

# **PREPARING PASCO COUNTY SCHOOL STUDENTS FOR COLLEGE, CAREER, & LIFE**

*Comprehensive Diagnostic Findings*

April 7, 2015  
FINAL REPORT

---

**Even one year with a highly effective teacher has a lifelong impact on students.**

## Great teaching changes lives.



Students with even one top teacher...

are less likely to have children as teenagers...

and are more likely to attend college...

earn a higher salary...

and save more for retirement.

**TNTP helps public schools, districts and states advance great teaching in four key areas, so teachers thrive and students excel.**

# OUR GOAL

Great teaching for every student

## FOUR PRIORITIES FOR THE TEACHING PROFESSION



### SUPPLY strong new teachers

Train and hire only new teachers who are consistently effective.



### GROW all teachers

Provide feedback and support that helps all teachers improve.



### KEEP top teachers

Ensure successful teachers stay and unsuccessful teachers leave.

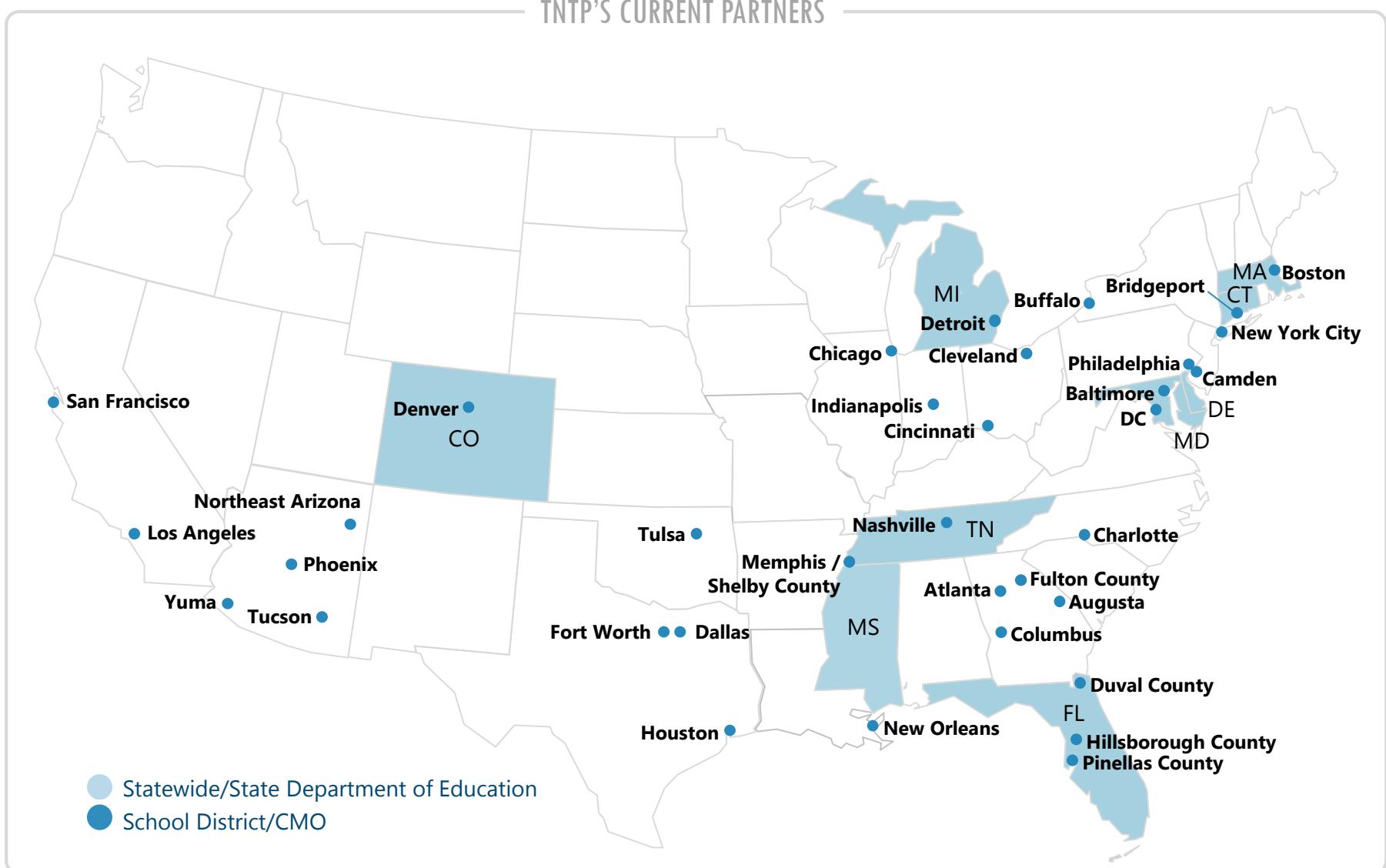


### REACH disadvantaged students

Prioritize great teaching for high-poverty students.

# TNTP currently operates in nearly three dozen cities, including many of the nation's largest.

## TNTP'S CURRENT PARTNERS



**Our diagnostic goal in Pasco County was to discover to what extent current practices at the classroom, school and district levels support or hinder efforts to ensure Florida Standards-aligned instruction for all students.**

## Core Research Questions

### Standards Based Instruction

To what extent is standards-aligned instruction taking place in Pasco schools? In particular, is middle school Math and ELA instruction rigorous enough to prepare students for high school coursework, college and career?

### Professional Learning Systems

How well is the district's professional development programming, especially professional learning communities, preparing educators to increase the rigor of instruction?

### Professional Growth Systems

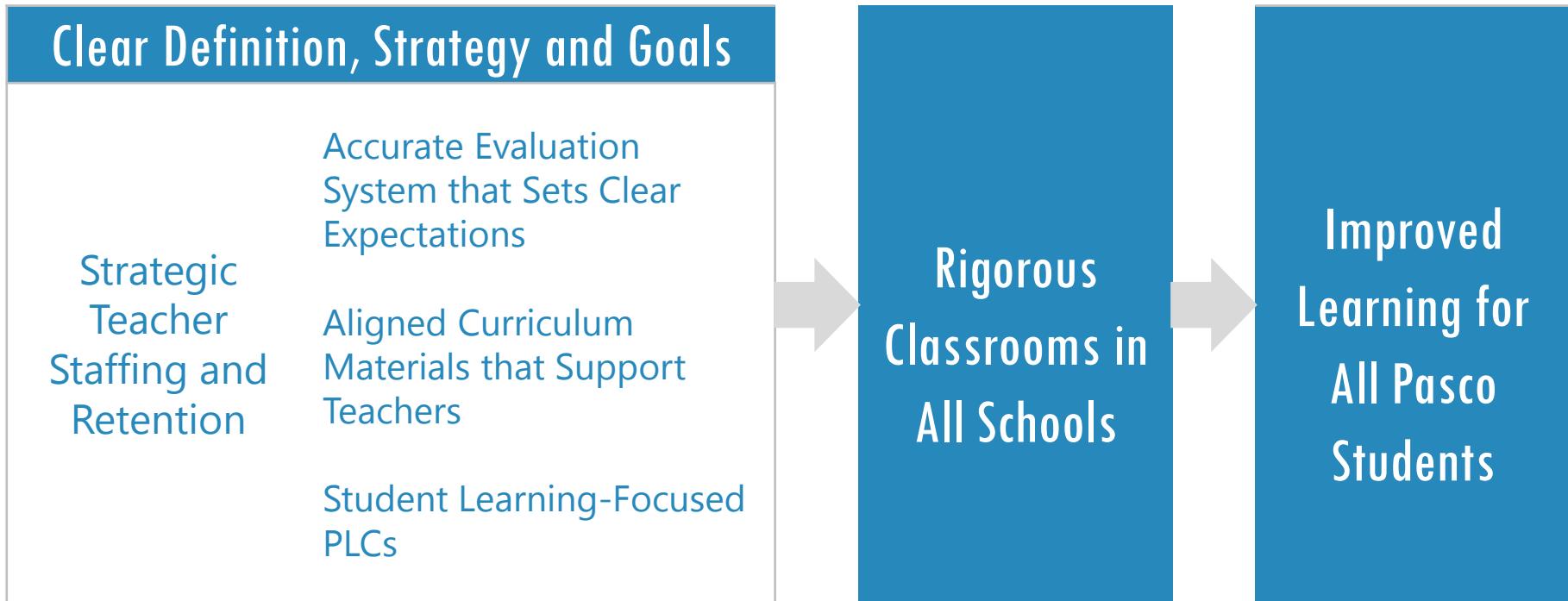
How effective are principals at growing and developing their teachers and building strong instructional cultures – and do they have support to reach that goal?

---

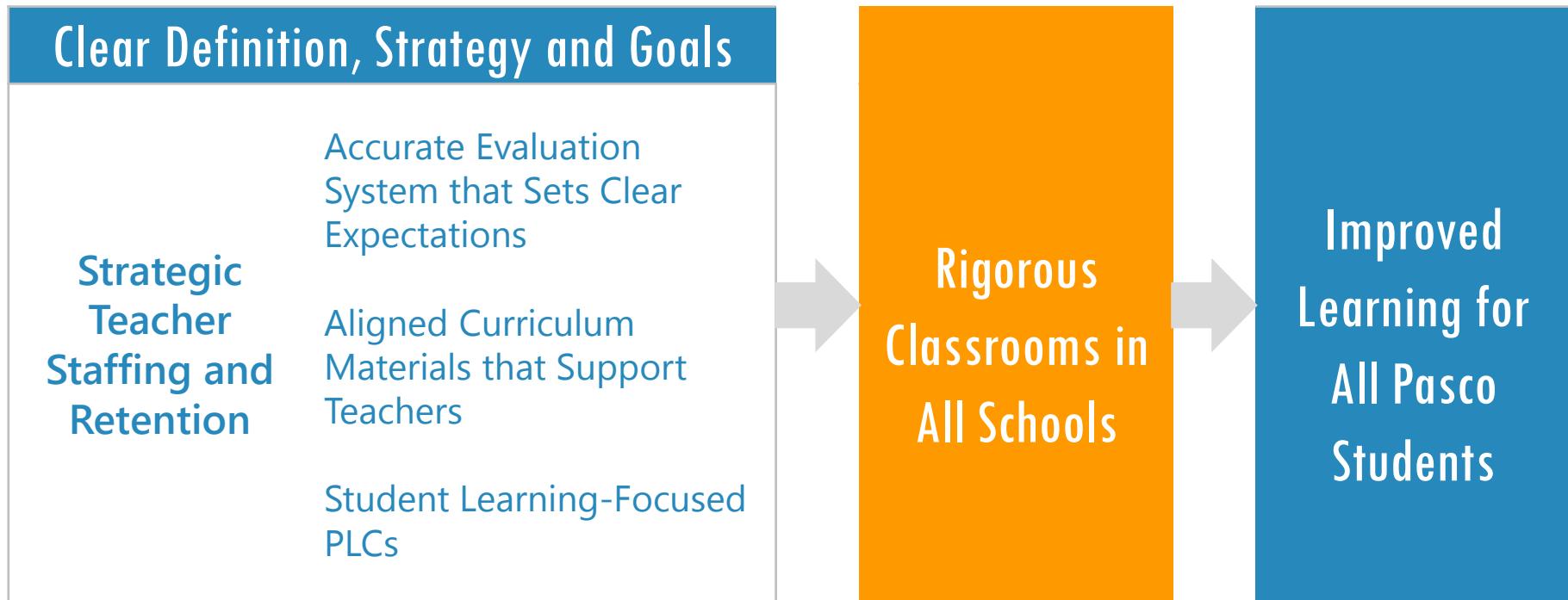
**The diagnostic relied on a comprehensive quantitative and qualitative assessment of Pasco's people, practices, and policies.**

