



EVALUATOR TRAINING



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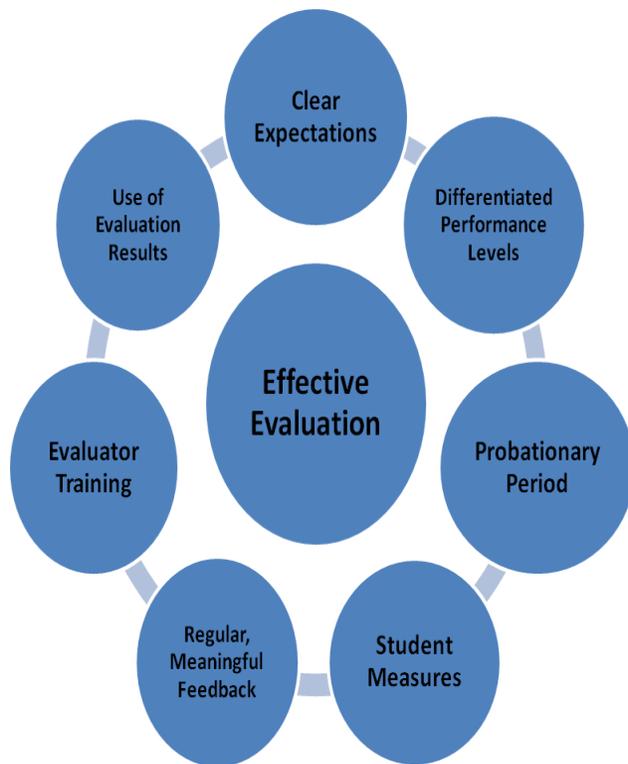
Guidelines for Evaluator Training and Meaningful Feedback

Introduction

An educator's primary responsibility is the learning of his or her students. Engaging in a process of continual growth and improvement of practice is a professional obligation to ensure the continued growth and improvement of student learning. The accurate assessment of educator performance is integral to any process of improving practice.

The state of Missouri has a long history of implementing various processes designed to improve the practice of teachers and leaders. In 1983, the Missouri legislature adopted statute [168.128 RSMo](#) directing the board of education of each school district to cause a comprehensive performance-based evaluation for each teacher employed by the district and the Department to provide suggested procedures for such an evaluation. This led to the creation of performance-based evaluation models for educators at all levels and marked the beginning of an intentional effort to link together the evaluation and the development of an educator's practice.

More recently, on June 29, 2012 the U.S. Department of Education approved Missouri's Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) waiver giving the state flexibility with respect to No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirements. Missouri's ESEA flexibility request addressed three principles: (1) college and career ready expectations for all students; (2) state developed differentiated recognition, accountability and support; and (3) structures for the support of effective instruction and leadership. In addressing the support of effective instruction and leadership, Missouri used current research to identify seven principles of effective evaluation. The research was in response to articles such as *The Widget Effect* (NTP, 2009) which challenged the effectiveness of current processes used to evaluate educators. It called for developing and implementing an evaluation system that not only accurately and reliably rates an educator's performance but also promotes growth and improvement in practice. Missouri's seven Essential Principles of Effective Evaluation which summarize this research include:

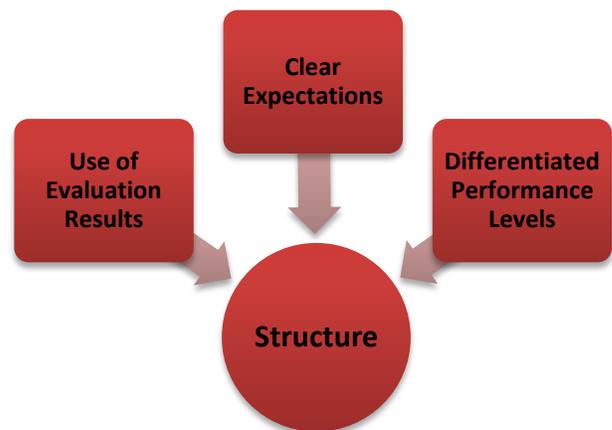


- Making determinations about an educator’s performance using research-based expectations and targets
- Using differentiated, developmental and discrete levels of performance
- Including a process to offer intensive support guiding the development of the novice educator during the probationary period
- Using measures of growth in student learning as a significant contributing factor when determining an educator’s effectiveness

- Developing and using strategies for providing regular and meaningful feedback
- Providing initial and periodic training for evaluators as well as those being evaluated
- Ensuring the use of evaluation results to guide employment policies and decisions

As articulated in Missouri’s Waiver Request and approved by the U.S. Department of Education, the local educator evaluation process for all district/LEAs will be guided by the research that supports these seven Essential Principles of Effective Evaluation by the 2014 – 2015 school year.

