Implementation Spotlight: Calibration Training Tool

This month’s Spotlight comes from the Haverhill Public Schools, where district and school leaders have been focusing on evaluator calibration as a critical component of an effective, meaningful evaluation system. In the following reflection piece, school and district leaders reflect on the use of a new, online calibration training tool and the importance of establishing a shared understanding of effective practice and feedback. A special thanks to Assistant Superintendent of Schools Julie Kukenberger, Principal Bruce Michitson, and K-12 Mathematics Supervisor Patty Juranovits for authoring the piece.

The Importance of Calibration

Haverhill Public Schools has approached the work of evaluation and calibration with the mindset of learning and growth for all. Last year we noticed that our use of the evaluation rubric and related tools was inconsistent. We wanted to work collaboratively to improve our content-specific instructional lenses across the curriculum in an effort to ensure that all evaluators were using the evaluation process as a tool for growth.

In August of 2015, we began an “Evaluation Cleanse” process during our summer Leadership Institute. We started by identifying power elements that reflected district-wide priorities for teaching and learning, and the district’s leadership team began a journey to refine the educator evaluation process while calibrating our expectations. We needed to improve the process, our feedback to teachers, and our ability to better support our teachers as we worked to improve our instructional lens across the curriculum, including integration of sheltered-English immersion strategies.

We started by devoting a portion of every Leadership Team meeting to educator effectiveness. Clear objectives were developed and evaluation activities were designed to hone in on specific aspects. Additionally, we developed an intensive 8 hour evaluation course for administrators who had not yet been formally trained. This course focused on deepening administrators’ understanding of the 5-step cycle, identifying criteria for effective feedback, and making connections between the formative assessment process and teacher effectiveness.

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Piloting the Online Calibration Training Tool
During this time, one of our principals, Bruce Michitson, was serving on the ESE Principal Advisory Cabinet. Principal Michitson and others shared the importance of calibration—both within and across districts—with ESE’s Center for Educator Effectiveness, and recommended building a resource that would be available to all districts in support of this work. This past spring, ESE invited districts to participate in a pilot of a new Online Calibration Training Tool. The opportunity aligned well with similar work we were doing at the time, and Principal Michitson brought the opportunity to the assistant superintendent’s attention.

This past spring, we piloted the tool twice with our Leadership Team, a group of 45 principals, assistant principals, department chairs, and other school and district level leaders. During the first meeting, the group watched a video of a classroom lesson, independently assessed the teacher’s practice related to two specific rubric elements on a 10-point scale, and provided the teacher with written feedback, all via an online platform that then presented a visual display of the group’s results in aggregate. The immediacy of the results, as well as statewide comparison data with other districts that were piloting the tool, allowed our Leadership Team to engage in reflective practice around our understanding of the focus elements aligned to the video.

After the first meeting, each member of the Leadership Team repeated the activity on their own, watching a second video and using the calibration tool to evaluate the focus elements for the featured lesson. In depth discussion around the collective results occurred at our next leadership professional learning opportunity.

Reflecting on What We Learned
The overall feedback from the team has been positive, and it is clear that this tool will be a valuable, user-friendly resource to support the ongoing district focus on improving the educator evaluation process. The 10-point scale allowed us to have a discussion around our understanding of observed instructional practice, and there was agreement that this allowed a degree of flexibility that better reflected the evaluator’s judgment. As a team, we were pleased that our ratings were well calibrated in several areas. This affirmed the hard work and effort we had dedicated to improving evaluator consistency in our district. When ratings were not in sync, the tool provided an opportunity to have in-depth conversations regarding the interpretation of specific elements in the educator evaluation rubric, which allowed us to better calibrate our own impressions of high quality practice. We are looking forward to continually using the ESE Online Calibration Tool once it is released this summer.

Opportunity: Apply for the Student Teaching Partnership Consortium
This consortium is focused on improving how we recruit, develop and retain teachers in Massachusetts to ensure the long-term sustainability of our teaching workforce. We’re looking for districts to apply individually or in partnership with an educator preparation organization. Members of the Consortium will spend one year in a professional learning network to promote high-quality training, development, and support of teacher candidates through well-coordinated student teaching placements. More information, along with the application (due August 1st), is available online.

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We also expanded our District Evaluation Committee (initially established during the 2014-15 school year and comprised of administrators, union representation, and teachers) to include teachers from every grade level. The monthly meetings have since focused on developing a collaborative relationship between evaluators and educators, fostering consistency with evaluation practices across the district, and promoting clarity of the process.

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Look for its statewide release next month on the calibration webpage.