- ✓ **Interviewed** nearly 150 district leaders, principals, and teachers
- ✓ **Surveyed** 3300 teachers, 170 school leaders, and 130 coaches
- ✓ **Observed lessons** in 100 classrooms across nearly every grade levels and subject areas and analyzed **450 samples of student work**.
- ✓ **Observed 25 PLCs** across several grade levels and subject areas
- ✓ Reviewed ELA **curricular resources** in grades 3, 6, and 10 and Math curricular resources in grades 3 and 6
- ✓ Analyzed **3 years of teacher performance data**, including student growth and observation ratings
- ✓ Reviewed available **talent data**, including hiring, attendance, and compensation
- ✓ Reviewed thousands of pages of **training and policy documents**.

**This research surfaced a theory of action that Pasco might pursue to ensure sustained improvement in learning for all Pasco students.**



## Finding 1: Most Pasco students have few opportunities to tackle rigorous academic content in the classroom.



---

## **The Florida standards require important changes to teacher practice – and the ways districts and schools support teachers.**

### **In *literacy*, teachers making the shift to the new standards:**

- Focus each lesson on a high-quality text and, in K-2, provide all students with the opportunity to master foundational skills.
- Employ questions and tasks, both oral and written, that are text specific and reflect the standards.
- Provide all students with opportunities to engage in the work of the lesson.

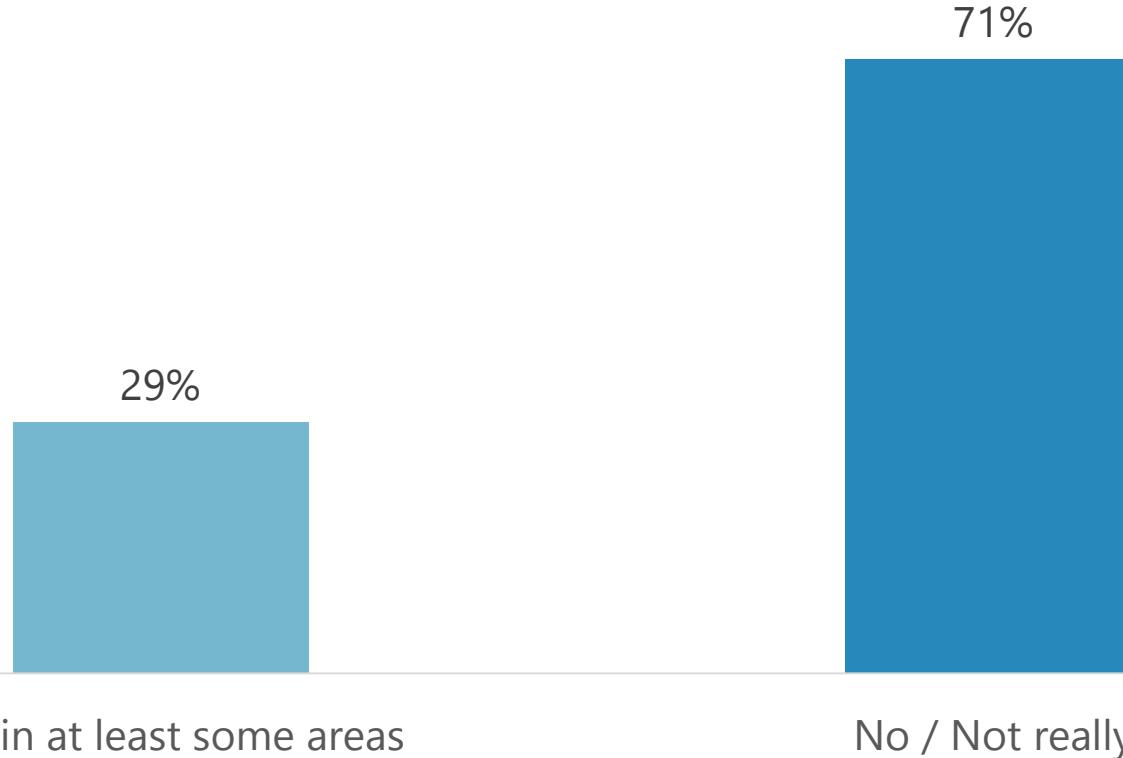
### **In *mathematics*, teachers making the shift to the new standards:**

- Ensure the work of the lesson reflects the focus, coherence and rigor targeted by the standards.
- Employ instructional practices that allow all students to master the content of the lesson.
- Provide all students with opportunities to exhibit mathematical practices in connection with the content of the lesson.

---

**Observations found that not enough teachers in Pasco are changing their instructional practice to meet the demands of the new standards.**

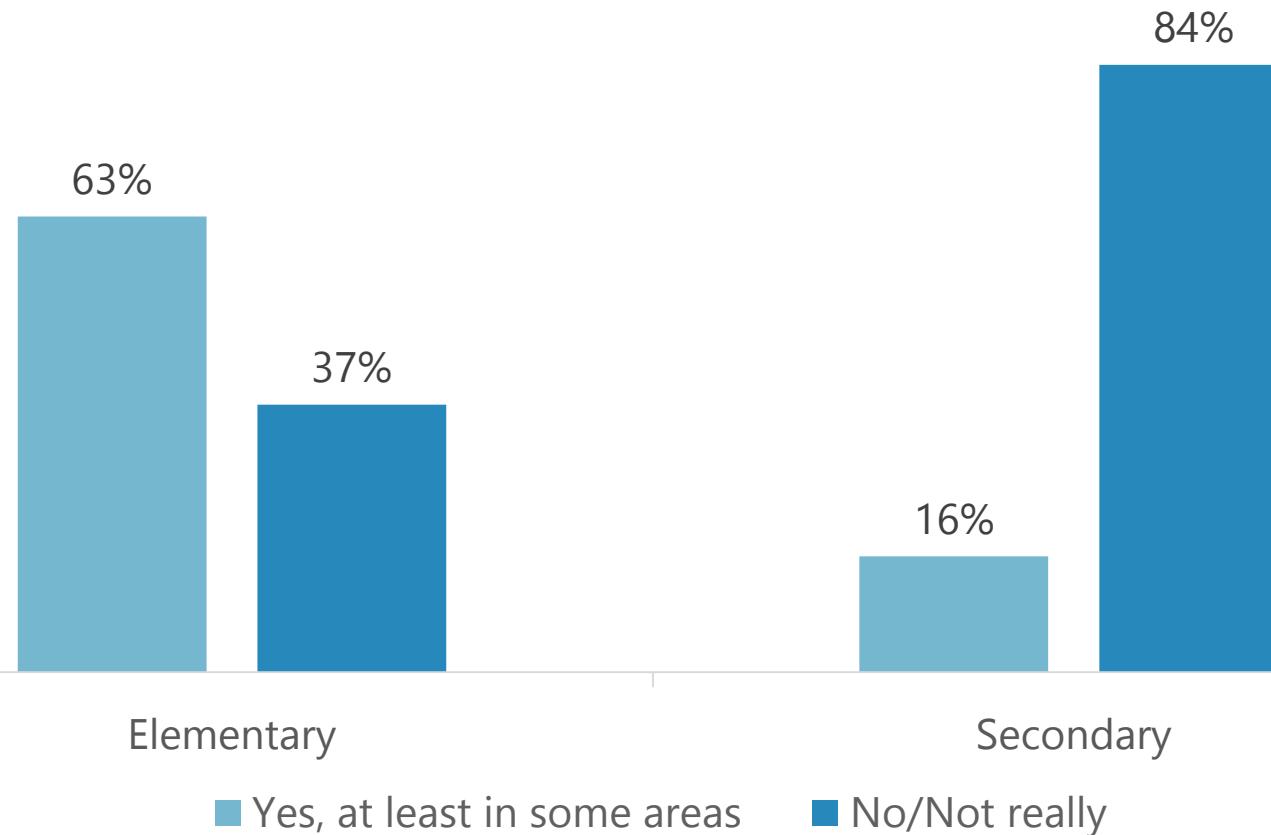
**Overall, did this lesson indicate that the teacher is making the instructional shifts required by the standards?**



*n* = 100 observed lessons

**Pasco's elementary teachers are making more progress shifting their instruction, reflecting significant investments made in these grade levels.**

