

Beyond Dollars and Cents: The Costs and Benefits of Teacher Peer Assistance and Review

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Since their inception in Toledo, OH, nearly thirty years ago, teacher Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) programs have received national attention and have spread to dozens of school districts across the country. In PAR programs, teachers not only support and assist their colleagues, but they also assess their performance and recommend fellow teachers for dismissal. Recently, many educational observers and policymakers, including President Obama, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, and AFT President Randi Weingarten, have pointed to PAR as an approach with great potential for improving professional evaluation and teacher quality (Obama, 2009; Duncan, 2009; Dillon, 2008; Toch & Rothman, 2008; Goldstein, 2007; Koppich, 2005; Goldstein, 2004).

In most districts with PAR, expert “consulting teachers” (CTs) provide extensive mentoring and support to all novice teachers and to tenured teachers who are not meeting the district’s instructional standards. These underperforming teachers are placed in the PAR Intervention program. The CTs conduct formal observations of these teachers throughout the school year and compile their findings into a summative evaluation. If the CTs judge that teachers have not met the district’s instructional standards, the teachers face dismissal. Implementing the program successfully requires collaboration between the teachers union and district administration, and a joint labor-management PAR Panel administers and oversees the program. Importantly, principals continue to perform evaluations for all teachers not in the program.

PAR stands in stark contrast to the cursory teacher evaluation systems documented in many other school districts. Typically, evaluation consists of principals observing teachers and checking a box to indicate whether they meet standards or not. In many cases, these principal

reviews consist of so-called “drive-by” evaluations where principals base their assessments on a five or ten minute class visit. Often, teachers report that they can go several years without principals observing them for their “annual” evaluations (Toch & Rothman, 2008). As a result, very few teachers are identified as ineffective and even fewer teachers are dismissed. Recently, New York City’s Chancellor Joel Klein reported that “just one one-hundredth of one percent of the city’s teachers are fired for incompetence in a typical year” (Honawar, 2007). Research suggests that far less than 1% of all teachers are terminated through a formal dismissal process (Dawson & Billingsley, 2000; Tucker, 1997; Ward, 1995). In part, state tenure laws provide job protections and the vast majority of dismissed teachers are novices without tenure; however, principals rarely dismiss even novice teachers with temporary contracts.

In contrast to traditional systems with these substantial problems, PAR affords several advantages. CTs conduct regular and thorough evaluations, often visiting a teacher’s class every week or two. Such frequent visits enable them to assess the teacher’s performance more reliably and to do so over time, documenting what progress, if any, has occurred. CTs also offer consistent support to help teachers improve to meet instructional standards. With such support, PAR serves as a strong induction program for novice teachers and as intensive and directed professional development for underperforming veterans. At the same time, if teachers cannot meet district standards, they are dismissed with both union and management agreement.

Despite their promise and the publicity surrounding them, though, PAR programs have not been adopted widely. While PAR programs prove difficult to implement for a wide range of reasons – including the egalitarian culture of schools, the need for labor-management collaboration, and the restrictions on the evaluative rights of administrators – one frequently-cited challenge is the program’s cost. However, to date, no research has systematically examined

the program's costs and benefits. The existing literature focuses on specific states or individual programs (e.g., van Lier, 2008; Koppich, 2004) or on broader discussions of PAR's effectiveness (e.g., Goldstein, 2007; Lieberman, 1998). In this paper, we use administrative and interview data from seven districts operating PAR programs to explore these costs and benefits.

We find that PAR programs do indeed represent a large financial expense for districts, primarily because they pull master teachers out of the classroom and require districts to hire replacement teachers. Across the districts studied, PAR costs ranged from \$4,000 to \$7,000 per teacher served. Although stakeholders recognize that it is costly, they argue that the substantial financial benefits help to offset program expenses. Districts credit PAR with reducing teacher turnover by providing high quality induction for novices and offering an alternative career path for master teachers. It also limits the legal expenses associated with dismissing tenured teachers. Furthermore, PAR can replace many other district functions, such as induction and some professional development, that often cost substantial amounts of money. As such, we find that, on a short-term financial basis alone, PAR likely represents a real cost-savings for districts.

Importantly, though, most stakeholders in districts with PAR cite the program's non-financial benefits as far more important considerations. Respondents did not justify the program's existence based on a detailed financial analysis, but rather on a sense that the program was worthwhile; for example, the Montgomery County, MD, Superintendent called PAR "priceless." Thus, across all the districts, stakeholders argued that PAR has substantial benefits for instructional quality. PAR also represents a driving force to change the strong, "egg-crate" culture of schools by encouraging collaboration and peer feedback. Finally, it affords real benefits to both principals, who generally appreciate their reduced evaluation load, and consulting teachers, who learn a great deal in their role and return to the classroom rejuvenated.

Although there have been no studies linking PAR to improved student achievement, stakeholders remain convinced that it does improve teacher quality and help student learning. Any longer-term social benefits produced by increased student performance and improved productivity should be factored into a benefit-cost analysis, but we cannot quantify these benefits with sufficient precision to do so. Instead, we rely on the assessment of union officials and central office administrators across the seven districts, all of whom spoke of PAR with great appreciation. They recognized that the program was expensive, but argued consistently that PAR's broader, organizational benefits made the program a worthwhile investment.

In the following discussion, we first describe our study design and data. In Section III, we examine the program's costs – both financial and organizational. We assess the program's benefits in Section IV. Finally, in Section V, we conclude with a rough cost-benefit assessment.

Section II. Data and Methods

This paper reports on one part of a larger qualitative study of seven districts' PAR programs. We sought to learn how these districts had implemented PAR and what challenges they faced, to understand how their PAR programs worked and the tradeoffs involved in different decisions about program design, and to solicit stakeholders' views about the effectiveness of PAR in their district. We focused specifically on the role of the consulting teacher, the labor-management relationship at the district level, the effect of PAR on building principals, and the costs and benefits of PAR.

We first selected a sample of seven districts that had implemented PAR (Toledo and Cincinnati, OH; Rochester and Syracuse, NY; Minneapolis, MN; San Juan, CA; and Montgomery County, MD). We identified possible research sites through literature reviews,

internet searches, and informal networking. In our research, we found some districts with programs called “Peer Assistance and Review” where CTs did not conduct evaluations of fellow teachers; as a result, we restricted our focus to programs that integrated both assistance and review. We sought a diverse sample of districts, with a range of geographic locations, district financial resources, labor-management relationship histories, and sizes. We purposefully included some districts, like Toledo and Cincinnati, that had long-standing PAR programs and others, like Syracuse, with relatively new programs.

