May 2015

On Track with Evaluator Capacity: Promising Examples from Massachusetts Schools

<image of ESE logo> <image of Educator Effectiveness logo>

Enter <arrow button image>

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Thank you to the members of the Professional Learning Network (PLN) for Supporting Evaluator Capacity. We value your team’s thoughtful approach and collegiality. Your steadfast dedication towards your students, schools, and communities is noteworthy!

<Image of the Massachusetts State map with school districts marked as follows>

Berkshire Hills Regional School District, Erving School Union 28, Greater Lawrence Technical School (GLTS), Hadley Public Schools, Marblehead Community Charter Public School (MCCPS), Monson Public Schools, Northbridge Public Schools, Weymouth Public Schools

The PLN for Supporting Evaluator Capacity is assisted by the Educator Evaluation Team: **Ronald Noble Jr.** – Manager, Educator Evaluation; **Matthew Holloway** – Educator Effectiveness Specialist; **Craig Waterman** – Assessment Coordinator

***A Message from the Team:*** We encourage evaluator teams to use this guide to 1. Be inspired 2. Take action. We have worked closely with the PLN to document he progress they have made, capturing it in an abridged and self-directed way.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to our team for technical assistance or to share your own positive insight and experiences. EducatorEvaluation@doe.mass.edu

**THE EVALUATOR CAPACITY PLN STORY**

**MAP** Us this map to follow different pathways by theme or by district.

**CULTURE** Perceptions of the Framework influence the attitudes and behavior of educators.

**EFFICIENCY** Implementing the Framework in a cohesive and timely way.

**QUALITY** Completing the Framework results in high-caliber assessments and plans for improvement.

**OTHER AREAS** Workload, Delivery Approach, and Cross-Site Visits.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS** Learn about the district’s key takeaways from the PLN experience.

**ON TRACK WITH EVALUATOR CAPACITY – THE MAP**

Click on the “stops” to explore how each district or school tackled evaluator capacity. NOTE: Each district or school has provided artifacts on their process. Access the artifacts on the following pages, or visit the complete list on the Educator Evaluation website.

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/pln/>

<Image of Evaluator Capacity map with school districts as X axis and Culture, Efficiency, and Quality as Y axis>

Key Takeaways; Other Areas of Focus

WORKLOAD; DELIVERY APPROACH; CROSS-SITE VISITS

**HADLEY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

[www.hadleyschools.org](http://www.hadleyschools.org)

<Image of the Massachusetts State map with Hadley marked.>

Rural public school district in Hampshire County. Level 2 District.

Students: 620

Schools: 2

Educators: 63

Evaluators: 4

**Quote –** “We designed a survey that captured teacher's feedback on what was helpful and what was unclear. This allowed us to make adjustments and improve implementation." – Anne McKenzie, EdD, Superintendent

**Problem:** Hadley Public Schools found that the new Evaluation Framework, although well designed, was becoming an overwhelming, incoherent initiative of disparate activities. This was inducing anxiety and stress, rather than encouraging educators to feel more effective.

**Solution:** Educators must have ownership over the evaluation process and be active (if not the lead) participants in the process. By creating a logical user guide for implementing educator evaluation, educators will experience the new evaluation system as meaningful and supportive. They will also feel connected to other school and district efforts to improve teaching and learning.

**STEPS**

1. **Identify areas of concern.**The Hadley Educator Evaluation Team met in the fall to discuss issues, concerns, and questions staff had about the new system and the current status of implementation. These concerns informed the questions we posed to Monson Public Schools, which we were paired with for our cross-site visit for the PLN. These issues also framed our approach to the user guide we were planning to create.
2. **Draft a user guide.**One of the main areas of anxiety revolved around the fact that teachers did not have a simple and straightforward guide for educator evaluation. Several times during the past couple of years, teachers relied on the members of the Teacher Evaluation Committee to explain the steps of the process (goals, assessment, evidence, etc.). Therefore, we wanted a document that was logical and helpful for all educators to use during the evaluation process. We drafted a guide that met these needs and sought feedback from the faculty.
3. **Create a staff survey.**In order to continue the conversation about how teacher evaluation is meaningful, we designed a survey to get feedback on implementation of the educator evaluation system. This would also inform the user guide. The questions identified areas where educators still felt uncertain or dissatisfied with the process. Specifically, they were able to share what was helpful, what they wanted to change, and if they felt that they had ownership over the process. Then, we administered the survey in April. We included survey results as part of the Superintendent’s feedback in her evaluation from the school committee.
4. **Review survey results with Educator Evaluation Team.**The team reviewed survey results in order to recommend professional development topics to the district-wide Professional Development Committee. It also offered an opportunity to make adjustments and improve implementation of the framework.
5. **Annually review guide with faculty.**The team will review the guide with the entire faculty at the beginning of the 2015-2016 school year, as we plan to start off a new year of implementing educator evaluation.

