collaboration to bring about a change to their teacher evaluation system. Since my research questions focus on process as it relates to results, a case study can provide the detail necessary to explore timeline. I am trying to find out what practices have led Green Dot to negotiate teacher evaluation reform. Through interviews, document analysis, and negotiation observation, I sought to determine what actions were taken both during negotiation and during reform implementation that led to the successful transition to a new evaluation system.

The action research portion of the design relates to the research team from Green Dot who have met with me while research was being conducted to help ensure that the best data is collected and that accurate analysis occurs. Part of the purpose of this study is to see first-hand how collaboration between union leaders and management can build the trust necessary to reform teacher evaluation and improve student achievement. This team included both managers and union leaders, providing the space for joint viewing of survey and interview results and discussion of the findings. It also reviewed the analysis to brainstorm ways that this research can be used moving forward to build an even stronger organization.

Site Selection

For this study, I have identified one charter management organization in California that negotiated teacher evaluation reform within the last five years. It agreed to be part of the study and leaders from both the union and management negotiating team agreed to participate. It was important that the school system had negotiated its new teacher evaluation reform within the past five years so that those who negotiated will be more likely to still be employed there (from both teams) and so that the comparison to prior evaluation systems was more easily accessible in interviewee's memories. Green Dot Public Schools meets all of the above criteria and is the site where I conducted this research. Green Dot negotiated teacher evaluation reform with its teachers union in 2012, well within the five year window. Both chief negotiators from that year are with the organization currently and can provide detailed descriptions as to the process and the collaboration. The reformed evaluation system at Green Dot is still in use, providing an opportunity to assess its success in building future collaboration between the charter management organization and union. This also gave me a chance to talk to teachers and administrators within the organization to assess the impact that this reform has had on teaching and learning.

Green Dot cannot represent all public school districts in California, but it shares some significant characteristics. Like all charter schools, it is funded by the state and federal government using public money. It is legally required to admit students by random lottery, without considering student ability or parent income. It is required to negotiate a labor contract with its teachers union, in the same manner as all other

districts. And it is required to have students take public accountability assessments, which are used to measure student growth and teacher success.

However, there are areas where Green Dot diverges from other school systems. As a Charter Management Organization, Green Dot is responsible to its board of directors, not to a publicly-elected school board. Green Dot families are allowed to remove students from the school at any point to send them to another charter school or to their home district. And while Green Dot's teachers are unionized through the California Teachers Association (CTA), the union has generally been more open to reform measures than other public employees unions.

This case study, then, can certainly provide evidence of how one organization was able to reform teacher evaluation through collaboration with its union. However, the steps taken and the results may not be applicable to all other charter management organizations or school districts that attempt a similar process. The purpose here is to study this one case as an example of how collaboration between unions and management can aid in teacher evaluation reform. In order to ensure that this research is useful to the stakeholders at this particular site, I established a research team made up of Green Dot administrators and teachers who met with me during data collection and analysis. This team provided guidance on research methods, data analysis, and ways to use this data to improve union/district relations throughout the Charter Management Organization.

Site Structure

Green Dot Public Schools is a Charter Management Organization, a not-for profit organization, currently running charter schools in three states (California, Tennessee, and

Washington). There is a national Chief Executive Officer and Board of Directors. However, since charter school laws differ so greatly, each state has their own staff and board leadership. Green Dot is originally a Los Angeles-based organization and currently runs 14 high schools and seven middle schools in the Los Angeles area. All of the schools are chartered by either the state of California or a Local Education Agency (such as the Los Angeles County Office of Education or the Los Angeles Unified School District). All of the teachers in those Los Angeles schools are represented by the Asociacion de Maestros Unidos, a teachers union local affiliated with the California Teachers Association and the National Education Association.

Green Dot Los Angeles is run by a President and CEO. The management team has a contract negotiations team who are responsible for meeting collaboratively with the teachers' union team on a yearly basis to negotiate changes to the collective bargaining agreement. The management team is run by Green Dot's Chief Talent Officer and generally includes legal counsel, site administrators, and cluster directors. The Asociacion de Maestros Unidos is run by a union President (a teacher on leave to work on union duties full time) with support for California Teachers Association staff). There is also a council of representatives from each school site who set union policy. AMU is also represented at the bargaining table by a team chaired by a union member.

Model of Collaboration

In order to determine Green Dot's level of collaboration prior to, during, and since teacher evaluation reform was negotiated in 2012, I used Rubinstein and McCarthy's (2014) research on the elements of a successful union / management

partnership as the measurement tool. Rubinstein and McCarthy found that there were two components of successful union / management partnership: communication (both formal and informal and at every level) and a culture of collaboration between the union and management (organizational structures that provided avenues for teachers to provide input and help problem solve). What's more, they found that those districts who built a partnership using these two components saw an increase in student achievement. In analyzing the methods Green Dot used to build a successful collaboration with their union, questions were created that are built around Rubinstein and McCarthy's research and those same two characteristics of strong partnerships.

Data Collection Methods

Interviews

I held interviews with 18 teachers and management staff members at Green Dot Public Schools, a charter management organization that has successfully negotiated teacher evaluation reform. The seven administrative staff interviewees included three Principals or Assistant Principals and four central office administrators (including the Chief Talent Officer / Chief Negotiator, and the implementation specialist for the new evaluation system). The eleven teacher staff interviewees included six union leaders (including the union President, the Negotiations Chair, and Executive Board Members) and five other classroom teachers who are not union leaders (including at least one teacher who was a part of the evaluation pilot program prior to adoption). Interviews took place one-on-one at a school site, the Green Dot home office, or at a mutually agreed upon place. Interviews lasted approximately one hour each. The questions asked of all participants

will be nearly the same (the only difference being the removal of questions irrelevant to the interviewee based on the length of their tenure in the organization).

The questions focused on the following:

- Demographic Characteristics
- Steps taken in communication prior to negotiating teacher evaluation reform that they believe created the type of collaborative environment that led to a new teacher evaluation system (RQ 1)
- Steps taken in building a culture of collaboration prior to negotiating teacher evaluation reform that they believe created the type of collaborative environment that led to a new teacher evaluation system (RQ 1)
- The practices used during the creation of their teacher evaluation reform that made it both successful and palatable to both parties within the negotiations. These will include questions about the pilot evaluation system, addressing concerns with the pilot, the process for creating the new evaluation system, methods to collect information from district staff about the new system, and the use of those opinions to create buy-in for the implementation (RQ #2).
- Ways in which communication and creating a culture of collaboration could be strengthened
- General perceptions about the successes of the current evaluation system

The full interview protocol can be viewed as Document 1.

Interview Sample

As part of the data collected for this dissertation, I conducted interviews with 18 current or former employees of Green Dot Public Schools. These particular interviewees were chosen because of their knowledge of the teacher evaluation system and/or their involvement in union / management relations. Most interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes and were audio recorded and transcribed. All of the data will be presented in the aggregate without names or identifiable characteristics so as to protect the anonymity of the interviewees. This sample included 11 females and 7 males, however the sample of management employees were more heavily male (four versus three female managers) whereas the teacher sample skewed heavily female (eight female and three male). Given that three of the four union Presidents in Green Dot history have been female, four of the 5 current union Executive Board members are female, and that all members of the union negotiation committee are female, it is very possible that the skew in the sample matches the population of union leaders being studied. What's more, I found nothing in the data that suggests that women and men have substantially different points of view as it relates to this particular subject.

I also measured the ages of the sample, which ranged from 27 to 56, a reasonable snapshot of any school staff. For the management sample, there was a mean age of 41 and a median age of 38. For the teacher sample, there was a mean age of 33 and a median age of 31. For most school districts, both of those numbers would represent a sample of employees who are younger than their peers and could, therefore, feel differently about union and evaluation issues. However, charter management

organizations in general (and Green Dot Public Schools in particular) have a younger staff and these particular employees are leaders in their union and in the management structure (including two union presidents, two senior Green Dot managers, and two very long serving administrators. In terms of race / ethnicity, again this sample produced a diverse set of backgrounds with 45% white / Caucasian, 17% Latino, 6% African-American, 6% Asian-American, and 28% biracial or other. It is important to note that the majority of teachers were non-white and a near majority (three out of seven) of management employees in the sample were also non-white, so there was ethnic / racial diversity in every subset of the sample.

Finally, the sample included Green Dot employees with a variety of experience at Green Dot and throughout the education sector. The management sample included the following seven individuals:

- The Chief Academic Officer (appointed one year ago) who previously worked at Green Dot as a Teacher, Assistant Principal, Principal, Cluster Director, and Vice President of Education and who taught for another district
- The Chief Talent Officer / Chief Negotiator (appointed four years ago) who previously worked at Green Dot as a Cluster Director and in other school districts as a Teacher, Counselor, Assistant Principal, and Principal
- The College Ready Framework Implementation Coordinator (appointed three years ago) who previously worked at Green Dot as a Teacher and Assistant Principal

- The Coordinator of Educator Effectiveness (appointed four years ago) who previously worked as a Teacher at Green Dot and another school district
- A High School Principal (appointed ten years ago) who previously worked at another school district as a Counselor, Coordinator, Head Counselor, and Assistant Principal
- A High School Principal (appointed six years ago) who previously worked at Green Dot as an Assistant Principal and at another school districts as a Teacher and
- A High School Assistant Principal (appointed seven years ago) who previously worked as a teacher both at Green Dot and at another school district.

The teacher sample included the following eleven individuals:

- The Union President (appointed two years ago) who previously served as a Teacher for both Green Dot and another district and who concurrently served as a Union Site Representative, Bargaining Chair, and Vice President
- The former Union President (served for two years) who previously served as a Teacher for three years and who left Green Dot two years ago
- The Union Treasurer (appointed two years ago) who also serves as a Teacher
- The Union Secretary (appointed one year ago) who has served as a Teacher for both Green Dot and another district
- The Union Bargaining Chair (appointed one year ago) who also serves as a Teacher

- A Union Bargaining Committee Member (appointed one year ago) who also serves as a Teacher and a Union Site Representative
- The Union Grievance Chair (appointed one year ago) who also serves as a Teacher and previously served as a Union Site Representative
- A Teacher (appointed nine years ago) who also serves as a Union Site Representative and previously taught at another school district
- A Teacher (appointed three years ago) who also serves as a Union Site Representative and previously taught at another school district
- A Teacher (appointed six years ago) who previously served as a member of the Union Negotiations Committee and previously taught at another school district and
- A teacher (appointed nine years ago) who previously served as a member of the Union Executive Board and previously taught at another school district.

Observations

To answer research questions one, two, and four, I observed a meeting of the Counselor Steering Committee for the Evaluations Committee, including both union leaders and district administrators, to code for the type of relationship that both sides have developed and how they discuss difficult issues together (in terms of communication and building a culture of collaboration). This observation lasted approximately two hours. The purpose was to determine how they function collaboratively around issues of concern, the ways in which they communicate, and the issues with which they choose to focus.

Document Analysis

To answer all four research questions, I analyzed a variety of documents including: contract articles before and after the negotiation, joint union/management presentations on the evaluation system, survey data compiled by management, and teacher supports under both evaluation systems. This data served to confirm / supplement the information mentioned during the interviews.

Research Team / Action Research

The research team consisted of three Green Dot employees: one union leader and two home office administrators. The research team was selected by the researcher based on their interest in the research topic, knowledge of the union / management relationship within the organization, and willingness to participate. The research team will meet and spoke virtually during the course of the data collection and analysis period in order to:

- Discuss research timeline
- Determine potential interview candidates
- Review interview questions
- Determine potential documents for analysis
- Determine potential observation opportunities
- Discuss interview data, potential findings, and steps for future organizational improvement

The purpose of the research team was to help disseminate the information for future use by the organization and to ensure a collaborative process throughout the data collection and analysis stages.

Data Analysis Methods

For all questions, I transcribed the audio recordings of the interviews. I also took notes during my observation. Finally, I had documents to analyze, which were coded to find evidence of trends related to the research questions. Categories of collaboration from the literature (interest based bargaining, shared decision making, joint communication) were used as coding categories, with additional categories created depending on the answers given.

Validity / Reliability

In order to increase the validity and reliability of the study, I used the following two techniques:

- Triangulation: I used a mix of document analysis, interviews, and observation to triangulate the data qualitatively. What's more, since there were 18 interviews (including members from each bargaining side), there was a natural triangulation of data between interviews of individuals with different perspectives.
- Feedback from the Research Team: By meeting with a research team that includes representatives of both administration and teachers to discuss methods, data, and potential uses for the data, I made it more likely that the research is representative of the viewpoints of the entire population.

Summary

Using a qualitative action research case study design helped to identify those particular actions that Green Dot and its teachers unions took prior to, during, and since the negotiation of teacher evaluation reform in order to successfully negotiate a change to their system. It provided them with information that can be used to continue to strengthen their collaboration and evaluation system. It can also provide other charter management organizations with information that they can use if they hope to follow a similarly collaborative path to this end. By using a mix of interviews with both teachers and administrators, document analysis, and observations, this dissertation included detailed information about how Green Dot was able to collaborate around their teacher evaluation system and how that decision has affected stakeholders at the school site. We better understand the process used to build the necessary collaboration for change. This is a significant issue for education because it has the potential to greatly influence how teachers are coached and evaluated, leading to better instruction and potentially the removal of highly ineffective instructors. It could also lead to a more collaborative spirit throughout the organization. Through the use of the methods described herein, I hope to have identified the strategies that can help educational leaders make just such a change.

