Massachusetts Model System for Educator Evaluation

Part VIII: Using Student and Staff Feedback in the Evaluation Process

July 2014 (Updated: December 2015)

Contents

A Letter From the Commissioner

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.
Commissioner

December 1, 2015

Dear Educators and other interested Stakeholders,

I am pleased to re-issue Part I of the Massachusetts Model System for Educator Evaluation. In June 2011, when the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adopted regulations to improve student learning by overhauling educator evaluation in the Commonwealth, staff here at the Department began working closely with stakeholders to develop the Model System called for in the regulations. With the help of thoughtful suggestions and candid feedback from a wide range of stakeholders, we developed the ESE Model System for Educator Evaluation, comprised of eight components:

I.   District-Level Planning and Implementation Guide
II.   School-Level Planning and Implementation Guide
III.   Guide to Rubrics and Model Rubrics for Superintendent, Administrator and Teacher
IV.   Model Collective Bargaining Contract Language
V.   Implementation Guide for Principal Evaluation
VI.   Implementation Guide for Superintendent Evaluation
VII.   Rating Educator Impact on Student Learning Using District-Determined Measures of Student Learning
VIII. Using Staff and Student Feedback in the Evaluation Process

Originally released in January 2012, the following Part VIII has been updated to reflect revised timelines and new resources to support effective implementation.

I remain excited by the promise of Massachusetts' educator evaluation regulations. Thoughtfully and strategically implemented, they are supporting analytical conversation about teaching and leading that is strengthening professional practice and improving student learning. At the same time, the regulations are providing educators with the opportunity to take charge of their own growth and development by setting individual and group goals related to student learning.

The Members of the State Board and I know that improvement in the quality and effectiveness of educator evaluation happens only when the Department does the hard work "with the field," not "to the field." To that end, we at the Department are constantly learning with the field. We will continue to revise and improve the Model System and related implementation guides and resources based on what we learn with the field. To help us do that, please do not hesitate to send your comments, questions and suggestions to us at EducatorEvaluation@doe.mass.edu, and visit the Educator Evaluation webpage at www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/. We regularly update the page with new resources and tools.

Please know that you can count on ESE to be an active, engaged partner in the work ahead.

Sincerely,

Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.
Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

The Massachusetts Model System for Educator Evaluation

The Model System is a comprehensive educator evaluation system designed by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE), pursuant to the educator evaluation regulations, 603 CMR 35.00. The following eight-part series was developed to support effective implementation of the regulations by districts and schools across the Commonwealth.

Part I: District-Level Planning and Implementation Guide
This Guide takes district leaders – school committees, superintendents and union leaders - through factors to consider as they decide whether to adopt or adapt the Model System or revise their own evaluation systems to meet the educator evaluation regulation. The Guide describes the rubrics, tools, resources and model contract language ESE has developed, and describes the system of support ESE is offering. It outlines reporting requirements, as well as the process ESE uses to review district evaluation systems for superintendents, principals, teachers and other licensed staff. Finally, the Guide identifies ways in which district leaders can support effective educator evaluation implementation in the schools.

Part II: School-Level Planning and Implementation Guide
This Guide is designed to support administrators and teachers as they implement teacher evaluations at the school level. The Guide introduces and explains the requirements of the regulation and the principles and priorities that underlie them. It offers guidance, strategies, templates and examples that will support effective implementation of each of the five components of the evaluation cycle: self-assessment; goal setting and educator plan development; plan implementation and evidence collection; formative assessment/evaluation; and summative evaluation.

Part III: Guide to Rubrics and Model Rubrics for Superintendent, Administrator, and Teacher
The Guide presents the ESE Model Rubrics and explains their use. The Guide also outlines the process for adapting them to specific educator roles and responsibilities.

Part IV: Model Collective Bargaining Contract Language
This section contains the Model Contract that is consistent with the regulations, with model language for teacher and principal evaluation, as well as model language for the Student Impact Rating and district-determined measures (DDMs) and the implementation of student and staff feedback.

Part V: Implementation Guide for Principal Evaluation
This section details the model process for principal evaluation and includes relevant documents and forms for recording goals, evidence and ratings. The Guide includes resources that principals and superintendents may find helpful, including a school visit protocol.

Part VI: Implementation Guide for Superintendent Evaluation
This section details the model process for superintendent evaluation and includes relevant documents and a form for recording goals, evidence and ratings. The Guide includes resources that school committees and superintendents may find helpful, including a model for effective goal setting.

Part VII: Rating Educator Impact on Student Learning Using District-Determined Measures of Student Learning
The Guide contains information for districts on identifying and using district-determined measures of student learning, growth and achievement, and determining ratings of High, Moderate or Low for educator impact on student learning.

Part VIII: Using Staff and Student Feedback in the Evaluation Process
This Guide includes directions for districts on incorporating student and staff feedback into the educator evaluation process, as well as ESE Model Surveys for students and staff.

