



A Union of Professionals

IT'S ELEMENTAL

A QUICK GUIDE TO IMPLEMENTING
EVALUATION AND DEVELOPMENT SYSTEMS



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Randi Weingarten
PRESIDENT

Loretta Johnson
SECRETARY-TREASURER

Francine Lawrence
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

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IT'S ELEMENTAL

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INTRODUCTION

Ensuring that the most highly effective teachers educate American children is at the heart of the systemic reform in teacher evaluation. Thousands of districts from Maine to New Mexico, from Hawaii to the Carolinas, are embarking on a mission: to grow, support and retain the most effective teachers to meet the challenges of preparing students for the 21st century. Re-imagining teacher evaluation and development is a key mechanism in meeting this goal.

In the pages that follow, we share insights, resources and ideas that inform evaluation system implementation. Implementation describes the activities surrounding the transformation of planning and design into action and operations. It is “where the rubber meets the road.” Implementation describes the transition—sometimes smooth, sometimes stuttering—from theory to practice.

In deploying a new teacher evaluation system, a school district stands at a critical juncture. The choice is clear: Systemic change in teacher evaluation must be embraced to transform a school’s culture, workforce and students, by raising the standard of teacher performance, and by providing the supports to ensure that teachers are empowered to take charge of their profession.

In taking on this mission, a labor-management implementation team can be a powerful ally during the challenging “start-up” period. The implementation team’s responsibility is to fully understand the structure, vision, intentions and processes associated with a newly devised or adopted teacher evaluation system, and then to communicate this understanding and support to the practitioners, evaluators and administrators who engage in the system’s many activities. The team is a resource, an adviser, a catalyst and a cheerleader for the system’s potential to drive teacher support and development.

Many districts are well on their way to realizing the promise of new teacher evaluation systems. Other districts, spurred on by the call for reform in *Race to the Top*, or in response to state legislation, are piloting projects; designing new measures of effectiveness; or engaged in designing new protocols, rubrics and teaching standards.

The AFT has been at the forefront of supporting new evaluation initiatives. Through the AFT Innovation Fund, our union has supported two major pilots in New York and Rhode Island, providing training and technical assistance, and succeeded in modeling the labor-management collaboration regarded as crucial to transforming evaluation culture from one that sorts teachers to one that supports them.

This guide introduces ten essential “elements” that new teacher evaluation systems might address as they move forward. These snapshots are designed to encourage districts and teams to grapple with questions, explore new ideas and, ultimately, to demonstrate accountability for the performance of their new systems. Additional resources, and expanded information about the elements presented here, are available on the Teacher Evaluation Community website (see inside back cover for details).

Districts have been preparing for their next test for many years: establishing standards for the teaching profession, devising rubrics to measure teacher performance, arriving at an understanding of what works in training, and what’s real in the classroom. As districts, administrators and teachers engage in the rollout of their new systems, the AFT remains committed to sharing the work, and celebrating the successes of labor-management collaboration.

1 CIT

Collaborative Implementation Teams

ASSUMPTIONS

Before implementation can begin, we assume that design tasks associated with a new teacher evaluation and development system—such as adopting standards, designing a rubric and specifying the content of training for evaluators—have been accomplished in the district through a collaborative labor-management process. Where collective bargaining agreements exist, union members and school administrators have settled mandated elements of the evaluation system. This early collaboration empowered teachers and administrators to give voice to their shared values around teaching and learning, teacher growth and student achievement, and teacher evaluation and development.

Similarly, early collaboration between union members and other stakeholders lays the foundation of trust, recognizes the strengths and expertise of individuals at the table, and ensures that the system elements have been devised or created to ensure fairness and that they result in improving teaching and learning across the district.

FORM A COLLABORATIVE IMPLEMENTATION TEAM

A collaborative labor-management implementation team is essential to successful implementation of a teacher development and evaluation system. The team may be appointed jointly by the union president and district superintendent. (Some districts may refer to this team as the “evaluation” “action” “steering committee” “leadership” or other team name that implies moving from theory to action.) It’s critical that labor is well represented on any implementation team to ensure that the agreed-upon elements of the system are implemented with fidelity.

The implementation team should be appointed to ensure and account for the dissemination of teacher evaluation and development practice across the district. To do so, the team must collaborate to assign ac-

countability responsibilities and to devise an overall plan for roll-out of the system.

IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING

This document outlines the work associated with nine additional elements of teacher evaluation and development. The work of the implementation team is not to accomplish the tasks associated with each element, but rather to identify the expertise necessary to accomplish those tasks, to set them in a workable framework of benchmarks, to review data and reports associated with those tasks, and to respond to roadblocks with timely problem-solving. Most important, the team should support the front line (teachers, administrators, professional development staff) with training, technical assistance, funding, communications and resources.

