Illinois State Board of Education Performance Evaluation Reform Act Implementation Study

Interim Report

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Background

The intent of the Performance Evaluation Reform Act of 2010 (PERA) was to ensure that educators receive valid, reliable feedback on their performance; have opportunities for and receive coaching to improve based on that feedback; and are held accountable for their performance. The components of this educator evaluator system are intended to enhance supports and services for educators, with the purpose of improving instruction, and, ultimately, student outcomes[2] (Illinois General Assembly, 2010).

PERA requires that districts create evaluation systems agreed to by joint committees that include equal numbers of district administrators and teaching staff. Under these district evaluation systems, educators must receive one of four evaluation ratings: Excellent, Proficient, Needs Improvement, and Unsatisfactory. Evaluation ratings must consider indicators of student growth and professional practice, such as instructional quality, attendance, planning, classroom management, or subject matter competency. Evaluations are to provide educators with reliable ratings and relevant feedback needed to identify areas of growth, enhance instruction, and, in the long term, improve student achievement (Illinois General Assembly, 2010).

State guidance requires that tenured teachers who have received ratings of *Proficient* or *Excellent* must be evaluated at least once every 3 years, with an informal observation at least every 2 years. Tenured teachers who receive a rating of *Needs Improvement* or *Unsatisfactory* must be evaluated at least once the following year. Untenured teachers must be evaluated at least once per school year. After four consecutive terms of service, educators who receive two Proficient ratings (in the fourth term and either the third or second term of service) or three consecutive Excellent ratings are eligible for tenure. Educators who receive Needs Improvement (or Unsatisfactory) ratings receive feedback for improvement, a professional development (or remediation) plan, and support from districts, often in the form of coaching from a qualified peer. If, after receiving an Unsatisfactory rating and completing a remediation plan, a teacher receives a subsequent rating of Unsatisfactory within 3 years, the school district may seek dismissal (Illinois General Assembly, 2011; Illinois State Board of Education [ISBE], 2015). Through the process of providing support, coaching, and feedback for improvement, as well as the option of removing teachers who receive an Unsatisfactory rating and fail to successfully remediate this rating within 3 years, this system is intended to improve classroom instruction and, consequently, student achievement.

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[2] The findings motivating the legislation note that "Effective teachers and school leaders are a critical factor contributing to student achievement" [Section 5(1)], and "School districts and the State must ensure that performance evaluation systems are valid and reliable and contribute to the development of staff and improved student achievement outcomes" [Section 5(4)].

Senate Resolution No. 774 (Illinois General Assembly, 2022) calls for a comprehensive review of the implementation of PERA. The resolution highlights concerns about the "lack of state-level research and disaggregated data make it challenging to fully understand the impact and opportunities of evaluation elements, such as measuring professional practice or student growth" (Illinois General Assembly, 2022, p. 2). It also calls on the chairs of ISBE and the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council (PEAC) to work together to initiate a research study—conducted by an educational research organization independent of state agencies—that examines teacher evaluation in Illinois, gathers feedback from stakeholders, and reviews best practices from other states.

PEAC, which oversees PERA's implementation and training, will use the research findings to develop policy recommendations that will address any identified challenges while preserving the core benefits of the system. ISBE and PEAC have commissioned the American Institutes for Research® (AIR®) to conduct this study. AIR is an independent, not-for-profit, social and behavioral research organization with a long history of nonpartisan, rigorous evaluation work. The sections that follow provide a framing for this study of the PERA evaluation system, including research questions, outreach plans, and data collection instruments.

Research Questions

To identify a set of research questions (RQs) to guide PEAC's research study, AIR obtained an initial set of questions generated by PEAC members, categorized the questions across seven themes, and drafted RQs for each theme. On March 17, 2023, AIR presented these themes and RQs to PEAC members and obtained their feedback. Based on input from PEAC members, AIR revised the RQs and gathered additional input from PEAC members on May 19, 2023. In response to the feedback that PEAC members provided, AIR developed the following RQs:

RQ1. What are the **components** of districts' educator and school-based administrator evaluation systems?

RQ2. How do districts differ in their **implementation** of these components, and what factors (e.g., district needs, characteristics of the district) do stakeholders identify as potential reasons for these differences?

RQ3. What **benefits** have stakeholders experienced implementing components of the educator and school-based administrator evaluation system with respect to

- obtaining useful feedback,
- supporting improvements to professional practice,
- informing policy decisions, and
- adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic?

RQ4. What **challenges** have stakeholders experienced implementing components of the educator and school-based administrator evaluation system with respect to

- obtaining useful feedback,
- supporting improvements to professional practice,
- informing policy decisions,
- reported biases or inequities in system components, and
- adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic?

RQ5. How do stakeholders suggest addressing reported challenges? What **supports**, resources, and changes are recommended?

AIR will use these five RQs, as well as PEAC's initial questions and feedback, to further inform the survey items and interview protocols used to gather feedback on educator and school-based administrator evaluation systems and structures from stakeholders in Illinois.

