Implementation Spotlight: West Springfield’s Transparent Collaboration Ensures an Effective Evidence Collection Process

This month’s Spotlight focuses on how district administrators and the local union representatives in West Springfield worked together to help educators and evaluators establish clear goals and expectations for evidence collection at the beginning of the 2013-14 school year. Co-authors: Michael J. Richard, Interim Superintendent; Michelle Davis and Kathleen Hillman, Co- Presidents of West Springfield Education Association (WSEA); Susan Wilson, Chair of Professional Rights & Responsibilities, WSEA.

Over the past two years, the West Springfield Public Schools have worked diligently to ensure that the new educator evaluation process is meaningful, streamlined, transparent, and manageable for the educators and evaluators. Through the collaborative efforts of the district administrators and the union representatives, this goal has been accomplished.

One particular facet of the system that enabled teachers and administrators alike to more easily navigate the process is that teachers decided at the beginning of the process exactly what evidence they planned to collect to demonstrate having met their goals. This exercise allowed the educator the freedom of choice combined with the flexibility associated with proper planning. However, it also gave the evaluator the opportunity to confirm that the educator’s plan for the evidence to be collected was fully aligned to each goal and demonstrated high expectations and rigor. This process was introduced to the entire district during Convocation to convey one consistent message to all who were involved.

All of the processes described below embrace the ideals of collaboration and transparency—two concepts that are vital to the success of the evaluation system!

**Overview of the Process**

Teachers worked collaboratively with members of their team, comprised of peers who taught the same grade and/or content. Within teams, teachers established both team and individual goals related to professional practice and student-learning. Teachers then began to build a list of what evidence they would collect during the 5-step evaluation cycle to support meeting these goals. All parties agreed that the amount of evidence per cycle needed to be reasonable: two pieces were too few, ten pieces were too many. All the while, evaluators supported the teachers in writing the goals and determining what evidence would satisfy the evidentiary requirements whenever necessary.

Once this exercise was underway, the educator and the evaluator both had clear expectations of what was going to be collected, and much of the anxiety associated with meeting with success in the process was set aside. All of this evidence related to the educator goals needs to be uploaded to our online evaluation management tool.

Of course, as the cycle moved forward, educators needed to consider how they would satisfy the evidence collection process related to the standards.

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In order to alleviate some of the stress of collecting evidence for the standards, West Springfield opted to have teachers create a Directory of Evidence. This model allowed teachers to simply “list” their evidence thereby avoiding the need to collect boxes of evidence that would likely overwhelm the educator and the evaluator alike! After reviewing the Directory of Evidence, if an evaluator wished to access something from the list, then the educator—who is responsible for maintaining the artifacts—had to produce the evidence within two school days.

Below is a sample of one educator’s Directory of Evidence for Curriculum Planning Indicators (Standard I):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I-A-1 Subject Matter Knowledge</th>
<th>I-A-4 Well-Structured Lessons</th>
<th>I-B-2 Adjustment to Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom observations</td>
<td>Classroom observations</td>
<td>Review benchmarks to review weaker standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending Pre-AP courses (Artifact, Pictures)</td>
<td>Use of smartboard</td>
<td>Continuous updates to the curriculum maps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending math programs during the summer (check MyLearning/Plan Portfolio)</td>
<td>Differentiated instruction</td>
<td>Weekly math content meetings to discuss content and the new curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Core math planning and implementation, Grades 7 and 8</td>
<td>Incorporate accountable talks</td>
<td>Provide ‘Do Nows’ to strengthen areas that are weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math TextBook presentation and workshop</td>
<td>Having notes available for students who were absent</td>
<td>Administer quick quizzes on areas of weakness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Using Title IIA Funds to Support Educator Evaluation and Other Educator Effectiveness Initiatives

The purpose of Title II, Part A funding is to increase student achievement through comprehensive district initiatives that improve educator effectiveness, including preparation, training, recruitment, and retention. ESE recently released districts’ FY15 Title IIA allocations and the workbook for submitting grant applications.

When determining how to allocate Title IIA funds, districts should examine:

- **Data on student assessments** to determine where students need to improve and then provide targeted professional development (PD) to the teachers to help students achieve at higher levels.
- **Educator Evaluation data** to determine educators’ learning needs to inform PD offerings that are aligned to the Standards of Effective Teaching Practice.
- **District’s induction and mentoring program** to determine where the program can be strengthened to provide supports to new teachers and administrators, including qualified mentors, to increase new educators’ effectiveness and retention.
- **Other district data** including results from school/district climate surveys, educator licensure data, parent feedback, etc. to inform PD and educator supports.