Establishing performance benchmarks is a critical part of implementation planning. Embedded in a calendar, benchmarks will identify who will do what

“We’re finally getting serious about teacher evaluation in Detroit, I’m proud to say. Teachers are glad that they’re having evaluations that are meaningful, consistent and fair. Groups have been created and teachers are talking with one another, collaborating, and developing a common language. We’re still working out some of the kinks in the system, but we see great promise in our evolving system. ”

— IVY BAILEY,

Teacher, Lead Consultant PAR Program,
Detroit Public Schools

and when. Benchmarks are targets, like incremental rungs on a ladder, designed to help the team keep track of the system's progress.

CHALLENGES

- Teacher evaluation systems are designed to strengthen teacher practice and inform district professional development.
- The district's vision of teaching and learning must emphasize the potential for teacher growth and professional development as well as the consequent student achievement. It is important that labor and management work together to reinforce the district's vision of successful teaching and student achievement.

RESOURCES

Learn more about implementation at <http://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/>.

The Science of Implementation

<http://sisep.fpg.unc.edu/news/enotes-02-2012>

2 W&B

Work Plan & Benchmarks

ASSUMPTIONS

The system has been fully designed. All participants have been oriented and trained, measures have been selected, and teachers are engaged in the evaluation and development process. All elements of the system may not be operational yet (e.g., a survey of teaching and learning conditions may not have been done in the first year), but most components are in use.

IMPLEMENTATION

From the start, the implementation team must formulate a work plan to establish its own goals and objectives for implementation of the evaluation system, identify roles and responsibilities of the team members, propose strategies for accomplishing the work, and account for the resources available. Because most systems are relatively new, the work plan is, in many ways, an exemplar of emergent design, a product that takes its shape from an ever-changing menu of inputs, personalities, environments and conditions. In such a situation, problem-solving should be proactive, visible and expedient. Impediments should be regarded as opportunities to learn and refine the system.

The implementation team should formulate a work plan that specifies a calendar for each phase of implementation, covering items such as evaluator training, teacher orientation, observation schedule, professional development, survey administration and other system components. The work plan also should specify intermediary steps and targets or benchmarks to assess progress, such as the production of communications related to the rollout of each element. The implementation team should perform a routine and predictable “systems check.” By periodically interviewing stakeholders about their experiences with the system, for example, the team can begin to assess where the system is working well, and where it might need some fine-tuning. In addition, teams can:

1. **Gather data** (such as data from observation systems) to assess whether deliverables are being produced on schedule;
2. **Produce agendas** that encourage reports from all committees, and utilize data to re-order priorities and problem-solve;
3. **Consult with other districts** to compare progress; and
4. **Regularly assess budgetary issues**, where appropriate.

“Evaluation implementation—at least in Houston—has left us with some serious advice for other districts. One thing we’ve come to value is the importance of using a piloting process. In a no-stakes pilot, you have the opportunity to work out the kinks in evaluation. The insights you gain in the experimental phase can save you a lot of headaches later! We also recommend doing everything possible to reduce administrative paperwork—to keep devising new tools that make activities like observations more efficient. There are a thousand details in teacher evaluation, and we encourage more collaboration, more sharing, and more resource development!”

— ELENA SANER,
Elementary Science Teacher,
Houston Independent School District

CHALLENGES

- The design of any teacher evaluation and development system and its success relies on a number of factors, including teacher and administrative buy-in, budget, training, and local context, among others. Not surprisingly, diversity among stakeholders and the contexts in which the systems operate are likely to yield unanticipated successes and problems.
- Given the complexity and many “moving parts” in teacher evaluation and development systems, accountability is crucial. The implementation team should be accountable for assessing whether the people, processes, procedures and policies are operating as planned. Accountability allows us to assess progress, troubleshoot problems, and propose and implement solutions, as well as hold individuals and others responsible for their actions.
- Identifying evidentiary benchmarks associated with a functioning system—e.g., website hits may be evidence that a communications effort is paying off; teacher enrollment in specific, targeted professional

development may be evidence of follow-through on individual learning plans—requires thoughtful design and a clear work plan.

INSTRUMENTS

Project management software (such as Basecamp), can provide the templates necessary for identifying milestones, collecting reports, sharing documents, assigning to-do lists and managing calendars.

RESOURCES

A brief, generic introduction to writing benchmarks can be found at http://charity.lovetoknow.com/Performance_Benchmarks_for_Nonprofits.