Outreach and Engagement Plan

To address RQs 1–5, AIR will partner with ISBE and PEAC to identify and recruit study participants. With support from ISBE and PEAC, we will engage a wide and representative sample of PK–12 school-based administrators (e.g., principals and vice-principals) and educators (tenured and nontenured teachers) across Illinois districts to participate in data collection activities. We will draw on these groups to seek participants for two modes of data collection: (a) a statewide survey and (b) focus groups. We also will invite PERA joint committee members, former PEAC members, and staffers and legislators involved in writing the original PERA legislation (Senate Bill 315) and Senate Bill 7 to participate in interviews with our team. Finally, AIR will request documents related to educator and school-based administrator evaluation systems and processes from a sample of Illinois public school districts. In the subsections that follow, we detail the steps of our outreach and engagement plan.

Identifying Outreach and Engagement Channels

To date, AIR has identified 21 organizations with points of contact in PEAC or outside PEAC but have agreed to support the study's outreach and engagement efforts (Exhibit 1). These entities include state and regional education agencies, local school districts, state and local professional organizations for educators and administrators, and education advocacy groups. Each organization will be instrumental in ensuring that the diverse perspectives of educators, administrators, and school board members across Illinois are included in the study.

To expand outreach and recruitment efforts, AIR also will leverage existing relationships with Illinois educational entities beyond those in Exhibit 1. For example, AIR will contact the regional superintendents of schools in Regional Offices of Education (ROE) 1, 17, and 28, which are ROEs that serve more rural locations and with which AIR has existing relationships.

Exhibit 1. Proposed Organizations to Involve in Study Outreach and Recruitment

Organization	Title/role of point of contact
Large Unit District Association	Executive director; PEAC member
Regional Office of Education 33	Regional superintendent of schools; PEAC member
Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools	President; PEAC members
Illinois Association of School Administrators	Associate director of professional learning; PEAC member
Illinois Principals Association	Field service specialists; PEAC members
Illinois Education Association	Directors; PEAC members
Illinois Federation of Teachers	Union professional issues director; PEAC members
Chicago Teachers Union	Administrator of new teacher development; PEAC member
Advance Illinois	Project director
Stand for Children	Executive director
Chicago Public Schools	Executive director of educator effectiveness; director of teacher and principal evaluation; instructional effectiveness specialist; PEAC members
Diamond Lake School District 76	Superintendent; PEAC member
Indian Prairie School District 204	School leader; PEAC member
Naperville Community Unit School District 203	Assistant superintendent for administrative services, PEAC member
O'Fallon District 90	Superintendent; PEAC member
Community Consolidated Schools District 168	Director of special education; PEAC member
Peoria Public Schools 150	Director of bilingual and multicultural programs; PEAC member
Huntley Community School District 158	Assistant superintendent of special services; PEAC member
Richland County Community Unit School District #1	Educator
Illinois Association of School Personnel Administrators	Executive director
Association of Rural and Small Schools	Executive director

Note. PEAC = Performance Evaluation Advisory Council.

Communicating With Outreach Organizations and Intended Audiences

Prior to all data collection activities, AIR will email the outreach partners and describe the data collection effort (e.g., to recruit participants for the survey, interviews, and focus groups; to request documentation of districts' systems and processes for evaluating educators and school-based administrators). In addition, AIR will provide communication templates for outreach partners to use when engaging with prospective participants (e.g., school-based administrators, PK–12 educators, and joint committee members). We also will provide a suggested timeline to launch and follow up on all outreach efforts. In addition to email, other modes of outreach communication may include notices on organizations' websites and in newsletters, as well as social media posts. All communication templates can be modified as the outreach organizations see fit. Exhibit 2 provides an example of an email template that professional organizations and districts can use to encourage survey participation among members.

Exhibit 2. Sample Email Promoting Survey Participation

We are inviting PK–12 public educators and leaders in Illinois to share your perspectives on and experiences with educator and school-based administrator evaluation in your district.

The Performance Evaluation Reform Act of 2010 requires that all Illinois districts implement performance evaluation systems for educators and leaders. The Illinois State Board of Education, in partnership with the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council, has commissioned the American Institutes of Research to conduct a study to better understand the opportunities and challenges involved with local evaluation systems throughout our state.

Please complete this survey at your earliest convenience: [insert link]. *Thank you in advance for your important contributions to this study!*

Exhibit 3 details the data sources, intended participants, and proposed research activities aligned with each RQ. During each data collection activity, AIR will communicate with outreach partners to provide updates on participation rates and—as needed—to strategize ways to promote greater participation. For example, if we find that survey participation rates are greater among educators and administrators in large urban districts than in smaller, rural districts, we will implement a more targeted recruitment effort. In this case, we would leverage contacts within and beyond the identified outreach organizations to encourage underrepresented parties to participate in the study. If funds allow, we may offer targeted incentives to attract a wide and representative sample of Illinois educators and administrators. The funds needed to provide targeted incentives may require a modification to AIR's current contract, and we look forward to discussing this further with ISBE.

The proposed research activities are preliminary, and we look forward to receiving feedback from ISBE and PEAC on the proposed activities and methodology. Research methodology will be finalized in August 2023, after AIR submits the research plan (including the PERA background, RQs, outreach plan, survey instrument, and interview/focus group protocols) to ISBE.

