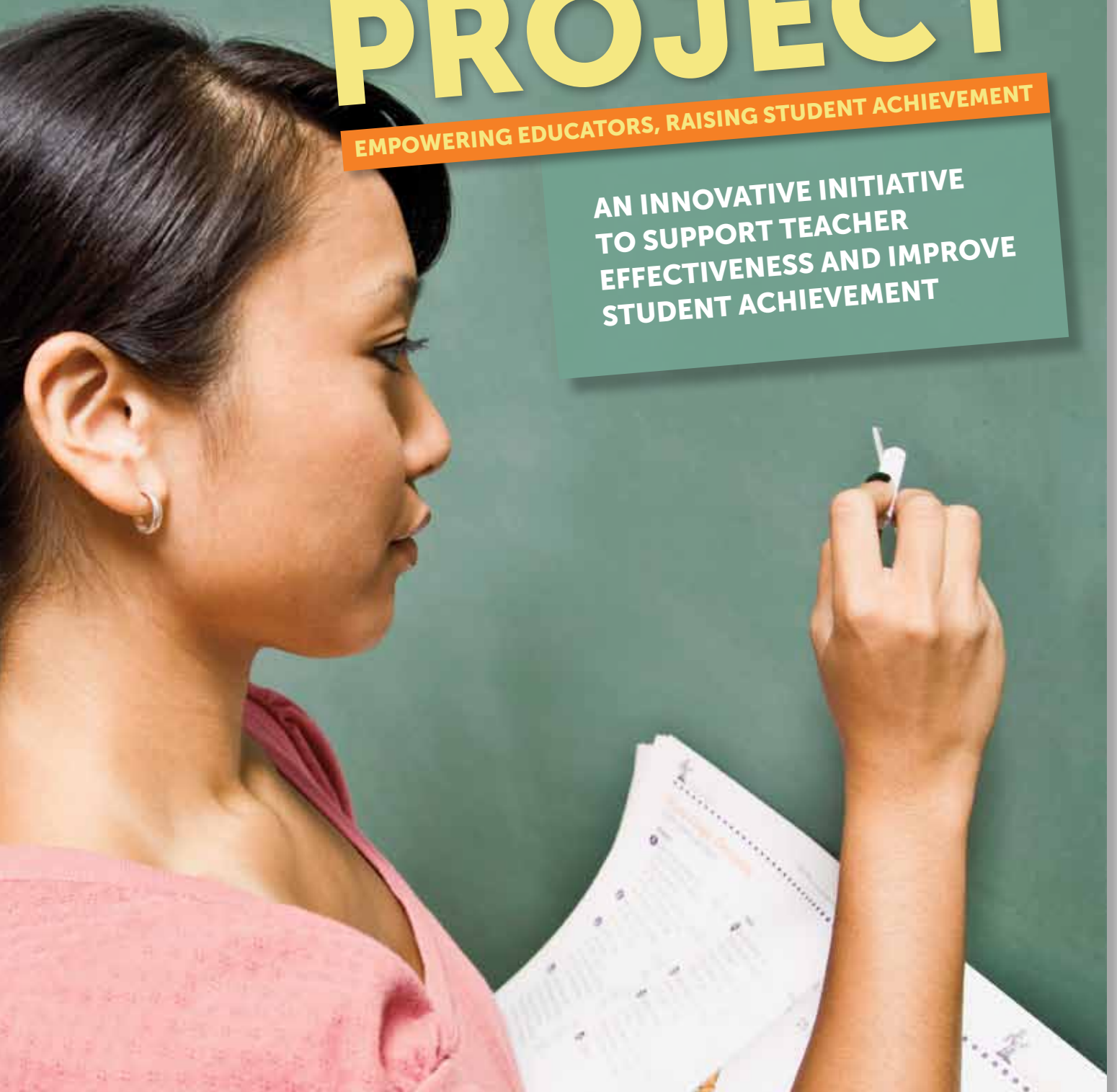


CHALKBOARD PROJECT™

CLASS PROJECT™

EMPOWERING EDUCATORS, RAISING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

AN INNOVATIVE INITIATIVE
TO SUPPORT TEACHER
EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPROVE
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT





AN EFFECTIVE TEACHER HAS THE SINGLE GREATEST INFLUENCE ON HOW WELL A STUDENT LEARNS.