**Reflections:** Throughout the PLN process, we focused on how to collect meaningful artifacts and evidence and how to keep educators actively engaged in evaluation rather than passive participants. We learned what we were doing well and what we needed to work on both anecdotally and through formal staff surveys. We also discovered how important it is to:

* Communicate with faculty
* Get staff feedback
* Create tools to support the process

**Artifacts**: Click to view in full detail.

<Image of Teacher Evaluation Handbook. <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/pln/Hadley-TeacherEvalHandbook.pdf> Image of Teacher Feedback Survey. <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/pln/Hadley-TeacherFeedbackSurvey.pdf> >

**District PLN Members**

**Jason Burns**, History Department Chair Hopkins Academy; **April Camuso**, English Department Chair Hopkins Academy; **Connie Douglas**, Physical Education Teacher Hadley Elementary School; **Jack Horrigan**, School Psychologist Hadley Public Schools; **Anne McKenzie**, Superintendent Hadley Public Schools; **Jeffrey Udall**, Principal Hadley Elementary School.

<Button to download the complete story on Hadley> <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/pln/Hadley-Narrative.pdf>

**GREATER LAWRENCE TECHNICAL SCHOOL**

[www.glts.net](http://www.glts.net)

<Image of the Massachusetts State map with school location marked.>

Urban public vocational technical high school in Essex County. Level 1 School.

Students: 1352

Schools: 1

Educators: 170

Evaluators: 10

**Quote -** "Setting expectations and getting the right people at the table for our evaluation committee has allowed us to make a big impact on our system." – Paul Mears, Assistant Principal

**Problem:** In 2013/2014 the Evaluation Oversight Committee (EOC) did not meet regularly. It also operated with diminished authority due to an agreement that a full union vote would be required for any language changes in the evaluation agreement.

Some of the work done by the EOC to make the evaluation system more efficient was dismantled as a result of negotiations associated with the renewal of the teacher contract. A solution was needed to support evaluator capacity, meet the goals of improving trust, and distributing broad understanding of the evaluation process.

**Solution:**  To meet the goals of improving trust and creating a better understanding of the evaluation process, GLTS reestablished the EOC to lead change and improvement in the evaluation system.

Greater Lawrence Technical School (GLTS) uses the following three teams to lead change:

* **Instructional Leadership Team** (comprised of faculty and management) – Tasked with the establishment of an instructional system that meets improvement goals.
* **Evaluation Oversight Committee** (comprised of faculty and management) – Tasked with establishing the evaluation system that supports instructional improvement.
* **Educational Administrative Team** (comprised of supervisors) – Tasked with evaluating the effectiveness of educators.

**STEPS**

1. **Set committee expectations**
The EOC voted to increase its membership to generate an increase in faculty input, and committed to more frequent meetings. To meet this challenge, several of these meeting have been held at 6:30 a.m. Six meetings have been held to date.
2. **Improve faculty communication**
The EOC committed to improving faculty communication, support and empowerment for all aspects of evaluation system.
3. **Make decisions and maintain the momentum**
Now that the committee was meeting more frequently, we made strides on a number of items:

• The Massachusetts Model Survey (educator feedback survey administered through Panorama) was analyzed and recommended for implementation.

• Teacher feedback on supervisor practices in evaluation was discussed. The analysis led to providing supervisors with improved guidance for writing evaluation reports; they are structured in a consistent way from supervisor to supervisor, giving clear verbal and written feedback and better defining unannounced observations.

• A system for reporting district-determined measures (DDMs) was identified and implemented.

• Proposed DDMs were analyzed, accepted, and recommended for union and school committee approval.

• Contractual/MOU language to accompany DDMs and the proposed educator feedback survey system was requested from the AFT representative.

• The process for submitting evidence for educator evaluation was designed and training was delivered to new educators. Veteran educators will soon be trained.

• Agreement was reached to create a simple evaluation manual to improve understanding, teamwork, and efficiency.

• In March 2014, two members of the EOC, who are also members of the teachers’ union, presented a proposal (which was accepted) for DDMs and educator feedback to the union.

**REFLECTIONS:** The original challenges of the EOC have diminished. By increasing teacher participation, increasing the frequency of meetings, and committing to supporting faculty, the GLTS EOC has become a driving force for change each step of the way.

**Artifacts**: Click to view in full detail.

<Image of Integrating Evaluation and Curriculum PPT. <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/pln/GLTS-IntegrateEvalCurriculum.pdf> Image of Flow Chart. <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/pln/GLTS-EvaluationProcess.pdf> Image of Examples of Practice. <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/pln/GLTS-EffectivePractices.pdf> >

**School PLN Members**

**David Cyr**, Teacher, GLTS; **Elizabeth Freedman**, Principal, GLTS; **Gregory Haas**, Assistant Principal, GLTS; **Paul Mears**, Assistant Principal, GLTS; **Helen Sullivan**, Teacher, GLTS; **Susan Zielinski**, Teacher, GLTS.

<Button to download the complete story on GLTS> <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/pln/GLTS-Narrative.pdf>

**MONSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

[www.monsonschools.com](http://www.monsonschools.com)

<Image of the Massachusetts State map with Monson marked.>

 Suburban public school district in Hampden County. Level 3 District.

Students: 1094

Schools: 3

Educators: 105

Evaluators: 7

**Quote –** "The energy and insight produced when we work collegially to improve our teaching practice is undeniable. The impact that this has for our students' learning is limitless." – Katherine B. Watts, Director of Curriculum

**Problem:** In previous years, we have experienced a *perceived* lack of continuity and consistency with the Educator Evaluation System and its implementation. High evaluator turnover and general lack of teachers’ buy-in have hindered the process. It was clear to us that we needed to foster more trust between teachers and evaluators.