Exhibit 3. Data Sources, Intended Participants, and Research Activities

Data source(s)	Participants	Research activities
Documents	• District education agencies	• In August 2023, we will finalize our sample of districts from which to recruit school-based administrators and educators. • In September 2023, we will ask these district education agencies to provide us with documents related to their evaluation systems and processes for educators and school-based administrators.
Survey	• School-based administrators • Educators	• In October 2023, we will administer a statewide survey to school-based administrators and educators. • We will leverage ISBE and PEAC members' communication outlets, including mailing lists, websites, and social media outlets, to promote awareness of the survey and to encourage participation. • On surveys, we will include a question asking respondents if they would welcome an invitation to participate in focus groups.
Focus groups	• School-based administrators • Educators	• In November 2023, we will recruit participants who indicated "yes" on surveys to participate in focus groups. • We also will recruit via email. We will leverage ISBE and PEAC members' communication outlets, including listservs, websites, and social media outlets, to promote awareness of the survey and to encourage participation. • In January 2024, we will conduct focus groups with school-based administrators and educators. • Interviews and focus groups will be virtual on Zoom. • Focus groups will include eight to 10 participants to allow for all voices and perspectives to be heard.
Interviews	• Joint committee members • Former PEAC members • Current/former legislators	• In November 2023, we will recruit participants for interviews. • We will recruit via email. We will leverage ISBE and PEAC members' communication outlets, including mailing lists, websites, and social media outlets, to promote awareness of the interviews and encourage participation. • In January 2024, we will conduct interviews with joint committee members, former PEAC members, and current/former legislators. • Interviews will be virtual on Zoom.

Note. ISBE = Illinois State Board of Education; PEAC = Performance Evaluation Advisory Council.

ISBE PERA Implementation Study: Interim Report

Timeline

The timeline in Exhibit 4 shows the progression of key checkpoints and deliverables during the evaluation, including plans, drafts, data collection, and final reports.

Exhibit 4. Timeline

Date	Deliverable
July 7, 2023	Submit Interim Report: • Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA) background • Research questions • Stakeholder feedback plan • Interview protocols • Focus group protocols • Survey instrument • Timeline
September 8, 2023[a]	Submit drafts: • Survey methodology • Interview methodology • Focus group methodology • Policy scan findings
February 16, 2024[a]	Complete data collection and analysis • Survey • Focus groups • Interviews
April 19, 2024[a]	Submit drafts: • Survey findings • Focus group findings • Interview findings
May 31, 2024[a]	Submit drafts: • Executive summary • Recommendations
June 28, 2024	Submit final report: • Executive summary • PERA background • Methodology • Policy scan findings • Survey findings • Focus group findings • Interview findings • Recommendations

[a] Tentative, internal deadlines for the American Institutes for Research.

Data Collection Instruments

To address the RQs about PERA's components, implementation, benefits, challenges, and supports, AIR will employ a three-pronged approach to data collection. First, AIR will administer a survey to a statewide sample of PK–12 educators (tenured and nontenured teachers[3]) and school-based administrators (principals and vice principals). See Exhibit 5 for the sample survey questions.[4] This quantifiable and standardized information will help assess differences and similarities between districts and serve as a foundation for determining areas that require further exploration. Second, we will conduct focus groups with a smaller sample of PK–12 educators and administrators (see Exhibits 6 and 7). Third, we will conduct interviews with (a) former PEAC members, (b) legislators and staff (both current and former) who participated in the development of Senate Bill 315 (the Performance Evaluation Reform Act[5]) and Senate Bill 7,[6] and (c) district joint committee members (see Exhibits 8, 9, and 10). These qualitative methods will allow for in-depth probing and iteration based on the survey findings, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the RQs.

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[3] "Teacher" means full- or part-time professional employees of the school district who must hold a teaching certificate issued in accordance with Article 21 of the School Code or a professional educator's license endorsed for a teaching field issued in accordance with Article 21B of the School Code. For the purposes of the requirements specific to student growth outlined in Article 24A of the School Code and this Part, "teacher" shall not include any individual who holds a school service personnel certificate issued under Article 21 of the School Code or a professional educator license endorsed for school support personnel issued under Article 21B of the School Code and is assigned to an area designated as requiring this certificate or endorsement, including but not limited to school counselor, school psychologist, nonteaching school speech and language pathologist, school nurse, or school social worker. Definitions based on the PERA guidance document are provided by the ISBE (n.d.-a).

[4] AIR will submit a plan to sample from among the 852 Illinois districts between July and August 2023. We may propose to survey Chicago Public Schools and then select a stratified random sample of districts by weighting districts' probability of being sampled based on total student enrollment and the characteristics of the students in those districts. We may then select a stratified random sample of schools within those districts. We may subsequently seek to survey every PK–12 educator and administrator within those schools. See the ISBE Education Data Systems list of public schools (ISBE, n.d.-b).

[5] PERA changed the measures for teacher and principal performance to include measures of student growth and professional practice. These measures are meant to be based on "standards of effective teaching, with evaluators trained and prequalified to conduct observations, collect evidence, and provide helpful feedback." Districts were meant to improve professional development in response to PERA to support educators in improving student learning. See a summary by ISBE (n.d.-a) and Senate Bill 315 (Illinois General Assembly, 2010).

[6] Senate Bill 7 was signed into law by the governor on June 13, 2011. Senate Bill 7 addresses, among other things, (a) a standard on which the state superintendent may initiate certificate/license action against an educator for incompetency, (b) requirements for the filling of new and vacant positions, (c) acquisition of tenure, (d) reductions in force/layoffs and recall rights, (e) the system for the dismissal of tenured teachers, (f) required school board member training, and (g) processes related to collective bargaining and the right to strike. See a summary by ISBE (n.d.-a) and Senate Bill 7 (Illinois General Assembly, 2011).