3

S&R Standards & Rubrics

ASSUMPTIONS

By now, districts that are ready to move forward with teacher evaluation have chosen a rubric that is aligned to state or district standards. The standards capture the best of teaching practice and clearly reflect what stakeholders believe. A rubric, aligned with standards, expresses the range of performance (generally from ineffective to highly effective) and can be a powerful tool for scaffolding outstanding teaching practice.

IMPLEMENTATION

Teachers and administrators, evaluators and other stakeholders can find a tremendous amount of guidance for evaluation in teaching standards and rubrics. It is essential that teachers and evaluators alike are familiar with these tools, and fluent with the content of each. The use of a common language in standards and rubrics will facilitate trust-building and professional discourse that remains fixed on teacher evaluation.

From district to district, and state to state, teaching standards and rubrics will vary. Some rubrics are “homegrown,” designed collaboratively by labor-management teams to reflect local contexts or special student populations. (The development of considerations to support teachers of English language learners and students with disabilities is underway at the AFT.) Standards may also be homegrown. Standards and rubrics also may adopt wholly, or in part, the frameworks described by others.

In systems where standards and rubrics form the basis for evaluation activities, these tools generally provide the framework in which the largest portion of points are distributed for scoring. To prepare for evaluation activities—whether teachers are being observed or by a review of classroom artifacts, for example—it is critical that teachers and evaluators share an understanding of which standards (if not all)

apply in each activity, and subsequently, both evaluators and teachers should become familiar with the language of the rubric. This fluency supports professional conversations throughout the evaluation process, including pre-conferences, evidence reviews and summative evaluations.

“I think it’s fair to say that now that we’ve got a firmly established evaluation system, we are all—administrators, teachers, evaluators—speaking the same language. Every professional conversation uses the language from the standards and the rubric. The focus on improving instructional practice never wavers.

One of the unique accomplishments of our efforts in Plattsburgh [an AFT Innovation Fund pilot school] was the early buy-in we acquired from the college’s [SUNY Plattsburgh] School of Education. Now, they’ve adopted the standards and rubric into the curriculum and will use them to evaluate student teachers. When those young people graduate, they’ll be among the most marketable in the state—because they know what being a ‘professional’ means.”

— KATHY FESSETTE,

Teacher, Peru Central School District;
and director, North Country
Teacher Resource Center (SUNY-Plattsburgh)

CHALLENGES

- A rubric must be aligned with the teaching standards if it is to be a meaningful measure of teacher performance. Over time, in most states, rubrics and standards also should be aligned with the Common Core State Standards, professional development standards, and 21st century skills.
- Local contexts often suggest the necessity of adjusting or tailoring “off-the-shelf” standards and rubrics to make them most useful.
- Standards and rubrics are dynamic constructs, and should be revisited annually to reflect changes in instructional practice, curricula or evaluation practice and policy.

INSTRUMENTS

Rhode Island Rubric:
www.rifthpinnovation.net/rubrics

Iowa Teaching Standards:
www.boee.iowa.gov/stndrds.html

Standards for Alaska’s Teachers:
www.eed.state.ak.us/standards/pdf/teacher.pdf

North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Process:
www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/profdev/training/teacher/required/rubricassessmentform.pdf

RESOURCES

The NBPTS Five Core Propositions form the foundation and frame the rich amalgam of knowledge, skills, dispositions and beliefs that characterize National Board Certified Teachers.
www.nbpts.org/the_standards/the_five_core_propositio

Goodrich, H. (1996). Understanding Rubrics. *Educational Leadership*, 54 (4), 14-18

4 M²

Multiple Measures

ASSUMPTIONS

Multiple measures are required to make fair, valid and comprehensive evaluations of teachers. Using multiple measures means that evidence must be collected from more than one type of source in order to draw conclusions that reflect the complexity of teaching.

In general, multiple measures fall into two major categories (scores from each category contribute to a teacher's overall evaluation and rating):

1. **Measures of teacher effectiveness.** Evidence may be collected from observations, goal-setting, review of instructional artifacts (such as lesson plans) or student portfolios, among others.
2. **Measures of student achievement/growth.** Evidence may be collected and scores developed from standardized tests; district wide teacher-designed assessments; and, in some cases, student learning objectives, or SLOs (see Element 5).

IMPLEMENTATION

Depending on what measures a district or school has selected, putting them to use is a substantial challenge. But in so doing, we honor the idea that multiple measures are crucial to representing the complexity of teaching.