Introduction

The Opportunity

The Massachusetts educator evaluation framework is designed to include information about educator practice from a wide and representative range of sources. Student and staff feedback, which is a mandatory element of the regulatory framework, offers a unique and important perspective on educator effectiveness. When taken together with other information sources, staff and student feedback helps to provide a more accurate and detailed picture of an educator's practice.[1]

Feedback has long played a key role in teaching and learning in schools throughout the Commonwealth. Whether it's a third grade teacher using weekly exit slips to gather student input on learning activities, a principal convening a group of teachers to collect feedback on a new initiative, or a librarian canvassing students for opinions about new resources, the use of feedback to shape and refine practice is a familiar idea for many educators.

By including student and staff feedback to the types of evidence that educators use in the evaluation process, the Massachusetts' educator evaluation framework captures this critical perspective to support professional growth and development.

> ### Why is collecting feedback important?
>
> Research shows that combining observational feedback, student outcome data, and student feedback results in (a) a stronger predictor of teacher impact on student learning, (b) diagnostic feedback an educator can use to improve, and (c) a more reliable picture of educator effectiveness.
>
> Student and staff feedback is one piece of the overall picture of an educator's practice and can provide a unique perspective that is not captured in any other place.

The Role of Feedback in Educator Evaluation

On June 28, 2011, the Massachusetts Board of Elementary & Secondary Education adopted regulations to guide evaluation of all licensed educators: superintendents, principals, other administrators, teachers and specialized instructional support personnel. Under these regulations, all educators participate in a 5-step evaluation cycle, at the end of which they receive a Summative Performance Rating based on their performance on the Standards and Indicators of Effective Practice, as well as attainment of goals established in their Educator Plans.[2]

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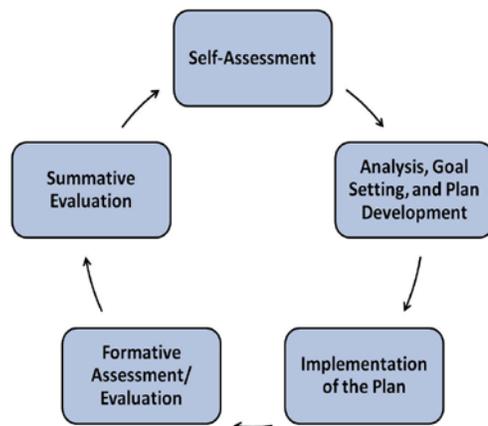
[1]Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. 2012. Asking Students About Teaching: Student Perception Surveys and Their Implementation. http://www.metproject.org/downloads/Asking_Students_Practitioner_Brief.pdf. Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. 2012. Gathering Feedback for Teaching: Combining High-Quality Observations with Student Surveys and Achievement Gains. http://www.metproject.org/downloads/MET_Gathering_Practitioner_Brief.pdf.

[2] The process involved in arriving at an educator's summative rating has been described in detail in Parts I-VI of the Model System (http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/model/) as well as in Rating Educator Performance: *The Summative Performance Rating* (http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/implementation/RatingEdPerformance.pdf)*.

There are three categories of evidence to be gathered over the course of the 5-Step Evaluation Cycle that inform the Summative Performance Rating:

- Category 1: Multiple Measures of Student Learning, Growth and Achievement
  (including measures of student progress on classroom assessments and measures of student progress on learning goals set between the educator and evaluator)

- Category 2: Products of Practice (judgments based on observations and artifacts of practice)

- Category 3: Other Evidence related to Standards of Practice

The third category of evidence includes feedback from students and staff, as well as other sources such as evidence of fulfillment of professional responsibilities and evidence of family engagement. It is important to remember that, like the other categories of evidence, there is no specific weight accorded or point value associated with student and staff feedback. Instead, student and staff feedback should be considered as one source of evidence—alongside evidence Categories 1 and 2—that informs the larger picture of an educator's practice.

What is required in the regulations?

603 CMR 35.07. Evidence used in educator evaluation shall include:
- Student feedback collected by the district starting in 2013–14*
- Staff feedback (with respect to administrators) collected by the district, starting in 2013–14*

*603 CMR 35.11(10). On December 19, 2013, the regulations were amended to authorize the Commissioner to establish new schedules for implementing regulatory requirements for good cause. The Commissioner postponed the incorporation of student and staff feedback into the educator evaluation system for one year to the 2014–15 school year.

Purpose of this Guide

This guide is designed to assist districts as they determine (1) appropriate feedback instruments for all educators, and (2) how to incorporate feedback as evidence into the 5-step cycle of evaluation.[3] The regulations allow for flexibility in determining how feedback will be collected and how it will be used. Therefore, districts need consider the following:

- Will the method(s) used to collect student and/or staff feedback be used district-wide, or will they be school-based, educator role-based, educator-specific, or some combination?

- At which point(s) of the 5-step evaluation cycle will student and staff feedback be used and for what purpose? How will feedback inform evaluation ratings?