Between December 2007 and April 2008, two researchers conducted site visits of 2 to 3 days in each district. Over the course of each visit, we interviewed approximately 25 individuals, including key union and district officials, members of the PAR Panel, current and former Consulting Teachers, and principals. In all districts, we interviewed both the Superintendent and the teachers union president. We made a concerted effort to speak with both advocates and opponents of PAR. Overall, we interviewed 155 individuals across the seven districts. In Appendix A, we include the study’s general interview protocols, although we tailored the protocols to each district and each role.

For each district, we created a thematic summary that captured salient aspects of the district’s PAR program shortly after the site visit. We had the interviews transcribed verbatim and coded them using both theoretical codes drawn from past research and open codes identified from the thematic summaries and the interviews. We also developed matrices to identify patterns in the data and to catalogue the similarities and differences between the programs. We supplemented these interviews with relevant documents, including local collective bargaining agreements and program handbooks. We were able to obtain total program costs from most

districts. Several also provided detailed budgetary information that we used to analyze itemized program costs.

Section III. The Costs of PAR

Financial Costs

Although most stakeholders did not evaluate PAR in terms of dollars and cents, understanding the actual program costs remains important for districts considering PAR. Several districts had difficulty enumerating the exact expenses associated with their PAR programs because they integrate PAR services with other professional development or evaluation programs. For example, the Minneapolis PAR program was one part of a larger professional growth system that included tenure reviews and professional development activities throughout a teacher's career. As a result, identifying the specific costs associated with the PAR program alone proved difficult. However, our analysis of district budgets reveals several key patterns. Although the exact size of the budget depends on the extent of PAR services provided, PAR is a costly program. By far, the bulk of this expenditure covers the salaries and benefits of teachers hired to fill the classes of consulting teachers.

The districts we studied exhibited wide variation in their PAR expenditures, but all said that the program was expensive and a large investment. Actual program costs ranged from \$245,000 to \$2 million across districts. In large part, these vast differences reflected the relative sizes of the programs: larger programs obviously cost more. The cost per teacher in PAR ranged from approximately \$4,000 to \$7,000 across the seven districts, figures that match fairly closely with other analyses (e.g., van Lier, 2008). We find that PAR's costs depended on several factors, including the extent to which the program served veteran teachers. Because working with

experienced teachers requires greater resources and places a larger emotional burden on consulting teachers, most districts adjust caseloads such that a teacher on Intervention counts the same as several novice teachers. Thus, districts with larger Intervention programs may have greater program costs.

Importantly, these figures reflect the full program costs of PAR, not the net or marginal costs after accounting for other programs that PAR replaces. For example, PAR often takes the place of traditional mentoring, which exists in most districts across the country. Although there is wide variation in mentoring costs across districts, even relatively inexpensive programs typically provide a stipend for mentor teachers. Intensive mentoring, like the New Teacher Center's program, can cost just as much as PAR, between \$6,000 and \$7,000 per teacher (Villar & Strong, 2007). Similarly, some districts have developed career ladders that already reward teachers for taking on specialized roles or for achieving advanced certification under the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Some districts pay these teachers an additional stipend but do not place them in roles that allow them to perform additional, valuable work because such opportunities do not yet exist in their schools. Thus, in such districts, PAR may provide an opportunity to use these teachers' knowledge and skills more effectively. In estimating the total costs of PAR, then, districts should only consider the incremental cost of the PAR program above other programs that it will replace. As a result, enumerating the total financial costs of PAR to a district remains quite difficult because it depends in large part on the district context and current expenditures, particularly in programs for novice teachers. In all cases, though, these net costs are somewhat less than the full \$4,000 to \$7,000 per teacher served.

Within each PAR program, the greatest expense comes from hiring teachers to fill the classes of CTs who are released either full-time or part-time. Although these replacement

teachers generally have less experience and earn less than the CTs, the total cost of their salary, fringe benefits, and training is significant. In Toledo and Syracuse, two districts with detailed budgets for separate PAR programs, these replacement expenses represented approximately three-quarters of the district's PAR budget. Individuals in other districts identified the costs of hiring teachers to cover these classes as similarly large.

Although all other categories pale in comparison to these replacement costs, districts must also account for a wide range of other expenses. All districts pay CTs an additional stipend, ranging from \$5,000 to \$10,000 across the programs studied, and some districts provide small stipends for PAR Panel members. Districts need to train CTs and Panel members, although several use current or former CTs to provide the bulk of the training. Because Panel meetings are typically held during the school day, teachers and principals on the Panel need substitute coverage during meetings. Although the PAR Panel runs the program, districts need some way to handle day-to-day program management. Some distribute these responsibilities across several "lead" CTs, but others, particularly those with more extensive or complicated programs, choose to hire a full-time program director. Finally, districts must cover the program's administrative costs, including office space, computers, mileage reimbursements, and administrative/clerical support staff for the CTs. Several districts and teachers unions have found creative ways around these costs; for example, the Syracuse teachers union provided office space in kind, while other districts housed their CTs in closed school buildings. Nonetheless, districts must find some way to account for these administrative expenses.

Non-Financial Costs

Beyond the actual dollar costs of the PAR program, district officials and union members also mentioned the organizational costs of PAR. Most importantly, CTs are usually some of the

district's best teachers, and PAR typically removes them from the classroom for several years. The Cincinnati teachers union president articulated this concern clearly: "You have got twenty teachers who are arguably supposed to be your very best of your best out of the classroom, not teaching kids, but evaluating other teachers." Principals in several districts had similar concerns. By losing their best teachers to the program, principals needed to hire a replacement for the classroom and to fill the informal leadership void left by the teachers' absence. A Syracuse principal said that, particularly at the middle and high school levels, "it's a great challenge because you can vacate a department. And if you lose two candidates in a department, to replace those is extremely difficult because the pool of candidates is small, [particularly] in terms of math and science." Finding replacement teachers was thus not only a financial expense to districts but also an organizational cost borne by principals, schools, and students.

