REACH Students
Frequently Asked Questions

What is REACH Students?
REACH Students (**R**ecognizing **E**ducators **A**dvancing **CH**icago's Students) is a new and comprehensive teacher evaluation system that will provide teachers with unprecedented tools and support to improve their practice and better drive student learning.

Why is our current system inadequate?
The current outdated evaluation system, established in the 1970s, does not reflect the needs of today's teachers, acknowledge or assess their impact on student learning, or provide them with meaningful guidance and supports. Rooted in just a single measure for evaluating teacher performance, today's evaluation system is based on a checklist of subjective, surface level details such as references to clothing, administrative tasks and bulletin boards. With such subjective standards, the basis for observations leaves teachers unclear on expectations, and without proper guidance for improvement.

What is the research-base for our teacher evaluation system?
Each aspect of the teacher evaluation system is based in research and/or best practices across the nation.

Charlotte Danielson's framework for teaching, which is research-based, widely used and nationally respected, serves as the foundation for the REACH Framework for Teaching, which was built collaboratively by CPS and CTU. Numerous research studies have validated Danielson's framework and established its reliability when implemented by trained observers, both in Chicago and elsewhere. By working closely with Charlotte herself to make CCSS adaptations to the framework, we intentionally stayed close to this research base.
- The Gates' Foundations MET study, research performed in Cincinnati Public Schools, and the Consortium on Chicago School Research's own study of CPS's Excellence in Teaching pilot all established the strong correlations between classroom observation ratings using a Danielson-based framework and student learning outcomes.
    - "Rethinking Teacher Evaluation in Chicago: Lessons Learned from Classroom Observations, Principal-Teacher Conferences, and District Implementation." Sartain, Stoelinga, and Brown. *Consortium on Chicago School Research*. November 2011. p. 11 & 18.
        - Students showed the greatest growth in test scores in the classrooms where teachers received the highest ratings on the Danielson Framework, and students showed the least growth in test scores in classrooms where teachers received the lowest ratings.
    - "Gathering Feedback for Teaching: Combining High-Quality Observations with Student Surveys and Achievement Gains." Tom Kane & Douglas Staiger. *Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation*. January 2012. pp. 35-55.
    - "Identifying Effective Classroom Practices Using Student Achievement Data." Tom Kane, Taylor, Tyler, & Wooten. *The Journal of Human Resources*. Summer 2011; Vol. 46, no. 3. p. 608.

- About Gates' MET: The Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) Project is a partnership between more than 3,000 teacher volunteers and dozens of research teams across seven large urban school districts (Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Dallas, Denver, Memphis, Hillsborough County, New York City, Pittsburgh). Sponsored by the Gates' Foundation and led by Harvard researcher Tom Kane, MET is aimed at understanding and sharing what great teachers do.
- Use of scores in Teacher Evaluation
    - The reliability of using value added measurements in teacher evaluation systems is consistent with other education and non-education measures of performance.

- The reliability of value added is directly in line with the best measures in education. According to recent research, growth scores are as reliable as a measure of teacher performance as two classroom observations by two separate expert observers. [1]
- According to research, the reliability of value added is also in line, with measures in other high-complexity professions such as medicine. [2]

Why does REACH include multiple measures?
Our own experience tells us that teaching is complex and that any one measure of a teacher won't necessarily tell us the whole story. The research strongly supports the importance of including multiple measures of teacher performance in any teacher evaluation system.
- Researchers in Cincinnati (which has implemented the Danielson framework for many years) found that using the combination of classroom observation ratings AND student learning data from one year provides the most accurate picture of teachers' performance the following year, more accurate than using either measure on its own.
- There is strong evidence, from both the Gates' MET research and Kane and Tyler, that using a combination of classroom observations and student learning data is more accurate than using either on its own.
  - Kane and Tyler write, "The nature of the relationship between practices and achievement… supports teacher evaluation and development systems that make use of multiple measures."
  - One of the major findings of the Gates' MET project is that "Combining observation scores with student achievement gains and student feedback improved predictive power and reliability."
- Our system imitates this multiple measures approach and goes one step further. Each study uses one measure of student learning in its assessment of teachers, but CPS will have two measures of student learning—standardized test and performance task.

Lastly, REACH was informed by best practices used effectively in different districts across the nation. In particular:
- Denver, Colorado includes teacher goal-setting as part of its professional growth plan and CPS teachers will engage in that best practice as well.
- Houston Independent School District in Texas and New York City have used Performance Tasks, or non-standardized testing methods, to measure student learning over time, and CPS will also include that as a measure in all teachers' evaluations.