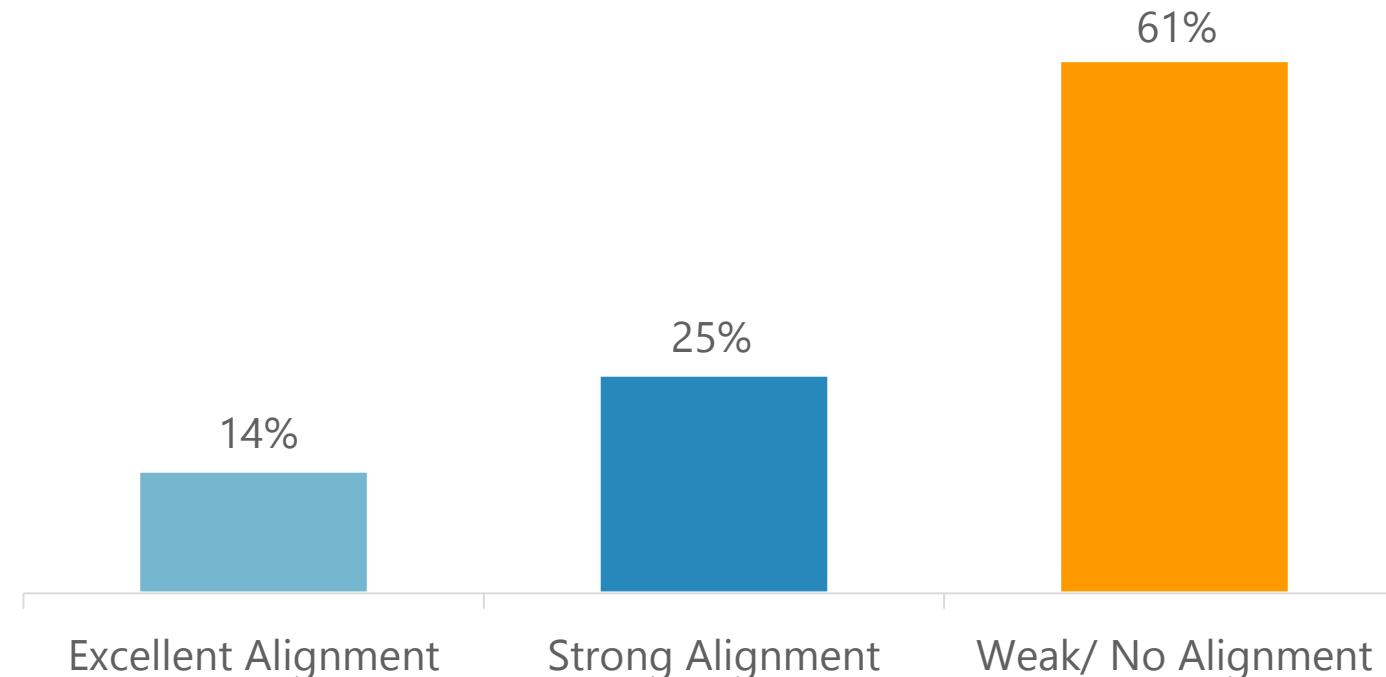
**Overall, did this lesson indicate that the teacher is making the instructional shifts required by the standards?**



*n* = 100 observed lessons; 27 K-5 and 73 6-12

**Pasco students are not receiving enough opportunities to demonstrate achievement of the standards. Over half of observed classrooms did not ask students to engage in standards-aligned work.**

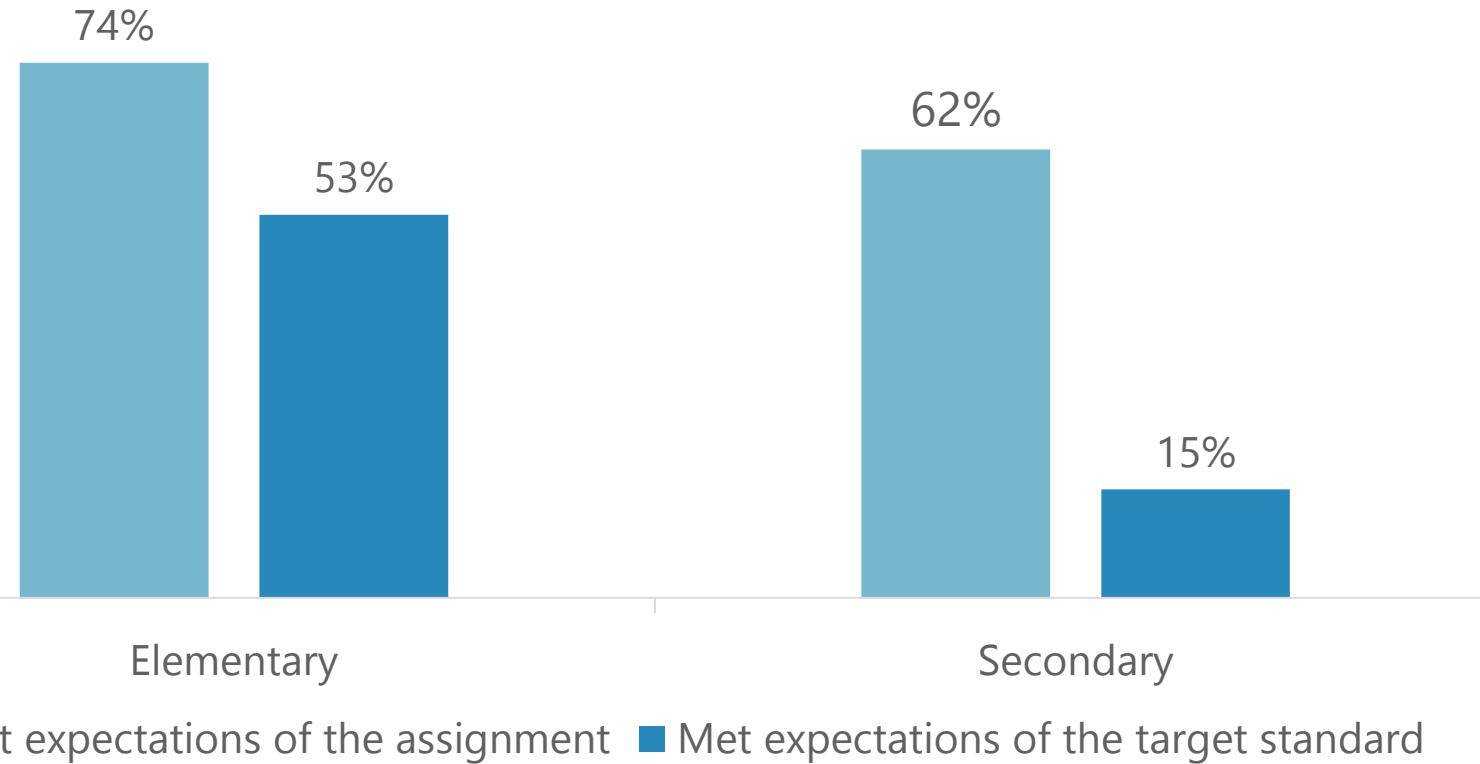
**How well aligned are the content and performance demands of this assignment with the demands of the targeted standards?**



*n* = 100 examined assignments

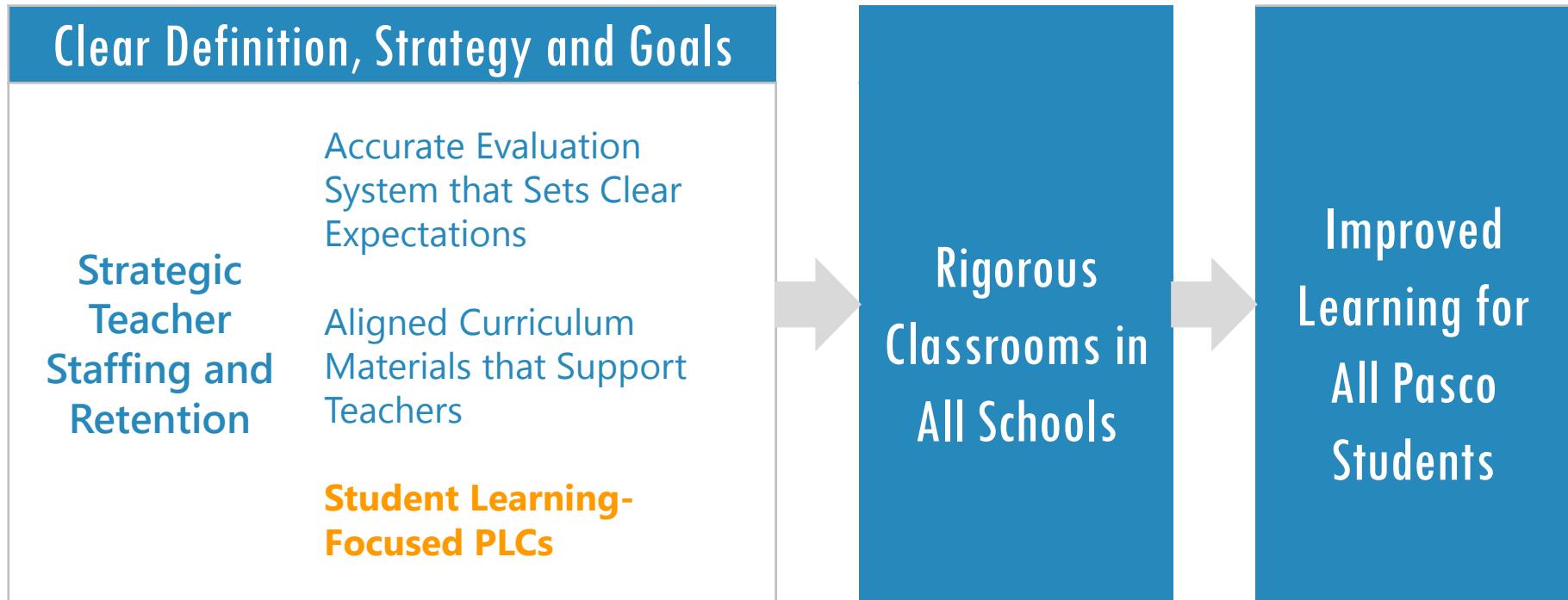
**Most Pasco students are meeting the expectations of their assignments. However, significantly more elementary students than secondary students are meeting the expectations of the standards.**