CHAPTER 4

The focus of this study is to evaluate the unique union / management collaboration at Green Dot Public Schools, a large charter management organization (CMO) operating in Los Angeles County. I have also studied the impact that collaboration has had on its ability to successfully reform teacher evaluations in 2012 and its ability to sustain the reform three years later. Unlike most CMOs, Green Dot teachers and counselors are unionized under the Asociacion de Maestros Unidos (AMU), a local chapter of the California Teachers Association. Because of its unionized workforce, Green Dot management was only able to implement a reformed evaluation system after building and negotiating such a system with union leadership. What's more, the reformed system could only be implemented once a majority vote of teachers and counselors supported including it in their contract.

In previous chapters, I introduced the reason for this study and its importance to education, reviewed the previous literature that informed this study, and presented the methods that I used. In this chapter, I present the data that I found that answers the following research questions:

- What were the preconditions in building a collaborative relationship prior to negotiating teacher evaluation reform?

- What successful practices do administrative and union leaders say they utilized during the transition to gain teacher approval?
- How do administrators and teachers feel that improved collaboration and new teacher evaluations have improved teaching and student learning?
- To what extent has collaboration between unions and administrators persisted after implementing the new teacher evaluation system?

To begin, I examine the alignment of teacher and manager values before beginning to negotiate a major change to the teacher evaluation system. By evaluating responses to open ended questions about the purpose of teacher evaluation, the problems inherent in the previous system, and the role of AMU, I show how closely management and teacher values had to align. Next, I present the current model of teacher evaluation used at Green Dot Public Schools, using a joint union / management presentation to track the changes made during the reform process. Next, I examine how Green Dot and its union were able to build a collaborative process that allowed them to jointly create a reformed evaluation process and gain the majority teacher support necessary to ratify its inclusion in the contract.

As a case study I examine the current effort to follow a similar collaborative process in building a reformed counselor evaluation. Next, I present current teacher and manager views on the effectiveness of the evaluation system, including its impact on teaching and student learning. Finally I assess the current collaborative environment within the organization that may be needed to make further changes to improve teacher evaluation.

Agreeing on Values

Prior to negotiating any change to the teacher evaluation system, Green Dot teachers and managers first came to some conceptual agreement about three key values necessary for reform in this arena. The first value is the purpose of teacher evaluation including how it will be used, how it will help all stakeholder groups, and how it can be beneficial in educating students. The second value is the deficiencies of the current evaluation system including areas where supports for administrators and teachers are necessary but lacking. And finally, values surrounding the purpose of teachers unions as a key player in collaborating with management to achieve any form of teacher evaluation reform.

Both management and union leaders shared common values statements in each of these four areas to move collaboratively towards a common goal. This is not to say that there must be universal agreement, but in cases where both sides show significantly different values as they relate to evaluation and collaboration, there is a likelihood that reform will be difficult. It is impossible in 2015 to measure attitudes on those four questions from four or more years ago. However, by asking questions about current perspectives of those who were part of the organization four years ago, I have obtained data that help us to see how much values alignment existed at that time between management and teachers.

Agreeing on Values: The Purpose of Teacher Evaluation

The California Department of Education reports that educator evaluation (both for teachers and administrators) has three overarching purposes: improve teacher quality, ensure equity, and continue development / improvement

(<http://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ps/evaluationsystems.asp>). However, Green Dot teachers and administrators saw the purpose of teacher evaluation even more broadly to include providing accountability for good teaching, providing support for professional growth for all teachers based on need, allowing teachers to reflect and set goals for improvement, and ensuring educational equity for all students. Given the level of support around these four purposes of teacher evaluation, Green Dot was able to use that alignment of teacher and manager values to institute changes to the teacher evaluation system.

TABLE 4.1: Interview Responses on the Purpose of Teacher Evaluation

The Purpose of Teacher Evaluation	Manager Support	Teacher Support
Accountability and teacher quality assessment	86%	80%
Teacher growth, improved practice, and coaching	100%	80%
Teacher reflection and goal setting	86%	20%
Supporting student learning and ensuring a good education for all students	29%	50%

First, teachers and managers saw assessing teacher quality and hold teachers accountable to that quality standard as a key purpose of evaluation. In fact, 86% of management employees interviewed and 80% of teachers interviewed saw the need to identify those teachers who are not performing to standard in order to be able to begin

removal procedures. Green Dot, like most school systems, has a contract article dedicated to removing teachers who do not perform well in their observed and evaluated practice (which includes specified improvement plans with administrative support). The vast majority of those interviewed saw the evaluation process as a key piece of data in order to determine those in need of removal from the classroom.

Second, 100% of management employees interviewed and 80% of teachers interviewed identified coaching teachers towards professional growth and improved practice as an important part of the teacher evaluation process. A union leader laid out the process clearly: at the end of the evaluation process “teachers should know their areas of strength, what they're really good at. They should know the areas that they need to improve in, and they should have specific resources for how to improve. They should be coached in those different areas.” For Green Dot teachers and managers, evaluation is not just an exercise in compliance, it is part of a growth model where all teachers improve in their practice through objective measurement, direct feedback, and continued support. What’s more, Green Dot employees see value in evaluating all faculty members, including veterans who are already effective teachers. A manager suggested that “if our ultimate goal is to have an effective teacher in every classroom, evaluation provides us a means in which to assess the growth and development of teachers, and provide continued support so that teachers can reflect and improve practice.” While this is related to the Department of Education’s goals of improved quality and continual improvement, those interviewed suggest with near unanimity that the coaching relationship between administrators and teachers in order to improve practice for all was a paramount importance.

While both of those responses had majority support from management and teachers, two other responses reveal lack of agreement. As Table 4.1 shows, 86% of management employees but only 20% of teachers cited teacher reflection and goal setting as a key part of the evaluation process. This suggests that teachers see a lack of cohesion between the goal setting process done as part of the evaluation and their own regular process of reflection. Is this being done in order for teachers to improve practice, as administrators hope, or is this done in order to complete the evaluation cycle so that they can receive the highest possible rating. Improvement is a shared value, as was previously mentioned. So if teachers do not see reflection and goal setting as a worthwhile practice to improve, they it needs some revision.

Managers focused on the need for teachers to practice goal setting and receive feedback on their goals from administrators in order to ensure that there is regular growth. One administrator laid out the questions that teachers should be asking themselves as part of the evaluation process:

“the evaluation purpose is to sit down and help a teacher reflect. How successful was my year? How successful was my observation? What did I like? What I did not like? I think that's where he or she will see the growth and then it is my responsibility to try to make sure that [I find] either as a resource, or help, or a link to an idea, or something ... for them. What I look forward to in an evaluation is to try to help an individual get through a reflective process of how that went.”

While the California Department of Education does not consider reflective thinking a part of the evaluation process, management employees saw that as crucial in order for coaching and growth to follow. However, since only two teachers cited this as important, management may want to consider whether the way in which reflection and

goal setting is currently conducted is truly helping teachers to improve practice or just adding extra work to their load.

Finally, as Table 4.1 shows, 29% of management employees interviewed and 50% of teachers interviewed said that supporting student learning and ensuring a good education for all students was a significant part of the teacher evaluation system. This shows teacher commitment within the organization to creating an evaluation system that will help to equalize student access to quality teacher regardless of the school they happen to attend. It may also point to a concern among teachers, which may not be apparent to administrators, about the disparities that exist throughout the organization. A teacher reflected this viewpoint, saying that “ultimately it is to ensure that students are getting a quality education. That's the ultimate goal. It's not right for a child to be in a classroom with a sub-par teacher and have nothing done about it.” While this is somewhat reflective of each of the other three common responses, these employees specifically connected evaluation to the students in teachers classrooms, making the case that teacher evaluation should be conducted in a way where it will most benefit the students relying on that teacher for their education. That apparent concern over what’s best for students and providing equal access to education is also an area that union leaders and managers need to discuss in order to ensure greater alignment.

Agreeing on Values: Deficiencies in the Previous Teacher Evaluation System

Green Dot teachers and managers agreed on three major areas of weakness in the teacher evaluation system used prior to 2012: lack of clarity in the rubric used to describe and measure good teaching, room for subjective scoring by administrators, and a focus on compliance rather than real growth. Based on values alignment among teachers and managers around these three deficiencies, Green Dot and its union were able to jointly create a new model for teacher evaluation that seeks improvement in these areas.

Until 2012, Green Dot had a teacher evaluation system where the entirety of the evaluation was based on administrator classroom observation using the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTPs) as a measurement of teacher performance. Each of the domains had a series of subsections that described the actions included therein (for example, “using knowledge of students to engage them in learning” and “creating a rigorous learning environment with high expectations and appropriate support for all students”) and a series of questions that teachers would ask as part of their development within that domain. For each of these six domains, Green Dot teachers were assessed using a four point scale (exceeds standard, meets standard, approaching standard, below standard). As a precursor to reforming the evaluation system, Green Dot teachers and managers jointly identified the problems inherent in the current evaluation system in need of repair.

TABLE 4.2: Interview Responses on the Deficiencies in the Previous Evaluation System

Deficiencies in the Previous Evaluation System	Manager Support	Teacher Support
Vague language, not descriptive of effective teaching	86%	67%
Evaluator subjectivity, lack of evidence	71%	50%
Compliance-based	57%	67%

When asked about weaknesses of the evaluation system under the CSTP model, management and teachers centered their comments on three deficiencies. As Table 4.2 shows, 86% of management employees interviewed and 67% of teachers interviewed considered the CSTP language to be vague and not especially descriptive of good teaching. While this shows agreement on the idea that the language in the CSTPs was vague, managers agreed more often than did teachers. This may be reflective of teacher understanding that vague language can make successful completion of the evaluation easier and union understanding that vague language makes teacher dismissal more difficult.

One of the subsections of the CSTPs suggests that teachers should be “monitoring student learning and adjusting instruction while teaching.” There are few models of teacher evaluation where checking for understanding and adjusting instruction are not included as a key indicator of teacher success. However, the CSTPs do not suggest when monitoring and adjusting should occur, how they will be most successful, whether all monitors can be identical or whether there needs to be variety, etc. The vague language does provide a list of areas of focus for teachers looking to improve their practice, which

is helpful. However, the vague language provides no specific information on best practices that teachers can use to improve or monitor growth or success.

Also as Table 4.2 shows, 71% of management employees and 50% of teachers identified evaluator subjectivity in their ratings and the lack of evidence to support a particular rating as a major deficiency in the previous evaluation system. As previously mentioned, the Green Dot evaluation system based on the CSTPs did not include a detailed description of the practices that would lead to a particular rating. Instead, there were four broad categories of practice (exceeds standard, meets standard, approaching standard, below standard) and it was left to the discretion of the administrator to determine where teachers scored. Teachers complained about this lack of clarity:

“The earlier system, prior to the system we have now, was a little bit more general, a little broader, and had no rubric that I can remember. It was unclear, often, why someone would get a particular evaluation score. I'd never understand why it was partial, or exceeds ... it was never quite clear.”

But equally important, administrators admitted that the system left room for non-teaching factors to influence teacher ratings: “You didn't script and you would just go off of your impressions as the school leader and I found that that leaves a little more wiggle room for I think you're a nice person.” Since an evaluation system is intended to be an objective measure of practice, then this subjectivity became problematic for both teachers and managers.

Table 4.2 also shows that 57% of management employees and 67% of teachers found that the evaluation system under the CSTPs seemed to be more about compliance than about teacher growth, focusing more on checking off a box than with any type of

coaching or real feedback. One teacher noted the lack of meaning throughout the process,

“it was done to be in compliance. There was no real accountability on the teacher or admin’s part of the evaluation to have anything of meaning in the moment and/or afterwards. There [were] meetings, but nonetheless ... the feel of it wasn’t different than any other meeting, other than it had to be done. I remember the process being very short.”

Teachers and managers wanted a process that would support teacher growth and be aligned with professional development and other coaching that they received throughout the year. But one teacher described the lack of that alignment,

“So it was just like good job or you’re in trouble. There wasn’t a whole lot of targeted room for improvement. There wasn’t a lot of structure to debrief your discussions like with your administrators. When people are getting in trouble, it’s just like, well, this isn’t good enough, and now you’re on a plan or whatever. So I just felt it lacked a real process.”

Without greater integration, the majority of employees interviewed felt that there was little value to teachers wanting to improve practice.

