

# INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION PHASE TRAINING FEEDBACK

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November 2011

## CONTEXT

Over the last two years, the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) has worked with internal and external stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, labor partners, parents, and students, to develop multiple measure performance review systems that will allow the District to better differentiate between the performance levels of its educators, celebrate and recognize excellence, and provide targeted support to improve teaching and learning. The Initial Implementation Phase (IIP) of the Educator Growth and Development Cycle will test out the multiple measure performance review and support system we seek to bring to district-wide scale for our teachers and school leaders.<sup>1</sup> In this phase, we are working with a set of representative schools throughout LAUSD, where participants will be providing critical feedback on the tools and process necessary to further develop and refine the components.

This report is part of our commitment to collect, synthesize, and respond to feedback as we approach the mid-year mark of this Initial Implementation Phase. Survey data from participants in the IIP process will be used to inform future observer and teacher trainings as well as make refinements to the LAUSD Educator Growth and Development Cycle.

## SUMMARY FINDINGS

This summer, prior to the start of the Initial Implementation Phase, teachers, school leaders, central and local district office personnel who volunteered to participate in the no-stakes IIP attended trainings that introduced them to the Educator Growth and Development Cycle, familiarized them with their roles and expectations, and prepared them to begin implementing the program at their school sites.

Most Observer Certification Training participants were satisfied with the quality of the workshop delivery and reported feeling that the training sufficiently equipped them for the observer role. However, respondents felt less confident using the web platform, understanding 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, and were less satisfied with the pace of the workshop, which they reported as being too much to digest in five full days.

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<sup>1</sup> The Initial Implementation Phase of the Educator Growth and Development Cycle is based on a multiple measure performance review system made up of objective classroom observations by trained professionals, including each teacher's supervising administrator and a second observer, along with smaller fractions of the process consisting of stakeholder feedback, contributions to school community, and contributions to student outcomes. The support and development of our educators will be individualized for each employee, and will be based on the specific needs and opportunities for acceleration identified during an educator's performance review process. To that end, we are developing templates, training, and support for Individual Growth Planning for each teacher and school leader. These plans will include education (e.g., attending classes and workshops), exposure (e.g., watching someone else demonstrate excellence in the development area) and experience (e.g., targeted attempts at trying out new skills in one's role as a teacher or school leader).

Teacher Training participants also mostly felt that their training activities were effective. Their open-ended comments revealed the need for greater clarification of the Initial Implementation Phase and expectations for participating teachers.

### **Key IIP Participant Recommendations**

- Systematize a feedback loop to gather input and communicate it back.
- Clarify the Initial Implementation Phase, with specific due dates for action items.
- Ensure that participants know how to receive the support and answers they need from Talent Management.
- Offer tech support and computer training before the general training and improve usability of the web platform.
- Spend more time during the observer training reviewing the Teaching & Learning Framework rubric and clarifying 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills.
- Build in more practice observing and scoring videos of classroom teaching or live teaching, and allow observers to compare their scores with those of the “experts.”
- Streamline the activities and templates to make implementation more feasible.

## **OBSERVER TRAINING**

### **I. Introduction**

This summer, LAUSD held a series of 5-day trainings to prepare school leaders, local district leaders, and District instructional experts for their observation role in the Initial Implementation Phase of the Educator Growth and Development Cycle. From mid-June to mid-October, primary observers (Principals and Assistant Principals) and second observers (local district staff, central office staff, instructional experts, etc.) participated in 32-hour, week-long trainings that took place around the district. Five hundred and fifty-four observers enrolled in the course, EGD201, and 413 have completed the course to date (105 primary observers and 308 secondary observers) in 12 different cohorts. The training was developed and facilitated by LAUSD’s partner, Teaching & Learning Solutions (TLS). Staff from the LAUSD Talent Management Office was present at the trainings to provide an overview of the context, purpose, and history of this work, as well as to answer participant questions. Throughout the observer training, participants viewed videos to collect evidence of teaching, and assessed the teacher’s performance against the Teaching & Learning Framework to derive scores for the teacher’s performance. The participants’ evidence and ratings of the teacher’s performance were submitted on the final day for an individual assessment of their work.

