CAPTURING THE LEARNING POINTS

Early Decision Making and Engaging Stakeholders in Educator Evaluation

“No matter what is happening everywhere else, we still want to provide the best possible instruction to each and every child in every classroom. And that is why everyone should get on board.”

— DAVE BOND, superintendent, Kennewick School District

In describing Pullman School District’s experience in the teacher and principal evaluation reform process, superintendent Paul Strum had this to say:

“In the long term, improving professional practice requires a lot of risk and trust, in particular between teachers and principals and between administrators and principals when the principal is the focus. And so, we are in it together very visibly and intentionally and treat no one as the expert. We are learning this together, and we are going to trust each other—coming from that premise is probably the foundation of any success we’ve had.”

In Pullman, it was clear from the start that to be successful, a lot of goodwill needed to be developed, nurtured, and emphasized. Kicking off a new evaluation system is a huge endeavor, and establishing the right tone and building buy-in from the start impacted their work—as it will yours.

As Pullman’s new teacher and principal evaluation system took shape, another strategy proved useful: collaboration. The district planning team thrived knowing they had designed key elements together, and each member appreciated having been invited to shape meaningful parts of the process. They deepened the goodwill by also asking each professional to commit to celebrating each other’s improvements, creating an all-for-one, one-for-all environment. This collaboration and goodwill was not, however, automatic. Those trusting relationships that were developed were almost lost when teachers began to fear that the reforms were about “getting rid of those bad teachers” or about punishing someone in the school. It was only because of the transparent decision making that they were able to eventually see the profound positive impact the work had. This impact was felt in three ways: the higher level of conversations about teaching and learning that developed among all their staff, the increased student engagement, and the developed and expanded ways to measure student growth.

“The development of the new teacher evaluation system at North Mason School District has been focused on professional growth, and it has served as a catalyst in creating a new culture of learning. It provides an opportunity for the teacher to demonstrate his/her instructional proficiency skills, with clear and concrete evidence.”

— VICKI HOPKINS, teacher, Kennewick School District

“Everybody could talk about what great instruction looked like, but it was different perspectives on great instruction. So we decided to look at the evaluation process and our instructional model so that the two—instruction and evaluation—could be purposefully connected.”

— KRISTEN SHERIDAN, principal, North Mason

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Consider the Following Key Steps to Ensure the Success of the New Systems

1. SET THE TONE FOR THE WORK

- Inspire your faculty with the knowledge that moving away from a simple compliance system will improve the professional experience for everyone. The awareness that everyone is in this together and is going to do meaningful work breaks down some natural resistance that comes from feeling anxious about the new evaluations.

- Emphasize that everyone is in a learning phase and that all staff (including leadership) will be scrutinizing their own work.

2. PLAN REGULAR CONVENINGS

- Plan for regular convenings throughout the year to both gather and share information and perceptions about the new system.

- Host a small summit with leadership before the school year begins. These kinds of convenings will allow you to listen to concerns and gather input to help you shape your plan for the year. Be sure to include association representatives and actively draw them in. Consider having one teacher from each grade at this early planning meeting.

- Expand stakeholder engagement and buy-in by holding a larger forum during the school year and invite all staff, families, and community members to attend.

3. SHARE RESPONSIBILITY

- Develop teacher leaders who are trained intensely in the system who can act as ambassadors among your staff.

- Ensure a representative leadership team understands its responsibility for bringing information back to colleagues. They also are responsible for bringing issues and questions back to the team.

- Make a commitment among your leadership team to be active—even optimistic—participants while you are working together on evaluation reform.

4. DEMONSTRATE THAT THIS IS YOUR SCHOOL OR DISTRICT’S MAIN PRIORITY

- Find and focus significant staff time toward learning the entire rubric.

- Use the same vocabulary for all initiatives; projects not directly related to the new evaluation system should still be couched in the vocabulary of the instructional and leadership frameworks.