**To what degree did students meet the expectations of the assignment and the standard?**



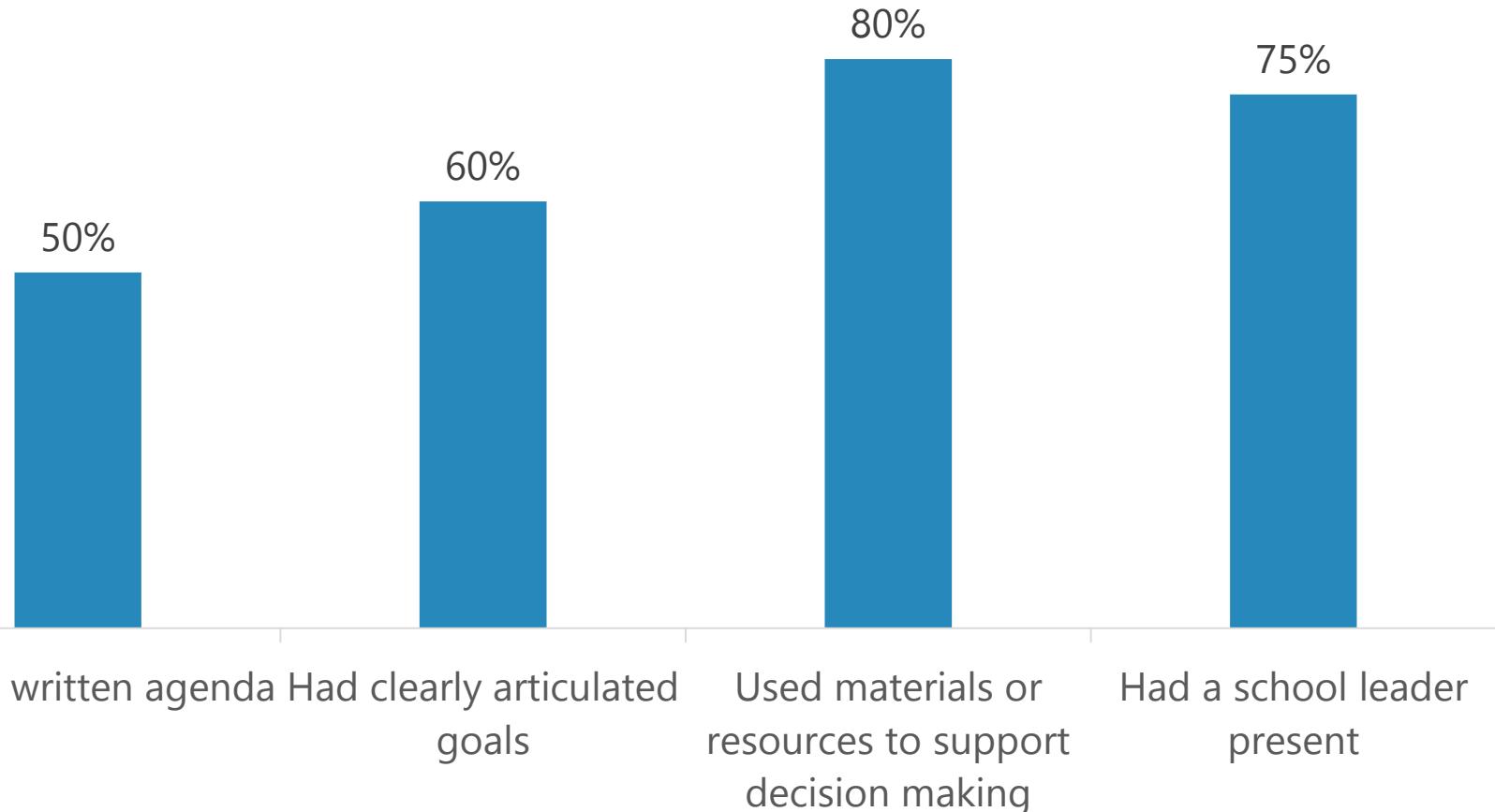
*n* = 447 students completing examined assignments

## Finding 2: Pasco's professional learning communities (PLCs) have great promise, but are not yet enabling teachers to focus on standards-aligned instruction and materials.



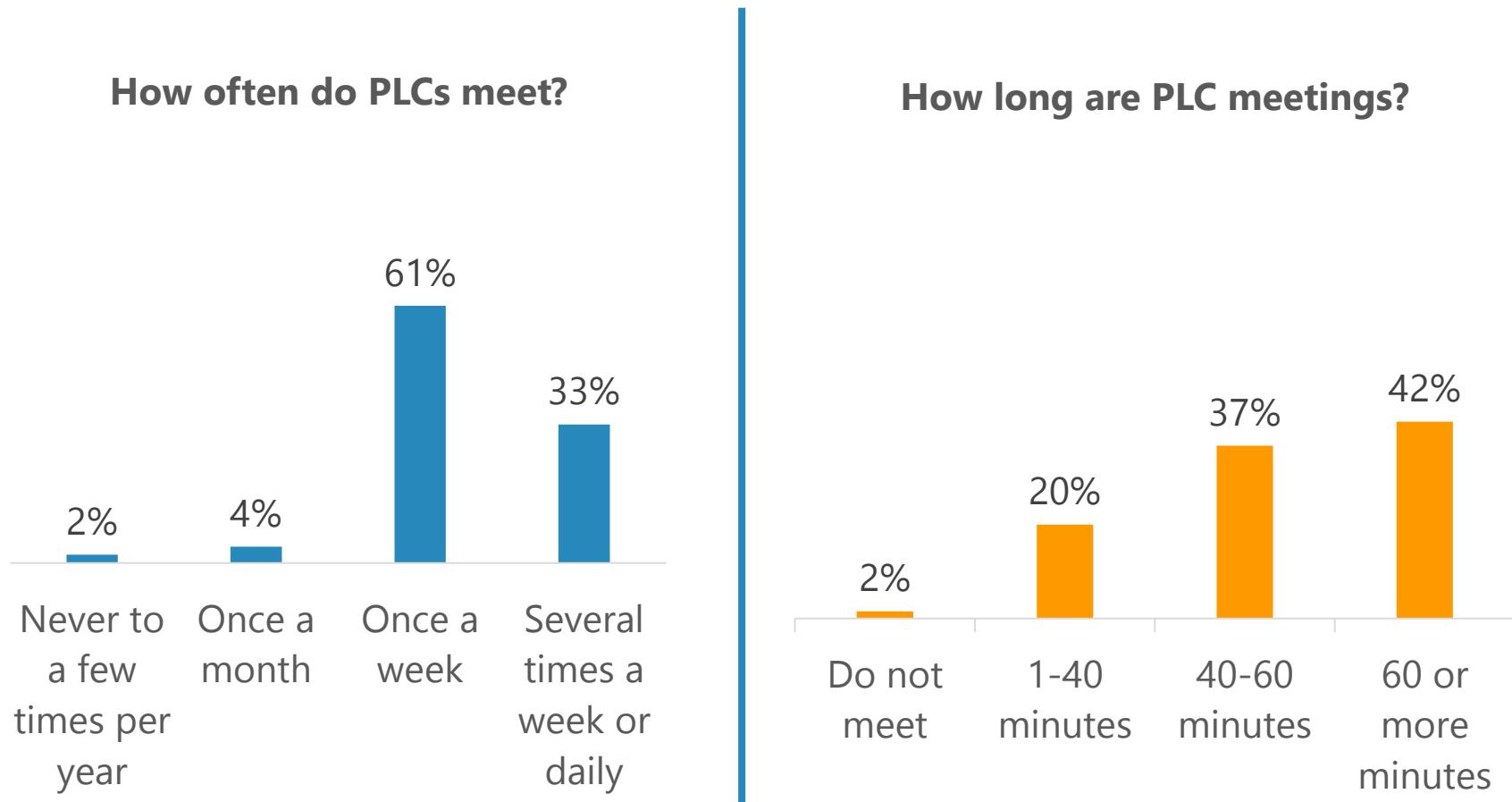
**Pasco's investments in PLCs are beginning to take hold in schools, with most PLCs having some of the foundational elements in place.**

**% of PLCs with structural elements**



n=25 PLCs observed

**Furthermore, Pasco's PLCs are meeting frequently enough to become a key lever for teacher development and strategic instructional planning.**



After only 1 ½ years of implementation, six of 10 teachers report that PLC work is directly applicable to their classrooms.

---

**Strengths in Pasco's PLC structure and organization can serve as a foundation for improving content development and data-driven instructional planning.**

**PLC Priority Practice**

**% of PLCs demonstrating this practice**

**A focus on student learning:** Rigorous content and lesson design supports student learning.

21%

**Defined student learning objectives:** Set clear expectations grounded in the demands of the standards.

21%

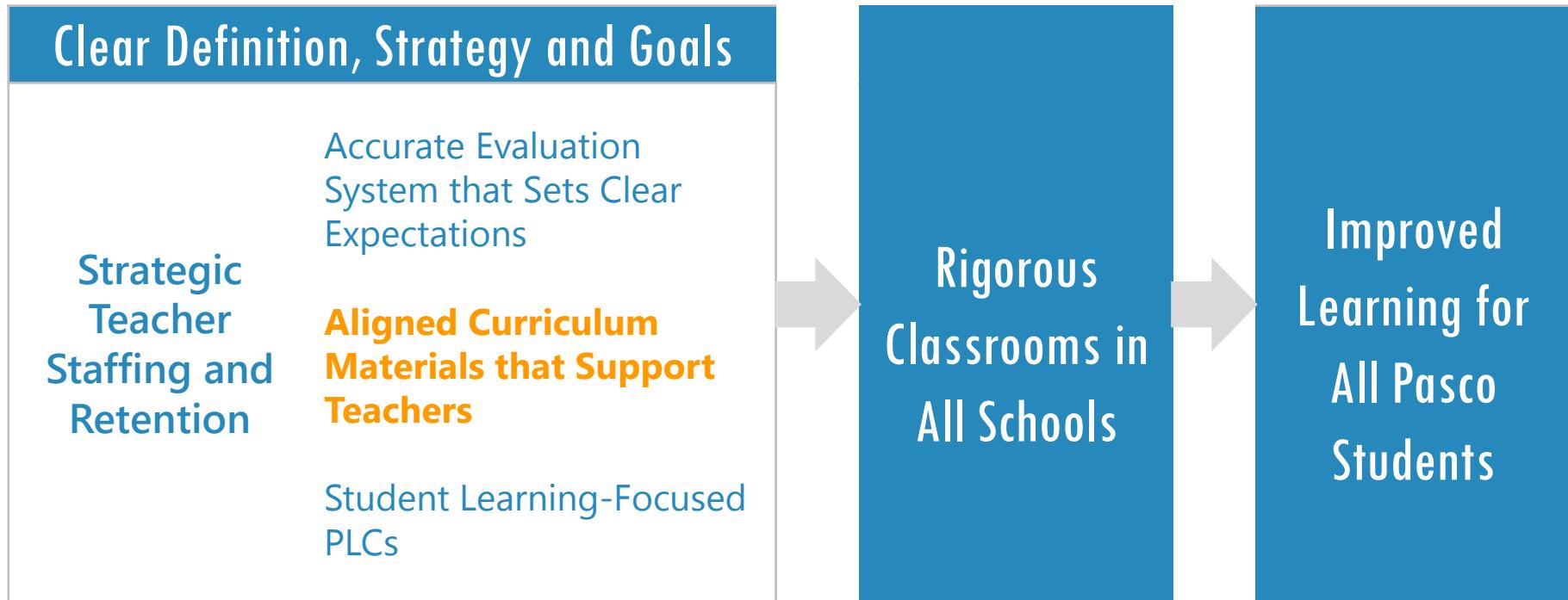
**Responding when students do not learn:** Analyze student work and assessments to identify where students are not achieving the standards.

19%

**PLC structure and organization:** Core structures include roles, responsibilities and clear agendas.

52%

## Finding 3: Pasco's curricular resources are inconsistently aligned to the standards, but there are some strong foundational materials on which the district can build.