**Solution:** We first built an Educator Evaluation Support Team (the group that was part of the PLN) to help streamline the evaluation process. The team developed a professional development (PD) program that enhanced teachers’ understanding of the evaluation tool and its impact on student learning outcomes. The team also focused on administrative calibration of goals and walk-through feedback.

**STEPS**

1. **Conduct a needs assessment.**The team developed a needs assessment survey (for teachers) to gather information for planning useful PD on evaluation. The survey included questions about feedback, TeachPoint, evidence collection, and more.
2. **Develop a plan.**Based on the needs assessment results, we developed a PD plan and program that provided information and training related to the Educator Evaluation System. The data suggested that we focus on the following:
	* Evidence collection and examining the rubric
	* Establishing goals and objectives using data
	* Using TeachPoint effectively
3. **Implement inclusive PD.**We wanted to make the PD as inviting and accessible as possible. We dedicated the month of March to the program – calling it “March Madness” – and offered sessions on different days and times to provide multiple opportunities for attending. We promoted it through a calendar posted around school and by email. We also offered the attendees weekly prizes, related to educator development. Sessions were designed using Principles of Adult Learning and allowed educators to reflect within the lens of their own practice using case study examples.

What made this unique among other offerings is that this particular PD was developed and co-facilitated by the Support Team and eight other teachers from across the district. Teachers stepped forward to share their own experiences and best practices. So far, both anecdotal and formal feedback (using post-PD surveys) on March Madness has been overwhelmingly positive!
4. **Refine the process.**PD is not the only solution to the building of trust between evaluators and educators; we still plan to enhance other offerings for all participants. We are working on strengthening the mentor program to ensure support for new teacher evaluation. In addition, we’re adjusting walk-through forms, creating equity in observations, and creating a district guidebook for consistent expectations. We’ve also worked with EDi on a delivery consultation to understand our strengths and weaknesses with implementing evaluation.

**REFLECTIONS:** We have received positive feedback from teachers and support from the Superintendent. Teachers are having richer conversations about professional growth and in turn strengthening our district-wide rigor to enhance evaluator capacity. We have learned that:

* Check-ins with teachers and evaluators must be done on an on-going basis, both formally through surveys and informally through conversations.
* Relationship building between evaluators and teachers is a continuous process. Give teachers an opportunity to take the lead in PD!
* Streamlining the forms, observations, and process takes time, but is something we need to enrich our culture of evaluation.

**Artifacts**: Click to view in full detail.

<Image of Needs Assessment Results. <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/pln/Monson-NeedsAssessResults.pdf> Image of PD Tools. <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/pln/Monson-mmTools.pdf> Image of Evaluation Results. <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/pln/Monson-mmEvalResults.pdf> >

**District PLN Members**

**Jennifer Beaudry**, Principal Quarry Hill Community School; **Colette Bidus**, Special Education Teacher Quarry Hill Community School; **Amanda Nobbs**, ELA Teacher-Grade 5 Granite Valley Middle School; **Katherine Watts**, Director of Curriculum Monson Public Schools; **Ronie Webster**, Spanish Teacher, Monson High School.

<Button to download the complete story on Monson> <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/pln/Monson-Narrative.pdf>

**WEYMOUTH PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

[www.weymouthschools.org](http://www.weymouthschools.org)

<Image of the Massachusetts State map with Weymouth marked.>

Suburban public school district in Norfolk County. Level 3 District.

Students: 6721

Schools: 12

Educators: 529

Evaluators: 31

**Quote –** "Our team was empowered to address underlying problems through targeting, improving some of the smaller and more manageable components of the system and engaging in honest dialog." – Maggie Murphy, CFCE Coordinator

**Problem:** We recognized a need to decrease anxiety and address questions regarding the structural components of the new teacher evaluation system. In completing our second year of our new educator evaluation system, we would like to see less energy devoted to “figuring out” the system and more effort allotted to self-reflection, progress monitoring, and effective feedback.

**Solution:** The evaluation system requirements need to be communicated through a streamlined and easily referenced format. We decided to create “quick look” documents that would be available to all participants in the system through the district website in the Spring of 2015 and distributed as hardcopies in the Fall of 2015. In addition, continuous training needed to be provided to the evaluators to increase their level of comfort with the new system and target calibration across the 12 schools.

**STEPS**

1. **Framework visual.**We developed a “Tree” visual to communicate the framework, purpose, and philosophy that drive the evaluation system. This visual includes our mission statement for the evaluation system, representation of the growth process, and the components that support the individual’s growth.
2. **Timeline visual.**We developed a “quick look” timeline that highlights all deadlines during the evaluation process. This reference would decrease time and effort devoted finding the dates embedded in the contract and eliminate the frustration associated with this work.
3. **Evidence suggestion visual.**We developed a “quick look” evidence suggestion visual to decrease questions around what is appropriate evidence. This visual will support teachers in identifying classroom strategies that they already use that can support their evaluations.
4. **Teachers 21 training.**We offered Teachers 21 training to all new administrators in the district and any that felt they could benefit from a refresher. The training focused on the evaluator’s capacity to produce effective feedback that was uniform across the many schools and departments.