Section IV. The Benefits of PAR

Financial Benefits

Districts report two main benefits of PAR that have clear financial implications: increased teacher retention and lower arbitration and dismissal costs, as seen in Table 1. Although these costs rarely show up as line-items on district budgets and are difficult to quantify, they represent substantial sources of potential expenditures for most districts. As a result, stakeholders we interviewed felt strongly that PAR not only was a worthwhile investment, but that it also saved the district money.

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Reduced costs of turnover

Studies suggest that the financial costs of teacher turnover are high, with urban districts spending \$10,000 to \$20,000 to replace a novice teacher who leaves (Barnes, Crowe, & Schaefer, 2007; Birkeland & Curtis, 2006). PAR programs help to increase teacher retention in several ways. Most obviously, as a high quality induction program, PAR can help new teachers feel more effective in the classroom. A growing body of evidence suggests that teachers who feel ineffective are more likely to leave their schools (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003).

Although there is no definitive causal evidence that PAR reduces turnover, the district officials we interviewed pointed to the program as a highly effective component in their efforts to retain new teachers. For example, Rochester reported a retention rate of 88% for its new teachers over the 20 years in which it has had PAR, greater than in comparable urban districts. The Superintendent attributed this low turnover specifically to PAR: “A little bit over 70 percent of my budget is spent on people: \$680 million. It’s all about people, it’s all about talent. And [PAR] is a great process in developing great teachers and retaining great teachers. The retention is amazing.” Although the other districts that we studied did not track turnover as systematically, many reported similar patterns. In Syracuse, a principal noted that PAR caused teachers to remain in the district because they became more effective in the classroom: “Teachers were quitting and jumping to the suburbs. But, I think with PAR they are really learning how to teach urban kids and they are really excited about it because their skills are so well-developed so early on in their career. They are committed in wanting to stay.”

Similarly, PAR can help districts retain more experienced teachers by offering differentiated roles outside of the classroom to help further their careers. One common feature of the teaching profession is that it has a “flat” career path, with thirty-year veterans typically doing the exact same job as novices. Serving as a PAR CT offers a new role and new responsibilities to

experienced teachers. Many of the current and former Consulting Teachers we interviewed spoke of PAR as an important part of their careers. In Toledo, one teacher called her time as a PAR CT “the biggest, most important professional growth of my entire career.” She continued to say that “it changed me forever.” In districts without differentiated career structures, PAR provides an opportunity for teachers to gain such experiences that, for many, encourage them to remain in teaching.

Reduced costs of teacher dismissal

Importantly, district officials that we interviewed argued that PAR does not simply reduce overall turnover, but it also promotes selective retention. The program helps to retain teachers who are succeeding, identify those who need help, and screen out those who fail to meet standards. Thus, PAR can help districts improve their personnel practices, avoiding costly decisions to tenure teachers who do not meet the district standards. The Superintendent in Syracuse argued that there are “immeasurable” costs involved with rehiring and offering tenure to “a first-year teacher that isn’t great.” A central office administrator in Minneapolis concurred: “There’s a huge benefit because, I think number one, if you tenure somebody that’s not ready, those are million dollar decisions.” In part, this cost of tenuring an under-performing teacher is borne in future dismissal costs. In this realm, PAR can represent a substantial cost-savings to districts not only by preventing such teachers from achieving tenure, but also in reducing the costs of dismissing tenured teachers who do not meet district standards.

Dismissing teachers with tenure is ordinarily a very expensive and time-consuming process, one which very few districts actually pursue. Although there has been no national study that quantifies dismissal costs, most district officials reported that they typically range into what one called the “double digit thousands.” Bridges (1992) interviewed district administrators in the

1980s and found, even then, that districts counted on \$50,000 for a single dismissal, with some proceedings costing upwards of \$200,000. Dismissal proceedings generally require substantial documentation, which places burdens on principals and district Human Resources administrators charged with building the case. Legal fees, costs for arbitrators, and the expenses associated with several levels of appeals create substantial expenditures. As a result, many districts ignore the problem, keeping ineffective teachers in the classroom or paying them to perform non-instructional roles rather than proceeding with a dismissal case.

Districts with PAR programs have had success removing tenured teachers without expensive legal challenges. Although the actual numbers of tenured teachers dismissed every year in these districts remains small, ranging at most up to ten teachers, in every case these dismissal rates exceed those before PAR. Furthermore, in many cases, teachers who do not meet district standards despite efforts at remediation end up leaving the district because they recognize that both the union and administration support their removal. Across the districts studied, nearly as many teachers in Intervention resigned or retired as were dismissed and, as programs become more established, more teachers appear to see the writing on the wall and leave before passing through the formal dismissal process. In Rochester, the union president described how he talked with underperforming teachers: “the union, without batting an eye, says, ‘If you’re not doing the kids any good and we can’t help you come up to that level, then you’re not doing the rest of us any good.’” He said that most often, these conversations led teachers to resign or retire rather than facing the prospect of formal dismissal. Thus, simply counting dismissals does not fully account for the impact of PAR on the district’s teaching force.

In situations where teachers do not leave voluntarily, the detailed PAR procedures and thorough review by CTs helps ensure that teachers’ due process rights are met; thus, unions can

satisfy their duty of fair representation without supporting teachers' legal appeals. Union officials across the districts clearly supported pursuing dismissals when teachers were given assistance but could not improve their practice. The Syracuse union president articulated this attitude: "Frankly, I think that there is a difference between representing people and defending the indefensible. I think in this day and age, in this age of accountability, true accountability, we have to draw a line." Every union official opposed pursuing appeals for teachers who had made their way through the PAR process.

Without the union mounting challenges, dismissal proceedings often move smoothly. A Syracuse district administrator saw the real financial advantage of having labor-management collaboration in dismissal cases: "We're saving money because, with PAR, we're not going for arbitration with the union and all those other hearings, because the union is sitting at the table from the beginning. The union is listening to each presentation that is being done by a union member as a consulting teacher." An administrator in San Juan concurred, saying that "The union is certainly with us every step along the way." Thus, these district officials felt that the joint involvement of union members throughout the PAR process saved the district substantial legal costs in processing dismissals.