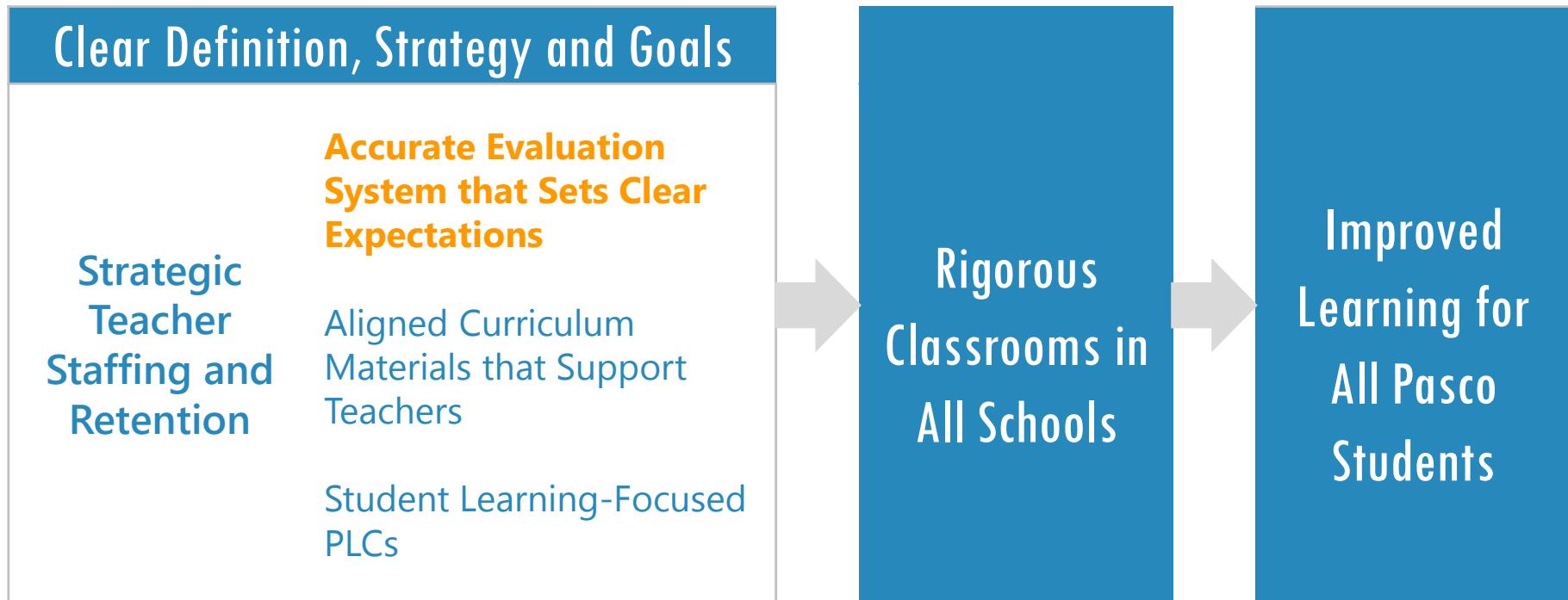


**Pasco's curriculum materials show some areas of strength, as well as opportunities for improvement. However, Pasco's benchmark assessments in ELA and Math are not aligned to the Florida Standards.**

	ELA		Math	
	Grade 3	Grades 7 & 10	Grade 3	Grade 6
Adopted materials	ReadyGen	<i>adoption underway</i>	Go Math!	Go Math! ConnectED
Created materials				
Benchmark assessments	Discovery Ed	Discovery Ed	Discovery Ed	Discovery Ed



## Finding 4: As currently designed, Pasco's teacher evaluation system does not assess standards-aligned instruction or student learning – and it does not yield information that can help school leaders and teachers improve classroom practice.

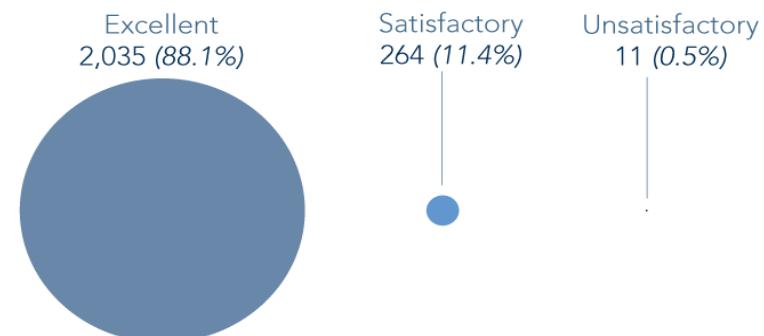


# Across the country, we routinely find that the vast majority of teachers are rated in the top two performance categories on their evaluations.

## AKRON PUBLIC SCHOOLS SY 05–06 to 07–08



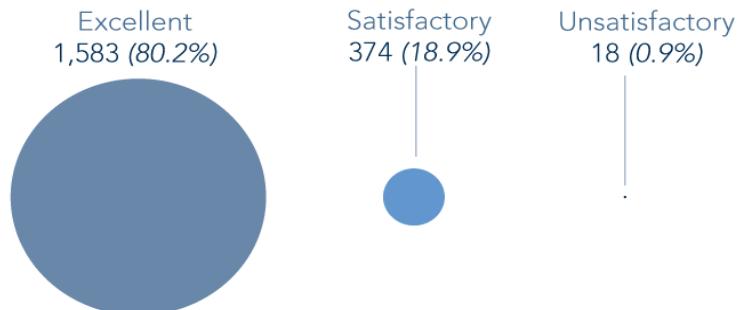
## DISTRICT U-46 (ELGIN) SY 03–04 to 06–07



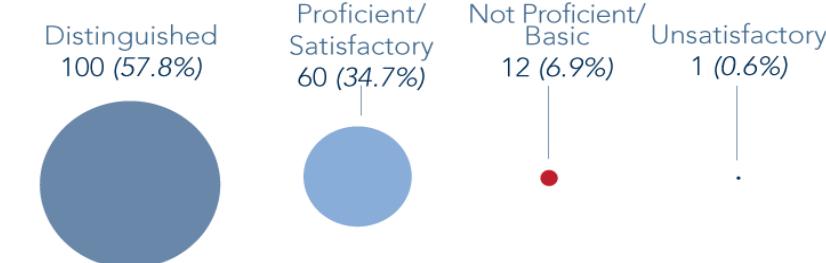
## CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS SY 03–04 to 07–08



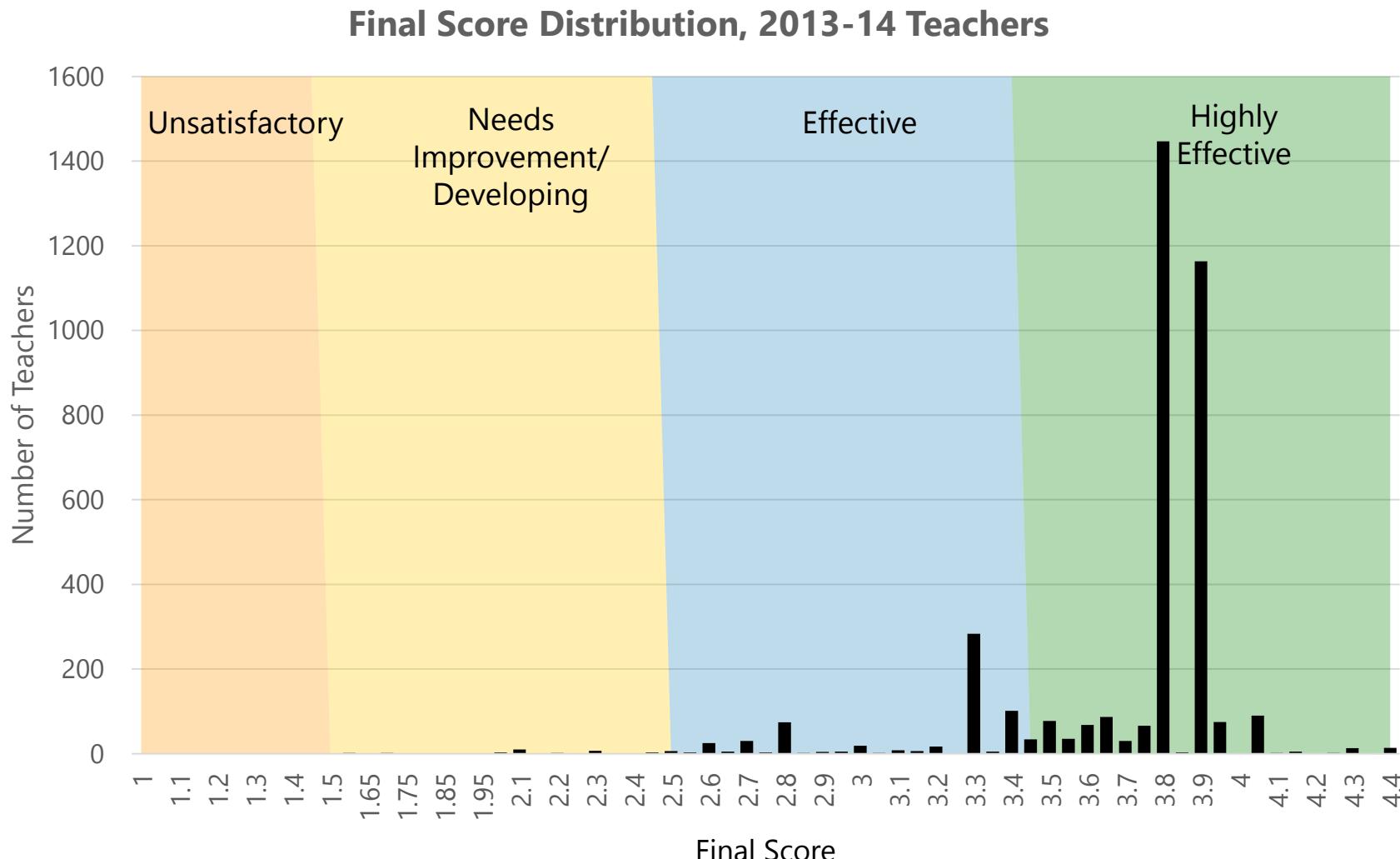
## ROCKFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS SY 03–04 to 07–08



## CINCINNATI PUBLIC SCHOOLS SY 03–04 to 07–08\*



**The same is true in Pasco, where 99% of evaluated teachers are rated in the top two categories.**



Notes: This chart is based on the evaluation data for Pasco County. It is restricted to teachers with score data (N=3845), and consists of the average of the student growth and observation scores. No teachers had scores that fell in the unsatisfactory range.

