OFFICE OF CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER
Summary of State Board of Education Agenda Items
August 14-15, 2014

OFFICE OF EDUCATOR QUALITY

12.   Approval to contract with Evidence-Based Education Research and Evaluation
       (EBERE) to complete an evaluation of the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) Grant

            Awarded Vendor: Evidence-Based Education Research and Evaluation
                                   Cambridge, MA

       Scope of Project: The purpose of this contract is to utilize the services of
       Evidence-Based Education Research and Evaluation (EBERE) to complete a
       thorough evaluation of the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) Grant and its
       components. The contractor will employ quantitative and qualitative measures to
       complete this evaluation.

       Personnel associated with this contract are not former Department employees or
       related to any Department employees.

       Scope of Contract:

       • Term of Contract: October 1, 2014 – September 30, 2015

       • Total Amount to be Awarded: $98,110

       • Method of Award: Pool of Service Providers

       Funding Source: Federal funds

       Recommendation: Approval

       Back-up material attached

Mississippi Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) Evaluation

June 2014	Year 3 Report: Summary of Findings

Evidence-Based Education Research & Evaluation (EBERE, LLC)

Fran E. O'Reilly and Crystal Bish

Introduction

In this third year implementation study of Mississippi's Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) program, Evidence-Based Education Research & Evaluation (EBERE, LLC) focused on determining the extent and degree of fidelity of program implementation relative to Federal project guidelines and proposed activities with respect to the five core elements of Mississippi's TIF program, New Direction: (1) communication with stakeholders; (2) involvement of stakeholders; (3) teacher and principal evaluation systems; (4) data management systems; and (5) professional development. Particular attention was also paid to the implementation of collaborative school teams (i.e., professional learning communities or PLCs), which had been identified as an important source of variation across TIF schools in prior years.

During on-site visits, the project team interviewed key project participants, including principals, master teachers and teachers in TIF schools, as well as the TIF leadership team at MDE[1] and consultants from the IMPACT Education Group (IMPACT) who have worked closely with MDE on the TIF grant and have provided support to the TIF schools since the inception of the grant in 2010. We also administered an on-line survey to teachers in TIF schools to obtain in-depth information about PLC implementation and the teacher evaluation system (Mississippi Statewide Teacher Appraisal Rubric (M-STAR)). As part of the Year 3 evaluation focus, and with the goal of informing MDE about the strengths and limitations of TIF, we gathered data on participant perceptions of which components and strategies of TIF have had the greatest influence on teaching and learning in the TIF schools, and we identified challenges and facilitators of TIF implementation.

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[1] Shortly after completing a first set of interviews at MDE in January 2014, the grant leadership team retired and we were unable to complete additional data collection from the state level. As a result, our assessment of TIF implementation status relies heavily on data gathered during our site visits from leadership and teachers at the TIF schools about their communications and interactions with MDE during the school year. It is also worth noting that MDE did not contract with EBERE for the Year 3 evaluation until late November 2013. Thus, we were unable to do any data collection around grant activities that occurred between the beginning of the school year and December 2013 such as leadership team meetings or professional development opportunities for TIF principals.

We found that during the 2013-14 school year, implementation of the TIF program components was moderately high and that most schools continued to make progress on implementation of key program strategies and components despite substantial turnover in leadership among the TIF schools (five new master teachers and six new principals across nine of the 10 TIF schools). All schools were implementing the M-STAR evaluation system for teachers at high levels, and for the first time during the grant, principal evaluation and related professional development was being fully implemented. Professional development for teachers, implementation of professional learning communities and the master teacher role varied in implementation from moderate to full implementation across the schools. Not surprisingly, given the staffing changes that occurred mid-year at MDE, communication was noted as an area of weakness.

For teachers, professional learning communities was the TIF strategy reported most often as having the greatest impact on their instruction; the performance-based compensation system was the strategy reported least often. For principals, professional development for staff--such as PD-360 and the availability of funds to address locally determined professional development needs was paramount.

More detail on the methods, analytic techniques and data collection strategies used for the Year 3 evaluation are provided in Appendix A. Demographic characteristics for the 10 TIF schools and state assessment data showing that most TIF schools have seen steady increases in their student achievement outcomes as measured by the QDI are provided in Appendix B.[2]

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[2] The QDI data are highlighted as it pertains to school eligibility for the PBCS incentives. Given the focus as an implementation evaluation, no assessment has been made as to the impact of TIF participation on student outcomes.

Findings

In the following sections we detail our findings regarding the extent to which each of the five required domains of the TIF project was implemented according to the Federal requirements and discuss our findings regarding school level implementation of professional learning communities.[3]

Communication with Stakeholders

Federal guidelines for this domain require that TIF projects have a plan for effectively communicating to all stakeholders (including teachers, principals/administrators, other school personnel, and the community-at-large) the components of its performance-based compensation system (PBCS). As detailed in the Year 1 evaluation report, MDE did develop a communication plan and since that time a variety of strategies have been used by MDE such as brochures, newsletters and the Mississippi Teacher Center website to communicate about the TIF program generally. These communications typically include information on the performance-based compensation system. At this point in the project, the TIF school leadership and most teachers have been well informed about the PBCS, although it is unclear whether these types of communications have reached the community- at- large, as required by Federal guidelines.

Considering this domain more broadly to encompass all communications between MDE and the TIF schools, this past year was challenging and this domain was rated as low for implementation purposes. The evaluation team experienced its own difficulties communicating with MDE and we learned from the TIF schools that they also had issues with continuity and timeliness of communications. According to principals and master teachers, despite meeting about monthly with MDE staff or consultants either in person or through conference calls for specific purposes (e.g., FIP training, EPIC training), respondents indicated that they were not made aware of meetings in advance and they did not feel that the time required on their part was always time

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[3] Because school implementation issues reflect state implementation to a large extent and the major charge for the evaluation was to assess state level implementation, findings are presented only for the five required project domains. Additional information reflecting school level implementation is provided in Appendix A.

well spent. Principals expressed frustration that they had no opportunity to discuss issues they thought would affect their ability to implement the TIF strategies effectively and in turn the ability of the school to meet growth necessary for participation in the PBCS. For example, concerns were expressed about the number of state and district initiatives that were being layered on to the school in addition to requirements of TIF participation. These included switching to the Common Core State Standards but using the MCT2 for accountability purposes; requirements in some schools to participate in LETRS, a new K-3 literacy initiative; PLCs directed by central district office; substantial teacher turnover; and pilot testing of the PARCC assessment.   Concerns were also expressed about a lack of knowledge regarding whether or not the TIF schools would fall under the new state accountability system next year.

Moreover, no orientation to the TIF program was provided for the five new master teachers or six new principals in the TIF schools. And support for the schools from IMPACT did not begin until the school year was half over. Participating schools with new leadership were challenged to understand expectations and requirements for TIF schools such as the PBCS, and new master teachers were unclear about their roles and responsibilities. This affected the ability of the schools to implement the program with high fidelity and may influence the schools' success in improving outcomes for students. Principals and master teachers would like more opportunities to come together to discuss issues of common concern as well as learn from each other about grant implementation.

Note that data collection occurred during March and April 2014, during a transitional period for grant leadership at MDE. These findings may not be reflective of communication issues with current grant leadership.

Stakeholder Involvement

In this domain, Federal requirements address the extent to which there is significant enough involvement of stakeholders in order to carry out the implementation of the grant. At this point in the project, decisions have been made about key project components, including the educator evaluation system and the performance-based compensation system.

Notwithstanding communication issues mentioned above, as a general rule, during the life of the TIF grant the TIF leadership team at MDE has done a good job of including stakeholders in important decisions regarding TIF, especially in the development of criteria for the performance-based compensation system. Principals and master teachers who were not new to the grant indicated that they were pleased to have had the opportunity to participate in the roll-out of M-STAR, and to have received the intensive training to implement the system. As a result, this domain was rated as being implemented with high fidelity.

Teacher and Principal Evaluation

Federal guidelines for this domain require that TIF projects have in place a multi-faceted teacher and principal evaluation system that includes an evidence-based rubric aligned with professional teaching/leadership standards. The teacher evaluation system (M-STAR) was developed and piloted in the TIF schools and implementation continues to be strong (see below for detailed survey results on M-STAR implementation). For the first time during the three year grant period, a principal evaluation system aligned with the grant requirements was in place (the Mississippi Principal Evaluation System, MPES). In prior years, TIF school principals were evaluated using VAL-ED (the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education) and there were many inconsistencies in the implementation, use and feedback provided through this system. With the addition of MPES, which several TIF school principals indicated had been used for their evaluation, this domain was rated as being implemented with high fidelity. Some principals also noted that they had been evaluated with VAL-ED and it was unclear whether there was an expectation that both systems should be used for principals in TIF schools. This is something that should be clarified for next school year.