Most states now require that some measure of student learning be included in teacher evaluation. This requirement has been legislated in some jurisdictions; in others, decisions regarding student learning measures have been made by the state board of education. If measures in a teacher evaluation system have been legislated, it is likely that scoring parameters and weighting for measures have been pre-determined. For example, a composite score of effectiveness could be derived from teacher effectiveness (observations and goal setting, 50 percent), and student achievement measures (50 percent). If these scoring formulas have not been determined, districts may be tasked to do so.

Generally speaking, scores for student growth and student achievement are provided to evaluators from formulaic calculations of test scores and demographic data. On the other hand, the onus is on labor-management committees to determine how to measure teacher effectiveness, and how to score and weight each measure.

“Our model in Helena is built on a rock-solid foundation of professional growth. Every element in our evaluation system—from a preconference to a peer discussion, to the development of a professional growth plan—is based on the idea that teachers can and should fortify the profession. We collect multiple measures of data that we use to tie our growth plans to at least one of the six Critical Teaching Standards we’ve adopted, and from which we’ve built our own rubric. We’ve got buy-in here—some of the best labor-management relationships in the country are to be credited for that accomplishment! Every step in our process is an avenue for an awesome conversation. That’s the way we see it.”

— TAMMY PILCHER,
President, Helena (Mont.) Education Association

CHALLENGES

- As in the past, evaluators today continue to rely on classroom observations as the major vehicle for determining teacher effectiveness. However, because observations now are often conceptualized as a multi-part event—including pre- and post-conferences, individual professional learning plan development, and goal setting—principals and evaluators frequently struggle with time and resource management. District implementation teams can support the observation process by working with evaluators to redistribute resources (personnel, for example) to ensure that neither observations nor other administrative responsibilities are compromised.
- Reviews of classroom and instructional evidence and survey data may also contribute to teacher effectiveness scores, and evaluators must be trained to deal with this evidence.

INSTRUMENTS

The system in Helena, Mont., includes FAQs, observation forms and rubrics.

www.helena.k12.mt.us/district/departme/personne/newteach/index.dhtm

RESOURCES

A helpful introduction to the concept of multiple measures can be found in Educational Leadership's The Many Meanings of "Multiple Measures."

www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/nov09/vol67/num03/toc.aspx

Multiple measures are explained in depth in AFT's A Guide for Developing Multiple Measures for Teacher Development and Evaluation at

www.aft.org/pdfs/teachers/devmultiplemeasures.pdf.

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TS

Test Scores & SLOs

ASSUMPTIONS

This element applies to districts or states which have determined that, in addition to some measure of teacher effectiveness, measures of student achievement or growth must contribute to a teacher's final effectiveness score and rating. Generally speaking, test scores and/or student learning objectives (SLOs) may contribute to composite, summative scores of teacher effectiveness. Many states and districts have concluded that the inclusion of test score measures and/or SLOs strengthens the overall validity of teacher evaluation.

IMPLEMENTATION

By and large, teacher evaluation systems have chosen to incorporate the use of state-sponsored, standardized test scores and statistical methods to measure changes in student scores over time. These methods also use formulas to attempt to account for demographic and other factors that influence achievement. Because standardized testing forms the basis for an index of student academic growth, it is subject to the persistent criticism that teachers “teach to the test” or use persistent “drill-and-kill” strategies in their classrooms. Alternatively, authentic, classroom-based assessments might serve students (and evaluation systems) better. Teacher-created assessments offer other measures such as collaboration and critical thinking, to test skills.

In many subjects or grades, no state measures exist. In such cases, the burden of finding valid and rigorous measures falls to the districts.

Student learning objectives (SLOs) provide an alternative to test-based measures in subjects for which no standardized tests (or statewide measures) exist, or an additional measure of student growth along with standardized tests. SLOs are district- and teacher-centered strategies that utilize rigorous and valid evidence derived from student performances to measure student growth. SLOs incorporate learning goals

a teacher sets at the beginning of the academic year. A teacher's score is derived from the degree to which the goal is attained.

Developing SLOs and ensuring that they are aligned with the Common Core State Standards often requires training and substantial time on task for teachers and administrators.

Implementation teams can support the development of SLOs by ensuring that appropriate training, exemplars and adequate resources have been procured. Teams should be conversant with the requirements of and approval process for SLOs in their districts.

“We are very pleased to learn that the Rhode Island Department of Education has approved the Innovation model. I really think that Innovation districts have had a leg up on successful implementation of a new evaluation system because of the collaborative work we've done through the consortium. We have worked together to define our expectations of effectiveness and trained our teachers and evaluators in the new system. The relationship between educator effectiveness and student achievement is something we all agree on, and developing this system as partners ensures that we'll be able to implement it successfully. Ultimately that's a great benefit to our teachers, our system and our students.”