**REFLECTIONS:** Our participation in the PLN has produced both intended and unintended products. In looking back on the experience, we have grown from the open dialog. Without the neutral forum that the PLN provided, in which administrators and membership leaders could communicate and solve problems, our tangible products would not have been created. We would also have continued in a cycle of devoting energy to “busy work” versus effective reflection and feedback.

Our decision to be honest with each other regarding our frustrations has led to understanding the resource deficits that will continually plague the effectiveness of our evaluation system. While this experience has increased our capacity to optimize the impact with the resources currently available, we will need to continue engagement and communication with district and town leaders regarding the under-resourced system. An unintended product of this experience is that we can engage in these discussions with a united voice.

Overall, our experience with the PLN has resulted in time-saving tools for participants and a baseline of knowledge for evaluators. It has helped us decrease the frustration associated with the busy work of the new educator evaluation system and created an environment which enabled honest dialog. The PLN team was empowered to address underlying problems through targeting, improving some of the smaller and more manageable components of the system, and engaging in honest dialog. We look forward to using the “quick look” tools for this upcoming year’s evidence and evaluation deadlines.

**Artifacts**: Click to view in full detail.

<Image of Timeline. <http://www.weymouthschools.org/sites/weymouthps/files/u3396/ed_eval_timeline.pdf> Image of Evidence Suggestions. <http://www.weymouthschools.org/sites/weymouthps/files/u3396/evaluation_evidence_suggestions.pdf> Image of Tree of Growth. <http://www.weymouthschools.org/sites/weymouthps/files/u3396/updated_tree_lo-res.pdf> >

**District PLN Members**

**Peter Haviland**, High School Principal Weymouth High School; **Susan Kustka**, Assistant Superintendent for Admin & Personnel Weymouth Public Schools; **Maggie Murphy**, CFCE Coordinator Johnson Early Childhood Center; **Joan Woodward**, Administrator for Special Education Weymouth Public Schools.

<Button to download the complete story on Weymouth> <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/pln/Weymouth-Narrative.pdf>

**ERVING SCHOOL UNION #28**

[www.union28.org](http://www.union28.org)

<Image of the Massachusetts State map with Erving marked.>

Rural public school district in Franklin County. Level 2 District.

Students: 579

Schools: 4

Educators: 98

Evaluators: 4

**Quote –** "As we look at the professional culture elements of the Teacher Rubric, developing teacher capacity for observation, reflection, and feedback is vital." – Margot Lacey, Principal, Leverett Elementary School

**Problem:** How do we, as administrators, carry forward the suggestions and recommendations that are made in the write-ups following classroom observations, as well as those made in the formative and summative evaluations? This issue is particularly challenging when we are tracking dozens of staff.

**Solution:** We did not want to construct a system that created MORE work for administrators. We were looking to support our positive and thoughtful conversations with staff in a manner that underscored our interest in improving their practice. A suggestion or recommendation that was followed up on sent the message that the suggestion had value and needed further action. A “one and done” approach for a suggestion communicated not only the lack of value of that statement, but a diminished sense of purpose and focus for the entire evaluation.

**STEPS**

1. The administrative team (made up of the four building principals, the special education director and the superintendent) agreed that we could improve the evaluation system by closing the circle of suggestions/ recommendations, discussion, and action, by creating a system whereby those suggestions and recommendations had greater visibility than the one-time statement in an observation or evaluation.
2. The individual principals experimented with spreadsheets and lists during their fall observations to ascertain the effectiveness of carrying forward this information.
3. We discussed our experiences at administrative meetings – the consensus was that these systems created more work, were time consuming, hard to manage…and not worth the effort.
4. One principal volunteered to work with the company that manages the educator evaluation software in an effort to design a more efficient system.
5. By the middle of February we had the prototype design for an additional form on our computer program that would automatically populate with the suggestions and recommendations for each teacher. This would allow the evaluator and educator the opportunity to maintain an on-going dialogue about ideas to improve classroom practices and to deepen the value of the evaluation.

**REFLECTIONS:**

This initiative came out of a question raised during a review of our evaluation system. As an administrative group we saw the benefit of following up on our suggestions and recommendations to the teachers, but were stymied by the number of evaluations. By discovering an efficient system to support those efforts we have begun to address the issue and continue in our determination to maintain robust and helpful conversations with the teachers.

**Artifacts**: Click to view in full detail.

<Image of Educator Evaluation Forms. <http://www.erving.com/cms/One.aspx?portalId=3147786&pageId=7508364> >

**District PLN Members**

**Laura George**, Grade 3 Teacher Erving Elementary School; **Andrea Hermans**, Grade 5/6 Teacher Shutesbury Elementary School; **Margot Lacey**, Principal Leverett Elementary School; **Robert Mahler**, Superintendent Erving School Union 28; **Jackie Mendonsa**, Principal Shutesbury Elementary School; **Kelley Sullivan**, Principal Swift River School; **James Trill**, Principal Erving Elementary School; **Danika Tyminski**, Grade 5 Teacher Swift River School.

<Button to download the complete story on Union 28> <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/pln/Erving-Narrative.pdf>

**MARBLEHEAD COMMUNITY CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOL**

[www.marbleheadcharter.org](http://www.marbleheadcharter.org)

<Image of the Massachusetts State map with Marblehead marked.>

Suburban charter school in Essex County. Level 1 School.

