This month’s Spotlight is written by a team of educators in the Williamstown-Lanesborough Public Schools who are currently participating in ESE’s Guidebook Partners review project. These educators, along with others from 32 districts, are reviewing the tools from the Educator Effectiveness Guidebook for Inclusive Practice and providing feedback to inform revisions. Read on to learn about the Guidebook tools Williamstown-Lanesborough found most useful. A special thanks to the co-authors: Kimberley Grady, Director of Pupil Services; Nicola McMahon, Student Services Coordinator; Elea Kaatz, Assistant Principal; and Caitlin Reilly, Special Education Teacher.

Our leadership team wanted to help the staff at Williamstown Elementary School strengthen and promote shared ownership of students and responsibilities. ESE’s Guidebook for Inclusive Practice is well-aligned to this goal, so when offered the chance to try it out and provide feedback, it seemed like a natural fit. By creating a team of district and school administrators as well as special education teachers, we hoped to impact both general and special education instruction and incorporate the use of common language in working with both general education and special education teachers.

Aligned to the stages of the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Framework, the Guidebook provides a foundation for streamlining expectations and understanding best practices for teaching in an inclusive setting. Using these tools, our teaching practices became more reflective and we made shifts to meet the needs of all of our students.

There were several tools our team found particularly helpful. The Example Artifact List tool provides examples of evidence aligned to inclusive practices and the teacher rubric. Assistant Principal Kaatz found it “especially helpful in that it removed a great deal of ambiguity for both educators and administrators and resulted in a positive communication and collaboration. Both educators and administrators in our district have been afforded the opportunity to be more reflective and to build stronger collaborative relationships.”

Other building administrators reported that the Observation Feedback tool supported them in having conversations with teachers about reflecting on inclusive practices. The specific student action prompts emphasize meeting the needs of all of our students and thinking about how we can meet those needs in a variety of ways.

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Teachers also found the Guidebook tools helpful when collaborating and collectively discussing student learning. First year teacher, Caitlin Reilly, noted that the Annotated Classroom Teacher Rubric helped her team “model how we communicate with each other, the students, and our families.” The Guidebook helped her “model positive ways to enhance the collaborative work we do, and it gave me positive ways to enhance the working environment when practicing and implementing our inclusive programming.”

The project has proved to be highly value-driven and definitely not the “cumbersome, one more thing burden” the team initially feared when the project outline and Guidebook binders were presented to them. This process has allowed us to remove the language barriers of “my kid/your kid” and teams of teachers are collaborating about students and for students using common language about inclusive practice. We’ve enjoyed providing ESE with feedback on how to augment and improve the tools over the course of the year, and look forward to using the revised versions next year and sharing the Guidebook with other districts that the shared administration oversees.

**Additional Information about the Guidebook:** Designed to support all educators, the tools of the Guidebook for Inclusive Practice are based on evidence-based frameworks for instruction and behavior support including Universal Design for Learning, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, and Social and Emotional Learning.

The Guidebook can function as either a comprehensive set of supports or on a case-by-case basis. At this time of year, educators may be interested in tools supporting:
- Classroom Observations
- Artifacts of Practice
- Common Assessments

**Addressing Educational Equity, One Gap at a Time: A Focus on Educator Preparation**

As part of the Educational Equity Professional Learning Network, nine districts are working with ESE to improve students’ access to highly effective educators. In three of these communities—Lawrence Public Schools, the Springfield Empowerment Zone, and UP Academy Network—educators are cultivating deeper partnerships with educator preparation programs to strengthen the pipeline for some of the hardest-to-staff areas.

- **Lawrence Public Schools:** Seeking to develop relationships with 20 providers who certify educators in special education, ESL, and science, and who are prepared to work in high-poverty schools. Goal: increase teaching placements in hard-to-staff areas.
- **Springfield Empowerment Zone:** Looking to partner with providers certifying math and ELA teachers to increase candidates’ awareness of, interest in, and readiness to teach in Empowerment Zone middle schools. Goal: increase candidate pool.
- **UP Network:** Seeking a partner to facilitate development and certification of current staff to become special education and ESL teachers. Goal: improve preparedness and retention of special education and ESL teachers.

Stronger partnerships between districts and preparation programs can have a profound impact on student outcomes, particularly for those who need it most. In addition to the innovative work underway within the Educational Equity PLN, ESE is launching a new phase of work to further support the development of deep and interactive partnerships between districts and preparation programs in Massachusetts. With additional resources provided through the Elevate Preparation: Impact Children (EPIC) grant, ESE has proposed to:
- Bring together districts and preparation programs
- Provide direct support to districts in leveraging preparation as a key strategy in their human capital pipeline
- Pilot replicable, scalable models of induction in two high-needs districts

If you’re interested in developing or strengthening the pipeline of talent in your school or district, ESE has created an advisory that helps districts understand and use available data about the preparation/employment pipeline.