This guide provides tools for districts to begin planning how they will capture and use student and staff feedback beginning in the 2014-2015 school year. It does not present concrete formulas for incorporating feedback into evaluation, nor does it identify feedback instruments for educators beyond the ESE Model Surveys for classroom teachers and school leaders. ESE will collaborate with districts over the next several years in the exploration and use of various feedback instruments. We welcome you to contact us at EducatorEvaluation@doe.mass.edu.

- Section 1: Identifying Feedback Instruments provides guidance on determining district-wide versus educator-specific feedback instruments, three fundamental principles of effective feedback instruments, information about ESE Model Surveys, and non-survey approaches to collecting feedback across different types of educators.

- Section 2: Incorporating Feedback Into the 5-Step Evaluation Cycle includes considerations in using feedback in the 5-Step Evaluation Cycle.

The appendices include the ESE Model Student and Staff Surveys and related administration protocols, model contract language, and general considerations for collective bargaining, a report and recommendation on the use of parent surveys, and a brief summary of the ESE Pilot Survey Project.

- Appendix A: ESE Model Feedback Instruments and related administration protocols

- Appendix B: Model Collective Bargaining Language and General Considerations

- Appendix C: ESE Report and Recommendation on Parent Feedback

- Appendix D: ESE Pilot Survey Project: Summary

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[3] The procedures for conducting educator evaluation are a mandatory subject of collective bargaining in Massachusetts. See Appendix B for general considerations for collective bargaining.

Section 1. Identifying Feedback Instruments

Districts have flexibility in the identification of feedback instruments for educators. They may choose to implement district-wide feedback instruments, such as student or staff surveys, or they may create processes by which educators and evaluators can identify feedback instruments at the individual educator level (educator-specific instruments). These approaches are not mutually exclusive, and leaders may settle on a combination of instruments in order to best meet the needs of all educators.

Principles of Effective Feedback Instruments

The following principles offer best practices for districts to consider when making decisions about student and staff feedback instruments; they are intended to be applicable regardless of the method for collecting student and/or staff feedback.

- **Feedback should be aligned to one or more MA Standards and Indicators for Effective Teaching Practice or Administrative Leadership so that it yields information that is relevant to an educator's practice.**

  The purpose of collecting feedback is to capture additional information about educator practice. Therefore, just as artifacts of practice and observational feedback relate to practice associated with one or more Standards of Effective Practice, so should feedback. This close connection between evidence and practice ensures the relevance of feedback to professional growth and development for each and every educator, and guides its role in the 5-Step Evaluation Cycle.

  That said, duties and responsibilities vary widely across educational roles, and one feedback instrument may not neatly align to the responsibilities of *all* educators. It is important to determine whether an instrument provides meaningful feedback about an educator's key responsibilities. Modifications or even entirely different instruments may be appropriate for certain educator roles.

  For example, a team of 3rd grade teachers may use a student survey to solicit feedback on instructional strategies aligned to the new curriculum framework, while a school librarian may ask students to provide feedback on the accessibility of existing technology resources and input on potential new resources via exit slips.

- **Feedback should be informative and actionable.**

  It is essential that feedback is able to inform an educator's practice. Educators should be able to draw conclusions from looking at feedback that may result in changes to their instructional or leadership practices. Also, feedback instruments should be nuanced enough that they adequately differentiate areas of strength and areas where an educator might focus. For example, the ESE Model Student Surveys solicit feedback on a range of instructional practices related to Standards I and II, including practices that are easy to demonstrate as well as more sophisticated practices.

  Remember that feedback is one piece of evidence among many in the evaluation cycle and that it may be a reflection of student attitudes and opinions on a given day; the conversation between an educator and his or her evaluator is essential in helping educators determine how best to use student or staff feedback data.

- **Items must be accessible to all potential respondents so that the information they provide allows educators to draw valid conclusions.**

    In order to ensure that a feedback instrument is accessible to *all* potential respondents, and that respondents understand the questions they are being asked so that they can answer accurately, districts will want to be sure that the constructs of each question item are clear to respondents. Instruments should be designed such that feedback reflects the intent of the question and is not impeded by non-essential factors like cultural misunderstandings or reading ability level.

    For example, in order to ensure that each item on the ESE Model Student Surveys would be accessible to all students, ESE conducted cognitive interviews with individual students where researchers asked, "What do you think this question is asking?" and drew conclusions about which items were confusing and which ones were clear. Further analyses of model survey items also assessed the degree to which items were interpreted the same way among all students, ensuring reliability. This level of item development and analysis is critical for large-scale feedback instruments that will be administered to a widespread, diverse population of respondents. However, it may not be feasible for those instruments that are developed by individual educators.

    What's important is to ensure that all potential respondents—whether they include students in one 2nd grade classroom, or students who access health services through the school nurse over the course of a school year—can access, understand, and respond to the items or questions and provide valid, accurate feedback to the educator.

Other Considerations

As districts consider various feedback instruments for educators, it is important to explore the potential benefits and challenges of each. The table below includes a preliminary list of potential benefits and challenges associated with district-wide feedback instruments and educator-specific feedback instruments, though there may be others that apply depending on local context within a district.

