



Educator Quality

Uncommon Measures: Teacher Self-Evaluation to Encourage Professional Growth

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In an effort to develop a balanced and valid system, states and districts increasingly have moved toward using multiple measures in educator evaluation. Certain measures, such as classroom observations and value-added models, are more commonly used or considered than others. To support innovation and build collective knowledge, this series provides guidance on alternative measures of teacher effectiveness and highlights district and state contexts where these methods are used.

This guidance document focuses on the use of teacher self-evaluations as an alternative measure, including background information on self-evaluation, information on its use in teacher evaluation systems, and recommendations, resources and references to support districts in their decision-making and implementation of this measure.

Background

Teacher self-evaluation can be a valuable tool in the arsenal of any multiple measures evaluation system. Self-evaluation allows teachers to assess their current professional practice, to set goals for their professional learning, reflect on their performance on a range of professional practice indicators, gather and reflect on multiple artifacts and pieces of evidence, and draw conclusions about their own impact on their students and their school. Having teachers reflect on their instructional practice, their impact on students, their collaboration with colleagues, and their interactions with larger school community can provide insight and can prove to be a powerful tool to identify gaps in professional knowledge and areas for continued growth and professional development. Both “in the moment” reflections, such as the way a specific activity went or how students are grasping the material, and longer term reflections—such as those at the end of a unit that focuses on how students performed on a summative assessment, and how instruction may have been tweaked to improve that performance—are a part of an effective teaching and learning process. In fact, many of the teaching frameworks used in states across the country specifically highlight the importance of the self-reflective practice as part of what high-quality educators do on a regular basis.

Use of Self-Evaluation in Teacher Evaluation Systems

Self-evaluation can be included as a portion of teacher performance evaluation in two ways:

- Self-evaluation at the beginning of the year that is used for setting professional goals and a professional development plan for engagement throughout the year
 - Teachers use past evaluations or a self-evaluation tool to identify strengths and weaknesses and use this as the basis for creating a professional growth plan.
 - The growth plan spells out specific practices or strategies that will be used to address the identified weaknesses.
 - The final evaluation might include an end-of-year reflection.
 - At the end of the year, the teacher and evaluator will meet to review the written reflection and supporting evidence; the teacher also submits an end-of-year self-evaluation score.

- Self-evaluation during the school year
 - Teachers review the teaching framework or other standards to identify areas for reflection and complete a self-assessment at the beginning of the year.
 - Teachers collect evidence or artifacts that support their reflective process. They use predetermined reflection times to assess their professional growth.
 - At the end of the year, teachers summarize their experience in a reflection that could include their score on a self-evaluation rubric.
 - During the final evaluation conference, the teacher and evaluator would review the reflections, the evidence, the self-evaluation rubric, and the teacher-assigned summative score, then agree on a final summative rating.

Self-Evaluation Used in Practice

Teacher self-evaluation as a stand-alone measure in teacher evaluation systems is not widely used in many areas of the country. As a tool, teacher self-evaluation is, in many evaluation systems, seen as an extension of the self-reflection process and does not receive a separate score in the evaluation system. In some systems, teachers are asked to reflect on their own skills in a range of professional practices, generally tied to a teaching framework at the beginning of the year, with an eye on goal setting for professional development for the upcoming year. In other systems, the self-reflective process is more of an ongoing process during the year where teachers

Possible Sources of Data to be Used When Setting Goals for Teacher Self-Evaluation

- Prior-year observation documents
- Prior-year teacher professional development plans
- Feedback from peer evaluations or observations
- Student survey results either from a formal student survey or from an informal teacher-created student survey
- Climate survey data
- Results of action research projects
- Results or findings of collaborative teams (e.g., professional learning communities, data teams, department teams, grade level teams)

identify specific practices or habits of teaching on which they will reflect on at predetermined times throughout the year. These practices and habits often are outlined in a teaching framework. Some of these systems ask that the teacher provide evidence either to base the reflection on, or to support the finding of the reflection. These two broad approaches are discussed here:

1. **Reflection with goal setting that starts at the beginning of the year.** Many states and districts ask teachers to engage in a goal-setting process at the start of each year. These goals often are turned into a professional development plan, and those plans are used as a guide for whatever professional learning the teacher will take part in during the upcoming school year. In one model for self-reflection, some states are tying this goal-setting process together with self-reflection and asking that teachers confer with administrators at the end of the school year to reflect on the original goals. Kentucky, for example, asks teachers to use their teaching framework (modeled after the Danielson Framework for Teaching) as the basis for reflection at the beginning of the year. Teachers are asked to rate themselves on different elements within the framework and to use those ratings to frame their professional goals for the upcoming year.

