

## **Forums on Proposed Amendments to Educator Evaluation Regulations: Preliminary Summary of Feedback**

In June, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education conducted six live forums across the state for teachers, administrators and other stakeholders to learn about the proposed educator evaluation regulations and provide feedback. Attendees shared their views through live-polling technology. Each participant was given a personal voting keypad to record his/her opinions on questions related to the proposed regulations. In addition, the sessions included lengthy question and answer questions in which participants were provided an opportunity to ask questions and share their perspectives with the Commissioner or Deputy and other Department staff. In addition, feedback forms were provided at each forum, and participants were directed to the Board's comment site on the web to provide formal comments on the regulations.

More than 700 educators and others participated in the six forums, which were geared primarily for teachers and administrators. Forums were held at the following locations:

**Wilmington High School**  
Wilmington, MA

**Mill Pond Middle School**  
Westborough, MA

**Agawam Junior High School**  
Agawam, MA

**Middleborough High School**  
Middleborough, MA

**North Quincy High School**  
Quincy, MA

**Taconic High School**  
Pittsfield, MA

The forum in Pittsfield did not include audience response technology—but comments from audience feedback forms are included in the summary below. Six hundred and sixty-nine people voted in the first five events, of which 51% were teachers, 42% were administrators, and 7% were other stakeholders. Upwards of 8 in 10 of the participants had more than three years of experience in their present role. A plurality (40% of the attendees identified themselves as working in the elementary grades, with the remaining educators distributed more or less evenly across other grade levels (MS and HS) or other. A key question asked before presenting the elements of the proposed new framework was: over the course of your educational career, how useful have evaluations been in improving your practice as an educator. Of those responding, only 11% reported that their most recent evaluation was very useful, 56% said it was somewhat useful, and 43% said it was not useful at all.

Participants were asked a series of poll questions on key elements of the proposed regulations

Nearly nine out of ten support including educator self-reflection and self-assessment (somewhat support: 25%; strongly support 64%).

More than eight out of ten support including goals for improving educator practice (somewhat support: 23%; strongly support: 59%).

More than three in four participants support including goals for goals for improving student growth and learning (somewhat support: 25%; strongly support 52%).

Two thirds of the participants polled support including multiple measures of student learning and growth in educator evaluations (somewhat support: 21%; strongly support 46%).

In addition, attendees were asked to rate their support for other potential elements of the new framework on a five point scale, with five indicating the strongest level of support and one representing do not support.”

3.90 Staff feedback (for administrators)

3.87 Team and school based goals

3.34 Peer review

2.86 Parent feedback

2.78 Student feedback from 6th-12th

In addition, 478 feedback forms were turned in at the six Regional Meetings, providing further comment on the proposed regulations and the kinds of implementation supports that attendees feel would be most useful. Although the feedback form sought to guide feedback into categories such as comments on the regulations, comments on implementation—the response often crossed these categorical lines. Below is a summary of participants’ written feedback, based on a tally of the number of times key issues were mentioned in the feedback forms of the first five meetings— including their hopes for the proposed regulations and their concerns. In addition, select quotes are included that represent the most common feedback.

## Evaluation of Teachers and Administrators: Hopes

Participants expressed hope that the new system would improve teaching and learning, generate an improved culture of excellence, reward high-performing teachers and administrators, and result in improvements among under-performing educators. For example:

**Student Achievement:** Teachers and administrators expressed confidence that this new system will improve teaching and learning, and increase student achievement across the state. (54 mentions)

- “Hope: That student learning will improve. Teachers will become reflective practitioners to a far greater extent.”

- “My greatest hope is that we will improve student achievement by honestly reflecting on the outcomes of learning.”

**Improved Teaching:** Many believe that this system will successfully improve the quality of teaching, ensuring that students receive the education they deserve. (46 mentions)

- “Hope is pushing the professional point of self-reflection, use of standards to guide instruction, and student learning being the central point of teaching will raise all staff members to a higher level of performance.”
- “Being a Level 4 district, this is all desperately needed by our district. We have some very capable, highly motivated teachers and others who are not invested in improving their practice.”