- Safeguard that these new evaluations are the only real focus for change for the first implementation year. Put other projects and big changes on the back burner.
# Key Leadership Decisions and Timing for Principals and Superintendents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Item</th>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Considerations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Select your leadership team</td>
<td>August</td>
<td>What faculty (from many, if not every, grade and subject) and association leadership can you include early on?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Establish monthly leadership meetings</td>
<td>September</td>
<td>Can you schedule recurrent meetings throughout the year? Can you ensure times and locations are convenient for all members or else rotate the time and location so no individual member(s) is unduly burdened? Is it possible to make key decisions with this team openly so they can share all thinking and learning with the larger community?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Host an open forum for faculty and parents</td>
<td>September</td>
<td>Consider these topics for your gathering: Why is this important? Who was invited to be on the leadership team and how others can join? What have other schools and districts seen happen with these changes? Make this a celebration of good things to come. Consider bringing a speaker from a pilot district to talk about what he or she has learned.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Schedule your meetings at the start of the fall</td>
<td>September</td>
<td>Is it possible to set up all evaluation observations and conferences early in the school year so that everyone commits before the year gets hectic? This will send a message that this is the top priority for the year.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Find the resources to hire an outside trainer</td>
<td>September–October</td>
<td>Given that it is so challenging to deeply digest the rubric of the new system, can you hire outside help to support training?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Set up your own evaluation</td>
<td>October–November</td>
<td>How quickly can you show your faculty that you are walking in the teachers’ shoes and reflecting on your own improvement?</td>
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<td>Let everyone on staff know what you’ve learned so far</td>
<td>December</td>
<td>Include what you learned from your own evaluation, what you learned as an evaluator, and what the leadership team is discussing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Schedule all spring meetings</td>
<td>January</td>
<td>Schedule all observations and pre- and- post-conferences for the entire spring so that they are the main priority as the semester unfolds.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Celebrate your staff and their accomplishments</td>
<td>June</td>
<td>Can you find a way to share what worked in a loud and proud way? Highlight everyone who participated. Invite them to share what they learned. Allow this to be a celebration of everything that has been learned and accomplished.</td>
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These documents could not have been created without the generous time of teachers, principals, and district leaders in these areas. This is a publication of the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) Teacher/Principal Evaluation Project (TPEP) with American Institutes for Research (AIR) supporting this endeavor. More information, including videos with practitioners from the pilot districts, can be found on the TPEP website: http://tpep-wa.org/pilot-sites/
In describing their experiences implementing new teacher and principal evaluation systems, the Washington TPEP pilot districts were very clear that to be successful, a lot of time needed to be spent ensuring that the new evaluations resulted in meaningful professional conversations between educators and their evaluators. Moreover, intensive training to ensure accurate teacher and principal ratings was a must. Rater agreement is considered a “huge” issue that is intertwined with educators’ trust in the system.

This document includes four real-life Washington pilot district perspectives on these changes to their observation and rating systems, some successes that were apparent across all pilot districts, and some practical ideas for your consideration.

Kennewick School District: Kennewick Superintendent Dave Bond described how superintendents can lead by example by opening up about their own evaluation and growth experiences:

“When you look at the rubric, it’s important to understand that a 4 is really challenging, an aspirational score. I am not a 4 as a superintendent, but I’d like to think I am a strong 3, and every day I try to be a 4. The goal of trying to be a 4 is just as important as being a 4.”

Betti Gregg, NBCT, a Consulting Peer Educator at Kennewick, elaborated on the rewards of the transformation from the teachers’ perspective:

“No one walks into the classroom and says, ‘Yay! I’m satisfactory.’ It’s exciting for teachers to have the opportunity to be truly proficient, to have a specific set of goals and some really specific components to work toward for being distinguished. So, for the teachers that I have spoken with, one of the most meaningful parts for them is that opportunity to talk with their evaluator in a reflective manner about how they can improve their own practice. I’ve heard the same thing from administrators. They love having those conversations with teachers, where they can really dig in and look at what can I do to get better, so it’s very exciting.”

