



# Communication Plans Revisited

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# Successful Communication Strategies

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# Introduction

- Why communicate? (To “control” the message)
- Need to communicate to multiple audiences: teachers, administrators, public, media
- Communication needs to be clear and frequent
- Need constant reminder of why district or state is implementing a new teacher pay system

## Introduction (cont'd)

- Need to make sure teachers (especially) who will be most affected by the plan are involved all along the way
- Need to communicate in multiple formats (written, oral, electronic)
- Ongoing task: Building and sustaining support for the program

## Two Very Different Examples

- Minneapolis and Austin
- Have very different programs and very different communication approaches
- Both programs appear to be working smoothly
- Both programs developed locally, but (primarily) state funded
- Neither is a TIF program

## Minneapolis - Background

- Program is a cooperative effort between Minneapolis Public Schools and Minneapolis Federation of Teachers
- Minneapolis began developing alternative pay plan about a decade ago (before state-funded Q Comp that now exists)
- Heavy focus on professional development
- No written communication plan

# Minneapolis

- Communication strategies developed, executed by teacher-on-special-assignment (who is now the union president)
- She now wishes she had had a written plan, but she was a one-person operation
- What she did:
  - Over 2 months, visited every school to talk to teachers to explain plan

# Minneapolis

- Explained new pay plan would be voluntary
- Set up system (email and phone) to ensure teacher questions answered quickly
- Met with community groups
- Principal dilemma: District wanted to explain teacher pay plan with union not in the room —created some mixed messages between teachers and principals

# Minneapolis

- No media contact...
- Some written “outside” communication (e.g., article in *American Educator*, AFT’s professional journal)
- Now has small cadre of teachers trained to be spokespeople for program

# Austin - Background

- AISD REACH—billed as “strategic compensation plan”—11 schools
- Four program elements:
  1. student growth
  2. professional growth
  3. focus on high-needs schools
  4. improved teacher retention
- Texas not a collective bargaining state, but district worked very closely to develop, implement plan with Education Austin (AFT affiliate)

# Austin

- Very extensive written communication plan that includes timelines, methods/strategies, persons responsible, deadlines, status
- Among activities:
  1. Program logo
  2. Frequent written/electronic communication to principals and teachers
  3. Media briefings (including with editorial board)
  4. Identified teachers and principals to be spokespeople with media

# Austin

5. Dedicated website
  6. Back-to-school kickoff celebration
  7. Radio PSAs
  8. Briefings with Chamber of Commerce and state legislative staff
- Developed rollout plan leading up to first payouts, including FAQs for teachers and principals
  - Included with payout, thank you letter from superintendent