Survey Instrument

The survey in Exhibit 5 will be disseminated to teachers and school administrators. Each question helps answer at least one of the five RQs, including questions about evaluation components, implementation, benefits, challenges, and supports. Demographic questions are included to provide comparison points across the sample.

Exhibit 5. Survey Instrument (PK–12 Educators and School Administrators)

Question	Demographics	RQ1: Components	RQ2: Implementation	RQ3: Benefits	RQ4: Challenges	RQ5: Supports
1. Were you evaluated in an Illinois public school as a tenured or nontenured teacher, principal, assistant principal, or other school-based administrator during the previous school year (2022–23)? Please select one: (required) a. Yes (Go to Q2.) b. No (Go to thank you page.)	X					
2. (If Q1 = "Yes") What Illinois **district(s)** did you work in during the previous school year (2022–23)? If you worked in more than one district, please select the district in which you spent most of your time. Please select one: (required) a. Insert list of districts.	X					
3. What Illinois **school(s)** did you work in during the previous school year (2022–23)? Please select all that apply: (required) a. Insert list of schools.	X					

Question	Demographics	RQ1: Components	RQ2: Implementation	RQ3: Benefits	RQ4: Challenges	RQ5: Supports
4. What was your **role** during the previous school year (2022–23)? If you worked in more than one role, please select the role in which you spent most of your time. Please select one: (required) a. Nontenured teacher (Go to Q6.) b. Tenured teacher (Go to Q5.) c. Principal (Go to Q5.) d. Assistant principal (Go to Q5.) e. Other school-based administrator (Please specify:) (required) (Go to Q5.) f. Related service provider (e.g., school counselor or nurse) (Please specify:) (required) (Go to Q5.)	X					
5. (If Q4 = "tenured teacher," "principal," "assistant principal," "other school-based administrator," or "related service provider") Did you serve as an **evaluator** during the previous school year (2022–23)? Please select one: (required) a. Yes (Go to Q6 if Q4 = "tenured teacher." Go to Q9 if Q4 = "principal," "assistant principal," "other school-based administrator," or "related service provider.") b. No (Go to Q6 if Q4 = "tenured teacher." Go to Q9 if Q4 = "principal," "assistant principal," "other school-based administrator," or "related service provider.") c. Unsure (Go to Q6 if Q4 = "tenured teacher." Go to Q9 if Q4 = "principal," "assistant principal," "other school-based administrator," or "related service provider.")	X					

Question	Demographics	RQ1: Components	RQ2: Implementation	RQ3: Benefits	RQ4: Challenges	RQ5: Supports
6. (If Q4 = "nontenured teacher" or "tenured teacher") What **grade levels** did you work with during the previous school year (2022–23)? Please select all that apply: (required) a. Early childhood (PK–2) b. Elementary (3–5) c. Middle (6–8) d. High (9–12)	X					
7. (If Q4 = "nontenured teacher") What **subject area(s)** did you teach during the previous school year (2022–23)? Please select all that apply: (required) a. General education (Go to Q8.) b. Special education (Go to Q8.) c. English language arts (Go to Q8.) d. Mathematics (Go to Q8.) e. Science (Go to Q8.) f. History/social science (Go to Q8.) g. Visual/performing arts (Go to Q8.) h. Physical/health education (Go to Q8.) i. Foreign language (Go to Q8.) j. Career and technical education (Go to Q8.) k. Other (Please specify:) (required) (Go to Q8.)	X					

Question	Demographics	RQ1: Components	RQ2: Implementation	RQ3: Benefits	RQ4: Challenges	RQ5: Supports
8. (If Q4 = "nontenured teacher" or "tenured teacher") During the previous school year (2022–23), did you teach a grade and subject tested by the Illinois statewide student assessment system (e.g., Illinois Assessment of Readiness, Illinois Science Assessment, SAT)? Please select one: (required) a. Yes (Go to Q9.) b. No (Go to Q9.) c. Unsure (Go to Q9.)	X					
9. At the conclusion of the prior school year (2022–23), how many **years of experience** did you have in this role? Please select one: (required) a. 2022–23 was my first year in this role. b. 2022–23 was my second or third year in this role. c. 2022–23 was my fourth or fifth year in this role. d. 2022–23 was my sixth or more year in this role.	X					

Question	Demographics	RQ1: Components	RQ2: Implementation	RQ3: Benefits	RQ4: Challenges	RQ5: Supports

10. Which of the following options best describes your **race or ethnicity**?[7] Please select all that apply: (optional)[8]
  a. Hispanic/Latinx
  b. White
  c. Black/African American
  d. Asian
  e. American Indian/Alaskan Native
  f. Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
  g. Other/I don't know (Please specify:) (optional)
	X					

11. How do you currently describe your **gender identity**? Please select one: (optional)
  a. Male
  b. Female
  c. Transgender
  d. Nonconforming/nonbinary
  e. Other/unsure (Please specify:) (optional)
	X					

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[7] Race-ethnicity categories are from the U.S. Census Bureau (n.d.), updated annually.
[8] Responses to Questions 10–13 are optional to protect respondent anonymity.

