PICCS

Partnership for Innovation in Compensation for Charter Schools

PICCS Profiler

PICCS HCMS Continuum

Career Ladder — Preparation (1) — Recruitment & Retention (2) — Induction & Mentoring (3) — Evaluation (4) — Ongoing PD/Professional Growth (5) — Performance Management (6) — (7)

Effective Practice Student Learning Outcomes

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In year two of their participation in PICCS, New Jersey charter schools were moving ahead to align core school functions—recruitment, induction, evaluation, professional development, and compensation—to support and develop strong educators. Otherwise known as a Human Capital Management System (HCMS), this systematic approach to educator talent organization ensures that schools measure, reward, and support effective teaching and leader practices that are grounded in a vision of instructional improvement.

This work is being supported by a five-year Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grant, which is the third funding award for PICCS since 2007. PICCS provides charter schools with a framework, guidance, and resources to cultivate professional policies and practices that support continuous growth for teachers and administrators and that lead to improved student outcomes. Through PICCS, schools make increased connections between teaching and learning by facilitating practices such as data-driven decision making, professional learning communities, and distributive leadership. All activities and resources are grounded in Odden's seminal theory and research on HCMS.[1]

The progress demonstrated by the five schools (see list of schools below) is the topic of this issue of the *PICCS Profiler*—a research brief focused on providing periodic updates about key findings from a multi-year evaluation conducted by Measurement Incorporated (MI). The report begins with a general overview of the schools' implementation status and alignment around the vision of improvement. Following are key findings on the individual components of the system. All data were gathered from administrator and teacher surveys and site visits to the schools that occurred in the spring of 2013.

Schools participating in the 2012 grant include
- **Academy for Urban Leadership Charter High School**
- **Academy Charter School**
- **Charter Tech High School for Performing Arts**
- **Millville Public Charter School**
- **Vineland Public Charter School**

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[1] Odden, A. (2011). Strategic Management of Human Capital in Education. Improving Instructional Practice and Student Learning in Schools. Routledge: NY

Overall HCMS Alignment

With the ushering in of new State requirements—most notably the adoption of Common Core Learning Standards and changes to educator evaluation systems—participation in PICCS HCMS was considered rather timely. The general sentiment across schools was that the State changes posed great challenges to these small schools in trying to do it alone. "It was a good fit because we were already moving in the direction of the grant but needed more support and professional development," summed one administrator. Early reluctance from staff gave way to greater acceptance in year two when teachers better understood that change was necessary. The schools were also motivated to participate in PICCS because they felt the grant would help them to be more competitive in attracting talented teachers.

For their part, NJ PICCS schools were in good position for overall HCMS alignment beginning with a shared vision of instructional improvement. The study revealed that most teachers *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that the vision was frequently communicated to staff and guided school programs (see **Table 1**).

Table 1
Vision of Instructional Improvement: Teacher Perceptions
Percent Reporting "Agree" and "Strongly Agree"

	Teachers	
	Agree	**Strongly Agree**
School has a clear vision of instructional improvement.	46%	42%
School's programs and practices are guided by this vision.	53%	31%
The vision of instructional improvement is frequently communicated to staff.	48%	32%
Teachers support and agree with the vision of instructional improvement.	54%	29%
Teachers are aware of the knowledge, skills, and competencies needed to realize the instructional vision.	50%	29%

Equally important, most teachers supported the vision and understood the knowledge, skills, and competencies needed to realize it.

Moreover, overall implementation of practices and process within five main PICCS HCMS areas showed some movement from year one to year two. Specifically, administrators rated the extent of implementation on a 6-point *stage of implementation* scale using the corresponding rubric.

Descriptions of Stages of Implementation
Stage 1. Not Implementing: We do not have this procedure/practice(s) in place and have not discussed it yet.
Stage 2. Under Development/Planning: We are planning to implement this procedure/practice(s) and are allocating the needed resources—human, physical, and financial— to implement it with fidelity.
Stage 3. Early Implementation: We are beginning to use this procedure/practice(s) but implementation is inconsistent/uneven because we're still learning about it and mastering the logistics.
Stage 4. Routine Implementation: We have this procedure/practice(s) in place and our approach is organized and consistently used with no major gaps.
Stage 5. Refinement: We have this procedure/practice(s) in place but are making changes/revisions to improve its alignment with other HCMS components.
Stage 6. Sustained: We have systemic, aligned and effective implementation of this procedure/practice(s). It is an integral part of the way we do business and fully aligned with other human resource functions.