Data from interviews with principals, master teachers and from the teacher survey indicated that M-STAR is being implemented as planned and, while it is not without issues, the evaluation data indicate that the process is perceived as being useful. When the survey was administered in January and February of 2014, nearly 91% of respondents indicated that they had been evaluated under the M-STAR system during 2013-14. The same percentage of respondents

indicated that they had received training or professional development on the M-STAR process and most (82%) felt knowledgeable about how the process worked.

The vast majority of teachers responding to the survey indicated that they had been through most steps in the evaluation process related to the fall formative observation, including a self-assessment (91%), a formative observation (96%), a pre-formative observation conference (90%), and a post-formative observation conference (78%). Principals were most likely to be conducting the formative observation and conference cycle, with a small percentage being conducted by the master teacher. Five of the TIF schools indicated that master teachers were involved in formative assessments. One school reported that their master teacher also conducted summative assessments. Given the survey timing, not all respondents had participated in the spring summative process although all anticipated that a summative observation would be completed by year end. During on-site visits to schools in Spring 2014, respondents indicated that most summative evaluation cycles had been completed. Master teachers, as noted, typically do not participate in this component of the teacher evaluation system.

One challenge with M-STAR often voiced during on-site interviews is related to the amount of time and paperwork that M-STAR requires of administrative staff. Each step in the cycle (self-assessment, pre-conference, post-conference) was reported most often to take between 15 and 30 minutes, not including the observation itself and thus could take upwards of 90 minutes for teachers and twice that long for administrators per teacher. As one principal explained, echoing others, the system is so complicated and time-consuming he doesn't have sufficient time to work with teachers to help them improve their practice. Teachers also voiced concern about the additional data they had to compile (i.e., artifact binders) and were unclear whether and how this material was considered in the evaluation process.

These concerns are probably not specific to the TIF schools as all schools are now using the M-STAR teacher evaluation system. One theme noted by TIF principals, however, is that the training they received regarding how M-STAR is to be implemented seems to be different from the training being provided to administrators in non-TIF schools, most notably that their

training results in more rigorous application of the system which translates into higher standards for teachers in the TIF schools and potentially lower ratings. Teachers expressed similar concerns about what they had heard about M-STAR evaluations from their colleagues in other schools. Both teachers and principals expressed concerns that teachers were at a disadvantage in their schools and that this would reflect poorly both on the schools and on individual teachers as they were being held to a different standard.

TIF principals have had the opportunity to attend M-STAR training both as it was piloted in their schools and as it has been rolled out subsequently in the state so they have observed firsthand the differences in how their colleagues in non-TIF schools are being trained. Even though many of the TIF principals were new this year, most were not new to the school and only one was a new school administrator, so they also have been exposed to both M-STAR trainings (i.e., one for TIF schools, one for non-TIF schools).

Despite these concerns, survey data indicates that most teachers responding to the survey find the feedback received from the M-STAR observations to be helpful and nearly two-thirds reported that they have changed their classroom practice as a result of this feedback. (See Figure 1.) Principals also reported that the process provided important opportunities to reflect with teachers about their practice, but that they would like options that would make the process less time-consuming, such as decreasing the number of walkthroughs for teachers previously rated as highly-effective, or simplifying some of the paperwork which would make the process less time-consuming.

Data Management System (Performance-Based Compensation System)

Development of a data management system is central to the TIF program because this system is intended to be used to determine if personnel qualify for an incentive reward and then to provide performance-based compensation to qualified personnel. The theory behind the TIF program rests on the hypothesis that incentive rewards will motivate teachers to change their instruction which in turn will improve student achievement. This component of the TIF program has been poorly implemented in Mississippi based on reports from the TIF schools.

Figure 1: Teacher Perceptions of M-STAR evaluation process
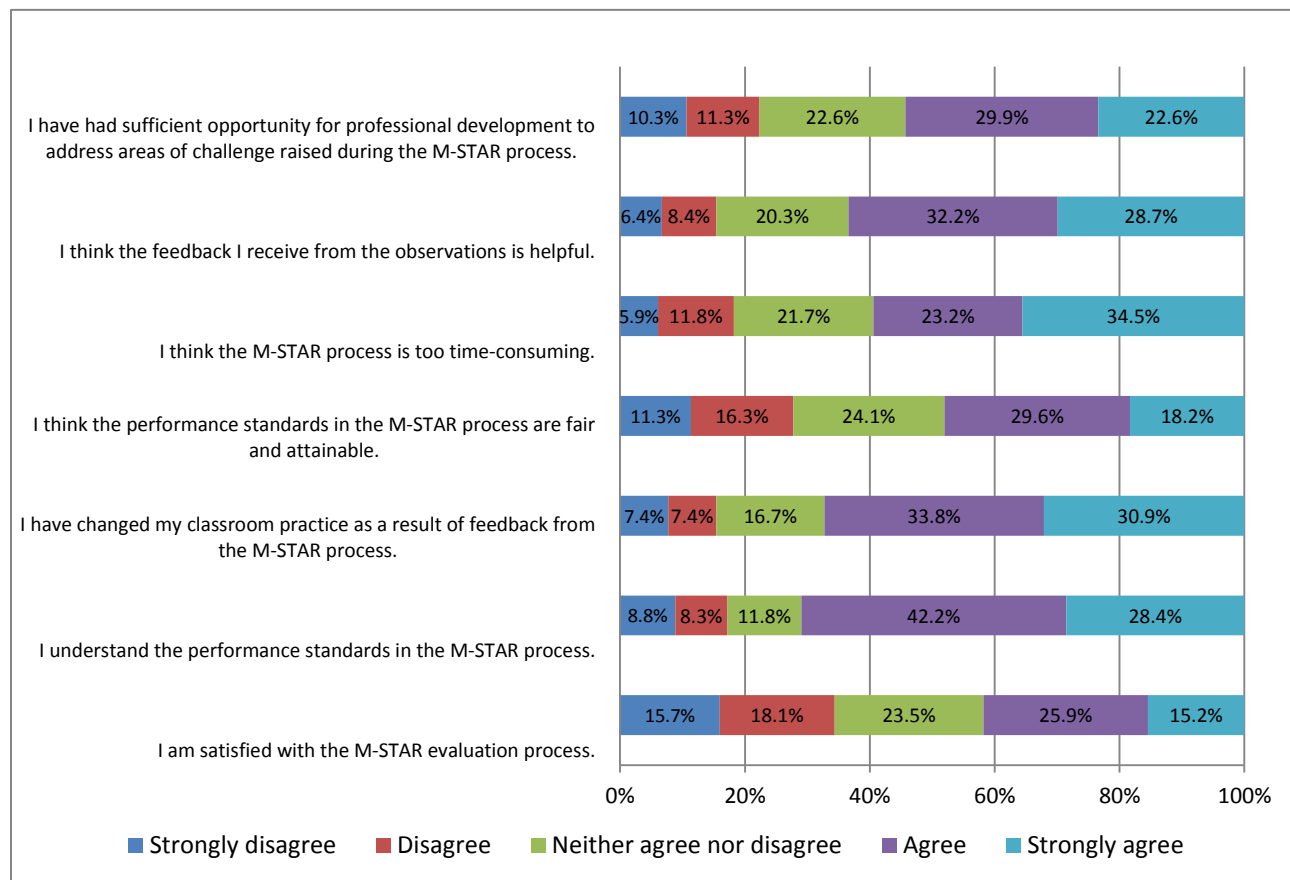
Both development of the performance- based compensation system and the data system to support it have experienced delays. Early on in the grant, a system was established for determining rewards at the school level but the system for determining rewards for individual teachers was not finalized until the second year of the grant. The first payments through the system were made in December 2012 based on results for the 2011-12 school year, but only at the school level. In seven of the 10 schools that met growth for 2011-12, all teachers received a flat payment of $1000.