Teachers are also less likely to appeal decisions on their own because the recommendations come from fellow teachers through a detailed, evidence-based evaluation process. According to a union representative in Minneapolis, "It's just very difficult to contest when you've been told by your peers that you're not performing." Consulting teachers across the districts agreed with this statement, suggesting that their decisions were rarely challenged by teachers both because of their position as a peer and because of the hard work they invested in evaluations. Thus, because PAR is a comprehensive process built on strong labor-management

collaboration, districts reported that very few dismissal decisions were challenged. As a result, the San Juan Superintendent said, “I mean, yes, if you can ... avoid the costs of some dismissals, it doesn’t take very many to pay for a pretty extensive program!”

Districts also reported that the labor-management collaboration engendered by PAR spilled over into other areas, reducing the costs associated with grievances and arbitrations throughout the district. A principal in Syracuse noticed improved labor-management collaboration at the school level after PAR was implemented: “our teacher reps in the building, instead of just constantly picking on little issues, have really increased their level of professionalism.” As the union and district administration – at both the school and district level – improve their working relationship, they can resolve issues outside the official, and expensive, grievance process.

Quantifying the financial benefits

PAR can reduce district expenses substantially in two key areas: teacher turnover and dismissals. Quantifying the overall financial benefits of PAR, however, is even more difficult than enumerating the costs, for four main reasons. First, as discussed above, PAR typically replaces programs, such as induction and professional development, for which districts often pay substantial amounts of money. Thus, districts must weigh the marginal cost of replacing these programs with PAR against the marginal benefit that PAR brings relative to these other programs. Second, the research base concerning PAR’s effectiveness, particularly at increasing teacher retention, is quite limited. Districts point to evidence of improved retention rates, but we cannot know exactly how much PAR improved a district’s retention. Third, the potential cost-savings of PAR often come in areas that districts tend to ignore. For example, PAR can reduce the costs of dismissal, but many districts do not take any action to remove underperforming

teachers from the classroom. Thus, these districts have no dismissal “costs” to reduce, and determining how to count such “cost-savings” in a financial analysis remains unclear. Finally, the improved teacher quality, through both strong induction and selective retention, likely produces social benefits of improved student learning and increased workforce productivity in the future. Accounting for these social benefits tips the benefit-cost analysis even more favorably towards PAR, but enumerating the true social benefit in dollar terms remains impossible.

Organizational Benefits

Although several district officials said that PAR could be justified purely on a financial benefit-cost analysis because of improved turnover and reduced dismissal costs, very few framed the discussion in financial terms. District officials, union leaders, principals, and consulting teachers all talked about the program’s benefits in much broader ways. Stakeholders saw several key advantages of PAR programs that extended beyond pure cost-savings. They acknowledged that the strong induction component, improved teacher retention rates, and ability to assist or remove underperforming teachers can save the district money, but they spoke in much greater detail about the positive effects that PAR has on teachers and, as a result, on their students.

District officials often spoke about PAR’s costs as investments in the district’s human capital rather than as expenditures the district had to bear. As a central office administrator in Rochester asserted, “the cost doesn’t bother me at all. ... [It] can be very, very expensive. But I think it’s an essential investment in launching teachers in our district successfully.” Union and district officials saw PAR as an investment that produced rewards in four main areas: improving teacher performance in the classroom, building a positive organizational culture centered on

instruction, alleviating burdens on principals, and providing opportunities and professional development for consulting teachers.

Improving teacher performance in the classroom

The most common benefit cited by our study participants was improved teacher quality; interviewees acknowledged PAR as a key component in ensuring that every student has a competent teacher. In this regard, PAR operates through several avenues. First, the Novice component is a strong induction program. Key stakeholders in these districts saw that PAR helps new teachers get off to a successful start under the watchful eye of an engaged mentor. In PAR, an experienced CT observes the teacher almost weekly, provides detailed feedback, both formally and informally, and helps support the teacher in her professional growth. As a result, one Minneapolis CT said, “these new teachers soar.”

Similarly, the Intervention program helps underperforming experienced teachers get back on track. Teachers on Intervention may be struggling in a new teaching assignment, be dealing with personal problems, or simply have lost the motivation to improve their practice. With intensive mentoring, many teachers improve and go on to succeed, while those who cannot meet district standards are removed from the classroom. A PAR Panel member in San Juan articulated this dual role of Intervention: “We’ve saved a lot of careers. Those teachers are now in the classroom doing really good things. We’ve gotten some people that needed to be moved out, and we got them out quicker than in the old process.” Across the districts, CTs, principals, union officials, and district administrators all acknowledged that PAR had provided just the spark some teachers needed to revisit their practice and turn the corner to return to their past successes. And, in cases where teachers did not improve, PAR provided a vastly better route for removal, either through informal counseling out of the profession or formal dismissals.

Thus, PAR's financial benefits – in improved teacher retention from mentoring and decreased costs of dismissals – also have organizational benefits for schools and students. For teachers in both the Novice and Intervention programs, CT support and assessment were widely seen as superior to the traditional evaluations done by principals. Because evaluation is their full-time job, CTs can spend much more time with teachers on their caseload than principals, who must manage all aspects of the school. According to a Toledo principal, “if you are in a position to have a consultant who can go in weekly, observe these people, and make arrangements for them to go out and observe other teachers, I think that is of great benefit.” By visiting classrooms weekly rather than dropping by once a year for an annual evaluation, CTs could develop a much richer sense of the teacher's abilities and growth over the year.

Beyond the time and effort involved in CT support, though, stakeholders – both teachers and administrators – argued that the CTs could often provide more objective evaluations than principals. A central office administrator in Cincinnati argued that this objectivity comes from the CT's position as an outsider in the school:

This is a person who comes and does the observation who has nothing to gain one way or the other. If you're outstanding they have nothing to gain, and if you're lousy they have nothing to gain. So it isn't, well, this is the Principal who is just angry with me. She's mad because I didn't organize the Christmas party last year. It's very, very objective.

A Syracuse principal offered another example, saying that she tends to give her novice teachers the benefit of the doubt even when they do not deserve it “because I have established a bond with that person.” She appreciated the outside perspective of the CT. Finally, stakeholders saw the peer relationship between CTs and teachers as valuable in encouraging the teachers to change their practice. As instructional experts, CTs often had more credibility in the advice that they gave; as peers, CTs had better success in actually effecting instructional changes. A former principal in Minneapolis saw this peer relationship as a key feature of PAR's success: “In my

role as a principal, I can say exactly the same thing that a teacher colleague can say, and because it came out of my mouth and not the teacher colleague's, it's interpreted differently." Thus, she saw PAR as being much more effective because teachers took the advice provided by CTs and changed their practice as a result.