Table 2 summarizes levels of implementation across schools in year two, comparing it to year one in most areas.[2] Most notable was the growth and high level of implementation of educator evaluation practices. Growth in implementation of sound recruitment practices such as partnering

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[2] Represents the median level of implementation reported across all 5 schools. Items changed from year 1 to year 2 to better reflect PICCS HCMS model; therefore some items were not measured both years.

with reputable universities and agencies as well as progress toward the use of a collaborative coaching model under induction practices were significant, too. Professional development practices hovered around the routine (4) to refinement (5) levels of implementation. Finally, while overall alignment of the performance management and career lattices was still a work in progress, it appears that plans to allocate resources were underway in year two.

Table 2
Level of Implementation of PICCS HCMS

Recruitment and Hiring	2013	2014
School partners with reputable universities and/or talent recruitment organizations with demonstrated success in obtaining top talent.	2	4
School identifies and actively recruits educators with *specific performance competencies* necessary to produce high levels of student achievement.	n/a	5
School uses meaningful data to detect and forecast personnel needs and develop hiring goals accordingly.	n/a	3
Induction		
The program uses a collaborative coaching model.	2	5
Participation in the program is a minimum of three years.	1	3
The program is informed by student growth targets and professional practice rubrics.	n/a	3
Educator Evaluation		
Evaluation observers are certified to conduct evaluations to ensure proper implementation and inter-rater reliability.	4	5
A minimum of two observations are conducted on each eligible teacher.	6	6
Evaluations are reviewed by at least two certified people to ensure congruence between student growth and professional practice measures.	1	6

| Professional Development	2013	2014
PD content is designed according to identified needs based on educator evaluation results and student performance.	n/a	4
PD is ongoing (throughout the school year).	5	5
PD provides teachers with opportunities for active learning.	5	4
Performance Management and Career Lattices		
Teacher evaluation performance is aligned to retention.	3	5
Performance-based pay is tied to annual teacher evaluations.	4	4
Performance-based stipends are tied to teacher leadership positions.	3	2
School has differentiated levels of teaching positions.	1	2
Differentiated teaching positions have annual PBCS increases within each level.	1	2

The remainder of the Profiler closely examines each of the HCMS areas and presents data on perceptions of implementation quality and fidelity from both administrators and teachers. Data that point to either discrepancies or corroborate with the levels of implementation reported in **Table 2** are highlighted when appropriate.

Recruitment and Hiring

For the 2013-2014 academic years, almost 1/3 of school staff was newly hired.[3] The mean years of teaching experience was 8.26 and mean number of years teaching in the participating schools was 3.85.

Recruitment and hiring procedures in the schools appeared to be proactive and strategic, as suggested in administrators' ratings in **Table 2**. For instance, administrators used a variety of reputable sources to recruit teachers. Chief among them were universities and colleges, job fairs, and online sources.[4] Administrators were also active in filling vacant positions. **Figure 1** shows that hiring mostly (64%) occurred between the months of May and August. Similarly, most teachers were active in their pursuit of a teaching position, with 73% applying between January and August.

Figure 1
Teacher Applying and Hired by School Comparison of Months
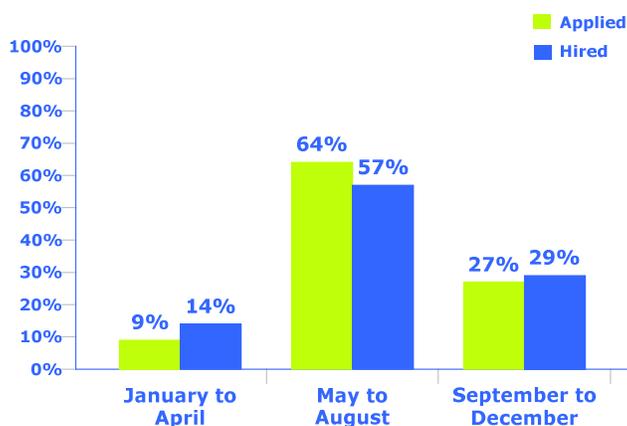
Key to finding a good match is to ensure that prospective teachers are informed of performance expectations, the school's vision, and the performance management plans (e.g., PBCS and career ladders). As seen in **Table 3** most teachers *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that the school vision and performance requirements were explained to them. To a slightly lesser extent, teachers were in agreement that the educator evaluation process and performance-based pay

was also made clear. To the latter finding, several teachers commented that it would be helpful for future staff if more explanation of the educator evaluation system was provided up front.