Three of the seven principles primarily address the structure of an effective evaluation process while the other four principles address implementation of effective educator evaluation.



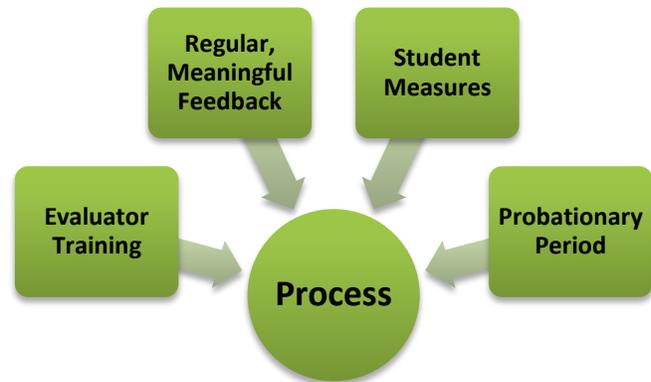
The principles of structure in an effective evaluation system are: (1) clear, research-based expectations, (2) differentiated performance levels, and (3) the use of evaluation results for the development of policies and to inform employment decisions.

The other four principles reflect research about how an effective process is implemented.

The principles of process are (1) support for novice educators during the probationary period, (2) measures of growth in student

learning are incorporated into the evaluation of

educators, (3) the inclusion of regular and meaningful feedback to all educators, and (4) systematic training of those doing the evaluation as well as those being evaluated.



Purpose

A group of stakeholders from Missouri’s professional organizations were organized into focus groups to provide clarification and identify areas of technical assistance for the four principles of process. Pilot districts across the state provided feedback to these focus groups as these guidelines were developed.

This guide is designed to assist Missouri LEAs in determining their approach to implementing one of the four principles of process: evaluator training. Specifically, this guide will help districts/LEAs with the implementation of this principle of process based on the following critical components:

- Includes demonstrated skills aligned to minimum quality assurance standards established by districts, LEAs and/or the state
- Provides training on conducting observations focused on the quality of instruction
- Includes assessing student data, analyzing artifacts and interpreting survey information
- Provides for the effective delivery of meaningful feedback
- Is offered both initially and periodically to those who evaluate educator performance

This guide will not answer every question or address every issue, but it will provide LEAs with a starting point. As districts/LEAs work to incorporate the research represented by the seven Essential Principles of Effective Evaluation and in particular how to ensure the training of evaluators, a great deal of collective learning will occur. This ongoing learning and development will be used as a means of providing ongoing updates and revisions to these guidelines as Missouri approaches its full implementation year in 2014 – 2015.

A full scale pilot project of Missouri’s model Educator Evaluation System was conducted in the 2012 – 2013 school year. More than 100 districts and several charter schools participated. These districts included both the largest and smallest school communities, and a broad representation of urban, suburban and rural districts. They represented low and high concentrations of minority students, free and reduced-lunch students, and low and high achieving students. These pilot districts represent

20,872 or just over 30%, of the state’s teachers. These teachers are responsible for educating 236,842 or nearly 27% of Missouri’s students. These pilot districts provided input and feedback on the content of these guidelines in addition to piloting the overall process in the state’s model Educator Evaluation System.

