

# Collecting Evidence of Teaching and Learning

How can educators and evaluators collect evidence of teaching and learning in a way that promotes meaningful feedback and growth in culturally responsive practice?

As educators strive to meet students' academic and social-emotional learning needs after two unprecedented school years, the educator evaluation process provides an opportunity to support, recognize, and develop an educator's practice through meaningful feedback.

This is made possible when educator evaluation is implemented in a way that centers student outcomes, engages educators as partners, and leverages multiple, holistic sources of evidence to more fully understand educators' strengths and areas for growth.

This resource provides recommendations and strategies for educators and evaluators to promote culturally responsive practice through the evidence collection process and to consider evidence not as separate from the work of teaching and leading, but as an important piece of ongoing reflection and continuous improvement during a time of collective learning, innovation, and refinement.

The following pages include key considerations, best practices, and resources on:

This resource can be used alongside other [Educator Evaluation Implementation Resources](#), including:

- Focus Indicators for Teachers and Administrators
- Self-Assessment and Goal-Setting Tools
- Adapted Feedback Surveys

Recommendations are consistent with the regulatory framework. However, districts should examine alignment to collective bargaining agreements as needed.

**CLICK**

ON A SECTION  
TO GET STARTED

- [Collecting Evidence of Teaching and Learning](#)
- [Observations & Feedback](#)
- [Student, Staff & Family Feedback](#)
- [Student Learning Measures](#)

*In the 2020-21 school year, DESE partnered with educators on the Teacher and Principal Advisory Cabinets to learn more about how educator evaluation can help support more anti-racist, culturally responsive schools for educators and students. Their recommendations are included throughout this resource.*

# Collecting Evidence of Teaching and Learning

Evidence collection is a collaborative effort between the evaluator and the educator.

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

- **Collaboratively identify authentic sources of evidence based on educator’s goals and Focus Indicators** that will be *most meaningful or informative* relative to the educator’s goals and identified Focus Indicators. Educators and focus on quality over quantity, recognizing that one piece of evidence could demonstrate multiple aspects of an educator’s practice.
- **Look beyond observations** and include evidence from a wide *variety* of sources, including [student and family feedback](#). Given the fact that many aspects of an educator’s practice, including relationship-building, social-emotional support and engagement with families, may be less readily observable, there is a necessity for an increased emphasis on a holistic collection of evidence. Potential sources of evidence could include (but are not limited to):

### Sample sources of evidence for TEACHERS

- Student and family feedback from surveys, end-of-lesson reflections, or informal conversations
- A teaching cycle including an assignment, sample student work and teacher feedback
- A video-recorded lesson with teacher reflections
- Lesson plans developing students’ cultural competence or sociopolitical awareness
- Examples of adjustments to practice based on student assessment, student feedback, or peer-to-peer feedback
- Artifacts related to building relationships with students and families in service of supporting social-emotional learning, student well-being, and cultivating an anti-racist, culturally responsive environment.

### Sample sources of evidence for ADMINISTRATORS

- Staff, student, and family feedback from surveys, one-on-one conversations, or small group discussions
- A coaching cycle of pre-conference, observation, feedback, and reflection
- Artifacts of collaboration with other administrators
- Professional learning offerings responsive to the teaching and learning needs of this year
- Differentiated induction and mentoring supports for new teachers
- Examples of ongoing, culturally responsive family communications
- Artifacts related to supporting staff’s social-emotional well-being and an anti-racist, culturally responsive environment.

[Note: The list above includes examples of evidence aligned to Focus Indicators. It is meant to guide—not prescribe—the collection of evidence, and should not be considered comprehensive, nor should an educator or evaluator attempt to gather all the examples.]

- **Recognize and mitigate bias.** Collecting and analyzing specific evidence helps ensure that feedback is grounded in actual practice, rather than perception. An evaluator must be mindful of the biases they bring to the interpretation of, and judgments around, evidence and work to mitigate them in the evaluation process.

# Observations and Feedback

Observations of educator practice provide an opportunity to see teaching and learning in action and provide supportive coaching and feedback.

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

➤ Prioritize **relationship-building and communication** by co-creating systems for observation and feedback with educators.

✔ Invest in solidifying relationships and communication with educators to understand how best to provide meaningful support and feedback given the ongoing challenges inherent in this school year.

✔ Plan for announced observations where the evaluator and educator can mutually agree on lessons for observation and focus areas for feedback.