Table 3
Hiring Process: Teachers' Experiences
Percent Reporting "Agree" and "Strongly Agree"

	Teachers	
	Agree	Strongly Agree
The interview(s) included an explanation of the school's vision and approaches to instruction.	44%	39%
The performance requirements of the position were made clear and explicit.	42%	37%
The school's policies and procedures on how teachers are evaluated and what is expected were clearly explained.	37%	37%
The school's performance-based pay and career ladder opportunities were clearly explained.	37%	26%

Induction

Through the grant, PICCS and participating schools have been crafting a 3-year, comprehensive induction program for new teachers that uses a collaborative coaching model and is informed by student growth targets and professional practice rubrics. Previously reported in **Table 2**, administrators designated their induction program as grounded in a collaborative coaching model in year two; furthermore, they were beginning to align it to student growth targets and professional practice rubrics.

Teachers who participated in the induction program,[5] however, reported low levels of participation in various activities designed to provide support and guidance in core teaching functions. When asked to indicate the frequency with which they collaborated and/or received support in activities listed in **Table 4**, less than half of the inductees participated in the various

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[3] On the surveys, administrators reported that 77% of staff returned from the previous year and 32% of teachers reported that they were new to the school this year.

[4] Data taken from principal survey

[5] Of the teachers who completed the survey, 12% (8) teachers from 2 schools indicated participation in an induction program.

activities on a regular basis (defined as weekly or more frequently). It appears that the most frequent activity was working with other teachers on planning activities with only 43% of inductees who did this at least weekly. All other activities were conducted less frequently; indeed, while not reported in the table, on average, participation in most activities occurred on a monthly basis.

Table 4
Induction: Teachers' Participation
Percent Reporting "Weekly" or "Daily" Exposure

	Teachers
Worked with other teachers on planning activities	43%
Received support and guidance on instructional strategies	37%
Received support and guidance on curriculum content	37%
Received support and guidance on classroom management	37%
Met with school principal to discuss teaching	37%
Met with curricular specialists to discuss teaching	25%
Attended in-service/professional development workshops	14%
Observed classrooms with experienced teachers	12%
Participated in a PLC	12%

Oddly, despite infrequent participation in induction activities, most of the inductees were satisfied (87%) and perceived their experiences as valuable (87%). Several comments made by inductees, however, belie these ratings. Frustrated, one teacher stated that the program "was nearly non-existent" and that s/he did not meet one-on-one with a mentor. Conversely, another teacher at the same school did not "feel the need to observe other teachers" because of prior teaching experiences. Yet another teacher at a different school suggested that the program could offer more choices for teachers.

The bottom line is that it is difficult to determine from the data what activities were featured or emphasized in the schools' induction program that was deemed helpful. It is possible that the evaluation data did not accurately capture the program or that the small number of inductees who reported on their experiences was

insufficient. Schools are encouraged to examine their existing practices to ensure that they allow teachers' ample learning opportunities in the context of their work.

Educator Evaluation

The cornerstone of PICCS HCMS is performance evaluation, which realizes the vision of instructional improvement. It provides a meaningful measurement of individual teacher performance and draws upon multiple measures including observations of professional practice and student growth. It also makes clear expectations of effectiveness, facilitates collaboration between teachers and administrators, and serves as a basis for identifying appropriate professional development.

Recall in **Table 2** that administrators gave high implementation ratings to key features of their schools' evaluation procedures. Similarly, the study found that teachers' perceptions of implementation also suggested high fidelity and quality. In **Table 5** (following page), for instance, nearly all teachers were in agreement that the post-observation conference allowed for a two-way conversation between teacher and administrator and that the feedback on their performance was provided expediently. Many teachers were also in agreement that the evaluation activities and schedule were communicated, that procedures were consistent and objective, and that ratings were fair and accurate.

Equally important, most teachers were in agreement with statements related to the utility of the evaluation results. Specifically, the majority of teachers *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that the results helped to identify areas of teacher growth and that they had received focused feedback and guidance on their teaching. To a slightly lesser extent, teachers were in agreement that the evaluation results helped to improve their instruction. It may be that more time is needed for teachers to translate the feedback and guidance into meaningful changes to their practice.