Will REACH be implemented in all schools?
Components of REACH will be implemented in all schools in the 2012-2013 school year. However, all teachers will not receive an end of the year summative performance rating based on the new system. All teachers will learn about REACH and experience components. For instance, all teachers will receive feedback on teacher practice using the REACH Framework for Teaching.

How will implementation be phased in?
Elementary Schools
- All teachers will get experience with all components of REACH in SY2012-2013.
- Probationary Teachers and Tenured Teachers who received a summative rating of satisfactory or unsatisfactory in 2011-2012 will receive a summative rating in the 2012-2013 school year based on teacher practice and student growth.

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[1] "Empowering Effective Teachers: Readiness for Reform", February 2010 Issue Brief, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, page 1

[2] Robert Gordon, Thomas J. Kane, and Douglas O. Staiger, "Identifying Effective Teachers using Performance on the Job" (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 2006).

- Tenured Teachers who received a summative rating of excellent or superior in 2011-2012 will remain on a biennial cycle for the 2012-2013 school year. Even though these teachers will experience the full evaluation process in 2012-2013, these teachers will not receive a summative rating until the 2013-2014 school year, and then on an annual basis thereafter.

High Schools
- All high school teachers will experience all elements of teacher practice and student feedback during the 2012-2013 school year. Teachers of core subjects such as reading, math and science will also implement performance tasks, one of the two student growth measures included in REACH.
- Probationary Teachers and Tenured Teachers who received a summative rating of satisfactory or unsatisfactory in 2011-2012 will receive a summative rating in the 2012-2013 school year, based on teacher practice and, for core teachers only, performance task ratings.
- Tenured Teachers who received a summative rating of excellent or superior in 2011-2012 will remain on a biennial cycle for the 2012-2013 school year. Even though these teachers will experience the teacher practice process (and performance tasks for core teachers) in 2012-2013, these teachers will not receive a summative rating until the 2013-2014 school year, and then on an annual basis thereafter.

DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

How did we begin this process?

As we prepared to design a new evaluation system, we felt it was of critical importance to begin the journey directly hearing from teachers about what they wanted and needed from an effective evaluation system. Between April and June of 2011 we conducted focus groups with more than 200 CPS schools. In that time, we received feedback from 2,300 teachers from all across the City of Chicago, representing all grades and subjects. The thoughts, suggestions and ideas we received from teachers helped us begin the re-design process with their feedback in mind. Our goal was to create a system that recognizes, inspires and supports educators to improve their practice and better drive student learning.

Have we piloted other teacher evaluation systems?

Our preparation and work toward creating a new evaluation system did not just start in January of this year. We have known for many years that we've needed a better evaluation system, and over the past several years we've made significant efforts to improve individual components of the evaluation system through various pilots. One pilot was particularly successful—the Excellence in Teaching Project—which focused on the use of the Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching as a tool for observations. The teacher practice component of our new comprehensive evaluation system was developed using what we've learned through the Excellence in Teaching Pilot. Over 100 schools were in that pilot, and the feedback from teachers in that pilot very much affirmed the value of the feedback facilitated through the use of the Danielson Framework.

- **Excellence in Teaching Project** (began in 2008 without partnership with CTU) – CPS and CTU negotiated the program for 18 months and CTU walked away over unrelated issue; CPS implemented anyway the program previously agreed upon. EITP was pilot of a modified Danielson Framework and did NOT replace, but was add-on to the current 'checklist' system; it DID count however. EITP started with about 40 schools and reached a max of 102 schools in 2009-10. More than 140 schools (all elementary) have participated in EITP since 2008.
  - Danielson framework as a measure of teacher practice was validated against test scores in CPS schools (CCSR research) and was reliably implemented by CPS principals when they were properly trained. More training will improve reliability. Also, teachers and principals on the whole reported that they liked the framework.

- **Comments from CPS Teachers about Excellence in Teaching Project**
  - "Very detailed and well thought out."
  - "The Framework should be required as a way to help us hone our craft of teaching practice."
  - "Useful as a guide for improvement."