North Mason School District: After engaging deeply with the new instructional framework, Rachel Stites, a teacher from North Mason School District, shared this:

“Previously, there wasn’t really any conversation about what the next steps would be to improve. Now, the rubric gets you thinking even before you meet your evaluator, and it’s more focused on what you’re doing. It helps you pull out evidence and be honest with yourself because you can’t change the language that’s there. The reflection piece is the most important part—it helps you take a good look at your instruction and what you need to do to improve.”
Anacortes School District: From the principal’s perspective, Peter Donaldson has seen great things emerge from the experience, too:

“I just finished with a teacher, for example, who is easily a 3 but probably a 4. She said the process made her more conscientious, more intentional in her teaching, and more reflective about her practice. She has learned to do more—while doing it better—as a teacher this year compared to her past 17 years in the classroom. Once I run this whole system through a building, I will know these teachers better than ever. I will know their tendencies and practices, and if I am really good at what I do, I’ll get them the resources they need when they need it. As a result, teaching will improve and students will learn. It really is amazing.”

As the new evaluations unfolded in Washington’s pilot districts, educators were able to document tremendous successes that resulted from the new approach to teacher observation. These successes included the following:

- Schools saw a shared vocabulary emerge among teachers and leaders.
- Educators felt increased camaraderie and a greater shared sense of purpose.
- Teachers became much more specific when describing their practice, and this specificity led to better conversations about teaching and learning and to greater results.
- Schools witnessed richer, more purposeful discussions about all aspects of school life.
- Support systems “up and down” became apparent as staff began seeking and receiving support in both directions.
- Feelings of “us versus them” among the educators in the school buildings disappeared as people engaged in the process as a team.

The following suggestions and questions for consideration from the Washington pilots were gathered to help you achieve reliable observation systems that result in more meaningful professional conversations:

- Provide extensive evaluator training, particularly around rater agreement. Washington pilot participants found the anxiety about the new educator evaluation system was far greater than anticipated, and at the heart of this was concern over equity in observations across school buildings. Rigorous, high-quality evaluator training is often seen as the only approach to address this widespread concern.

  **KEY QUESTIONS:** How much support is there from district staff and school directors for this rigorous training? (Often there is more than you may think!) What resources would be needed to provide high-quality, ongoing evaluator training, and can they be secured early on?

- Include educators in the evaluator training on rater agreement so that they feel confident that their evaluators have undergone rigorous training to conduct accurate observations. This may include watching teaching videos as a group and talking about where the practice fits in the instructional framework.

  **KEY QUESTIONS:** Which training topics and activities should be inclusive of all educators, and which should be limited to evaluators only?

- Look beyond your district. Hire an outside expert to assist in training evaluators on observing against the frameworks to increase rater agreement and on engaging in professional dialogue based on evaluations. Visit other schools with other administrators to further ensure rater agreement.

  **KEY QUESTIONS:** What support do you have from district staff and school directors to hire external assistance? Is it possible to create efficiencies by partnering with neighboring districts? What types of cross-school or cross-district collaborations are practical in your context? Can these be combined with other collaborative activities you have planned to save time?
Only tackle one portion of the framework at a time during staff trainings. Have these conversations when no one is being evaluated so that staff can gain fluency and a shared understanding of the material. Show your teachers and principals numerous examples of excellence.

**KEY QUESTIONS:** What is the staff training schedule, and what is the appropriate sequence of topics?

Design purposeful questions for pre- and postconferences (especially postconferences) to ensure that the meaningful and rich conversations also are not unduly lengthy. Share documents between discussions so that everyone has read the materials before the conversations.

**KEY QUESTIONS:** What is the appropriate length of time for postconferences, and how many topics can reasonably be covered in that time? How much input should those being evaluated have in determining what will be covered or whether additional time for conversation is needed?

Consider creating “learning walks” where small groups of educators go into a variety of classrooms over a short period of time together. Then have a conversation afterward about what they saw, which deepens their understanding of the rubric and allows them to practice assessing in the same way. Learning walks are not a formal part of evaluating the teachers being visited; rather they serve as a professional tool for the people on the walk.