Students: 230

Schools: 1

Educators: 35

Evaluators: 7

**Quote –** "We wanted to ensure that these new evaluation processes were not perceived as separate or redundant." – Nina Cullen-Hamzeh, Head of School

**Problem:** Implementing educator evaluation, while continuing the freedoms afforded to MCCPS as a charter school, has presented challenges. Several of the evaluators are department heads *and* teachers, and they serve on the school’s Instructional Leadership Team (ILT). To navigate these uniquely complex roles, evaluation processes seemed cumbersome and labor-intensive for our staff.

**Solution:** Several steps in the educator evaluation system have always been integral to our practices. We kept that in mind to ensure that our new evaluation processes weren’t perceived as separate or redundant. We streamlined the various processes to keep them *manageable, meaningful*, and positioned as learning opportunities.

**STEPS**

1. **Take ownership of the elements and rubrics.**Administrators and teachers carefully examined the rubric developed by ESE and took ownership of educator evaluation. We identified elements that directly aligned with the school’s mission and priorities. In place of collecting samples of evidence for *each and every element*, the reformatted tool allowed MCCPS evaluators and educators to focus their evidence-collection and discussions on fewer elements.
2. **Create a shared system to capture data.**MCCPS evaluators recorded classroom visits using *Google Docs*. In this way, evaluators easily tracked the frequency and location of classroom visits. The shared system also enabled robust discussions among evaluators – particularly about the types of observations they were conducting and expectations during observation sessions.

MCCPS is also piloting the use of *TeachPoint* with approximately half of its faculty. This technology may be a useful tool for tracking educator’s professional practice and student growth goals from year to year – a task that has traditionally been a difficult challenge.
3. **Encourage a shared learning experience.**We worked on building a shared understanding and common language for educator evaluation. Discussions at ILT meetings focused on clarifying protocols for classroom visits, timelines, expectations, and documentation. We developed forms and protocols enabling evaluators to learn how others approached similar tasks.

In order to document details of observations and feedback to educators, the evaluators devised a simple form focusing on *“claims, evidence, and recommendations.”* For training, evaluators first viewed a short video of a class. They went on to share observation notes and brainstormed possible feedback and next steps. To calibrate, we shared our *“claims and evidence”* of subsequent classroom visits at an ILT meeting.
4. **Use professional development (PD) to analyze evidence.**PD offerings and department meetings were spent identifying, collecting, and analyzing evidence of student learning and growth. Using the *Validation Protocol*, teachers took turns presenting their work to fellow teachers.

We used other PD sessions to examine class sets and conduct case studies. Examining *class sets* involves a team of teachers reviewing a sample of completed student work for an entire class. The *case study* exercise was an opportunity for teachers to look at samples of student work across content classes. The exercise allowed teachers to examine a particular student’s learning profile and identify necessary supports.

**REFLECTIONS:** Learning continues for all. We are now attempting to document and streamline processes so that evaluation activities are integrated with, and not separate from, everyday teaching and learning. Several important takeaways include the following:

* Communicate expectations and deliver messages in multiple formats and doses. Resources to support effective implementation must be carefully examined and repackaged to be appropriate to our own school context.
* Engage evaluators and educators in the decisions that impact them. When educator evaluation is viewed as a learning opportunity, we can expect real growth to occur in professional practice and student performance.

**Artifacts**: Click to view in full detail.

<Image of Informal Observation Form. <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/pln/MCCPS-InformalObservation.pdf> Image of Observation, Claim, and Evidence Form. <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/pln/MCCPS-ClaimEvidence.pdf> Image of Observation, Claim, and Evidence Example. <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/pln/MCCPS-ClaimEvidenceExample.pdf> >

**School PLN Members**

**Matt Croninz**, Math, Science, & Technology Department Chair; **Nina Cullen-Hamzeh**, Head of School; **Arlene Hijara**, Director of Special Education; **Michael Ruth**, Assistant Head of School; **Adria Smith**, Integrated Arts Department Chair.

<Button to download the complete story on MCCPS> <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/pln/MCCPS-Narrative.pdf>

**NORTHBRIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

[www.nps.org](http://www.nps.org)

<Image of the Massachusetts State map with Northbridge marked.>

Suburban public school district in Worcester County. Level 3 District.

Students: 2483

Schools: 4

Educators: 222

Evaluators: 11

**Quote –** "We wanted all of the hard work that people were doing throughout this process to mean something more than checking the box and just getting it done." – Amy B. Allen-Magnan, Director of Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment

**Problem:** A review in July 2014 revealed a daunting evaluation process, marked by a minimum of six observations per educator per year, as well as evidence binders two to three inches thick.

The tools and forms used were excessively long, lacked focus, and didn’t present an opportunity for authentic and actionable feedback. As a result of the burdensome and unfocused system, 99% of teachers in the district were rated as proficient or exemplary on the end of year report, which was not necessarily an accurate measurement of effective instruction in the district.

**Solution:** We needed to align our educator evaluation process with the **Northbridge Norms** – the new district-wide areas of focus for Northbridge. All of our forms, processes, and professional development (PD) were revised based on these norms, reducing the quantity of information being collected and increasing the quality of our feedback. This would provide us with authentic data that would ultimately improve instruction in the district.