— **KENNETH SHEEHAN**,
Superintendent,
West Warwick, R.I., Public Schools



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IT'S ELE

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Data & Evaluation

CHALLENGES

- Test score formulas alone are poor measures of teacher effectiveness. However, when used in combination with other measures, including other measures of student learning, could have some predictive power about a teacher's potential for career-long success.
- The development of SLOs is a labor-intensive and time-consuming process. Across common class levels and subject areas, teachers may consider working collaboratively to construct the objectives.
- Challenges remain for school districts, particularly in the development of local assessments. These assessments should be aligned with curriculum; developed through collaborative efforts; and rely on diverse, authentic and multiple indicators.

INSTRUMENTS

RI Guide to Measures of Student Learning for Administrators and Teachers

www.ride.ri.gov/educatorquality/educatorevaluation/Docs/GuideSLO.pdf

SLO Exemplars from New York

<http://engageny.org/news/student-learning-objective-exemplars-from-new-york-state-teachers-are-now-available/>

New York's SLO Template

<http://engageny.org/resource/new-york-state-student-learning-objective-template/>

RESOURCES

'MET' [Measures of Effective Teaching] Made Simple, a report from The New Teacher Project, provides a concise and accessible discussion of multiple measures.

http://tntp.org/assets/documents/TNTP_METMadeSimple_2012.pdf

Measuring Student Growth for Teachers in Non-Tested Grades and Subjects: A Primer

www.swcompcenter.org/educator_effectiveness2/NTS__PRIMER_FINAL.pdf

6

TLC

Teaching & Learning Conditions

ASSUMPTIONS

The importance of gathering data regarding teaching and learning conditions in the school district has been widely recognized. The inclusion of data from a survey of teaching and learning conditions is seen as an important contributor to the context necessary to understand teacher effectiveness within the district.

IMPLEMENTATION

There are many ways to gather data about teaching and learning conditions. Survey tools from some national vendors are in widespread use. Alternatively, locally developed surveys or other instruments can be utilized. Data can be quantitative or qualitative. Most important, research of this nature must be regarded as valid and the data protected; interpretations of data should be led by knowledgeable researchers. Data can be collected at the school, district and statewide levels.

What factors affect “conditions” for teaching and learning? With some variation, data are often collected regarding the following areas:

- Leadership: distribution, opportunities, effectiveness;
- Professional learning opportunities;
- Induction, mentoring, peer assistance;
- Curriculum and instruction;
- Time available for professional learning, instructional preparation and other activities;
- Building resources, including physical space and safety;
- Instructional resources and support; and
- Student conduct and classroom management challenges.

CHALLENGES

- For many districts, regardless of how essential they believe the results from the survey instrument, leveraging results to make change can be difficult. Results may have implications for school-wide or district-wide school improvement planning.
- Identifying or developing an instrument can be time-consuming and expensive. Consequently, while many districts see this component of teacher evaluation as essential, it may not assume its place in the system until Years 3-5.

“The collaborative environment in our district is admirable—it’s not just the administration making decisions. Overall, I think that through collaboration, we’re really working toward shared solutions and strengthening our professional culture. We’re also partners in understanding the survey data we’ve generated. We’ve shared data in our labor-management committee, a place where teachers really feel listened to. We use the data to inform planning, both schoolwide and districtwide. We’re just getting started with survey tools, but we feel they have the potential to help us do things like manage schedules, ensure safety in the buildings and align our facilities with our programmatic needs.”

— **TOM FORKNER,**
AP teacher, Anderson High School
and member of the
Anderson (Ind.) Federation of Teachers

- While statewide surveys can provide valuable data to inform policymakers, local surveys can be tailored to address local contexts.
- Disaggregating administrator responses from teacher responses may shed light on areas of agreement and disagreement.
- Survey data may be supplemented by focus groups, interviews, observations and many other data-gathering activities.

INSTRUMENTS

The New Teacher Center (www.tntc.org) offers the Teaching & Learning Conditions Survey.
www.newteachercenter.org/node/1359

RESOURCES

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's Teaching and Learning International Survey recognizes the importance of such data collection beyond the United States.

www.oecd.org/dataoecd/17/51/43023606.pdf

Review a presentation from the AFT TEACH conference to learn about measuring teaching and learning conditions.

www.aft.org/pdfs/teachers/teach11materials/t900_measuringpres.pdf

7 Tr

Training: Teachers/Evaluators

ASSUMPTIONS

The district has recognized the necessity of orienting all stakeholders so that each can engage in a fair and meaningful process of teacher evaluation.