2012-2013 Pilot Project Districts
Model Educator Evaluation System



- | | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Adair Co. R-II | Ferguson-Florissant R-II | Leaton R-X | Southwest R-V |
| Advance R-IV | Festus R-VI | Lexington R-V | Springfield |
| Allen Village | Fox C-6 | Lift for Life Academy | St. James R-I |
| Alton R-IV | Francis Howell R-III | Linn Co. R-I | St. Joseph |
| Arcadia Valley R-II | Ft. Zumwalt R-II | Malta Bend R-V | Ste. Genevieve Co. R-II |
| Ash Grove R-IV | Gasconade County R-II | Mexico 59 | Stoutland R-II |
| Atlanta C-3 | Gorin R-III | Milan C-2 | Sturgeon R-V |
| B. Banneker Academy | Green City R-I | Moberly | Sullivan |
| Belton 124 | Greenville R-II | Morgan County R-I | Summersville R-II |
| Bevier C-4 | Hazelwood | Morgan County R-II | Swedesborg R-III |
| Braymer C-4 | Henry County R-I | Mountain Grove R-III | Valley Park |
| Brookfield R-III | Hickman Mills C-1 | Mountain View-Birch Tree R-III | Valley R-VI |
| Brunswick R-II | Higbee R-VIII | North Wood R-IV | Van-Far R-I |
| Campbell R-II | Holden R-III | Oak Grove R-VI | Warrensburg R-VI |
| Carrollton R-VII | Howell Valley R-I | Palmyra R-I | Webb City R-VII |
| Central R-III | Hume R-VIII | Paris R-II | Wellsville Middletown R-I |
| Chilhowee R-IV | Junction Hill C-12 | Pattonville R-III | Wentzville R-IV |
| Clarksburg C-2 | Kearney R-I | Pike County R-III | West Plains R-VII |
| Clearwater R-I | Kelso C-7 | Ralls Co. R-II | Willow Springs R-IV |
| Clinton Co. R-III | Keytesville R-III | Renick R-V | Winona R-III |
| Community R-VI | Kingston 42 | Richland R-IV | Worth County R-III |
| Crawford Co. R-I | Kirkville R-III | Richwoods R-VII | Zalma R-V |
| Crocker R-II | Laclede County C-5 | Scott City R-I | |
| Drexel R-IV | Lakeland R-III | Sedalia 200 | |
| Fairfax R-3 | Laquey R-V | Shawnee R-III | |
| Farmington R-VI | Lebanon R-III | Southwest Livingston Co. R-I | |

Updated 11/21/2012

Specific Recommendations of Pilot Project Districts

Key Ideas

- A district's local evaluation process must be structured and implemented based on the seven essential principles of effective evaluation by 2014 – 2015.
- One of the essential principles maintains that providing regular, meaningful feedback is essential for promoting growth in practice.
- Another of the essential principles summarizes the research for providing a comprehensive strategy for training evaluators.
- This guide offers clarification and technical assistance for evaluator training and providing meaningful feedback.

Training the Evaluator

Missouri's Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) waiver request offers the following regarding evaluator training:

Reliable and valid measures of performance are essential factors in ensuring that annual growth for teachers and leaders results in growth for students. Evaluators who collect these measures of evidence and provide feedback must be highly trained and objective to ensure that ratings are fair, accurate and reliable. Evaluators demonstrating skills aligned to minimum quality assurance standards may include master teachers and peers as well as other external, trained third party people from within or outside the district that assist the building principal with the overall responsibility of moving staff to higher levels of performance. The Department, in partnership with regional centers, the state's educational associations, preparation institutions, and local LEAs will provide certification standards and processes for training evaluators. Training will be delivered in-person, but may also utilize online resources in order to keep the cost of training as minimal as possible.

These guidelines offer quality assurance standards for the effective training of evaluators. They are not an exhaustive checklist but rather a representation of what current research maintains is necessary for establishing a process that is reliable and consistent. Training protocols and the necessary professional development to accompany them must be developed and in place by the 2014-2015 academic school year.