District-wide instruments: Districts identify common feedback collection tools for specific educator roles; the same tools are applied across the district.	
Possible Benefits:	**Possible Challenges:**
• Ensures fairness (in terms of establishing common survey administration protocols, and quality of feedback, for example) across educator groups. • Allows for district-wide (and possibly school-wide) aggregation of data that can inform professional development, goal-setting and school- and district-wide improvement planning. • Promotes continuity and coherence across schools; instrument would become familiar with students and educators throughout a district. • Would allow for easier communication with parents about surveys, including purpose, schedule, etc.	• May demand a greater logistical or financial burden to accurately and efficiently collect, analyze and report back data in a timely, useful way. • Requires appropriate storage and management of confidential educator data. • Offers less opportunity for customization (one-size-fits-all); may be more difficult to tailor feedback to educators' individual goals or school-based goals and initiatives, which may in turn result in less educator buy-in. • In settings where participants are asked to fill out the same survey for multiple educators, may run the risk of survey fatigue. • May engender anxiety among educators about being ranked or directly compared to others.

> **Educator-specific instruments:** Individual educators work with their evaluators to decide which feedback collection tools to use, as they do with other forms of evidence (e.g., artifacts of practice).

Possible Benefits:	**Possible Challenges:**
- High degree of individualization for educators, which may result in the process feeling more authentic/empowering. - May promote more targeted and meaningful feedback. - Educators can easily adjust their instrument to reflect changing goals and priorities or to dig more deeply into an area of challenge. - Capitalizes on existing practices by individual educators who are accustomed to soliciting and applying feedback to their practice. - Educators may be better able to ensure accessibility for students with special learning needs. - Lightest lift for a district; work is distributed across evaluators and educators. - Could be extended to groups of educators designing their own instrument that they all agree to implement, e.g. a grade level or team. - Can be implemented whenever and as frequently as an educator chooses.	- Precludes systematic collection of feedback data at the district level, which could be used to inform school- or district-wide improvement planning. - Introduces questions of validity and reliability. - May be challenging to ensure fairness across educator groups with regard to the type and/or quality of feedback, unless district and association/union leaders agree to apply certain parameters to all such methods. - Educator's focus may be so targeted that important data may not be collected. - Places the burden on educators to create an instrument and manage and analyze the results.

Districts may decide to use a combination of methods to meet the needs of educators and mitigate some of the challenges noted above. For example, some models could include:

- Ex. Student and staff feedback surveys are used for the majority of educators, while educators in some specialized roles use educator-specific feedback instruments more targeted to their responsibilities.
- Ex. Surveys are used to provide feedback for teachers in secondary schools, as well as principals and district staff, while elementary teachers and specialists develop their own differentiated instruments.
- Ex. Educator role-specific instruments are the same for educators in similar grade bands or content areas. For example, K-2 teachers develop/identify an instrument that can be used with younger students.
- Ex. Educator-specific instruments are identified at the individual level for all teachers in collaboration with their evaluators, but surveys are used for principals and districtwide staff.

These examples are by no means comprehensive. Rather, they are designed to spur conversation around the various approaches to the identification of feedback instruments within a district, taking into account familiarity with feedback, district readiness, educator buy-in, and logistical challenges.

ESE Model Feedback Instruments

ESE is charged with recommending and supporting a feasible, sustainable, cost effective way for districts to collect and report back feedback to educators. To that end, ESE has developed the following model feedback instruments for *optional use*[4] by MA districts:

- Student surveys about classroom teacher practice (for students in grades 3-5 and 6-12)

- Staff surveys about school leadership practice (including principals, assistant principals, directors, etc.)

- Discussion prompts for K-2 students about classroom teacher practice

See Appendix A for student and staff surveys, K-2 discussion prompts, and related administration protocols.

ESE Model Feedback Surveys

The ESE Model Feedback Surveys were designed in accordance with the same key principles of effective feedback outlined earlier in this guidance:

- Items are aligned to observable practices within the [Standards and Indicators of Effective Teaching Practice](#) (student surveys) and [Effective Administrative Leadership Practice](#) (staff survey).

- Survey information provides educators with actionable information to improve their practice.

- Items are developmentally appropriate and accessible to all potential respondents.

Survey items were developed, tested, and refined through a rigorous pilot project in the 2013–14 school year, a detailed description of which is included in Appendix D. Over the course of two pilots, almost 10,000 students completed pilot surveys about classroom teachers, and over 1,500 staff completed pilot surveys about school leaders. ESE survey developers combined data collected through the pilot administrations with input from educators and students gathered through ten Expert Review sessions, pilot district site visits, online item feedback surveys, and cognitive student interviews to identify items that were the most meaningful, reliable, and accessible.