Using data for the 2012-13 school year, eligibility for school-level incentives was known as early as Fall 2013 and teachers anticipated getting their incentive payments in December 2013 as in the previous year. Again, seven of the 10 TIF schools met growth, but there was much delay in determining the individual teacher incentive rewards. The existing data management system

does not link student achievement data to teacher and principal payroll and human resource systems as required by the program regulations. An apparently much-flawed roster verification process was implemented as a remedy and was described variously by principals as a "nightmare" and "a mess." As a result, incentive payments for the 2012-13 school year were not made until late March 2014. At that late date, teachers indicated that it was hard to think of the incentive as a motivator to change their behavior in the classroom, as they weren't convinced that the payments would be made. Not surprisingly, data from half the schools indicate that the incentives are not a motivating factor. In the other half the schools, data reveal that the incentives may be motivational for some staff. Results from the teacher survey indicated that fewer than 5% of respondents perceive the incentive payment to be the TIF strategy with the greatest influence on their instructional practice. Moving forward, if incentive rewards are to be sustained, MDE must make progress in the development of a data management system that meets the requirements of the program.

Professional Development

The professional development system for teachers and principals is fundamental to the ability of staff to improve student performance through increased teacher and leadership effectiveness. Teachers and principals are to receive data from their evaluation that will allow them to improve their practice, and professional development targeted to identified needs. A process is to be in place for regularly assessing the effectiveness of professional development activities. For 2013-14, implementation for this domain was assessed at a high level.

As was the case since the grant inception, TIF schools have been provided with professional development funds, some of which were required to be used to purchase Professional Development (PD)-360, a web-based system that allows teachers and administrators to identify professional development support through the use of on-line videos on specific instructional and leadership practices (e.g., small group instruction, coaching). Grant funds also are to be used to implement a schoolwide professional development plan. PD needs are to be identified both across the school and for individual teachers based on M-STAR observations and walkthroughs. All schools receive the same amount of PD funding, regardless of school size.

This was a challenge for one of the smallest schools that found it difficult to use all of the PD funds and for one of the larger schools that found the amount insufficient to meet their needs. Principals also did not like that they did not know in a timely way how much funding would be available for professional development so that they could plan ahead for schoolwide PD or summer opportunities.

In addition to PD-360, all schools were required to view professional development modules provided by Battelle for Kids on Formative Instructional Practices (FIP) and for the first time during the life of the grant, principals were provided with professional development targeted at their leadership skills. IMPACT worked with the TIF principals on leadership development using EPIC (Effective Principal Institute and Collaborative) training. In nine of the 10 TIF schools, principals remarked on how much they appreciated the support received through EPIC training. This is especially important given that all of the five new principals are first year principals (although only one is a new administrator).

Although the specifics of how each of the TIF schools implemented these various professional development options vary, nine of the 10 school principals mentioned that the availability of professional development funding was the most important aspect of their participation in the TIF grant because it allows them to provide targeted assistance to teachers to meet their identified needs. In eight of the 10 schools, these funds provided the only opportunity for teachers to receive professional development aside from state and district initiatives such as learning about implementation of the Common Core State Standards.

Data from the schools did suggest that there is tremendous variation in the execution and use of PD-360. Four schools experienced technology challenges, and three schools indicated that PD-360 was not used much, primarily because the principal and/or master teacher was not familiar enough with the system to make good use of it. Without any training or orientation to the system, and with no accountability for its use, TIF school leadership is left on their own to decide whether and how to use it, even though it is required to be purchased as part of the schools' grant participation. In three of the schools, teachers reported that PD-360 was one of

the most important influences on their practice. With some support and guidance for the use of PD-360, this resource could benefit additional teachers.

The use of the FIP modules was also inconsistent across the schools, although because their implementation was understood to be required, all of the schools had adopted an approach to making sure that teachers watched them. And while some respondents told us that watching the modules was very time-consuming, they were out of date, or geared towards high school rather than the lower grades, most respondents found the information practical, and master teachers and principals noted that they saw many of the practices being implemented. By teachers throughout their school

According to the on-line survey, 12% of teachers found PD-360 to be the TIF strategy that had the greatest impact on their instruction. For 17% of teachers, other professional development opportunities were reported as having the greatest impact. Professional development is clearly viewed as a critical component for improving teacher practice and principals are right to be concerned about how this aspect of the grant will be sustained after the grant is over.

Professional Learning Communities

The use of collaborative school teams (aka Professional Learning Communities or PLCs) is a school-based strategy implemented as part of the TIF program in Mississippi, but one that falls outside the Federal requirements for the program.   As the Year 2 evaluation results suggested that one key difference among TIF schools was the fidelity with which professional learning communities were implemented, we explored this component more deeply during the Year 3 evaluation. The evaluation team attended a PLC training for TIF schools provided by IMPACT to make sure that we understood the expectations for PLC implementation. A central focus of the teacher survey was implementation of PLCs, and during seven of the school site visits we were able to observe at least one PLC team meeting.

During site visits to the TIF schools, teachers in five of the 10 schools agreed that PLCs were the most important of the TIF strategies affecting their practice. In three additional schools, PLCs in combination with other strategies such as PD-360, FIP or data use were noted as being

influential on daily practice.   This mirrors survey results where 53% of respondents indicated that PLCs were the TIF-related activity with the greatest impact on instruction. Where we observed PLCs, substantial variation in their implementation was noted. The survey data support this variation.

Nearly all respondents (99%) reported that PLCs were being implemented in their schools during the 2013-14 school year. Most (84%) indicated that they had received professional development about PLCs and about two-thirds (66%) indicated that this training had been provided by the master teacher. Fewer than half (45%) reported they had received training from IMPACT.[4] The training provided by IMPACT covers a variety of topics. Survey results show that not all teachers receive training on all of the PLC topics that IMPACT covers in their PLC training. This may help to explain variation in PLC implementation across the schools. (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Topics Covered in PLC Trainings (N=175)

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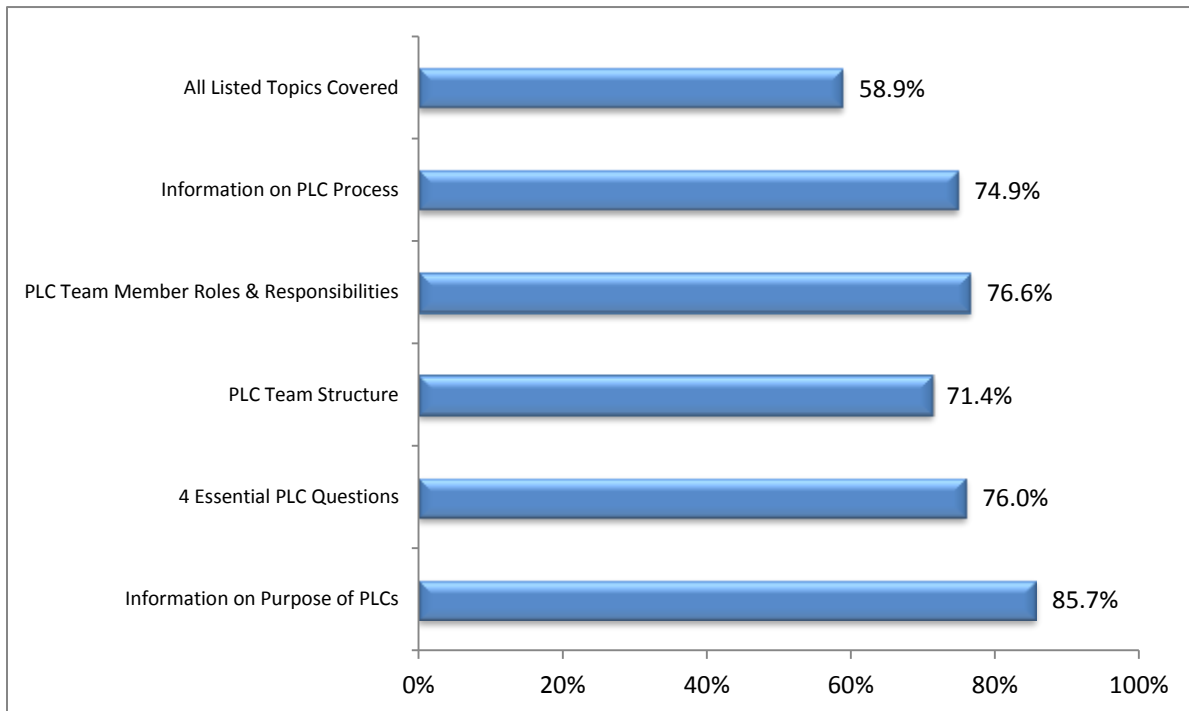
[4] One of the key activities of IMPACT support to the TIF schools is supporting the implementation of PLCs.