- No other intervention can make the difference that a knowledgeable, skillful teacher can make in the learning process.

—LINDA DARLING-HAMMOND (NATIONAL COMMISSION ON TEACHING AND AMERICA'S FUTURE)¹

- Four consecutive years with a teacher from the top 25% of the teaching pool can erase the black-white testing gap.

—ROBERT GORDON, THOMAS J. KANE AND DOUGLAS O. STAIGER (THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION)²

- High-quality teachers cause a “spillover effect” on an entire school: “Student achievement rises across a grade when a high-quality teacher comes on board.”

—C. KIRABO JACKSON AND ELIAS BRUEGMANN (NATIONAL BUREAU OF ECONOMIC RESEARCH)³



About the Chalkboard Project™

The Chalkboard Project designed and funds the CLASS™ Project. A non-partisan, non-profit organization, Chalkboard is working to propel Oregon's public education system into the top 10 nationally.

Chalkboard plays a unique leadership role by:

- Giving voice to Oregonians' values and beliefs about schools and soliciting their ideas for improvement;

- Designing and implementing pilot programs to test promising practices; and
- Providing thought leadership and a neutral, independent voice to citizens, educational stakeholders and decision makers around educational practices and policies.

Founded in 2004, Chalkboard is the first initiative of Foundations for a Better Oregon, a collaboration of six of Oregon's leading grantmaking foundations.

Creative Leadership Achieves Student Success

Getting serious about improving public education means making a strong commitment to ensuring every student has an effective teacher.

Time and again, research shows that teachers are the single most important factor in determining whether and how well students learn. In fact, a teacher's influence on student achievement is a full 20 times greater than the effect of any other variable, including class size and student poverty.⁴

Maximizing teacher effectiveness has become an increasingly important nationwide education priority—fueled not just by growing awareness of the compelling research, but also by a new federal emphasis on the issue. In response, states and school districts across the nation are beginning to focus like never before on bolder solutions for ensuring they are recruiting, retaining, supporting and promoting top talent in every classroom.

Still, despite the promise of this new focus on teacher effectiveness, there are actually few places that have successfully implemented comprehensive programs and policies. Too many efforts are polarizing and piecemeal, and too many have stalled due to political wrangling or poor planning and implementation.

We want to demonstrate—for educators, for union leaders and for policymakers—what's possible and how efforts to improve teacher effectiveness can boost both student achievement and the teaching profession. Today's challenge is to move beyond policy abstractions and pronouncements to innovations that are grounded in the real work that happens in classrooms and connected explicitly to improving student learning.

Oregon's CLASS (Creative Leadership Achieves Student Success™) Project is one of the few initiatives in the country helping school districts implement new and comprehensive models for improving teacher effectiveness.

CLASS provides both a framework for enhancing teacher effectiveness and seed funding to create **innovative approaches for recruiting, retaining, mentoring, developing, evaluating and compensating educators that are linked to raising student achievement.** And it showcases the success that can result when key stakeholders come together genuinely to tackle these challenging issues.

Begun in 2006 by the Chalkboard Project—a unique non-profit organization that aims to improve public education in Oregon—CLASS currently works with 12 innovative Oregon school districts (three that are implementing and nine more in planning stages). **The Oregon CLASS school districts are beginning to show remarkable results.**

U.S. SECRETARY OF EDUCATION:

Arne Duncan

"Our challenge is to make sure every child in America is learning from an effective teacher—no matter what it takes...Our teacher evaluation systems (are deeply flawed), and the losers are not just the children. When great teachers are unrecognized and unrewarded, when struggling teachers are unsupported, and when failing teachers are unaddressed the teaching profession is damaged."

Here's how.

Breaking the Mold

A NEW MODEL FOR INCREASING TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS



At the core of CLASS™ are four bold design components that aim to recruit and retain the very best teachers and support all teachers in becoming their best.