Across the districts, then, administrators and union leaders all felt that PAR represented an important investment because it improved instruction. A Cincinnati administrator said that PAR "does what many evaluation systems don't do, and they're not designed to do, which is to improve teaching performance." In particular, many stakeholders talked in great detail about the large price that students pay when they have an ineffective teacher. For example, a PAR Panel member in San Juan said that the benefits of PAR were immeasurable: "When you talk about the financial cost, and you look at that, and you think about the credit card commercial, that is priceless because it impacted 20 little kids for the rest of their life to have a quality teacher." This sentiment was echoed by teachers and administrators across all districts in our study.

Several stakeholders also directly challenged the concern described above that removing a district's best teachers from the classroom could hurt students. One Syracuse principal said directly, "That's a bunch of baloney." She continued to argue that the CTs "are impacting the students of all of the interns and ... they're leaving for three years, and then they're going back. So, knowing that, that's the best of both worlds, because you're leaving to impact many more students." That CTs could have a broader, albeit indirect, influence on many students across the district seemed to convince most stakeholders that the challenges presented by CTs working at the district level rather than directly teaching students were relatively minor.

Building a positive organizational culture centered on instruction

Beyond these contributions to student achievement, PAR can also help effect larger cultural changes across the district. Many said that PAR contributes to a strong, professional culture of teaching. Teachers become the gatekeepers to the profession and help to enforce professional standards across the district. By arguing that underperforming teachers who cannot meet district standards should be removed from their positions, the union challenges the stereotypical stance of protecting all teachers. This attitude has lasting repercussions in the district; in Syracuse, a principal recognized that “the joint development of this program between the district administration and the teachers union really shows a commitment to professionalism.”

PAR also helps to challenge and reshape longstanding norms of autonomy and privacy in public schools. As new teachers come to expect that CTs will be regular presences in their classes, the deeply entrenched norms of the egg-crate school begin to erode. Thus, PAR can encourage collegiality and openness of practice. The Minneapolis teachers union president saw this cultural shift as a key benefit of PAR: “I think you have to factor in the elements that you can’t quantify in terms of dollars, just the – sort of – general climate that I think is going to be more positive when you have this constructive assistance.” The Syracuse Superintendent agreed, saying that “to go over all the litanies of failures in the [traditional] evaluation process is probably pointless, but clearly until we create an atmosphere where teachers are in a culture of change, in a culture of support, we’re not going to get the kind of instruction that we want to happen.” He saw PAR as a key factor in promoting such a culture in Syracuse. As more and more teachers go through PAR, these cultural changes can extend throughout the district.

In addition to encouraging collegiality among teachers, PAR can also help build a stronger labor-management relationship, not only saving the district money as fewer grievances

move to arbitration, but working to build a positive climate of collaboration throughout the district. A Syracuse principal said that she saw these benefits: “I also think it does something for the relationship between the union and central office administration, because you really feel like you’re working together for improved things.” Principals across the seven districts saw this collaboration trickling down to the building level, improving relationships between union members and administrators in the school.

Finally, PAR’s steady focus on teacher evaluation stimulates dialogue about effective instructional practice. Teachers in these districts – particularly those novices who have come through the program – often grow to know intimately the district standards. Several individuals described their district’s renewed focus on discussions of practice, and they attributed that emphasis to PAR. In fact, a Cincinnati program administrator said that PAR’s “biggest benefit is getting this dialogue, continuing this dialogue about what good teaching practice is.”

Alleviating burdens on principals

Although some principals in the districts that we studied saw PAR as an encroachment on their rights and responsibilities as building administrators, the large majority appreciated the program. Particularly in districts with longer-standing programs, most principals seemed to have overcome their initial opposition to PAR and to recognize that CTs can devote much more time to evaluation and support than principals ever could on their own. By evaluating novices and underperforming veterans, CTs reduce the evaluation burden on principals. Importantly, though, principals still have ample opportunities to assess their teachers, as they typically evaluate all second-year teachers and all more experienced teachers except the handful on Intervention.

Across our study sites, principals said that running a school was a complex and difficult task that required attention to many details. As a result, they could not spend enough time with

the teachers who needed the most support – novices and underperforming veteran teachers. A Minneapolis principal echoed a common theme heard from principals in many different districts: “As a principal of a large school – we have a thousand kids here – I wouldn’t have that time to devote to a new teacher as well as they do. So, I have had tremendous results from the program.” A consulting teacher in Rochester told a similar story, as a principal pulled her aside and said, “I’ve got so much on my plate that I’m not going to have a whole lot of time to visit with this intern. So, I’m counting on you to support and help this young man along.” Principals recognized the value that CTs brought to their schools and appreciated that they handled some of the principals’ many responsibilities.

Beyond the time savings and improved evaluations that result from PAR, many principals also appreciated that PAR enabled them to take on a more supportive role, particularly for their novice teachers. Instead of spending their time as evaluators, principals can work to build more personal connections with their teachers. According to a principal in Syracuse, “I am able to relax in that sense and know that the PAR teacher is coming in to do some really good things. And, I can watch that teacher from a different point of view, which is really important to me because I am able to see their development more.” A Cincinnati principal agreed, saying “I actually think it’s a support to principals that we have someone who is qualified to come in and model lessons and demonstrations and provide the extra support and assistance to this teacher who desperately needs it.” He liked that he could identify a problem but then rely on the CT to provide the necessary mentoring to help the teacher improve.

Similarly, having CTs work with veteran teachers on Intervention can help to alleviate tension in the building. Many principals, particularly those in districts with relatively new PAR programs, spoke of the interpersonal challenges involved in dismissing teachers through the

traditional process. They appreciated that, with PAR, they could remove themselves from the situation to some extent, relying on a CT to gather evidence, work to support the teacher, and finally decide whether the teacher should be dismissed.

Providing opportunities and professional development for consulting teachers

Finally, PAR benefits the consulting teachers. Current and former CTs consistently reported that the role offered professional challenges that left them rejuvenated. A Toledo CT said that “it’s been a renewing experience for me.” Most CTs talked about being excited to return to the classroom because they had been inspired by a sense of new possibility. According to one Cincinnati CT, “I really enjoy going into classrooms and seeing fantastic teaching, because I am stealing every good idea that’s out there.” Another spoke of keeping a file on her computer with new things she wanted to try in her classroom.