### **II. Observer Certification Training Survey Findings**

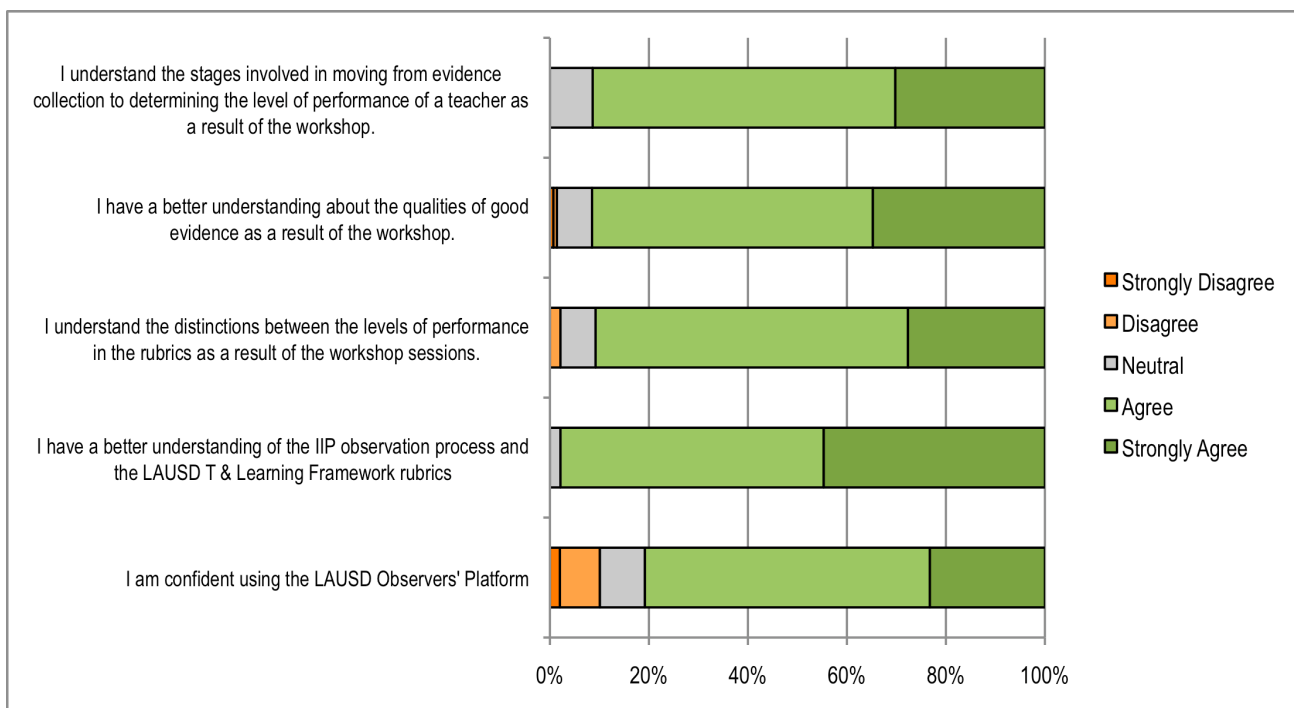
After each training series ended, Teaching & Learning Solutions (TLS) sent an online survey to workshop participants asking for feedback via SurveyMonkey. The survey uses a combination of open and close-ended questions to ask for feedback on the workshop delivery and mastery of observer concepts and skills. 141 participants completed the feedback survey, giving data

collection efforts a response rate of 34%.<sup>2</sup> This report used the available data from this survey, incorporating 5 different data sets, some which were only available in summary form. Seventy-two responses were available in raw form, and we were able to analyze these by job title. Limitations of these data include the low response rates, and the nature of self-reported data, which may not capture participants' actual mastery of concepts and skills precisely.

### A. Mastery of Concepts and Observer Role

Most training participants reported feeling that they had mastered the concepts and skills necessary to be an Observer in the Initial Implementation Phase after completing the training. However, respondents reported less confidence in their ability to navigate the web platform in order to complete the observation tasks.