The district has further recognized that if evaluators are to perform their responsibilities with fairness, they must be trained in a shared set of practices that ensure uniformity across evaluations. Some states/districts will require evaluator certification.

IMPLEMENTATION

The training of evaluators is an ongoing concern for teacher evaluation systems. Year after year, evaluators will enter the training pipeline, or require periodic recertification. As rubrics change or standards are updated, evaluators must be conversant with new rubric content, and they must understand the types of evidence that meet the criteria for specific performance expectations. Inter-rater reliability should be assessed frequently.

While some states require certification prior to an evaluator's participation in teacher evaluation, other states allow evaluators to engage in evaluation activities pursuant to certification by an established date in the future. District implementation teams may find it helpful and supportive to maintain a central roster of evaluators, certifications and dates critical to maintaining a current and well prepared cadre of evaluators.

Training should be structured to build competence in evaluating evidence in the full range of evaluation activities utilized (observations, portfolio review, goal-setting, and structured review of classroom artifacts, among others).

ORIENTING TEACHERS FOR EVALUATION

Teachers also require training and orientation for evaluation activities. This orientation should include an introduction to and use of the standards and rubrics against which performances will be measured, as well as a comprehensive overview of scoring. A full range of possible performances will provide guidance on the scope of practice. Likewise, teachers should be provided with timetables that identify forms and due dates if such are required for evaluation.

“The evaluation task force has been extremely diligent in vocalizing the importance of evaluator training to ensure that teachers understand this system is not meant to be punitive, but is meant to support and improve our profession. Evaluators need to be forthright with their teachers on the collaboration opportunities provided by this system. Teachers need to understand they are part of an evaluation team; they have the power to provide relevant evidence of their performance in each of the six critical standards. We all need to remember that the goal is to improve student learning.”

— **CHRISTINE CAMPBELL,**

Language arts teacher; member, West Virginia Department of Education Teacher Evaluation Task Force, and AFT-West Virginia executive board member, Pocahontas County School District, W.Va.

CHALLENGES

- Evaluator training, depending on local district or state requirements, may have widely variant dimensions and require substantial time commitments. Training may cover inter-rater reliability; calibration and re-calibration; bias, evidence and validity; evidence evaluation; scoring and weighting; pre- and post-conferences; professional conversations; professional learning plans and other topics.

INSTRUMENTS

A wide range of evaluation tools in Rhode Island's Guide to Evaluating Building Administrators and Teachers.

www.ride.ri.gov/educatorquality/educatorevaluation/Docs/RIModelGuide.pdf

RESOURCES

Teacher Evaluator Training & Certification: Lessons Learned from the Measures of Effective Teaching Project
www.danielsongroup.org/article.aspx?type=news&page=METLessons

Teacher Evaluator Training: Ensuring Quality Classroom Observations
www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/01/01/14/10114.pdf

8

SC

Strategic Communications

ASSUMPTIONS

Moving forward with strategic communications assumes that districts have strategies in place—such as newsletters, e-mail and other vehicles—to share their successes and progress reports with teachers, students, parents, school board members, funders and the community at large.

IMPLEMENTATION

The key word in this element is “strategic,” meaning sharing the right information with the right people in time for them to use it efficiently, appropriately and positively.

A shared vision statement sets the context for messages about teacher evaluation. This stable context underscores the systemic nature of evaluation and its elements. Communications should provide accountability, rationales and benefits to audiences.

Trust in messaging can be forged by creating an identity for communications, and pairing it with messages that are positive, candid and jargon-free. It is helpful to “brand” system communications with smart graphics, meaningful iconography, and succinct slogans or catchphrases.

Every communication project provides an opportunity to connect with audiences; one test of effectiveness is to ask audiences to respond, comment, upload, produce or contribute. By emphasizing these two-way responsibilities, communication becomes a shared activity, and simultaneously confirms that messages are being received and understood.

Implementation teams can work with communications offices and union building representatives (often a trusted source of information) to integrate messages into existing structures. Messages can be constructed for internal audiences (teachers and evaluators) and external audiences (school board, parents, community at large). New channels, such as social media sites and blogs, provide easily updateable and accessible oppor-

tunities to share information, and to gather input from readers. Online video sharing sites provide additional venues for posting videos that reflect teachers’ experiences with evaluation.

The Internet also offers many accessible tools, such as SurveyMonkey, that can generate questionnaires and offer assistance with interpreting the data, and Ning, which fosters the development of specific social networks.