How did we arrive at this system?
The thoughts, suggestions and ideas from thousands of teachers across the district helped establish the foundation of this system. To create this enhanced system, the CTU and CPS established two committees that have been in negotiations since November 2011. Between November 2011 and April 2012, the two committees held over 35 meetings and met for a total of over 90 hours to discuss all elements of the new system. The committees included teachers, former principals, deputy network chiefs, teacher human resource professionals, technical and legal advisors, CTU officials, including the Union President, and the Board's Chief Education Officer, Dr. Noemi Donoso, and Chief Talent Officer, Alicia Winckler. These committees also sought and relied upon input from experts in the field of teacher evaluation to inform the plan's development and implementation. *REACH* is the result of the CPS and CTU's collective work and establishes an enhanced teacher evaluation system that includes three components: teacher practice, student learning and student feedback.

How will the components of the new system be weighted?
The teacher evaluation system will start by weighting teacher practice more heavily and slowly increase the weight for both student growth and student feedback over time. Beginning in year two, the weighting for student growth will increase by 5 percentage points each year, until reaching our ideal end state, which will be 50 percent teacher practice, 40 percent student growth and 10 percent student feedback.

OBSERVATIONS/FRAMEWORK

What is the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*?
The Danielson *Framework for Teaching* is a standards-based rubric that describes teaching practice across four levels of a continuum. The *Framework* divides all aspects of teaching practice into four domains:

- Planning and Preparation
- The Classroom Environment
- Instruction
- Professional Responsibilities

Each of these domains is further sub-divided into four or five components.

Why did CPS and CTU modify the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*?   Specifically, what were the most significant changes? How will this benefit teachers and students?
Because the new teacher evaluation system and the Common Core State Standards are being introduced to teachers concurrently, CPS took advantage of the opportunity to fully align CPS teacher practice expectations with the Common Core state standards. In addition, we sought to eliminate redundancy based on feedback from school administrators and teachers who piloted the *Framework for Teaching*. CPS worked closely with the CTU and Charlotte Danielson to modify the *Framework for Teaching*.   Charlotte Danielson has approved and endorsed the REACH Framework.

The revised Framework clearly identifies what teaching to the Common Core State Standards looks like and how it will be observed in all classrooms. The emphasis on the Common Core State Standards is evident mainly in Domain 1 (Preparation and Planning) and Domain 3 (Teaching). In Domain 1, the framework emphasizes a deep understanding of the CCSS within and across grade levels, standards-based unit and assessment design, and an

ability to choose appropriate text for students who are struggling. Domain 3 emphasizes literacy across the curriculum, text and task complexity, use of evidence to support arguments, and academic language use—all critical aspects of the CCSS. Domains 2 and 4 describe the culture, routines and procedures that are necessary for the CCSS to take hold (for both students and teachers). For students, this includes a college readiness culture. For teachers, this includes a commitment to data-based collaborative planning and reflection on practice.

What is the REACH Framework for Teaching?
The *REACH Framework for Teaching* is the district's instructional framework, which was adapted from the Danielson Framework for Teaching and approved by Charlotte Danielson. It provides a common definition for effective instruction for CPS classroom teachers. It is also the basis for Teacher Practice scores, based on observations and evidence collection aligned to performance level rubric across four domains: Planning and Preparation, Classroom Environment, Instruction, and Professional Responsibilities. It is critical to understand that the REACH Framework for Teaching will serve as the anchor for all professional development, coaching conversations, and teacher self-reflection.

How will teacher practice be weighted in year one?
- In year one at the elementary level, teacher practice will represent 75% of a teacher's summative evaluation—both for teachers who teach "tested subjects" (reading and math) as well as teachers who teach other subjects, like art, PE or library.
- In year one at the high school level, teacher practice will represent 90% of the evaluation system for teachers who teach core subjects (reading, math, science and social studies) and 100% for all other teachers.

MEASURES OF STUDENT GROWTH

Which student growth methodology are we using? Why did we choose this methodology?
In grades 3-8, CPS will use a value-added methodology to measure student growth. This methodology was selected because it provides the most accurate assessment of a teacher's contribution to student learning. Value-added is used widely in school districts across the nation as a measure of teacher effectiveness.

In grades 9-11, CPS will use an expected gains methodology to measure student growth. Like value-added, this methodology takes into account where students start, not just where they end up at the end of the year. CPS chose this methodology because it is not possible to create a value-added model on data from the EPAS assessment series.

What assessments will CPS use to measure student growth?
In grades 3-8, CPS will use the Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA MAP) assessment. In grades 9-11, CPS will use the EPAS series of assessments: EXPLORE in Grade 9, PLAN in Grade 10, and ACT in Grade 11.