**Exhibit 1: Understanding & Mastery of Teaching & Learning Framework and Observer Role**  
N=141



Compared to other areas, participants felt the most comfortable with the IIP process and the Teaching & Learning Framework rubrics, with 98% of survey respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement, "I have a better understanding of the IIP observation process and the LAUSD Teaching & Learning Framework rubrics" (Exhibit 1). Despite an improved understanding, at least 12 survey respondents still recommended that the training spend more time reviewing the Framework rubrics during the training. One respondent commented, "I still

<sup>2</sup> Survey response rates are largely dependent upon context and can be influenced by incentives or the frequency of follow-up contact. The validity of survey responses depend on how representative the respondents are of the survey population and whether there is non-response bias. This report does not use the data for statistical analysis and assumes that the 141 respondents largely share the opinions of most of the training participants.

think we all need more work with the Framework first and then focus on the technology piece. Retention of content would be better for everyone.” Another suggested that trainings, “Spend more time analyzing and synthesizing rubrics to develop common understanding and expectations.”

The majority of respondents also felt that they understood how to use evidence objectively to identify where a teacher’s practice falls among the four levels of performance within the Teaching & Learning Framework rubric. Ninety-one percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they understand how to collect evidence, distinguish between different levels of performance, and use evidence to distinguish between levels of performance. Of note, 24 survey respondents stated the need for more practice observing and scoring videos of classroom teaching or live teaching before they felt prepared to observe.

*“I need future opportunities to view teacher lessons, collect evidence, align evidence with standards, evaluate it, and practice scoring in the platform.”*

In addition to wanting more opportunities to practice observing, at least 18 survey respondents also expressly requested greater insight into how experts scored the practice videos and differentiated between levels of performance. Five other respondents noted that watching examples of highly effective teaching would help them know what to watch for in their own observations.

*“I am looking forward to seeing how my scores calibrate with the experts. Also, it would have been great to have been able to do a ‘test’ scoring and, with my own answers in front of me, walk through the ‘correct’ scoring with rationales provided.”*

Of all the survey questions, respondents indicated slightly less confidence with the Observer Platform. Exhibit 1 shows that 81% of survey respondents agreed that they feel confident using the Observer Platform, while 9% were neutral and 10% disagreed with the statement. In their qualitative comments, 13 respondents felt challenged by the technological demands of the process, from typing during the observation to laptop use. One respondent requested, “I would like to be taught some computer skills that would aid my ability to work through this program.” Eighteen survey respondents wanted more practice navigating the Observer Platform, or felt that it still needs improvements to become more user-friendly.

An analysis of a smaller subset of survey respondents by job title reveals slight differences in participants’ confidence mastering Teaching & Learning Framework concepts and observation skills. Using a 5-point scale (“1” being “strongly disagree” and “5” being “strongly agree”), Exhibit 2 shows that Principals and Response to Intervention Experts/Coordinators felt the most confident using the web platform for observation compared to other positions, while there is less variation across job titles among the other survey questions.