### Implementation Study of MA Evaluation System

In Fall 2012, a research team led by SRI International launched a multi-year study of Massachusetts’ new educator evaluation model. Interim findings from the second year of the study are now available online. Two key findings and ESE’s responses are below. The full research policy brief and ESE’s response are available [here](#).

1. **Most educators perceived their own evaluator’s assessment of their performance as fair but expressed concern about the fairness of the system as a whole.** Perceptions of fairness at the individual level reinforce the value of a flexible, holistic evaluation model as opposed to a “one size fits all” approach. However, the fact that educators perceive the system as a whole to be less fair due to inconsistencies in implementation demands continued attention on building educator knowledge and supporting educator skill development. In 2014–15, ESE will be working with groups of 6-8 districts (Professional Learning Networks) to identify and cultivate innovative ways to ease evaluator workload, support teacher leadership opportunities, and strengthen evaluator skills. ESE will publish findings from PLNs over the course of the 2014-15 school year to assist other districts in adopting similar strategies.

2. **Opinions of the new evaluation framework seem to hinge on whether educators see the system as focused on support and improvement or on accountability and compliance.** This finding offers critical insight into the importance of thoughtful implementation. At ESE, we believe the system should be focused on support and improvement. ESE is working closely with educators to identify, support, and disseminate best practices around using the new evaluation model as a tool for growth and development, rather than one of compliance.

*Special Resource*: [Teacher and principal surveys](#) developed by SRI have been adapted into diagnostic tools for schools and districts to use to capture educator perceptions and experiences about their own evaluations. Forms are available through SurveyGizmo or in MS Word versions.
Leveraging Technology to Support Educator Evaluation Implementation

During the 2013-14 school year, through a competitive technology innovation grant, ESE supported the work of three districts as they explored opportunities to enhance educator evaluation implementation through the use of technology applications. Each district focused the work on enhancements of current technology applications or the development of new applications based on the needs of the district. Grant highlights are summarized below, for additional information you can read one-page summaries of the grant-funded work from each district on our website.

**Worcester Public Schools**

- Along with Webster Public Schools and the Central Mass Special Education Collaborative, partnered with TeachPoint.
- Developed features in their technology platform to track professional development and coaching opportunities. Educators now have easy access to their professional development information and will be able to track their PDPs toward licensure. Coaches will be able to track professional development work across the district and to tag activities to the Standards of Effective Practice. These features will provide district-wide visibility and an efficient reporting structure for the central office.
- The PD and coaching module is freely available to all MA districts that use TeachPoint.

**Boston Public Schools**

- Developed an iPad application to support their in-house technology system, the Educator Development Feedback System (EDFS). The “app” allows evaluators to access observation forms anywhere in a school building so they can record notes, evidence, and feedback from classroom visits, even when offline. Evaluators can then upload multiple observations at a time when an internet connection is available.
- Using the app, notes are entered into the observation section of EDFS where they are linked to specific Standards, Indicators and elements of the MA model performance rubrics. This supports evaluators in collecting objective evidence without inferences and provides a way to link evidence and feedback to specific elements.

**New Bedford Public Schools**

- Along with Acushnet Public Schools and the Southeastern Mass Educational Collaborative, partnered with Longleaf Solutions. Through this partnership, features were added to the BaselineEdge software platform to enhance capabilities for evaluators to track the status of the evaluation process, including which components have been completed and those still pending.
- The districts and vendor are continuing to build functionality to tag pieces of evidence as best practices and to build in fields to capture data from DDMs evaluators will use to determine Student Impact Ratings. These enhancements will be freely available to other MA districts that use BaselineEdge software.

Questions or Comments are always welcome at EducatorEvaluation@doe.mass.edu

Contact the Educator Evaluation Team

Claire Abbott, Evaluation Training Program, Implementation Support, Student and Staff Feedback

Susan Berglund, Evaluation Liaison to Level 3 and Level 4 Districts

Kate Ducharme, Implementation Support, Student and Staff Feedback

Kat Johnston, Communications, Peer Assistance & Review, Implementation Support

Simone Lynch, Assistant Director, Office of Educator Policy, Preparation and Leadership

Ron Noble, Evaluation Project Lead, District-Determined Measures, Student & Staff Feedback

Craig Waterman, Assessment Coordinator, District-Determined Measures

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- Strengthen curriculum, instruction, and assessment
- Improve educator effectiveness
- Turn around the lowest performing districts and schools
- Use data and technology to support student performance