

# Student Perceptions and the MET Project

## Introduction

A teacher has more impact on student learning than any other factor controlled by school systems, including class size, school size and the quality of after-school programs—or even which school a student is attending<sup>1</sup>—but currently, there is no agreement among education stakeholders about how to identify and measure effective teaching. In an effort to improve the quality of information about teaching effectiveness, in the fall of 2009, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation launched the two-year Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) project to rigorously develop and test multiple measures of teacher effectiveness.

As part of the project, partners from more than a dozen reputable academic, non-profit and for-profit organizations are collecting and analyzing data collected during the 2009-10 and 2010-11 school years from over 3,000 teacher volunteers and their classrooms across Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, Dallas Independent School District, Denver Public Schools, Hillsborough County Public Schools, Memphis City Schools and the New York City Department of Education. Teachers and classrooms in Pittsburgh Public Schools are also participating in the project by helping researchers with early-stage development and testing of the effectiveness measures before they are tested in the other MET project districts.

The project's data is collected across five critical research areas:

1. Student achievement gains on state standardized

assessments and supplemental assessments designed to measure higher-order conceptual thinking

2. Classroom observations and teacher reflections
3. Teachers' pedagogical content knowledge
4. Student perceptions of the classroom instructional environment
5. Teachers' perceptions of working conditions and instructional support at their schools

A close analysis of each of these will help establish which teaching practices, skills and knowledge positively impact student learning. This paper seeks to define and explain how student perceptions of the classroom instructional environment factor into the MET project.

## About Student Perceptions of the Classroom Instructional Environment

Recent education research has begun to explore whether students' perceptions of the teaching they experience help in predicting how much those students learn. In order to determine whether and to what extent such a connection exists, Cambridge Education's Tripod Project surveys will be administered to students in MET project participating classrooms during both years of the study.

The Tripod Project surveys – which have been developed and refined over the past decade and are used in schools through a partnership between Cambridge Education and Dr. Ronald F. Ferguson of Harvard University – assess whether or not students agree with a variety of statements designed to measure seven teaching practices that the survey's authors call the “Seven Cs.”

<sup>1</sup> Steven G. Rivkin, Eric A. Hanushek, and John F. Kain, “Teachers, Schools, and Academic Achievement,” *Econometrica*, Vol. 73, No. 2 (March 2005), pages 417–458.  
<http://edpro.stanford.edu/Hanushek/admin/pages/files/uploads/teachers.econometrica.pdf>

- **Caring** about students (Encouragement and Support)
  - Example: The teacher in this class encourages me to do my best.”
- **Captivating** students (Learning Seems Interesting and Relevant)
  - Example: “This class keeps my attention – I don’t get bored.”
- **Conferring** with students (Students Sense their Ideas are Respected)
  - Example: “My teacher gives us time to explain our ideas.”
- **Controlling** behavior (Culture of Cooperation and Peer Support)
  - Example: “Our class stays busy and doesn’t waste time.”
- **Clarifying** lessons (Success Seems Feasible)
  - Example: “When I am confused, my teacher knows how to help me understand.”
- **Challenging** students (Press for Effort, Perseverance and Rigor)
  - Example: “My teacher wants us to use our thinking skills, not just memorize things.”
- **Consolidating** knowledge (Ideas get Connected and Integrated)
  - Example: “My teacher takes the time to summarize what we learn each day.”

In a previous administration of the Tripod surveys in a large, urban school district, Tripod researchers ranked classrooms by their average gains on standardized achievement tests and also by their ratings on the Seven Cs. Classrooms in which students rated their teachers higher on the Seven Cs tended also to produce greater average achievement gains. Results such as these can improve the feedback teachers receive and help them refine their teaching to raise student achievement.

As part of the MET project, all 100,000 participating students are given Tripod surveys. The surveys are administered either online or in a paper-based format as determined by the school. The students’ survey responses are then compiled by researchers to form a Tripod “quality value” for each classroom; these values are then compared against average

year-over-year improvements on student assessments in each classroom to determine how closely correlated the Tripod quality values are with changes in the assessment scores. (See [www.metproject.org](http://www.metproject.org) for more information about this process.)

For more information about the student perceptions study component and the Tripod survey, contact Rob Ramsdell at [rob.ramsdell@camb-ed-us.com](mailto:rob.ramsdell@camb-ed-us.com) or 781-915-0005.

### About the Tripod Project

The Tripod Project is a national consortium of schools and districts with a shared interest in raising achievement for all students, while narrowing gaps among students from different racial, ethnic and economic class backgrounds. The project derives its name from the conviction that schools can raise achievement while closing gaps by helping teachers improve in three essential and interrelated areas: content knowledge, pedagogy and relationships. Tripod participants use data from the project’s surveys to analyze student engagement, classroom learning conditions, teaching practices, youth culture and school climate. Their understanding of the data is guided by the Tripod Conceptual Framework, which includes the Seven Cs and five student engagement targets.

For more information about the Tripod Project, contact Rob Ramsdell at [rob.ramsdell@camb-ed-us.com](mailto:rob.ramsdell@camb-ed-us.com) or 781-915-0005.

### About Cambridge Education

Cambridge Education is an established education consultancy with over 25 years of experience working in over 45 countries throughout the world. In the United States, Cambridge has partnered with over 2,500 schools in more than 200 districts across 25 states. Services are provided by a team of experienced educators who specialize in the fields of leadership, instruction, student achievement and change management. In the U.S., Cambridge is currently leading large-scale projects focused on school- and district-level transformation, teacher evaluation, school and district quality review, and comprehensive school improvement.

### About the Measures of Effective Teaching Project

The Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) project seeks to develop an array of measures that will be viewed by teachers,

unions, administrators and policymakers as reliable and credible indicators of effective teaching. By determining exactly what measures predict the biggest student achievement gains, the MET project will give teachers the feedback (including exemplary practices) they need to improve. In addition, a greater understanding about which teaching practices, skills and knowledge positively impact student learning will allow states and districts to develop teacher evaluation systems that will help strengthen all aspects of teaching—from recruitment through retention.

The MET project has enrolled over 3,000 teachers from a number of school districts around the country and is gathering a variety of data, including videotaped teacher observations, student surveys, teacher surveys and supplemental student assessments, and represents a real opportunity for teachers to inform the national discussion on education reform in order to determine which measures are most strongly correlated with high levels of student achievement. The MET project's final findings will be shared broadly at the project's conclusion in winter 2011-2012.

For more information about the MET project, please visit [www.METproject.org](http://www.METproject.org) or send an email to [info@METproject.org](mailto:info@METproject.org).

**Note:** The inclusion of a given research protocol, tool or rubric in the MET project is not an endorsement by either the MET project or its partners of that protocol, tool or rubric. In many cases, the research instruments included in the MET project are still being tested and do not yet have verified results associated with them. Other protocols, tools and rubrics similar or equivalent to those used in the MET project may exist.

In addition, selection of a given academic, non-profit or for-profit organization to participate in the MET project does not constitute an endorsement by the MET project of that organization. Other organizations may exist who do work that is similar or equivalent to the work done by the organizations participating in the MET project.