**Exhibit 2: Observer Training Ratings Sorted by Job Title**  
N=72

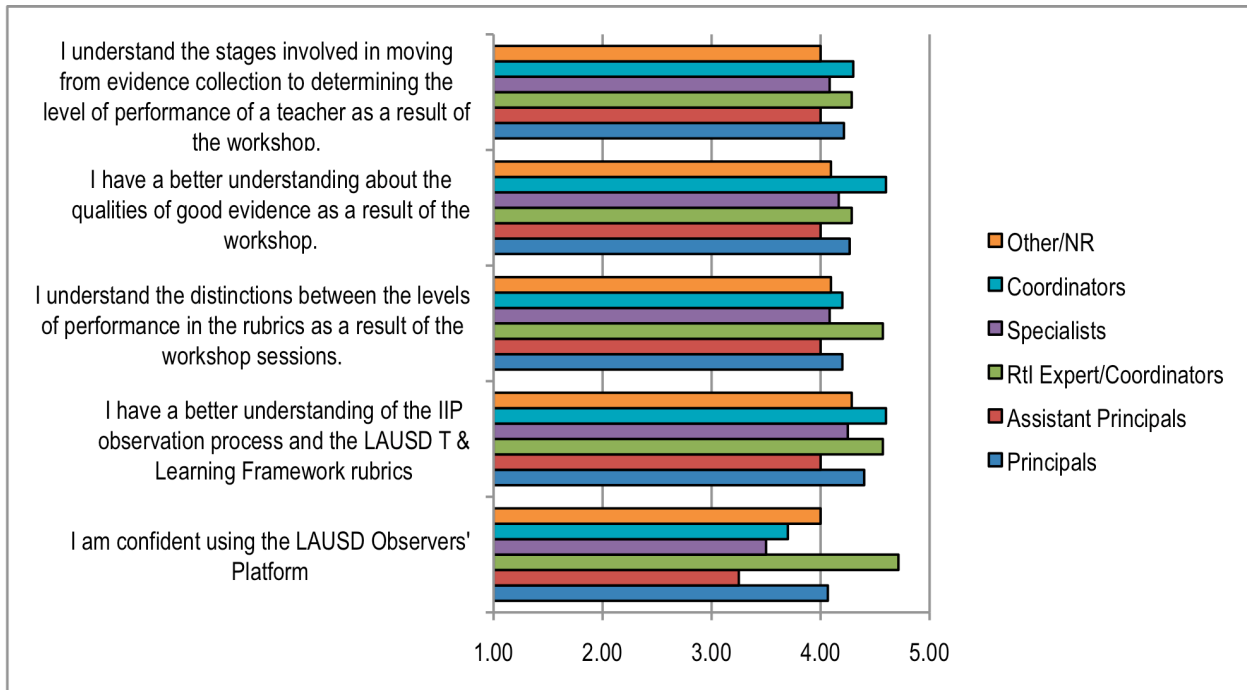
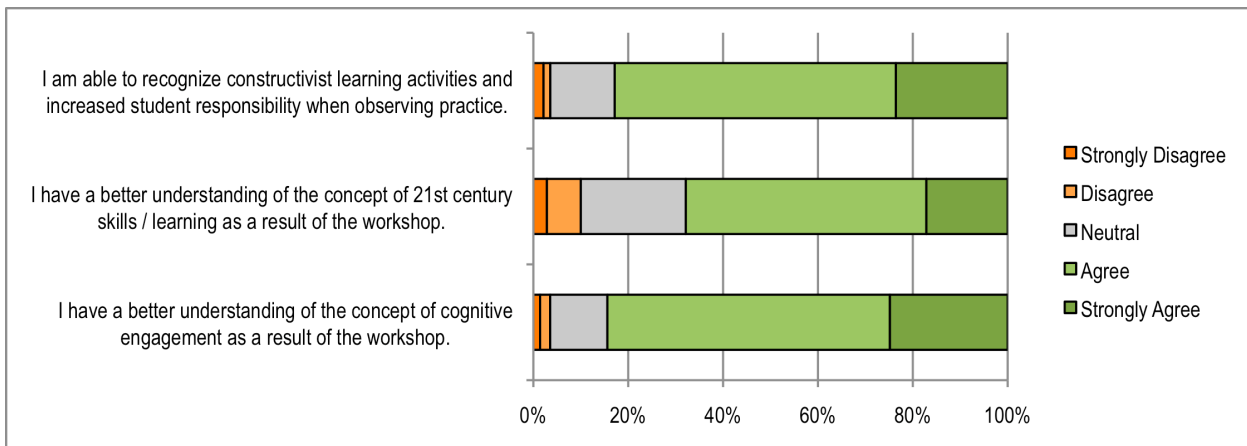


Exhibit 3 below shows training participants' self-reported understanding and ability to identify the three underlying priorities of the Teaching & Learning Framework: 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills; cognitive engagement; and constructivist learning. While 83-84% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they understand or are able to recognize cognitive engagement and constructivist learning activities, 68% of respondents developed an understanding of 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills and learning. Seven respondents requested a more in-depth discussion and clarification of 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills. For example, one respondent wanted an "explicit list of 21st Century Skills as defined by LAUSD."