✔ Consider frequent, informal visits as they can lower the stakes of an individual observation as well as normalize the evaluator's presence for students.

Observing **video-recorded lessons**, in addition to live instruction, may be a supportive approach to conducting observations for both educators and evaluators (Kane et al., 2020):

- The educator can choose a specific lesson for feedback,
- The evaluator has more flexibility around when to observe and provide feedback, and
- The educator and evaluator can co-watch and discuss the lesson together.

Consult local requirements around securing student/caregiver permissions and ensuring video security and confidentiality.

➤ **Keep educator voice at the center of the process** by soliciting input in advance on a specific focus for the observation and feedback and to gain additional context on the lesson and classroom learning environment.

✔ Establish ongoing cycles of observation, feedback, and support aligned to Focus Indicators and educators' goals and desired areas for support.

✔ Ask the educator about what came before and after the observation to contextualize the purpose and impact of observed practice. (For teachers, what direct instruction took place? What student work followed? For leaders, what systems or expectations were in place?)

✔ Calibrate around what the observer may expect to see or hear in the observation and discuss elements of practice that may be less readily observable. For example:

- *What should the observer look for with regards to student engagement in this particular class?*
- *What observable evidence might there be of the classroom agreements for the learning environment?*
- *What aspects of the students' cultures, identities, or interests helped shape this lesson?*

✔ Routinely seek out educator feedback on their experience with the observation and feedback cycle, and make adjustments accordingly.

*"There's often a mentality of 'if we didn't see it, it didn't happen,' so teachers would need multiple chances and ways of demonstrating effectiveness."*

Member, DESE Teacher & Principal Advisory Cabinet

# Observations and Feedback [CONTINUED]

Observations of educator practice provide an opportunity to see teaching and learning in action and provide supportive coaching and feedback.

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

*"We all absorb and internalize prejudices that influence our automatic actions and beliefs. The absorption of these biases is not a conscious process and in fact, can run counter to what we think we believe. Framing our work with the concept of unconscious racial bias allows us to decouple intention from racism. It allows us to focus on what's most important: the impact on students."*  
Excerpt from *Unconscious Bias in Schools* by Tracey A. Benson and Sarah E. Fiarman

## MITIGATING BIAS IN OBSERVATIONS

*Engaging in anti-bias, anti-racist practice is lifelong work and requires sustained learning and reflection.*

### IN INDIVIDUAL OBSERVATIONS

**Before:** Have a conversation to get a sense of the educator's goals, priorities, and needs. Co-create and share a set of 'what to look for' criteria to guide subsequent observations.

**During:** Write down observations, not judgments, about what you notice during the lesson, focusing on the 'what to look for' criteria and educator goals.

**After:** Have a collaborative conversation with the educator, providing specific feedback on their goal(s) and evidence of student learning.

### IN ONGOING PRACTICE

**Reflect on ways your bias will show up in observations:** What are your instructional (or leadership) preferences? What culture-specific notions or assumptions do you have about what good practice can or should look like?

**Extend grace and humility:** Keep in mind that many factors, such as mental and physical well-being and formal power dynamics, will play a role in how the observer and the educator show up in observations and pre- and post-conversations.

**Reflect on your feedback over time:** Are there patterns along lines of gender, race, ethnicity, content area, etc.?

## RESOURCES:

### [Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading](#)

DESE | *Guidance and resources on culturally responsive practice*

### [Online Platform for Teaching and Informed Calibration \(OPTIC\)](#)

DESE | *Upload videos and other artifacts of practice, or use the 100+ videos in the platform, to support calibration around practice and feedback.*

### [Implicit Bias Test](#)

Project Implicit | *A free online test assessing implicit associations and biases.*

### [Classroom Observation Tool](#)

Coalition of Essential Schools | *Protocols for pre- and post-observation conversations.*

### [Principal Supervisor School Visit Protocols](#)

DESE | *A 10-step process for conducting meaningful and effective school visits.*

[Can video technology improve teacher evaluations?](#) Kane, et al. 2020. *Education Finance & Policy*, 15(3), 297-427

# Student, Staff, and Family Feedback

Feedback from students, staff, and families provides valuable information about teaching and learning, as well as insights into culturally responsive practices that can be used to inform and strengthen practice going forward.

