Appendix C. Parent Feedback: A Summary of Current Research & Practice and ESE Recommendations

Background

In 2010, ESE convened a large stakeholder group (the Massachusetts Task Force on the Evaluation of Teachers and Administrators) to reflect on the state of educator evaluation and to consider how it might be improved. That group, whose ideas are captured in a 2011 report, Building a Breakthrough Framework for Educator Evaluation in the Commonwealth, was clear that stakeholder feedback ought to be included in educator evaluation process. They suggest (pg. 17) that evidence of "broad based" parent and student input or feedback ought to be collected as one of many sources of evidence used to inform teachers' evaluations and that evidence of staff input or feedback ought to be used to inform administrators' evaluations.[1]

The recommendations laid out by the group were used to inform new regulations, passed by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education in 2011, which stated, in part, that while student and staff feedback must be included in teacher and administrator evaluations, ESE ought to research the feasibility of collecting and using parent feedback in the educator evaluation process and make a recommendation accordingly. The information below captures the research conducted during the 2012-13 and 2013-14 school years, drawing from both national trends and local practices and preferences.

Current Research and National Practice

Research on this topic is scarce. Two studies conclude that it is relatively difficult to connect parent feedback meaningfully to individual educators; rather, parent feedback is more of a reflection on the collective efforts of educators within a school.[2,3] Given that most states have undertaken educator evaluation reforms within the past several years, we expect that more current research on this topic will be forthcoming.

As of the 2013-14 school year, four states (AK, IA, KY, UT) required the inclusion of parent feedback in a teacher's summative evaluation[1] and three states (CT, MI, WV) require parent feedback in a principal's summative evaluation[2]. In addition, twenty-two states and the District of Columbia recommend or allow the inclusion of parent feedback in either teachers' summative evaluations (CO, CT, DC, MO, NM, NY)[4] or principals' summative evaluations (AZ, CO, DC, FL, HI, ID, IN, KS, KY, MN, MS, NJ, NM, NY,NC, ND, OK, RI, SD, UT, VT, WI)[5]. This represents a shift from prior years when fewer states required or recommended collecting and using parent feedback for these purposes.

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[1] Massachusetts Task Force on the Evaluation of Teachers and Administrators. Building a Breakthrough Framework for Educator Evaluation in the Commonwealth. March, 2011. Malden, MA. Available at: http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/breakthroughframework.pdf.

[2] Danielson, C., and McGreal, T.L. 2005. Teacher Evaluation to enhance professional practice. Princeton, NJ: ETS.

[3] Peterson, K.D., Wahlquist, C., Brown, J.E., and Mukhopadhyay, S. 2003. "Parent surveys for teacher evaluation." Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education, 17(4), p. 317-330.

[4] National Council on Teacher Quality. 2013 NCTQ State Teacher Policy Yearbook: National Summary. January, 2014. Available at: http://www.nctq.org/dmsView/2013_State_Teacher_Policy_Yearbook_National_Summary_NCTQ_Report.

[5] Center for Great Teachers and Leaders, American Institutes for Research. Available at: http://resource.tqsource.org/stateevaldb/Compare50States.aspx. (Accessed June 12, 2014).

Field Research in Massachusetts

During the 2012-13 and 2013-14 school years, ESE conducted a number of focus groups with educators on the topic of staff, student, and parent feedback, as well as five focus groups comprised of parents and/or representatives from parent organizations that centered primarily on parent feedback. All of the parent-specific groups recommended inclusion of parent feedback in the evaluation process in some way; however, they encouraged ESE to make sure that several pieces of the process were well thought out first. These include:

- The survey development and design process: who will be involved and what quality controls will be in place?
- Training and assistance for districts: how will districts be supported in learning how to reach and genuinely engage parents?
- Training and assistance for parents: how will parents be supported in understanding their new role in this process and how their feedback will be used?

All groups acknowledged that in light of the inclusion of student and staff feedback, this is a logical, practical, and valuable next step. All, however, also acknowledged that genuine parent engagement and the welcoming of genuine parent engagement are not common practice in some districts, and getting to that point will take a tremendous culture shift in which all stakeholders play an active role.

A small number of districts currently collect parent feedback, but none explicitly include it in educator evaluation. Additionally, districts that do collect parent feedback report relatively low response rates, though these can be improved with concentrated efforts from schools, teachers, and parent groups working together.

ESE's Recommendation on the Use of Parent Feedback in Educator Evaluation

In light of our findings from a scan of the current research, practices in other states, and the current use of parent feedback by Massachusetts districts, the incorporation of parent feedback into teacher and administrator evaluation is optional; ESE does not require districts to develop or use a parent feedback instrument of any kind at this time.

ESE plans to monitor national findings and work with local stakeholders to see if the role of parent feedback should be formalized in the future.