**KEY QUESTION:** Are there logistical or cultural challenges to overcome?

Set up monthly meetings at the start of the year for representatives from all parts of your community to have purposeful conversations about how observations are unfolding in practice. Give all parties a chance to discuss progress and make midcourse adjustments during the year if needed.

**KEY QUESTIONS:** Who is best placed to lead these conversations to make sure that all parties can openly discuss their concerns and that steps can be taken to address issues that are arising?

Consider more than the mandatory two observations to increase the reliability of the evaluation.

**KEY QUESTIONS:** What is the ideal number of observations for teachers? For principals? Does this vary depending on whether they are new to the field or the position?

Know that evaluators will likely embrace rather than feel burdened by training to reduce or eliminate bias in their evaluations of teachers. In the words of one Washington evaluator, “As much as I admire every single person that’s in my building, maybe sometimes I might be [too generous in my evaluations] because I know how hard they’re working and how committed and dedicated they are. So to have somebody else come in and have another perspective helps keep it very consistent.”

**KEY QUESTIONS:** What is the outlook in your context? What are the hopes and worries around developing effective observation systems that raise the level of professional conversation among your staff?

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Measuring Student Growth

“When we ask students to hone in on crystal-clear, finely defined targets, then we know as teachers if they are achieving those.”

– CINDY McSMITH, principal, Medical Lake School District

Measuring student growth, or change from one point in time to another, is a very challenging task and a central part of the new evaluation systems being implemented across the state of Washington. Whether a teacher is being evaluated using a comprehensive or a focused process, student growth goals are required. This document clarifies the new requirements and provides questions for consideration as you map out this change and a timeline for implementation.

In addressing this challenging task, participants in Washington’s pilot districts had this advice to offer. Dave Bond, the superintendent of Kennewick School District, found from their pilot experience that the challenges of measuring student growth can be addressed in part by looking carefully at the way the curriculum is delivered and treating curriculum and instruction as the focus. He stated,

“There is a lot we don’t control in education. We don’t control the demographics of our parents. We don’t control the language spoken at home. We don’t control the parents’ education level. We do control some things. We do control the curriculum we choose to share with the students, and we can control how we assess the students (though assessments come from outside), but the biggest thing we control is instruction. So if we’re going to impact the system, we can either sit around and moan about our clientele or we can see how we can best serve that clientele.”

Jennie Beltramini, NBCT, a teacher and a union leader in the Anacortes School District, described how focusing on equity and ensuring that student growth is part of the professional conversation all year long also can support new student growth systems:

“Our teachers are looking at their practice and asking if they are making adequate growth with students. This is a goal-setting process where teachers are setting growth goals for students and then they are tracking and monitoring the student growth aligned to the goal throughout a determined period of time. I think it is important that the rubric does not look different for any teacher; throughout the district there is a sense of equity. It doesn’t matter if you are a core teacher with state tests or a CTE [Career Technical Education] teacher teaching woodshop or metals without a formalized state test. The rubric looks the same. It doesn’t matter what you teach or what kids you have in your classroom; you have student data that you can reflect on and use to monitor students throughout the year. It is this feeling of equity that is a big deal.

“All of our teachers are targeting at-risk and struggling learners. Even an honors class has students not working to potential. It doesn’t matter what you teach or what kids you have in your classroom, you can take student data and decide which students you need to focus on, and you can monitor those students

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throughout the year. We think teachers need to be doing this throughout the year and not waiting until the end of the year to measure growth. It may be too late if we wait until the end of the year because nothing can be done about it at that point. In our system, they’re using classroom and district-based data to adjust and modify instruction throughout the year. So it’s not just about saying you made student growth at the end of the year but about the process.”

Measuring Student Growth—What Is Required?