Nearly three-quarters of respondents (71%) reported that their PLCs met weekly, with 15% reporting a bi-weekly meeting and about 10% reporting that their PLCs met only monthly. A modest 3.4% reported meeting on a daily basis, the highest frequency specified. Finding sufficient, mutually available time for teachers to meet together was cited as a challenge during site visits to schools.

On average, meetings are most likely to last for 45 minutes or more (71% of the time) although more than a quarter of respondents (30%) said their PLCs lasted for 60 minutes or more. PLCs typically include teachers at the same grade level (75%) as opposed to teachers in the same content area (53%). About half the respondents indicated that PLC meetings typically include their master teacher (52%), and a school administrator is included with the same frequency (53%). More than a quarter of respondents (27%) reported that PLC meetings in their school were regularly attended by teachers at the same grade and subject level, the master teacher and school administrators. (See Figures 3 and 4).

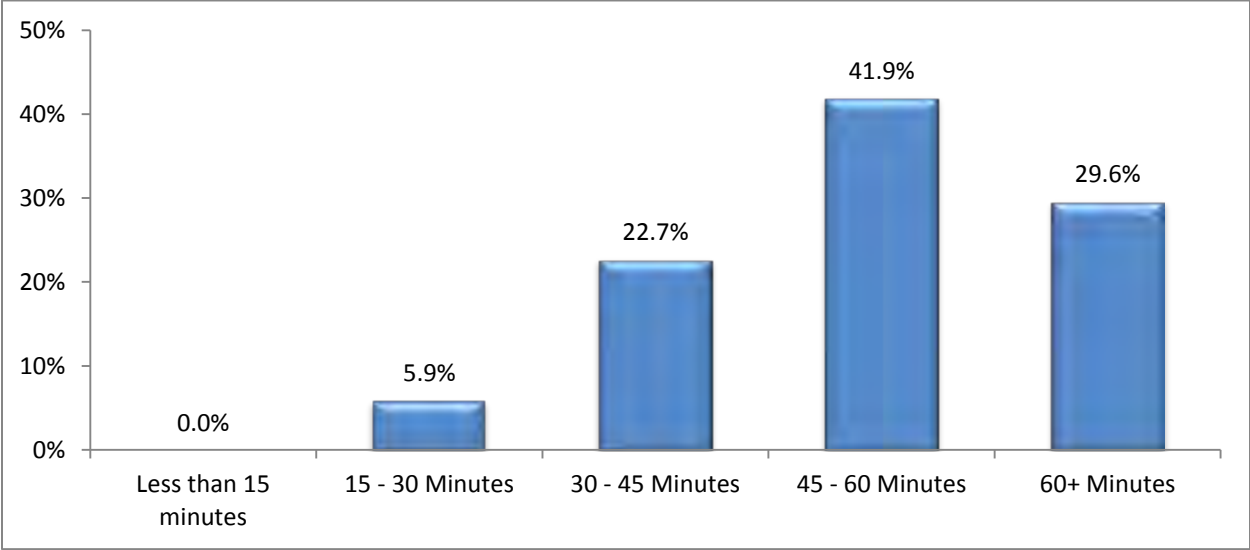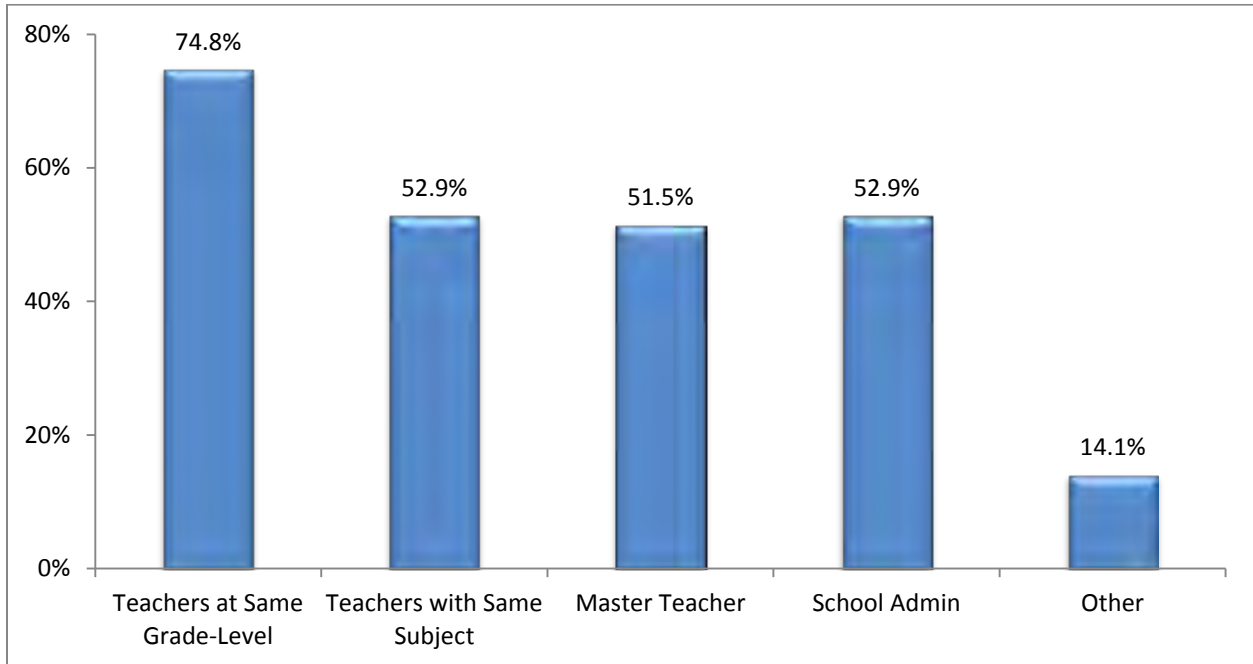**Figure 3: Average Length of PLC Meetings (n=203)**

Figure 4: PLC Meeting Attendees (n=206)

Roles for attendees at PLC meetings are intended to facilitate the efficiency and effectiveness of meeting time, as well as to engage participants. When asked which roles their PLCs included, respondents most often cited a notetaker (83%), but a majority also reported that their PLCs included a chair or leader (79%), a facilitator (77%) and a timekeeper (71%). More than half the teacher respondents (54%) reported that the PLCs in which they participate included all suggested roles.

Nearly all respondents (96%) indicated that minutes reflecting PLC meeting outcomes were prepared for their PLC meetings. A fair amount of variation was reported in how these minutes are disseminated. Nearly all minutes are shared with team members (90%) and the master teacher (90%) but only about two-thirds share the meeting minutes with the school principal (66%). This was reflected in our interviews during site visits where it was apparent that master teachers were typically much more involved in PLCs than are school principals.

According to survey respondents, the content of PLC meetings can encompass a wide variety of topics, including student discipline and attendance, classroom management, and student performance data but student learning and instructional practices were cited by nearly all

respondents as topics of PLC meetings (94% and 96% respectively). The most frequent PLC meeting topic was reportedly instructional practice (45%). Fewer than 2% of respondents indicated that student discipline, student attendance or administrative issues were the most frequent topic of PLC meetings, but ideally these subjects have no place on the agenda in the most effective PLC meetings. Reviewing data and adjusting and sharing practices based on assessment results is a core function of PLCs. Nearly all respondents (93%) indicated that data was used in their PLC meetings. Most often these data were from standardized formative assessments (e.g., MAP) (78%) or MCT2 data (70%) or the results of teacher developed tests (70%). Samples of student work were also used in many PLC meetings (69%).

While most teachers believed that their school's PLC effort was well-implemented, somewhat fewer respondents perceived that their PLC participation would reap all of the desired benefits. Many teachers reported that they had found PLC participation personally helpful (73%), resulting in the adoption of shared classroom practices amongst colleagues (78%) and the development of a more collaborative culture at their school (74%). The majority of respondents also indicated that both students and teachers were considered learners in their school (78%) and a similar number of respondents reported a sense of responsibility among PLC members for the student learning happening in their school. However, fewer respondents believed that their students had already benefited from teacher participation in PLCs (68%) or that student performance would improve in the future as a result of teacher participation in PLCs (67%). For a contingent of the respondents, who neither agreed nor disagreed that their PLC participation had (or would) help their pupils, whether students will ultimately benefit or achieve improved performance remains to be seen (14%). (See Figure 5.)