Question	Demographics	RQ1: Components	RQ2: Implementation	RQ3: Benefits	RQ4: Challenges	RQ5: Supports
12. How **frequently** was your professional practice **observed** as part of your district's evaluation system during the previous school year (2022–23)? Please select one: (required) a. Once b. Twice c. Three times d. Four or more times e. Unsure			X			
13. How **frequently** did you engage in a **preconference** before you were observed as part of your district's evaluation system during the previous school year (2022–23)? Please select one: (required) a. Never b. Once c. Twice d. Three times e. Four or more times f. Unsure			X			

Question	Demographics	RQ1: Components	RQ2: Implementation	RQ3: Benefits	RQ4: Challenges	RQ5: Supports
14. How **frequently** did you engage in a **postconference** after you were observed as part of your district's evaluation system during the previous school year (2022–23)? Please select one: (required) a. Never b. Once c. Twice d. Three times e. Four or more times f. Unsure			X			
15. How **frequently** did you receive **written feedback** based on an observation as part of your district's evaluation system during the previous school year (2022–23)? Please select one: (required) a. Never (Go to Q17.) b. Once (Go to Q16.) c. Twice (Go to Q16.) d. Three times (Go to Q16.) e. Four or more times (Go to Q16.) f. Unsure (Go to Q17.)			X			

Question	Demographics	RQ1: Components	RQ2: Implementation	RQ3: Benefits	RQ4: Challenges	RQ5: Supports
16. (If Q15 = "once," "twice," "three times," or "four or more times") How **actionable** was the **written** and verbal postconference **feedback** that you received as part of your district's evaluation system during the previous school year (2022–23)? Please select one: (required) a. Not at all actionable b. Somewhat actionable c. Extremely actionable d. Unsure				X		
17. How frequently did you receive **coaching opportunities** based on an observation as part of your district's evaluation system during the previous school year (2022–23)? Please select one: (required) a. Never (Go to Q19.) b. Once (Go to Q18.) c. Twice (Go to Q18.) d. Three times (Go to Q18.) e. Four or more times (Go to Q18.) f. Unsure (Go to Q19.)			X			

Question	Demographics	RQ1: Components	RQ2: Implementation	RQ3: Benefits	RQ4: Challenges	RQ5: Supports
18. (If Q17 = "once," "twice," "three times," or "four or more times") How **useful** were the **coaching opportunities** you received as part of your district's evaluation system during the previous school year (2022–23)? Please select one: (required) a. Not at all useful b. Somewhat useful c. Extremely useful d. Unsure				X		
19. Overall, how **supportive** was the district's evaluation system to your professional growth and development during the previous school year (2022–23)? (required) a. Not at all supportive b. Somewhat supportive c. Extremely supportive d. Unsure				X		
20. How confident did you feel in your **understanding** of the district's evaluation system during the previous school year (2022–23)? Please select all that apply: (required) a. Not confident b. Somewhat confident c. Extremely confident d. Unsure		X				

Question	Demographics	RQ1: Components	RQ2: Implementation	RQ3: Benefits	RQ4: Challenges	RQ5: Supports
21. Which **components** did the district's evaluation system use to rate your professional practice during the previous school year (2022–23)? Please select all that apply: (required) a. Standardized, statewide assessments (e.g., Illinois Assessment of Readiness, Illinois Science Assessment, SAT) (Go to Q22.) b. Districtwide or locally developed student assessments, including student learning objectives (Go to Q22.) c. Observation rubrics for professional practice (e.g., Framework for Teaching or Classroom Assessment Scoring System) (Go to Q23.) d. Other measures of educator practice (Please specify:) (required) (Go to Q24.) e. Unsure (Go to Q24.)		X				
22. (If Q21 = "standardized" or "districtwide or locally developed student assessments") How **fairly** did the **student assessment component** of the district's evaluation system measure your professional practice during the previous school year (2022–23)? Please select one: (required) a. Not at all fairly b. Somewhat fairly c. Extremely fairly d. Unsure					X	

Question	Demographics	RQ1: Components	RQ2: Implementation	RQ3: Benefits	RQ4: Challenges	RQ5: Supports
23. (If Q21 = "observation rubrics for professional practice") How **fairly** did the **formal observation component** of the district's evaluation system measure your professional practice during the previous school year (2022–23)? Please select one: (required) a. Not fairly at all b. Somewhat fairly c. Extremely fairly d. Unsure					X	
24. How **accurately** did the district's evaluation system measure the effectiveness of your overall professional practice during the previous school year (2022–23)? Please select one: (required) a. Not at all accurately b. Somewhat accurately c. Extremely accurately d. Unsure					X	
25. How **knowledgeable** was your **evaluator** about your professional practice during the previous school year (2022–23)? Please select one: (required) a. Not at all knowledgeable b. Somewhat knowledgeable c. Extremely knowledgeable d. Unsure						X

Question	Demographics	RQ1: Components	RQ2: Implementation	RQ3: Benefits	RQ4: Challenges	RQ5: Supports
26. How many hours of **professional learning** did you participate in connected to the feedback from your district's evaluation system during the previous school year (2022–23)? Please select one: (required) a. Less than 1 hour b. 1–2 hours c. 3–5 hours d. 6–10 hours e. More than 11 hours f. Unsure						X
27. If you requested **extra support** (e.g., informal observations, informal feedback, or informal mentorship from colleagues) to improve your practice, how **difficult** was it to get the support that you needed during the previous school year (2022–23)? Please select one: (required) a. Not at all difficult b. Somewhat difficult c. Extremely difficult d. Unsure e. I did not request additional support.						X

Question	Demographics	RQ1: Components	RQ2: Implementation	RQ3: Benefits	RQ4: Challenges	RQ5: Supports
28. Are you interested in sharing more about your experiences with the district's evaluation system during a 60-minute virtual **focus group** in January 2024 with the AIR research team? Please select one: (required) a. Yes (Go to Q29.) b. No (Go to "thank you" page.) c. Unsure (Go to "thank you" page.)	X					
29. (If Q28 = "Yes") What is your **email address**? Please specify:	X					

Note. AIR = American Institutes for Research; RQ = research question; Q = survey question; X delineates research questions that each item answers.