- 1. Expand career paths** to support highly effective teachers in taking on new leadership roles and responsibilities, such as mentoring and instructional coaching.
- 2. Develop effective performance evaluations** by setting clear goals for enhancing professional practice and increasing student achievement. Student learning gains included in performance evaluations are based on multiple measures and are used to advance the quality of teaching and learning.
- 3. Provide targeted and relevant professional development** to give teachers the resources and support that can help them improve their teaching practices and become more skilled and effective by incorporating such strategies as mentoring and professional learning communities.
- 4. Implement new compensation models** in order to create alternatives to seniority-based pay, reduce attrition and reward effective teachers. Compensation

models include incentive grants and career-based pay tied to new roles, responsibilities and increasingly to improving student achievement.

The CLASS Project's overarching principle is that it is an integrated framework for increasing teacher effectiveness that provides teachers with the support, information and motivation to do their best work. School systems need to ensure that teacher career paths, performance evaluations, professional development resources and compensation models work together to maximize the skills, knowledge and disposition of each and every teacher.

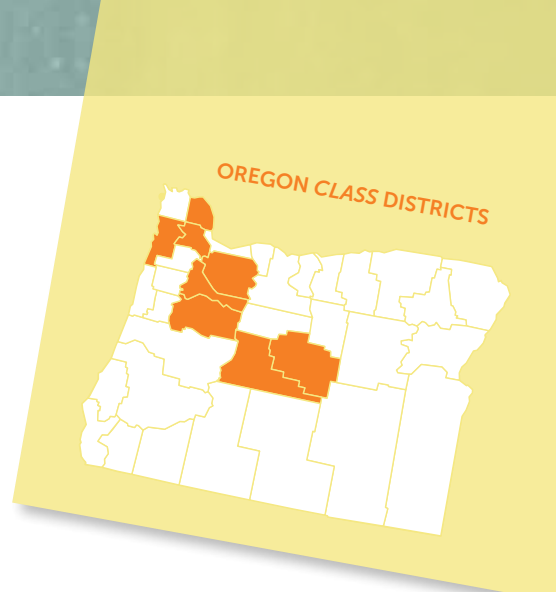
CLASS's success starts with a high bar for districts that want to participate: they must commit to bringing together key representatives to develop their plans, including the superintendent and leaders from the teacher's union and local board of education. Indeed, each of these key stakeholders must sign the CLASS application and agree to a joint planning process in order for the district's application to be considered.

Just as important, these leaders also commit to re-aligning career paths, performance evaluations, professional development activities and compensation plans in their districts toward the goal of raising student achievement.



Designing CLASS

MATCHING A FRAMEWORK FOR RESULTS WITH LOCAL INGENUITY



CLASS began with planning efforts during the 2007-08 school year in three very different school districts: Sherwood, Forest Grove, and Tillamook.

Today, these three districts are in their second year of implementation, and an additional nine districts are currently designing CLASS programs.

In all, approximately 16% or almost one out of every six Oregon students (92,325 students) and 18% of Oregon teachers (5,221 teachers) participate in districts that are engaged in the CLASS Project.

Districts selected to participate in CLASS start by engaging in a one-year planning process, followed by a three-year implementation process to test and refine their plans.

The Chalkboard Project provides significant technical assistance and a grant (\$30,000 on average) to defray district expenses during the planning process, and it offers districts an average of \$100 per student during the implementa-

tion phase to cover the costs of new compensation plans, performance evaluations, leadership role development and professional development. Districts provide matching funds and are expected to assume the full costs of CLASS initiatives after the third year.

CLASS provides a framework, not directives. While CLASS provides research and best practices to draw upon in redesigning teacher development systems, each CLASS district tailors its plans to meet the unique goals and needs of its staff, students and community. **Districts create CLASS designs that support their strategic plans and school improvement goals.**

For example, plans to support teacher effectiveness in the small coastal town of Tillamook do not look the same as those in the fastest-growing district in the state, Sherwood. While Tillamook is focused on solutions for keeping talented new teachers in the district, Sherwood is focused on maintaining high-quality teachers in a growing workforce. Both plans aim to improve teacher effectiveness, but they reflect the local needs.

