

Planning a Calibration Training Experience

A guide for school and district leaders.

How can I use ESE's [Calibration Video Library](#) for calibration?

There are several possibilities, including:

1. Groups of evaluators may watch a video together and discuss the quality, scope, and consistency of the practices they observed and the feedback they would offer the educator.
2. Evaluators could watch a video individually and complete a questionnaire to communicate their thoughts about practice and feedback with a district leader. The district leader could then share aggregated questionnaire data with all evaluators at a meeting to discuss the practices they observed and the feedback they would offer the educator.
3. An educator and evaluator could watch a video together and discuss the practices observed and the type of feedback that could be provided to the teacher. This experience will help evaluators understand the type of feedback their educators find most beneficial and provide educators with insight into their evaluators expectations of practice.

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Where do I start?

1. Choose an objective. Do you want to calibrate around quality of practice, feedback, or both? Since the goal of an observation is to document an educator's practice and provide meaningful feedback, ESE recommends calibrating around the quality, scope, and consistency of the observed practices *and* the type of feedback from which a teacher would most benefit.
 - Quality: ability to perform the skill, action or behavior at or above expected performance levels
 - Scope: the scale of impact (e.g., one student, subset of children, all students) to which the skill, action or behavior is demonstrated with quality
 - Consistency: the frequency (e.g., all the time, sometimes, once) that the skill, action or behavior is demonstrated with quality
2. Plan the experience.
 - *Who?* Consider who needs to be in the room to meet your objective. It could be a group meeting or

Sample Observation & Feedback Calibration Activities

- [The Subject Administrator](#) (Revere Public Schools)
- [Video-Based Calibration Activity](#) (Amherst-Pelham)
- [Rating Practice & Providing Feedback](#) (ESE)
- [What To Look For](#) Content-Specific Observation Guides (ESE)

Should evaluators rate educator practice in a video on a 4-point scale? Why or why not?

Evaluation performance ratings in MA use a 4-point scale. However performance ratings are only determined after evaluators consider a wide array of evidence, including but not limited to observations. In practice, it is therefore not necessary to label a single observation with a rating. That said, when calibrating evaluators around a common rubric or set of expectations, some kind of scale or metric is useful. Districts may choose to use the 4-point performance rating scale because of its familiarity, or they may use a different numerical scale when calibrating evaluators' understanding of practice.

a 1:1 conversation. It might be an experience for all district or building-level evaluators, an activity for role-alike evaluators, or a meeting open to teachers as well.

- *Focus?* Agree on an area of focus for the calibration exercise. For example, you may pick one or two elements or Indicators from the performance rubric on which participants will center their observations and feedback.
 - *Protocol?* If your district has adopted an observation and feedback protocol or form, it might make sense to use it for your calibration exercise. If not, choose an appropriate tool.
 - Click [here](#) for some sample observation protocols and forms.
 - *Pre-work?* Determine what, if anything, you want participants to do to prepare for the meeting. For example, you might send the link to a video in advance and ask participants to watch it and take notes using the district's observation and feedback form. You might also develop an online questionnaire and ask participants to watch the video and submit a response. Participants could bring copies of their individual responses and/or be provided aggregated data to discuss at the meeting.
 - *Norms?* Calibration involves reaching consensus around expectations, which can sometimes be bumpy work. Set meeting norms that will enable productive dialogue among colleagues.
3. Conduct the meeting. Support participants throughout the session by upholding the following principles of effective observations and feedback:
- *Support claims with evidence.* Statements about the quality, scope, or consistency of practices observed in the video should be accompanied by specific references to teacher and student behaviors.
 - *Provide feedback that is actionable.* The goal of educator evaluation is to provide all educators with opportunities for growth. Too often educators at the top range of performance are denied actionable feedback in favor of platitudes. Calibration activities can provide great opportunities to practice giving actionable feedback to a range of performers.
 - *Protect rigorous expectations.* A potential pitfall to group calibration is lowered expectations. When reaching consensus on the quality, scope, and consistency of practice, some groups tend to experience a sort of "regression to the mean," where more critical evaluators lower their expectations to better align with the group. Build in periodic checks throughout the meeting to ensure that the bar is staying appropriately high.
4. Reflect and Refine. Collect feedback from the group to gauge the effectiveness of the activity. Ask participants to bring an example of feedback they offered to an educator based on what they learned by participating in the calibration exercise, and continue to engage evaluators in calibration activities on a regular basis. Strong within-district calibration will only be achieved using a deliberate and ongoing approach.

ESE hopes these videos and supporting materials provide districts with useful content that strengthens evaluator practice and educator growth and development.