Focus Group Protocols

Focus group protocols are divided into two groups: a teacher protocol (Exhibit 6) and a school administrator protocol (Exhibit 7). We separated the two protocols to capture key differences in responses between the groups. Both protocols help answer all five RQs; however, because administrators serve multiple roles, the questions for this group are slightly more expansive to capture their multiple perspectives about the evaluation system.

Exhibit 6. Focus Group Protocol (Teachers)

Question	RQ1: Components	RQ2: Implementation	RQ3: Benefits	RQ4: Challenges	RQ5: Supports
1. Please tell me about your **overall experience** with the district's evaluation process during the 2022–23 school year. (required—9 minutes) *Probes:* a. How was your **impact on student learning** (e.g., student growth) measured or ascertained? (required) b. How was the quality of your professional practice measured? (required) c. What kind of **feedback** did you receive based on observations or student growth? (required)	X	X			
2. Can you provide specific examples of how the **evaluation process** in your district **improved** your professional practice during the 2022-23 school year? (required—9 minutes) *Probes:* a. How did the evaluation process help **identify** strengths or areas for growth? (required) b. What steps or actions did you take to **improve** your professional practice as a result of the evaluation process? (required) c. Are there additional **benefits** of the performance evaluation system for teachers in your district? (required)	X	X	X		

Question	RQ1: Components	RQ2: Implementation	RQ3: Benefits	RQ4: Challenges	RQ5: Supports
3. Can you provide a specific example of how the **district supported** your efforts to improve your professional practice based on the feedback you received as part of your performance evaluation during the 2022–23 school year? (required—9 minutes) *Probes:* a. **Coaching**? (required) b. **Professional development**? (required) c. Time or funding for **peer mentoring**? (required) d. Other **feedback or resources** your district offered you as you sought to improve your instruction? (required)		X	X		
4. To what extent do you feel that your **evaluator** does an **adequate** job in conducting your evaluation? Please elaborate. (required—9 minutes) *Probes:* a. What is the **background** and **experience** level of your evaluator? (required) b. How sufficiently was your evaluator **trained**? (required) c. How **knowledgeable** was your evaluator about what is going on in your professional practice? (required) d. How useful was your evaluator's **feedback**? (required) e. What **additional supports or training** would you recommend that evaluators receive as a part of their preparation to conduct evaluations? Why? (required)		X			X

Question	RQ1: Components	RQ2: Implementation	RQ3: Benefits	RQ4: Challenges	RQ5: Supports
5. How **fairly and accurately** did your district's evaluation process assess your effectiveness as an educator during the 2022–23 school year? (required—9 minutes) *Probes:* a. **Student growth** measures? (required) b. **Observations**? (required) c. **Other measures** or professional practice or impact? (required) d. Why? (as needed, based on participants' responses) e. In what ways is the evaluation process in your district susceptible to **bias or subjectivity**? (required) f. Do you have suggestions for how to mitigate bias or subjectivity (e.g., evaluator training, hiring practice, changes in the measure)? (as needed)	X				
6. What were the most significant **challenges** you faced in relation to your district's performance evaluation system? (required—9 minutes) *Probes:* a. What challenges did you face in terms of being able **use the feedback** from your performance evaluation to **improve** your professional practice? (required) b. Did you have **sufficient time** to thoughtfully prepare for and engage in the evaluation process? Please explain. (required) c. Were there aspects of the evaluation process that seemed **unhelpful** to your instructional practice? If yes, please elaborate. (required) d. Can you provide a specific **example**? (as needed, based on participants' responses)	X			X	

Question	RQ1: Components	RQ2: Implementation	RQ3: Benefits	RQ4: Challenges	RQ5: Supports
7. How did the **COVID-19 pandemic** impact your performance evaluation, including the process and outcome? (optional—9 minutes) *Probes:* (as needed, based on participants' responses) a. Did the pandemic impact how often you were **observed**? If so, please elaborate. b. Did the pandemic impact the **feedback** you received? If so, please elaborate. c. Did the pandemic impact your **ability to act on the feedback** you received through the evaluation process? If so, in what ways? d. Did the pandemic impact how **student growth measures** were used to assess your effectiveness?				X	
8. What **improvements** to the performance evaluation process would you recommend to your district leaders? To your state leaders? (optional—9 minutes)					X
9. Is there **anything else** that you haven't shared during this focus group that you think is important for us to know for the purposes of this study? (optional—9 minutes)					

Note. RQ = research question.