# A Cautionary Tale

- What not to do
- 3:00 pm example

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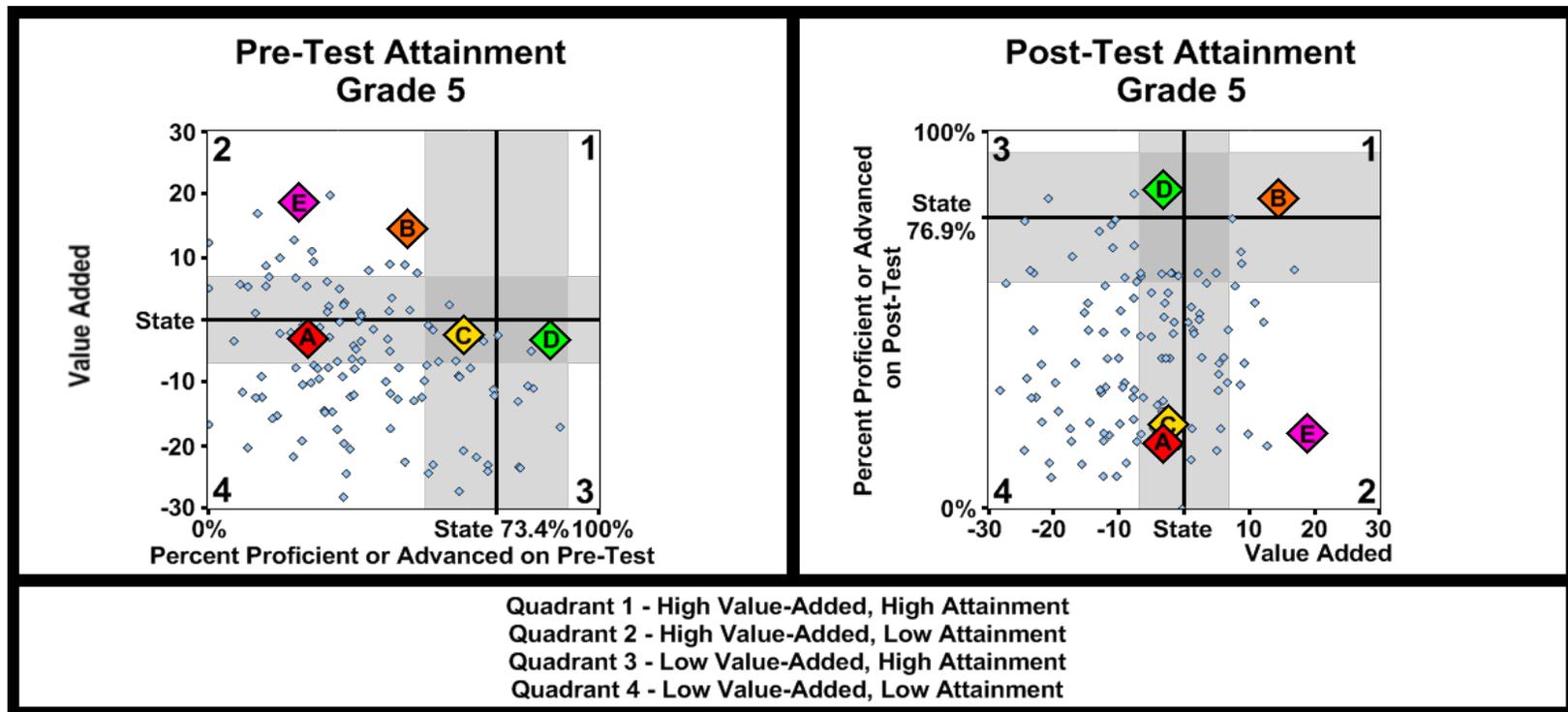
# Value-Added and Attainment