The single most important requirement to note when incorporating student growth in your new evaluation system is that the student growth process must utilize the OSPI-approved student growth rubrics and be a substantial factor embedded in the new evaluation criteria (specifically criteria 3, 6, and 8), as opposed to a separate process. Further legal requirements are as follows:

- The requirements of RCW28A.405.120 are as follows:
  1. School districts shall require each administrator, each principal, or other supervisory personnel who has responsibility for evaluating classroom teachers or principals to have training in evaluation procedures.
  2. Before school district implementation of the revised evaluation systems required under RCW 28A.405.100, principals and administrators who have evaluation responsibilities must engage in professional development designed to implement the revised systems and maximize rater agreement.

- It is a requirement of WAC 392-191A that by September 1, 2013, each school district is required to post on its website its instructional framework selection from the three options: CEL 5D+, Danielson, or Marzano.

- Student growth data must be a substantial factor in utilizing the OSPI-approved student growth rubrics. To assure fairness, identical student growth rubrics have been added to each of the frameworks by the TPEP Steering Committee.

- In September 2013, all provisional-status teachers and teachers on probation must be evaluated using a comprehensive evaluation under the new system. Other teachers will be added to either comprehensive or focused evaluations according to a plan determined by the board of directors in each school district.

- Student growth requirements under comprehensive evaluations:
  - Under State Criterion 3, the teacher must set one or more student growth goal(s) for a group of students and also must determine to what extent the goal(s) was achieved.
    
    AND
  
  - Under State Criterion 6, the teacher must set one or more student growth goal(s) for a classroom of students and also must determine to what extent the goal(s) was achieved.
    
    AND
  
  - Under State Criterion 8, the teacher must set an instructional goal for a group of classrooms of students and describe how they will strive to achieve that goal collaboratively.
Student growth requirements under focused evaluations:

The focused evaluation will include the student growth rubrics of the selected criterion. If criterion 3, 6 or 8 is selected, evaluators will use those student growth rubrics. If criterion 1, 2, 4, 5, or 7 is selected, evaluators will use criterion 3 or 6 student growth rubrics.

Student growth goals:

A student growth goal describes what students will know/be able to do at the end of an instructional period based on course- or grade-level content standards and district curriculum.

A proficient student growth goal:
- is specific, measurable, and time bound
- is based on multiple sources of available data that reveal prior student learning
- is aligned to content standards
- is appropriate for the context, instructional interval, and content standard(s) (grain size)
- demonstrates a significant impact on student learning of content (transferable skills)
- identifies formative and summative measures aligned to learning targets to monitor progress towards goals
- identifies subgroups and uses data that identifies students not reaching full learning potential (i.e., achievement/opportunity gaps, English language learner, special education, highly capable)

Assessments used to measure student learning goals should be:
- standards-based
- of high quality
- designed to best measure the knowledge and skills described in the student growth goal
- inclusive of multiple measures of student growth

The implementation timeline and considerations on the following page is intended to help you put into practice these state requirements.
District Implementation Timeline and Considerations

Planning

Goals
- How will your district define high-quality student learning goals?
- Has your district established a common format for goal setting (i.e., SMART goals)?
- Has your district identified a preferred or required process/timeline for teachers to complete goal setting?
- If your district uses eVAL, has the format/process/timeline been made available to teachers and their evaluators inside eVAL?
- Will your district support a paper/pencil goal-setting format/process?
- Will individual teachers’ student growth goals connect to school or district SIP goals, PLC efforts, or other initiatives (required, preferred, no position)?
- What time is being set aside for all administrators to learn about the goal-setting process? Who will teach the evaluators about goal setting?
- How can you ensure that evaluators of teachers have opportunities to dialogue about goal setting to assure consistency across the district?
- What time is being set aside for all evaluatees in the new system to learn about the goal-setting process? Who will teach the teachers?
- Do you want evaluators or teachers (or both) to review OSPI's goal setting module? By when?
- Who can help shape the communications plan to make information and decisions public and assure that messages remain consistent across the district?