Important Elements of Evaluator Training

In this current era of reform highlighting next generation evaluation processes used for high-stakes personnel decisions, it is critical that evaluators have the ability to make performance determinations that are accurate and defensible. Creating this level of skill in the evaluator requires a training process that is comprehensive and effective. There are three important elements to be considered and addressed in developing an effective evaluator training process. For the training process to be effective at accurately and consistently assessing performance and producing inter-rater reliability, it must

1. Build the capacity of the evaluator
2. Create conducive conditions to allow for accurate performance assessment
3. Create structures to monitor and ensure quality

Using Training to Build the Evaluator's Capacity

Building the capacity of the evaluator requires intensive training to establish a level of competence at assessing an educator's performance. It should include live practice as much as possible. However, the use of online video banks is another potential alternative. It is necessary to assess the evaluator's skill both initially and then periodically. The initial training should establish a district-determined acceptable rating, perhaps using a kind of cut score or competence level, to ensure all evaluators have hit a minimum expectation. Periodic follow-up trainings are then necessary to ensure the level of competence remains at an accurate level.

Training may include the use of different strategies to reinforce the evaluator's skills. For example, deep dive trainings are intensive trainings with a very narrow focus on a particular aspect like interpreting levels of student engagement. This strategy ensures a thorough understanding of a particular skill or concept and multiple repetitions to ensure the evaluator performs it with fidelity.

Another example is one-to-one coaching where expert direction on the process is provided. This strategy ensures personalized attention from a knowledgeable coach that can focus on the particular skills of the person with whom they are working.

Paired observations provide comparable learning of one evaluator to another. This allows evaluators to learn from each other and collectively grow in their understanding and skill.

Group collaboration is another possible strategy to promote collective learning. In this strategy, multiple people act as a type of learning community and working together collectively improve their understanding of the evaluation process and their ability to accurately assess performance.

Building capacity in an evaluator and ensuring accurate ratings requires the training to address bias and the collection of evidence. When thinking about biases and their influence on evaluators, it is helpful to common rater error of central tendency. This is the tendency to evaluate performance towards the middle of the scale to avoid extreme ratings. When considering this, there are two types of bias to consider.

- The first references the particular preferences of the evaluator. As virtually all evaluators have at one time been teachers, preferences may exist on factors like classroom organization, strategies for building rapport with students, the use of particular instructional practices or assessments, etc. While it is not possible to remove these biases, it is helpful to be aware of them and limit them as much as possible. Questioning the rationale behind the rating may surface particular biases or preferences.
- Bias will also exist based on the prior history of the relationship between the evaluator and the teacher and may result in a stricter or more lenient rating based on that relationship. Overall, guard against bias and making interpretations by basing ratings on evidence. One may avoid such bias by having different evaluators observe a teacher.

Assessing educator performance requires the use of district-approved tools like observation templates, guides, rubrics, etc. The training provided should include a deep understanding of the rationale for the tool and its appropriate use. This should include knowledge of how the instrument was developed, the philosophy or theory of action that guides it, general descriptions of its scales and levels, and its proper protocol. It is important to fully understand the different points on the scale and learn to differentiate between them.

Videos, as mentioned earlier, are a very helpful tool for learning how to determine levels of performance in real practice. Some districts have begun to acquire taped lessons of people on staff and have used them as a development opportunity. Others have attempted to access external resources (i.e. PD 360, Teaching Channel, MET project). It may be best to start in the middle of the scale and work out to the high and backward to low as it is often easier to recognize extreme performances quickly while determinations in the middle are the most difficult. Using videos can provide concrete examples and rationales for a rating that has been tied to an element or target of performance, especially when provided abstract descriptions.

The most effective training includes multiple practice opportunities at authentic scoring. This would involve multiple opportunities to score an authentic lesson and receiving feedback on those scores including explanations as to why scores differ. The overall goal is for the replication of correct or consistent ratings. In other words, multiple evaluators arrive at the same rating of the same demonstration of performance consistently. Evaluators will then give the right scores for the right reasons. Ratings will not be assigned or influenced by luck or by accident. The training is designed to establish proper skills in the evaluator to collect relevant evidence to arrive at and support the correct rating. It is important for evaluators to be familiar with the Missouri Learning Standards to ensure they know what to look for in the teaching of those standards.

Creating Conducive Conditions

For effective evaluation to occur, the conditions must be right. Even the most rigorously trained evaluator will fail to be accurate on their ratings and offer meaningful feedback should they encounter significant obstacles. Therefore, the training of evaluators must address how to create an environment of trust that is conducive to effective evaluation. This will include the importance of building a positive, professional culture based on expectations of continuous improvement. The accurate observation – meaningful feedback process is about the improvement of practice.