Since an important component to any evaluation system is the level of support available to teachers and administrators throughout the process, all those interviewed were asked to describe the supports available under the CSTPs (primarily as a means of comparison to the supports available under the reformed evaluation system). Nearly every employee was able to list some support. One administrator and one teacher cited the use of annual goal setting and teacher reflection as helpful tools for supporting growth. Two managers said that cluster directors (who supervise principals) were available for coaching principals through the evaluation process and helping them with a norming process for their scoring. One teacher reflected fondly on a track two part of the

evaluation (available to more experienced teachers) where they could do a professional development project in place of an observation as a way to grow both teacher quality and school culture. And one manager saw value in the fact that the CSTPs, on which the entire scoring system was based, aligned with all statewide credentialing programs, providing a level of consistency. However, none of these supports seemed to be helpful enough that more than 15% of those interviewed made mention of them.

The only supports that were identified as being especially impactful were those developed by individual administrators at individual sites in their coaching process with individual teachers. Forty-three percent of management employees interviewed and 67% of teachers interviewed remembered those administrator-specific supports as helpful during the CSTP evaluation system. According to a current manager who was a teacher at the time when this evaluation system was being used, administrators would use their own academic resources to support teachers with their growth. “There were some times like our admin would provide us with a reading. I was struggling with ... the objectives. I remember I got a xerox copy of a reading about objectives.” A teacher even said that administrators would find teacher colleagues to serve as models of best practices. “The supports that I received were conversations with my administrator, and sometimes they would mention another teacher that was strong in an area that I needed support in, and help me to schedule a time to go observe that teacher and maybe meet with them, maybe get some resources from them.” However, while teachers seemed to appreciate the supports that their administrators provided, the lack of universal supports throughout the evaluation system were apparent with each interview conducted. That would serve as a flaw with the previous evaluation system that would be addressed during reform.

Agreeing on Values: The Role of Teachers Unions

Green Dot teachers and managers both believe that there are two purposes of teachers unions: to protect teachers' rights and to provide teachers with a voice in decision-making. What's more, there was agreement that AMU differed from other unions in that they worked collaboratively with managers to solve issues of importance to the students and organization. As mentioned previously in chapters one and three, California teachers have collective bargaining rights. Therefore, any proposed change to the evaluation system at Green Dot would have to be negotiated between management and the union. In addition, teachers would have to ratify that change with a majority vote, a process with a very low success rate nation-wide. So the fact that teachers and managers shared these common beliefs about union roles and specifically the union at Green Dot served as a necessary precursor to ratification in this particular school system.

TABLE 4.3: Interview Responses on the Role of Teachers Unions

The Role of Teachers Unions	Management Support	Teacher Support
Protect teachers' rights	86%	73%
Teacher involvement in the decision-making process	57%	64%

Eighty-six percent of management employees interviewed and 73% of teachers interviewed believed that a central role of teachers unions is to protect teachers' rights. A teacher used her experience at a non-union charter school as a cautionary tale of what can happen when management authority cannot be checked: "We were required to stay every five weeks until 7 at night. We weren't allowed to go home and we had to do parent

conferences. We were asked to come to after-school meetings. I felt like everything was at the whim and the discretion of the principal and that when teachers were asked to do these things and they felt like it was unnecessary or unfair or not part of their job description, they really had no place to voice that concern or seek help or protection.” Given the serious impact that teacher evaluation has on job security, having overwhelming understanding that the union would protect Green Dot employees was important before discussion of any change to the system.

One significant check that teachers and their union have on the power of management in Green Dot is the ability to file a grievance if they believe that the planks in the contract are not being followed to fidelity. The grievance process in Green Dot includes opportunities for both sides to meet in hope of finding common ground along with a mediation and arbitration process if it cannot be addressed internally. One manager saw that as a positive part of the collaborative process. “I don't see a grievance as something bad. I see it as there are some misunderstandings between what we have going on. How can we address that? If I made a mistake then not a problem; call me on it, and we can fix it. I think that's the purpose of the union, ... to review it and make sure that it's being fair.” Again, having these processes in place with trust on both sides adds to the willingness to negotiate teacher evaluation reform. If teachers believe that their contract will be upheld and their concerns addressed, then they will take chances.

In a second area of values alignment, 57% of management employees interviewed and 64% of teachers interviewed believed that teachers' unions provide a seat at the table for teachers during the decision-making process. They believe that the inclusion of

teacher voice in addition to (not instead of) the voice of management employees allows them to find common ground on behalf of students. One teacher believes that the closeness of teachers to the classroom and, therefore, students provides them with a crucial perspective in any and all decisions. Because teachers see on a daily basis what is needed in their classroom, they must be permitted to advocate for what they know is needed. This accountable relationship was described by one manager as central to ensuring a fair process during the negotiation of the new evaluation system. “In states across the country that were implementing frameworks and similar things that we have, it was just mandated by the state. Implementation varied very greatly. I feel like having the teacher's union held us accountable to running focus groups, hearing from all stake holders, actually having teachers help to build the system. We're not just implementing it on you, we have to do it together.” When managers, along with teachers, see collaboration on teacher evaluation reform as central to the process, then that adds to the chance that reform can occur.

However, most unions serve as a check on the authority of management and provide a space for teacher voice, at least on some issues. So in what ways do managers and teachers believe that Green Dot and AMU built a relationship in the years leading up to the negotiation of teacher evaluation reform that's different from neighboring school systems with less success? The primary perceived difference seems to be the more collaborative relationship between the union and management, which was cited by 43% of management employees interviewed and 45% of teachers interviewed. A teacher described it not only as a contractually-mandated collaboration, but also sought after input from their management colleagues. “I feel like at Green Dot, teachers have had a

significant input in almost any development. That doesn't mean we get our way every single time. But our voice is asked for and sought after and heard much more than in any other organization that I've seen." But the collaboration goes further than just seeking opinions from union members. When there are areas of agreed upon need, such as teacher quality and professional growth, the Green Dot union is willing to take a chance to collaborate on issues that would be potentially explosive elsewhere. As one teacher described it, "I don't know any other teachers union that would have said, 'Okay, hey, let's embrace some connection to merit pay, to looking at test scores to be part of our evaluation.' I think that they're open to educational reform measures that I don't think other necessarily unions are as open to."

Solving policy issues collaboratively is a hallmark of this relationship and it extends to the work at the bargaining table. Traditionally, teachers have used a positional bargaining process where each side proposes changes to the contract and they exchange proposals until they are able to meet somewhere in the middle. While this process allows both management and union leadership to leave with an agreed upon compromise, the decisions reached aren't always to the benefit of students or their education. As a way to center negotiations around the interests that both sides have in terms of student learning and success, Green Dot and AMU transitioned to an Interest Based Bargaining model in 2011 before negotiating a change to the evaluation portion of the contract. As described by one teacher, "One of the big difference is the way that we work with management. Most unions use a traditional bargaining system that's positional. One side will come in and say this is what we want. The other side says this is what we want. In our bargaining sessions with Green Dot it is more of an intraspace process where we identify areas

where our interests as a management team and as the teachers union align. Then try to find solutions that meet that those mutual interests. It is less combative and more collaborative.” With a more collaborative attitude focused on finding mutual interests around the needs of students, Green Dot and AMU were better placed to negotiate teacher evaluation reform than other school systems.

A New Model of Teacher Evaluation

TABLE 4.4: Comparing the new and old models of teacher evaluation

Item	Old Model	New Model
Measurement used to evaluate teacher practice	Administrator observation only	Multiple measures of evaluation
Rubric used to evaluate teaching during administrator observations	Categories based on CSTPs, four ambiguous score categories for each	Categories based on Danielson model, detailed descriptors of practice for each rubric band
Use of evaluation score	Improvement plan or as part of layoff process	Added effectiveness compensation and career pathway
Supports	No system-wide supports	Many system-wide supports including data fellows, instructional coaches, and online video library
Evaluator Certification	No certification	All evaluators (administrators) were required to be independently certified and calibrated related to the rubric

In June of 2012, Green Dot teachers and counselors approved a radical shift to the method of teacher evaluation as part of a contract ratification vote on a package

negotiated by union leaders and managers. Five months later, the AMU President and Coordinator of Teacher Effectiveness jointly presented at the Cal TURN (Teacher Union Reform Network) conference, describing the new teacher evaluation system. They broke down the reform into four primary shifts: measure, rubric, use of evaluation score, and connection to supports. In each case, I found that the shifts aligned with the values statements previously identified (showing coherence in values and action) and with the input that teachers and administrators contributed throughout the development process (which will be explored later in this chapter).

In terms of the measurement used to evaluate teacher practice, this reform moved Green Dot from evaluation based solely on administrator observation to one based on multiple measures of teacher effectiveness. Under the previous evaluation system, an administrator would come in to observe a teacher's classroom two times per year and their findings from those two observations would account for the entirety of the evaluation score. Under the reformed evaluation system, those two formal observations would continue, but would now only account for 40% of a teacher's evaluation in most cases (depending on what classes a teacher taught there were some where the percentages in the overall evaluation pie were different than are described in this presentation). In addition, teacher effectiveness would be measured based on a student survey (10%), a family survey (5%), a survey of their colleagues / administrators (5%), student growth percentile (SGP) based on that teacher's student test scores (30%), and a school-wide measure of SGP (10%). Green Dot and AMU's theory was that by providing multiple measures of teacher performance, the evaluation would more accurately reflect a teacher's practice than would two isolated observations.

The first alteration was in the rubric used to evaluate teaching during administrator observations, where they replaced the CSTPs, which evaluated using four ambiguous scores, with a 29 item rubric modeled after the Danielson model (described in chapter two). The rubric is divided into five domains that represent teacher planning, classroom environment, instruction, professional practice, and family / community partnerships. For each band on the rubric, there are descriptors of practice that measure performance from a score of one to a score of four. Instead of using vague language such as “exceeds standard” with no description of what that entails, the new rubric might say “A variety of formative assessments are selected to yield actionable data about progress towards mastery of the learning objective(s) AND Formative assessments are planned for different components of the lesson cycle, progressing towards student mastery of the learning objective(s).” Because of the large number of indicators and the detail of the rubric descriptions, Green Dot managers and union leaders believed that this reform would eliminate some of the subjectivity of the observation while also giving teachers a specific guide for how to improve their instruction.

Under the previous evaluation system, the score a teacher received was used only for two potential purposes: putting a teacher on an improvement plan if they were severely deficient (as a step potentially towards termination) and as one of four components used when determining lay-offs in the case of position reduction at a school site. However, under the reformed evaluation system, there was a proposed pathway for teachers to be compensated for higher levels of effectiveness and for career advancement. For the first two years after implementation of this system, teachers with higher scores were given a stipend that ranged from \$500 - \$2000. This was intended to pilot a change

to the compensation system organization-wide. However, no further negotiation has occurred to change towards a merit pay system. In addition, Green Dot and AMU jointly developed a number of leadership positions built around creating a pathway for effective teachers to support others. These positions include Instructional Leadership Team Members to plan system-wide professional development, Teacher Leader Facilitators to lead subject-specific professional development on pupil free days, and Demonstration Classroom Teachers to make themselves available for observation as part of a coaching process. Green Dot and AMU believed that if the evaluation process could be used to accurately identify effective teachers, then it should be used as a career path to develop them into teacher leaders.

As described previously, under the old evaluation system, there were very few system-wide supports available to help teachers grow. There were many supports available by individual administrators looking to help their teachers with areas of need. However, Green Dot and AMU determined that a part of the new teacher evaluation system would be a plethora of supports available to all teachers regardless of where they worked. One manager described the purpose of reforming the evaluation system from one intent on catching bad teachers to one focused on moving teachers towards better practice, “if we say the evaluation is important to help teachers grow, then we need to be able to provide the training for our administrators and our teachers.” One teacher described the supports that were being built to address this change in practice, “We were building a video library that showed great teaching practices, connected to each scoring area. We had a laboratory classroom where we had identified effective teachers, and we released teachers that needed support in certain areas that they were strong in to first meet

with the teacher, talk about the lesson they were going to do, observe the lesson, and then debrief that lesson with that teacher. They were mentored by another teacher. We had a data fellow. We had teachers that we trained extensively in understanding the data collection and how to use it to help improve your instruction, and they were at every school so you could make a personal appointment with them to help you with data. We had department heads that analyzed the evaluation results and tailored their professional development and meetings with their department to those results. We had PD days that were tailored to what most teachers in the district needed support on.”

In addition, Green Dot developed an online clearinghouse of resources tied to each rubric indicator, including growth guides that detailed ways to improve practice. Green Dot hired Curriculum Specialists for each subject area. These coaches would be assigned to teachers and provide regular observations and debriefs with no tie to the formal evaluation. Teachers could get continuous support in their practice that could prepare them to score higher on the evaluation without any repercussions for a shaky lesson. But maybe the most extreme shift in supports were for administrators who were tasked with conducting the teacher evaluations. All administrators were required to be trained in proper observation technique and coaching. They were then required to be certified to ensure proper evaluation skill before they can evaluate a teacher. Ongoing calibration efforts persist so that administrators across the organization are scoring accurately and equitably. And Cluster Directors (principal supervisors) and other home office staff routinely participate in observations so that they can coach site administrators. Green Dot and AMU believed that these added supports for both teachers and

administrators will help to elevate the quality of the evaluation and support all teachers to grow in their practice.