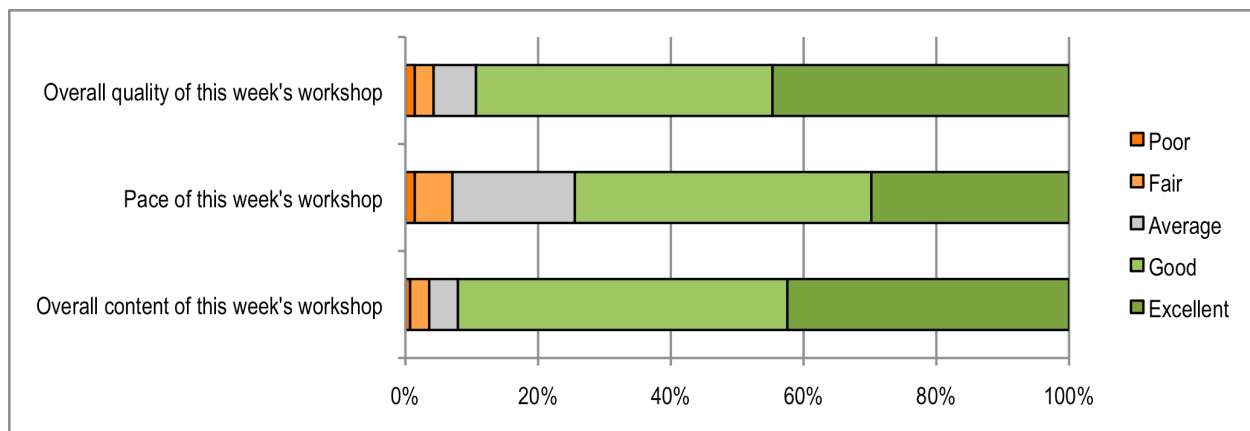
**Exhibit 3: Understanding Underlying Priorities of the Teaching & Learning Framework**  
N=141



## B. Quality of Workshops

Overall, most survey respondents were satisfied with the quality of the observer trainings (Exhibit 4 below). One possible area for improvement is the pace of the workshop, with 7% of respondents rating the pace as “Poor” or “Fair,” and another 18% of respondents marking “Neutral.” Fourteen respondents remarked that the training was very intense, and that it covered a lot of dense material within a 5-day period. One respondent suggested, “Perhaps the training should be organized so that all 5 days are not completed in a row. Time in between to reflect and think might be helpful.” Another commented, “[There’s a] fine line between having enough time to truly absorb the information to adequately do the data collection and assessment and the overload that occurs—it’s hard work!! I think the follow up during the year is essential.” On the other hand, a couple of respondents felt that the training moved too slowly during some portions.

**Exhibit 4: Workshop Delivery Ratings**  
N=141



Survey respondents also expressed appreciation for the quality of the training and the patience and knowledge of the facilitators. At least fifty respondents shared sentiments such as, “Having several opportunities to review the lesson plan and gather evidence as well and understand how data should be captured during each stage was quite beneficial. The learning curve was high, and I know you all did a great deal of work to present us with this training. Thank you.”

*“I appreciate the skillful, professional manner in which this training was delivered. [I] also appreciated insights shared, [and] the manner in which participants were put at ease and skill with which productive conversations were fostered.”*

## C. Workshop Recommendations

Respondents offered several logistical suggestions to improve the observer training, from organizing the binder with color coding and continuous pagination, to making sure all the questions in the “Parking Lot” are addressed, to making sure that participants have an opportunity to review materials prior to the training. One respondent felt uncomfortable going through the training with their principal in the room, and would have preferred a separate workshop in order to feel free to speak candidly. Additional recommendations embedded in the survey findings above include:

- Spend more time reviewing the Framework rubric during the training.
- Build in more practice observing and scoring videos of classroom teaching or live teaching.
- Allow observers to compare their scores with those of the “experts.”
- More in-depth discussion and clarification of 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills.
- Give examples of highly effective teaching.
- Making the online platform more user-friendly.
- Offer computer training to those who need it before the observer training.
- Spread the training out over a longer period and build time for reflection.

### III. Comments on the Educator Growth & Development Cycle

In addition to workshop improvements, survey respondents also commented on the Educator Growth and Development Cycle and the Teaching & Learning Framework. Twenty-four respondents made suggestions, a sample of which are included below:

*“To have a more concise rubric that would focus on the lesson observed. I found the rubric cumbersome and not always correctly or fairly describing level of performance.”*

*“I think it will be very important to continually share and get feedback about the tools we're using and the process. I think that the rubric will need to be tweaked and there is some language that will need to be clarified.”*

*“I think this will be a valuable tool, but I think focusing on all the elements is a bit much both for the principal/observer and for the teacher if it is to be truly used as a tool to support teacher improvement. I think establishing a focus on a few elements (as a team between the teacher and the principal) would be more valuable and helpful in improving teacher practice.”*

Survey respondents left an additional 24 comments expressing concerns with both the Initial Implementation Phase as well as LAUSD’s plans to “scale-up” in the future, particularly given the time-consuming nature of each observation cycle. One queried, “How are we going to make this doable for Principals—especially Elementary Principals who have little or no support of any kind at the school site? Supervision of instruction is the primary work we should all be doing, but the realities of being in a school do get in the way when you have no one to turn to for help with day to day issues.”

