

Quick Reference Guide: Opportunities to Streamline the Evaluation Process

The Massachusetts [Educator Evaluation Framework](#) is designed to promote educator growth and development while keeping student learning at the center. The regulations that establish the Framework ([603 CMR 35.00](#)) lay out the major components of the evaluation process used in each district, but leave room for local flexibility. District evaluation systems are aligned to the Framework and are typically codified in collective bargaining agreements.

Districts are encouraged to use this document to reflect on and continuously improve 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?

Identifying Evaluators

The goal: Educators receive ongoing, actionable feedback from trained evaluators. Evaluators are responsible for supporting a manageable caseload of educators and can sustain an ongoing dialogue with each to support growth and development.

The basics:

- The regulations define an evaluator as “any person designated by the superintendent”¹ and charge the superintendent with ensuring that all evaluators are trained.²

Takeaways:

- **Widening the pool of evaluators.** As districts continue to explore models of distributed leadership, the broad regulatory definition of “evaluator” may be helpful in identifying additional educators to serve as evaluators. Allocating evaluator responsibilities beyond to a wider pool of people such as other school and district administrators or teacher leaders is one solution to consider. ESE’s [Distributed Leadership PLN](#) is focused on exploring models of distributed leadership that reduce evaluator workload to ensure that all educators receive high quality feedback.

Standards of Effective Practice

The goal: Districts across the Commonwealth discuss effective practice using the shared language of the Standards and Indicators of Effective Teaching Practice and Administrative Leadership Practice.

The basics:

- The Standards and Indicators of Effective Teaching Practice and Administrative Leadership Practice are described in the regulations.³
- All educators receive a rating on each of the four Standards that inform an overall rating.
- ESE’s [model performance rubrics](#) are anchored by the Standards and Indicators. The rubrics break the Indicators into smaller *elements* of practice, which are described at four levels of performance.
- The inclusion of the student learning indicator in Standard II for teachers and Standard I for administrators makes the process more efficient by promoting simultaneous conversation about teaching and learning throughout the evaluation cycle.⁴

¹ 603 CMR 35.02

² 603 CMR 35.11

³ 603 CMR 35.03 and 603 CMR 35.04

⁴ 603 CMR 35.03, 603 CMR 35.04

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Takeaways:

- **Priority elements.** Many districts have found it useful to identify a subset of the elements included in the model rubric as “priority” elements.” By narrowing the focus, these districts can cut down on the amount of evidence educators collect, and provide more intensive support to evaluators and educators to develop shared expectations for practice in areas aligned to school and district improvement plans. Check out an example from Northbridge [here](#).

Collecting Evidence

The goal: Evaluators make informed judgments about educator performance by applying sufficient evidence from multiple categories to the rubric.

The basics:

- Evidence collection is the joint responsibility of the educator and evaluator.
- The regulations describe the types of evidence that must be considered in the evaluation process: multiple measures of student learning, growth, and achievement; observations; artifacts of practice; and additional evidence related to one or more of the Standards, including student and staff feedback.⁵

Takeaways:

- **Quality trumps quantity.** Assembling large binders of evidence can be burdensome and may not meaningfully contribute to productive dialogue between educators and evaluators or help evaluators make informed judgments. For more suggestions for streamlining and improving evidence collection, see [ESE’s Evidence Collection Toolkit](#) and the [TEEM video on data collection](#).
- **The amount and format of evidence is determined locally.** When determining evidence collection practices, districts should make sure that the process is helpful to both educators and evaluators; educators should benefit from reflecting on authentic artifacts of their practice, and evaluators should learn something new about the educator’s practice from reviewing the collected evidence. To support meaningful evidence collection, some districts have developed examples of evidence aligned to the model rubric (e.g., [Boston’s interactive rubric](#) and [Weymouth’s evidence suggestions](#)).
- **Evidence for every rubric element.** It is important to keep in mind that a single piece of evidence can and often will provide insight into multiple aspects of the educator’s practice. One way to take the guesswork out for educators and ensure that evaluators have manageable amounts of evidence to review leading up to formative and summative evaluations is to set expectations at the beginning of the cycle. For example, in West Springfield, educators and evaluators work together at the beginning of the process to decide exactly what evidence they plan to collect – a sort of evidence roadmap (learn more [here](#)).

Paperwork and Forms

The goal: The evaluation process involves ongoing dialogue between educators and evaluators. Paperwork and forms associated with the process contribute to this dialogue and provide a meaningful way to document the educator’s progress.

⁵ 603 CMR 35.07

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The basics:

- The regulations do not prescribe the paperwork and forms that must be used in the evaluation process.

Takeaways:

- **Starting point for streamlining.** Many districts have found that forms are a great starting place for streamlining the process for both educators and evaluators. Simple observation forms that provide educators with actionable, evidence-based feedback related to the district’s priorities can be more effective than longer forms that encourage evaluators to comment on every aspect of the rubric, or worse, promote use of the rubric as an observation checklist.
- **Consult educators.** Ask educators and evaluators which parts of which forms they believe promote educator reflection and ongoing dialogue and which do not contribute to the process of continuous improvement. Rethink paperwork that feels overly compliance-driven. For example, the Candidate Assessment of Performance used by educator preparation programs uses a [single-page observation form](#) that provides evaluators with space to summarize evidence aligned to a set of focus elements and provide feedback by identifying areas of reinforcement and refinement.
- **Where do ratings enter the process?** Districts might also think about the level of granularity at which educators earn ratings. The regulations require educators to receive ratings on the four Standards, which leads to an overall rating.⁶ However, some districts have decided locally to determine ratings at the Indicator or even the element level. Still others provide ratings after each observation. Districts should consider the benefits and challenges of these approaches, taking into account the impact on the amount of documentation collected as part of the evaluation process.

The 5-Step Evaluation Cycle

The goal: The 5-Step Cycle provides educators with a continuous opportunity for professional growth and development through self-directed analysis and reflection, planning, action steps, and collaboration.

The basics:

- The [5-Step Cycle](#) outlined in the regulations drives the evaluation Framework. The regulations describe each step of the Cycle.⁷



Takeaways:

- **Timelines are set locally.** Each district decides how to map the cycle onto the school year. Some districts have found it helpful to support educators to begin their self-assessments at the end of the school year, just after they receive their summative evaluations. This way, the feedback they receive can be a catalyst for refining or setting new student learning and professional practice goals. Moving this step to the end of the school year also ensures that educators can have their Educator Plans in place early in the following school year, thereby increasing the likelihood that educators and evaluators will have sufficient time to reflect without bumping up against the always busy opening of school.

⁶ 603 CMR 35.08

⁷ 603 CMR 35.06