



Massachusetts Department of
ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY
EDUCATION

Massachusetts Model System for Educator Evaluation

Part I: District-Level Planning and Implementation Guide

January 2012

Practical Requirements and Considerations

Key Features of the New Educator Evaluation Framework

Starting in fall 2012 school committees will begin applying the framework when they evaluate superintendents. Superintendents will apply the same framework when they evaluate assistant superintendents, principals and other district administrators. Principals, in turn, will apply the framework when they evaluate teachers, caseload educators¹ and school-level administrators. Everyone is "in this boat" together.

The framework calls for key features that apply to every educator:

1. **Statewide Standards and Indicators for Effective Administrative Leadership and Teaching Practice.** The regulations define Standards and Indicators for Effective Teaching Practice and for Administrative Leadership Practice (603 CMR 35.03 and 603 CMR 35.04).

Standards for Administrators

Instructional Leadership

Management and Operations

Family and Community Engagement

Professional Culture

Standards for Teachers

Curriculum, Planning and Assessment

Teaching All Students

Family and Community Engagement

Professional Culture

2. **Role-specific rubrics define the Standards and Indicators.** The regulations require that the Standards and Indicators be "translated" into rubrics that describe practice in detail at different levels of proficiency (603 CMR 35.06). Educators and evaluators will use the rubric most appropriate to the role of the educator as a foundation for self-assessment, formative assessment and summative evaluation. Rubrics give substance to the Standards and Indicators. Each Indicator is broken down into Elements that are in turn described at four levels. Rubrics are a tool for making explicit and specific the behaviors and actions present at each level of performance. They can foster constructive dialogue about those expectations and how to improve practice. The rubrics prompt careful analysis and discussion.
3. **Three Categories of Evidence.**
 - **Multiple measures of student learning, growth, and achievement,**
 - **Judgments based on observation and artifacts of professional practice, including unannounced observations of practice of any duration; and,**
 - **Additional evidence relevant to one or more Performance Standards (603 CMR 35.07(1)).**
4. **A Statewide Performance Rating Scale.** The performance of every educator is rated against the Performance Standards described above. All educators earn one of four ratings: *Exemplary*, *Proficient*, *Needs Improvement*, or *Unsatisfactory*. Each rating has a specific meaning:

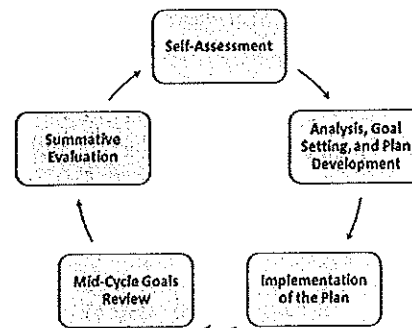
¹ Caseload educators are educators who teach or counsel individual or small groups of students through consultation with a classroom teacher, such as school nurses, guidance or adjustment counselors, speech and language pathologists, and some special education teachers.

- *Proficient* performance is understood to be fully satisfactory. This is the rigorous expected level of performance; demanding, but attainable.
- *Exemplary* performance represents a level of performance that exceeds the already high standard of Proficient. A rating of Exemplary is reserved for performance on an Indicator or Standard that is of such a high level that it could serve as a model. Few educators are expected to earn Exemplary ratings on more than a handful of Indicators.
- *Needs Improvement* indicates performance that is below the requirements of a Standard but is not considered to be Unsatisfactory at the time. Improvement is necessary and expected. For new educators, Needs Improvement can be understood as "developing" in cases where the educator is "on track" to proficiency within three years.
- *Unsatisfactory* performance is merited when performance has not significantly improved following a rating of Needs Improvement, or performance is consistently below the requirements of a standard and is considered inadequate, or both.

The regulations also call for a higher bar for tenure: "Professional teacher status, pursuant to G.L. ch. 71, § 41, should be granted only to educators who have achieved ratings of Proficient or Exemplary on each Performance Standard and overall. A principal considering making an employment decision that would lead to professional teacher status for any educator who has not been rated proficient or exemplary on each Performance Standard and overall on the most recent evaluation shall confer with the superintendent of schools by May 1. The principal's decision is subject to review and approval by the superintendent." (See 603 CMR 35.08(6))

5. **Rating Educator Impact on Student Learning.** Every educator earns a second rating that reflects his/her impact on student learning. The Board added this more explicit focus on student learning by requiring that the impact on student learning of every educator be rated high, moderate or low based on trends and patterns in learning gains on state and district-determined measures of student learning, growth and achievement
6. **Four Educator Plans.** The regulations define four differentiated Educator Plans. The following three plans apply only to "experienced" educators, defined as a teacher with Professional Teacher Status (PTS) or an administrator with more than three years in an administrative position in the district:
 - *The Self-Directed Growth Plan*
 - *The Directed Growth Plan*
 - *The Improvement Plan*
- Few new educators are expected to be Proficient on every Indicator or even every Standard in their first years of practice. Therefore, the fourth plan applies to teachers without Professional Teacher Status, an administrator in their first three years in a district, or an educator in a new assignment (at the discretion of an evaluator):
 - *The Developing Educator Plan* is developed by the educator and the evaluator and is for one school year or less.