**Improved Professional Development & Feedback:** Educators expressed hope that this new system would provide them with improved professional development and feedback, allowing them to improve their practice. (41 mentions)

- “I would like the framework to provide administrators and teachers a common language to have meaningful conversations about what defines ‘good teaching.’”
- “This will encourage authentic PLC work. Love it!”
- Hope: “That it really does turn out to be an effective tool to bring growth opportunities full of richness in PD and materials and support.”

**Self-Assessment:** Stakeholders expressed strong support for the self-assessment component of this system, with many hoping that it would encourage educators to be more self-reflective and improve their practice. In the live-polling exercise, 89% of those surveyed expressed support for this provision. (18 mentions)

- “My hope is that evaluations will become a meaningful and helpful experience for my own professional growth. Too often over 25 years, it has been a matter of supervisors just trying to get the job done: lack of leadership and mediocrity in their own effectiveness. I believe in the importance of teacher reflection, self-assessment, and goal-setting for my own improvement.”

**Fairness/Ensuring Quality Teaching Force:** Stakeholders expressed hope that this system would increase fairness by rewarding high-quality teaching, and coaching the small percentage of struggling/underperforming teachers to improve or exit the profession. (16 mentions)

- “I hope the new evaluation framework is successful at assisting districts with locating and helping unsuccessful educators and rewarding successful educators.”
- “Hope: That those teachers who are excellent/high performing are rewarded, that those who are mediocre are given directions as to how to improve, and that people who shouldn’t be teaching don’t.”
- “Hope: ability to evaluate all staff effectively and dismiss those very few who are ineffective and unwilling to change their practice. Reward those that are doing an exemplary job and are true professionals.”

## Evaluation of Teachers and Administrators: Concerns

Concerns spanned implementation issues, reliability and fairness of evaluators and evaluation tools, conflict with collective bargaining, and impact on morale and school culture. For example:

**Time and Money to Implement:** The largest concern expressed among educators is about the time and money required to implement these regulations effectively, especially during a time of budget cuts and during the implementation of the Common Core. (124 mentions)

- “This is a priority and a great framework. We need the support and funding to make it such.”
- “My concern is that the continued fiscal situation will be utilized to undermine [implementation].”
- “I hope it works, but as a single administrator with a staff of over 60 it seems overwhelming.”
- “1 Teacher Goals – 1 hr., OBS – 8 hrs, formative – 1 hr., summative – 1 hr.: 11 hrs. per teacher x 30 = 330 hrs.”
- “I hope this increases student learning. My concern is that to do this thoroughly and meaningfully, it needs to be funded. This will/should cost money because additional staff will need to be hired and trained to properly assess and support teachers in the classrooms and provide real professional development when needed.”
- “Funding and time: Currently, my system struggles to evaluate teachers once every 3 years, and our evaluations are nowhere near as extensive.”
- “TIME! Teachers are already working non-stop, with very little time for staff meetings, team meetings, district meetings, and even teacher planning and preparation time. When is all the planning for the new system going to take place?”

**Quality of Evaluators:** The second-largest area of concern was around the quality of available evaluators. Stakeholders argued that evaluators may be biased because of friendships or personal vendettas, and may not have the experience required to be able to give valuable feedback. Teachers and administrators indicated that significant training will be required, both around observation/feedback and on data analysis. (118 mentions)

- “We need instructional leaders at our schools, not managers. The professionalism and expertise of the principal sets the tone for all teachers in that building.”
- “I’m concerned about practitioners’ ability to understand and manage data effectively.”
- “My concern is that there may still be opportunities for unsatisfactory teachers to continue in their profession if they have personal social relationships with the evaluator.”
- “Training should include how to observe, how to coach, how to write improvement plans, how to have difficult conversations, how to assure reliability between/among raters.”
- “Concern: having administrators with enough proficiency themselves to be able to assist all teachers with goals. The process could remain very subjective.”
- “Evaluator qualifications – Evaluators should have at least five years of experience in teaching (for evaluating teachers) or in administration (for evaluating administrators). All administrators

should receive training in how to conduct effective evaluations and should be required to demonstrate their abilities through performance assessment.”