Standard and Short Forms

ESE Model Feedback Surveys are available in standard and short forms to allow for flexibility in implementation. The standard forms yield more comprehensive information about an educator's practice and can serve as a diagnostic tool; however they may take longer for a respondent to complete. The short forms solicit feedback within the same constructs as the standard forms but include fewer items. The short forms are designed to allow students and staff to complete surveys about multiple teachers or administrators, and/or complete surveys more than once in a given year; however, they may not yield as comprehensive a picture of practice as the standard forms. We encourage districts to consider the benefits and challenges associated with each approach when determining the best administration process for their students and staff. Key considerations for administering a large-scale survey, such as the ESE Model Surveys, are available on pg. 8.

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[4] Districts are not required to use ESE Model Feedback Surveys.

Key Considerations for Administering ESE Model Feedback Surveys

The ESE Model Feedback Surveys are designed to be administered on paper or online, depending on the preferences and capabilities of a school or district. (Specific administration protocols for ESE Model Surveys are available in Appendix A.) Based on the experiences of ESE pilot districts, the following key considerations are recommended when choosing to administer a large-scale feedback survey of any kind:

1) Planning & Communication: Collaborative planning and communication with all relevant stakeholders (including students) around the purpose, scope, and timing of feedback surveys is critical to ensuring a successful and smooth administration.

   In Quaboag Regional School District, Principal Greg Myers gathered a large stakeholder group to reach a consensus on the following key questions prior to implementing the ESE pilot surveys: 1) How will we use feedback data? 2) How do we mitigate against this survey being "just one more thing" (i.e., how do we integrate it with other initiatives)? 3) How can we implement the survey with minimal impact on student learning time?

2) Preparation of Participant Data/Rosters & Forms: Preparing accurate and timely rosters will ensure that students complete surveys about the appropriate teacher(s) and staff complete surveys about appropriate administrator(s). Rosters should take into consideration the duration of a student/teacher or teacher/administrator relationship, changes in course schedules, the number of surveys per respondent, and student and/or teacher transitions.

   In Lincoln Public Schools, the technology director and superintendent convened their leadership team early in the process to discuss survey participation details. The group collectively decided that students would have to be in a teacher's class a minimum of six weeks in order to take the survey and that students in upper grades would provide feedback for one teacher only.

3) Survey Administration: The thoughtful administration of surveys should take into account timing (will educators be able to act on the feedback in a timely fashion?), the preservation of student and staff confidentiality (including the identification of proctors, where necessary), and minimal disruption to instructional time.

   District leadership teams in pilot districts worked together to address key questions about the pilot survey administration: how students would be grouped for the survey administration (i.e., by homeroom or by a particular subject), who would proctor the surveys, where surveys would be administered (i.e., in classrooms or in computer labs), and how students would be identified in order to protect their confidentiality. For staff surveys, some pilot districts afforded staff time in faculty meetings to complete surveys, while others encouraged staff to take the surveys on their own time.

4) Data Processing & Timely Reports: Data processing and timely data turnaround are essential components of an effective survey project. Districts should be prepared to receive, process, and return aggregate survey data to individual educators in a timely manner such that educators may incorporate the information directly into their practice as quickly as possible.

5) Usefulness of Reports: Data is only as useful as the format within which it is received. Survey reports should present data in a manner that communicates meaning and relevance to the educator. For example, survey reports may group data by construct, such as the Standards and Indicators of Effective Practice; they may also provide educators with aggregated comparative data (by grade or content area) to signal where they are excelling and where they have room for growth. A sample report is available on pg. 12. ESE encourages districts *not* to produce reports that generate scores or "grades," but to simply provide descriptive, item-level data that allows an educator to understand, analyze, and act upon the feedback received.

   Colleen Mucha, principal of West Brookfield Elementary School in Quaboag, sums up how her teachers responded to the pilot survey reports and made targeted adjustments to practice based on the data they received: "I am so pleased at how the teachers have really reflected upon the student responses. I have even seen some positive changes in practice since the results came. I think this is a very good sign for the potential impact of these surveys."

Using ESE Model Feedback Survey Results

Where districts plan to implement one or more ESE Model Feedback Surveys, ESE recommends that survey results be incorporated into steps 1 and 2 of an educator's 5-step evaluation cycle: the self-assessment and/or goal-setting and plan development processes. For more information on this formative use of student feedback, please see Section 2: Incorporating Feedback into the 5-Step Cycle of Evaluation.

The formative use of ESE model survey data is recommended in acknowledgment of the instruments' early developmental stage. While the pilot administrations in the 2013–14 school year allowed for an initial determination of item validity and reliability across respondents, ESE will be conducting additional external validity analyses of the model survey instruments in subsequent years and engaging in ongoing item refinement, after which point the summative use of model survey data may be more appropriate.