Why isn't CPS using ISAT?
CPS is not using ISAT for two main reasons. First, the NWEA MAP assessment will provide more accurate results because it is computer adaptive. This means that if a student enters a grade far above or below grade level, growth for that student can still be measured. Second, the ISAT is given only once a year in March. Thus, student learning reflects the instruction of more than one teacher.

What is expected gains methodology? Why is it the best metric for grades 9-11?

In grades 9-11, CPS will use an expected gains methodology on EPAS assessment results to measure student growth. In consultation with our technical experts, we have determined this is the best approach given a value-added model is not possible with our current EPAS data.

EPAS is in use across CPS high schools. Teachers are familiar with this assessment and are currently using it to align instruction to the college readiness standards. The expected gains model allows growth targets to be set based on beginning of year results, and growth is measured as the percentage of students meeting or surpassing anticipated growth at the end of year administration.

- This methodology controls for incoming test score, but not the other demographic factors used in value-added.
- EPAS is in use across CPS high schools. Teachers are familiar with this assessment and are currently using it to align instruction to the college readiness standards. The expected gains model allows growth targets to be set based on beginning of year results, and growth is measured as the percentage of students meeting or surpassing anticipated growth at the end of year administration.

What is value-added methodology? Why are did we decide to make it a part of teacher and school evaluation in CPS?
Value added isolates a teacher's impact on student achievement by separating out the effect of variables outside of the teacher's control. This measurement allows us to estimate a teacher's actual impact on student learning rather than the impact of factors that are outside of the teacher's control. Separating out the effects of things that are outside a teacher's control provides more fair and accurate information on the contribution that a teacher makes to student learning.

We believe that teachers impact on student growth is a necessary component of their overall performance. That's why state law has required that student growth be included as a "significant factor" of our enhanced teacher evaluation system. However, measuring that growth accurately and objectively is difficult for a variety of reasons. There is no perfect measure of student growth however we believe that value-added and similar growth-based approaches are the best measures available. Because value-added takes into consideration students' prior achievement as well as other student characteristics, we believe it levels the playing field for teachers in a way that other measures do not.

We chose this methodology for three primary reasons:

- **Fairness**: Measures student achievement most fairly—it isolates the effect of instruction by controlling for factors that affect achievement but are not within the teacher's control
- **Precision**: Most precise measure available – credits teachers with all student gains, large or small
- **Research validation**: Most widely used student growth methodology with the largest research base.

What does the research say about value-added?
While there is no perfect measure of teacher effectiveness, recent research suggests that a combination of measures, including value-added, is the strongest approach. There is strong evidence, from both the Gates' MET research and Kane and Tyler, that using a combination of classroom observations and value-added data is more accurate than using either on its own. Kane and Tyler write, "The nature of the relationship between practices and achievement… supports teacher evaluation and development systems that make use of multiple measures." One of the major findings of the Gates' MET project is that "Combining observation scores with student achievement gains and student feedback improved predictive power and reliability." The research also found that value-added models are as reliable as a measure of teacher performance as two classroom observations by two separate expert observers. With reliability between .30 and .50, VAM is directly in line with the best

measures in education. Further, reliability between .30 and .50 is also in line, according to research, with measures in other high-complexity professions such as medicine[3].

Value-added is also the fairest system to use for teachers. CPS already uses VAM in the school performance policy. Because of how the model is built and because it truly measures learning over time and not just achievement status, high and low VAM scores appear in all types of school proportionately, regardless of economics, race/ethnicity, or prior achievement of students.

Furthermore, data on the reliability of value-added is frequently misinterpreted or misreported as "unstable", when in fact it is commensurate with other education and non-education measures of performance.

CPS is taking into account the best research and using value-added in the most appropriate manner possible; blending student data with classroom observation. Such an approach will yield an assessment system that is akin to using a meter stick to measure height at the beginning of the year and then again at the end of the year to understand how much a child grew.

Is value added the only measurement that will be used to determine student learning?
No, value-added is not the only measure used to determine student learning. Performance tasks, which are written or hands-on demonstrations of student progress towards mastery of a particular skill or standard also comprises the student growth. Performance tasks will be administered in all content areas and grade levels. Using both student growth measures will provide a more comprehensive assessment of a teacher's impact on student learning.

