Kenneth and Catherine Peterson write about teacher evaluation from a very different perspective. While they emphasize the importance of using the best available objective data, as well as multiple data sources, they also suggest that teachers should be more active participants in the evaluation process.

In their view, the role of the principal in regard to teacher evaluation should change from chief data collector and quality judge to supporter of teacher self-evaluations, ensuring that relevant, high-quality data are available for teacher use. The authors contend that greater teacher involvement in their own evaluation would encourage reflective practice and would free principals to spend more time on other responsibilities.

Although this approach takes us far from value-added models for assessing teacher effectiveness, the two approaches are not mutually exclusive. Both acknowledge the importance of using multiple indicators to assess teacher effectiveness.

What is very different, however, is the message the two approaches typically convey to teachers. In discussing value-added assessments, teachers often express concern over their limited control of many factors related to both student learning and the assessments used to evaluate it. In contrast, Peterson and Peterson stress the importance of putting teachers in control of their own evaluations and development.

As more states and districts move toward use of value-added assessments, a challenge for principals will be to address what the authors call the “sociology” of teacher evaluation systems in ways that actively engage teachers in the process.

Resources:
www.naesp.org/ContentLoad.do?contentId=821
This article from Principal magazine, “Improving Instruction Through Teacher Observation,” discusses the importance of this technique in effective teacher evaluation, as well as the importance of principals’ knowledge about what constitutes good teaching.