> *Guidelines for administering ESE Model Feedback Surveys more than once in a year*
>
> Although the ESE Model Surveys are not designed to be measures of growth, many educators are accustomed to, and find value in, administering a feedback survey more than once in a given year. In this way, they identify areas of focus early on, implement changes to practice, and assess progress over time. The ESE Model Survey short forms are designed to make it possible to survey students or staff more than once without resulting in survey fatigue or taking up too much class time. However, surveying populations more than once raises potential challenges to the validity and reliability of survey data. Below are several guidelines we encourage districts and schools to follow when administering the ESE model surveys multiple times in a given year:
>
> 1. Ensure that sufficient time has passed before the first survey is administered, so that students, teachers and administrators have had ample opportunity to get to know one another.
>
> 2. Ensure that sufficient time passes between survey administrations, so that educators can address specific areas of practice in a meaningful way.
>
> 3. Establish clear processes to track individual responses across survey administrations (using unique respondent identifiers such as SASIDS, for example), so that educators can see paired comparative data from the respondents who completed surveys during both administrations; this allows for an accurate assessment of change over time and mitigates

Modifying ESE Model Feedback Surveys for Other Educators

The ESE Model Feedback Surveys are designed for students to complete about classroom teachers of grades 3-12, and for school staff to complete about school-level administrative leaders. Because the surveys reflect teaching and administrative leadership practices that are applicable to all educators, many of the survey items are applicable to other educators, such as instructional coaches and specialized instructional support personnel, as well. That said, districts may choose to modify survey forms for specific educator roles to ensure that the feedback an educator receives is applicable to the content he or she is responsible for delivering.

To support districts in this work, ESE has created an Item Bank comprised of additional survey items aligned to observable teaching and leadership practices within the Massachusetts Standards and Indicators. The Item Bank is available as a part of the standard survey forms in Appendix A to this guide. Districts may draw from this item bank to:

- Add items to ESE Model Feedback Surveys that align to key instructional content or leadership responsibilities of a specific educator role;

- Adapt wording of individual items to better align responses to a specific educator role; and/or

- Remove item(s) from an ESE Model Feedback Survey that are not applicable to a specific educator role and replace them with more appropriate item(s).

While these adaptations may be appropriate for specific educator roles, districts must be aware that altering the ESE Model Feedback Surveys can compromise the validity and reliability of the instruments as a whole. ESE will also be exploring additional survey instruments and/or survey modules for specific educator roles in subsequent years and invites feedback into this process.

ESE Model Feedback Surveys: Item Bank

ESE has published an [Item Bank] of additional survey items for districts to consider as replacement or supplemental items to the model student and staff feedback surveys (standard forms), if such items are deemed appropriate within specific district- or educator-specific contexts. These items have been tested and validated during the ESE pilot survey project and represent concrete, observable educator practices within the Standards and Indicators of effective teaching or administrative leadership.

Included in the item bank are suggested protocols for replacing existing survey items with those from the item bank, and/or supplementing model instruments with additional items from the item bank, such that the validity and reliability of the model survey may be preserved.

Administering Surveys to Students with Special Needs

Collecting feedback from students with special needs is a valuable part of the evaluation process. Districts should include all students, or a representative sample of all students, in their feedback collection. When students with disabilities participate in the Model Surveys, their accommodations must be consistent with IEPs and 504 Plans. Examples of common accommodations are available in the Administration Protocols for each survey form.

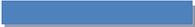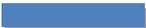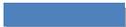**Administering Surveys to ELL Students**

The ESE Model Student Surveys are available in the following languages: Spanish, Portuguese, French and Chinese. When appropriate, ESE recommends that the language accommodations used for state assessments or other tests for English Language Learners are used for the ESE Model Surveys. Districts with similar ELL populations are also encouraged to develop and share translations into other languages.

Grades K-2 Discussion Prompts

The K-2 discussion prompts represent a subset of items that were piloted with students in Kindergarten, first, and second grades during the ESE Model Pilot Survey Project. These items (available in Appendix A) are intended to serve as discussion prompts for educators to use to collect feedback about their practice from individual students, small groups of students, or in large group settings, depending on the type of dialogue sought. Discussion prompts are meant to generate conversation between a teacher and his or her student(s). If a teacher or school wants to preserve student confidentiality in the solicitation of verbal feedback, another staff member familiar to the students may engage them in responses to these discussion prompts.

Sample Educator Report

This sample report shows one way that districts might format survey information to make it most useful to educators. Similar descriptive reports may be constructed via low-cost or free online platforms, such as Survey Monkey, Survey Gizmo, K12 Insight, or Google Forms.[5]

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Teacher: Last Name, First Name	School Name
Grades 3-5 Survey	Number of Respondents: 17
Date of Administration	

IA. Curriculum & Planning (11 items total)

#1 What I am learning now connects to what I learned before.

82% of students responded favorably.
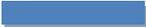
Strongly agree	6 responses
Agree	8 responses
Disagree	2 responses
Strongly disagree	1 response

District-wide grade average: 89%

#2 I use evidence to explain my thinking when I write, answer questions, and talk about my work.

64% of students responded favorably.

Strongly agree	5 responses
Agree	6 responses
Disagree	4 responses
Strongly disagree	2 responses

District-wide grade average: 65%

#3 My teacher makes me think first before he or she answers my questions.

76% of students responded favorably.