Building Teacher Support

Of the 18 Green Dot employees interviewed, 13 of them were working for the school system during the years leading up to 2012 when the new evaluation system was being developed and approved. Of those 13 individuals, all but one reported some level of involvement in developing, testing, or approving the changes to the evaluation system at that time. Four employees (all managers) were part of an administrator focus group providing regular feedback on the language in the observation rubric so that it could be improved. Four employees (two managers and two teachers) were part of the negotiations committees for their respective units using Interest Based Bargaining to negotiate changes to the contract around teacher observation and evaluation. Three employees (two managers and one teacher) were part of the pilot programs, testing out the new evaluation system before ratification in order to share experiences with other employees and improve the system before its full-scale launch. Four employees (all teachers at the time, though one has since become a manager) were part of focus groups working to study and recommend the specific alterations to the evaluation system for one particular area. And four employees (two managers and two teachers) were part of the evaluation committee, working to collaboratively recommend changes to the evaluation system that could then be negotiated. The individuals interviewed for this dissertation

were heavily involved in this successful reform process and they saw first-hand how such a massive change was able to gain teacher approval.

According to the data reported by Green Dot and AMU leaders at the Cal TURN conference, involving as many teachers in the process of developing the new evaluation system as possible was a key component of their success. While they cite an industry standard of 5% teacher involvement in other school systems, Green Dot says that approximately 32% of their teachers were in some way connected. And for Green Dot managers, providing opportunities for teachers to be involved was the key to success. “For us, we felt like, we'd love to have more teachers involved, we felt like we had a strong group of teachers that were helping to design this. I think that was most important for us. That if we were really going to get buy-in from our teachers and from our administrators, we had to get them involved in the planning of this.” This process had both formal decision-making roles and informal information-sharing roles. Those interviewed identified six such processes that they believed contributed to the successful vote at the end.

The formal decision-making process developed jointly by Green Dot and AMU began with Focus Groups, which were mentioned by 62% of interviewees as a significant reason why teachers supported the reformed evaluation system. Each focus group was made up of any and all teachers interested in being involved and would focus on one particular part of the evaluation system. For example, there was a focus group entirely devoted to determining what percentage of a teacher's evaluation would be based on each of the multiple measures. Another focus group would focus on student growth

percentage (SGP) to better understand how that worked and how student growth would be measured as part of the teacher evaluation. Focus groups would meet after school hold these discussions with management staff and would then make recommendations to the Evaluation Committee. When asked why these focus groups were successful in building support for the evaluation system, one manager noted the genuine interest in shared-decision-making. “Teachers could get involved and make their voices heard. It wasn't just this is what we're going to do, so anything you say, whatever. It was actually we didn't really know how the system was going to shape out, so we needed the feedback to build it out. I think that was solid.”

But more than just making decisions, Focus Groups also served the purpose of communicating to teachers about the new evaluation system and how it would work. According to a manager, “It was 2-part, a little bit of, what do they say, building the ship as they fly it because we were with these focus groups and trying to figure out the details but at the same time there were a lot of misconceptions.” By having these teacher Focus Groups meeting, Green Dot managers were able to educate teachers in the hope that the information will spread throughout the union in advance of the vote. However, some teachers saw this process as deceptive because the teachers in the focus group and the managers in attendance were not equally knowledgeable about the topics being discussed. “There was no collaboration. It was just ‘this is the way it is, this is the way it's going to be.’ I wanted to see if that was a Potemkin village of collaboration, a big façade, so when I went there I had that belief that it was going to be a façade. In fact, it was not a façade, but, ultimately, teachers didn't know, most teachers didn't know enough. We didn't know

enough to be able to create some type of system that was going to be standard. We didn't know it.”

Once a Focus Group researched and evaluated a proposal, they would send it to the Evaluation Committee, a formal body made up of teachers, counselors, site administrators, and managers, to evaluate the proposal and determine what changes to the evaluation system they would recommend to the AMU and management negotiations teams. Thirty-one percent of those interviewed said that the evaluation committee work was significant in gaining teacher support for the reform effort. Because of the collaborative nature of that committee, teachers and managers believed that decisions were made jointly and by those with the knowledge to understand the complex issues at play. One teacher who served on the evaluation committee suggested that the collaboration was real and important. “I thought [that the evaluation committee was] one of the best, most collaborative groups I’ve ever worked on... But I thought the work that was done in that room was fantastic, just everyone seemed to be on the same page and was open-minded and critical at the same time. I thought the evaluation committee work was great.”

In addition to the formal process described above, there were four informal processes that Green Dot management and union leaders took that contributed to teacher support for the new evaluation. First, they held numerous information sessions at a variety of school sites (which one manager called “a road show”) in order to inform teachers about the reasons for this reform, the process being used (including ways that they could become involved), and an update on the status of the reform effort. Presenters

would then provide attendees with an elongated question and answer session so that correct information was disseminated and all voices were heard.

Second, they piloted the new observation protocol and rubric prior to negotiating its use for the entire organization. This allowed the Evaluation Committee to receive valuable feedback that would allow them to correct mistakes before rolling it out for the entire organization. One of the pilot teachers described this process: “they piloted first a couple schools with a couple teachers. It was a variety of schools, so we would meet and the teachers from all the different sites would talk about their experience and overwhelmingly it was positive. So again that’s the type of thing where they’re not just going to roll something out and kind of strong-arm it. It’s – we’re going to test this out and we’re going to get teacher feedback, we’re going to tweak it.” But equally important, the pilot allowed teachers to hear from their colleagues about how the system worked in a way that led many skeptics to become more comfortable with the change. One teacher described the way that his colleagues in the pilot convinced him to support reform, “I remember it being piloted here ... and two of the more widely respected and highly regarded teachers on our campus were chosen as pilot teachers for the school site... What was interesting was even though they both had their reservations, because they felt it was very hard for them to achieve ... that sometimes mythical, or mystical four, the highly effective rating, they both were excited about the opportunity to be vetted as a highly effective teacher.”

Third, Green Dot and AMU continually communicated information about the evaluation reforms and the design process to teachers, usually through webinars or live

professional development (co-presented at each school by site administrators and union site representatives). The theme for leaders on both sides seemed to be that there could never be enough information passed on to teachers throughout the process. A union leader described the import of this technique. “We always talked about how communication, there could never be enough communication, so we tried our best to provide information and communicate in tons of different ways. We ... would communicate in as many ways as possible about what was happening and changes that were being made and where you could go for more information and support.” Equally important, much of the communication came, at least partially, from union leadership or other teachers. One manager mentioned that teacher voices were heard narrating many of the webinars and pilot teacher experiences (in their own words) were highlighted throughout the process. Each school had a teacher liaison who, along with administrators and union site representatives, presented much of the information in person to teachers at each school during designated professional development time. This communication was central to gaining teacher support.

Finally, Green Dot and AMU jointly conducted quarterly teacher surveys to measure teacher attitudes towards the new evaluation and to ensure that the process was being conducted in a fair and inclusive way. One union leader remembered the importance of these surveys. “We constantly collected survey data on how much people understood, how much they felt they had an opportunity to impact the evaluation. We asked the same questions, we did the survey four times a year, and we shared those results back with teachers.” In all, six surveys were conducted during the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years as the new evaluation system was being implemented. On

average, 257 teachers responded to these surveys, representing just under 50% of AMU members. The surveys asked whether the purpose of the new evaluation system had been clearly communicated to the respondent. During the first year, over 80% responded “agree” or “strongly agree” to this question, with a high of 85% giving a positive response by the last survey administration. This suggests that communication techniques referenced above were successful at reaching a large majority of the intended audience. When asked if they have received enough information about the new evaluation system, the responses were nearly identical. The surveys also asked respondents whether they believe that the new teacher evaluation system would have a positive effect on: their finances, their effectiveness as a teacher, their collaboration with other teachers, the growth of their students, and the supports available to them (among other categories). Teacher effectiveness routinely received the highest marks, at one point gaining 83% support. But teachers seemed to be wary of the effect that this would have on their finances, the only category where a majority of respondents disagreed on one survey. The surveys allowed Green Dot management and AMU to re-evaluate their strategy and ensure that they were responding to the needs of their members before the final vote.

When asked what about this particular evaluation system made teachers most supportive, interviewees mentioned a plethora of different components. Some believed that the use of multiple measures of teacher success (instead of just one administrator’s observations or just student test scores) elicited trust. Others believed that the possibility of a pay increase might have caused teachers to vote yes (although the survey results might refute that idea, at least for the majority of teachers). Some believed that teachers were encouraged by the fact that the refinement process was ongoing and that the

evaluation system could be improved at any time. Some appreciated the training and certification processes for administrators, having experienced untrained evaluators too often in the past. One administrator noted the interest that he saw at his school for a rating based on evidence, since all rubric scores had to be justified using bucketed quotes from the observation. "I think one of the things ... that people liked, was the fact that people felt like 'Okay, now you're going to be able to give me evidence ... give me a rating based on evidence that you got to see in my classroom. It's not going to be a what you think.'" Ultimately, it is likely that all of these components and all of these processes contributed to creating a package that a majority of teachers could support on the very first ballot.

Case Study: Building an Evaluation System through Collaboration

While the Evaluation Committee did not hold any meetings during the research period for this dissertation, a sub-committee focused on creating a reformed counselor evaluation was meeting and I watched a two hour portion of an all-day session. The process that I saw in many ways mimics the process used to develop the new teacher evaluation process three-five years ago. The Counselor Evaluation Steering Committee includes two management representatives (the Coordinator of Educator Effectiveness and the Director of Counseling and Student Services), one union leader (the AMU Counselor Vice President), and several pairs of counselors and site administrators who are piloting the new evaluation system and bringing their reflections back to the committee. The meeting was held in a conference room at the Green Dot headquarters with management

and counselors sitting interspersed around the table. An agenda was created and followed, allowing them to address a wide variety of topics throughout the session.

A manager who is part of the Counselor Evaluation Steering Committee described the good and bad about this collaborative process. “Yesterday, we met for three hours. We have four counselors, a director of counseling, ... one other person from the home office, and a principal. We're working on the pilot of the counselor evaluation. We have, I don't know, spent 10 full days over two different summers writing the counselor rubric. We wrote a whole rubric from scratch not like ours, which was the teacher rubric which was done with Danielson as a basis. We literally generated it from scratch collaboratively. There was certainly no [person] typing away..., it was all done so collaboratively with consensus. We'd work on the steering committees. All ideas are open on the table. There's no animosity in those meetings. We have eight counselors as part of this pilot. There's a total of 30 counselors in the whole organization. We have a quarter of people experiencing it, providing survey feedback once a month, getting on the phone with us once a month. In those instances, it feels so collaborative. If I needed to devise a counselor evaluation and you gave me a week uninterrupted at my desk, I could come up with something. It would be done. If you have to do it with membership, it takes years because that's the nature of collaboration. It's much slower.” But does the extra time and energy inherent in a collaborative process lead to a stronger result?

The first hour of the observation was focused on reviewing a recent survey that was sent out to counselors and administrators asking very similar questions as the teacher surveys referenced previously. This committee was reviewing the results and

brainstorming the impact that those results might have on their process moving forward. They then did a gallery walk of the same survey data, comparing the results to those from the three previous months, and commenting on the trends. Every team member then took turns reporting on those trends. The results from the survey were quite interesting and elicited a healthy conversation about the process thus far and moving forward.

Counselors showed more faith, based on their survey scores, than their administrators in terms of being able to accurately evaluate the performance of a counselor. Discussion ensued about adequate training and clarifying the role of the counselor. Numerous comments throughout the survey showed that pieces of the counselor work were either not measured by the evaluation tool or were not clearly connected to a specific part of the rubric, making their inclusion in the evaluation tenuous. Discussion ensued about changes in rubric language that could be made.

However, the content in the conversations were potentially less significant than the overall collaborative spirit exhibited between all parties in attendance. After this discussion when determining next steps, administrators wanted to continue with the pilot in order to continue practicing the evaluation before it becomes official. They felt that they were still learning the rubric and the process and wanted to ensure that it was implemented to fidelity before it counts. Counselors and union leaders agreed with continuing the pilot in order to refine the system, but they wanted to ensure that all counselors (not just those on this committee) had a chance to review the progress and discuss the timeline before the Counselor Vice President brought it to the union Executive Board for approval of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The management members were concerned about sharing too much information with too

many people before the process and evaluation tool is closer to finalization. The conversation continued, with both sides respectfully listening to the needs of the other before they agreed that the need for information trumped any other concerns and they would schedule a meeting with all counselors in attendance.

Another issue of discussion was how often goals would be set by counselors and their administrators. As part of the evaluation (in addition to the rubric), counselors would set goals along with a work plan and would be evaluated on their ability to competently follow the work plan and meet their goals. Counselors and administrators discussed the frequency of these meetings, respectively sharing thoughts about long term goals and the differentiation that would need to take place when comparing a new counselor who is trying to set up systems and procedures versus a veteran counselor working on longer-term projects to benefit students. Counselors were adamant that some goals take multiple years to complete and they did not want the evaluation process to be fake, but instead measure the work that they are actually doing over several years. Administrators were concerned about counselors setting goals that represented work that they were already doing rather than pushing themselves to do better. The conversation then shifted to the ways in which administrators can “observe” counselors and bucket evidence that would dictate their work towards their goals without the observations being pre-planned.