Exhibit 7. Focus Group Protocol (School Administrators)

Question	RQ1: Components	RQ2: Implementation	RQ3: Benefits	RQ4: Challenges	RQ5: Supports
1. Please tell me about your **role** within the district. Are you a school administrator, an evaluator, or both? (required—2 minutes) (Zoom Poll)					
2. Please describe your **experiences** with your district's teacher evaluation system. (required—10 minutes) *Probes:* a. What **observation tools** do evaluators use to assess aspects of teaching? (required) b. Are evaluation components **weighted** in a way that properly portrays a teacher's overall performance? (required) c. What frameworks or rubrics do evaluators use when observing **teachers**? (required) d. What **software** does your district use to manage the evaluation process? How helpful is it? Are there any barriers to using it? (optional)	X	X	X	X	
3. What type of **training** does your district provide for **evaluators**? (required—9 minutes) *Probes:* a. What are the components of the training? (required) b. Is there an **antibias** component to the training? If so, please describe. (required) c. About **how much time** does it take? (required) d. **How often** is training provided? (e.g., one time at the beginning of the year) (required) e. How **adequately** did the training prepare you to be an evaluator? (required) f. If not, what **additional training** would be helpful? (optional)		X			X

Question	RQ1: Components	RQ2: Implementation	RQ3: Benefits	RQ4: Challenges	RQ5: Supports
4. How has the performance evaluation process in your district **supported** improvements to teaching? (required—9 minutes) *Probes:* a. What are the main **benefits** of the performance evaluation system for teachers in your district? b. Can you provide a specific **example of strengths and areas of growth** that were identified for your teachers? c. What **supports** does your district offer to teachers who are seeking to improve? d. What **steps or actions** have you taken to improve the effectiveness of your teachers because of the evaluation process?	X	X	X		
5. How **fairly and accurately** does your district's evaluation process measure teacher effectiveness? Please elaborate. (required—9 minutes) *Probes:* a. Based on **student growth** measures? (required) b. Based on **observations**? (required) c. **Other measures** of professional practice? (required) d. **Why** do you think that student growth/observations/other measures are accurate/inaccurate measures of teacher effectiveness? (as needed, based on participants' responses) e. In what ways is the evaluation process in your district susceptible to **bias or subjectivity**? (required) f. Do you have suggestions for how to mitigate bias or subjectivity (e.g., evaluator training, hiring practice, changes in the measure)? (as needed)		X			

Question	RQ1: Components	RQ2: Implementation	RQ3: Benefits	RQ4: Challenges	RQ5: Supports
6. What are the most significant **challenges** facing leaders and evaluators related to the district's teacher performance evaluations? (required—9 minutes) *Probes:* a. What challenges do evaluators face in **providing useful feedback** to those you evaluate? (required) b. What challenges do teachers face in terms of **obtaining useful** feedback? (required) c. What challenges do teachers face in terms of **improving** their professional practice? (required) d. Did you have sufficient **time** to thoughtfully prepare for and engage in the evaluation process? Please explain. (required) e. Can you provide a **specific example**? (as needed, based on participants' responses)				X	
7. How do you **use information** collected through the performance evaluation system **to improve instructional quality** in your school? (required—9 minutes) *Probes:* a. **Setting goals** for your school? (required) b. Determining **areas** of focus for **professional development**? (required) c. Identifying **supports** for teachers? (required) d. Any other **examples**? (required) e. Do you receive information from the evaluation process in a manner that is **timely** and/or **useful**? (required) f. Please describe any **additional** systems of **observation and feedback** outside the performance evaluation system that you use to support the professional growth and development of educators in your building. (optional)	X		X		

Question	RQ1: Components	RQ2: Implementation	RQ3: Benefits	RQ4: Challenges	RQ5: Supports
8. How does your district use the information collected through the performance evaluation system to inform **personnel management decisions** (i.e., tenure or dismissals)? (optional—9 minutes)		X	X		
9. How did the **COVID-19 pandemic** impact performance evaluations in your school? (optional—9 minutes) *Probes:* a. How did the pandemic impact the work of evaluators? (optional) b. Did the pandemic impact the **frequency** of **teacher observations**? If so, please elaborate. (optional) c. Did the pandemic impact the **quality of feedback** teachers received? If so, please elaborate. (optional) d. Did the pandemic impact teachers' **capacity to act** on the feedback they received through the evaluation process? If so, in what ways? (optional) e. How did the pandemic impact how **student growth** measures were used to assess educator effectiveness? (optional)				X	
10. What **improvements** to the performance **evaluation** process would you recommend to your **district leaders**? To your **state leaders**? (optional—5 minutes)					X
11. Is there **anything else** that you haven't shared during this focus group that you think is important for us to know for the purposes of this study? (optional—3 minutes)					

Interview Instruments

There are three interview protocols: former PEAC members (Exhibit 8), authors of the original Illinois Senate bill (Exhibit 9), and joint committee members (Exhibit 10). These protocols help answer all five RQs, and the responses are meant to inform understandings of state and local contexts, in addition to implementation, benefits, and challenges.