Although observers expressed some apprehension with the work ahead, administrators also expressed optimism that the school district is taking on this important work. As one observer participant revealed, “The need to reconsider the teacher evaluation process is evident. However, the methods and the integration of this project into the real world of a school building are daunting.” Another commented, “The reality is that the training was good and I understand the value, but realistically, this is very intense work.”

*“[The Teaching & Learning] Framework will help me give more explicit, useful feedback to teachers, and help guide my conversations with teachers to encourage them to think about their teaching in new ways.”*

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# TEACHER TRAINING

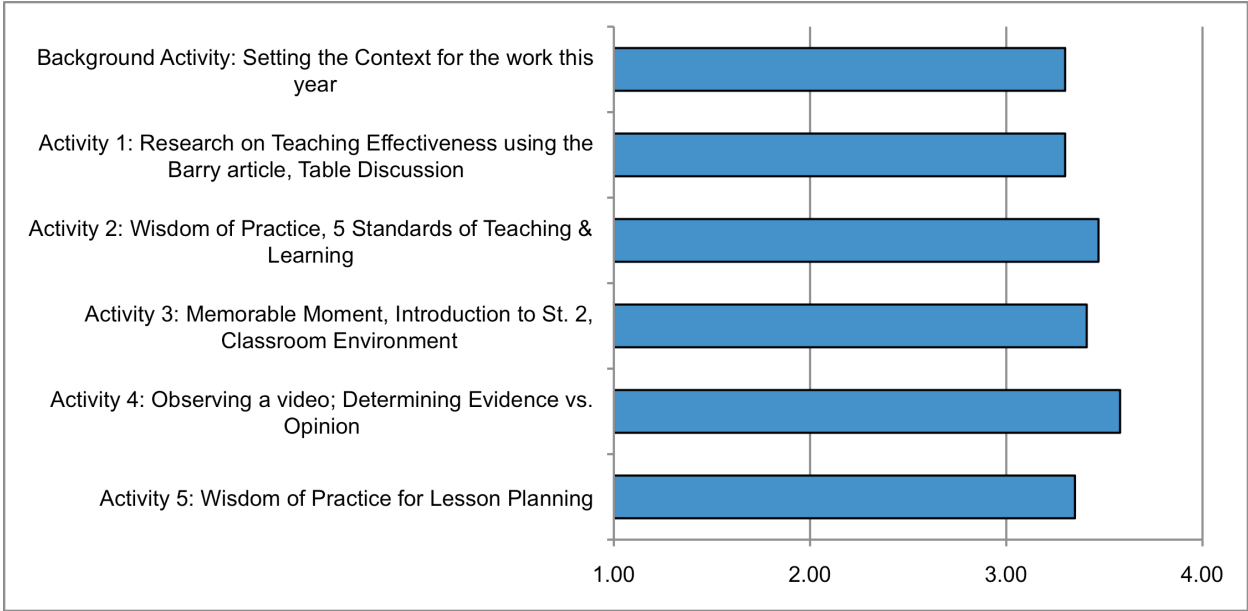
## I. Introduction

Teachers participating in the Initial Implementation Phase also went through a series of workshops. Teachers attended a 2-day workshop (EGD101) during the summer to introduce the Educator Growth & Development Cycle and the Teaching & Learning Framework rubric. Five hundred and twenty-eight teachers completed the summer training.

