Evaluation Beyond the Checkbox: Turning Ratings Into Teacher Growth

November 10, 2026

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Agenda

01 Welcome & Introductions

02 The Widget Effect: Is it still true?

03 What evaluators are up against

04 Lightening the load: systems and Brevard's approach

05 Honest feedback and professional learning

06 Getting people to the table

07 Q&A + Takeaways

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Today's Presenters



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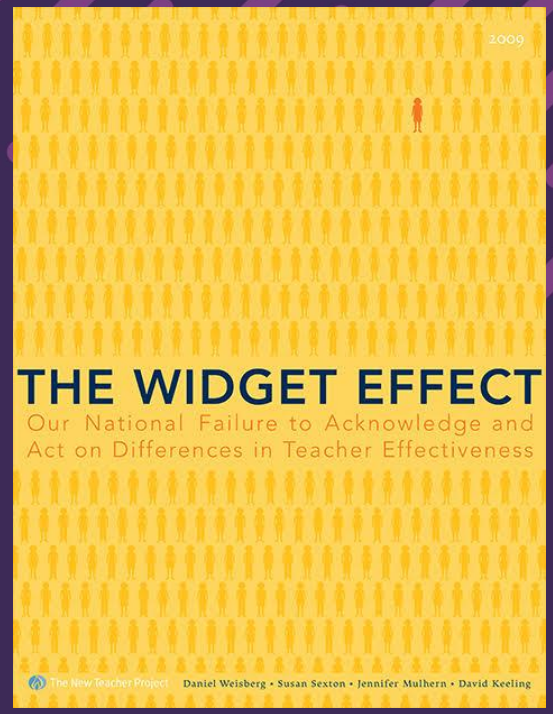
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The Widget Effect, 2009

Recognizing differences between teachers is where growth starts.

Widget: an interchangeable part. TNTP's term for assuming classroom effectiveness is the same from teacher to teacher.



>99%

of teachers rated satisfactory in districts with binary ratings

94%

received one of the top two ratings in districts with broader scales

73%

said their most recent evaluation identified no development areas

Source: Weisberg, D., Sexton, S., Mulhern, J., & Keeling, D. (2009). The Widget Effect: Our national failure to acknowledge and act on differences in teacher effectiveness (2nd ed.). The New Teacher Project. tntp.org

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Poll

Which best describes how evaluation ratings are distributed in your district?

- **A** Most teachers get the top rating
- **B** Most teachers get one of the top two ratings
- **C** Ratings are spread across the scale
- **D** Not sure / I don’t see the data

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Besides an evaluation rating, what do most teachers get in your district?

The author can see how you vote. Learn more

Nothing else	37 %
One conversation	19 %
Ongoing feedback	33 %
A specific PD plan	9 %

83 votes • Poll closed



Five Questions

1. **Is the Widget Effect still true?**
   What districts see in ratings and conversations today
2. **What are evaluators up against?**
   Time, training, and the limits of the job
3. **What changes when systems carry the admin work?**
   Taking tracking and reporting off evaluators' plates
4. **What makes feedback honest and useful?**
   The quality and source of feedback, and its link to professional learning
5. **Who else needs to be at the table?**
   Unions, cabinets, and committees

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Revisiting The Widget Effect, 2017

Question 1: Did new rating scales change ratings?

24 states, data from 2012–2016

0.48%

of teachers rated Unsatisfactory*, weighted across 24 states

0.7–28.7%

rated below Proficient*, depending on the state (lowest Hawaii, highest New Mexico). Weighted avg.: ~4%

6–62%

rated above Proficient*, depending on the state (lowest Georgia, highest Tennessee)

*Below Proficient = bottom two levels. Unsatisfactory = bottom level only. Above Proficient = top one or two levels

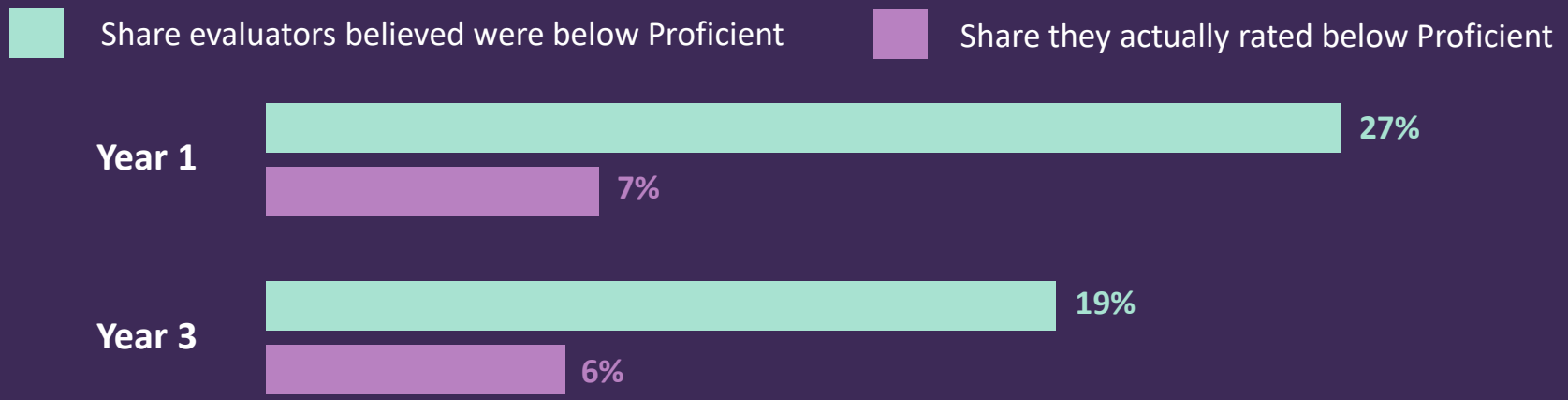
Where states do differentiate, it happens mostly at the top of the scale, and the bottom of the scale is still nearly empty. Gaps between states are too wide for teacher quality alone to explain.

Source: Kraft, M.A. & Gilmour, A.F. (2017). Revisiting the Widget Effect: Teacher evaluation reforms and the distribution of teacher effectiveness. Educational Researcher, 46(5), 234–249.

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Revisiting The Widget Effect, 2017

Question 2: Do ratings match what evaluators believe? *One large urban district*



14 of 24 principals said ***time*** was the most common reason for not giving a low rating. In that district, a below Proficient rating triggered a structured improvement plan.

Source: Kraft, M.A. & Gilmour, A.F. (2017). Revisiting the Widget Effect: Teacher evaluation reforms and the distribution of teacher effectiveness. Educational Researcher, 46(5), 234–249.

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Poll

If you asked your teachers to describe your evaluation process, which would they say it is?

- **A** A once-a-year event
- **B** A compliance requirement
- **C** Some growth, but mostly compliance
- **D** A regular part of how teachers grow
- **E** I'm not sure

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Questions?

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Thank You

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