Coming in August
During the 2015-16 school year, members of ESE’s Teacher and Principal Advisory Cabinets developed short, targeted resources filled with their advice on topics of interest to educators. Final resources will be published in the August edition of the newsletter focused on:

- reflecting on high quality feedback for educator growth
- using student and staff feedback to improve educator practice
- making professional development meaningful

Deadline Extended—Apply for ESE’s Teacher and Principal Advisory Cabinets by August 1st
Members of ESE’s Teacher and Principal Advisory Cabinets provide crucial feedback and input on ESE policies and resources! Members increase their knowledge of state education policies, build relationships with educators across the state, and position themselves as go-to resources and leaders in their districts. Additionally, members will work closely with ESE staff on a year-long project aligned with a key educator effectiveness initiative. Apply at www.tinyurl.com/2016Cabinets. Applications are open to all district and charter school teachers and school-based administrators.

You can also read about members’ experiences in a recent issue of Teachers’ Top Three and learn more about the Cabinets and watch a short video featured on page three in the April newsletter.
Submitting the 2015-16 Induction and Mentoring Report

On June 16th, districts received a link to complete the 2015-16 Induction and Mentoring Report. This link was emailed to the designated Induction and Mentoring Contacts (or the superintendent if no contact was designated in Directory Administration) from EducatorDevelopment@doe.mass.edu.

The report is intended to provide ESE with a broad understanding of the induction and mentoring activities in place to support educators across the Commonwealth. Although not a new requirement, this is the first year the report is being collected through an electronic survey (reporting requirements are outlined in 603 CMR 7.12(3)).

The goals of the annual report are to:
1. Encourage district reflection on current induction and mentoring practices so districts may identify strengths and areas for further development;
2. Provide ESE with data so the agency can identify promising induction and mentoring practices to share across districts and understand areas where the agency can provide additional supports and resources to districts.

Districts must complete the report by July 31st. Prior to beginning the electronic report, districts should first download the sample report to review the contents, gather necessary data, and prepare responses so they are easy to enter into the electronic report. The electronic report must be completed in one sitting, districts are unable to enter partial information and return later. The electronic report is intended to be completed in less than one hour. When reporting data, districts should only include data from the 2015-16 school year.

Look for a statewide summary of the report findings in the August newsletter! For questions or to request a copy of the report link for your district email EducatorDevelopment@doe.mass.edu.

Instructional Support Newsletter

Longtime readers will remember that when we launched this newsletter in February 2013, it was called the “Educator Evaluation Newsletter,” and served the primary purpose of disseminating new resources and best practices related to the rollout of the MA Educator Evaluation Framework. Last August, we expanded the focus and changed the title to the “Educator Effectiveness Newsletter” in order to bring you content related to additional aspects of educator effectiveness. We are ready to broaden our horizons once again.

Our August edition will mark the first Instructional Support Newsletter. In addition to the content you’ve come to expect related to evaluation, preparation, licensure, induction and mentoring, and educator recognition, we will feature articles about ESE’s initiatives and projects related to curriculum and instruction and meeting the needs of all learners. The Instructional Support Newsletter will continue to support our goal of every student having access to an excellent education.

Ambassadors for Equitable & Inclusive Practice

This fall, ESE will partner with the Massachusetts Organization of Educational Collaboratives and both statewide principals’ associations to coordinate and conduct visits among Massachusetts principals and Equitable & Inclusive Practice Ambassadors. Composed of current and former principals, teachers, and other educational leaders, this team of Ambassadors will share resources and strategies to help building principals promote equitable and inclusive practices in their schools. For example, the Ambassadors will share information about a new grant designed to support innovative partnerships between districts and educator preparation organizations; a district-created interactive planner that helps districts assess and plan for distributing leadership; and information about a free online course on the Foundations for Inclusive Practice.

ESE’s partnership with these Ambassadors is a component of the Massachusetts State Equity Plan to promote equitable access to excellent educators for all students. For more information, contact the executive director of your local Educational Collaborative.

Recap: ESE’s Spring Convening 2016

On May 16 and 17th, ESE’s hosted the fourth annual Spring Convening: Expanding Opportunities for Every Child, Every Educator and Every School. Representatives from approximately 150 districts and collaboratives along with 33 educator preparation programs attended.

The Department is grateful to Franklin High School whose Jazz Band kicked things off on Monday and whose students provided artwork to display throughout the convening and the Worcester Public Schools, which contributed student artwork for Tuesday morning. ESE would also like to thank all of the presenters, particularly Liz Garden, principal of Florence Roche School in Groton, who was the keynote speaker Monday, and Techla Connolly, a middle school English language arts/history teacher in Revere, who was the keynote speaker Tuesday. Their remarks and other materials from the convening are available online.
Contact Us!

Contact the Educator Evaluation Team at EducatorEvaluation@doe.mass.edu or individual team members:

Claire Abbott
Matt Holloway
Kat Johnston (currently on maternity leave)
Simone Lynch
Ron Noble
Craig Waterman

Contact the Educator Development Team at EducatorDevelopment@doe.mass.edu.

Contact the Educator Preparation and Assessment Team at EdPrep@doe.mass.edu.

Contact the Office of Educator Licensure at 781-338-6600 (Monday-Friday 9am-12pm & 2pm-5pm).

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