How is student learning being measured for teachers who do not teach tested subjects or grades?
The primary way to measure growth for teachers who do not teach traditionally tested subjects and grades will be to use a Performance Task to measure student learning of a course throughout an academic year aligned to a particular standard or group of standards. A performance task is used to assess demonstration of mastery, or progress towards mastery, of a particular skill or standard determined most critical in the course of an academic year (or student learning objective). Performance tasks can be used in every subject area, across disciplines and grade levels. Teachers often favor performance tasks because they can be designed to authentically reflect the actual work being done in their classroom.

Student performance on each PT will assessed using a four point rubric, in which the highest score represents mastery of a particular standard. Growth in performance will be measured by subtracting a student's performance on the beginning-of-year PT pre-test from his/her performance on the end of year PT post-test.

How will Performance Tasks be implemented?

- All teachers in grades Pre-K – 8 will administer a performance task, regardless of subject taught
- All HS teachers of core subjects will administer a performance task
- Teachers will contribute substantially to the development district-created performance tasks, and there will be elements of teacher choice in the administration of the task, particularly with respect to task materials
- Teachers will score their own students' tasks using a 4-point rubric in which the highest score is associated with mastery
- Student growth will be based on growth, along the 4-point rubric, from beginning-of year PT to end-of-year PT

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[3] Robert Gordon, Thomas J. Kane, and Douglas O. Staiger, "Identifying Effective Teachers using Performance on the Job" (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 2006).

Will CPS use value-added data from before the 2012-13 school year?
No, CPS will not use value-added data from prior to the 2012-13 school year. The District will only use data from 2012-13, when teachers were first informed about the details of REACH.

Is CPS proposing to use team or school-wide value-added data?
CPS will use school-wide value-added data for teachers of untested grades or subjects. All teachers contribute to the literacy development of students. Reading teachers in grades 3-11 should not be solely responsible for the literacy growth of all students. CPS believes that including a school-wide measure will foster collaboration on Literacy, which should be a part of every classroom and also aligns with one of the district's critical focus areas. Literacy strategies should be embedded in every teacher's instruction. Focusing on literacy reinforces its importance and drives school-wide commitment to student improvement in these critical college-ready skills.

Why is CPS using school-wide literacy as a component of student learning measures for teachers that do not teach tested subjects or grades?
CPS students, on average, perform significantly lower than the national average on literacy measures. Integration of literacy (reading, writing, thinking about the written and/or spoken word) into all subject areas is critical to boosting these essential college-ready skills.

Will CPS make teacher value-added data public?
We have no plans to release this data. Based upon the experiences of other school districts—the decision to release value-added data to the public was not one that the school districts made themselves. In fact, FOIA requests and court decisions have been the driver behind the release of value-added data in other districts, such as Los Angeles Unified School District and the New York City Department of Education.

It is the position of CPS—as we have stated many times—that value-added scores should not be the sole indicator of an individual teacher's performance and REACH reflects that belief.

How will student growth be weighted in year one?
- In year one at the elementary level, student growth will consist of **25%** of a teacher's evaluation, the minimum that the state will require, which is a combination of statistical growth data and growth on a performance task.
- In year one at the high school level for core teachers, student growth will consist of **10%** of a teacher's evaluation and will only be measured using performance tasks.

STUDENT FEEDBACK

Why are student surveys being including in the teacher performance system?
Research confirms what many of us would instinctively say – that students are important and accurate evaluators of teacher effectiveness. Students, in the classroom day in and day out, deep and firsthand view of the kind of learning environment a teacher has built and the degree to which a teacher's instruction is meeting their needs. For this reason, we know many teachers already implement their own student feedback forms to help themselves get better. Research from the Tripod Project and the Gates' Foundation's MET study shows a strong correlation between a teacher's student survey results and their impact on student achievement. In fact, students are such accurate assessors of effective teaching, that student surveys improve the overall accuracy of the system. We have also heard from students that they want the opportunity to provide feedback about their teachers in a meaningful way.

When will CPS implement student surveys? Why?

Student surveys will be conducted once each year at the end of the school year for grades 4-12 to ensure that student responses consider as much experience with the teachers as possible.

When will student survey results be included in a teacher's summative rating?
Student surveys will be administered in the 2012-13 school year, but the results will not be factored into teachers' summative rating until 2013-14. This will provide teachers with one year of student feedback data to understand and become familiar with the data before it is included in summative ratings.

How will student feedback be weighted in year one?
- Student surveys will be implemented in grades 4-12 next year, but will not count toward teacher ratings in year one.
- In year two, student feedback will count for 10%