Figure 5: Teacher Perception of PLC Benefits
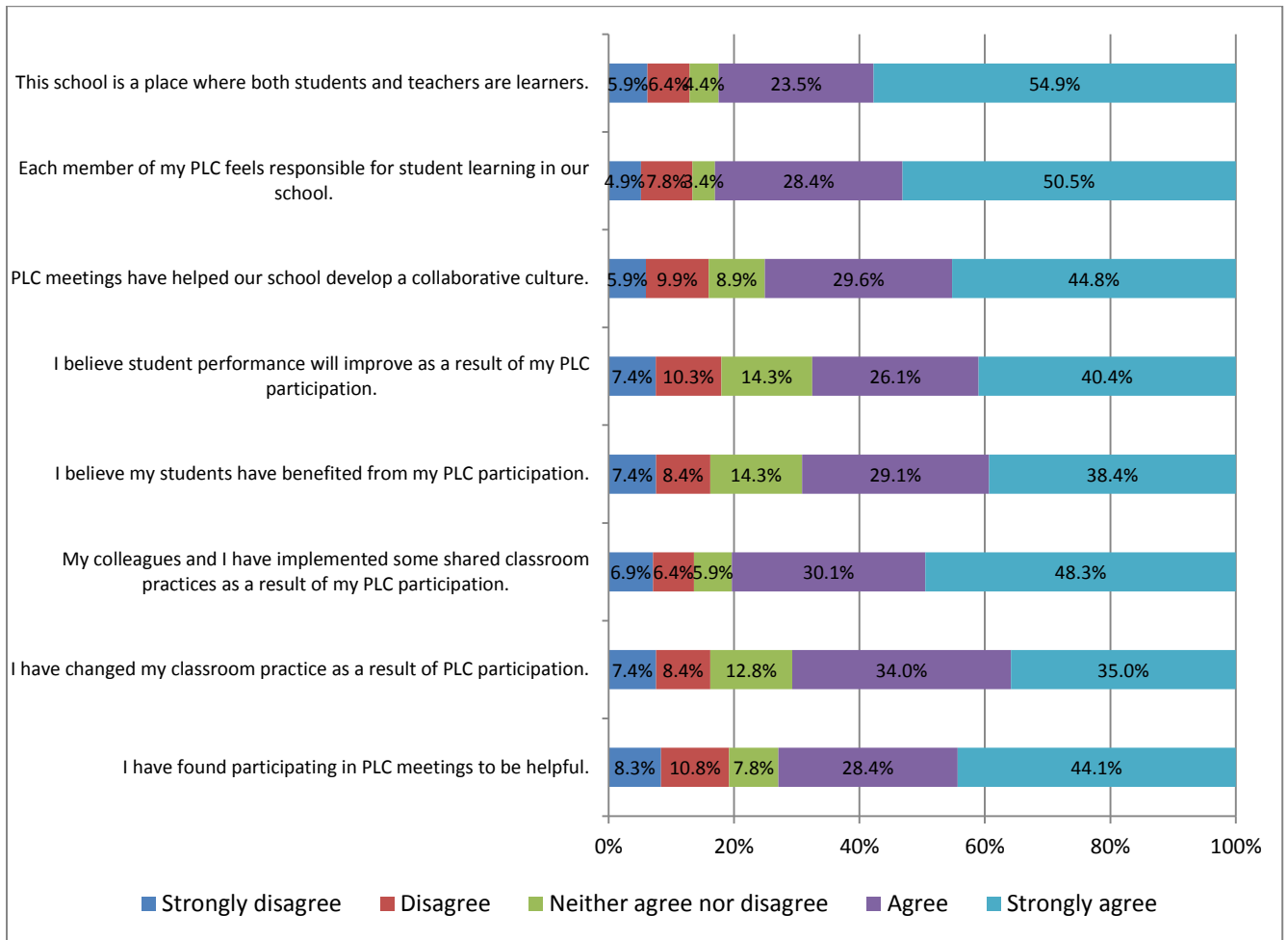
The survey results regarding PLC implementation suggest that most respondents understand the purpose of PLCs and for the most part the meetings have an appropriate structure and composition. Some schools seem to be meeting less frequently than the ideal (i.e., less than weekly) and for short duration and some of the content covered is outside the scope of what is intended (e.g., student attendance and discipline). Some variation is undoubtedly appropriate for the different contexts in each school, but with higher fidelity of implementation to the standards for PLC as presented by IMPACT, more teachers may find that PLC meetings are helpful, that students will benefit as result of PLC participation, and that instructional practices have changed. At this time it appears that many, but not all teachers and principals have embraced the concepts of PLCs. Going forward, it will be important to ensure that staff and

principals are trained in the expectations for PLC implementation, especially where there is substantial turnover of staff and administrators.

Conclusions/Recommendations

At the end of the third year of TIF implementation, MDE and the TIF schools have made good progress towards full implementation of the TIF components and project strategies. This past year has seen some challenges with the leadership transition, late communications from MDE and implementation of the PBCS, but key evaluation and professional development systems have been put into place and school leadership seems well positioned to continue with their side of implementation in ways that can improve teaching and learning in the schools.

Ongoing support from IMPACT has been helpful in ensuring that schools are able to participate in the TIF grant with continuity and this support has been helpful in schools progress in implementation of PLCs. For teachers, professional learning communities was the TIF strategy reported most often as having the greatest impact on their instruction and we recommend continued support for this strategy in the schools especially as it is likely that this strategy will be sustained after the grant period is over. The performance-based compensation system was the strategy reported least often as having an impact on teacher practice. This may be the result of delays and challenges in processing the incentive payments this year, but most respondents suggested that while the incentive money was nice, it was not much of a motivator for change. MDE should take this under advisement when considering whether this policy should be adopted more broadly after the grant period. An impact evaluation to assess whether incentives are related to changes in student outcomes would be a helpful complement to the implementation data.

For principals, professional development for staff, such as PD-360, Battelle for Kids training on Formative Instructional Practices (FIP) and the availability of funds to address locally determined professional development needs was paramount.   Given the uneven use of PD-360 and FIP modules and the technology challenges in some schools, we reiterate an early recommendation to put in place an accountability system to ensure that these resources are

being put to good use and that they are in fact addressing the needs of teachers. We also suggest that some training be provided to leadership staff so that they can become familiar and adept at using these resources.

Schools would appreciate advance communications from MDE prior to or early in the school year to ensure that they are aware of expectations for the program for the coming year, such as required professional development or schedules for leadership meetings with MDE. It will be important also to make sure that the schools are informed about any changes to the accountability system or educator evaluation systems that could affect eligibility for the PBCS. Setting out clear expectations and priorities for the grant strategies and communicating these consistently from MDE rather than from consultants would decrease variation in implementation across the schools. Although obviously some flexibility is warranted based on the individual contexts of the 10 schools, a clear and consistent message from MDE about expectations would decrease variation in areas such as use of PD-360, the role of the master teacher and expectations for M-STAR implementation.   An orientation for any new principals or master teachers in the TIF schools would facilitate continuity of implementation of the TIF strategies in schools that may experience turnover in school leadership. Finally, improving the data management system for determining individual awards under the PBCS should be a priority for the 2014-15 school year.

Appendix A: Methods and Data

Evaluation methods were descriptive and qualitative in nature, using multiple data collection techniques to determine the extent to which Mississippi's TIF program, New Direction, met the requirements of the five core components required of all TIF projects. Similar strategies were used to collect data at the state and school levels to assess implementation of the TIF program in Mississippi as detailed below. As a whole, the evaluation is based on the logic model developed for the project during Year 1 (see Figure 1).