## Communicating Information on Two Different Dimensions of Student Achievement

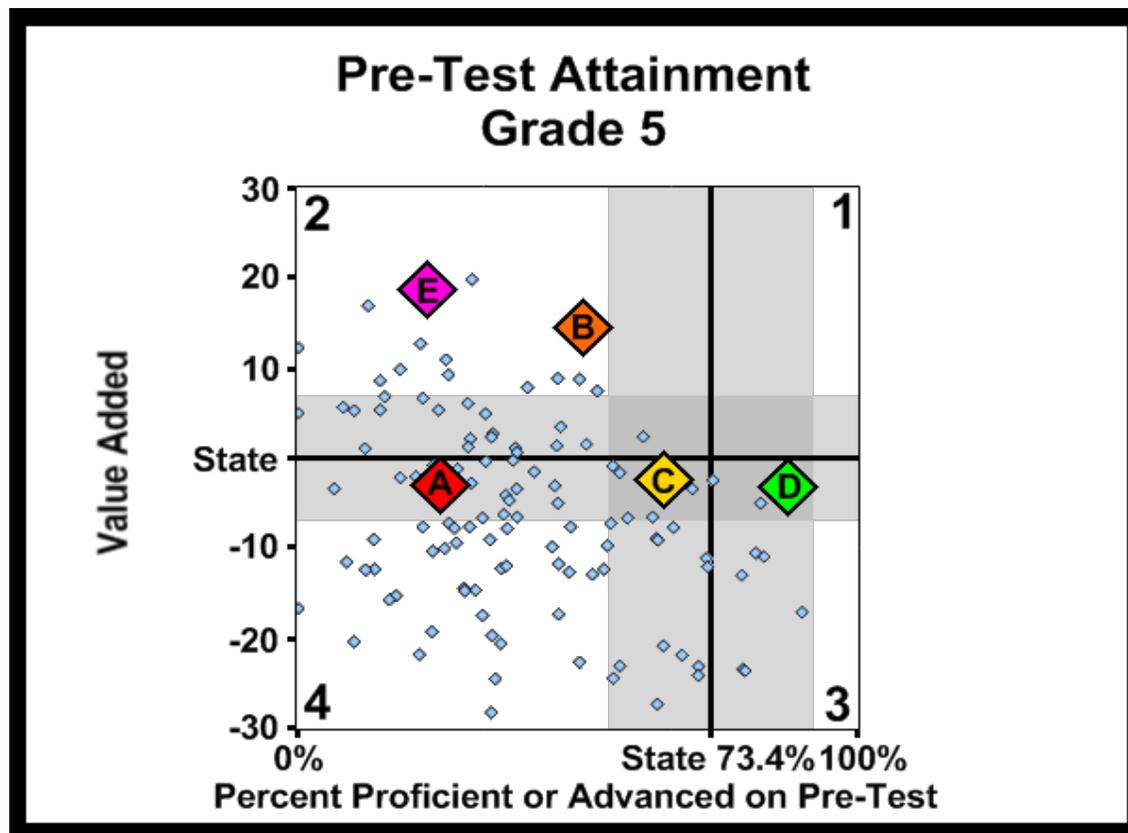
Robert Meyer

University of Wisconsin - Madison

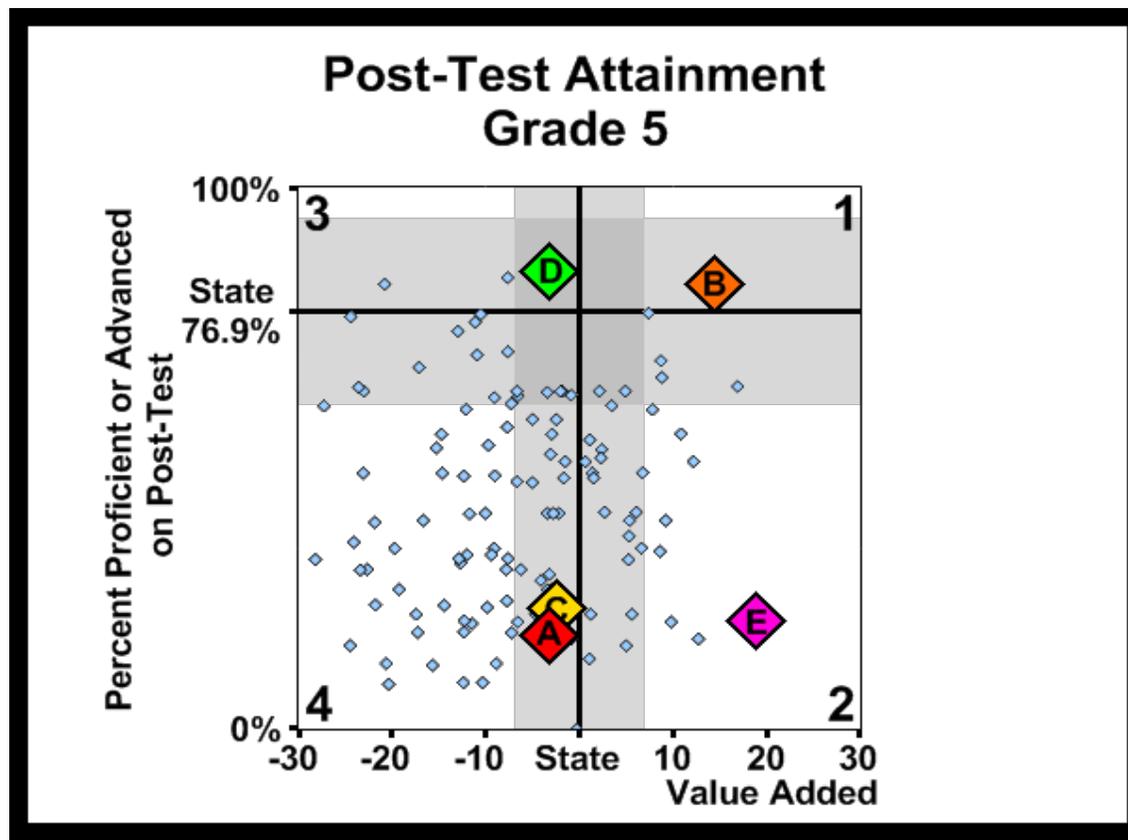
# Two Options for Connecting Value-Added and Attainment Data