Beyond the value of seeing excellent teachers in action, CTs also said that their role as evaluators helped them develop a better understanding of what makes for good and successful teaching. In Rochester, a union official said, “A persistent recurring comment is, ‘I know my interns benefited but not as much as I did. I learned more about teaching this year than I did in my first 20 years in the classroom.’” The Syracuse Superintendent saw this as one of the most important benefits of PAR:

These six teacher that are PAR consultants are going to be fabulous when they go back to the classroom. I mean, they are already good. They will be incredible and if we keep turning them over, you’re creating a core of just incredible educators, because I’m convinced that you don’t know good teaching until you see somebody else teacher. We all do this in isolation and there’s no possible way that we can really perfect our skills.

Former CTs regularly acknowledged that their clear understanding of the district’s instructional standards stayed with them when they returned to the classroom.

Beyond improving practice in their own classes, former CTs also reported that they grew in other ways. For some CTs, this change meant gaining the confidence to take on a new challenge, either a new subject area or an assignment in a more challenging school. Other CTs moved into formal school-based roles, serving as instructional coaches or curriculum specialists, or became informal leaders in their schools. These former CTs said that they enjoyed a measure of respect as instructional experts when they returned to the classroom, and that they continued to influence others' practice more widely. One former CT said that teachers regularly came to her with questions and that she sometimes sought out teachers to provide unsolicited advice: "I look at what I see going on in buildings, and sometimes I offer advice, even when it's not asked, to other teachers." Another recognized that she now had a better idea of how the district worked, allowing her to bring about larger changes at her school: "I have some clout. And I have some understanding of the system. And I can make things happen at my school that maybe I wouldn't have even dared to try before, didn't know how, didn't have the courage, didn't have the confidence." Across the districts, these CTs felt more confident as teachers and with their peers, gained a broader understanding of how the district worked, and had doors opened because of their time as a consultant.

Section V. Conclusion and Implications

A straightforward benefit-cost analysis of PAR remains difficult. Even focusing on the monetary implications, identifying the marginal costs and marginal benefits of the program is challenging. In large part, weighing the financial impact of implementing PAR is contingent on the district context. Although the overall costs range from approximately \$4,000 to \$7,000 per teacher served, PAR may replace many other programs, including mentoring and professional

development for novice teachers, on which districts spend substantial resources. Similarly, PAR's financial benefits have the potential to represent significant cost-savings to districts. However, we cannot clearly quantify PAR's causal effect on teacher retention, and the savings from reduced dismissal costs depends to a great extent on the district's current efforts to remove underperforming teachers from the classroom. Furthermore, cost savings from dismissals and retention are only short-term considerations; we have no clear way of understanding the broader and long-term benefits of PAR. If PAR does indeed improve student achievement, the financial gains from improved student learning, productivity, and the many benefits associated with an improved education would provide clear evidence that PAR represents a worthwhile investment for society. Unfortunately, our present analysis cannot explicitly account for such broader effects in financial terms. Nonetheless, we conclude that PAR can indeed save districts money even in the short-run, particularly in districts that take serious steps towards remediating and possibly dismissing tenured teachers who have fallen below district standards.

Importantly, almost all of the stakeholders that we interviewed considered PAR's costs and benefits in much broader terms. They said that the program improved teacher evaluations and raised the level of instruction, thereby preventing children from having ineffective teachers. They argued that PAR also had broader effects, encouraging a culture of collaboration not only among teachers, but also between labor and management at both the school site and the district level. PAR focused teachers' attention on instruction and promoted conversations about sound practice and instructional standards across the district. Finally, PAR helped both principals and consulting teachers.

Thus, on balance, the individuals with whom we spoke saw PAR as an expensive program, but they judged it to be important and worthwhile. The Toledo union president said, "It

is the best investment the district makes, all about teacher quality for every reason.” Similarly, according to the Syracuse Superintendent, “This is a huge investment for us and even in a time when we cut sixty-seven positions last year, we didn’t cut this.” That Superintendents, central office administrators, and union leaders, including officials in districts facing budgetary shortfalls, supported PAR so vocally lends real credence to the assessment that the program can have real and lasting benefits on schools.

There are several caveats to this conclusion, however. Most obviously, the districts we selected are clearly districts that had chosen to implement PAR and that have sustained the program through both good and bad times. Thus, PAR’s benefits appear to far outweigh the program’s costs in these districts, but that assessment is not surprising, given that these districts have chosen to sustain the program. Other districts with different contexts may face different benefits and costs. However, the broad-based support for PAR – particularly among central office staff – in a wide range of districts, including those that had recently adopted PAR, suggests that it may have real success in many locations. Second, we cannot know for sure that many of the benefits attributed to PAR, such as increased retention, were actually brought about by the program. In the absence of PAR, for example, these districts may have implemented other programs that would have had similar results. Similarly, although many of the stakeholders argued that PAR had improved teacher quality in their districts, there is no clear evidence linking PAR implementation to increased student achievement. Finally, we have no knowledge of how the dramatically different budgetary context facing districts in 2009 will affect PAR. As local tax revenues erode and state funding for education falls, districts may be faced with tighter budgets than ever. Thus, implementing a new and complex program may not be a realistic option. On the

other hand, the large increase in federal education spending might make programs like PAR a very attractive target.

Nonetheless, policymakers must often make decisions with limited information. Our analysis suggests not only that PAR can represent a key component of a district's human capital strategy, but also that this investment, albeit expensive, may actually save districts money. Factoring in the non-financial benefits, including improved teacher quality, tips the scales even further in the direction of PAR. Districts that have chosen to implement PAR have invested up front in a system that can provide not only short-term cost savings but also afford longer-term payoffs. Although replacing existing induction programs with PAR might seem to represent an expensive and unattractive option, choosing to invest in PAR may yield both financial and organizational benefits that make it a smart use of funds, particularly in this time of financial constraints. Implementing PAR is a challenging undertaking, requiring clear commitment from both union leaders and district officials. However, our analysis suggests that districts looking to improve their evaluation practices may want to examine PAR as a possible solution.

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Table 1. The costs and benefits of teacher Peer Assistance and Review.