Effective evaluation will also require administrators to be more of an instructional leader than a school manager. A significant challenge will be that while the administrator is attempting to spend increased time and effort focused on the improvement of teaching and learning, the school must still be managed. This suggests that a very critical aspect that must be addressed is the “TIME” issue. Like everyone else, administrators have only so many hours in a day to devote to the many responsibilities they face.

Although principals may have the appropriate skill set and the desire to be more involved in leading instructional improvement, data from studies on how principals on average spend their time reveals that up to 75 percent of a principal’s time can be spent on management issues. As the leader of a building with multiple teachers of differing grade levels and content, this creates a serious issue. It will require administrators to be very intentional about where and how they choose to spend the time they have. It is helpful as a first step to have a clear understanding of exactly how their time is spent.

Maintaining a very detailed and accurate calendar is an important way of gathering and analyzing data on how time is allocated. This can create cognitive dissonance for the leader between where they actually are spending their time verse where they feel they ought to be spending their time. With this data, administrators can work to intentionally distribute some of their managerial tasks, set goals to engage in activities related to instructional improvement, and begin to shift a percentage of the time spent on management to time spent on instruction. This increased time spent on instructional

activities will allow administrators to ensure an appropriate amount of time is spent on evaluating performance and providing meaningful feedback.

Additionally, an evaluator should avoid trying to do too many evaluations at one time. This often results in evaluators “rushing the process” and trying to “cut corners” instead of authentically assessing performance. An effective evaluation must have focus and specificity and this requires time. Evaluators should plan accordingly to ensure the proper time is allotted to not only the observation and gathering of data but to providing meaningful feedback. This is a commitment that the district must make to ensure that this administrative duty is a priority. An administrator may consider the use of peers, coaches, external third party evaluators to assist in gathering performance data and offering feedback as a strategy for addressing the issue of very limited time available to principals.

Promoting a “POSITIVE CULTURE” about the evaluation process is important to creating conducive conditions. One important aspect to consider is the communication and engagement plan a district/LEA has to build the awareness and understanding about the evaluation process to everyone in the system. A positive culture is based on the belief that educators engage in the evaluative process, not out of compliance, but out of a sense of professionalism that maintains we should always try to improve for the sake of the learning of students.

While self-reflection on performance can and should be an important and included component, the most accurate feedback about performance cannot come from a person while they are doing it. Coaches watch players from the sideline for a reason. Aligning professional development, the acquisition of new knowledge and skills and its application, to feedback on performance that includes opportunities for growth identified through the evaluation process will drive continuous improvement.

Monitor and Ensure Quality

The training of evaluators is an ongoing process. It includes an initial training and then follow-up, periodic training. This is important to ensure accuracy and reliability. Inter-rater agreement is the extent to which two independent observers assign the same score or set of scores to the same

classroom session. It is necessary to ensure accuracy and therefore the overall goal of the training process. Basically it is asking the question: Would two different people provide the same rating on the same performance? This is not a question about the evaluation instrument itself as much as it is a question about how the tool is used. Over time, “rater drift” occurs, indicating a movement away from accuracy. The fact is, people forget. Skills not used continuously tend to diminish. Ongoing, periodic “refreshers” minimize rater drift. It is important to include a mechanism for checking for patterns and inconsistencies as a part of the process. This might include checking evaluators against other evaluators and looking for reliability across the system. It would also include a process for periodic re-calibration to maintain accuracy overtime. This would also include regularly checking inter-rater reliability as evaluators practice new skills and periodically after skills are well-established.

A Final Word on Reliability and Validity

Reliable instruments are consistent when they are used consistently by a trained evaluator. The first challenge is to choose an instrument that is designed so sufficiently trained evaluators can produce consistent results. Once the results generated by an instrument and the evaluator who uses it are reliable, only then can the results be valid. An evaluation instrument itself is not valid. Rather, the use and interpretation of the instrument’s scores and results makes it valid. The evidence supporting the results allows reasonable conclusions and inferences about the performance it articulates. The results can be used to improve the practice articulated in the instrument.