Assessments
- How will your district define high-quality sources of student learning data?
- How will the district support teachers to assure that multiple measures are utilized, regardless of content area or student population?
- Which common assessments (if any) does the school or district want to require or encourage teachers to use when applicable and appropriate to their context?
- What district- or school-level data is available to help teachers define student subgroups for criteria 3?
- What assessment literacy resources might be useful to evaluators? To evaluatees?
- How will the district help assure that spring learning data are available to assess achievement of goal(s)?

Initial Implementation

- What time is being set aside/encouraged for evaluators and evaluatees to dialogue about student growth goals?
- Will the district collect/monitor that student growth goals have been established?
- How will the district help teachers study the rubric to understand that a Basic goal might become Proficient or a Proficient goal may be revised to become Distinguished?

Setting Targets
- What time is being set aside for evaluators to dialogue about goals set to move toward rater agreement on the student growth rubric?
- What patterns are emerging?
- How can the evaluator/district support teachers' efforts?
Monitoring

- How are teachers using formative assessment to monitor student progress toward the goal and to differentiate instruction for all students (Criterion 6) or students in the subgroup (Criterion 3)?
- Do teachers have timely formative data from district-level measures?
- Can teachers describe their progress toward goal(s)?
- How are the evaluator and the district supporting teachers’ efforts?
- How can other leaders (department heads, PLCs, mentors, and/or coaches) support teachers’ development of knowledge and skills to do this work well?
- How are teachers sharing what they are learning?
- What patterns are emerging?

Reflecting

- How will the district help assure that spring learning data are available to evaluate achievement toward goal(s)?
- What time is being set aside for evaluators to discuss evidence of goal achievement with teachers?
- What time is being set aside for evaluators to dialogue about goals set to move toward rater agreement on the student growth rubric?
CAPTURING THE LEARNING POINTS

Time-Saving Strategies for Principals

“Every person I have talked to has reported that the new system has made them better teachers. They’re also saying it’s more work, more in-depth, and involves more time.”

—JENNIE BELTRAMINI, NBCT, teacher leader, Anacortes School District

Washington’s Teacher/Principal Evaluation Pilot project made one thing clear: one of the greatest concerns voiced, a very real concern, was the amount of time involved in implementing the new evaluations.

“Historically, the norms were simply two 30-minute observations followed by a postconference, occasionally preceded by a preconference but not always. It was quick and easy, but it didn’t offer a lot of opportunity to really think about practice, to think about how to improve as a teacher. It didn’t even offer a forum to have those types of conversations with the evaluator because it was a rushed, check-check process.

While this evaluation process is better, time is a real concern for both teachers and evaluators. The rubric really gives us a common language and a specific focus for communication and allows for much, much deeper conversations about practice than have occurred in the past. These deeper conversations, digging up the evidence or determining what is appropriate evidence for each of the components, all take more time.

To a degree, there is no way to shortcut this process, but as people become more experienced with using the rubrics, they are becoming more comfortable with what type of practice is being described and where their practice falls. That will ultimately bring about that time saving.”

—BETTI GREGG, NBCT, Consulting Peer Educator, Kennewick School District

“If we’re going to ask people to get better at their practice, we can’t rely on their college degree. You can’t do this [work] without some time and some focus. You cannot write it down on paper and tell people to make it happen and have it happen. It takes people’s time. It takes working together and talking and learning together. It’s hard work and it’s complex work, and it’s not going to happen by just turning it over [to the schools].

It’s [The new evaluation system is] shifting the focus of our principals and their time. There isn’t more time, but this model takes a lot more time. We are hoping that principals are becoming more efficient at implementation down the road. It’s certainly shifting their emphasis toward instruction and student learning. [This is] a good thing, but it’s also taking time away from other broader leadership issues: connecting with the community, connecting with parents, [and] connecting with students other than in the classroom. [The] whole-school climate and culture is getting less attention, and that’s a bit of a concern because all of our schools need to be safe places to be.”

