Implementation Spotlight: Sharing Practices from ESE’s Professional Learning Networks

In the December newsletter, we featured two new Professional Learning Networks (PLNs) that are bringing diverse sets of districts from around the Commonwealth together to share and develop best practices in the areas of Teacher Leadership and Supporting Evaluator Capacity. Over the past several months, we have been excited to learn alongside these districts and are planning to share their work more comprehensively at the end of this school year. In the meantime, here are some highlights:

Teacher Leadership

Developing Learning Labs in Wakefield: In an effort to build a culture of collaborative teacher practice, teachers in Wakefield are establishing Learning Labs. Teacher leaders open their classrooms to colleagues interested in observing an instructional practice or strategy that addresses the shifts in the 2011 MA Curriculum Frameworks. Superintendent Jim Jolicoeur states, “This innovation has been both cost-justifiable and effective. The Lead Teacher model has provided the much needed capacity to our curriculum development efforts through the utilization of the talent, knowledge, and educational leadership of our classroom teachers.”

Investing in a Leadership Corps in Leominster: As an outcome of work initiated through the District Capacity Project (DCP), a team comprised of administrators and teachers, Leominster created a corps of teacher leaders to add capacity to their curriculum, instruction, and assessment work. Rather than hiring a new district-level curriculum leader, Leominster split the salary across teacher leaders (7 in year 1, 10 in year 2), expanded their work year (from 185 days to 210 days), and added an additional $10K to their salaries. The Lead Teachers applied for the roles and their responsibilities include curriculum development, alignment of curriculum to the 2011 MA Curriculum Frameworks, delivering PD to peers, serving as resources to subject area teams, and making decisions about curriculum and assessment. Superintendent Jim Jolicoeur states, “This innovation has been both cost-justifiable and effective. The Lead Teacher model has provided the much needed capacity to our curriculum development efforts through the utilization of the talent, knowledge, and educational leadership of our classroom teachers.”

Decentralizing decision-making in Revere: Teachers, union leaders, and district leaders in Revere are working to change the way decisions are made in their district. They have formed the Revere Educators Leadership Board (RELB) to include more voices in decision-making with the hope that a more inclusive process will improve implementation of district programs and strengthen communications throughout the district.

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Revere High School teacher and RELB member Chris Kingston explains: “The RELB has allowed all members of the Revere Public Schools to bring about change from multiple directions and not just a top down model. Effective change is being inspired and marshaled by teachers and administrators alike.”

**Evaluator Capacity**

**Collaborative Communications in Weymouth:** Weymouth Public Schools and the Weymouth Educators’ Association (WEA) are collaborating to streamline the communication processes around the evaluation system through FAQs, small-group training sessions, and non-conventional communications resources like posters and short reference documents. The resources are a result of an ongoing dialogue between the central office and the WEA. Assistant Superintendent Susan Kustka says, “The goal of this work is to increase the level of trust between evaluators and educators,” and WEA President Ydana Chella agrees, “It’s about building relationships, opening opportunities for conversation and genuine reflection.” The district expects that this sharing of knowledge and information, along with an enhanced culture of trust and transparency, will allow their evaluators to focus on instructional leadership.

**Peer Evaluation in Berkshire Hills:** Berkshire Hills is working to develop a strong culture of peer evaluation to support the development of educators. The team believes peer feedback has great potential to ensure all educators receive high quality feedback. Berkshire Hills has implemented peer evaluation in first, third, and fourth grades. Currently, the PLN team is working to develop a clear set of shared expectations that encourage safe, frank, and open communication that supports the evaluation process without impeding meaningful peer feedback. Principal Mary Berle believes peer evaluation is an important step towards addressing the question, “How do we get thoughtful observations?”

We look forward to sharing the outcomes of these districts’ work with you as the school year draws to a close. Look for samples of this work at the Educator Effectiveness Spring Convening (May 27th and repeated on May 28th). A new Teacher Leadership website and resources from the Supporting Evaluator Capacity PLN will be published later this spring.