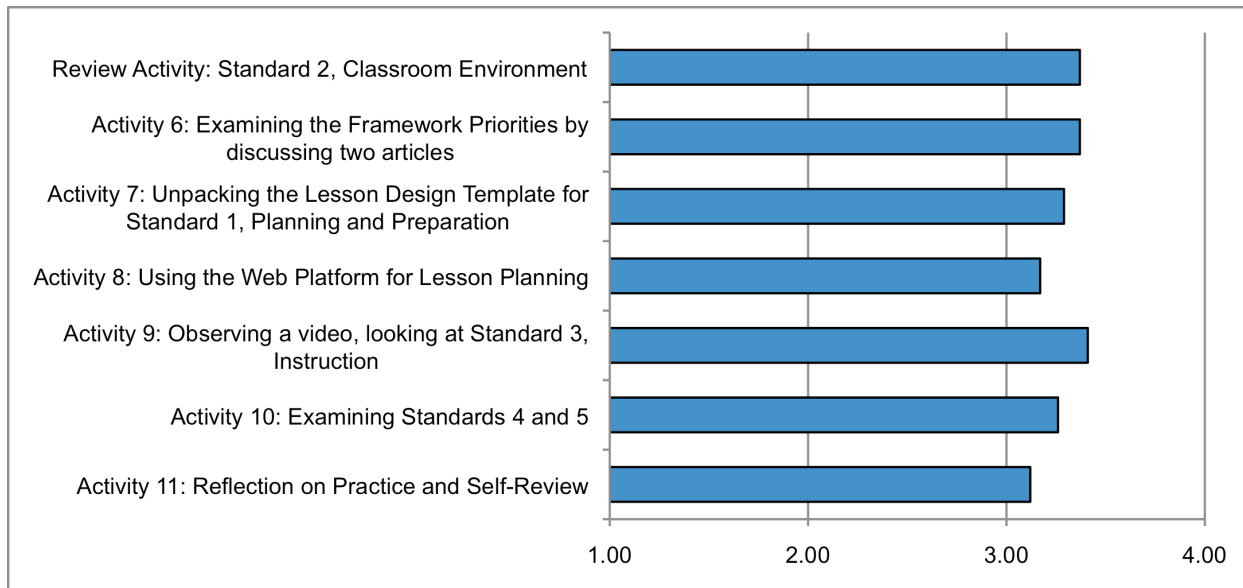
## II. Teacher Training Survey Findings

A brief online SurveyMonkey survey was sent by Teaching & Learning Solutions to training participants after each day, asking them to rate each activity on a scale of 1 to 4, with "1" meaning, "Did not work" and "4" meaning, "Was very effective or helpful." The average rating for each training activity was rated between "Somewhat effective" and "Very effective," indicating that most teachers found the trainings to be helpful.

**Exhibit 5: Summer Teacher Training EGD101, Day 1**  
N=429



**Exhibit 6: Summer Teacher Training EGD101, Day 2**  
N=373



### III. Open-Ended Teacher Feedback

Teacher survey respondents left numerous open-ended comments to offer suggestions, express concerns, and ask questions. A large number of questions revealed the need for greater clarification of the Initial Implementation Phase and expectations for participating teachers. Teachers wanted specificity around scheduling observations, time commitment, due dates for each activity and a general overview of this initial year. Teachers also wanted information about upcoming trainings for planning purposes, and some even suggested the need for further training. Another area of clarification was how teachers will be able to access their stipend and how they may use it. Many questions centered on the role, identity, and training of the second observer and how observation scores would be used.

Teachers requested additional support using and accessing the web platform. These ranged from having a tech support line to making the platform more user-friendly, particularly in the lesson plan portion. Others requested help with specific aspects of the Educator Growth & Development Cycle and wanted a District contact person, wondering, "What happens if I'm stuck? Who can I contact to help me?" Two areas that teachers wanted greater guidance in are the self assessment and lesson planning. Respondents wanted examples of strong lesson plans that are aligned to the Teaching & Learning Framework, and wanted direction on suggested length. Several felt that it is important to have a representative from LAUSD's Talent Management Office at each training to field process questions that TLS could not answer.

The open-ended comments included concerns about school site implementation as well as how this year's activities fit into the broader picture. Teachers are worried about the time required of them and their administrators, and whether the tools can be implemented with fidelity. One teacher asked, "How much time will it take, and will administrators/observers devote the time needed to make this a success?" Teachers want to know how the EGDC is different from the STULL evaluation and whether those participating in the IIP will have to undergo a STULL as

well. They were curious about where the EGDC is headed and how it will be used in their evaluation. They also wanted to know whether other staff and administrators will be going through a similar performance review cycle. Teacher respondents expressed concern about implementing a larger scale version of the IIP, given their own experiences with how demanding the process has been. One teacher asked, "There is still a lot of discontent about this process among other teachers at my school. How can I support my colleagues in becoming more accepting of the process?" Some expressed concern with Academic Growth over Time,<sup>3</sup> while others wanted to know how the observation rating would fit in with their Total Effectiveness score.