The CLASS Project's powerful combination of a clear framework and district-specific plans tailored to meet student achievement goals enables the crucial grassroots buy-in—among educators and union leaders in particular—that has proven elusive elsewhere. As a result, in each district, **CLASS is becoming the key vehicle for rethinking how professional development is offered, how new teachers are coached and mentored, how master teachers are identified and deployed, and how all teachers are evaluated and compensated.**

TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL,
SHERWOOD SCHOOL DISTRICT:

Eric Beasley

"Creating and implementing a fair and comprehensive performance evaluation system is an essential component to our district's continuous improvement."

Teacher Development System

	What needs to improve in schools?	What does CLASS ask districts to do?	How have CLASS districts tackled this element?
PREPARING AND HIRING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen link to teacher preparation programs Create career paths for the most effective teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop partnerships with teacher preparation programs Provide new-teacher mentoring plus training for mentor teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Districts have created relationships with teacher preparation programs to ensure that all teachers are prepared for work in the classroom. In their first three years of teaching, all new teachers in the CLASS districts receive ongoing guidance from mentor teachers, who in turn are trained by research-based teacher development programs.
EVALUATING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate performance Differentiate quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct performance evaluations that consider student learning results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educator evaluations incorporate standards-based rubrics of professional practice, teaching effectiveness, and multiple measures of student achievement.
DEVELOPING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide targeted, research-based professional development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-design teacher professional development to make it more collaborative and relevant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Districts offer ongoing, research-based, job-embedded professional development. Professional development activities are embedded into the teaching day or week (for example, early release or late start days and professional learning communities), rather than a disconnected add-on.
RETAINING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create career paths for the most effective teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify highly effective teachers and expanded career paths 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Districts adopted explicit definitions and ways of recognizing professional career achievement (for example: Novice, Emerging Professional, Accomplished Professional, Master Teacher) or specialized roles (for example: Mentor Teacher).
REWARDING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement new compensation models 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop incentive grants and progression pay designed to reduce attrition and reward teachers for quality work and new responsibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Career-based pay and salary adders: Salary increases are associated directly with career advancement and salary adders are offered for additional responsibilities (such as serving as a mentor). Alternative salary schedules: Alternatives to the traditional compensation paths (20 to 30 steps, nine to 12 lanes) get teachers to career high pay faster, and are weighted towards rewarding achievement. Performance-based awards (school or team level): Additional pay (incentives) are granted to teachers (and sometimes administrators and classified employees, too) whose students meet or exceed agreed-upon learning improvement goals tied to federal accountability rules or school improvement goals.

No one intervention creates “an effective teacher.”

A 21st century talent development system pays relentless attention to every element of the teacher pipeline—including preparing, hiring, supporting, evaluating, developing, retaining and rewarding. The Chalkboard Project believes school districts need to ensure these elements are aligned.

The CLASS™ Project provides districts with the support to address these essential elements of the teacher pipeline. The latter elements in particular—**evaluating, developing, retaining and rewarding**—can be contentious and, oftentimes, difficult to implement; these are the elements most in need of new approaches—and also are those that CLASS addresses most vigorously.

What Matters Most

EFFECTIVE TEACHERS IMPROVE STUDENT LEARNING

Better schools and higher student achievement depend on how well every teacher is improving student learning.

“The quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers,” concluded a 2007 study performed by McKinsey & Co. that analyzed the world’s best-performing school systems.⁵

If we want better schools—and higher student achievement—we need to more deliberately pay attention to how well every teacher is improving student learning and what we can do differently to support effective teaching. And for those who aren’t effective and are struggling to get better, we need faster ways of finding out that information and acting on it.

What’s different about the new national focus on “teacher effectiveness” is the interest in measuring outcomes—are students actually learning more because of their teacher?—more than inputs such as what degree a teacher has earned or how long a teacher has taught. That’s a radical change in emphasis, and it’s why CLASS has so few peers across the country.