While no final decisions were reached on this important issue, the conversation (which was based on concerns raised both as part of the survey and by the pilot counselors / administrators in the room) moved the evaluation system forward and

included multiple voices in collaboration. These discussions mimicked those that transpired during the creation of the teacher evaluation system in such areas of percent weight for each of the multiple measures and the proper timeline for the observation process to ensure opportunities for reflection and coaching. By including all of these voices, the counselor evaluation system will hopefully be stronger and will receive an approval vote by the union membership similar to the teachers three years ago.

Views of the Current Teacher Evaluation System

After nearly four years of using the new teacher evaluation rubric and almost three years of measuring teacher quality using this reformed system, it is worthwhile to reflect on how teachers and managers view the successes and weaknesses of the system. The first interesting trend is that after interviewing 18 employees of Green Dot Public Schools who are all very knowledgeable and connected to the new evaluation system and asking them about it, there was not one characteristic mentioned by a majority of those interviewed. This shows the variability of thought on the successes and failures of the current system. Part of that can be attributed to the holistic nature of the evaluation system and the number of components that interviewees could choose to mention in response to the question. However, this also points towards a lack of coherence of thought among employees over where the system is successful and where there needs to be improvements made (in contrast to agreement over the purpose of evaluation, the purpose of unions, and the problems with the previous evaluation system described earlier in this chapter). This may account for why the evaluation system is basically

unchanged in the three years since negotiations. While both sides agree that further reforms would be helpful, agreement on the specifics of the needed reform has yet to be reached.

That being said, there are some trends that have received a substantial, though less than majority, response and it may be instructive to look at where groups of employees have common beliefs. When asked for the strengths of the current evaluation system, 71% of management employees interviewed and 37% of teachers interviewed appreciated the strong connection between the evaluation system and teacher support growth, specifically coaching. First and foremost, the rubric can provide accurate information on teacher performance that can be used to address areas of strength and areas of growth. One teacher expressed this belief, “I feel that, when done with fidelity, you can have at least at the very minimum actionable data that can be used to inform both the teacher and the administrator about what can be considered present level performance.” Respondents also appreciate the connection between the rubric and proven standards of good teaching, as a teacher identified. “The idea is to create a set of standards for teaching practices that if teachers met those expectations they would be able to teach effectively. The evaluation system is about how to find what good teaching practice looks like.” What’s more, this process has changed the language of coaching because teachers and administrators are talking about teaching using the language of the rubric (for example, talking about effective questioning techniques or completing a lesson cycle). As one management employee said, “When you talk to a teacher about their evaluation, although there can be some griping if there's not a great relationship with an admin or there is not trust, those, I think you hear that irrespective of what the evaluation system is but you hear teachers

talking about the nitty-gritty of their practice. I think that's an advancement that is hard to quantify.” This evaluation system, then, has altered the way that teachers and administrators look at teaching and coaching while providing them with the language to hopefully have meaningful conversations about improving practice.

There were also multiple responses that appreciated the clarity in the language and in the process. Seventy-one percent of management employees interviewed and 9% of teachers interviewed said that the specific, targeted, and objective language improved the reformed evaluation system. They felt that the language clarified what Green Dot considered to be good teaching practices while providing a roadmap for teachers who wanted to improve. It took away the mystifying language of exceeds standard and instead made it concrete, according to a management employee. “Six CSTP's to twenty-nine indicators, there's clearly much more detail in terms of really what are the specific skills and practices that an effective teacher does in the classroom. Not just in the classroom, in planning for the classroom, as well as in reflecting after instructions, so it's much more detailed.” In fact, there were only a few voices who were critical of the actual language describing good teaching in the rubric, so there seems to be at least some agreement on the standards.

There was also a good deal of support for specific aspects of the process that teachers found helpful in their practice and in the fact that the evaluation was multi-dimensional, and therefore included all of those processes. One teacher pulled out the goal setting as the most important process of the evaluation system. Each year, teachers along with their administrators create smart goals built around the bands of the rubric

intended to guide their coaching throughout the year. Another teacher highlighted the lesson planning function as the most important component. “I think that the lesson plan is very important. I do think that every teacher is not able to dictate and to state current student issues, pass certain issues, the lesson, the way the cycles is with the standards, then there's actually a problem defined. I actually do like the planning, it makes me actually self-reflect as an educator and a person in the classroom and that helps me figure out how I'm going to teach that specific lesson.” As part of the formal evaluation process, each teacher is required to produce a detailed lesson plan that guides coaching in the weeks prior to the observation. Another teacher was most happy with the reflective part of the evaluation, where all teachers are required to reflect on different parts of the lesson and meet with their administrators to discuss those reflections and plan for future growth. Finally, three interviewees mentioned the multi-dimensional nature of the evaluation, appreciating the feedback that teachers are getting from so many different stakeholders. “You're not just hearing from one administrator. You're able to hear from peers about aspects of your practice that actually affect them that you're able to hear from students about aspects of your practice, that your admin is also looking at it from a different lens.”

Even with all of those positive reflections on the improvements made by the reform to the evaluation system, Green Dot teachers and administrators agreed that there were components of the evaluation system that still needed changing in order to provide teachers with the best environment for growth. Forty-three percent of management employees interviewed and 55% of teachers interviewed noted that the evaluation process is overwhelming. Teachers have to write formal lesson plans twice per year that often

require so much detail that they go on to double-digit page lengths. Their administrator then has to bucket all of the evidence associated with their lesson plan and both have to rate scores before a pre-conference meeting. The administrator then has to come in to watch the lesson, script everything that is happening, bucket that script, and then both have to rate that information. They meet again after the teacher has reflected on the process. And that's not including the peer surveys, student surveys, family surveys, or goal setting meetings. One teacher describes the impact on teachers, "when I compare it to what other schools have, I think it's a little bit overwhelming for teachers. My husband is a teacher at LAUSD (Los Angeles Unified School district) and he's never been evaluated by his administrators so it's really interesting to have him see how stressed I can get trying to participate in the evaluation system." A management employee calls out the effect that it may have on new teachers. "I also wonder how much is overwhelming for newer teachers that are just trying to handle their classroom management and get through a targeted lesson. How much can they really dig into misconception?" Administrators are also impacted by the extra workload, with interviewees using terms like "behemoth" and "formal season" to describe the times of the year when all are overwhelmed by the process.

One administrator and three teachers also mentioned that the evaluation system seems to emphasize one specific style of teaching ("one size fits all") without enough of a tiered system to encapsulate great teaching that doesn't fit the model. According to one teacher, "I think it is inflexible too. I think it's very prescriptive for the type of teaching, a very specific type of teaching, and I think it doesn't always allow for other types of teaching." One band of the rubric relates, for example, relates to facilitating instruction.

In order to get a three on the rubric (meets standard), a teacher has to “[facilitate] an appropriately sequenced and timed lesson that appropriately releases responsibility so that students can independently master the learning objective(s).” There is no question that facilitating instruction so that students can appropriately master the content is a key to effective teaching. However, this band suggests that there is a gradual release of responsibility where the teacher begins with whole class direct instruction, then some sort of guided practice, and then finally an individual formative assessment, which can allow the student to show the independent mastery. This is one way of teaching. However, an inquiry-based lesson, where students are made to find answers on their own with full release may or may not fit this description. A teacher who plans a group presentation where students are asked to support each other through finding answers may or may not be able to see independent mastery. An art or music classroom with larger scale semester long projects may or may not be able to meet this expectation, even under the expert guidance of a superior teacher. This concerns some of those interviewed.

One manager and 2 teachers also said that the current evaluation system can easily become a “dog and pony show,” where teachers put on a show in order to ensure that they receive the best possible score for their evaluation. While few within the organization expect teachers to routinely teach in a way that exceeds 29 standards on the evaluation rubric, there is a concern that this model of evaluation encourages teachers to teach in a way during observations that is not representative of their daily practice. Since administrative coaching is based partially on this observation, it can skew relevant data and misalign coaching. As one teacher said, “it's a dog and pony show. It can be manipulated. It can be practiced. It can be rigged. I don't think it's authentic of most of

the teachers' practice who participate in it. And it's very time-consuming.” Instead of focusing on improvement, one teacher said that it is all about attaining the high score on the evaluation. “I think it causes teachers to do things that day-to-day they wouldn't but they do it that day just because they know it's what's going to get them a three or four. I don't necessarily think that that's beneficial to the students or to the teacher.”

Finally, there were concerns about the consistency of the evaluation rubric and the consistency of attached quality coaching. Teachers especially were worried that it becomes easy for the evaluation to revert back to one focused on compliance paperwork and not instructional growth unless there is consistent coaching on the part of school administrators. This is exacerbated where there is continuous turnover of site administrators / evaluators, making sustained improvement very difficult. And this is further weakened when the rubric is changed on a yearly basis, based on the suggestions of the evaluation committee. As one teacher said, “I think though that since our evaluation system has not stayed consistent through the changes every year that it's hard for teachers to measure whether they are growing or not because they're being graded by different criteria each time that they're rated. I think that as a general set of standards that TCRP rubric isn't bad. But it does have limitations particularly when teachers are changing evaluators year after year. There are teachers that have been with the organization for 3 or 4 years and are on evaluator 5 or 6. There is just not enough consistency within the system to be able to really measure growth in a meaningful way.”

The Impact of Collaboration and Teacher Evaluation on Student Success

Based on the perceptions of all those interviewed, there is no question that the collaborative process used during the creation and implementation of the new teacher evaluation system was critical to it receiving a majority vote during contract ratification in 2011 and 2012. However, does collaboration between teachers and management improve instruction and student success? According to all interviews, the answer is yes. While employees saw many connections between improved collaboration and better teaching / learning, there were two areas of connection that were most cited: teacher knowledge of what is best for students and the importance of making teachers happy so that they can focus on teaching and stay with the organization longer.

There are some within our politics who argue that teachers unions (and specifically collective bargaining) are hurting students because it allows poor teachers to be protected and stay in the classroom. However, when asked about a connection between collaboration and student performance, 43% of managers and 55% of teachers interviewed identified teachers as an important source of information about what is best for students. They said that a collaborative process can actually provide teachers with an opportunity to advocated for student needs and implement policies that will help teaching and learning. What's more, a teacher actually made the case that the contract is a source of help for Green Dot's students. "There's a lot of things that are in the contract that benefit teachers but also benefit students like I would say an example of that would be teacher caseload, having 190 students is not beneficial for anyone, teacher or students and having counselors with a caseload of 400 kids because they're the only teacher in a

middle school or something, is not going to get those students the things that they need.” In addition to the contract, those interviewed made the case that decisions that impact students are made better when everyone has a seat at the table. According to a Green Dot manager, “things have to be negotiated. They can't just be like bam, this is it. I do think ultimately that benefits kids because we have to be ten times more thoughtful as if we didn't have a union and just said this is how we're going next year.”

Forty-three percent of managers and 27% of teachers interviewed also made the argument that when teachers are included in a collaborative process, they are happier and feel more valued, which can lead to a more stable teacher corps and teachers who are focused on their work in the classroom rather than distracted by other work-related issues. A teacher expressed that sentiment, “By treating teachers fairly you keep teachers for longer and that teachers who are treated fairly who aren't overworked, who have appropriate class sizes and caseloads and things like that benefit students. I feel like a lot of the stuff that we're fighting for it may seem very teacher-focused like pay or benefits or things like that but I think at the end of the day we have a serious problem with hemorrhaging teachers and so the better work environment we can create for teachers the more likely they are to stay for the long-term and they more likely they are to be productive and healthy and happy and so I think by doing that you actually benefit students.”

While all 18 employees saw a positive connection between collaboration and student success, there was a note of caution from one teacher who has seen too much collaboration as the removal of an important check on management authority. “I feel that

collaboration at times, in efforts to improve the performance or perceived performance at locations, worked adversely against it, in that changes were made too quickly, and or too drastically in order to meet similar measures that other school sites were getting that weren't necessarily coming from the same place at the same sort of characteristics.” This teacher sees Green Dot as a growing school system with diversity of campuses and student needs. While collaboration can be helpful to produce needed reform and bring together disparate voices to have a seat at the table, it is important to remember the needs of each student and the role that teachers have to collaborate only on those projects that benefit all students.

I also asked those interviewed whether or not they saw a connection between the new evaluation system and student performance. Many echoed comments from earlier sections of this chapter (including teacher coaching and a new rubric that provides a path for teacher growth). However, three themes emerged as potentially significant supports for student learning: The continual increase of teacher evaluation scores since implementation, a new system-wide focus on improved teaching, and a thoughtful focus on supports for subgroups and differentiation and identified in the rubric. On the other hand, while nearly all of those interviewed could find something about the new evaluation system that benefited teaching and student learning, 29% of managers and 45% of teachers interviewed also identified ways in which the new evaluation system could hurt teaching and student learning (specifically citing teacher stress levels and a lack of consistent coaching).