7. Five-Step Evaluation Cycle with Goals for Student Learning and Professional Practice. For every educator, evaluation begins with self-assessment. The self-assessment leads to establishing at least two goals in the Educator's Plan for the year, one focusing on student learning and another focusing on improving the educator's own practice. The cycle concludes with the summative evaluation and the rating of the educator's impact on student learning. It also is a continuous improvement process in which evidence from the summative evaluation and rating of impact on learning become important sources of information for the educator's self-assessment and subsequent goal setting 603 CMR 35.06.



Implementation Timetable

The regulations call for districts to phase in components of the evaluation system over several years:

Below is the schedule for key ESE and district action over the next eighteen months.

Winter/Spring 2012: Race to the Top (RTTT) districts begin collective bargaining

Summer 2012: RTTT districts begin training for evaluators and develop plans for a process to identify, develop and/or adopt district-determined measures

By September 2012: RTTT districts submit their proposed educator evaluation systems to ESE for review, including collective bargaining agreements for teachers and administrators represented by bargaining units (Phase I)

September 2012: RTTT districts begin implementation of educator evaluation for superintendents, principals, teachers and other administrators

September 2013: All districts are implementing the educator evaluation framework in ways consistent with the educator evaluation regulations

Superintendent Evaluation

The model applies the new regulations to superintendent evaluation, adapting them to meet the requirements of the open meeting and public records laws. The requirement in the framework for every educator to propose at least one goal related to student learning and one to professional practice is expanded for superintendents to include proposing 3-5 district improvement goals, thereby making setting and meeting ambitious goals a more central aspect of superintendent evaluation.

Principal Evaluation

It calls on principals, in collaboration with superintendents, to develop 3-5 school improvement goals to complement student learning and professional practice goals required in the framework. The rubric is based entirely on the Standards and Indicators detailed in the regulation. The 20 indicators are broken down into 42 elements, each with descriptors of practice at four levels of proficiency

Teacher and Caseload Educator Evaluation

Model contract language is available, as well, in part IV, developed by ESE legal staff with the help of candid advice and feedback from the state associations representing school committees, superintendents, human resource administrators, and teachers: MASC, MASS, MASPA, MTA, and AFT-MA.

District Options: Adopt the Model, Adapt it, or Revise Existing Systems

No district is compelled to adopt the model system. School committees and school districts can adopt the model system, adapt the model system, or revise their existing evaluation systems to align with the framework. That said, the Board established a critical role for ESE:

All evaluation systems and changes to evaluation systems shall be subject to the Department's review to ensure the systems are consistent with the Board's Principles of Evaluation. A District may continue to use its existing evaluation systems until the District has fully implemented its new system.²

"the model system developed by the Department need not be submitted for review...if the district implements it as written"³.

The educator evaluation regulations apply to four educators or groups of educators:

1. Superintendents and other district administrators serving under employment contracts;
2. Principals;

ESE's Review Process

Districts that decide to adapt the model or revise their existing system for one or more groups of educators will need to complete the Educator Evaluation Review Questionnaire for each group for which it is adapting the model or revising its existing system. In both cases, the district will need to complete a separate Educator Evaluation Review Questionnaire for the group(s) of educators for which it is adapting the model, and submit its proposed protocol and rubric(s), including any relevant contract language for review.

The more components of the model a district adapts, the more extensive its response to the questionnaire will need to be. For example, a district that adopts the model contract for teachers with a few changes will be responding to fewer questions than one that makes many changes. Similarly, a district that adopts the model process for evaluating its principals but wants to keep its existing rubric will have fewer questions to respond to than a district that maintains both its protocol and its rubric.

Collective Bargaining

The procedures for conducting educator evaluation are a mandatory subject of collective bargaining in Massachusetts.⁴ As such, all districts will be engaged in collective bargaining in order to implement the framework for teachers, caseload educators and administrators represented by bargaining agents. Many

² See CMR 603 35.11(2)

³ See CMR 603 35.1 (3).

⁴ M.G.L. c 71 s 38. See Appendix D

of the early adopter districts see the new framework as a welcome opportunity for labor and management to engage deeply and constructively in the conversation, collaboration and negotiation required to establish a sound foundation for implementing new practices. They understand that formal negotiations are only one step in a much longer process of collaboration that will be needed to build, monitor, update, and revise an educator evaluation process that is fair, transparent, credible, and leads to educator growth and development.

The Model Collective Bargaining Contract Language developed by ESE (Part IV of the Model System for Educator Evaluation) contains very specific language. A district that chooses to adopt the model will adopt the contract language in its entirety. Districts may choose to adapt it to local conditions by adding, deleting and/or revising language. Districts that choose to adapt the model or revise their existing system will need to complete the Educator Evaluation Questionnaire described earlier. The Questionnaire serves as both a self-assessment to help districts know ahead of time if the evaluation process they are planning conforms to the regulations, and as the vehicle for presenting its process for ESE review.