Table 5
Educator Evaluation Procedures and Results: Teachers' Perceptions
Percent Reporting "Agree" and "Strongly Agree"

	Teachers	
	Agree	Strongly Agree
Perceptions about procedures		
The conference was a two-way conversation.	45%	45%
Performance feedback is given in a timely manner.	39%	48%
The evaluation activities and schedule are communicated to teachers.	41%	36%
Procedures used are consistent and objective.	25%	44%
The proficiency ratings are fair and accurate.	40%	27%
Perceptions about use of results		
Results of the evaluation identify specific areas for teacher growth.	37%	44%
I received evidence-based, improvement focused feedback and guidance on my performance as a teacher.	40%	40%
Results of the evaluation are used to improve instructional practice.	29%	45%
The conference dialogue and information helped to improve my instruction.	34%	37%

For their part, administrators were confident in their abilities to carry out teacher performance evaluations. As seen in **Table 6**, all administrators felt that they were *well prepared* or *completely prepared*. Indeed, most reported that they were completely prepared, meaning that they could share their knowledge with others. In most areas, their ratings corroborate with teachers' perceptions regarding the evaluation process with the possible exception of accuracy of the proficiency ratings.

Table 6
Educator Evaluation Preparedness: Administrators' Perceptions
Percent Reporting "Well" or "Completely" Prepared

	Administrators
Conducting classroom observations in a timely manner.	5/5 or 100%
Identifying and documenting appropriate evidence of teacher performance.	5/5 or 100%
Accurately discerning effective and ineffective teaching.	5/5 or 100%
Engaging in evidence-based, improvement focused conversations with staff.	5/5 or 100%
Encouraging and facilitating a two-way dialogue with staff during conferences.	5/5 or 100%
Using teacher evaluation data to identify school improvement needs.	5/5 or 100%

Student Learning Objectives, another component of evaluations, received less support from teachers than the observations. As seen in **Table 7**, 60% of teachers felt that SLOs helped them to focus their work as a teacher; however, fewer felt that SLOs were relevant and substantive in conversation with colleagues and administrators. Teacher focus group discussions suggested that there was a mismatch between trainings provided on SLOs and implementation of them, which resulted in disconnect and less utility.

Table 7
SLOs: Teachers' Perceptions
*Percent Reporting "Agree" or "Strongly Agree"*

	Teachers	
	Agree	Strongly Agree
Having SLOs in place has helped me focus more clearly on my planning, instruction and assessment.	33%	27%
The SLO process has made conversations with my supervisor about student learning more relevant and substantive.	32%	24%
The SLO process has made conversations with my colleagues about student learning more relevant and substantive.	31%	24%

Professional Development and Growth

In PICCS' HCMS model, teacher performance on professional practice measures serves as the basis for developing professional growth plans. Ideally, teachers and supervisors collaboratively identify areas to focus on improvement as well as identify supports and resources that will help lead to teachers' growth in practice via an individual professional growth plan. In the PICCS model, these supports and resources are provided through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and onsite coaching, to name a few, where emphasis is placed on building data-driven instructional skills and content area knowledge relevant to the Common Core Standards.

Interestingly, teacher reports showed a decrease in individual professional growth plans in year two. Specifically, 66% reported that they had created an individual growth plan with their supervisor that identified areas of focus for professional growth, which is down from 82% of teachers from last year (see **Figure 2**). One possible explanation is the plans are not renewed annually.

Figure 2
Individual Professional Growth Plans (IPGP) and Aligned PD
Comparison of 2013 and 2014
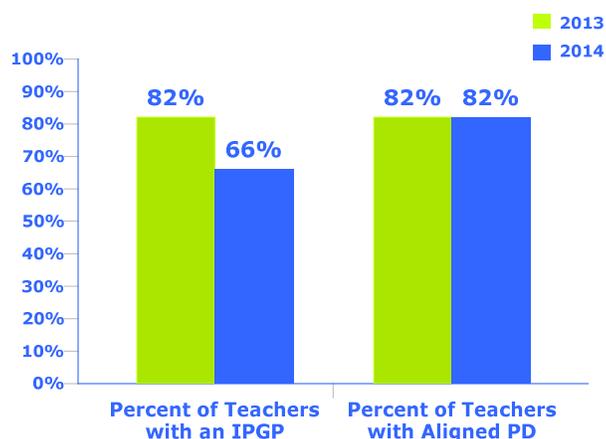
The good news is that the majority of teachers (82%) were provided with professional learning opportunities that were aligned with their growth goals; this percent was unchanged from last year. These findings corroborate earlier administrators' reports that professional development content was designed according to identified needs (**Table 2**).