“I think getting our system successfully off the ground in Peoria can be attributed to four ‘lessons learned.’ First, we learned that labor-management collaboration was critical to getting buy-in from everyone: teachers and administrators, especially. Second, consistent, proactive communications go a long way to solving problems before they start. And keeping the ‘planning/steering committee’ or ‘implementation team’ to a reasonable size makes decision-making quicker and clearer. Finally, don’t rush. Slow down. You can make great progress one step at a time.”

— LANA MYERS,
Teacher; mentor/induction program coordinator,
Peoria (Ill.) School District

CHALLENGES

- Occasionally, **some messages will need content and vocabulary adjustments** to reflect both a consciousness of audience and the district's support for professionalism and its investment in assisting teachers at every stage of their careers.
- **Social media** can be rich sources of information from audiences; however, **not all sites allow content to be moderated.**

INSTRUMENTS

www.ning.com

www.surveymonkey.com

RESOURCES

Communications Challenges and Opportunities:
New Teacher Evaluation Systems

www.nga.org/files/live/sites/NGA/files/pdf/1112EFFECTIVENESSVANHOOK.PDF

9 PgS

Professional Growth & Support

ASSUMPTIONS

Teacher evaluation has the potential to fortify the workforce when the results of teacher ratings are consistently integrated with job-embedded professional development, learning communities and targeted growth opportunities.

IMPLEMENTATION

Perhaps in no other area do district implementation teams have a greater opportunity to measure the impact of system outputs than in the close support and review they can lend to professional development. If these reviews are to be meaningful, however, preparation in the district entails ensuring that adequate supports for professional development are in place.

These supports are crucial:

- **Evaluations of teachers**—when executed correctly, consistently, and comprehensively—will result in the identification of an individual teacher’s strengths and areas in need of improvement. District implementation teams should work with professional development committees or staff to ensure that differentiated forms of support are available to teachers at every rating—from ineffective to highly effective.
- **Progress in achieving goals identified** in the professional growth/professional improvement plans should be reviewed periodically throughout the school year.
- **Teachers may be directed into peer assistance, coaching or mentoring;** or they may be provided closely supervised support in the classroom to address a specific and critical instructional skill.
- **Teachers who are highly rated are not exempt from professional development;** on the contrary, their exceptional performance suggests that they may serve well as teacher-leaders, facilitators of learning communities, mentors, and content and curriculum developers.

- **High-quality professional development is characterized by a number of factors,** including duration, relevance to classroom practice, active learning strategies and the opportunity for peers to connect with peers.
- **The district implementation team may devise a strategy to assess** the long-range effectiveness of professional development strategies by surveying participants and monitoring immediate and longer-term outcomes. These outcomes may include improved student achievement, teacher retention, cost-benefits, and stronger alignment of district and building-level goals and accomplishments, among others.

“Cincinnati Public Schools has been committed to the professional growth and development of its teachers since 1985, and our system continues to grow in responsive and dynamic ways. Our Peer Assistance and Evaluation Program, which helps new teachers and teachers with specific growth challenges, relies on the expertise of consulting teachers who are certified in the specific content area. The program provides intense, job-embedded professional development for the teachers. Our objective is for every teacher in Cincinnati Public Schools to have targeted professional development that is directly linked to their annual goals.”

— KENDRA PHELPS,
Professional issues representative,
Cincinnati Federation of Teachers

CHALLENGES

- Significant time commitments are required of participants in many models of professional development, from teacher academies to cross-district content area teams. Creative scheduling may be required to accommodate collaborative professional development options; implications for release time and budgetary constraints should be considered.

INSTRUMENTS

The Maryland Teacher Professional Development Evaluation Guide provides detailed guidance (and a logic model) to assist districts in the assessment of professional development offerings.

<http://marylandpublicschools.org/NR/rdonlyres/DF957230-EC07-4FEE-B904-7FEB176BD978/18593/MarylandTeacherProfessionalDevelopmentEvaluationGu.pdf>

RESOURCES

Getting It Right: A Comprehensive Guide to Developing and Sustaining Teacher Evaluation and Support Systems

www.nbpts.org/userfiles/file/nbpts_getting-it-right.pdf

Learning Forward (formerly, the National Staff Development Council) has a wealth of resources on professional development on its website at

www.learningforward.org.

10 D&E

Data & Evaluation

ASSUMPTIONS

The process of improving teacher evaluation, teacher development and student achievement—like other data-driven activities that inform decision-making—requires a “paper trail” (or better yet, a digital trail) to document its successes.

The district has a clear, shared definition of “data,” a commitment to use this information responsibly, and has identified data, reports, correspondence and other evaluation-related documentation. The district recognizes that data can serve as a primary vehicle for demonstrating accountability, promoting collaborations and solidifying partnerships, and reducing costs.