—DR. PAUL STRUM, Superintendent, Pullman School District
Time Savers for Leadership Setting up the New System

Washington’s pilot districts acknowledged the validity of the concern around time. Implementing a new evaluation system will no doubt require time, but by employing time savers simultaneously, it is possible to keep this extra time to a minimum. The following two checklists of time-saving strategies are based on the suggestions gathered from TPEP pilot districts.

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<td>Take time in August to schedule all your teachers’ evaluations and conferences for the fall. This will be more efficient than waiting until the school year starts, and it will send the message that this work is the year’s priority.</td>
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<td>Show teachers examples of high-quality artifacts, student growth goals, and self-assessments so that they can model their work on excellent work versus guessing at what you want.</td>
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<td>Assure your teachers that this is not a portfolio-gathering exercise; evidence that is collected consists only of materials that teachers are creating, regardless of the evaluation.</td>
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<td>Blend the new evaluation system with Common Core State Standards initiatives.</td>
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<td>Assume that having everyone digest the new system will take time and allow for it from the start. Don’t think that if the teachers hear about the new evaluations once or twice, you’re done with training. Invest the time at the start of the year and then things will become more streamlined when people gain fluency. This is easier than playing catch-up.</td>
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<td>Consider evaluating one group around the same time (e.g., the entire second grade team). This will allow them to use any of their collaboration or planning time to support each other and gain more fluency in the framework.</td>
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<td>Dedicate early release or collaboration time for faculty to learn the materials to be successful.</td>
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<td>Hire an outside trainer to deepen everyone’s fluency in the frameworks while alleviating staff of this training responsibility.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hire additional support staff to take some of the administrative duties of principals while this is being launched.</td>
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<td>Consider using eVAL to streamline your system and make evaluation data available to both educators and evaluators so that both can add detail into the framework, working on the same document at the same time. (eVAL is the state of Washington’s Web-based tool for managing and documenting the evaluation process.)</td>
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<td>Develop districtwide negotiated forms so all administrators are on the same page (e.g., pre- and postconference forms and artifact review forms).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Share examples of completed forms, such as calendars, with teachers and evaluators. Streamline the forms for principal evaluation. For example, make most of the recommended forms “optional” and use them as discussion starters instead of something that must be filled out.</td>
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Key Questions for Consideration

Which existing examples of high-quality artifacts, student growth goals, and so on, can be shared, and what types of examples must be identified to provide educators with templates so that they do not need to reinvent the wheel?

What, if any, initiatives, activities, or duties can you limit, eliminate, or reassign to focus your entire team on this work for the year?

What options are there to seek support from district staff or school directors to hire additional administrative or other staff to alleviate the time burden?

What messages can you craft to convey that your team is already doing impactful work and that time spent documenting and deepening strong practice is well worth it?

What are the biggest time-draining endeavors for teachers, principals, and district staff? Is there a way to collect this information from your staff and take action to try to address them?

Are there existing convenings among evaluators in your district or across neighboring districts where opportunities can be built into the agenda to share time-saving strategies that work for your context?

Time Savers for Evaluators on the Job

| Type your observations directly into the rubric as you are observing a class. (Don’t take notes and then go back to translate them onto the tool because that will take more time than you have.) | Check |
| Not all evidence needs to be written comments. Use your smartphone to take pictures to put in the rubric and use your smartphone to record audio of students. (Note: Please get permission from your students’ parents to record them.) |  |
| Spend an extra 15 minutes at the end of your visit to complete your observations while you’re still in the classroom. This idea seems to add 15 minutes, but the idea is that those 15 minutes will help you complete the notes versus trying to get back to them once you go back to your office and are competing with voicemail, phone calls, e-mails, people stopping you in the hall and so forth. |  |
| Share initial observation notes with the person observed. Invite them to add more evidence you may have missed. This will enrich the tool and also give you a head start on the postobservation discussion. |  |
| Pre- and postconferences need to have some clear structure. While these conversations are the heart of the process, without structure, they can take one to two hours. These conversations have been called “rich, meaningful, fruitful, helpful, and productive.” But to be valuable, they also must be succinct. |  |