**Continuously Improving District-Determined Measures**

The development of high-quality district-determined measures (DDMs) is a challenging and important task. Just as teachers change and refine their lesson plans for the future, districts are encouraged to review and improve measures of student growth. As districts improve the quality of their measures, these measures can increasingly be used to support curriculum and instruction and provide more meaningful feedback to educators. ESE is supporting this process in several important ways.

First, ESE has released a new Implementation Brief, focused on the Continuous Improvement of DDMs. The Implementation Briefs are shorter guidance documents focused on providing tips and strategies to promote meaningful implementation of DDMs and the Student Impact Rating. This newest brief includes guidance about building on the quality of DDMs year to year. It discusses issues of validity, and how to implement a continuous cycle of improvement.

Second, ESE is supporting the development of “second generation” DDMs to share with districts, through a partnership with six Educational Collaboratives from across the state. These example DDMs, along with the process used to develop them, support continued cross-district conversations about quality assessment. One participating teacher noted that “writing up the measures with integrity is difficult for many teachers at the onset.” Despite the learning curve, Educational Collaborative leaders found that “school district staff have the knowledge, skills and expertise to work together on a project like this and are willing to do the work.” Look for the publication of the example DDM collection this summer.

Additionally, ESE partnered with WestEd to produce four new reports focused on improving DDMs. These reports, organized by the four approaches to measuring student growth first introduced in Technical Guide B, discuss the strengths and limitations of each approach to measuring growth and include example assessments from Massachusetts districts.
MA Teachers Participate in National Teacher Leadership Conference

Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education and the National Board, **Teach to Lead** is a national initiative to promote teacher leadership and engage teachers in policy to transform education for the benefit of students. Over the last several months, three national summits were held to convene teacher leaders and support the development and sharing of their ideas to improve education. Several members of ESE’s Teacher Advisory Cabinet submitted ideas and were selected to attend the Boston Summit on February 6th-8th. Read on to learn about Beth Morgan’s experience. Beth is an 8th grade World History teacher in Littleton, MA.

I confess. I have overcommitted myself at work. Having chosen to participate in too many side responsibilities on top of teaching 110 energetic, super-cool 8th graders each day, I never seem to get enough sleep. Yet, I couldn’t resist the temptation to apply to the Teach to Lead Boston Summit so that I could hopefully work on a plan to incorporate student feedback into educator evaluation in Littleton.

In order to attend, I submitted an idea through the Teach to Lead online platform about having teachers lead the creation of user-friendly, helpful, non-threatening, and meaningful examples of ways to solicit student feedback for grade levels K-12. More than 100 ideas were submitted and scored by teachers across the nation. My idea was one of about 40 selected. I was joined by my Littleton colleague, Tracy Turner, and my fellow Teaching Advisory Cabinet member, Lisa Capongiro. We brainstormed and discussed the various steps needed to effectively introduce and implement student feedback in order to get teacher “buy in” and increase awareness of the value of student feedback.

At the beginning of the summit, we were introduced to a logic model—a graphic organizer that broke down the goals, activities, and desired outcomes for a task. The logic model process enabled us to articulate the necessary steps needed to smoothly and successfully integrate student feedback into educator evaluation in my district. I found the logic model process extremely helpful in breaking down our task into manageable steps (a picture of the logic model can be found [here](#)).

In addition to attending workshops, we had time to discuss our student feedback project with other summit participants and “critical friends,” people working in the education field but not necessarily teachers. On the second day, there was a gallery walk where everyone had a chance to read and comment on all of the different logic models representing teacher leadership ideas from across the country. These comments provided helpful outside perspectives on our student feedback project as well as some suggested resources.

In short, the Teach to Lead summit was awesome, energizing, and helped us formulate a cohesive student feedback plan to bring back to the district. We’ve shared the logic model with district administrators. We also plan to share it with curriculum coordinators and plan to use several of the action steps to direct our use of student feedback in Littleton.