Districts are encouraged to conduct bargaining in a way that permits the parties to return to educator evaluation periodically over the next several years. Districts may want to consider the use of side letters, memorandum of understanding, "re-opener clauses" and other mechanisms for facilitating the work that lies ahead.

Reporting Requirements and Educator Confidentiality

The regulations require districts to provide ESE with individual educator evaluation data for each educator. The regulations are explicit that educator evaluation data for each educator will not be made public. The single exception is the superintendent whose evaluation must be conducted in public and whose summative evaluation is a public document, consistent with state open meeting and public records laws. For all other educators, the regulations guarantee that any information concerning an educator's formative assessment, formative evaluation or summative evaluation is considered personnel information and is not subject to disclosure under the public records law. However, aggregate data that do not identify individual educators may be made public. ESE will also produce detailed collection guidance for the ongoing school year implementations. Appendix F details district reporting requirements beginning for some districts at the close of the 2011-12 school year, and for most districts at the close of the 2012-13 school year.

Strategic Choices and Opportunities

Coherence Among District Initiatives

One way to build coherence among district initiatives is to link these strategies to critical work already underway. Each offers opportunities to link district initiatives in ways that create synergy, support and coherence.

For example, strong vertical alignment between individual, team, school and district goals will accelerate improvement. All schools and districts are transitioning to the new MA Frameworks in Mathematics and English Language Arts. Team goal setting in the evaluation cycle can be used to advance this work: teacher teams can share the common professional practice goal of learning "backwards design" principles and applying them to design together units that align with the new Frameworks.

"Unpacking" rubrics will help educators develop a deep, shared understanding of what proficient leadership or teaching practice looks like. Working together with rubrics offers a rare opportunity for teams of administrators and teachers to learn together and sets the stage for individual and collective growth as educators see more clearly what will be involved to develop their practice to the next level and

identify colleagues who can help get them there. A key to having the rubrics contribute to coherence rather than fragmentation will be in the choice of what indicators and elements to focus on first. Linking that choice to other district priorities is important. Similarly, analyzing student learning data together at administrative teams will sharpen each member's insights and can lead to decisions to refine the action steps for district-wide learning goals. Creating time and space for these conversations at district administrator meetings is an important way to create synergy and coherence for they will help create the shared vision of effective practice that is the critical ingredient for nearly every strong and improving district and school.

Collaboration: Not Always Easy or Comfortable, but Essential

Ever since the formation of the Task Force, ESE has been challenged to work in new ways to engage stakeholders. We have reached out to leaders of many state associations, including, but certainly not limited, to these (in alphabetical order):

- American Federation of Teachers-Massachusetts (AFT-MA)
- Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC)
- Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (MASS)
- Massachusetts Elementary School Principals Association (MESPA)
- Massachusetts Secondary School Principals Association (MSSAA)
- Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA)

These have not always been easy conversations. We have worked to make time and space for candid conversation and invited stakeholders to challenge long-held assumptions of their own, of others and of ours at ESE. We have worked to place BOTH student learning AND educator growth and development at the center of our conversations. We have worked hard to bring traditional adversaries "to the table" to seek common ground. We have not always reached agreement, but we have always learned. These first components of the model system are far more promising tools and resources because of the challenging questions posed, suggestions made, and assumptions challenged. We believe the same will be true at the local level: the conversations will not always be easy; but they are essential.

Addressing Feasibility

A singular strength of the Framework is that it relies on practices that hold great promise for enhancing educator growth and development. At the same time, many of these same practices help make the framework "doable" and desirable from the perspectives of both the educator and evaluator.

- **Rubrics** describe administrative and teaching practice in detail across different levels of performance. For educators, rubrics help describe what skillful practice looks like and what steps the educator needs to take to move further along the continuum of practice toward exemplary performance. For both educators and evaluators, rubrics help make explicit and transparent the next steps the educator needs to take.
- **Educator Self-Assessment** gives the educator the initial opportunity to use the rubric and data about student learning to assess their own strengths and impact on student learning, thereby taking more control of their own growth and development. For the evaluator, an educator's thoughtful self-assessment paves the way for a clear focus for observation and feedback.
- **Educator-Proposed Goals** again give the educator the opportunity to take charge of identifying how s/he wants to grow as a professional. When well-crafted, goals give both the educator and the evaluator a straightforward way to assess progress.
- **Team Goals** give educators the opportunity to learn with and from colleagues as they tackle challenging problems of practice together. For evaluators team goals are an efficient way to organize school improvement and give specific, focused evaluation feedback to educators.
- **Brief, Unannounced Classroom Observations with Brief Feedback** are encouraged by the regulations which require "unannounced observations of varied duration". Brief unannounced observations followed by focus and brief feedback give educators the opportunity to receive frequent, focused feedback based on an authentic understanding of their classroom practice. For evaluators, short observations followed by brief feedback are a realistic and efficient way to gain knowledge of an educator's practice and provide meaningful feedback. Brief unannounced visits fit the hectic schedule of a school administrator.
- **Educator Collection of Evidence** means that the educator and evaluator share responsibility for assembling the evidence that will be used to assess progress.