In partnership with the principal, every teacher in a CLASS district develops a specific, measurable goal for how he or she is going to increase student learning—and how well these goals are met becomes part of evaluating teaching effectiveness, identifying both struggling and successful teachers, and targeting support and professional development.

Consider these examples from actual teacher professional growth plans in CLASS districts:

- *By May, among my 88 students, the 24 students who nearly meet the eighth-grade writing benchmark will meet it, and the 17 who do not will improve by at least one level.*
- *My three fifth-grade students with special education plans will improve their achievement between pre- and post-test for each unit, scoring at least 80% on the post tests.*
- *By May, 89% of my students will meet the third-grade benchmark in writing.*

DIRECTOR, TILLAMOOK FOUNDATION:
Ed Armstrong

“The CLASS Project in Tillamook is so in line with the needs of the community that even local businesses are asking how they can help support this work. Our community wants to invest in the expertise of our teachers and our teachers want to invest in the future of the community.”

Targets Met

IMPROVING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN TILLAMOOK, SHERWOOD, AND FOREST GROVE SCHOOL DISTRICTS

The CLASS Project is improving teacher effectiveness by encouraging teachers to set high, but attainable, goals for student achievement and supporting them to meet those goals. Here are examples of results in the project's first three implementation school districts:

- **In Tillamook**, a team of third-grade teachers determined to increase—from 14% to 70% by the end of the year—the percentage of third-grade English-learning students who could read at benchmark level in English, as measured by the DIBELS test. The team adopted strategies that included working together to communicate about students' progress and needs and using new curriculum and technology targeted to student needs (such as SMART boards and computers) to enhance instruction. By June, 71% of the students were reading English at the benchmark level for all third-graders.
- **In Sherwood**, a team of freshman teachers, high school administrators, teachers involved in summer programs, and counselors, set a goal to cut the percentage of freshman failing one or more classes in half by the end of the year. The team implemented new ways of encouraging freshman success including: having teachers refer to the middle school planner system, conducting parent trainings on how to encourage success, linking the freshman teachers together, and arranging for extra management support when students were struggling. By June, Sherwood had seen the percentage of freshman failing one or more classes drop from 14% to 7%.
- **In Forest Grove**, first-grade teachers and support staff at Cornelius Elementary School aimed to increase first graders' proficiency on a reading assessment that measures the ability to make connections and discuss prior knowledge of topics in informational texts—from 26% testing at proficiency or higher at the beginning of the school year to a goal of 87% at the end of the year. To achieve this goal, teachers developed a strategy that included using learning logs, observation charts and other specific teaching tools and methods. The result: teachers actually exceeded their goal, with a full 92% of students meeting or exceeding proficiency.



Charting Progress

THE CLASS PROJECT'S PROMISING EARLY RESULTS

Although still a young initiative, results from CLASS's first cohort of three districts are encouraging.

The Chalkboard Project™ is closely tracking the CLASS™ districts and has commissioned a rigorous evaluation to determine the impact of CLASS models on student learning and teacher effectiveness.

Early student achievement results suggest participating CLASS districts are moving in the right direction. In most of the grade levels initially targeted by districts for CLASS innovations, there is promising, continuing momentum in improved student achievement—including spikes in both state test scores and results of local diagnostic assessments.

In addition to promising student achievement results, CLASS districts have shown additional evidence of success, including:

- **Improved teacher retention;**
- **Changes in teacher attitudes and beliefs and increased opportunity for leadership and collaboration; and**
- **The emergence of new, progressive teacher and union leaders passionate for reform.**

School improvement experiences across the country show that implementation challenges can cripple reform—and thus need to be addressed early if such programs are to really take hold. The promising results in Oregon CLASS districts suggest that, while change is difficult,

it is achievable with meaningful partnerships and careful attention to the difficult issues that can divide teachers and administrators. CLASS is catalyzing this change in participating districts because it:

- **Makes measureable improvements in student achievement the cornerstone of district efforts;**
- **Empowers local districts to meet their unique challenges;**
- **Emphasizes the development of expanded career paths for teachers so they see a clear professional benefit and are recognized for their skills; and**
- **Requires and carefully fosters union and district leadership collaboration from the beginning and throughout.**

Just as significantly, by paying attention to implementation details, CLASS is catalyzing a movement in Oregon that—teacher by teacher, school by school, and district by district—is actually doing the tough work of transforming a culture and a profession in the service of schoolchildren.