	Costs of PAR	Benefits of PAR
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full costs: \$4,000 to \$7,000 per teacher served, primarily to hire replacement teachers for CTs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost-savings from reduced teacher turnover • Cost-savings from reduced dismissals • Long-term cost-savings from improved teacher quality
Organizational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removes some of the districts' best teachers from the classroom for several years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases teacher performance in the classroom • Builds a positive organizational culture centered on instruction • Alleviates burden on principals of evaluating novice and underperforming veteran teachers • Creates opportunities and professional development for CTs

APPENDIX A: Interview Protocols

Interview Protocol for Superintendent and Union President

1. Please tell me briefly how long you've worked in education and in the district.
 - What roles have you had?
 - When did you first become involved with the PAR program?
 - Have you been active in your union?
2. We want to understand how PAR relates to the broader relationship between labor and management here. Does PAR stand out as typical or unusual, given that relationship?
3. We're interested in how PAR came to be in this district:
 - How was PAR negotiated?
 - Who were the proponents and opponents?
 - Did you have difficulty convincing the superintendent?
 - Your members? (which ones)
 - Principals?
 - Are there unique features of the district's PAR program?
4. How do you choose the members of the PAR panel? Is there a labor-management split?
5. What are the effects of PAR on the principal's role? What issues does PAR raise for them?
6. What have been the biggest challenges?
7. Have there been any significant changes in the past two years?
8. What do you think are the costs and benefits of PAR?
9. What do you see as the future of PAR in Cincinnati?
10. If another superintendent/union president asked you for advice about PAR, what would you say?

Interview Protocol for Union Officials and District Administrators

Personal Background

1. Please tell me briefly how long you've worked in education and in Cincinnati.
 - What roles have you had?
 - When did you first become involved with the PAR program?
 - Have you been active in your union?

PAR Background/History/Purpose

2. Can you tell me about how and why PAR was introduced in your district?
 - Who proposed this program? Why?
 - Who were the proponents? Were there opponents? Why did it pass?
 - Were people familiar with similar programs in other districts?
3. What are the goals for these programs? Do you think those goals are being achieved?
4. We are interested in whether the program has changed over time. Have there been any important changes in the way the program is administered or in the program goals since it began?
5. Who are the key union leaders or district administrators involved in PAR?
 - Do they work together or separately?
 - Is there a point person for each side?
 - Does each side work independently to make this work, or is there constant collaboration between the union and the administration?

Labor-management Relations and Program Governance

6. Most people who don't know about these types of programs are surprised by the extent of labor-management collaboration that these programs require. Can you describe the nature of the labor-management relationship in the district? Has it changed over time?

IF ON THE PAR PANEL:

7. (Ask the first few Panel members that we interview this question, but not everyone.) Can you briefly describe how the Panel meetings work?
 - Do all interns get presented at each meeting?
 - What kinds of questions are asked by panel members?
 - How do decisions get made (voting)?
 - How often are CT recommendations overturned?
 - Who attends meetings (principals attend? their role?)

ASK THIS QUESTION OF KEY PEOPLE, NOT EVERYONE

8. On average, how many dismissals does the panel recommend each year (Apprentice and Veteran)?

IF NOT ON PAR PANEL

9. What do you think of the Panel and how it works?

View of CTs

10. Do you think you are getting the best teachers to be CTs?

11. I'd like to know your views of CTs and the work that they do.

- Do you feel that they give the Interns and Intervention cases adequate support?
- Do you feel confident in CT recommendations?
- Are those views shared by others?

IF ON PAR PANEL

12. What more, if any, support do you think CTs need?

13. We understand the CT term limit is 3 years. Do any CTs serve for longer?

What is the typical career path of a CT – i.e. do they tend to work as CT for a while and then return to full-time teaching?

IF UNION OFFICIAL:

14. What do your members think about teachers evaluating other teachers and sometimes recommending dismissal?

Program Evaluation

15. Do you think the PAR program is successful? Do others see it the same way or differently?

16. What do you see as the costs and benefits of the program? On balance, do you think it is worthwhile?

17. We know that the program has been evaluated. What have you learned from that process? Is there any evidence of improved teacher quality?

18. Are there additional challenges or benefits that the district has encountered in implementing and sustaining PAR?

Going forward

19. What do you see as the future of PAR in Cincinnati?

Interview Protocol for Panel Members

Personal Background

1. Please tell me briefly how long you've worked in education and in this district.
 - What roles have you had?
 - When did you first become involved with the PAR program?
 - Have you been active in your union?

PAR Background/History/Purpose

2. [If applicable.] Can you tell me about how and why PAR was introduced in your district?
 - Who proposed this program? Why?
 - Who were the proponents? Were there opponents? Why did it pass?
 - Were people familiar with similar programs in other districts?
3. What conditions have enabled PAR to last in the district?
 - What groups have opposed these programs? Supported them?
 - Have there been any substantial challenges to them?
 - How are they funded?
4. We are interested in whether these programs change over time. Have there been any important changes in the way the program is administered or in the program goals since it began?

Panel and Responsibilities

5. How are members chosen? How long are members' terms?

CT Selection/Training/Support

We are particularly interested in understanding the role of the Panel in employment decisions. Before we get into that, we want to ask you about some other areas of the Panel's responsibility.

6. How often does the Panel meet and for what purposes?
7. Selection of CTs
 - What is the process?
 - Who applies? Is this a strong pool? How do you know?
 - What criteria do you use for selection?
 - How do you decide which ones to take?
8. Training of CTs
 - How are the CTs trained?
 - Is there on-going training?
 - Who is responsible for this?

9. Supervise/Support CTs
 - How do you know if CTs are doing their job?
 - How do you evaluate them? What is entailed in the CT evaluation form?
 - What makes CTs effective in their work?
10. Can you talk about how the Pair process works?
11. Does the Panel review and make changes in the program?
12. What role, if any, does the Panel take in helping CTs navigate their relationships with building principals?

