
In Fall 2012, a research team led by SRI International, an independent non-profit organization, launched a multi-year study of Massachusetts’ new educator evaluation model. Interim findings from the second year of the study, 2013–14, are now available (Research Brief: Implementation of the New Educator Evaluation System in Massachusetts) and indicate areas of strength and progress, as well as areas of challenge. ESE is working to respond to these findings as we continue our support to districts. ESE’s responses to SRI’s key findings are below.

1. **Nearly all Massachusetts educators have participated in the new evaluation system.** This finding is important for several reasons.
   - Feedback from ESE principal and teacher advisory cabinets, as well as input from the ESE’s 2014 Principal Dialogue Tour, indicate that levels of anxiety and misconceptions about the framework decrease as educators implement the 5-step cycle and gain familiarity with the process. Administrators and teachers in schools that are in the second or third year of implementation report more meaningful dialogue between educators and more efficiencies in implementation. Widespread participation in the new framework suggests continued increases in confidence and efficacy.
   - Second, participation in the 5-step cycle and performance rating is an important precondition for effective implementation of the next components of the framework. Beginning in the 2014–15 school year, districts will fully or partially implement district-determined measures (DDMs). Also in 2014–15, districts will implement student and staff feedback measures, which will provide additional evidence contributing to an educator’s summative performance rating. ESE has developed extensive guidance and resources to support districts in the implementation of these additional components, including DDM implementation briefs, technical assistance webinars and example DDMs, as well as guidance on collecting feedback and model student and staff perception surveys for optional use by districts.

2. ** Principals reported far more positive views of the new evaluation system than school staff. School staff’s mixed opinions of the new evaluation system seemed to hinge on whether they saw the system as focused on support and improvement or on accountability and compliance.** This finding offers critical insight into the effectiveness of the evaluation process. New and upcoming resources explicitly designed to create coherence between the educator evaluation processes and ongoing educator growth and development include:
   - Quick Reference Guide: Educator Evaluation & Professional Development
   - Resource to support meaningful conversations around staff and student feedback (upcoming: Fall 2014)

---

1 DDMs are measures for assessing student learning, selected by districts, that will inform an educator’s student impact rating. Using trends in state assessment data (where available) and DDM data over at least two years, evaluators will determine a student impact rating for each educator. The student impact rating, along with the educator’s summative performance rating, will determine the type of educator plan for that educator. Source: http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/QRG-Measures.pdf.
ESE also works closely with educators from the field to identify, promote, and disseminate best practices around leveraging the new evaluation model as a tool for growth and development. Partnerships and communications strategies include:

- ESE Principal and Teacher Advisory Cabinets, whose members work to highlight ways schools and districts can leverage the new evaluation framework to promote educator growth and development over compliance approaches. Cabinet members have informed training resources, how effective teacher leadership roles may be structured, and new guidance on the use of staff and student feedback as a tool for professional learning. Two members of the recently teacher cabinet offered testimony to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education about the value of state policymakers engaging with teachers and how this translates into better implementation practices at the school level.

- The Educator Evaluation Newsletter “Spotlights” will continue to regularly feature stories from MA teachers and administrators who are utilizing the resources and supports afforded to them through the 5-step cycle of continuous improvement to focus on their practice and improve outcomes for students. Recent editions have spotlighted meaningful collaboration around evaluation processes such as evidence collection (August 2014), DDM development in the Career/Vocational Technical Education Community (May 2014), strategies for more effective observations and feedback (March 2014), and leveraging teacher teams to improve educator evaluation implementation (February 2014).

3. **A majority of educators reported receiving sufficient training on the new evaluation system, although administrators reported having a stronger understanding of it than school staff.** This finding may reflect the number of training hours initially required for evaluators (11 hours) versus teachers and specialized instructional support personnel (4 hours). In subsequent years, ESE will be updating training programs and resources in the following ways:

- Develop a series of engaging video-based training materials to support implementation of the Massachusetts educator evaluation framework. The intended audiences are preparation programs, program supervisors, supervising practitioners, candidates, and new in-service educators and evaluators.

- Gather and publish high quality examples of educator evaluation resources, including but not limited to sample S.M.A.R.T. goals, educator artifacts, observation protocols and feedback notes, sample educator plans, district-determined measures, etc.

- Identify and disseminate best practices from high-performing schools and districts related to evaluator capacity development and teacher leadership opportunities.

4. **A majority of educators found the workload required to implement the new evaluation system burdensome.** Survey data and feedback from principal advisory cabinets imply that evaluator workload begins to ease in implementation years 2 and 3 as educators become more familiar with the processes. That said, the development of evaluator capacity and the distribution of evaluation activities are at the forefront to ESE research and development in 2014–15. ESE will be entering into deep partnerships with groups of districts in 2014–15 to focus on evaluator capacity development and teacher leadership. These Professional Learning Networks (PLNs) are designed to identify and cultivate innovative ways to ease evaluator workload, such as more distributed leadership structures, Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) models, and strategic redistribution of administrative responsibilities. ESE will publish findings from PLNs over the course of the 2014-15 school year to assist other districts in adopting similar strategies.
5. **Specific implementation challenges with goal-setting, evidence collection, and observations and feedback have resulted in fragmented experiences with the five-step evaluation cycle.** ESE has updated and developed new resources to assist educators in connecting each step of the evaluation cycle to one another in a meaningful and coherent manner. New and updated resources include:

- Quick Reference Guide: 5-Step Cycle of Evaluation
- Quick Reference Guide: Educator Evaluation & Professional Development
- Evidence Collection Toolkit

6. **Most educators perceived their own evaluator’s assessment of their performance as fair, but school staff perceived inconsistencies within and across schools in how evaluators conducted evaluations and 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. The perceived fairness of individual ratings is supported by preliminary analyses of 2012–2013 summative performance ratings in relation to one measure of student learning (MCAS median student growth percentile), which demonstrated that teachers rated Exemplary were more likely than other teachers to have achieved high student academic growth, and teachers rated Needs Improvement or Unsatisfactory were more likely than other teachers to have achieved low student academic growth. 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 evaluator capacity development. See responses to Findings 3, 4 and 5 for current and upcoming resources designed to support evaluator capacity development and training resources.

7. **Districts were implementing the evaluation system along with other complicated initiatives, and most were trying to explicitly integrate the evaluation system with these other initiatives.** Districts are devoting time and resources to multiple, concurrent reform efforts of critical importance to Massachusetts students. ESE remains committed to helping educators identify and facilitate synergies across initiatives, such that implementation of all initiatives is more effective and efficient. To that end:

- ESE released a guide for using current assessments as a starting point for DDMs that features the Curriculum Embedded Performance Assessments included in ESE’s Model Curriculum Units.
- ESE has published Quick Reference Guides on the integration of educator evaluation and the 2011 MA curriculum frameworks and professional development.
- In Fall 2013, ESE launched the Professional Practice Innovation (PPI) Grant, an opportunity for districts to receive funding to develop strategies, systems, and tools for integrating implementation of educator evaluation with the revised MA curriculum frameworks. The 2014 Educator Evaluation Spring Convening featured the work of several PPI grantees. In Summer 2014, ESE was pleased to launch a second PPI Grant and will be supporting six new districts with their integration efforts during the 2014-15 school year.

---