

# Policy Points

## EVALUATING TEACHERS—A SNAPSHOT

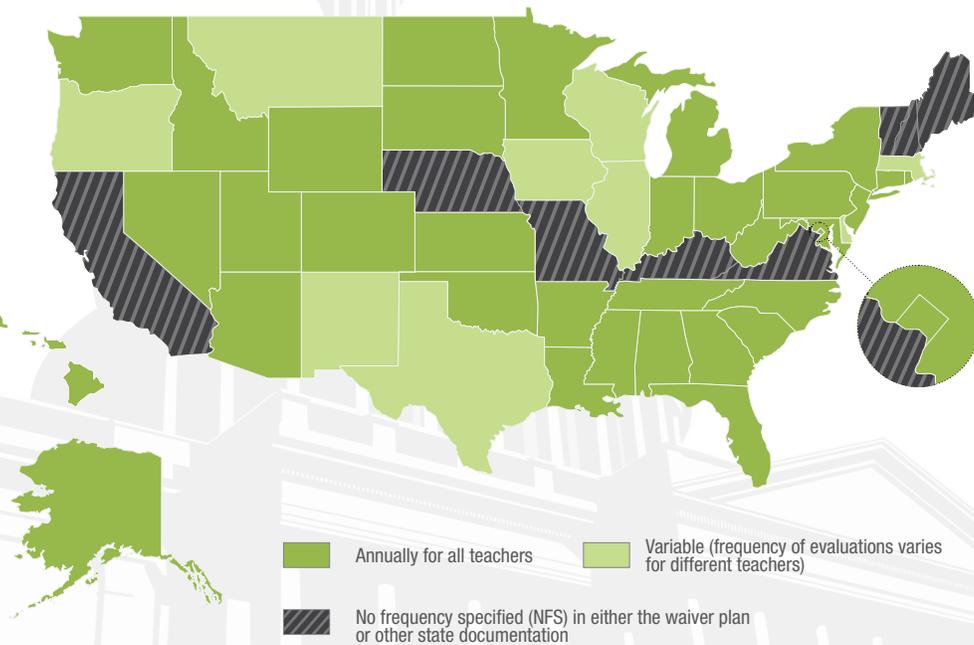
Today's educators, parents, and even students recognize that the most important in-school factors influencing student learning are the effectiveness of the classroom teacher and the school-building leader.

One way states intend to improve the effectiveness of teachers and principals is through implementing evaluation systems that can provide meaningful, actionable feedback on their performance, helping to inform professional development. In 2009, 15 states required annual teacher evaluations (Bellwether, 2012). But both the Race to the Top initiative and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) waiver requirements have spurred states to make significant

changes to their teacher evaluation policies. Today, more than 33 states require annual evaluations for all teachers or are in the process of developing new evaluation systems.

NCLB's waiver applications contain the most current data on teacher evaluation plans and are the primary source of information for the maps in this resource.

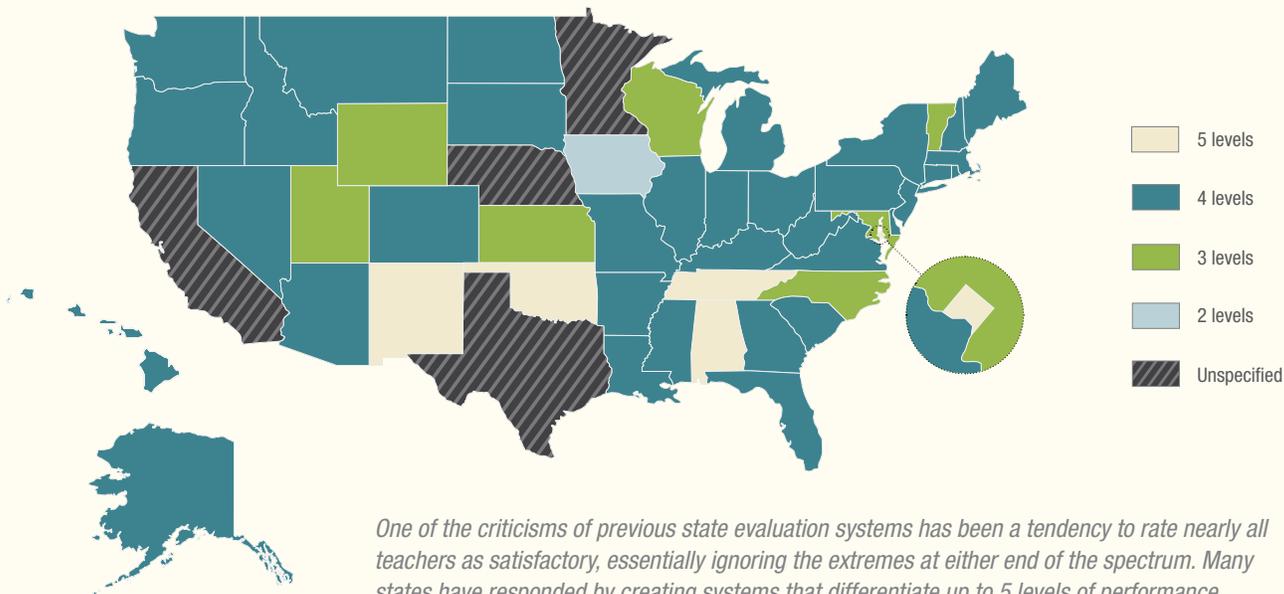
### HOW OFTEN DO STATES EVALUATE TEACHERS?