Strongly agree	4 responses
Agree	9 responses
Disagree	4 responses
Strongly disagree	0 responses

District-wide grade average: 88%

Items are grouped by Standard and Indicator to help educators quickly scan responses on a similar topic.

Each item is displayed with an overall percentage as well as individual breakdown of responses, providing the educator with as much data as possible while preserving confidentiality.

The percentages should be viewed in comparison to each other, and not on a "grading" scale. (e.g. a 60% does not indicate a D or F)

District averages provide context for overall percentages across similar grades or grade bands. For example, at first glance 64% of students responding favorably may seem low in comparison to other items. However, this is on par with the district average of 65% within the same grade. This could indicate that the practice referred to in this question may be more difficult to implement. It may also indicate that this could be an area for district-wide focus.

In contrast, item #3 shows a higher overall percentage (76%), but it is noticeably lower than the district average of 88%. This could signal to this teacher that this may be a focus area for him or her.

Alternative methods for collecting student and staff feedback

District-wide student and staff surveys may not be the most useful or practical solution for all educators or all districts. ESE urges districts to consider the unique needs of their educators. Engaging a representative team of teachers and administrators to discuss the benefits and challenges listed in Other Considerations might be helpful when determining how to structure feedback methods. This is especially important because it is likely that some educators within a district have already developed methods for collecting feedback that are working well for them, and districts want to build on existing best practices.

ESE urges that any feedback instrument be aligned to the three Principles of Effective Feedback Instruments. Still, a great deal of leeway exists to allow for all educators to find a way to collect feedback that is useful and sensible to them and the group from whom they are seeking feedback. Some examples of alternatives to ESE's Model Student and Staff Feedback Surveys include:

Other surveys:

In some districts, educators may already be using surveys to collect feedback that can be used in educator evaluation (such as the Tripod Project survey), surveys to gather input on school climate (such as the 5 Essentials survey, the NEA KEYS survey, or the NTC Teaching and Learning Conditions Survey) or comparable surveys across multiple stakeholder groups (such as K12 Insight).[6] Existing surveys should be evaluated to see how well they meet the Principles of Effective Feedback Instruments outlined in this document and the needs of the educators in the district.

Surveys can range from large-scale instruments common across educator groups to individualized feedback forms used by individual educators at the classroom or school level. Districts may identify several types of surveys for use in educator evaluation. Different types of surveys include:

- Commercially available surveys (including but not limited to the ones named above)
- Pre/post surveys: some surveys might be designed to be administered at multiple points with the same stakeholder group, allowing educators to assess whether new practices are working well.
- Ongoing: many surveys are administered in an ongoing, less formal way. For example, classroom teachers, school nurses, or guidance counselors might use exit slips with students on a regular basis. Similarly, teachers might include questions about the pacing of their lessons, for example, on an end-of-lesson or end-of-unit quiz or exam, the aggregated or cumulative results of which guide practice throughout the year.

Focus groups/interviews:

- Groups of stakeholders might be engaged in a focused conversation around a set of pre-determined discussion questions. This could be led by a teacher or principal seeking feedback on his or her own practice (ESE K-2 discussion prompts may serve this purpose), or by a third party who produces notes or a written summary afterwards.
- Students/educators might also be engaged in one-on-one interviews in the collection of feedback around targeted or specific topics.

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[6] Reference in this document to any specific commercial products, processes, or services, or the use of any trade, firm or corporation name is for the information and convenience of the public, and does not constitute endorsement or recommendation by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Written narratives:

- Teachers may ask students to respond to a series of written prompts, keep a journal, compose letters, or engage in other written narrative activities in which they comment on key instructional practices, specific units, or other aspects of the learning environment.
- Similarly, principals or district leaders may create written prompts or narrative opportunities to solicit staff feedback.

Portfolios:

- An educator may create a representative collection of feedback from multiple sources, including but not limited to survey results, written responses, and feedback collected in interviews or focus groups.

Identifying appropriate feedback instruments for educators should be done thoughtfully and collaboratively. A suggested process for identifying feedback instruments that involves all relevant stakeholders is available on pg. 15.

Identifying Feedback Instruments

Below is a suggested process by which districts may identify and/or develop feedback instruments for educators. These steps are not intended to be comprehensive but rather to serve as guideposts for the identification and development of appropriate feedback instruments.

1. **Conduct a needs assessment**. Identify feedback instruments already in place; identify those educators for whom feedback instruments are needed in order to ensure everyone has the ability to collect student and/or staff feedback.

2. **Create a joint labor/management working group to decide on the district-level approach to feedback.** Key questions include:

   – Will feedback instruments be district-wide or educator-specific? (consider feasibility, district culture and climate, experience with surveys or other feedback instruments)

   – How will feedback be incorporated into the 5-step cycle of evaluation?

3. **Create a team(s) to confirm/develop feedback instruments and/or protocols**. Teams of teachers and administrators should consist of individuals who may make recommendations to the district related to appropriate feedback instruments for specific educators (superintendent, district- and school-level administrators, teachers, specialized instructional support personnel, etc.). Key questions for team(s) might include:

   – What will the administration protocols look like? This will include local decision-making around which survey platform to use, how to report the data to individual educators, and how to manage and store confidential educator data.