Exhibit 8. Interview Protocol (Former PEAC Members)

Question	RQ1: Components	RQ2: Implementation	RQ3: Benefits	RQ4: Challenges	RQ5: Supports
1. Please describe your **role and involvement** as an original PEAC (Performance Evaluation Advisory Council) member. (2 minutes)					
2. What were the **intended benefits** of implementing PERA (Performance Evaluation Reform Act)? (5-6 minutes) *Probes:* a. For **teachers**? b. For **administrators**? c. For **students**? d. For **school districts**?	X				
3. Did PERA have any **goals** other than the intended benefits you just described? (5 minutes)	X				
4. Now that PERA is being implemented, what do you see as the **actual or realized benefits** for educators, students, and others? (5-6 minutes)			X		
5. What has been the **impact** of the legislation on educators and students on . . . (5-6 minutes) a. educator **effectiveness**? b. educator **retention**? c. educator **promotion**? d. student **performance**?			X	X	

Question	RQ1: Components	RQ2: Implementation	RQ3: Benefits	RQ4: Challenges	RQ5: Supports
6. What **challenges** occurred with implementing PERA? (5-6 minutes) *Probes:* a. Were there any **unintended** consequences or unanticipated challenges? b. What challenges did PEAC members **anticipate**?				X	
7. Please describe the early phases of the **implementation** process of PERA. (5-6 minutes) *Probes:* a. What **issues** came up? b. How were they **resolved**?		X			
8. Do you believe that most districts' systems for evaluating teachers under PERA provide **fair** measures of teacher effectiveness? (5-6 minutes) *Probes:* a. **What** makes you think so? b. Can you provide an **example**?		X			
9. If **PERA** were revised, what **changes** would you **recommend** that it include? Why? (5-6 minutes)					X

Note. RQ = research question.

Exhibit 9. Interview Protocol (Illinois Senate Bill Authors)

Question	RQ1: Components	RQ2: Implementation	RQ3: Benefits	RQ4: Challenges	RQ5: Supports
1. What were the intended benefits of implementing the Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA) of 2010? (5 minutes) *Probes:* a. For teachers? b. For administrators? c. For students? d. For school districts?			X		
2. In addition to these benefits, what were some of your other goals when proposing PERA and/or Senate Bill 7? (5 minutes) *Probes:* a. Which individuals, organizations, or events played important roles in developing the legislation?	X				
3. What were the actual benefits of implementing PERA, as best you can describe them? (5 minutes)			X		
4. What is the impact of the legislation on . . . (5 minutes) a. educator effectiveness? b. educator retention? c. educator promotion? d. student performance?			X	X	
5. What challenges did you *anticipate* districts might face when implementing the legislation? (5 minutes) *Probes:* a. Were these challenges realized?				X	

Question	RQ1: Components	RQ2: Implementation	RQ3: Benefits	RQ4: Challenges	RQ5: Supports
6. Has the legislation had any **unintended consequences** or unanticipated challenges associated with it? (5 minutes) *Probes:* a. Some **examples** might include consequences related to policy, resources, staffing, equity, and local communities. b. Can you briefly **elaborate** on your response?				X	
7. Please describe the **early phases of the implementation** process of PERA. (5 minutes) *Probes:* a. What **issues** came up? b. How were they resolved?		X			
8. What were the **responses to PERA**, particularly from **districts**? (5 minutes) *Probes:* a. How and to what extent did districts **support** the implementation process?		X			X
9. Do you believe that most districts' systems for evaluating teachers provide **valid, reliable measures** of teacher effectiveness? (5 minutes) *Probes:* a. **What** makes you think so? b. Can you provide an **example**?		X			
10. If PERA were revised, **what changes would you recommend** that it include? Why? (5 minutes)					X

Note. RQ = research question.

Exhibit 10. Interview Protocol (PERA Joint Committee Members)

Question	RQ1: Components	RQ2: Implementation	RQ3: Benefits	RQ4: Challenges	RQ5: Supports
1. **How long** have you been on your district's PERA (Performance Evaluation Reform Act) joint committee? (5 minutes) *Probes:* a. **When** and **how often** does the joint committee meet? b. **Do most members attend** all meetings?					
2. Based on your understanding, what were the joint committee's **original goals** regarding the evaluation process for administrators and/or teachers? (5 minutes)	X	X			
3. PERA joint committee guidelines state that the group should have equal representation of teachers and administrators. Can you describe **how joint committee membership is determined** in your district? (5 minutes) *Probes:* a. Is there an **application** process? b. Are there **requirements** to be eligible to serve? c. Can anyone who is eligible join or is there a **limit** to the number of members?	X				
4. What does the **work** of your district's joint committee **involve**? (5 minutes) *Probes:* a. What are the **roles and responsibilities** of joint committee members? What is your specific role? b. What **goals or expectations** have been established for the joint committee? c. How has the role of the joint committee **changed** across time?		X			

Question	RQ1: Components	RQ2: Implementation	RQ3: Benefits	RQ4: Challenges	RQ5: Supports
5. What do you believe are the **strengths** of your district's current system for evaluating educator effectiveness? (5 minutes)			X		
6. What do you believe are the **weaknesses** of your district's current system for evaluating educator effectiveness? (5 minutes)				X	
7. In what ways have you and other members of your district's joint committee been involved in **providing feedback on or making recommendations** to your district's evaluation system? (5 minutes)					X
8. Describe the committee's **process for reviewing** the district's teacher evaluation system, including how often these reviews occur. (5 minutes) *Probes:* a. What **criteria or evidence** does the committee consider when evaluating the district's teacher evaluation system?					X
9. In what ways has your involvement with the joint committee led to **changes** in your district's performance evaluation system? (5 minutes) *Probes:* a. What were the **changes**? b. How were these changes **received** by educators? Evaluators?	X	X	X	X
10. Did the **COVID-19** pandemic play a role in influencing or informing any of these changes? (5 minutes)				X	
11. Please describe any **actions** your district has taken to make the evaluation process more **efficient** and/or less time intensive for educators and evaluators. (5 minutes)					X

Note. RQ = research question.

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