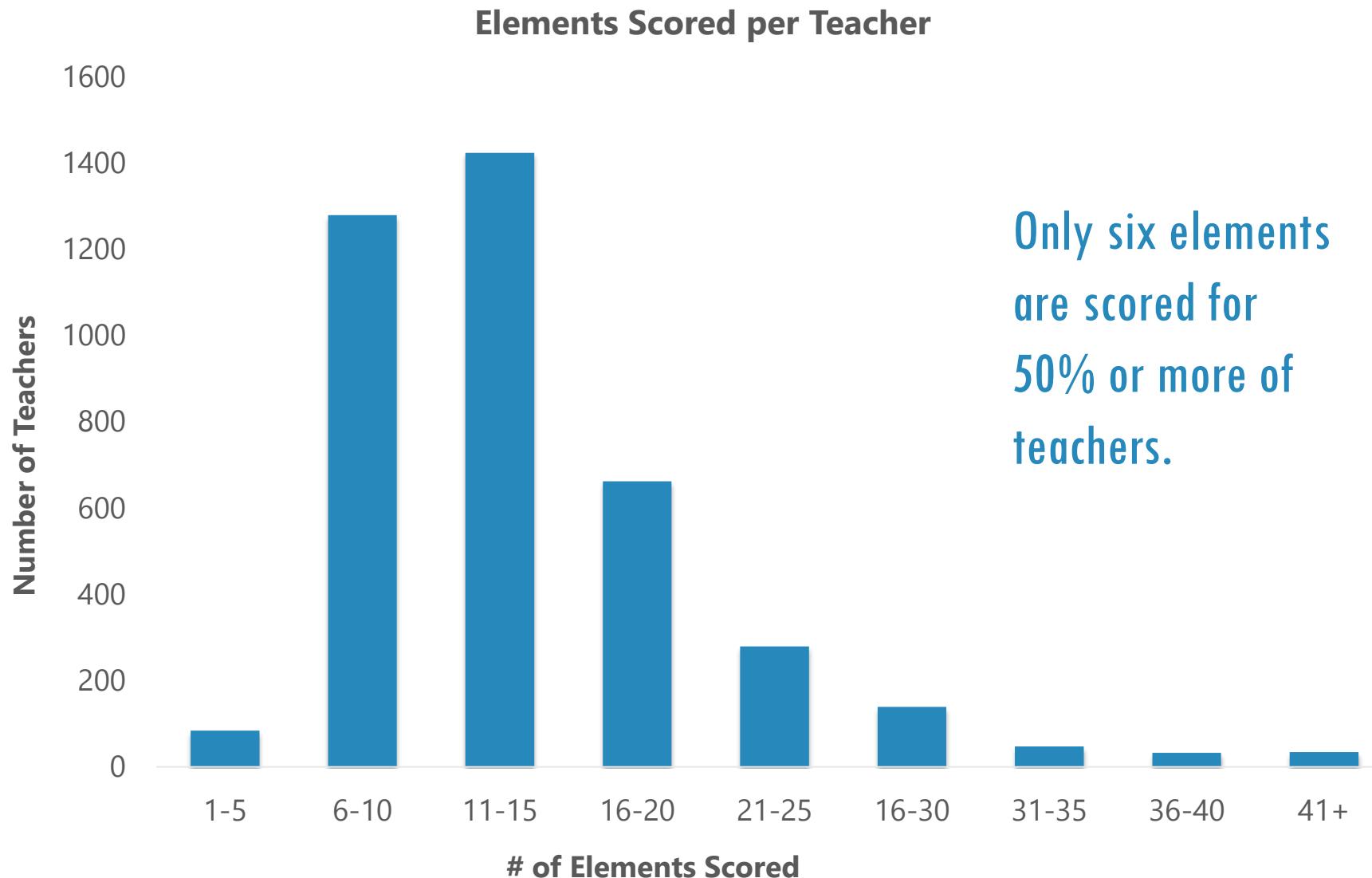
---

**Pasco's observation rubric does not focus enough on standards-aligned instruction and clear expectations for student learning.**

## Main challenges in the rubric include:

- 1 The rubric focuses on *how* the teacher teaches at the exclusion of *what* the teacher teaches.
- 2 Observers are not asked to assess the degree to which the content is aligned to the standards.
- 3 Student learning – whether they have mastered the right content – is not assessed.

**Because school leaders choose which of the 41 elements to rate, the observation tool is inconsistently implemented across the district.**



This data is from Pasco's 2013-14 evaluation data. Teachers with more than 41 are teachers who received more than 1 observation and were scored on a high number of elements.

**The authors of the Marzano Framework have offered guidance on which elements to prioritize to better assess standards-aligned instruction, but few Pasco teachers are being rated in those areas.**

Marzano element	% of teachers rated
6. Identifying critical information	56%
11. Elaborating on new information	24%
12. Recording and representing knowledge	43%
17. Examining similarities and differences	21%
18. Examining errors in reasoning	14%
20. Revising knowledge	12%
22. Engaging students in cognitively complex tasks	7%

**Due to design of Pasco's evaluation system, the bar for effective teaching fails to distinguish great teachers.**

## Example: Two Effective Teachers in Pasco



### Teacher A

- Fewer than 25% of students meeting expectations for growth over three years.
- Rated "Applying" on six elements and "Beginning" on four elements
- Final score: 2.5-3, rounded up to 3 = Effective



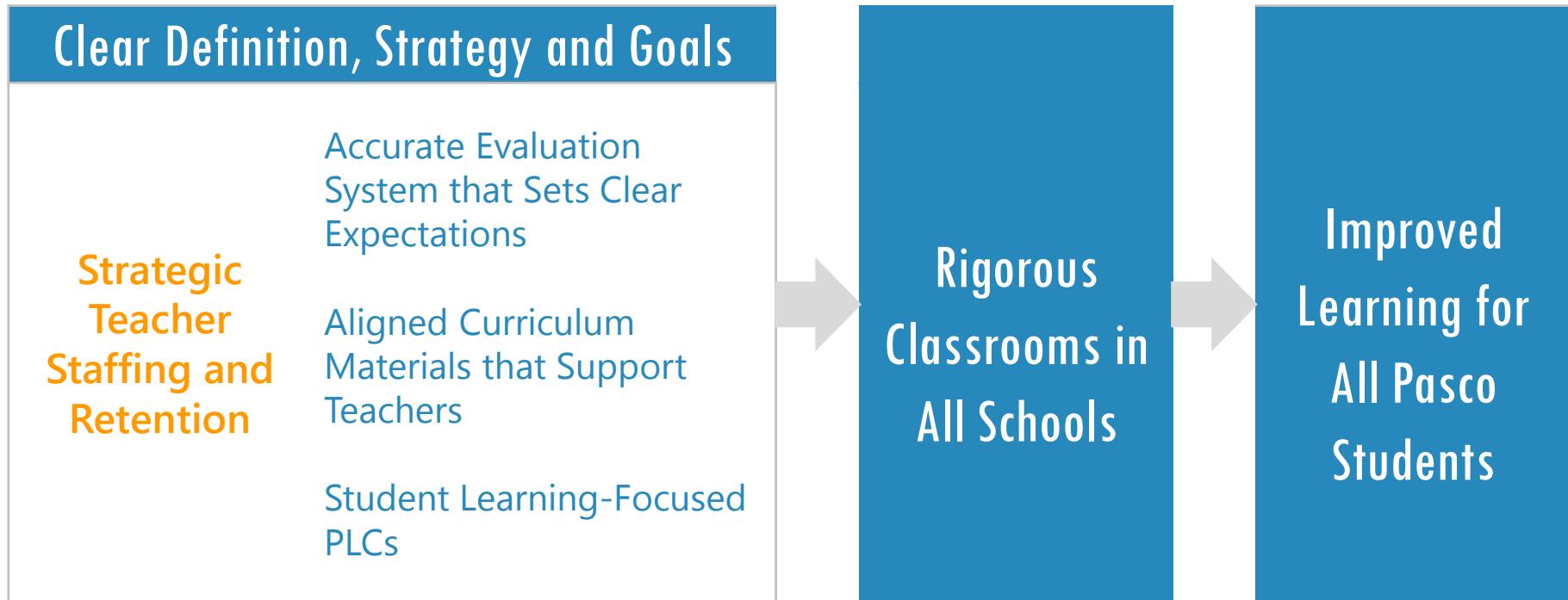
### Teacher B

- More than 80% of students meeting expectations for growth over three years.
- Rated "Applying" on eight elements and "Beginning" on seven elements.
- Final score: 3-3.4, rounded down to 3 = Effective