Assuming that the evaluation tool has been aligned to research showing student growth (which this one has, as was described in chapter two), then one would assume that an increase in teacher scores on the rubric would mean that teachers are teaching using more sound strategies and students are learning more. Over the three years that the rubric has been used, teacher scores across the organization, especially for teachers in their first five years of teaching, have increased. However, given that the rubric is used to measure teacher performance only on two days out of a 183 day school year (in other words, 1% of instructional time), it is difficult to make this case without knowing whether the practices that are displayed during formal evaluation lessons are transferred to daily practice. What's more, teachers are more familiar with the evaluation tool now than they were in 2011, when it was first rolled out system-wide. Managers who were interviewed questioned whether familiarity could also play a role in increased scores. Nonetheless, this data does suggest that, at the very least, teachers are more knowledgeable about good teaching techniques than they were when the new evaluation system was implemented and that could translate with proper support and coaching into better results for students.

Fifty-seven percent of managers and 27% of teachers cited a philosophical change in the organization that can attributed to the new evaluation system and that has led to an organization-wide focus on improved teaching. According to a manager, “the skeptics will say, ‘How much can evaluation change the outcomes for students?’ I think if you look at it in a bigger sense like the philosophy, the impact that this has had... In other organizations... it only sat on the valuation side of the house. They have not seen that kind of change.” If teacher evaluation is only about valuing teacher quality, then it won't have the same impact on students as if there is a philosophical shift towards improving

teacher quality. You know this works when teachers forget that they are being evaluated and instead use the evaluation as an opportunity to get better at their craft. A teacher exemplified that exact occurrence, “I was just having my post-observation meeting today and I was saying you know I did the self-monitor activity and I said honestly I did it because it was my formal but I really liked it so I think I'll use it again you know and I liked it because I saw how engaged my students were and how some of my students who are pretty apathetic were really involved because they were doing this self-monitoring activity. I think maybe I wouldn't have tried that if I wasn't thinking about my formal observation.”

But maybe the most important connection between the new evaluation system and student learning is the renewed concentration on supporting subgroups and differentiation. An administrator who uses the observation rubric regularly describes this new focus for teachers. “Even just, who are your subgroups and what supports are we thinking about for them. It forces you to think about, on a more regular basis, what are you doing for different student needs in your classroom. Things like thinking about how you introduce something, how you tie in prior learning , how you tie in future learning so it makes things more relevant to kids. The new evaluation system makes certain things a lot more explicit and it's purposeful, the things that are explicit. We know kids need buy in and part of the way we get buy in from kids is make it important to them, make it exciting to them, make it relevant, make it something they know they're going to need. That's something that we've built into this system.” For many bands of the rubric, teachers need to differentiate learning and/or address identified subgroups (special

education students, English Learners, etc.) in order to get a high score. By helping teachers to focus on these skills, the evaluation system is helping all students to learn.

However, some employees identified ways that the evaluation system may actually be harming teaching and learning. Both managers and teachers agree that the evaluation process is time consuming and stressful, which could cause teachers to burn out and be less focused on the needs of their students. One teacher focused primarily on the lesson plan portion of the evaluation. “Like this extensive lesson plan. That is just ridiculous. It takes people hours to do. I don't know if I necessarily think that if you can create an amazing lesson plan, does that necessarily correlate to being an amazing classroom teacher or vice versa?” An administrator was so concerned about the stress that he would actually counsel his teachers to do less. “I remember getting a couple of the lesson plans 8, 9, 10 pages long. I'm like, ‘Guys, this is not the way you lesson plan everyday. I know that's not happening everyday. You shouldn't have to take a day off from work to go through a lesson plan because that's not what we're asking people to do.’ Give me what you do everyday. That's what I want to see. I think that's my concern with the evaluation process. How can we get to a place where teachers will not have to do, you know, this show to show that I do a great job everyday?”

In addition, both managers and teachers questioned whether the quality of the coaching is equal to the quality of the evaluation system. Students will only learn more if there is a great skilled teacher in their classroom and the teacher will only get better if they have a clear picture of what great teaching looks like (the observation rubric) AND an informed administrator capable and committed to supporting them through consistent

improvement. Given the stress that the evaluation system puts on site administrators, questions were raised about whether they are coaching effectively. As one teacher said, “I think that what really helps benefit teaching is having strong instructional support and that instructional support can come in the form of the teaching evaluation system if your evaluator is strong. But there is a lot of teachers that are being evaluated without consistency whose evaluation scores for very similar lessons vary drastically from year to year because they have different administrators whose... Who are being evaluated really by folks who have really very limited experience in their content area and so particularly for those more experienced teachers.”

Collaborating to Improve the Teacher Evaluation System

All parties are in agreement that the evaluation system currently in use at Green Dot Public Schools is a living document meant to be improved as the organization changes and the needs of the teachers and students are clarified. Given that it took collaboration between union leaders and managers to build the current evaluation system, it would take continued collaboration to correct the deficiencies mentioned previously. In order to gauge the current union / management climate within the organization, I asked all those interviewed to rate Green Dot management and AMU leaders on the following three statements:

- a. Green Dot managers and union leaders communicate effectively with each other
- b. Green Dot managers and union leaders have built a culture of collaboration

- c. Green Dot managers and union leaders effectively address teacher / administrator concerns

Interviewees were able to choose between very effective (given an averaging value of four), effective (three), somewhat effective (two), and not at all effective (one).

Looking at the raw data measuring employee perceptions of union/management relations, a few interesting characteristics stand out. Of the 54 individual scores given to the above three statements, only four scores (seven percent) were higher than effective (and three of those four scores came from one individual administrator). But at the same time, only two individual scores (four percent) were below somewhat effective. That means that there was near universal agreement (89%) that union / management relations at Green Dot were between somewhat effective and effective in all measured areas. What's more, the management employees have remarkable stability in their views, providing an average (mean) score between 2.71 and 2.79 for each of the three statements. However, the differences in the teacher responses speak to areas where the union and management have been successful in their cooperative structures and areas where work still needs to be done.

The teacher average (mean) score of 2.68 for effective communication between management and union is nearly identical to that of their management colleagues. This speaks to consistent agreement that the structures put in place to communicate between union and management are working. Nearly every person interviewed mentioned the monthly standing meetings between the entire union Executive Board and senior management as a key structure for fostering sustained communication. In addition there is a yearly union / management retreat and regular meetings between the union president

and individual leaders of key departments (Chief Academic Officer, Chief Talent Officer / Chief Negotiator, etc.). These meetings, according to a manager who attends, are not just about communication, but are meant to set the tone for all communication throughout the organization. “Our mantra in our meetings is that how we collaborate in these meetings should trickle down to the school site. What we're trying to model, and it doesn't always happen, what we're trying to model is, being able to show site reps and administrators at school sites that you can effectively collaborate, and it's important that that's happening.” What’s more, the fact that this line of communication exists allows teachers to feel comfortable sharing their concerns with union leaders at their site knowing that they will make their way to the appropriate people at the home office. According to a teacher, “someone from a school site will site off a concern, the site rep will bring it up to the AMU President or Vice President and they will go immediately to the ED team at Green Dot with that concern and that concern gets heard. The ED team will respond in one way or the other. I don't think there's ever an excuse to say, Green Dot management, ‘oh they're out of touch because there is just no way for them to know,’ I feel like there is a very open channel of communication.”

In terms of specifically communicating about the teacher evaluation system and ways to improve it, managers and teachers commented on e-mails, surveys, and webinars used to provide regular two-way communication about the system. During the 2014-2015 school year, management and union leaders have worked in tandem to create and distribute three surveys measuring teacher and administrator perspectives on the purpose of the evaluation system and potential changes to it. Surveys asked teachers and administrators to rank evaluation components based on their importance and usefulness.

Surveys also asked teachers whether they would be willing to alter the evaluation system in very specific ways (creating a second track for those who score highly, increasing the number of unplanned evaluations, etc.) or whether they would prefer to keep the evaluation as it is. Each of these surveys, along with regular e-mail communication from the negotiations chair about work that is being done in bargaining, provides ample information both ways allowing decisions to be made only after teacher and administrator opinions are weighed.

Even when there are issues with communication, new systems are developed or existing systems are altered to improve communication outcomes. For example, nearly half of those interviewed mentioned joint committees (focused on evaluation, safety, and benefits) as communication strengths in that they provided a structure for regular discussion on issues of concern developing joint solutions that could then be implemented. However, when those issues contained contractual issues, problems would arise in that changes to the contract could only be made when they are agreed upon by both teams as part of the negotiations process. So while communication as part of these joint committees was helping the development of solutions to organizational issues, they were also becoming areas of contention when they had to be renegotiated at the bargaining table. However, one union leader described how an alteration to their communication model addressed this frustration and made the union / management relationship even stronger. "They modified the bargaining system when it came to evaluation slightly. There has been frustration in the past that the bargaining team would be presented with the recommendation of the evaluation committee, so changes to the evaluation system. Then the bargaining team would say "no" to those changes. Because

we didn't feel that they were in the interest of teachers and in order to try and prevent that from happening this year a middle step was added where management and the e-board would meet and discuss the different options that have presented by the evaluations committee and give suggestions.”

However, while the communications structures seem to be solidly in place, questions were raised about the effectiveness of the communication at these meetings. One union leader said that while communication is important, there are times where it may be inappropriate to share everything that is discussed privately, and that can create tension. “Now I guess when I say where it's somewhat effective is because we do communicate, but we don't necessarily always walk away in agreement in certain things. We tend to bump heads because we don't necessarily agree how a particular issue should be taken, or sometimes AMU may take us down a particular issue and we don't necessarily feel that we need to go talk to management about what we're going to do.” Another teacher cited an unwillingness to change their mind as a downfall of communication. “I think there is a lot of communication that happens. I don't know how effective the communication that happens within those meetings is so sometimes it seems like both sides are coming at it a little bit not quite prepared to listen and to change their minds but to say how can we get what we want.” However, given the strong opinions on communication from both teachers and managers along with the structures already in place, this seems to be a strength.

The second area of union / management relations is in collaboration, measuring the way that both units are able and willing to work together in order to improve the

organization. Management employees recorded their highest score here (a 2.79, just shy of an average effective rating). However, teacher scores averaged 2.41, a mean 14% lower than their management colleagues, with over half of the teachers interviewed rating collaboration as somewhat effective. There were areas of agreed upon strength, including the collaborative building of the webinars and surveys described previously. That process, according to a teacher who has been involved, is a model of effective collaboration. “AMU and management co-created that. Then we put it out to admin and teachers to get their opinions and perspective. Then what we're going to do, we're trying to make changes based on that data and that information and then we're going to create a webinar where we present the different things, the different changes to the evaluation system we came up with as AMU and management and get teacher feedback on that and admin feedback on that. I think that's been very collaborative and that's been really good.”

Managers and teachers also noted the amount of co-facilitation and co-presentation done collaboratively. Each school has two site representatives to the union elected by teachers at that school site. At the beginning of each year, all site representatives hold a workshop where they learn how to best perform their role and about the procedures inherent in the contract (for example, grievance procedures). Also at the beginning of each year, all site administrators hold a meeting where they do much of the same thing. Managers and union leaders co-plan and co-present at both workshops, ensuring that information is consistent, clear, and collaboratively-delivered. This same collaborative spirit is brought to the planning of Green Dot-wide professional

development days, which are planned by teacher leaders and managers together to make them most useful to the audience.

However, both managers and teachers seemed concerned that even with the improvements made to the negotiations process (specifically, instituting interest based bargaining), it is still not collaborative enough to address needed changes to the negotiations process, which get stalled there. One manager describes the difficulty of collaborating within the confines of the formal negotiations process. “There are times where you will sit in a meeting with somebody in the union 1-on-1. You'll have a really positive interaction with union leadership. In a group setting, behavior is very different. I think that's really problematic for communication if people feel like they have to be positional or act a certain way in sort of larger groups that looks or feels different in a one-on-one setting.” And even with collaboration as a goal, a union leader says that unions sometimes have to act alone in the interests of their members. “They think that, ‘Well, you should have talked to us about this. We're a team.’ Sometimes we're like, ‘Look, we need to just act like a union.’ Let’s just be a union. It doesn't mean that we don't believe in collaboration... It means we need to have our own identity as well.” Finding a way to always be collaborative in the face of sometimes differing interests can be a struggle.

The final measurement of union / management relations is their collective ability to address the concerns of teachers and administrators. This seemed to elicit the most disparate response. Management again rated this an average of 2.71, close to an effective score. However, teachers averaged a two, 36% lower than their colleagues. That score

represents a somewhat effective relationship. By far the most common example of success in this area came in the regular meetings between site administrators and union site representatives to address the concerns brought up by teachers at their site. A teacher and union site representative described the entire process used to address teacher concerns collaboratively. “The three of us work together and we will usually when we're having our AMU meetings with all the teachers, we'll write down concerns that they have and then my site rep and I will also go around and have individual meetings with teachers where we just ask them about their concerns that they're having. We'll write that down and then we'll have our monthly meetings with admin where we check in with them and let them know generally what concerns teachers are having and what we're hearing. Then we'll discuss it together and usually we'll either come up with a solution or we'll table it for later. Or for example like the bell schedule we'll have more meetings to work on it and then we'll present it eventually to the teachers to vote on.”