What's more is that most teachers were in agreement with the structure and utility of professional development opportunities. For instance, as seen in **Table 8**, 78% *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that PD provided them opportunities to collaborate and learn from other teachers in a timely manner. These experiences also helped teachers to improve their professional practice skills (78% agreement); allowed ample opportunities to improve current practice (73%); and increase knowledge of content and pedagogy (71%).

Table 8
Professional Development: Teachers' Perceptions
Percent Reporting "Agree" and "Strongly Agree"

Professional development…	Teachers	
	Agree	Strongly Agree
provided opportunities to collaborate with and learn from teachers in my school	54%	24%
was appropriately timed	61%	16%
helped to improve professional practice skills	56%	22%
included ample opportunities to directly incorporate new techniques into my instruction	54%	22%
allowed ample opportunities to work on improving current practice	54%	19%
increased knowledge of content and pedagogy relevant to teaching assignment	50%	21%

In year two, a myriad of professional learning opportunities and supports were made available to school staff through the grant. For instance, Literacy and Math Coaches worked onsite with teachers. While a smaller group of teachers (i.e., 43%) reported working directly with Coaches, most of them (83%) felt that their teaching had benefitted *moderately* or *greatly* from this support. In open-ended survey items, teachers lauded the Coaches for helping them to improve questioning techniques that would facilitate more student response and discussion, as well as increase students' critical thinking skills. Lesson modeling by the Coaches was particularly effective, according to teachers. Put by one teacher, "I benefitted from seeing how a seasoned teacher approached some of the abstract ideas involved in teaching reading and

writing." It should be noted though that there were a fair number of teachers who expressed concerns that the Coaches, who came from New York, were not familiar enough with the New Jersey State curriculum. In the future, they would like more connections to be made between their work and the State's curriculum.

Teachers and administrators also gave praises to the support and resources provided by PICCS around data analysis and use, including the use of Performance Plus, Performance Tracker and the TERC process. The primary benefit of these resources, according to teachers, is that it gave their schools a structure for building a data-driven culture. Moreover, they learned data analytic skills across *all* content areas; teachers in non-tested subjects also benefitted from the process.

Indeed, in keeping with the spirit of facilitating student-centered learning, teachers in one school had taken "data drill downs" to the next level by including students in the process of examining their own performance data relative to benchmarks. "This is a new thing for kids to be seeing their academic behaviors quantified and gauged against their class and the school," stated a Data Coach.

Moreover, increased focus on student data added to the exercise of "connecting the dots" for instructional improvement, as perceived by several administrators. Ultimately, self-reflections and discussions about teacher performance were enriched and improved.

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), another form of professional growth promoted through PICCS, showed a marked increase in participation in year two.[6] Nearly all teachers reported participation in a PLC (93%), which is up from only 47% last year. Unfortunately, though, there was a significant decrease in percent of teachers who felt that their teaching practices had benefitted from participation in a PLC. **Figure 3** shows that 48% reported benefits in year two compared to 76% in year one.

Figure 3
Participation and Benefits of PLCs: Teachers' Perceptions
Comparison of 2013 and 2014
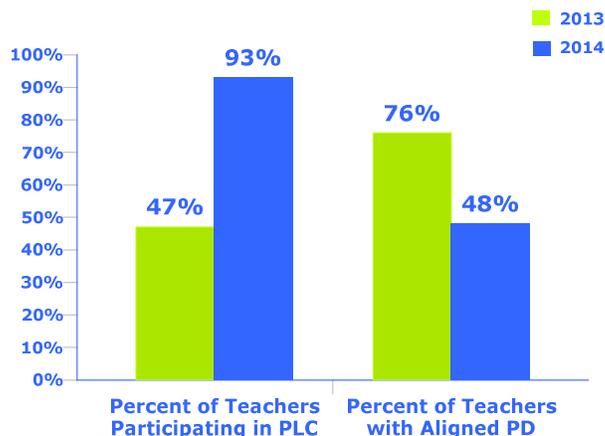
Site visit data shed some light on the concerns with PLCs, most of which centered on issues related to implementation and buy-in from teachers. In several schools, staff reported that scheduling time for PLCs to meet was a challenge, particularly at the high school level. Some teachers felt that conducting PLCs during the school day took too much time away from their instruction. Regarding buy-in, use of protocols to structure PLC time was not always well received by teachers. Put by one administrator, "teachers are strong in content, but weak in process."