Through CLASS, the Chalkboard Project is building a track record of success—and aims to reach a tipping point by engaging up to one-third of all Oregon students by 2013.

1st Grade Teacher, Tillamook School District

Melissa Rose



"This year is my third year as a teacher and South Prairie is the third school at which I have worked. I have never felt, even marginally, the level of support and desire for collaboration that I have felt here in Tillamook.

Being able to discuss and share ideas with my team has made me more aware of my own teaching, and given me ideas on how I can improve it as well.

I feel that having CLASS in Tillamook has made the biggest impact on the district through the creation and use of data teams and the new evaluation process.

The information that is gathered and analyzed through the data teams is such a powerful tool to use in the classroom. Through the use of pre-testing, I know what my students know already and what they need to learn. As a result, I can tailor my instruction to them, making our class time more effective. I use the post-test to ensure that they have made gains and I can re-teach areas with which students are struggling.

I've found the evaluation process here in Tillamook more meaningful than in other schools at which I have worked. It allows for both teacher and principal to reflect on the teacher's strengths and weaknesses, which I find important and useful. The criteria are clearly defined and I never felt that any section was particularly subjective. This makes the evaluation even more valuable since I can clearly see why I am scored the way I am. I can look at my scores this year and formulate goals for next year that will help me continually grow as a teacher."

Conclusion

Ensuring students—especially those from the neediest backgrounds—have the best possible teacher in their classroom is a pressing issue in every state and school district in the nation.

CLASS™ is forging a trail for how school districts can engage school leaders, teachers and other stakeholders to plan and implement real reforms, and it is creating innovative models for evaluating, retaining, supporting and rewarding teachers to help them grow the strongest possible teaching force.

CLASS is helping to change skeptical attitudes and proving there are new methods for maximizing teacher effectiveness that educators, administrators, local communities and reformers can all support. As CLASS districts grow, refine their innovations and show sustained success, the Chalkboard Project™ expects these models will galvanize other districts toward reform.

Additional Resources

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Killion, Joellen and Patricia Roy. *Becoming a Learning School*. (National Staff Development Council, 2009).

Moore Johnson, Susan and John P. Papay. *Redesigning Teacher Pay: A System for the Next Generation of Educators*. (Economic Policy Institute, 2009).

Footnotes

¹Linda Darling-Hammond. *Doing What Matters Most: Investing in Quality Teaching*. (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1997). See www.nctaf.org/resources/research_and_reports/nctaf_research_reports/rr_97_what-matters-most.htm.

²Robert Gordon, Thomas J. Kane and Douglas O. Staiger. "Identifying Effective Teachers Using Performance on the Job." *Hamilton Project Discussion Paper* (The Brookings Institution, 2006). See www.brookings.edu/papers/2006/04education_gordon.aspx.

³C. Kirabo Jackson and Elias Bruegmann. "Teaching Students and Teaching Each Other: The Importance of Peer Learning for Teachers." *NBER Working Paper No. 15202*. (National Bureau of Economic Research, August 2009). See www.nber.org/papers/w15202.pdf.

⁴Daniel Fallon. *Case Study of a Paradigm Shift: The Value of Focusing on Instruction*. (Education Research Summit, December 4, 2003). See www.nctaf.org/resources/events/2004_summit-1/documents/Fallon_Case_Study.doc.

⁵Michael Barber and Mona Mourshed. *How the World's Best-Performing School Systems Come Out on Top*. (McKinsey & Co., September 2007). See www.mckinsey.com/client-service/Social_Sector/our_practices/Education/Knowledge_Highlights/Best_performing_school.aspx.



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