**Use of MCAS:** Many teachers and administrators were concerned about the use of MCAS – either because they don’t believe that student growth scores using MCAS are reliable, or because they believe that the use of MCAS growth scores for some teachers, but not others, would be unfair or divisive. (80 mentions)

- “What measures would be used to assess student growth for those teachers who teach subject areas that are not measured by standardized testing, MCAS, or other means? This needs to be addressed soon.”
- “All the research on teacher effects would indicate a lack of validity and reliability to use standardized MCAS or MEPA measures.”
- “Yes, please add [student growth measures] ‘over time’ as it was in original language.”
- “I am in a system that uses teacher self assessments, rubrics, portfolios and multiple measures of assessment. Those are all good. Using test scores to evaluate teachers will be the demise of public education in my humble opinion as a passionate, caring, dedicated teacher of 10 years.”
- “Having only some teachers in a school evaluated on MCAS scores will be demoralizing and cause problems between teachers.”

**Conflict with Collective Bargaining:** Supporters of this new system are concerned that it will be hard to implement (on time, or at all) because of collective bargaining, and opponents of the system protest that it supersedes collective bargaining rights. (62 mentions)

- “Locally, I am concerned also that negotiating the change in the contract may be very challenging.”
- “Biggest challenge: Expediting contractual language and having it be accepted by teacher associations.”
- “What exactly will collective bargaining be negotiating?”

**ESL/Special Education:** Many respondents shared concerns that use of student growth scores for ESL and special education students would unfairly penalize ESL and SPED teachers. In addition, some argued that an unintended consequence may be that teachers will seek to avoid teaching ESL and special education students. (60 mentions)

- “What do most administrators know about evaluating growth of special education students?”
- “[We need] more specific language regarding English language learners, dual language learners, and our often-neglected special needs students on either end of the spectrum.”

**Socio-Economic Status and Other Factors:** Teachers highlighted many external factors that could inhibit student growth: troubled home lives, student motivation, socio-economic factors, violence, divorce, etc. Some requested that attendance be taken into account when analyzing student growth scores. (56 mentions)

- “Many factors other than teacher effectiveness affect student growth. Growth can be negatively impacted by absences, divorce, abuse, language problems, transience, death in the family, etc. Teachers cannot control this.”
- “Adaptations are necessary for socio-economic issues such as homeless children, abuse issues, financial issues, etc. High-risk populations will be shunned due to evaluation issues.”
- “Some students do not come to class, do not do homework, etc. Teachers try their best to encourage students in class, but nothing can be done if students don’t come.”

**Creating Valuable Assessment Tools:** Some educators were skeptical about districts’ ability to create useful assessment tools, especially within the implementation timeline. These concerns included the creation of teacher and administrator observation rubrics and the design of multiple measures of student growth. There was also some concern about equity across districts. (48 mentions)

- “Concern: Ensuring the local assessments are valid and reliable in their construction/implementation and not overly time-consuming to administer.”
- “How will family/community engagement be measured for teachers?”
- “Biggest challenge: finding authentic assessments across the state for the ‘alternate’ to MCAS scores by 2013.”

**Use of Parent Feedback:** Educators expressed concern about the use of parent (and to a lesser extent, student) feedback in evaluations. They fear parents don’t have enough information, and/or will seek to penalize teachers for disciplining their students. In the live-polling exercise, parent feedback received a 2.86 out of 5 in terms of support for the provision, and student feedback received a 2.78 out of 5 (with 5 being strongly supportive.) (39 mentions)

- “I think it is a mistake to include parent feedback in evaluations. It is not possible to require parents to complete a survey and those who volunteer to complete a survey will likely have very strong opinions (both positive & negative).”
- “How do we avoid generating only negative feedback from those who don’t agree with a disciplinary decision or with an A- rather than an A+ grade?”

**Stakeholder Understanding/Buy-In:** Educators expressed concern about whether teachers, administrators, school committee members, and the public would understand the new system – particularly student growth measures – and whether they would buy in to the new system. (31 mentions)

- “Teacher buy-in – helping teachers to understand the benefit of common assessments for kids, peer assessment and informal observation/evaluation.”
- “Clarity of process – this new ‘system’ is cumbersome and not easily understood. There are all kinds of opportunities for litigation.”
- “Biggest challenge: push-back from teachers who feel blindsided by these changes.”