Teacher Evaluation/Employment Decisions

13. Walk me through a typical Panel teacher evaluation meeting:
 - Who attends?
 - How many cases do you hear at a time?
 - Who presents the case? What kind of information do they present? Who makes recommendations?
 - Are there deliberations? What kind of discussions do you have?
 - What options does the Panel have in deciding a case?
 - Does the Panel vote? What vote is required for action?
 - How often does the Panel overturn the recommendations?
 - How often do Panel recommendations get overturned? By whom?
 - How does this process work for veteran teachers?
14. The Panel is deliberately composed of both union and administrative representatives. This might suggest that the groups have different, possibly conflicting, priorities. Does the panel have split decisions along party lines (4-4 votes)? How do you handle them?
15. What is the next step if the Panel decides not to renew a teacher?
 - Who tells the teacher? Are they counseled out (before or after non-renewal vote)?
 - Have you had to have these conversations? Can you give me an example?
16. How many Intern teachers are dismissed through the program each year? How many veterans? Are these all formal actions or did some people choose to leave before that happened?
17. [If not covered yet] As a Panel member, do you have any special responsibilities?
18. [If not covered yet] How do the roles of Program Facilitator and Co-Facilitator work?

Views of Other Constituents

19. How do others in the district (teachers, principals, district administrators, school board members) view PAR? Does the Panel solicit these views?

Program Success/Evaluation

20. Do you think the PAR program is successful? Do others see it the same way or differently?
21. What do you see as the costs and benefits of the program? On balance, do you think the program is worthwhile?
22. We know that the program has been evaluated. What have you learned from that process?
23. Do you have any recommendations for improving the program or the work of the Panel?

Interview Protocol for Consulting Teachers

Personal Background

1. Please tell me briefly how long you've worked in education and in this district.
 - What roles have you had?
 - When did you first become involved with the PAR program?
 - Have you been active in your union?

Selection/Initial Training

2. I'm interested in knowing more about how the CT selection process works here. Could you describe the process that you went through as an applicant?
3. Do you have a sense for how the position of CT is viewed by your peers (other teachers)?
4. Do a lot of people apply? [try to get a sense of the strength of the pool]
5. What initial training was provided for you as a CT?
 - Did you learn things there that you find useful as a CT?
 - Are there topics that the training didn't cover, but should?

What do CTs do and where did they learn to do it?

I'm interested in understanding in more detail what your job entails and what you do day to day throughout the year.

6. Could you describe your case load? (number of teachers; matched by grade and subject) Is yours a typical case load?
7. Could you choose a typical novice teacher and describe how you work with him/her throughout the year? [Explore program requirements vs. choice]
8. What might you do differently with someone whose work concerns you? [Explore the balance of coaching and evaluation.]
9. How does this process work in your support and review of veteran teachers?
10. How did you learn how to do these things?
11. As you do your job, how do you decide what good teaching is? How do you use the standards and rubrics? Example?
12. Could you describe the process that you use when you make recommendations about a teacher's reemployment?
13. How do you decide what is "good enough"? Do you factor in a teacher's improvement or promise?

14. Your job is to support and evaluate new and experienced teachers.
 - What role, if any, do principals have in first year evaluation?
 - How does the process work for veteran teachers?

15. Can you describe how you work with principals day-to-day throughout the year? [It might be useful to pick a typical principal/intern and walk me through your interactions throughout the year.]
[Probe how this differs for more “challenging” principals.]

16. Do you and the principal ever disagree?

17. I’m interested in understanding the kind of support and assistance that is available to you as you do this work with teachers. When you have questions or need help, who do you go to?

18. Do you work closely with other CTs?

PAR Panel

19. I’m interested in your experience with the Panel. Could you describe what you do at Panel meetings and what that experience is like? (NOTE: Once we understand how the meetings work in any district we only need to ask the second part of this.)

CT Role/Teaching Career

20. What do you find most challenging about your work?

21. What are the benefits and drawbacks, to you personally, of being a CT?

22. Could you tell me what you plan to do when you complete your term as a CT?
...and ten years from now?

Interview Protocol for Principals

Personal Background

1. Please tell me briefly how long you've worked in education and in this district.
 - What roles have you had?
 - When did you first become involved with the PAR program?
 - Have you been active in your union?

PAR Background/History/Purpose

2. How does the PAR program fit into what you hope to accomplish within your own school?
3. I'm interested in knowing more about the role of PAR in this district.
 - What do you see as the current goals for this program?
 - Do you think they are being achieved?

Experience with PAR

4. I'm interested in learning more about how PAR works in your school. Please describe how the program works. [novice and veteran programs]
5. Have you ever referred teachers for Intervention?
6. How do you as a principal identify an underperforming teacher?
 - What would be some warning signs that a teacher was in need of a performance review?
 - Do you look at test scores?
 - [Can you give me an example of an underperforming teacher who you – or the CT – identified as underperforming? How does that teacher get into Intervention?]
7. Could you describe how you work day to day and over the course of the year with the CTs?
8. What do you think of the CTs and the work that they do?
 - Candidate pool?
 - Selection process?
 - Subject/grade match?

IF NOT COVERED ABOVE:

9. Do you feel confident about the support the CTs give to apprentice teachers and their recommendations about reemployment? [Also for other veteran teachers and intervention cases]
10. Have you ever disagreed with a recommendation? Have you ever disputed a CT's recommendation?
11. What do you think makes the CTs more or less effective in their role?

12. How do teachers in your school view PAR? [novice and veteran programs]
13. Has a teacher you worked with ever been dismissed? Without getting into the details, could you give me a sense of what the concern was about? [novice and veteran]
14. From the time a teacher is identified as needing assistance, what's the quickest time until a resolution of the case? What's the longest? In your experience, what has the typical timeline been?

How PAR Affects Role of Principal

15. I understand that PAR and the work of a CT may affect the work of a principal quite a bit. We understand that the principal's role in evaluation is limited in the first year but that the principal takes over responsibility in the second year. Can you tell me about that?
16. How would you describe who is responsible for evaluation in this district?
17. How does this process work for veteran teachers?
18. How does this affect what you can / cannot do as a principal?
19. How do you think about your accountability and PAR? You are accountable for the results at your school, but CTs are making recommendations about employment. How do you feel about this?
20. In cases where the review plan works and teachers "get better," what does "get better" mean? What does it look like? Please give us an example of how you knew when a teacher improved.

Perspectives on PAR Overall

21. Are your views of the PAR typical of other principals in the district? Have views changed over time?
22. Overall, do you think the program is successful? Do you have recommendations for improving it?
23. We know that principals inevitably face challenges and constraints in these types of programs – what do you (or your peers) see as some of the biggest concerns?
24. What do you see the district doing that helps principals understand how to participate in PAR?