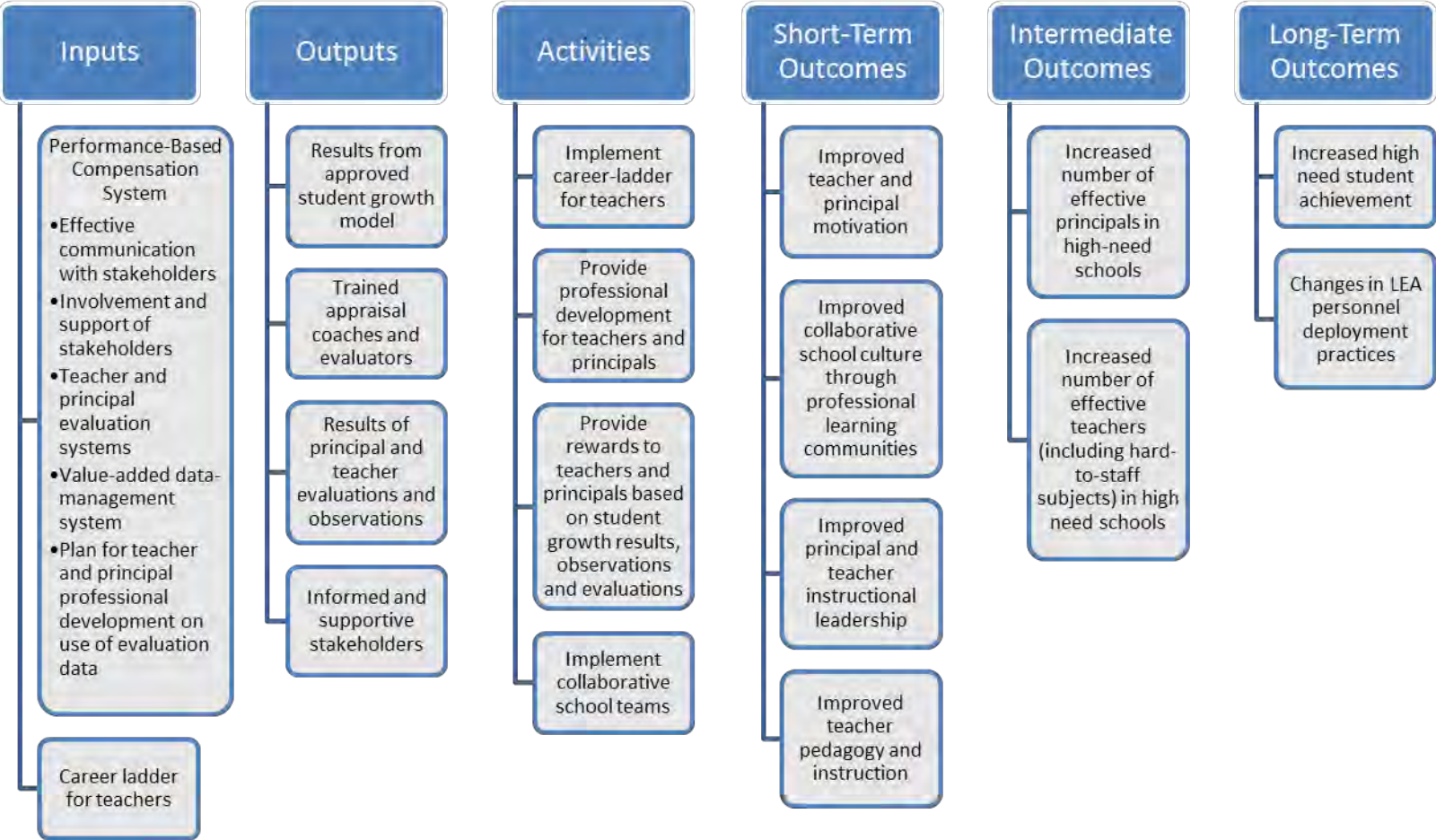### State Level Implementation

At the state level, initial data were collected through on-site interviews conducted during January 2014 with staff at the Mississippi Teacher Center at MDE who had oversight for the TIF program at that time. Due to turnover in leadership for the grant at MDE we were unable to complete additional data collection from the state level after that time. As a result, our assessment of MDE's implementation status relies heavily on data gathered during our site visits from leadership at the TIF schools about their communications and interactions with MDE during the school year.[5] No project documents were provided by MDE for our review.

During Year 1 of the project, the evaluation team developed a scoring rubric based on the logic model to assess alignment of New Direction with Federal project guidelines and requirements at the state level. Development of both the logic model and the rubric was an iterative process, with the evaluation team working with MDE staff over a period of several months to finalize both documents. Five domains were included in the rubric to parallel the five required components of TIF projects:

- Domain 1: Communication with Stakeholders

- Domain 2: Involvement of Stakeholders

- Domain 3: Evaluation of Teachers and Principals

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[5] It is also worth noting that MDE did not contract with EBERE for the Year 3 evaluation until November 2013. Thus, we were unable to do any data collection around grant activities that occurred in the Fall of 2013.

Figure 1: New Direction Logic Model

Inputs	Outputs	Activities	Short-Term Outcomes	Intermediate Outcomes	Long-Term Outcomes
Performance-Based Compensation System • Effective communication with stakeholders • Involvement and support of stakeholders • Teacher and principal evaluation systems • Value-added data-management system • Plan for teacher and principal professional development on use of evaluation data Career ladder for teachers	Results from approved student growth model Trained appraisal coaches and evaluators Results of principal and teacher evaluations and observations Informed and supportive stakeholders	Implement career-ladder for teachers Provide professional development for teachers and principals Provide rewards to teachers and principals based on student growth results, observations and evaluations Implement collaborative school teams	Improved teacher and principal motivation Improved collaborative school culture through professional learning communities Improved principal and teacher instructional leadership Improved teacher pedagogy and instruction	Increased number of effective principals in high-need schools Increased number of effective teachers (including hard-to-staff subjects) in high need schools	Increased high need student achievement Changes in LEA personnel deployment practices

External Factors:
Federal requirements for PBCS

Assumptions:
- Availability of funding
- Capacity of state and districts to implement required components
- IT availability for VAM computing
- District policies and compensation systems allow rewards to be made

- Domain 4: Data Management System

- Domain 5: Professional Development

Guiding research questions and indicators were developed for each domain and a three-point scale was used to assess progress in project implementation:

- 2—Proficient (> than 50% implemented)
- 1—Beginning (< than 50% implemented)
- 0—Not implemented (0% Implemented)

Domains 1 and 2 address the way in which MDE communicated with and involved stakeholders in the development of its PBCS and other aspects of the grant. Domain 3 focuses on the adoption and implementation of the evaluation systems for teachers and principals and whether or not these systems have an evidence-based rubric, alignment with professional teaching standards, includes a student growth measure, and other requirements outlined in the Federal guidelines. Domain 4 addresses the Data Management System utilized to carry out the PBCS, and lastly Domain 5 evaluates the type of professional development and training offered to participating schools and teachers. The rubric does not assess quality or effectiveness of the components. It simply assesses the extent to which the required elements of each component are present in the project. Tables A.1-A.5 show our analysis of compliance with each of the required project elements at the state level for the 2013-14 school year.

Table A.1: Assessment of Compliance of Requirements for Communication with Stakeholders

Variable Coding Scheme	Results
Stakeholder Identification	**1**
Presence of all 4 stakeholder groups (teachers, administrators, other school personnel, community at large) 0=No Stakeholders received communication 1= At least 2 groups received communication 2=All stakeholders received communication	
Content of Communication	**2**
0 = No discussion of 5 Core Elements of PBCS 1 = Presence of 5 elements, but only 1 or 2 are discussed in detail 2= All of the core elements are present and discussed in detail	
Average Score Across All Variables in Domain	**1.5**

Table A.2: Assessment of Compliance with Requirements of Involvement of Stakeholders

Variable Coding Scheme	Results
Involvement from Teachers, Principals, and Other School Personnel	**2**
0=No involvement from any of the parties 1=Involvement from only one of the parties listed above 2=Involvement from all three of the parties listed above	
Input from Teachers, Principals, and Other School Personnel	**2**
0=No documented input from any of the parties mentioned above 1=Documented input from only one of the parties listed above 2=Documented input from all three of the parties listed above	
Involvement from Union Affiliates in Participating LEAs	**2**
0=No attempt to contact or involve unions 1=Attempt to contact made but unsuccessful 2= Attempt to contact results in successful involvement from unions throughout the process	
Support of Union Affiliates in Participating LEAs	**2**
0=Unions voiced opposition for the PBCS 1=Unions showed neither support nor dissidence for the PBCS 2=Unions demonstrated support for the PBCS	
Average Score Across All Variables in Domain	**2**

Table A.3: Assessment of Compliance with Teacher and Principal Evaluation System Requirements