**Call for Bids: Frameworks for Inclusive Practice**

The Department has posted an RFR for the design and implementation of two separate online courses: Frameworks for Inclusive Practice: Administrator and Frameworks for Inclusive Practice: Educator.

More information about the project may be found on the COMMBUYS website.

Please forward along to any talented faculty or web developers in your network!

**Apply to be an Ed Prep Reviewer—Applications due March 2nd!**

Reviewers are responsible for reviewing, analyzing, and evaluating evidence of educator preparation program effectiveness. Together with ESE, reviewers help to guarantee that educator preparation in MA results in effective educators ready to support the success of all students.

Learn more and apply at http://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/reviewers/.
Seeking Educator Feedback on 2011 ELA and Math Curriculum Frameworks for MCAS 2.0

ESE is in the process of upgrading MCAS to better measure the critical thinking skills students need for success in the 21st century. The new test, informally called "MCAS 2.0," will build upon the best aspects of the MCAS assessments that have served the Commonwealth well for the past two decades. The test will include innovative items developed by PARCC, along with new items specifically created to assess the Massachusetts learning standards.

As ESE builds the new assessments, we are seeking the input of educators and community stakeholders from across the state to review the English language arts (ELA) and math standards. To share your thoughts about how to improve the standards, please use our feedback form.

If you have general questions or comments about the MCAS 2.0 project, please email us at MCAS2.0@doe.mass.edu. You can also learn more about the project online.

Reflect, Refine, Repeat: Improving the Evaluation Process

Most districts are in their fourth year of implementing an evaluation system aligned to the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Framework. The goal of the Framework is to promote educator growth and development while keeping student learning at the center of the process. With any new undertaking, it is important to check-in periodically to make sure the effort is driving toward the goal. Districts are encouraged to take stock and reflect on the successes and challenges they have experienced rolling out their evaluation systems:

✓ What’s working? What are the bright spots?
✓ How can we streamline the process to stay focused on professional growth and development?
✓ What do we need to adjust to ensure our system is valuable to educators and students?

The Framework provides many opportunities for districts to customize the process to align to local priorities and reflect the district context. Seizing these opportunities can result in a streamlined evaluation system more able to help educators grow and positively impact student learning.

As a first step, consult educators and evaluators to identify the components of the evaluation process they find most helpful and those they find most cumbersome. Think about ways to accentuate the former and streamline the latter.

• Example: Most districts are using ESE’s model rubrics in their evaluation processes. Many of these districts have prioritized a subset of the rubric elements, using terms like “power elements,” “anchor elements,” or “priority elements.” These elements become shared focal points across the district. In some districts, narrowing the focus helps align the evaluation process to school and district improvement plans. In others, the main benefit is reducing the breadth of evidence that educators and evaluators must collect each cycle, allowing for ongoing dialogue focused on improvement in targeted areas.

To support continuous improvement of evaluation systems, ESE has created a new Quick Reference Guide to share some of the ways districts have streamlined their evaluation systems to make them more meaningful to educators and evaluators.

Resources

Building Prep and District Partnerships: Roles of Supervising Practitioners and Mentors

This two-page document summarizes ideas generated from five regional meetings held in November that brought together educator preparation programs and K-12 districts. We hope it will spur new ideas for how teacher leaders are selected, trained, and supported to serve as supervising practitioners and mentors and catalyze opportunities for collaboration and partnerships across preparation programs and districts.

Updated Model Staff Feedback Surveys

Based on feedback from previous pilots and ESE’s Principal Advisory Cabinets, a small handful of items were adapted or removed.

Revised Training Website

Educator evaluation teacher workshops now include associated video resources.

Updated Model System Guides

In December 2015, ESE revised the following parts of the ESE Model System for Educator Evaluation to reflect updated timelines, new resources, and remove information that was outdated or obsolete:

• Part I: District-Level Planning and Implementation Guide
• Part II: School-Level Planning and Implementation Guide
• Part III: Guide to Rubrics and Model Rubrics for Superintendent, Administrator and Teacher
• Part IV: Model Collective Bargaining Contract Language
• Part VII: Using Staff and Student Feedback in the Evaluation Process
• Comparable revisions to Parts V, VI, and VII will follow in Summer 2016.
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
- Support the social, emotional, and health needs of students and families