*In a majority of states, educator evaluation systems are already in place; those being piloted or implemented largely require teachers to undergo annual evaluations. This represents a major shift in how teachers are assessed and, in many cases, may affect their compensation and employment. Other states may require annual evaluations for only beginning teachers, while tenured teachers are assessed on a multi-year cycle. Still other states, particularly those whose districts have a greater degree of autonomy, do not specify a frequency for educator evaluations.*

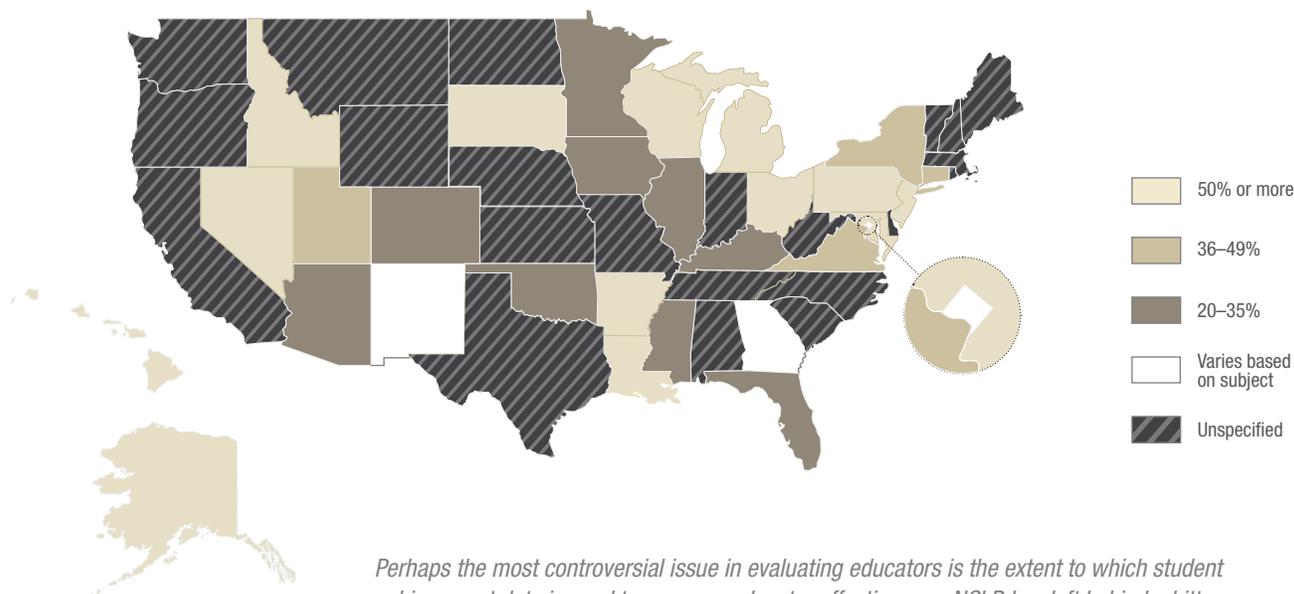
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HOW MANY LEVELS DO STATES USE TO RATE TEACHER PERFORMANCE?



*One of the criticisms of previous state evaluation systems has been a tendency to rate nearly all teachers as satisfactory, essentially ignoring the extremes at either end of the spectrum. Many states have responded by creating systems that differentiate up to 5 levels of performance. These rating categories can be useful, but only if they inform professional growth with a view toward student success and recognizing outstanding teachers, and not just as a way of shaming or indiscriminately removing the bottom tier of teachers.*

HOW MUCH OF A TEACHER'S EVALUATION IS BASED ON STUDENT LEARNING DATA?



*Perhaps the most controversial issue in evaluating educators is the extent to which student achievement data is used to measure educator effectiveness. NCLB has left behind a bitter reminder that evaluating student, educator, or school success solely on how students score on reading and math tests is neither accurate nor fair. Despite growing concerns about the statistical validity of such tests and the scant research to inform the best use of these data, student growth and achievement measures continue to be a primary factor in evaluating teacher performance.*

Sources: ESEA Flexibility Requests and Related Documents by the U.S. Department of Education, retrieved January 23, 2013, from [www.ed.gov/esea/flexibility/requests](http://www.ed.gov/esea/flexibility/requests).

Recent State Action on State Teacher Effectiveness: What's In State Laws and Regulations? by S. Mead, August 2012, Bellwether Education Partners, retrieved from [www.bellwethereducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/RSA-Teacher-Effectiveness.pdf](http://www.bellwethereducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/RSA-Teacher-Effectiveness.pdf).