**STEPS**

1. **Establish our district focus areas.**Over the Summer of 2014, multiple meetings took place among members of the Educator Evaluation Committee, which consisted of approximately eight members including the Director of Curriculum and Instruction, all union officers, coaches, administration, and teachers from each of the district’s buildings. We reviewed the district’s previously identified power elements, as well as the ESE teacher rubric, and made honest decisions about what we needed to do to make our students successful in the classroom. We selected four elements that best represented what effective instruction should look like in Northbridge. The final outcome, our **Northbridge Norms**, was a unanimously approved document. The norms consisted of elements selected from Standards I and II only – **Student Engagement, Well-Structured Lessons, Adjustments to Practice, and Meeting Diverse Needs.**
2. **Use our norms as a vehicle to focus and revise our evaluation process.**Our Educator Evaluation Committee and Leadership Team started with a review of our district forms for classroom observations, SMART goal setting, and action planning. The form that the evaluators were using for 10-15 minute classroom observations was seven pages of check boxes for every indicator, every element, and every standard in the teacher rubric. It was clear that it was difficult to provide a teacher with useful or actionable feedback using a form of this length and style. After revising several possible new templates (focusing on our four norms), we constructed two optional forms (each less than two pages long) and loaded them into TeachPoint. We then went through the same process with the SMART goal forms and action planning forms.
3. **Ensure that teachers were fully prepared to accept and implement these changes.**We met again in September to discuss ways to ensure that teachers felt supported and equipped to implement the changes for this year. We developed user-friendly reference materials, resources, and templates, as well as a cheat sheet of potential evidence for each standard and templates for writing student learning and professional practice goals. We also produced simplified templates for teacher action/educator plans, and several completed samples for each.
4. **Forms are streamlined, now we have to streamline the process.**The number of required observations (six per teacher) made it almost impossible for evaluators to lead their buildings. Teachers were spending an inordinate amount of time compiling three to five pieces of evidence for each of the *indicators* in the rubric (over 100 pieces of evidence per teacher). The quality of both observations and teacher evidence was minimal. We changed the number of observations to six per year for non-PTS teachers and three per year for PTS teachers (who are the majority). We also decreased the requirement for evidence to three to five pieces per *standard* and allowed teachers to submit evidence electronically via TeachPoint or Google Docs instead of turning in a binder.
5. **Rolling it out and ensuring staff buy-in.**On the first day of school for teachers in August, a presentation was given to every member of the district to introduce and explain our **Northbridge Norms**. We gave a presentation to every member of the district to introduce the **Northbridge Norms**, as well as a brief overview of our new evaluation processes and protocols. On the first full PD day in September, every staff member in the district received detailed training in how to write SMART goals, action plans, and how to use our new forms and processes. They also received reference materials, samples, and templates. The district has continued to offer follow-up evaluation PD and support at individual buildings, as needed.
6. **The easy fix is complete and the difficult work begins.**The Leadership Team continues to meet bi-weekly to discuss feedback quality. We have implemented consistent practices and professional development opportunities to calibrate and improve our evaluator feedback. We’ve implemented monthly district Learning Walks, during which members of the Leadership Team, coaches, and teachers visit each building, and focus on a well-defined part of one of our norms. The Director of Curriculum issues a final report after each Learning Walk for follow-up PD and staff discussions. The Learning Walk process has been the most effective tool in calibrating the feedback of our evaluators and leaders. We have even implemented a non-evaluative walk-through system, based solely on the norms. Everyone now sees instruction though the same lens and with consistent language.

**REFLECTIONS:**

* We carefully looked at the data prior to embarking on so many big changes in just one year with a group of stakeholders from all schools, all staffing levels, and union representatives.
* Once we realized that the evaluation system was flexible, we could use the tool effectively.
* Developing our district focus areas (Northbridge Norms) was crucial, as assuring that every other initiative, change, and training was connected to this focus.
* We kept the process as transparent and as wide open as possible, offering updates, training, resources, Q&A opportunities, and participation in decision-making.
* The quality of evaluator feedback has improved immensely and teachers now view evaluation as an exercise that is done both for and with them.

**Artifacts**: Click to view in full detail.

<Image of Feedback Form. <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/pln/Northbridge-FeedbackForm.pdf> Image of Classroom Visit Form. <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/pln/Northbridge-VisitForm.pdf> Image of Evidence Example List. <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/pln/Northbridge-Evidence.pdf>>

**District PLN Members**

**Amy Allen-Magnan**, Director of Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment Northbridge Public Schools; **Mary-Ellen Mega**, Principal Northbridge Middle School; **Karlene Ross**, Principal Balmer Elementary; **John Swayze**, ELA Teacher & Union Officer Northbridge High School; **Steve Tringali**, Assistant Principal Balmer Elementary.

<Button to download the complete story on Northbridge> <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/pln/Northbridge-Narrative.pdf>

**BERKSHIRE HILLS REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT**

[**www.bhrsd.org**](http://www.bhrsd.org)

<Image of the Massachusetts State map with Berkshire Hills marked.>

Rural regional public school district in Berkshire County. Level 2 District.

Students: 1,347

Schools: 3

Educators: 137

Evaluators: 8

**Quote – “**A driving vision for our schools is that *we are all learners*.” - Principal Mary Berle, Muddy Brook Regional Elementary School

**Problem**

Berkshire Hills has used Peer Observation in the past, but we were lacking a systematic process to have honest conversations and to define clear action steps connected to each peer observation session.