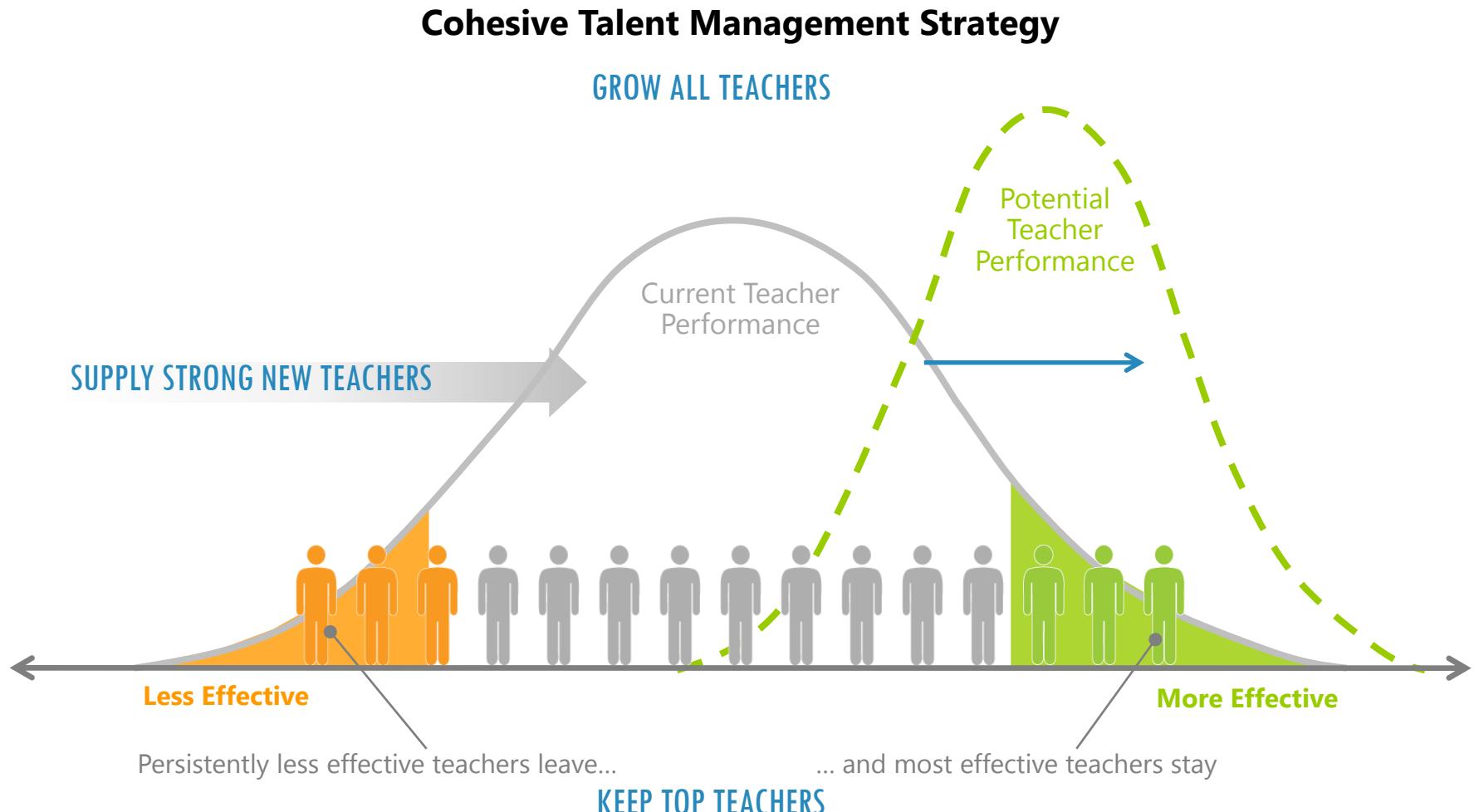


Among teachers for whom fewer than 50% of their students met expectations for growth, 85% were rated "highly effective."

## Finding 5: Teacher staffing and retention has not been prioritized enough in Pasco County Schools, but it is critical to improving instruction and accelerating student learning.

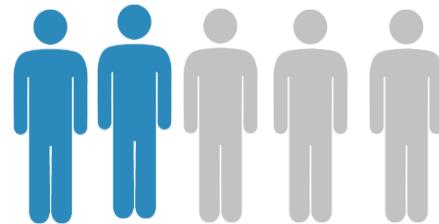


**Aligning curriculum, investing in PLCs, and improving evaluation and development would likely increase teacher effectiveness – and focusing on strategic talent management will accelerate and sustain that growth.**



**Research shows that late hires perform worse than other teachers in their first year on the job, increasing the likelihood of losing out on hiring effective teachers.**

### Late Hiring Timelines



New teachers who received an offer right before or after school started

**53%**

School leaders who report **losing a candidate** because of a late hiring timeline

### Poor Candidate Quality and Quantity

**33%**

School leaders satisfied with candidate **quantity**

**22%**

School leaders satisfied with candidate **quality**

---

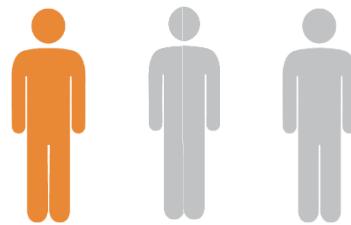
**A lack of real-time data has exacerbated the consequences of late hiring. Centralized vacancy tracking and strategic recruitment will help schools in fill vacancies faster – with higher quality candidates.**

-  Without centralized vacancy tracking, the district has not been able to effectively supported schools in filling vacancies.
-  As a result, many of these vacancies have been temporarily filled with a substitute teacher.
-  As of January, 31% of Pasco schools had an unfilled teaching position.

**Although Pasco's retention rate is above the national average, the district is retaining its highest performing teachers at essentially the same rate as its lowest performing teachers.**

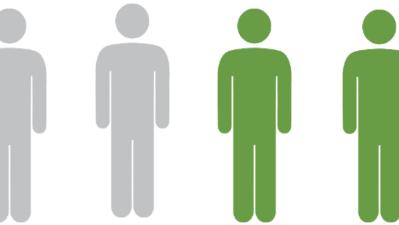
**17% of Pasco teachers report that they plan to leave  
the district within 2 years**

Bottom 20% meeting  
expectations for  
student growth



13% planned attrition

Top 20% meeting  
expectations for  
student growth



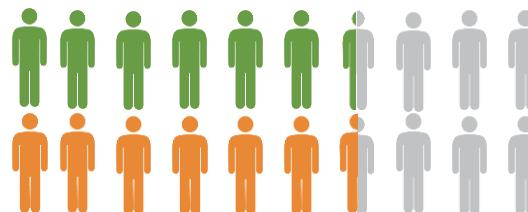
17% planned attrition

# Pasco school leaders can take several meaningful steps to differentiate their retention of their highest performing teachers.

When asked about retention strategies they have experienced, surveyed teachers said, “In the last year, a leader at my school...”

Informed me that I am high performing.

High performing

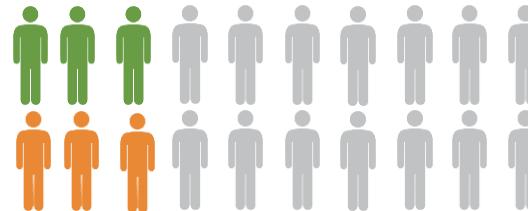


65%

66%

Identified opportunities or paths for teacher leader roles.

High performing

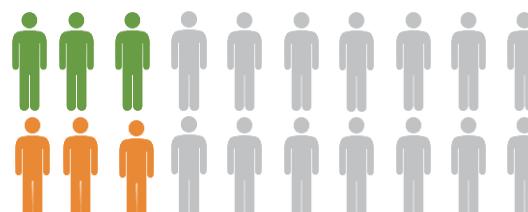


29%

32%

Encouraged me to keep teaching at my school next year.

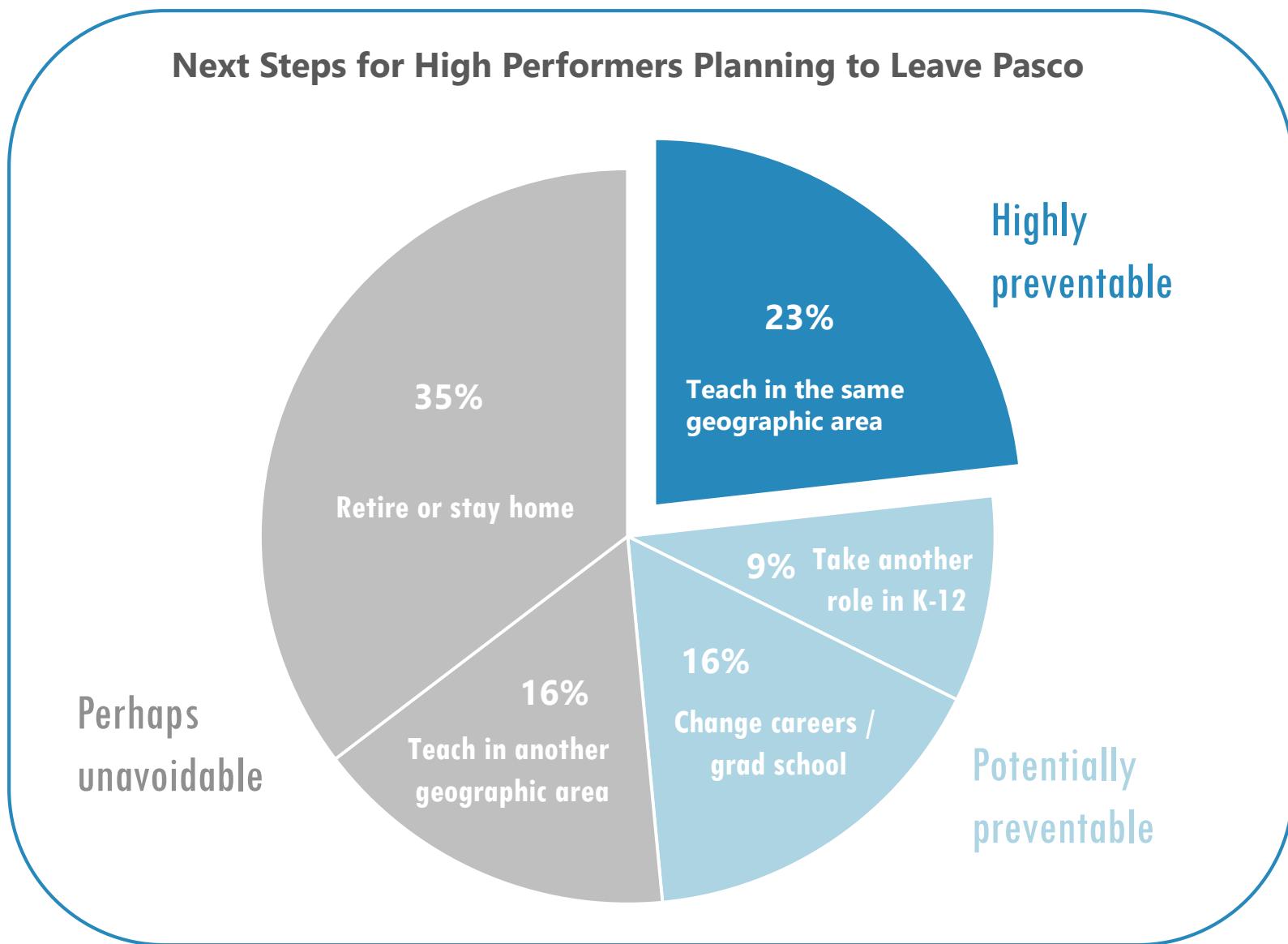
High performing



33%

32%

**Although 17% of top teachers report plans to leave in the next two years, much of that attrition appears to be preventable.**



**In summary, Pasco County Schools has several opportunities to build on its current strengths to improve instruction and help students meet the demands of the new Florida standards.**

## Strengths

### Instruction

Elementary schools are benefiting from investments in teacher development.

### Curriculum

Adopted ELA materials and many district created Math materials meet the demands of the standards.

### PLCs

Many helpful structural elements and processes are in place.

### Evaluation

Every Pasco teacher receives an evaluation and teachers understand the criteria for their evaluation.

### Hiring & retention

Pasco has a renewed focus on recruitment and vacancy management.

## Opportunities

Develop teacher practice, especially in secondary grades, and give all students more opportunities to practice the standards.

Design ELA materials to promote an integrated model of literacy and revise Math materials to emphasize the coherence and rigor of the standards.

Support PLCs to focus on aligned content development and strategic instructional planning.