Key Components for Training the Evaluator	
Strategy	Recommendation and/or Example
Initial and Periodic	Intensive initial training: <i>meet an established minimum expectation</i> Periodic training: <i>address a decrease in accuracy over time</i>
Address Bias	Ignore personal preferences: <i>hair length, teaching style, classroom management</i> Ignore prior relationship: <i>long time colleague, previous conflicts, different context</i> Avoid Interpretations: <i>“I don’t care for this” – instead, focus on evidence</i>
Know the Instrument and the process	Philosophy and the rationale: <i>fundamental belief about assessing performance</i> Protocol: <i>include and any templates, guides, rubrics, frameworks, etc.</i> Differentiated levels: <i>recognize differences in the middle as well as the extremes</i>
Practice, Practice, Practice	Authentic Practice: <i>as close to the real thing as possible</i> Overall goal: <i>consistency of correct ratings</i>
Conducive Conditions	Address the time issue: <i>allow enough time to accommodate the process</i> Build positive culture: <i>it’s about growth, not about “GOTCH’YA”</i>
Monitoring and Ensuring Quality	Avoid rater drift: <i>periodic follow-up training maintains high levels of accuracy</i> Reliability audits: <i>look for patterns and inconsistencies across the system</i>
Complies with MSIP	Meets any standards for training evaluators as identified in the MSIP Process as well as the Essential Principles of Effective Evaluation

The Role of Peers in the Feedback and Evaluation Process

In addressing the fact that most teachers do not receive enough meaningful feedback to positively impact an improvement in practice, many states, districts and schools across the country are looking more closely at the potential of peer performance review and feedback and perhaps even a part of the evaluation process. Information about this practice is offered here for district/LEA consideration, although the particular context will dictate how possible it is to include the use of peers in the evaluation process.

It is important to determine who will be a peer reviewer with the responsibility of providing feedback to other colleagues. It is important to consider what types of peer reviewers are most compatible with the district. In order to ensure their credibility, those selected should themselves be genuinely considered a high quality teacher. A district must offer specific guidelines about the process that will be used to select peer evaluators, the particular responsibilities the peer will assume and the training process they will participate to ensure they have the necessary understanding and skills.

The target of the observation and the nature of the feedback peers provide should be directly linked to teacher standards. Being a master teacher does not guarantee they would accurately observe performance and provide meaningful feedback. Providing feedback to adults who are your colleagues as opposed to students is a very different skill set. Peers should participate in district designed training specific to these new responsibilities and receive ongoing administrative support. Peers may support the evaluation process in the following ways:

- Contribute to support and evaluation or just evaluation
- Conduct informal observations or formal observations
- Gather evidence on some aspects of practice or on all aspects of practice
- Conduct some observations or all observations
- Work exclusively in one school or across the district or in multiple districts
- Work with specific types of teachers (e.g. specific grades or subject, veteran, novice, struggling) or all teachers generally
- Serve as a peer observer part-time or full-time

The peer observer's role in the overall performance evaluation will be dependent on the district/LEA's size and culture. Districts/LEAs might want to consider the following factors in this determination:

- Financial cost – the use of peers in the evaluation process might require hiring supplemental staff to replace them when they leave the classroom to be trained and to observe in other classrooms.
 - This might be particularly challenging in smaller districts/LEAs with limited personnel and staff

- In larger districts, peers may not be familiar with those they observe which might be beneficial in terms of bias but might require opportunities to build rapport
- Defining and communication roles – because the peer is performing administrative functions, their role must be clearly articulated in policy and, where applicable, in any labor negotiations and agreements
- Objectivity – peers serving in their own schools might be particularly susceptible to bias. High-quality training, monitoring and retraining are critical to reduce subjectivity.

Key Ideas

- Build the capacity of the evaluator's through intensive training and then periodic, follow-up training.
- Intensive training should include an awareness of bias vs. evidence,, a thorough understanding of the instrument, its scales and process, and multiple opportunities for authentic practice.
- Training should also include attention to creating conducive conditions based on trust and establishing structures to ensure ongoing quality.
- A possible option for district/LEA consideration might be the use of peers as a part of the evaluation process.

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