IMPLEMENTATION

In teacher evaluation and development systems, the system itself is subject to evaluation. A process of annual review and ongoing data analysis is critical to draw inferences about short- and long-term impacts, to strengthen the system, and to inform such elements as training and professional development.

Data and evaluation are linked; data are the documentary inputs that district teams need to answer questions such as: Is the system working? What additional resources does the system need? What steps have been missed; how might communications be improved? Time management—does it need more attention?

In order to answer these questions, system data should be collected. The work plan and benchmarks are excellent sources of data. So are surveys, meeting minutes, correspondence, social media, e-mails, training reports and, naturally, the content of evaluation processes (professional growth plans, observations, evidence reviews).

Good data represent knowledge-building activities, which can provide excellent road maps for the human actors who succeed one another. In this sense, all data may be considered research data, and this

information should be safeguarded. Data are more secure in digital format than in paper format, and the district should have policies and procedures governing the use of its data, the security of its data, and how data is stored and disseminated.

“In New Haven, we spent a full year creating our TEVAL system. As I reflect at the conclusion of our second year of TEVAL’s implementation, there are two significant thoughts. First, we know that we have to remain focused on training. We need to be certain that the administrators are capable of and have the capacity to implement the system with proper fidelity. It will be an ongoing challenge. Second, we’ve adopted a new data system that helps us monitor the participants in the evaluation system itself. Are midyear conferences being conducted, and are they completed in a timely manner? Is thoughtful and constructive feedback (the heart of TEVAL) being delivered to the teachers? Are teacher development plans with the supports promised being delivered? Managing our data has helped us figure out what’s working and what still needs work.”

— DAVE CICARELLA,
President, New Haven Federation of Teachers

EVALUATING PROGRESS: LESSONS LEARNED

An important component of any evaluation is the “lessons learned”—usually expressed in a report in accessible language that reminds readers that no system is perfect, but that obstacles, unanticipated outputs, and trends also provide opportunities for learning.

A careful annual review enables the district to report its findings. A report to stakeholders about the “lessons learned” can provide a powerful opportunity to reinforce the district’s ongoing commitment to system improvement, teacher development and student achievement.

Evaluation should be both formative and summative. Ongoing data collection offers the opportunity for district teams to make mid-course corrections, increase resources or adjust schedules.

OUTCOMES: THE TRUE MEASURE OF SUCCESS

Evaluations must address anticipated outcomes—both expected and unexpected. Many outcomes will not be apparent in the first year, but will emerge over a period of several years. Outcomes, such as teacher retention, student achievement and improved teacher performance should be linked to data each year.

CHALLENGES

- Not everything that teachers do can be measured and reflected by percentages, rates or other numerical formulations. We must explore an ever expanding universe of data collection strategies to keep contributing to the fund of knowledge that describes teaching and learning.

RESOURCES

Passing Muster: Evaluating Teacher Evaluation Systems
www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2011/04/26-evaluating-teachers

The American Evaluation Association offers extensive resources at www.eval.org.

Join the AFT Teacher Evaluation Community

The **AFT Teacher Evaluation Community website** contains resources for this publication as well as collective bargaining language, examples of evaluation policies, assessment tools, research about evaluation, relevant legislation, the latest news and other resources.

The screenshot shows the AFT Teacher Evaluation Community website. At the top, it says "Welcome Pamela Wolfe, Communications" and "This Site: Teacher Evaluation". The main navigation bar includes "Home", "Professional Teaching Standards", "Standards for Assessing Teacher Practice", "Implementation Standards", "Standards for Professional Contexts", and "Standards for Systems of Support". The main content area features a "Welcome to the AFT Teacher Evaluation Community" section with a detailed paragraph about the framework and a photo of a teacher with students. To the right, there are sections for "Featured Topics" (listing items like Multiple measures, PAR, etc.) and "News" (listing articles like "Teacher Evaluation Program to be Tested This Fall"). A left sidebar contains links for "View All Site Content", "Framework", "Implementation Quick Guide", "Featured Resources", "Recent Documents", "Discussion Boards", "Calendar of Events", "Other Websites", "Users", and "Comments / Questions: Contact Us".

To register for this site, contact:

Robin Vitucci
Associate, AFT Educational Issues
rvitucci@aft.org

Mary Kaniewski
Administrative Assistant, AFT Educational Issues
mkaniews@aft.org





A Union of Professionals

American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO
555 New Jersey Ave. N.W.
Washington, DC 20001
202/879-4400
www.aft.org



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