Focus on highest leverage observation elements and adjust student growth and observation cut scores.

Hire earlier in the year, while retaining more effective teachers and persistently exiting less effective teachers.

---

## **Pasco's district leadership should consider three key questions to begin making progress on these findings.**

- 1 What strategies will district departments and schools employ to address challenges raised in through the diagnostic research?
- 2 How will those strategies be integrated into Pasco's Success Plan?
- 3 How will the data generated through the diagnostic be used to set goals for the coming year?

---

## **APPENDIX A. Detailed Methodology**

This report is based on data collected from a variety of sources over a four-month period (November 2014 – February 2015). TNTP took an in-depth look at Pasco County Schools in order to learn as much as possible about the district, and to uncover areas of strength as well as opportunities for improvement as the district works toward full implementation of the new Florida Standards.

### **Instructional Quality Review**

In order to understand how implementation of the new standards is playing out in classrooms, a TNTP review team conducted full-day site visits at six Pasco schools between January 12 and January 15, 2015. The schools were selected in partnership with district leaders to represent demographic and performance variation across the district.

At each school, TNTP staff conducted 30-minute classroom observations of 12-20 teachers who had been selected by the principal as representative of the variation in instructional practices within the school. During that observation, instruction was assessed using the grade and subject appropriate Instructional Practice Guide from Student Achievement Partners, a resource aligned to the Common Core standards. TNTP also reviewed student work samples from each teacher using the EQuIP rubric from Achieve.

In addition to classroom observations and review of student work, each site visit included a 30-minute interview with the principal and a 30-minute focus group with the teachers that was intended to gain an on-the-ground perspective of how policies and practices in place in the district are playing out in classrooms.

Finally, school visits in Pasco included observations of 25 meetings of professional learning communities (PLC) across most grade levels and subject areas in all six schools. These observations were grounded in a TNTP-developed rubric that drew heavily from DuFour PLC practices (see Appendix B). Specifically, the observation rubric rated PLCs in four practice areas: a focus on student learning, defined student learning objectives, responding when students do not learn and PLC structure and organization.

---

## APPENDIX A. Detailed Methodology

### Review of Curriculum

In order to assess how strongly aligned the curriculum and assessment materials are to the new standards, TNP examined sample artifacts from district-provided resources using the Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool from Student Achievement Partners. The sample artifacts included materials from math in grades three and six and ELA in grades three, six, and ten. Within each grade, TNP analyzed the district-provided scope and sequence, ELA and Math adopted textbooks, Math unit documents, ELA sample units and ELA multidimensional unit scales and “know-understand-dos.”

### Insight Teacher Survey

TNP administered Instructional Culture Insight, an externally validated<sup>22</sup> teacher survey, in order to learn about school-based instructional culture from teachers’ perspectives. The online survey was sent to 4446 teachers across 81 schools. The survey was open from January 8 through January 20, 2015. Of teachers surveyed, 3287 responded, yielding an overall response rate of 74 percent.

The majority of responses to the survey are collected in a 6-point Likert scale, and results include the percent of teachers who agree or strongly agree with each statement. To maintain teacher confidentiality, individual teacher responses are aggregated alongside responses from other teachers at the same school. Items with fewer than four responses are not reported to further ensure confidentiality.

---

## **APPENDIX A. Detailed Methodology**

### **Administrator & Coaching Surveys**

TNTP conducted a survey of school leaders including Principals, Assistant Principals and Coaches in order to incorporate administrators' voices and experiences into the diagnostic. Two separate instruments were administered: a school leader survey and a coaching survey.

The online leader survey was sent to 214 leaders across 78 schools. The leader survey was opened from January 8 to January 21, 2015. 166 leaders responded, yielding an overall response rate of 78 percent.

The online coaching survey was sent to 163 coaches across 74 schools. The coaching survey was opened from January 21 to January 29, 2015. 133 coaches responded, yielding an overall response rate of 82 percent.

### **District-Level Interviews**

In order to build general contextual understanding and better understand district operations, TNTP staff members conducted interviews of key district leaders and personnel. These interviews typically lasted 45-60 minutes, and included staff members from Human Resources and Finance, the Superintendent and some Area Superintendents, as well as staff from Academics, including content directors and content specialists.

---

## APPENDIX A. Detailed Methodology

### Extant Data

In order to understand historical trends in the district, TNP examined human capital data provided by the district, as well as data from publically available sources. Teacher data included demographics, certification and placement, 2011-2014 evaluation, 2013-14 value-added/student growth, absence and leave data. School level data included school-level value-added/student growth. District data included teaching vacancy data, professional development usage data, and teacher application and selection data.

### Review of Policies and Supporting Materials

TNP reviewed both district and state level policy documents and materials to better understand the local context. Materials included collective bargaining agreements and any relevant MOUs, policy manuals, and recent communications about instructional priorities. In addition, TNP reviewed the teacher evaluation observation rubric, professional development training materials, coaching logs and salary schedules.

## APPENDIX B. Professional learning community observation rubric.

Essential Elements	Indicators	Rating
<b>A focus on student learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PLC activities are designed to further students' understanding of appropriately rigorous content.</li> <li>Teachers develop engaging lessons that are clearly linked to performance standards.</li> <li>Teachers review student work using standards-aligned protocols.</li> <li>Teachers review instructional practice (live or via video) and discuss student learning aligned to the standards.</li> </ul>	1 2 3 4 n/a
<b>Defined student learning objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers set clear expectations for student learning when developing lessons, assessments, and other student learning opportunities.</li> <li>The PLC uses clear, rigorous standards or criteria that specify what determines proficiency in student work.</li> <li>PLC discussions and practices refer to and are aligned with standards.</li> <li>The PLC develops or references authentic, common performance assessment tasks for projects and units.</li> </ul>	1 2 3 4 n/a
<b>Responding when students don't learn</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The PLC analyzes student work and other assessment data to identify patterns, strengths, and gaps in students' learning.</li> <li>The PLC discusses instructional dilemmas and questions and structures conversations around improving teacher practice.</li> <li>Teachers modify instructional plans and practices based on available evidence of student performance.</li> <li>Data and student work is examined regularly and systematically to set next steps for instruction.</li> </ul>	1 2 3 4 n/a
<b>PLC structure and organization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The PLC has developed clearly articulated agendas, team norms, roles and responsibilities that are understood and followed consistently.</li> <li>The PLC has a clearly identified PLC facilitator who effectively guides conversations and empowers teachers to take ownership over the PLC's focus.</li> <li>Teachers regularly reflect on how well the PLC is performing by evaluating their goals.</li> <li>Teachers observe each other's teaching, share lessons and resources, and give and receive useful feedback to improve teacher practice.</li> </ul>	1 2 3 4 n/a

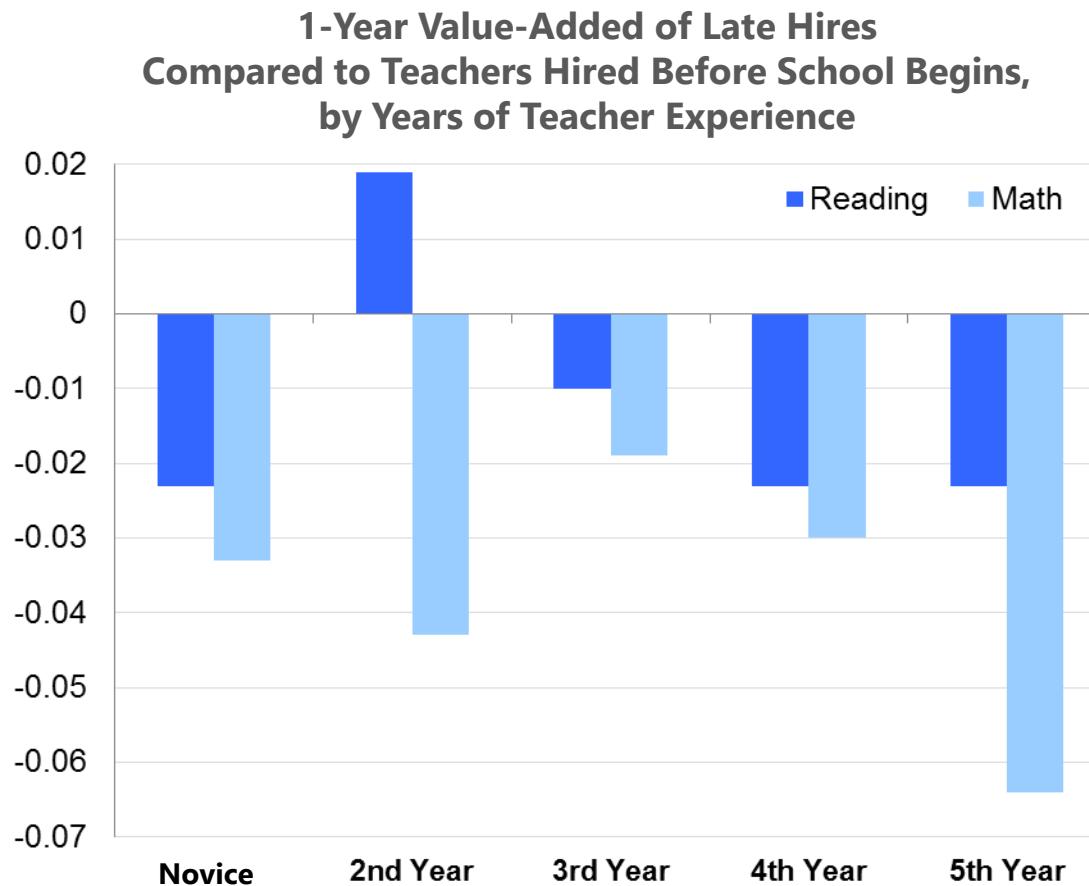
1 = **Little to no evidence:** Perhaps discussing how to do this practice, but not yet acting.

3 = **Moderate evidence:** Implementing practice at proficient level.

2 = **Some evidence:** Working on this practice at a beginning level.

4 = **Significant evidence:** Demonstrating capacity to do practice at a high level.

## APPENDIX C. Teachers hired after the school year begins do not perform as well as teachers hired before the school year begins.



Late hires occur disproportionately at the most challenged schools.

In 2006-07,  
**1 in 3 new hires**  
in Charlotte's lowest-  
performing schools joined  
after  
the beginning of the  
school year.

This further disadvantages  
students who need  
the most help.

Note: 4th-8th grade math and reading teachers in Charlotte-Mecklenberg Schools, 1998-99 to 2008-09

Source: "Teacher Employment Patterns and Student Results in Charlotte-Mecklenberg Schools," Harvard Center for Education Policy Research, 2010.