Part of the value of addressing teacher concerns informally during these regular meetings is that it prevents the union from filing a formal grievance, which could be time-consuming, costly, and divisive. One administrator said, “At the site levels I know that both admin and the site reps are trained and encouraged to have routine check-in meetings, even when there are not issues, grievances, complaints, things like that, kind of preventative maintenance things. There's a number of things that we do on the school site to try and address issues that aren't necessarily alleged violations of the contract, but could be things that make working conditions better, and so there's a lot of things that we try to do before it gets to any sort of dispute process.” However, some of the teachers questioned whether these meetings are just for the optics of addressing teacher concerns

or whether they actually led to a change. “We have a meeting ... once or twice a month with [our site administrators]. We go over some of the issues, so the communication is pretty good about it. The question is does whatever we say to them change what they believe in, what they do, as easily as what they say to us? When they say something to us, we generally say ... if someone's late to school we go up to them and say ‘you're late,’ but if we say something like ‘you're not bringing out the curriculum map for next year in a timely manner,’ they'll say ‘we're doing the best we can.’ They won't follow the contract. We follow more what they tell us, whereas when we tell them something, I don't know if they actually fully address it.”

This seemed to be a common refrain during interviews of both managers and teachers: addressing the concerns of teachers is different than fulfilling their requests. Most people thought that the systems were in place to communicate those concerns and that there were structures (such as joint committees, the contract, and negotiations) where those concerns could be discussed and potentially addressed. But teachers seemed to differentiate between that process and fulfilling the requests, mostly because of differing opinions as to how teacher concerns could best be addressed. “I don't think that we reached a point where we were good at, as a team, having people give you a concern, acknowledging and making them feel heard, and then collaboratively coming up with a solution and then communicating that with everybody. Whether that's because there's no time to do that or that's not built into our structures... It's probably both of those. I think that as AMU, we tried to collect the concerns of teachers as much as we could and were constantly communicating them to management and trying to come up with solutions and trying to create ways for teachers to advocate for themselves.”

This is especially evident when it comes to the teacher evaluation system and the real concerns that both administrators and teachers have expressed with the system (described previously). According to a teacher, “Green Dot and the union often times agree on what the concerns are. For example: This year we both agree that there are concerns around the evaluation system and in particular around how much time it takes to write the lesson plan. But as far as addressing them I think often times management and the union have very different ideas about what good solutions would be or acceptable solutions would be.” And so, after four years of using the new observation system (including the time-intensive lesson plan) and complete agreement that a change is necessary, nothing has been sent to teachers for ratification because the leaders have been unable to reach consensus. Finding more and better ways to address the concerns brought to them by teachers must be a high priority if management and the union hope to continue improving their collaborative relationship and their use of the reformed evaluation system because of the special and significant place that teachers hold in any education system. In the end, a site administrator said it best, “teachers are more effective when they're happy and invested, and so both sides I think have a vested interest in building teacher investment and building teacher satisfaction.” Let’s hope.

CHAPTER 5

Green Dot Public Schools has worked collaboratively with its teachers union to reform its teacher evaluation system, something that few other school systems have accomplished. As an indication of Green Dot's success, its system received a majority vote of union members and was implemented. As a Charter Management Organization (CMO), Green Dot has some flexibility in governance not available to school districts in California. However, with a unionized faculty and state-guaranteed collective bargaining, Green Dot faced the same dilemma that confounds so many school systems in California that want to reform and improve their teacher evaluation system. Green Dot's experience shows that with its union, it could build a reformed system that will help to better educate their students while also convincing teachers to vote for it.

Green Dot management took the unusual step of ensuring that their values around teacher evaluation were aligned with those of their teachers in the years prior to beginning negotiations. That values alignment centered on the purpose of teacher evaluation, the purpose of teachers unions, and the problems with the existing evaluation system. That process started a meaningful conversation with all stakeholders. Green Dot developed a collaborative system that involved many teachers in designing the new evaluation system. That allowed them to be able to build teachers' knowledge into the system that fostered their commitment to the reform.

Green Dot sustained this communication and collaboration in the years following implementation that allowed Green Dot and the Asociacion de Maestros Unidos (AMU) to improve the system even more. And after three years of full implementation, there is

evidence that collaboration and the result, a reformed teacher evaluation system, are helping teachers teach and students learn. So how can other Charter Management Organizations, and potentially even school districts, learn from Green Dot's experience to more adeptly navigate the difficult terrain of improving teacher evaluation collaboratively?

Discussion and Policy Implications

Charter Management Organizations and school districts that would like to improve their teacher evaluation systems can take four valuable lessons from Green Dot's experience: to learn to collaborate with your union and teachers, to build an evaluation system based on that collaboration, to see the reform process as ongoing even after ratification, and to be open to reforms that do not align with management predisposed ideas of a perfect evaluation model.

While the evaluation system developed by Green Dot Public Schools and its union, AMU, is not perfect and needs improvements, they actually built a local, collaborative model of teacher evaluation reform that did not include union stalling or management autocratic directives. Let me now turn to the lessons learned in chapter four to examine their policy implications.

First, there is strong evidence that collaboration builds better education policy than does non-collaborative decision-making. This is due to the development of policy that is in line with values shared between teachers and managers, who can jointly help to sustain the decision. However, the collaboration has to be real and authentic, where

teachers are brought to the table with genuine interest in their perspectives and not simply for show. Teachers are knowledgeable about the needed supports that would help them to teach better and many would be thrilled to share that information with those who will listen. A teacher evaluation system built only by managers and/or politicians will likely miss some of the nuance of the teacher role and could very well put resources where they would be unhelpful. However, teachers also have an unmistakable interest in making it more difficult for them to be fired and/or disciplined. Therefore, some teachers have enjoyed a teacher evaluation system that makes it easy for them to keep their jobs. That is not a productive attitude.

There are many specific pieces of data that showed the collaborative attitude that was built at Green Dot before, during, and since negotiating a reformed teacher evaluation system. When asked about the purpose of teachers unions, 57% of management employees interviewed and 64% of teachers interviewed believed that teachers' unions provide a seat at the table for teachers during the decision-making process. Shared decision-making, even in the abstract, is still controversial in education. For the majority of managers to volunteer information suggesting that unions have a role in getting decision-making power for their members shows a collaborative foundation. And the union took this shared responsibility seriously, altering their negotiations system to interest-based bargaining in order to be less positional and more collaborative during contract negotiations. And when asked to measure the level of union/management collaboration in the organization today, the 18 teachers and managers interviewed (including a lot of union leaders) overwhelmingly (89%) said that it was somewhere

between effective and somewhat effective. Those are all signs of an organization that values true collaboration.

Much of chapter four was focused on identifying and describing areas of values alignment between teachers and managers in three significant areas: the purpose of teacher evaluation, problems with the traditional evaluation system, and the purpose of teachers unions. I found that Green Dot succeeded in reforming their evaluation system partially because of that values alignment and its ability to bring both parties to the negotiating table ready to discuss improvements earnestly. For example, because 100% of management employees identified teacher coaching as an essential element of evaluation and 80% of teachers agreed, that provided the needed alignment for them to negotiate a new evaluation system focused on coaching and teacher growth. Had that alignment not existed, a struggle over purpose might have ensued at the bargaining table stalling or halting reform. As other school systems begin the process of reforming their evaluation system, it is important for them to gauge their own alignment.

However, an interesting question surfaced over whether Green Dot and AMU did anything specific to bring about this values alignment that could be replicated or whether the specific composition of the management and teacher corps at Green Dot made alignment possible where it might be more difficult elsewhere. Maybe a younger teacher demographic might be more willing to alter compensation systems. Both are possible and determining the answer to that question was not part of this study. However, given how important values alignment is as a precondition to reform, it is incumbent for school systems to measure alignment and then work to build agreement where it needs to exist.

Both sides have to come to the table ready to truly collaborate if this is to work, but that is rarely the case. Looking at the data from Green Dot in chapter four, one can see how difficult real collaboration can be. Green Dot had to hold countless meetings and forums, produce and analyze quarterly surveys and webinars, negotiate as part of the bargaining process for three years, and they still did not get exactly the system that they had hoped. It is much easier to set education policy by management directive, which is why so many educational leaders adopt just such a decision-making style. However, for those wanting to adopt a collaborative model of union / management relations as it relates to an issue as important as teacher evaluation reform, Green Dot's process provides a model of how to begin that work.

In Green Dot's case, management and union leadership signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) laying out their mutual support for teacher evaluation reform and committing to work on it together. That held both sides accountable to working towards a shared solution to a shared problem. This would likely be a helpful step for all districts and unions: work together to find issues of common concern and then put down on paper how you are going to collaborate to address those issues for the betterment of the students. But this also requires both sides to come to the table ready to collaborate. This does not work if one side already has drawn a line in the sand in terms of what they are willing to do. This does not work if one side has already developed a model that they are pushing. In Green Dot's case, they had the added incentive of having won a large grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to help finance this work as part of a cohort of area CMOs. Everyone knew that the money could only be used to help everyone if

they are were making progress towards a reformed system, so the process had to begin. However, all would probably benefit from that clean slate.

Second, Green Dot and AMU collaboratively built a process for developing a new evaluation system focused on two interlocking principles: participation and communication. The idea was to ensure that everyone within the organization (teachers and management) had an opportunity to be involved in as many components of the development process as possible and that regardless of whether or not they chose to be involved, all had access to information about the recommendations being made. This is difficult to do, especially with an organization with over 500 teachers working at over 20 different schools that span the expanse of the Los Angeles metro region and only see each other once per year. This is further complicated by the turnover rate within the organization, making it likely that a large percentage of the people voting on the reforms will not have been here when the reform process commenced. However, all of the steps highlighted during chapter four showed the attempt on the parts of Green Dot and AMU to build as much participation and communication into the process as possible.

In this study, we saw specific evidence of the benefits of collaboration. By building a process of collaborative decision-making that felt authentic to teachers, they were able to attract over six times the industry standard to participate, leading to more accurate data on teacher needs and a more informed decision. The teacher buy-in began with focus groups where every teacher had a chance to participate and where all decisions originated. It continued with the Evaluation Committee which had equal representation from teachers and managers and where issues related to the evaluation continue to be aired, discussed, and attempted to be rectified. Collaboration continued with piloting the

new evaluation system so that it could be improved before teachers were asked to ratify its use. Feedback was collected from teachers and administrators during the pilot in order to revise the system collaboratively through the Evaluation Committee. But the best data showing how collaborative this process really was is from the survey data that Green Dot collected quarterly from their teachers attempting that gauge support for the new evaluation system. When over 80% of teachers are routinely reporting that they have been told why and how reforms are being made to the teacher evaluation system and an equal number say that they have received enough information about the changes, then the process has been clearly defined and communicated. When up to 83% say that they believe that the reformed teacher evaluation system will benefit their effectiveness in the classroom, then that is evidence of a collaborative process that is addressing the needs of teachers within the organization.

For those interested in building the best system and gaining a majority vote of teachers for contract ratification, this lesson is valuable. A teacher who attended a focus group studying student surveys and working collaboratively to make recommendations on how to best use student surveys as part of the evaluation system likely left the meeting convinced that her voice was being heard (as was shown by the high level of participation and the survey alignment between the new teacher evaluation system and what teachers felt was best for them and their students). She told all of their friends about their experience as part of the process. And even those who do not know any involved colleagues would be more likely to support the reform just based on the fact that teachers were involved in creating it. Having voluntary pilots of the new evaluation was also a

great way to build support because of the trust that exists among teachers. When they heard that their colleague had tried it and liked it, a lot of the fear got removed.

But all of those collaborative techniques only work if the average union member knows that they are happening. By focusing on collaboration, Green Dot and AMU were ensuring that information about this complicated system spread to people who otherwise wouldn't hear about it. E-mail newsletters are valuable, but having management and union leaders come to the school to speak directly to teachers and address their concerns was even better. Site union representatives and site administrators presented to teachers during professional development time so that all parties, regardless of interest, were knowledgeable about the reforms being discussed. No one could argue that this was thrown together at the last minute. Policymakers interested in enacting teacher evaluation reform would be aided by developing a plan (agreed upon by union and management leaders) that would encourage every interested member of the school system to participate and one that will communicate regularly in multiple manners starting from the very first day of discussion.