“The eVAL tool has helped save hours and hours of work on the final evaluation. Because it is designed to act like a collection tool, all of the evidence collected (artifacts, observation data, notes, reflections, etc.) are compiled for the evaluator in the summary report, organized by the state criteria. The beauty of this process is that it organizes the entire year of work - all those conversations, the goal setting, the discussions about supporting evidence, all of it! - into one place, where a teacher and principal can sit side-by-side and clearly and collaboratively score the final summary report in about 30 minutes. I regained dozens of hours I used to spend writing anecdotal narratives and focused on the quick and easy scoring with my teachers, and then wrote a “claim-evidence-impact” statement as a summary.”

—SHELLEY PETILLO, principal, Everett School District
Implementing New Evaluations: A Teacher’s Perspective

“...we all want the same thing. We all want to move forward in our careers—all being district office, evaluators, and teachers. We all want to improve student learning. When you can all work together, you realize that we really are on the same page.”

—RACHEL STITES, teacher, North Mason

This is a first-hand account from a teacher about the changes to the evaluation system as she experienced them, and it is being shared in an effort to paint a picture of what the process can look and feel like. Rachel Stites is a first-grade teacher in the North Mason School District. She has seven years of teaching experience and is on the Instructional Leadership Team, as well as a part of the TPEP pilot work. Her own words follow.

A Teacher’s Perspective

We were motivated to dive in to changing our evaluations because we wanted to improve student learning and teacher effectiveness. Historically, the norm was either one or two observations and then you had a final evaluation, and it was either you met the standard or you didn’t. There weren’t any conversations about what the next steps would be to improve. It told me things I already knew I did well and, yet, I wanted more clarity about what I could work on.

To make sure everyone felt comfortable using the new tools, we had a lot of training on the scoring. We took up staff meeting time. We had longer staff meetings where we would focus on each domain and we would be given these little scenarios, then together we would plunk it in the rubric where we felt it was and then have a lot of discussion about it.

The main results are that we are more focused on improving student learning, and we are all using the same language to talk about our own instruction. We’ve been doing “learning walks,” and I suspect that without that common understanding and common language, everyone may not have been willing to let others into their classroom to see their instruction so that we can learn from them. This has created an atmosphere of trust that allows us to talk even more openly about how we can improve practice.

Measuring engagement is different in each class, and it would look different with each area of the subject that is being taught. Sometimes it might look like students in a book; other times you might walk in, and they may seem off task to you, but when you get down and really listen to what the kids are talking about, they are having a discussion around the concept that they are learning or the subject that’s being taught.
I’ve even extended this way of thinking to my classroom by inviting students to set their own goals for writing. I told the kids that this year we were going to focus on setting goals in writing. Using the rubric that we create in class for their own writing, we would score our work, and we were going to do that every month. They would score themselves, and then I would give them a score as well. We have a weekly journal where they write every Monday about what they did on the weekend, and once a month they will score themselves, and then the following day, I try to meet with as many as I can to talk about whether there is a discrepancy between their score and my score. This allows me to change their goal if needed. I know that I’ve grown as a teacher because I’ve been keeping track of their scores, I have evidence of their writing, and how the scores that they gave themselves compare to the scores that I’ve given them. The students and I have gained a more clear shared understanding of what achievement looks like, and their scores are improving!

Since implementing the new system, my teaching has changed. I’m more focused on specific goals—using the rubric has really focused not only my learning but also the conversations I have with my evaluator on what my next steps should be to improve.

To enhance my time spent on evaluation activities, I am going to collaborate on this work next year. One of my colleagues who is also going to be on focused evaluation and I decided to set the same goal so that we can work together as a team a little more closely than we do at present.

The main advice to educators in the state of Washington is to talk and listen to each other. And if I could ask every teacher and principal in the country to focus on one thing, I would suggest they focus on student engagement and learning. When you know your students and can meet them at their level, and you can differentiate instruction for them, they will all be engaged in the learning. The higher the engagement, the more learning is going to take place.