



## BEYOND THE NUMBERS CONVENING 2014

### *Plenary Session Summary*

### **What's Changed? How to Make Teacher Evaluation Systems that Make a Difference**

In the opening session, **NCTE Principal Investigator Tom Kane** was accompanied by **Sara Heyburn, assistant commissioner of teachers and leaders at the Tennessee Department of Education (TN DOE), Will Marinell, senior research manager at Strategic Data Project (SDP), SDP Fellow Tony Pratt, deputy associate commissioner of data and research at the TN DOE, and SDP Fellow Nate Schwartz, director of research and policy at the TN DOE.** The panel discussed Tennessee's teacher evaluation system, a case study of a state that overhauled its evaluation system in the early stages of Race to the Top, the successes and challenges of implementing the new system at the state level, and the potential areas for growth that remain.

Successes and lessons learned from Tennessee:

- The use of multiple observations for meaningful feedback and targeted improvement has allowed Tennessee to differentiate supports and opportunities for teachers.
- The state has tried to be a model for transparency and openness to feedback through a state listening tour with educators.
- To address implementation challenges, the state dedicated a full-time staff person to answer educator questions and target support, and has trained other teachers and administrators to help principals conduct the additional observations required by the new system.
- One use of the observation data has been to evaluate a large-scale professional development. In 2012, Tennessee trained 200 Common Core coaches who went on to train 6,000 math teachers. Using teacher observation data, the state analyzed whether training these coaches affected targeted teaching practices—and student achievement. They found what they believe was a causal effect as large as half the difference usually seen between first- and second-year teachers.
- Tennessee investigated the alignment of multiple measures by partnering with SDP to implement diagnostic analyses. The analyses identified schools with high misalignment, which enabled the state to refine its evaluation system and to provide additional coaching where it was needed most.

Challenges (that other states might be seeing in their own teacher evaluation system):

- The system also demanded a lot of principals, who had to find time to complete the observations, prompting the training of additional evaluators to support the work.
- The multiple measures used in teacher evaluation systems (such as value-added and observation scores) might show conflicting information (or alignment) about teacher effectiveness.

- Researchers agree that low reliability in teacher evaluation—low correlation of observation scores with value-added scores or student surveys—is still a problem and may be in part, due to score inflation.