**Evaluation of Professionals with Different Roles:** Stakeholders frequently raised concerns with how professionals with non-standard roles would be evaluated. Examples include the school nurse, librarian, psychologist, guidance counselor, specialists, etc. (31 mentions)

- “For support personnel (i.e. nurses, guidance, school psych, etc.) we need to do much more in reframing their roles to move from process work to student results focus.”

**Teaching to the Test:** Teachers and administrators argued that this system would force schools to narrow the curriculum, reduce creativity and professional risk-taking, and cause teachers to “teach to the test.” (26 mentions)

- Concern: “That my urban students will be further subjected to test prep and a narrowed curriculum.”

Other issues raised include: How to reward excellence, equity of implementation across districts, the definition of “up to one year” for improvement, unintended consequences for student teachers, competition between staff, and others.

**Feedback on Improving Clarifying the Regulations**

Attendees were provided an opportunity to provide feedback on areas of the regulations they would like to see clarified or changed before adopted. An analysis of the first five forums indicate concerns that were also raised in formal feedback provided at the DESE website.

<b>Student Growth Measures</b>	
Define measurement of student growth/clarify how test scores will be used in evaluation	35
Include ways to factor in SES, ELL, SPED, motivation, attendance, class size, etc.	35
Define how teachers in untested subjects/other roles will be evaluated (provide example assessments)	30
Reduce/eliminate use of test scores/MCAS use in evaluation	23
Define low, moderate, high impact	9
Rewrite to say evaluation measures growth “over time”	5
Test scores shouldn’t be used to terminate a teacher	4
<b>Observations</b>	
Define qualifications to be an evaluator/ensure evaluators are qualified (5 years of teaching exp.), fair, and well-trained	36
Create clear rubrics	8
Define “up to one year”	6
Give proficient/exemplary teachers 2-4 years between evaluations	2
<b>Other Measures</b>	
Don’t include parent/student feedback	12
Define “other measures” & “multiple measures”	12
Define how to ensure that parent/student feedback isn’t biased	7
Define how student/parent input would be gathered	7
Provide models for Peer Assistance and Review	5
Model for evaluating parent/community engagement	3

Don't include parent/community engagement	2
<b>Implementation</b>	
Define how excellence should be rewarded	8
Clarify where teachers & administrators will find the time/simplify	7
Fund implementation	6
Provide exemplars (including of improvement plans, curriculum, etc.)	6
Ensure that effective PD is provided	5
Define the appeals process	4
Ensure that feedback is sought after implementation/create assessment for the regulations	4
This should be left to collective bargaining	4
Lengthen the implementation timeline	3
Help districts build buy-in and create effective implementation plans	3
Increase 1-year improvement plan to 2 years/case-by-case	3
How do we include accountability for students and parents?	2
Add a maternity leave clause	2

### **Pittsfield Attendee Comments on Improving/Clarifying the Regulations**

Pittsfield attendees shared many of the same concerns as attendees at the other forums. A preliminary analysis of feedback responses to the question: *Is there anything you would like to see improved/clarified in the proposed regulations before they are adopted* follows:

Assessing Student Learning and Growth (15 comments)

- Clarify and provide more guidance for teachers of special needs (3)
- Factor in demographics (3)
- Provide TA on doing this for small and rural schools
- Clarify how this works and give guidance in non-tested grades and for specialists (8)
- Consider affective measures
- Concern about MCAS growth scaling
- Clarify what commercial assessments can and cannot be used

Clarify Leadership roles for administrators (4)

- Add Communication to Leadership standards
- Focus on leadership not management
- How will department heads work with evaluators in developing improvement plans for first year teachers?

Address Evaluator Training (2)

Clarify how Excellence gets rewarded (2)

Concerns about Student and parent feedback (3)

--Do it mindfully

--Collect data on parent engagement and student mental and emotional health

Reform Teacher and Administrator Training to make this doable (2)

Tone (2)

--Remove punitive tone

--Move away from factory model

--Teachers motivated intrinsic not extrinsic rewards

--Evaluate Administrators, leave teachers alone

Goal Setting

--Make clear that teachers set their own goals (sic)

Clarify: role of peer observation and support, timing of evaluation cycle throughout the year, number of announced and unannounced visits; connection between plans and IPDPs; support to be provided struggling educators

The attached slides present detailed results of the live polling and charts based on written feedback.