*"This whole process is extremely time-consuming. Even though the focus elements were limited to 19, it is still overwhelming. I have just completed the lesson design and that was extremely long and repetitive as well."*

Many also offered suggestions to improve the IIP and the Teaching & Learning Framework rubric. One common theme was the need to systematize a feedback loop so that teachers know how their suggestions and questions are being accounted for during the Initial Implementation Phase. Several teachers noted that they had raised questions during the trainings (e.g., the "Parking Lot") but had not received any follow-up.

*"I am all for hard work and implementing change for a better future, however we still need an opportunity to evaluate and provide feedback on the various components of this evaluation system. I don't think we should wait until the end of the cycle to provide feedback or some sort of evaluation. There should be different opportunities along the way to give our feedback and opinions."*

"I hope our feedback on the parking lot will be taken into consideration for change. Perhaps an anonymous parking lot bulletin board for teacher input (the practitioners) would be an idea." Another teacher wanted to know, "How much will teacher input during the pilot phase will be taken into consideration before the final product is rolled out to the district?" Teachers also expressed some concern with the Teaching & Learning Framework rubric and wanted to have an opportunity to help refine it; some noted that the language differentiating levels of performance sounded subjective, and others wanted separate rubrics for elementary and secondary educators.

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<sup>3</sup> Academic Growth over Time is LAUSD's new and comprehensive system of computing student gains that helps us know how much students have progressed on standardized tests from one year to the next. This provides a more complete picture of student learning because it compares a student's performance to his/her own expected performance (rather than comparing groups of students one year to different groups of students the following or preceding year). Academic Growth over Time also allows us to examine the impact of schools and educators on student learning outcomes and uses a value-added method that controls for external factors which often influence student test results.

### **Recommendations from Teachers**

- Clarify the Initial Implementation Phase and expectations for participating teachers, with specific due dates for action items.
- Ensure that teachers know how to contact the Talent Management office, and ensure that a representative attends all trainings to answer questions about the IIP.
- Ensure that teachers know who to contact for tech support on the MyPGS platform and elicit their suggestions for improvements.
- Create additional training or resources for completing the self assessment and lesson plan, including examples.
- Support teachers participating in the IIP with communicating with colleagues at their school.
- Address policy questions and implementation concerns that tie the observation process into the bigger picture.
- Systematize a feedback loop so that teachers know how their suggestions and questions are being accounted for during the Initial Implementation Phase, and proactively ask for feedback about the Teaching & Learning Framework and EGDC.

This first group of teachers participating in the Initial Implementation Phase acknowledged that, “this is going to require strong conviction and courage,” as well as a great deal of work. At the same time, some teachers felt energized by their experience so far. One teacher admitted that the training was, “Very different than what I was expecting. I am so glad to be working with a group of teachers that also enjoy their careers.”

*“I learned that it is important to remember that this is a process that will make me refine my practice. I need to decide on what I want to improve and focus on. I got tired of hearing the resistance of others. I had to remind myself that this process is designed to improve my teaching and my effectiveness as an educator.”*

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## CONCLUSION

When the LAUSD Teacher Effectiveness Task Force recommended a three-phase process for carrying out their recommendations, they included a year (Phase II) where the District would test out the multi-faceted review and support system in a representative sample of schools and teachers. During this 2011-2012 school year, all participants in this Initial Implementation Phase will provide critical feedback on the process and tools that have been developed. This report is the first of a series of reports the District will release on feedback that participants have shared. Suggestions, such as those found in this report, have already resulted in improvements to the process. For example:

- Changes to the MyPGS (My Professional Growth System) platform have been made, and will continue to be made, in order to make it more user-friendly.
- Communication related to participant expectations, process, and contact information has become more frequent.
- Both in-person and online support have been offered to assist participants with the performance review system.
- A schedule of formal feedback opportunities has been provided to all participants.

We look forward to our continued collaboration with teachers, school leaders, local, and central office participants to improve this system together.