*“The Model System needs to have more opportunities for input/feedback from voices other than the evaluator. This would open the system up to promote educator growth and not just be a conversation between ‘boss’ and ‘employee.’”*

Member, DESE Teacher & Principal Advisory Cabinet

- Create systems and routines to **collect student feedback on an ongoing basis, in a variety of ways**, on their experiences. Student feedback is critical to delivering and supporting culturally relevant and responsive instruction and better understanding the impact of teaching practice on students’ learning experiences.
  - ✔ In addition to formal surveys, student feedback can come from exit tickets, reflections on daily lessons, polling, virtual “chats” or discussion boards, and other informal methods.
  - ✔ Student feedback, and educators’ reflections on that feedback, is an important source of evidence about an educator’s practice. Student feedback can help inform, among other areas:
    - *Are students receiving the supports they need to access grade-level instruction? (I-A Curriculum and Planning)*
    - *Do students feel safe, supported, and engaged in the classroom? (II-B Learning Environment)*
    - *Are diverse backgrounds, identities, strengths, and challenges respected and affirmed? (II-D Cultural Proficiency)*
    - *Do students feel that their voice is heard in classroom decision-making? (IV-A Reflection)*
- **Ask families for their feedback** to gain insight into their values and priorities for this school year, better understand the cultural strengths that they and their children bring to the learning and identify how to adjust practice. Seeking to better understand and be responsive to families helps to form a mutually beneficial partnership and strengthens teaching and learning.
  - ✔ Provide families with accessible and varied options for providing input (e.g., in-person conversations, video calls, texts, or emails; materials translated into home languages).
  - ✔ Recognize that families have different approaches to and comfort levels with providing feedback to educators. By prioritizing relationships, interrogating biases, and being responsive, educators can create space for all families to engage in the ways that are most meaningful and supportive to them.

## RESOURCES:

### [Adapted Model Feedback Surveys](#)

DESE | A K-2 discussion protocol, student surveys for grades 3-5 and 6-12, and a staff survey aligned to the Focus Indicators.

### [Quick Reference Guide: Engaging Families through Educator Evaluation](#)

DESE | *Using family input to support continued growth and development toward culturally responsive, equitable teaching and leading.*

### [Strengthening Partnerships: A Framework for Prenatal through Young Adulthood Family Engagement in Massachusetts](#)

MA Family Engagement Coalition | *A roadmap for practitioners and families in health, human services, and education*

### [Academic Partnering Toolkit for Teachers](#)

Flamboyant Foundation | *Practices, tips, and tools supporting academic partnering with families.*

# Student Learning Measures

An educator's impact on student learning should be analyzed across multiple measures with particular attention to students' progression toward meeting grade-level content standards.

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

- **Identify the most appropriate assessments** to be used to assess student progress toward grade-level content standards and an educator's impact on that learning.
  - ✔ Where available, statewide assessment data is an important source of information for understanding student learning needs across content areas, grade-levels and schools.
  - ✔ Student learning measures may also include district-wide common assessments, classroom assessments, or other measures as set by the district.
  - ✔ Start with curriculum-embedded assessments from high-quality instructional materials, which often include curriculum-specific strategies to adapt and adjust instruction to accelerate student learning.
  - ✔ Consider the sources of student learning data that will be *most timely, relevant and actionable* in supporting student learning of grade-level standards.
    - In Mathematics, gauge prior learning throughout the year rather than frontloading at the beginning and avoid assessments without a clear purpose or intended target.
    - In K-3 Literacy, screen for a range of foundational skills to identify areas where targeted instruction is necessary. In secondary grades, use high-quality, short assessments to identify which students have reading comprehension and writing skills below grade level and the type of intervention required.
- Determine **anticipated student gains**. What are the expectations for student performance on this assessment?
  - ✔ Identify the supports and scaffolds needed to maintain and support grade-level expectations. Avoid over-remediation of previous grade-level learning, as this may exacerbate existing inequities.
  - ✔ Maintain an asset-based, rather than deficit-based, approach. What strengths do students bring to their learning this year, and how can educators best leverage those strengths to support their growth?

*"Educators need to have a strategic approach to collecting and using diagnostic data this year, so that they're diagnosing only the highest priority prerequisite knowledge and skills "just in time" throughout the school year. They will need to constantly know where they stand against clear goals for accelerating student learning for all students."*  
Academic Excellence Roadmap (2021)

## RESOURCES:

[3 Principles for Assessments During Instructional Recovery and Beyond](#)

Achievement Network | *Recommendations for collecting and using student data.*

[Early Literacy Screening Assessments](#)

DESE | *Guidance on universal screening and approved literacy screening assessments.*