# Do Low Achieving Students Attend High Value-Added Schools?

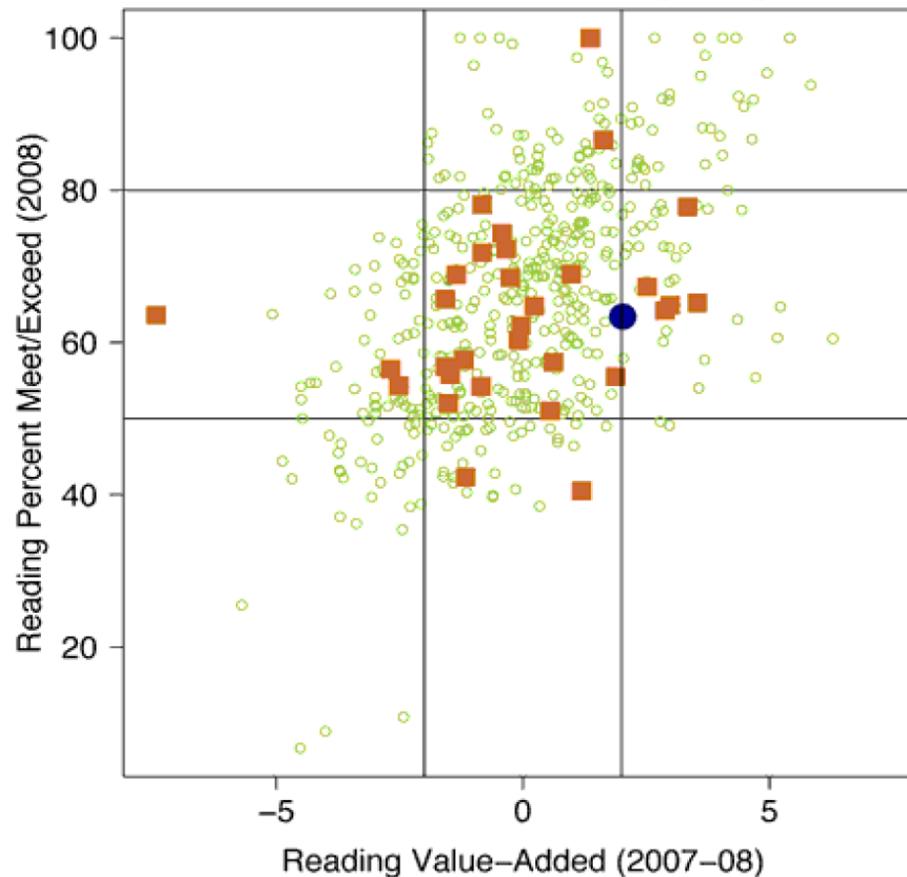


# Value-Added vs. Attainment: Is There a Difference?



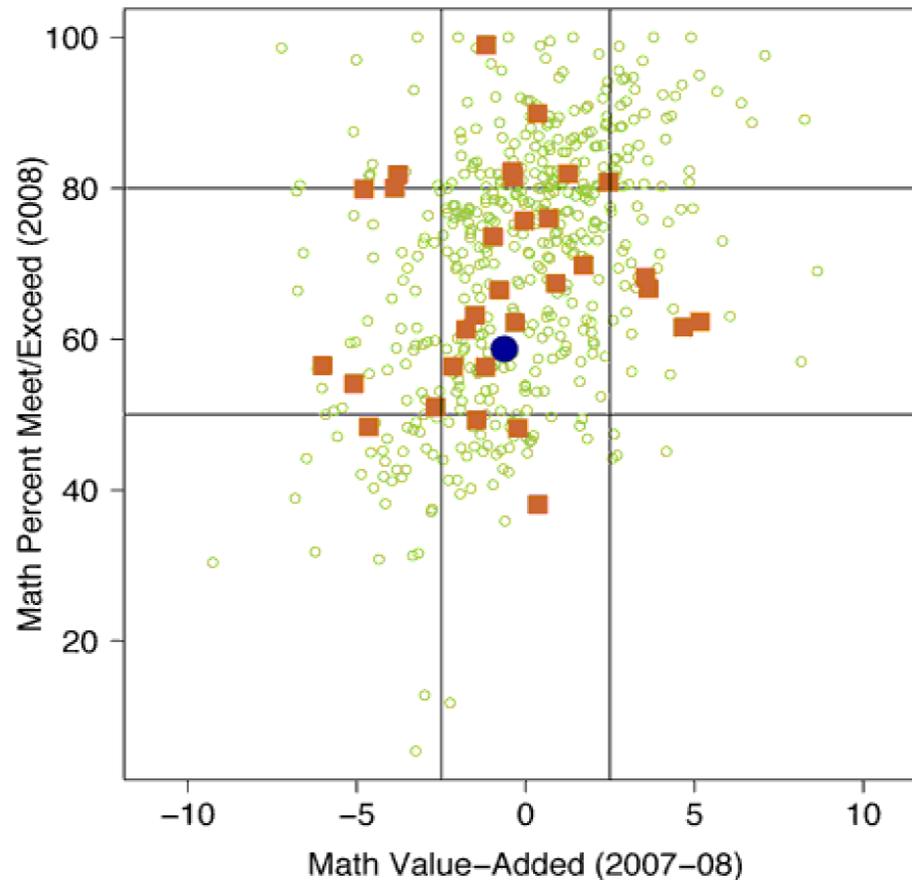
## Value-Added and Post Attainment: Low, Medium, and High Comparisons: Reading

In Reading, Your School Has High Value-Added (2.0) and  
Mid Percent Meet/Exceed (63.4%)



## Value-Added and Post Attainment: Low, Medium, and High Comparisons: Math

In Math, Your School Has Mid Value-Added ( $-0.6$ ) and Mid Percent Meet/Exceed (58.7%)



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# New Communication Challenges for TIF Grantees

Cynthia Prince  
Vanderbilt University

## Changes that create new communication challenges

1. Leadership changes
2. Economic changes
3. Change in focus due to natural progression of the project:
  - Securing cooperation, building momentum
  - Keeping constituents informed about the work and its progress
  - Sustaining the work

## Stakeholder engagement and communication module – 5 Steps

1. Assemble a representative compensation committee
2. Plan carefully
3. Design the new compensation plan
4. Build support for the work and the plan
5. Develop a feedback loop to make midcourse corrections
6. Evaluate the results

## Step 4: Build support for the work and the plan

- Strategies to “spread the word” and build support and momentum
  - Written materials
  - Meetings
  - Electronic communication
  - Written communications plan

## Lessons learned about effective communication strategies

1. Choose language carefully
  - Explain terms clearly and accurately
2. Give the plan a name and an identity
3. Anticipate the critics and skeptics
4. Communicate with the media
  - Develop working relationship with local media
  - Select point persons for media contact
  - Meet with editorial board and education writers
  - Produce periodic news releases about the project

## Step 5: Develop a feedback loop to make midcourse corrections

- Focus groups
- Satisfaction surveys

## Group analysis and observations about news articles

1. In general, does the article portray the compensation system in a positive light?
2. Is the information accurate?
3. Is any language in the article likely to raise red flags with teachers?
4. Are technical terms (e.g., value-added) adequately explained?
5. What criticisms are raised about the program or performance pay in general? Are responses adequate?
6. Does the article highlight midcourse adjustments? Program accomplishments?
7. Other observations?

## Questions for discussion

1. Did you receive any communication-related findings during your monitoring visit that you would be willing to share with other participants?
2. Did any communication-related problems come up when you made your first payout? If so, how did you respond? In retrospect, what do you wish that you had done differently?

## Questions for discussion (cont.)

3. Are changes in leadership, budget concerns, etc. creating new communication challenges for you?
4. Are you planning to make any mid-course adjustments in light of:
  - monitoring findings that you received;
  - lessons that you have learned over the past two years; or
  - new communication challenges that you are facing?