It should be noted that not all schools shared the above mentioned struggles. In at least one school, 93% of teachers gave high ratings to the benefits of PLCs. They identified several noteworthy benefits of PLCs in their school such as providing "a collaborative process for assessing students, formatively" "increased opportunities for discussing best practices and offering feedback" to one another. Teachers participated in job embedded PD on a monthly basis and then used PLC protocols to guide their discussions about how to incorporate data practices both vertically within, and horizontally across, grade level teams. The school counselor pointed out that "it is a good structure because everyone's voice is heard. I can give my perspectives on students that add value to our understanding of their performance." In fact, the general sentiment was that professional development had been improved after instituting the PLC process.

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[6] In at least one school, teachers are required to attend PLC, which may account for the increase.

Performance Management and Retention and Career Lattices

Also part of HCMS, PICCS supports schools in their effort to align educator evaluation performance (i.e., HEDI rating) with salary increases. Performance-based salary increases are awarded to teachers with ratings of "Effective" or "Highly Effective." The goal is to increase and retain the number of teachers with these ratings in the school and to support their growth through the 5-level differentiated teaching system.

Similar to their NYC charter school counterparts also participating in the grant, it appears that the NJ schools were still working to align their performance-based compensation plans with a differentiated teaching system. Overall, most administrators felt that their participation in PICCS was enabling them to enhance teachers' salaries by tying compensation to teacher performance via the HEDI ratings. Nevertheless, they were still exploring ways to do this strategically using career lattices. Those involved in the development of a system felt that more explanations of the HEDI ratings were needed for staff who were not involved in the process in order to foster buy-in.

Teachers' opinions varied across schools. Some appeared to have little knowledge or awareness of the work being done in this area. Others expressed concerns on several accounts. One, less experienced teachers were concerned about how the PBCS would affect them if they were to receive a lower proficiency rating. They appreciated that PICCS provided useful PD and handouts to allay some of these fears. Two, there was a bigger concern over how the adoption of PARCC as the new statewide assessment system would impact ratings.

Conclusions

This issue of the *Profiler* shows that already in year two of the grant, NJ charter schools are showing signs of more aligned practices and procedures to boost teacher effectiveness. Most notably, teacher performance evaluations, which define key teaching competencies, were informing and driving change in the schools. Teachers and administrators regarded the evaluation as a way to create more dialogue

about effective instruction and to identify professional development needs. These efforts were paying off; most teachers viewed professional development opportunities as valuable and impactful to their practice. For instance, teachers were creating a data-driven culture that centered on working with student data to plan and inform instruction. Consequently, more student involvement in the process of examining performance data was cited as a positive outcome.

In addition to being more strategic in their efforts to support the growth of current staff, administrators were acutely aware of the need to be competitive in attracting talented teachers. To this end, administrators were proactive in their recruitment of new hires and were tapping into reputable sources, such as universities. Moreover, prospective teachers were informed of performance standards and expectations prior to their hiring. The findings were less clear, however, on the state of induction programs, i.e., the types and frequency of support being provided to new teachers. More investigation is warranted; induction programs play an important role in a well-functioning HCMS. Research shows that good programs can lead to a higher rate of retention, as new educators find themselves in an environment that cultivates continual growth and success.

Moreover, more work is needed to align performance-based compensation plans with a differentiated teaching system. Admittedly, administrators were taking more care to ensure that the system that they put into place was sound and defensible. Ensuring that the PBCS is aligned with, and reinforces, the school's vision of instructional improvement is vital. This will help teachers to better see how current, conventional fixed-cost pay systems are disconnected with the school's priorities. Certainly most would agree that the resources and supports provided by PICCS is this area was much appreciated. Summed by one administrator, "PICCS has enabled us to move from the crawling to walking stage."

About PICCS

The *Partnership for Innovation in Compensation for Charter Schools* (PICCS) is a *Teacher Incentive Fund* program that seeks fundamental reform in teaching and learning by combining performance-based incentives with research-based tools to help teachers customize instruction and improve student outcomes. PICCS is led by the Center for Educational Innovation – Public Education Association (CEI-PEA).

About the Evaluation

Since 2008, Measurement Incorporated (MI) has been conducting independent evaluations of all PICCS grants. The current evaluation is designed to provide both formative and summative information on each of the program's goal areas to guide strategic decision making.

Information from this report represents the second of five years of study. Data were obtained from online surveys of participating teachers and school leaders and site visits to each of the five schools.

For further information about this Profiler or about the PICCS evaluation, please contact Shelly Menendez at (914) 682-1969 or

smenendez@measinc.com