Third, the process must be continually reviewed if it is to be sustainably successful. Looking at Green Dot's model, the work of improving teacher evaluation and support is ongoing. There are two full-time management employees dedicated to supporting this work (one focused on the nuts and bolts of the evaluation system and one focused on coaching and supporting administrators in using the rubric effectively). A good deal of professional development time for both teachers and administrators is focused on evaluation-related activities. The evaluation committee continues to meet and discuss ways to improve the system. The negotiations teams have spent most of their

bargaining sessions reviewing potential changes to the system. Three teacher surveys have gone out seeking input on potential improvements, many of which have been piloted over the intervening years. And now they are starting to build a reformed counselor evaluation system. These are not the actions of an organization which has finished their reform efforts.

The data collected as part of this study support the idea of continual collaboration in order to further refine an evaluation system in need of refinement. Even with the collaborative process described earlier and a majority vote for contract ratification, both managers and teachers identified areas of needed reform in interviews with them. It may be overwhelming to both teachers and administrators. It may value a one size fits all approach to teaching that may not fit the needs of all teachers or students. It may encourage teaching on formal evaluation days that is not representative of daily practice, leading to skewed results and inappropriate coaching. And there were concerns about administrators reverting back to a compliance philosophy around evaluation and coaching, potentially due to the overwhelming nature. These issues need to be addressed if Green Dot is to create an evaluation system that meets the needs that they set out to meet. However, the data presented in chapter four suggests that Green Dot is taking the steps to begin addressing those issues. Especially apparent were communication techniques around planned regular meetings to address concerns at all levels within the organization and regular surveys of members to collect accurate data about how the evaluation system can be improved.

No matter how effective a process, there is always going to be a need for improvement once the reform is brought to scale. The key is having in place the

structures to continue reviewing the successes and failures of your system to find ways to collaborate on improvements. In Green Dot's case, the new evaluation system seems to have brought about extra stress on both teachers and site administrators. Administrators are having to determine how to find the time to complete these intensive evaluations, do real coaching, and run their school. There is a concern that teachers have become good at gaming the system, making the evaluation less authentic. These are real issues that need to be resolved if this system is to be continually successful. For any school system hoping to reform their teacher evaluation system, they will have to understand that this is a continual process in need of structures to keep it relevant after implementation.

And finally, teacher evaluation reform will have to be disconnected from merit pay and from student growth data if it is to be used on a widespread basis. Teacher evaluation reform has become synonymous in the eyes of many (including teachers) as a way for student test scores to be included in the evaluation. They've also been connected with a change to the pay system where teacher pay will be tied to the evaluation (and therefore student test scores). Both of these are false connections. Teacher evaluation systems have been reformed in a variety of ways. However, that connection in the minds of teachers often makes any reform effort a non-starter. In the case of Green Dot, discussion surrounding both of these controversial issues were a part of the process. However, because they were not a central part and because Green Dot managers were willing to compromise with union leaders, they were able to agree to something that did not have merit pay or student growth data as the center of the reform. Student growth data (based on test scores) were originally negotiated as a part of the evaluation. However, the specific percent was negotiated. And since ratification, California state

standardized tests have been replaced, meaning that the current evaluation system includes no student growth component. Merit pay (or pay for performance) was a part of the conversation when the reform began. However, the union and management put that aside knowing that no change to the pay scale could be made until two years of data were collected. It has since not been revisited.

As long as teachers are concerned about losing pay based on a system that they do not yet know or trust, they are going to be unlikely to sit at the table. So long as money is involved, many teachers are wary that this reform is more about reward and punishment and less about coaching and improvement. School systems will be well-served to focus their efforts on improving teacher evaluation knowing that once a better system is implemented and teachers feel that they are getting the coaching that they need to improve their practice, they are much more likely to be willing to begin conversations about a change in compensation. The same can be said about using student growth test scores as a measurement of teacher quality. As I said in chapter three, teachers are more likely to agree to be evaluated based on those criteria over which they have control. Many teachers believe that test scores have more to do with the socio-economic status of their students and the quality of the tests than about their teaching ability. Using that as the primary gauge of teacher quality is likely not going to get very far in negotiations. However, talking about fair measurements of teacher quality and evaluating the quality of student growth percentiles as one of those potential measures may lead some teachers to consider reform. This is all about the process of bringing people to the table with an open mind. Whatever management and unions can do to lead towards collaboration will be helpful.

This model of union / management collaboration to reform their teacher evaluation system could help Charter Management Organizations and school districts in a variety of ways. As was shown in chapter three, effective teachers (and, therefore, effective teacher coaching and evaluation) have an impact on student performance. Green Dot teachers and managers agreed with the research in their unanimous criticism of the previous evaluation system and over 80% survey agreement that the new system would help them be more effective teachers. However, building a more collaborative union / management environment could help in other ways. Interviewees cited collaboration as a model that can be set for students on how to solve problems that arise. They also saw collaboration as a way to ensure that issues important to teachers become addressed by those who set policy since teachers often best understand the needs of their students. So following the model set by Green Dot could help CMOs and districts to improve teacher quality, increase student achievement, enact decisions in the best interests of all stakeholders, and build a better working and learning environment.

Research Limitations

Like with any research, this dissertation has limitations that must be taken into account before determining the implications of the findings described in chapter four. First, the research was conducted solely at one school system, Green Dot Public Schools, and is therefore impossible to generalize, even for other unionized Charter Management Organizations. Green Dot Public Schools has their own culture in terms of their relationship with their union and their stated purpose. AMU is an independent local of the California Teachers Association not affiliated with a larger union. Therefore, they

were able to build a collaborative relationship for over a decade before beginning this process. Green Dot Public Schools has a teacher corps and an administrative corps that are both much younger than average, providing a generational divide that may separate them from other school systems. Other CMOs, and certainly public school districts, will differ in the results that they might achieve from following a similar path towards negotiating teacher evaluation reform. This research is not intended to be a surefire guide to implementing a similar plan. Instead, it hopefully provides a case study for how one CMO with one individual set of circumstances was able to use union / management collaboration to reform their teacher evaluation system.

Second, the data collected during this study was, with only a few exceptions, collected during two months reflecting the viewpoints of management staff and teachers at one specific point in time. I did include as part of my study an interview with a former teacher and union president who has been out of the organization for two years (and whose viewpoints, therefore, reflect an earlier time period). I also looked at a presentation and survey data from past years to better understand the transition. However, most of the data is a snapshot of what people believe today. Given the potentially volatile nature of teacher evaluation issues, it is possible that these viewpoints would change drastically during different parts of the school year. It is possible that a longitudinal study covering multiple years would provide data that reflects the changing nature of perspectives surrounding these issues.

Third, I specifically chose to do a case study in order to be able to measure the opinions of a larger sample of people involved in this school system. And I believe that I have done that through 18 interviews ranging from a second year teacher within the

organization to two members of the executive management team. However, these interviews were not conducted randomly and, therefore, cannot represent the average perspective of teachers and managers within the organization. I chose, instead, to seek out and interview people who are knowledgeable both about union / management relations within the organization and about the teacher evaluation system. On the teacher side, those people tended to be union leaders past and present who may not necessarily represent the viewpoints of all teachers. On the management side, those people tended to be involved in ongoing discussions about evaluation, again not necessarily representative of the viewpoints of their colleagues. While I did include percentages throughout chapter four as an easier way of measuring the quantity of responses, it is important to note that I did not intend for those percentages to represent anything other than the individual perspectives of the 18 people who were interviewed.

Areas for Further Research

Much of the research in education right now (as was described in chapter three) is focused on teacher quality and evaluation. It is a hot topic of research because of the growing consensus that the way that teachers are evaluated traditionally (and currently) is not working. However, given the lack of success in negotiating teacher evaluation reform, the researchers have not taken that important extra step at looking at how school systems can get to the reform that all know is needed. This dissertation showed that there are school systems that are successfully working in tandem with their union to tackle this important issue. Using this case study, I presented a process that is ongoing in its attempt

to bring better teachers to every student's classroom. I hope that researchers will continue in this direction.

As was mentioned previously, this study looked only at one charter school. However, there are district run schools that also have succeeded in this area. It might be instructive to look at their process to see if it followed a similar path as did Green Dot's. This would be further magnified if the study were able to compare multiple districts with different tactics in order to determine which ones seem to work better than others. Finally, since this is an ongoing process, it might be beneficial to do a longitudinal study looking at this entire process from start to finish and conducting multiple interviews with each player throughout the process. Opinions change as situations change and tracking that could help us to see the process of negotiating teacher evaluation reform more realistically rather than looking back after the fact.

In addition, the field of teachers' union / management collaboration in general (not necessarily tied to teacher evaluation reform) is in need of more quality research. So much in education news is focused on the negative relationship between both parties. However, collaboration is taking place in school districts throughout the country and it could be very helpful to see exactly how building that collaborative working relationship impacts the policies that are enacted and the success of those policies on student achievement. Every single person who I interviewed unanimously said that in their observation, collaboration between teachers and management leads to better teaching and student learning. If their unanimous evaluation is accurate, then it would be very helpful to see more researched evidence of how and why that is the case.

Conclusion

During the summer after my first year of teaching for Green Dot, a colleague who I respected approached me asking if I would sign a petition calling on our school system and union to begin a conversation about altering the way that we were evaluated and paid. I listened intently out of respect, knowing that there was no way that teachers within this organization would agree to that plan. I had read the same news stories about union obstruction as everyone else and thought that any real reform would be shot down. I am glad to say that I was wrong. Union leadership took a chance, hoping to build a system that would actually help their members. Management actually valued teachers' contribution, hoping to work with them as equal partners. And the result is an evaluation system that is better than what it replaced. While I was writing this dissertation, the President and Chief Academic Officer of Green Dot came to my school to talk to teachers and answer their questions in person. When questions came up about problems with the evaluation system, both of them gave honest critiques about issues that still needed to be addressed. This is a hopeful sign that the collaborative relationship is ongoing. By using the tools that union leaders and management have gained throughout this process, there is no question that they can work collaboratively to fix whatever needs to be improved.

**Appendix
DOCUMENT 1
Silbiger Dissertation Interview Protocol
Management / Union Relations and Teacher Evaluation Reform
Spring, 2015**

Demographic Characteristics

1. What is your current position at Green Dot Public Schools?
2. How many years have you been in this position?
3. Prior to this position, what other jobs have you held at Green Dot Public Schools?
4. Prior to working at Green Dot Public Schools, what other positions have you held in education?
5. What is your age?
6. What is your gender?
7. What is your race / ethnicity?

General Perspectives

8. Describe the purpose of teacher evaluation. Why is it done? What is it supposed to accomplish?
9. Prior to the implementation of the current teacher evaluation system, how would you describe the system of teacher evaluation? How well do you think that it worked? What supports were available for teachers / administrators?
10. How would you describe the current system of teacher evaluation? How well do you think that it works? What supports are available for teachers / administrators?
11. In your opinion, what are the purpose of teachers unions? How effective are they? Are there any ways in which the union here at Green Dot is different from other teachers unions?

RQ#1: What steps did leaders in both union and administration take in building a collaborative relationship prior to negotiating teacher evaluation reform?

12. Rate the following three statements based on this scale: 1 is not at all effective, 2 is somewhat effective, 3 is effective, 4 is very effective
 - a. Green Dot managers and union leaders communicate effectively with each other
 - b. Green Dot managers and union leaders have built a culture of collaboration
 - c. Green Dot managers and union leaders effectively address teacher / administrator concerns
13. To your knowledge, in what ways have union and management collaborated successfully in regards to:
 - a. Communicating with each other
 - b. Building a culture of collaboration
 - c. Addressing teacher / administrator concerns
14. For union / management leaders only: When / how did the changes described in #13 begin?

RQ#2: What successful practices do administrative and union leaders say they utilized during the transition to gain teacher approval?

15. Were you involved in helping to develop the current teacher evaluation system? If so, how did you choose to get involved? If so, why? If not, why not?
16. What steps did Green Dot managers and union leaders take during the transition to the new teacher evaluation system in order to gain teacher support?
17. For each step identified in #17, rate it based on this scale: 1 is not at all effective, 2 is somewhat effective, 3 is effective, 4 is very effective

RQ#3: How do administrators and teachers feel that improved collaboration and new teacher evaluations have improved teaching and student learning?

18. Do you believe that teaching and student learning have benefited due to the improved collaboration between management and union leaders? If so, how? If possible, give an example. If not, why not? If possible, give an example.
19. Do you believe that teaching and student learning have benefited due to the new teacher evaluation system? If so, how? If possible, give an example. If not, why not? If possible, give an example.

RQ#4: To what extent has collaboration between unions and administrators persisted after implementing the new teacher evaluation system?

20. Thinking about the seven months of the 2014-2015 school year that have elapsed so far, how often have the following occurred to your knowledge. For each, give an example.
 - a. Union leaders and managers have discussed ways to improve the teacher evaluation system
 - b. Union leaders and/or managers have communicated to teachers about the teacher evaluation system
 - c. Union leaders and managers have communicated informally to address teacher / administrator concerns
 - d. Union site leaders and site administrators have communicated informally to address teacher / administrator concerns
 - e. Union leaders and managers have collaborated on any project of mutual interest
 - f. Union site leaders and site administrators have collaborated on any project of mutual interest.

Concluding Questions

21. Is there any information pertaining to this study that you have not been able to relay to me but would like to add now?

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