Variable Coding Scheme	Results
Objective, Evidence-based Rubric	**2**
0=None of the evaluation indicators are tied with evidence 1=Some of the evaluation indicators are tied with evidence 2=All of the evaluation indicators are tied with evidence	
Alignment with Professional Teaching/Leadership Standards	**2**
0=No rubric is developed 1=Rubric is not aligned to professional teacher/leadership standards 2=Rubric is in place and is aligned with professional teacher/leadership standards	
Student Growth Measure	**2**
0=Did not implement student growth measure 1=Student growth measure implemented but does not play a significant role 2=Implemented a student growth measure that plays a significant factor	
Teacher/Principal Observations	**2**
0=Evaluation system does not provide for any observations of teachers/principals using trained observers 1=Evaluation system does provide for observation of each teacher or principal using trained observers once per year 2=Evaluation system provides for at least 2 observations of each teacher or principal per year using trained observers	
Collection of Additional Forms of Evidence	**2**
0=No evidence was collected 1=Less than half of the evaluation indicators involved collecting evidence 2=More than half of the evaluation indicators involved collecting evidence	
Evaluation of Additional Forms of Evidence	**1**
0=Additional forms of evidence were not collected 1=Some, but not all, of collected evidence was used as part of evaluation 2=All of collected evidence was used for evaluation purposes	
Average Score Across All Variables in Domain	**1.83**

Table A.4: Assessment of Compliance with Data Management System Requirements

Variable Coding Scheme	Results
Data Management System	**1**
0=No evidence of data management system linked to student achievement data and to teacher and principal payroll and human resource systems 1=Data management system only partially links student achievement data to payroll and human resource systems 2=Data management system links student-achievement data to payroll and human resource systems	
Use of PBCS Rewards	**2**
0=No evidence of PBCS being used to determine and provide rewards to principals and teachers 1=Limited evidence of PBCS being used to determine and provide rewards to principals and teachers 2=Significant evidence of implementation of PBCS; evidence points to MDE using PBCS to determine and provide rewards to principals and teachers	
Average Score Across All Variables in Domain	**1.5**

Table A.5: Assessment of Compliance with Professional Development Requirements

Variable Coding Scheme	Results
Implementation of Plan for Ensuring that Teachers and Principal Understand Specific Measures of Teacher/Principal Effectiveness	**2**
0=No Plan is in place for communicating with teachers/principals 1=Plan in place, but is not adequate for ensuring that all teachers/principals understand the measures of teacher/principal effectiveness included in the PBCS 2=Plan is in place which will ensure that teachers and principals understand the measures of teacher/principal effectiveness included in the PBCS	
Professional Development Linked to Measures of PBCS for teachers	**2**
0=No evidence that teachers received effective PD that allowed them to use data to improve practice 1=Limited number of teachers received PD to allow them to use data to improve practice 2=All teachers received PD to allow them to use data to improve practice	
Professional Development Linked to Measures of PBCS for principals	**2**
0=No evidence that principals received effective PD that allowed them to use data to improve practice 1=Limited number of principals received PD to allow them to use data to improve practice 2=All principals received PD to allow them to use data to improve practice	
PD Based on Needs Assessment and Targeted to Teachers' Needs or Needs of High-Needs Schools as Identified in Evaluation Process	**1.5**
0=No evidence that PD is targeted at specific needs of teachers; PD appears not aligned with documented needs or no needs documented 1=PD is somewhat aligned with documented needs of teachers/schools	

2=PD is entirely aligned with documented needs of teachers and schools	
PD Based on Needs Assessment and Targeted to Principals' Needs or Needs of High-Needs Schools as Identified in Evaluation Process	**2**
0=No evidence that PD is targeted at specific needs of principals; PD appears not aligned with documented needs or no needs documented 1=PD is somewhat aligned with documented needs of principals/schools 2=PD is entirely aligned with documented needs of principals and schools	
PD Provided Teachers with Necessary Tools and Skills	**2**
0=No evidence that teachers received PD that allowed them to improve or continue use of effective practices and assume new roles 1=Limited number of teachers received PD to improve or continue use of effective practices and assume new roles 2=All teachers received PD to allow them to improve or continue use of effective practices and assume new roles	
PD Provided Principals with Necessary Tools and Skills	**2**
0=No evidence that principals received PD that allowed them to improve or continue use of effective practices and assume new roles 1=Limited number of principals received PD to improve or continue use of effective practices and assume new roles 2=All principals received PD to allow them to improve or continue use of effective practices and assume new roles	
Process for Regularly Assessing the Effectiveness of the PD	**0**
0=No process in place for assessing the effectiveness of the PD 1=There is somewhat of a process in place, but appears to be insufficient or not able to assess the effectiveness of the PD 2=Suitable process in place to monitor effectiveness of PD and make modifications when needed	
Average Score Across All Variables in Domain	**1.69**

School Level Implementation

Data about school level implementation of the key program strategies for school year 2013-14 were collected through a variety of approaches, including an on-line survey and site visits to the 10 TIF schools. Most data were collected during in-person interviews with principals and master teachers, focus groups with teachers, and observations of PLC meetings completed during site visits to the 10 TIF schools in March and April 2014.   In May 2014, telephone interviews were completed with consultants from the IMPACT Education Group (IMPACT) who have worked closely with MDE on the TIF grant and have provided support to the TIF schools since the inception of the grant in 2010. Finally, in January 2014 the evaluation team attended a two-day PLC training provided by IMPACT for TIF schools to strengthen our understanding of the expectations for PLC implementation at the TIF schools.   Publicly available data on the participating schools and districts was accessed from the MDE website and from the U.S. Department of Education's Common Core of Data.

During January and February 2014, the project team conducted an on-line survey of teachers in the TIF schools primarily focused on implementation of PLCs and the M-STAR teacher evaluation system. .   A link to the survey was sent via email by MDE to 356 staff in all participating schools and 234 (66%) responded and completed the survey. Nineteen responses were excluded from the final data set because respondents were not teachers. In total, 215 responses were included in the analysis. Responses are anonymous, and as such, cannot be associated with specific schools. Descriptive statistics were used to examine and summarize the survey data.

These data sources were used to assess school level implementation based on a scoring rubric developed for the Year 2 evaluation for each of the four school-based strategies. Six domains are included in the rubric to encompass both the four school-based strategies and the state, district and school level support hypothesized to be associated with school-level implementation. These include:

- Domain 1: School Communication with MDE and with Teachers

- Domain 2: Support of District Administration

- Domain 3: Evaluation of Teachers and Principals

- Domain 4: Use of Professional Learning Communities

- Domain 5: Professional Development for Teachers and Principals

- Domain 6: Implementation of Master Teacher Role

As for the state-level scoring rubric, guiding research questions and indicators were developed for each domain and a three-point scale was used to assess project implementation:

- 2—Moderate to Full Implementation (Most or all components fully implemented)
- 1—Low to Moderate implementation (some, but not all components fully implemented)
- 0—No components implemented

As for the state scoring guide, the rubric does not assess quality or effectiveness of the components. It simply assesses the extent to which the desired elements of each component are present in each of the participating schools. Domain1 addresses the way in which the school administration communicated with teachers regarding the development and implementation of the PBCS and other aspects of the grant as well as their communication with MDE. Domain 2 assesses the extent to which district leaders may be either supporting or interfering with grant activities. Domain 3 focuses on the implementation of school-based aspects of the new evaluation system for teachers (M-STAR) and principals, including completion of walkthroughs and formative observations for teachers and the statewide assessment for principals (MPES) as well as EPIC training provided by IMPACT .

Domain 4 evaluates the extent to which each school has implemented the core components of professional learning communities and Domain 5 assesses the type of professional development and training offered by participating schools to teachers and principals. Domain 6 examines the extent to which the master teacher position on the career ladder is being implemented as desired by participating schools.

Interview data was used to assess each school's implementation status on each of the six domains and to surface themes regarding implementation of the various components of the TIF program. Tables A.6-A.12 below reflect our assessment of school-level implementation on each of the six domains for the 2013-14 school year.