To learn more about the Teach to Lead Summit in Boston, check out participants’ [photos and tweets](#).

Become an Ed Prep Reviewer

Would you like to help maximize Educator Preparation in Massachusetts? ESE is currently accepting applications for the 2015-2016 cohort of Ed Prep reviewers. Ed Prep Reviewers are responsible for reviewing, analyzing, and evaluating evidence of educator preparation program effectiveness. Along with effective training and support from the Ed Prep staff at ESE, reviewers will execute the effective, efficient and consistently rigorous evaluation process.

Thanks to feedback from teachers, school leaders, and district administrators throughout the Commonwealth, ESE is partnering with School Improvement Network to build a Video Resource Library for educators. Custom videos will profile both effective and innovative implementations of the MA Educator Evaluation Framework in schools, including self-assessment, goal-setting, evidence collection, observations and feedback, and other components of the 5-Step Evaluation Cycle. A substantial library of pre-existing videos with guidebooks and training protocols will also be made available to support evaluator calibration activities.

**License Customer Service Update!**

The **Office of Educator Licensure** has extended their **Customer Service ‘Hotline’** hours to include 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. in addition to 2:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The Office is excited to offer this newly-expanded licensure resource to educators, administrators, and school-support personnel via our direct line at 781-338-6600.

The **Licensure ‘Welcome’ Desk** (no appointments necessary) also remains available from 8:45 a.m. - 4:45 p.m., Monday through Friday, on the first floor of the DESE administrative building, located at 75 Pleasant Street in Malden, MA, 02148.

ESE anticipates that this newly-expanded Customer Service ‘Hotline’ access, along with the significantly-improved evaluation turn-around times, will continue to streamline the licensure application process and directly benefit our educators, prospective teachers, districts, and most of all, our students—who deserve fully-licensed educators and administrators in every school of our great Commonwealth.
The Role of Feedback in Educator Evaluation: Training Resource

Produced in collaboration with the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, this training resource includes video clips of superintendents, principals, and teachers discussing the value of feedback in educator evaluation alongside need-to-know facts and resources for effective implementation.

Educator Recognition Opportunities & Reminders

- **Grade 3-12 teachers** of any subject are encouraged to apply for the George Washington Teachers’ Institute. The Institute provides a one-week study program at George Washington’s home, Mount Vernon, in northern Virginia. The Institute is August 2nd – 7th, 2015. To learn more about the Institute and to apply, please click here. Completed applications must be submitted by March 4th, 2015.

- **Math and science teachers in grades 7-12** are eligible for nomination for the 2015 Presidential Awards. Nominations are being accepted for the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST). Nominate a math or science teacher here. The nomination deadline is April 1st, 2015.

- Applications for the 2015-2016 MA Teacher of the Year were due by February 20th, 2015. Applicants selected to become semifinalists will be notified by mid-March.

- We would like to expand our network of outstanding educators, so if you know an educator who has received an award other than MA Teacher of the Year, History Teacher of the Year, Milken National Educator, or PAEMST, please send information about the teacher (name, email, school/district, and the award received) to EducatorRecognition@doe.mass.edu.

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
- **Matt Holloway**, Evaluation Training Program, Evaluator Capacity, Student and Staff Feedback
- **Kat Johnston**, Teacher Leadership, Communications, Implementation Support
- **Simone Lynch**, Assistant Director, Center for Educator Effectiveness
- **Ron Noble**, Educator Evaluation Manager
- **Craig Waterman**, District-Determined Measures, Evaluator Capacity

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is committed to preparing all students for success in the world that awaits them after high school. Whether you are a student, parent, educator, community leader, taxpayer, or other stakeholder interested in education, we invite you to join us in this endeavor.

*We are guided by this mission...*  
"To strengthen the Commonwealth’s public education system so that every student is prepared to succeed in postsecondary education, compete in the global economy, and understand the rights and responsibilities of American citizens, and in so doing, to close all proficiency gaps."

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