   – How many students or staff will complete a survey for a given educator? Will all students/staff be included for a given educator, or is a representative sample more appropriate in specific contexts?

   – It may be advisable for a group of Special Education or ELL teachers to work together to ensure that the resulting protocols will be adequately accessible for their students.

4. **Confirm Feedback Measures.** Ensure that all potential measures align with the Principles of Effective Feedback Instruments (pg. 4) and met the needs of educators.

5. **Implement/Analyze/Refine**. Districts should remain open to modifying and refining feedback instruments as needed in order to ensure meaning, utility, and accessibility for all educators.

Section 2: Incorporating Feedback into the 5-Step Cycle of Evaluation

There is no point value or weighted value associated with feedback in an educator's evaluation. Districts have the flexibility to determine how student and staff feedback informs the Summative Performance Rating. Student and staff feedback may be gathered at multiple points in the 5-Step Evaluation Cycle and considered formatively, summatively, or both. For example, feedback can be an excellent source of formative or diagnostic evidence to consider during Steps 1 and 2 of the cycle, Self-Assessment and Goal Setting & Plan Development, particularly as it sheds light on specific aspects of practice on which an educator might focus. Feedback can also be an appropriate and important piece of evidence that educators and evaluators consider during Steps 4 and 5 of the cycle, Formative Assessment/Evaluation and Summative Evaluation, particularly as it relates to aspects of practice that are less readily "observable" through classroom observations or artifacts such as student work samples.

Based on recommendations from stakeholders and research partners, ESE is recommending student and staff feedback be used to inform an educator's self-assessment, shape his or her goal-setting process, and/or demonstrate changes in practice over time. If a district chooses to implement one or more of the ESE Model Surveys, ESE recommends that the feedback be used formatively in the evaluation framework (steps 1 and 2) until ESE completes additional external validity analyses of these instruments in subsequent years.

A Word About Timing

Formative versus summative use of feedback relies on information that's timely and relevant. If feedback will play a formative role in the evaluation process by informing the self-assessment, goal setting, and/or educator plan development steps, districts should facilitate the collection of feedback shortly before these processes commence. Part II of the Model System provides, "…the self-assessment step should be informed by the summative evaluation. Given a typical one or two year cycle, most summative evaluations will occur at the end of a school year—therefore, self-assessment may start at the end of one year as educators reflect on their performance and continue through the beginning of the next year as educators analyze data for their new students." As a result, feedback used during the self-assessment, goal setting, and/or educator plan development steps is likely to be feedback collected toward the end of a school year.

Similarly, feedback used for summative purposes, whether to inform adjustments to practice at the formative assessment/evaluation or to serve as evidence of performance at the summative evaluation, should be collected and analyzed close to those steps of the evaluation cycle.

The formative and summative uses of feedback are not mutually exclusive, and districts may ultimately choose to use student and staff feedback at all steps of the cycle. It is important to keep in mind that like all evidentiary components of the evaluation process, feedback is intended to act as one more piece of information to assist educators and evaluators in a comprehensive assessment, analysis, and realization of effective practice and not be given a point value or a weight. ESE encourages districts to work collaboratively to develop processes for the collection of meaningful feedback that will further expand the evidentiary base at the core of the educator evaluation framework, and to ensure a transparent and common set of expectations for incorporation of feedback into the 5-Step Evaluation Cycle.

Key Messages

By adding student and staff feedback to the types of evidence that educators will use in the evaluation process, the Massachusetts' educator evaluation framework seeks to use this critical perspective to support educators' professional growth and development. It is important to keep in mind the following key messages when talking about collecting feedback from students and staff:

- **Feedback should be meaningful and actionable.** What's important is that the feedback be directly related to the educator's day-to-day practice, and that it yield information that's meaningful and actionable to the educator.

- **Feedback collection tools can take many forms.** While student and staff feedback is frequently collected using surveys, educators can use alternative collection tools, such as exit slips, focus groups, written narratives, etc. This is an opportunity to further develop those processes and apply the resulting feedback to refining practice.

- **Feedback is one component of an evaluation framework that draws on many different types of evidence.** Alongside artifacts, observation feedback, and student performance measures, feedback will provide educators and evaluators with another type of information about the effectiveness of their practice.

- **There are no weights or formulas.** There is no weight or value associated with feedback in an educator's evaluation. Rather, the feedback provided by students or staff can be used to inform an educator's self-assessment, shape their goal-setting process, and/or demonstrate changes in practice over time.

Feedback from one's students or staff can be among the most meaningful types of feedback an educator receives—more resonant than feedback from a peer or supervisor. This type of information has the ability to shift practice in the most immediate and powerful ways, but it's also markedly personal. As districts move forward with this component of the evaluation process, we encourage educators, administrators, and students to embrace this as an opportunity for dialogue, and to apply the resulting feedback to the ongoing process of teaching and learning.