**Instructional Focus**

Analysis of value-added data helps educators identify which students are benefiting most from their instruction – high, middle or low achievers. Research from Tennessee reveals three distinct classroom patterns (shed, reverse shed and tepee), whose names reflect the shape of the slopes in the descriptive charts. These patterns can be found in any classroom, school or district, but occur disproportionately in the circumstances described below. All data is based on three year running averages for the value-added gains made by all students in individual classrooms.

The shed pattern explains the frequent observation made by teachers in low-income communities: the incidence of precocious students falls precipitously from first through sixth grade. Teachers in these schools, faced with so many low performing children, focus on the bottom of the student distribution so that previous low achievers get high gain while previous high-achievers get low gain. Sustaining this focus in the early years results in few high achieving children by middle school.

The reverse shed pattern reveals the opposite focus that is found disproportionately in high income communities. Here teachers appear to respond to the central concern of their communities by concentrating on their highest performers. As a result, previous low achievers get low gain while previous high achievers get high gain.

The final pattern is the tepee. In these classrooms, teachers are concerned with the average performer. By focusing on the middle of the distribution, both previously low and high achievers get low gain, while the previously average achievers get high gain.