**Solution**

By supporting peer observers and incorporating a well-structured system for constructive feedback we will provide opportunities for educators to receive honest feedback and empower educators in the process.

**Steps**

1. **Identify Priority Elements.**

We began by identifying clear, priority indicators in our evaluation rubric. This allowed us to focus our work with the hope of establishing clear action steps after each observation. Two of the four elements would serve to guide our peer observation work:

* Deliver well-structured lessons.
* Differentiate based on student needs.
1. **Review Existing Norms**.

We reviewed our work with the “Seven Norms of Collaboration,” a system of norms introduced into our District years ago. We have found that a shared commitment to these clearly outlined expectations provides a safe and solid framework for having frank conversations.

1. **Develop Norms for Peer Observation.**

In October 2014, we used a staff meeting to develop a new set of norms for peer observation, which included:

**Let the observed speak first:** This provides the demonstrating teacher the chance to reflect on what had happened prior to getting any outside input. We have found that, when allowed to speak first, teachers will often have insightful things to say about both what worked and what didn’t work in the lesson.

**Focus the work:** Our norms reminded us to focus on the core instruction happening in the class.

It has helped generate clear and articulate action steps for moving forward.

1. **Revise the Evaluation Schedule.**

Principal Mary Berle, of Muddy Brook Regional Elementary School, pushed to have the peer observations take place first, prior to evaluative observations. This gave teachers the opportunity to discuss their work and address particular challenges before more formal, evaluative observations began.

1. **Conduct a Cross-Site Visit.**

Erving School Union 28 came to visit and sit in on our peer observation process. It was illuminating to hear a group of knowledgeable professionals provide their insight on how we were having challenging conversations.

1. **Keep the focus and follow-through.**

At this point, all classroom teachers and learning specialists have participated in peer observations over the course of this year. The norms crafted by the teachers and principal have helped focus the work.

**REFLECTIONS:**

We have made great strides in improving how our peer observation process fits into the Supervision and Evaluation system in our schools. We’ve also improved our skills in translating the peer observation process into clear action steps for teachers moving forward. We learned the following:

* Crafting the Supervision and Evaluation system should be seen *primarily* as a tool to support teacher growth.
* Peer observations have helped us further develop a culture of collaboration for growth in our schools, making critical feedback a regular habit that engages everyone in our staff.
* Students, teachers, administrators, support staff… all of us have room to improve, grow, and learn. The more we can support continuous critical feedback, the more we can embrace that role as a learner.

**Artifacts**: Click to view in full detail.

<Image of Peer Observation Process. <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/pln/BHRSD-ObservationProcess.pdf>>

**District PLN Members**

**Mary Berle**, Principal Muddy Brook Elementary; **Joshua Briggs**, Director of Learning and Teaching BHRSD; **Jack Curletti**, Kindergarten Teacher Muddy Brook Elementary; **Peter Dillon**, Superintendent BHRSD; **Kristin Finnerty**, 2nd Grade Teacher Muddy Brook Elementary School; **Kathleen Gillis**, 5th Grade Humanities Teacher Monument Valley Middle School; **Bonnie Groeber**, 4th Grade Teacher Muddy Brook Elementary; **Shaun Kennedy**, 1st Grade Teacher Muddy Brook Elementary School.

<Button to download the complete story on Berkshire Hills> <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/pln/BHRSD-Narrative.pdf>

**WORKLOAD**

The PLN districts designed initiatives that increase the efficiency and quality of their evaluation systems or promote a culture of growth. Another strategy for improving evaluator capacity is to investigate evaluator workload to ensure that all evaluators have the time they need to provide support to their educators. In a multi-year study conducted by SRI International <<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/study/>>, researchers found that, on average, Massachusetts principals are each responsible for evaluating 21-30 educators – to do that well takes time. The same study found that **only 28% of surveyed principals believe they have enough time to conduct evaluations.**

Some districts outside of the PLN have taken on promising initiatives to address concerns related to evaluator workload by allocating more administrator time to evaluations or increasing the number of people with evaluator responsibilities. Of course, improving the overall efficiency of the evaluation system can also reduce evaluator workload. **See the efficiency section of this guide for more information.**

<Image of graph quantifying the number of Educators Principals Evaluate>

<Image of graph quantifying levels of agreement with the survey statement “I have enough time to evaluate the teachers in my school”> Source: 2014-15 SRI International MA Principal Survey

**MORE TIME:**

In Fitchburg, principals are held accountable for conducting classroom observations every week. In order to support principals as instructional leaders, the superintendent hired Student Program Support Administrators for each school. These administrators frequently take on administrative tasks, such as student discipline, and team meetings that have historically contributed to diminished time for principals to be in classrooms observing and working with educators. The principals also set clear expectations with parents and the community that they will be in classrooms during school hours and, therefore, might not be immediately available until after school dismissal each day.

**MORE EVALUATORS:**

Boston created a Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) program. A partnership between the Boston Public Schools and the Boston Teachers Union, the PAR program involves Consulting Teachers who support and evaluate a cohort of teachers. Adding teachers to the potential pool of evaluators reduces the number of evaluations each evaluator is responsible for completing.

In Manchester-Essex, a cadre of S.M.A.R.T. Goal Coaches support educators in all schools to write and plan their goals. While these coaches do not evaluate educators, they take on responsibilities that typically fall to evaluators.