Table A.6: Assessment of Implementation of Communication (Domain 1)

County/School Name	Calhoun County	Columbus Municipal		George County	Jackson Public		Jones County	Simpson County		Wayne County
	Bruce Upper	Cook Elem	Franklin Academy	Central Elem	Oak Forest	Van Winkle	North Jones	Mendenhall JHS	Magee Middle	Buckatunna
Communication with MDE	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
0=No communication with MDE 1=Limited communication with MDE 2=Regular and sufficient communication with MDE										
Content of Communication	1	2	1.5	1	1	1	2	1	2	2
0=No detail or minimal detail provided to teachers on reward system 1=Some detail provided to teachers on reward system but reward not an emphasis of communications about TIF 2=Teachers kept well informed on status of reward system										
Average Score Across All Variables in Domain	1	1.5	1.25	1	1	1	1.5	1	1.5	1.5

Table A.7: Assessment of Support of District Administration (Domain 2)

County/School Name	Calhoun County	Columbus Municipal		George County	Jackson Public		Jones County	Simpson County		Wayne County
	Bruce Upper	Cook Elem	Franklin Academy	Central Elem	Oak Forest	Van Winkle	North Jones	Mendenhall JHS	Magee Middle	Buckatunna
Support from district administration	2	1	1	1.5	1	1	1	2	2	2
0=No support from district administration OR interference from district with regard to TIF implementation 1=District generally supportive of TIF implementation 2=Positive Involvement from district administration (e.g., adopting some TIF components into the district)										

Table A.8: Assessment of Implementation of Teacher and Principal Evaluation Systems (Domain 3)

County/School Name	Calhoun County	Columbus Municipal		George County	Jackson Public		Jones County	Simpson County		Wayne County
	Bruce Upper	Cook Elem	Franklin Academy	Central Elem	Oak Forest	Van Winkle	North Jones	Mendenhall JHS	Magee Middle	Buckatunna
Walkthroughs completed as designed	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
0=Walkthroughs were not completed 1=No walkthroughs are being conducted 2=Ongoing walkthroughs being completed										
Formative observations completed	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
0=No observations completed 1=Observations completed, but not by principal 2=Observations completed by principal and/or other administrators										
Principal Evaluation	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
0=No principal evaluation completed 1=Principal evaluation completed but feedback not provided 2=Principal evaluation completed and feedback provided by supervisor										
Average Score Across All Variables in Domain	**2.00**	**2.00**	**2.00**	**2.00**	**2.00**	**2.00**	**2.00**	**2.00**	**2.00**	**2.00**

Table A.9: Implementation of Professional Learning Communities (Domain 4)

County/School Name	Calhoun County	Columbus Municipal		George County	Jackson Public		Jones County	Simpson County		Wayne County
	Bruce Upper	Cook Elem	Franklin Academy	Central Elem	Oak Forest	Van Winkle	North Jones	Mendenhall JHS	Magee Middle	Buckatunna
Implementation of PLC Components	**1.5**	**1.5**	**1.5**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**2**	**1.5**
0=No evidence of PLC implementation as designed 1=PLCs partially implemented as designed, using some but not all core components 2=PLCs implemented with most or all core components										

Table A.10: Implementation of Professional Development for Teachers (Domain 5a)

County/School Name	Calhoun County	Columbus Municipal		George County	Jackson Public		Jones County	Simpson County		Wayne County
	Bruce Upper	Cook Elem	Franklin Academy	Central Elem	Oak Forest	Van Winkle	North Jones	Mendenhall JHS	Magee Middle	Buckatunna
Professional Development Linked to MSTAR Measures Shared with Teachers	1.5	1	2	1.5	2	2	2	1	2	2
0=No evidence that teachers received data that allowed them to improve practice 1=Limited number of teachers received data to improve practice 2=All teachers received data to improve practice										
PD Based on Needs Assessment and Targeted to Teachers' Needs or Needs of High-Needs Schools Identified in Evaluation Process	1	1	2	1.5	2	1	2	1	2	2
0=No evidence that PD is targeted at specific needs of teachers; PD appears not aligned with documented needs or no needs documented 1=PD is somewhat aligned with documented needs of teachers/schools 2=PD is well-aligned with documented needs of teachers and schools										
Process for Regularly Assessing the Use of the PD	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5
0=No process in place for assessing the use of the PD 1=There is somewhat of a process in place, but it appears to be insufficient or not able to assess the use of the PD 2=Suitable process in place to monitor use of PD and make modifications when needed										
Average Score Across All Variables in Domain	**1.33**	**1.17**	**1.83**	**1.50**	**1.83**	**1.50**	**1.83**	**1.17**	**1.83**	**1.83**

Table A.11: Implementation of Professional Development for Principals (Domain 5b)

County/School Name	Calhoun County	Columbus Municipal		George County	Jackson Public		Jones County	Simpson County		Wayne County
	Bruce Upper	Cook Elem	Franklin Academy	Central Elem	Oak Forest	Van Winkle	North Jones	Mendenhall JHS	Magee Middle	Buckatunna
Professional Development Linked to Principal Evaluation Measures	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
0=No evidence that principals received data to improve practice 1=Some evidence that principal received data to improve practice 2=Sufficient evidence that principal received data to improve practice										
PD Based on Needs Assessment and Targeted to Principals' Needs or Needs of High-Needs Schools Identified in Evaluation Process	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
0=No evidence that PD is targeted at specific needs of Principals 1=PD is somewhat aligned with documented needs of principals/schools 2=PD is well aligned with documented needs of principals and schools										
Average Score Across All Variables in Domain	**2**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**2**

Table A.12: Implementation of Master Teacher Role

County/School Name	Calhoun County	Columbus Municipal		George County	Jackson Public		Jones County	Simpson County		Wayne County
	Bruce Upper	Cook Elem	Franklin Academy	Central Elem	Oak Forest	Van Winkle	North Jones	Mendenhall JHS	Magee Middle	Buckatunna
Implementation of Master Teacher Role	2	1.5	2	2	2	1	2	1	2	2
0=No evidence or limited implementation of duties and responsibilities for master teacher position 1= Implementation of some duties and responsibilities for master teacher position 2=Implementation of most duties and responsibilities for master teacher position										
Average Score Across All Domains	**1.62**	**1.52**	**1.80**	**1.58**	**1.55**	**1.36**	**1.62**	**1.45**	**1.90**	**1.83**

Appendix Table B.1: TIF School and District Characteristics

	Total Enrollment (2013 – 14)	Grades Served	% Free/ Reduced Price Lunch	SY 2009-10 QDI[#]	SY 2010-11 QDI[#]	SY 2011-12 QDI[#]	SY 2012-13 QDI	SY 2012-13 Accountability Status
Mississippi Statewide Average	**492,586**		**71.4%**	**150**	**154**	**160**	**168**	
Calhoun County Schools	**2,582**		**80.5%**	**151**	**155**	**160**	**172**	**B**
Bruce Upper Elementary	208	4-6	81.3%	137	140	142	161	C
George County Schools	**4,126**		**71.3%**	**156**	**158**	**166**	**179**	**B**
Central Elementary	499	K-6	78.4%	145	148	153	159	C
Jackson Public Schools	**29,481**		**89.3%**	**136**	**136**	**141**	**141**	**D**
Oak Forest Elementary*	485	K-5	94.1%	139	127	125	121	F
Van Winkle Elementary	470	K-5	86.2%	136	138	148	149	C
Jones County Schools	**8,562**		**67.6%**	**154**	**158**	**163**	**175**	**B**
North Jones Elementary	820	K-6	78.3%	152	156	159	173	B
Columbus County Schools	**4,516**		**85.7%**	**135**	**141**	**146**	**141**	**D**
Cook Elementary*	750	PK-5	81.6%	149	136	152	145	D
Franklin Academy	430	PK-5	93.0%	135	138	157	158	C
Simpson County Schools	**4,132**		**82.2%**	**133**	**137**	**146**	**148**	**D**
Magee Middle*	571	5-8	84.7%	126	133	140	142	D
Mendenhall Jr High	455	5-8	85.0%	132	131	138	147	C
Wayne County Schools	**3,453**		**83.0%**	**148**	**151**	**140**	**151**	**C**
Buckatunna Elementary	439	K-8	90.5%	139	153	142	156	C

*School did not meet growth for 2012-13 school year

Sources: Free/Reduced Price Lunch Data are taken from the U.S. Department of Education's NCES Common Core of Data School District Universe Survey and Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey, 2011-12 v.1a.

[#]The formula for calculating QDI is from "Understanding the Mississippi Statewide Accountability System" from the Office of Research and Statistics, 2009 Edition, February 1, 2010. Numbers vary slightly from what is published on the school report cards due to our inability to forward-map and back-map student level data.