

Educator Evaluation System FAQ

Answers to questions gathered during the PD session of December 5, 2012

A note to the faculty and administration: Below you will find my good faith effort at answering the questions gathered during the 12/5 professional development session on educator evaluations. Much remains to be answered as we work through this process together. As things become clarified I will attempt to revise answers.

Thank you,
Steven Stone

1. Is there a written evaluation document? If so, how long is it and will we be able to see it prior to the implementation of the evaluation process?
The School Committee and Administration are currently negotiating the working model for Dracut. It will be very similar in structure and format to the Model System produced by the DESE.
2. Does our group's definition of "proficient" have any bearing on the DESE standards, etc.?
The definition of Proficient is regulatory and applies to educators throughout the Commonwealth.
3. Will evaluators meet with us to discuss what they have seen in an effort to clarify their understanding of our individual classroom practices?
The process is meant to be circular, in that feedback will occur and educators will be obligated to gather evidence of their progress related to goals and areas of focus related to the rubric.
4. What happens if goals become unattainable or need to be revised due to individual circumstances (i.e. change of assignment)?
Such circumstances would be subject to discussion with an evaluator, and possible revisions of particular goals.
5. How will those of us who do not teach or provide any "direct service" to students be evaluated with this new tool? (School psychologists, physical therapists, autism specialist/BCBA, etc.)
Specialized Instructional Support Personnel are subject to the same system as classroom teachers. The rubric used is similar but altered to account for differences in job function. The district determined measures used in assessing impact on student learning are still under consideration.

6. Will sufficient time be allocated at the end of the cycle to gather evidence?
The gathering of evidence will occur once a plan is approved by the evaluator. It is expected that educators will gather evidence throughout the cycle.
7. How are the evaluators “trained” to recognize “quality” teaching?
Work has already begun within the administration to “calibrate” understandings of what is meant by the definitions of quality teaching as defined in the rubrics, as well as a general consensus of what good teaching looks like.
8. What happens if you teach different subjects? If an evaluator comes in six or seven times, they may see various courses and not a consistent set of practices.
The use of multiple unannounced observations is meant to give a clearer picture of teaching practice. Evaluators and educators will communicate relative to what an evaluator wishes to observe. Evaluators will seek to observe various components of classroom instruction and minimize observations of particular portions of lessons
9. How much evidence is sufficient?
Part of the answer will be determined through the current negotiations, and part will always be subject to what an evaluator wishes to see, and what an educator believes the evaluator needs to see.
10. Will we be provided templates and samples for writing our SMART goals?
Principals have examples and templates for discussion with faculty.
11. Is a new assignment based on new content, such as a former math teacher who is assigned to teach science courses, or is it based on a change in grade level within the same subject area, or is it based on a change in course, such as teaching Algebra II one year and Calculus the next?
The specific parameters of this issue are currently being dealt with in negotiations.
12. What role will the student growth rating play in determining the length of the educator plan, especially if you teach different classes each year?
The length/duration of an educator plan is related to professional status and the rating of a prior year.
13. Will classes be heterogeneously divided?
To date there has been no discussion or guidance from the DESE relative to this matter.
14. Will we be afforded additional time to set goals, analyze data, collect evidence, etc.?
The timeframes related to the evaluation plan are being discussed in the ongoing negotiations.

15. How will this system be implemented and maintained with our current administrative staffing concerns?
The district is mandated to undertake the new evaluation system regardless of staffing patterns.
16. What if trust is an issue with the evaluator?
Concerns about trust should be worked out on an individual basis as it is now. There is no mechanism in the model system to address this concern. The training that has occurred to date has focused a great deal on trust. Such work will continue.
17. What if limited resources/technology prevents you from attaining proficiency?
Goals and expectations will be set based on available resources.
18. How often will communication between parents and teachers be listed as proficient?
This issue will be subject to discussions during negotiations and between evaluators and educators.
19. What criteria will determine if it will be a one or a two year cycle for the survey or plan?
The specific mechanism has yet to be determined.
20. If under proficient or exemplary category, is there money for professional development to help me improve?
The district is currently reviewing existing professional development and will be developing a professional development plan tied to strategic goals/initiatives.
21. Is a mentor responsible for training new teachers on the new procedures of evaluations, are they trained in their practicum, or is that the responsibility of administrators?
District administrators (in subsequent years) will be the primary providers of guidance on the evaluation system.
22. If part of the evaluation is based on MCAS scores, what does that mean for classes with no MCAS tests, such as history?
The regulations require multiple measures of student performance. MCAS cannot be the sole measure.
23. Will we always have the same evaluator to create a consistent relationship or will it change periodically for a new viewpoint?
There is no indication that the current evaluator-educator dynamics will change. In general terms, the evaluator you have now will likely be your evaluator in the future.
24. How do you measure impact on students when they are only with a special for 36 days out of the school year?
Further guidance from the DESE is needed in this area.

25. Does a team goal have to include all members of a given team? For example, in grade 6 math, do all teachers need to be part of the goal or can 2-3 teachers of the team be attached to one goal?
There is no regulation framing the composition of a team. That would be a discussion with the evaluator, who has final authority over such decisions.
26. What student data might be used for a teacher who doesn't teach a subject that is tested by MCAS?
This issue is under review. The district anticipates additional guidance from the DESE.
27. Who will provide the student growth percentiles to teachers?
The district is currently undergoing a comprehensive review of data systems. Training for administrators in the use of new data tools. Training for teachers in the use and interpretation of teachers will occur in the future.
28. How many years of information will be considered?
The regulations state, "at least two years."
29. What is the recommended DESE guidelines for evaluator to teacher ratio?
No such ratio is referenced/provided by the DESE.
30. Do staff who take on a role in addition to teaching have to be evaluated in that area also/additionally/separately (pre-school liaison; department head)?
This is subject to future discussion.
31. Should we be keeping artifacts this year?
Until negotiations are complete, the existing evaluation system remains the vehicle for educator evaluations.