**Resource:** District leaders that want to learn more about their administrators’ evaluation workload and educator evaluation implementation in general should consider surveying teachers and administrators. The surveys used in the research study referenced above have been modified for district use and are available on ESE’s website.

<Image of button that says “Teacher Survey” <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/implementation/TeachersSurvey.pdf>>

<Image of button that says “Principal/Administrator Survey” <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/implementation/AdministratorsSurvey.pdf>>

**DELIVERY APPROACH**

EDI has been working in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for over four years. As part of the support offered to districts within the PLN, EDI conducted one-day delivery consultations to help district leaders reflect on their district’s capacity to implement a high-quality educator evaluation system. Each consultation involved a short site visit to conduct focus groups with key stakeholders, including a self-assessment exercise with relevant staff.

The self-assessment process involves using a tool called the Assessment Framework, which is a set of common criteria for measuring the progress of any strategy or initiative. The criteria are centered on one crucial question: *What is the likelihood of delivery?* That is, what’s the likelihood that a particular strategy will make its promised contribution to an identified goal?

<Image of US Education Delivery Institute Logo>

<Button to “Download the complete Assessment Framework. <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/pln/EDi-AssessmentFramework.pdf>>

<Button to “Download the Assessment Framework Guide to use in your own district or school” <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/pln/EDi-AssessmentFrameworkGuide.pdf>>

**CROSS-SITE VISIT PROCESS AND REFLECTIONS**

PLN districts were paired up and conducted cross-site visits – the experience was considered one of the most valuable and dynamic aspects of the PLN experience. The PLN considered these elements for their visits:

• Tour of Campus • Other Evaluators/Department Heads Interviews

• Principal Interview • Classroom Observation

• Forms and Systems Overview • Relevant Professional Development Observation

• Teacher Focus Group • Team Meetings

• Teacher Interview • Debrief Session

**THOUGHTS FROM THE FIELD**

“Knowing that there is a connection to someone who can be another set of eyes and someone from the outside who is working towards the same goal is powerful to this process.” **— Monson, on working with Hadley**

“The deliberateness of the Muddy Brook Elementary School observations provided a non-threatening and well-defined structure that appeared comfortable for the teachers. “ **— Union 28, on working with BHRDS**

“As school leaders, we have precious few opportunities to apply a laser-like focus to a topic. Fortunately, going to another school for a cross site visit makes this possible. We saw the conviction in the faces of our colleagues, commiserated over shared frustrations, and understood the urgency they felt for getting it right.” **— MCCPS, on working with GLTS**

“In addition to [educator] evaluation we discovered a new area of need: mentoring of new teachers. Monson provided the opportunity for this to be discovered as well as resources and ideas to better develop a mentoring program. Ultimately a professional relationship was fostered and I feel that if we needed to seek further professional feedback that Monson would be open and willing” **— Hadley, on working with Monson**

“While the terms and conditions for implementing change in both schools are quite different due to labor agreement differences, we found that we had a lot in common with respect to management of the new evaluation system” **— GLTS, on working with MCCPS**

“Union 28’s visit to our school was extremely helpful. Much of our focus has been on how to have productive conversations in regards to peer observations. Having a team of knowledgeable teachers (particularly teachers who are doing rich end-of-unit work, as we saw in both Union 28 schools) give us a critical outside perspective on how we are working to give constructive feedback was terrific.” **— BHRDS, on working with Union 28**

“The preparation for [hosting the cross-site visit] helped me to really look at the evaluation tools, and the way that I was interpreting the process. The Hadley team asked thoughtful questions that brought strengths and challenges to the forefront for us.” **— Monson, on working with Hadley**

**Download the following tools, developed by ESE, to plan cross-site visits with other districts and schools.**

<Image box titled “Cross-site Visit Toolbox” >

Considerations for Host Districts <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/pln/CSV-HostDistrict.pdf>

Overview of Forms and Systems <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/pln/CSV-FormsSystems.pdf>

Principal Interview Questions <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/pln/CSV-PrincipalInterview.pdf>

Teacher Interview Questions <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/pln/CSV-TeacherInterview.pdf>

Teacher Focus Group Questions <http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/resources/pln/CSV-TeacherFocusGroup.pdf>

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

**CUSTOMIZE:**

The Educator Evaluation Framework is flexible. It is meant to be modified to align with district goals. Use it to bring focus to the most important levers for improving student outcomes.

**COMMUNICATE:**

The Framework must be understood at the Administrative, Evaluator, and Teacher level. Everyone needs support and guidance to attain confidence with the system.

**CALIBRATE:**

Clear examples and guidance on systems, rubrics, and artifacts will help achieve consistent and fair results across evaluators, schools, and the district. Frequent opportunities for dialogue and debate are essential to the professional growth of evaluators.

**CONSOLIDATE:**

Districts often have multiple initiatives going at once. Find the through line that connects evaluation to the most important initiatives to create coherence for educators and evaluators.

The Center for Educator Effectiveness at the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is committed to partnering with districts to identify and share strategies for supporting evaluator capacity. We hope this guide is a catalyst. If your district has a promising practice or an idea related to evaluator capacity, we want to hear from you!

**Email us at** **EducatorEvaluation@doe.mass.edu**

The contents of this publication were developed under a grant from the U. S. Department of Education. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the U. S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

© Copyright 2015 – Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education