Although these reflections and goal-setting practices are not tied to a stand-alone rating in the Kentucky multiple measure system, they are sources of evidence that principals use when arriving at

a final summative rating. A sample reflection sheet can be found at the Kentucky Department of Education website (<http://education.ky.gov/teachers/PGES/TPGES/Pages/TPGES-Self-Reflection-and-Professional-Growth-Planning.aspx>). Another example of the reflective process being used as the beginning phase of the evaluation cycle can be found in the Teacher Evaluation and Development (TED) System, designed by six labor/management Innovation Teams across New York State. This system, which was piloted in 2011, is one model of an evaluation system approved by New York State for district use. The TED model starts with a teacher’s written self-reflection using a form to review the standards and the Teacher Practice Rubric in light of their incoming student needs, curriculum, professional learning needs, and school and community climate. This self-reflection piece becomes a part of the larger picture of the teacher’s professional practice. As with other systems reviewed, the TED self-evaluation tool does not provide a stand-alone score; rather, it is embedded in the work that teachers and evaluators engage in to arrive at a summative end-of-year rating. Information about the TED system can be found at <http://www.nysut.org/resources/special-resources-sites/ted/what-is-ted>.

2. **Reflection that is ongoing during the school year.** This type of reflective practice is used when teachers are asked to reserve time throughout the academic year to reflect on their performance, the performance of their students or on other data sources. As outlined in many of the teaching frameworks, this type of reflection is key to a process in which

Possible Sources of Evidence That Support a Teacher’s Final Self-Evaluation Score

- Samples of lesson and unit plans
- Samples of student work
- Samples of communications between the teacher and families
- Videos of the teacher in the classroom
- Agenda’s and other documents from teacher run professional development sessions
- Reflection journals
- Annotated articles from professional journals

highly effective teachers engage. As noted in the Danielson Framework, for example, “It is through critical reflection that teachers are able to assess the effectiveness of their work and take steps to improve it” (Danielson, 2007). Similarly, Marzano’s teaching observation protocol includes so-called design questions for each of the teaching practices, as well as additional reflection questions that teachers or evaluators can use to identify at which level a teacher is operating (see <http://www.marzanocenter.com/Teacher-Evaluation-2014-Model.pdf>). Neither of these models assigns a “rating” for the reflective process, which makes using them as an alternative measure for teacher evaluation more challenging; however, each does provide a way to frame the reflective process. Districts that select this model might look to the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards model, which has teachers reflect on multiple artifacts, including videos of their teaching, samples of student work, and planning documents.

One might note in the second model a similarity to the use of student portfolios. An important distinction can be made between the types of evidence that are required for a portfolio, which generally focuses on student work, and a self-evaluation in which the evidence and artifacts used can encompass a broader range of sources.

For the self-evaluation rubric, districts might focus on the domains of teaching frameworks that allow for the uses of nonstudent-focused evidence when choosing to use teacher self-evaluation as an alternative measure. Lesson or unit plans might, for example, be used in the self-evaluation as evidence of a teacher’s engagement in planning and preparation. A teacher’s self-evaluation might be focused on how the lesson or unit plans reflect his or her ability to address multiple learners within the classroom. This would be in contrast to a portfolio where the evidence might be more focused on student work and student outcomes. Similarly, districts might ask teachers to self-evaluate their increased use of formative assessments in the planning of activities based not on how students did on those assessments per se, but rather on how the teacher chose to adjust instruction to meet the needs of the students based on the results of the formative assessment process. Specific best practices for self-evaluation are discussed later in this guidance document.

Considerations for Selecting a Self-Evaluation as Part of Teacher Evaluation

Roles will need to be defined clearly. To ensure that the self-evaluation process is rigorous, and meaningful, the role of each stakeholder needs to be clearly defined. The following are some recommendations for the teacher’s role, the evaluator’s role and for the role of the system/district.

The role of the teacher: The teacher’s role in self-evaluation is very different from in other evaluation components. Since teachers are assigning themselves an evaluation rating, they will be more engaged in this process than in other evaluation processes. Specifically, teachers need to do the following:

- Be responsible for reviewing the current district-selected teaching framework and identifying the domains or elements that they select as the focus of their self-evaluation.
- Complete a district-provided, beginning-of-year self-assessment. Teachers might be asked to provide reflections, evidence, or other documentation that supports the selection of the domains and their self-evaluation starting scores.
- Identify, collect, and organize artifacts that demonstrate their ability to address the framework domains or elements. Depending on the model of self-evaluation selected by the district, specific reflections on each piece of evidence (or artifact) might be required (or suggested) and be included in a portfolio presentation of the self-evaluation. Variations in approaches are possible and likely, given the variety of systems already in place in most districts.
- Assign themselves a summative rating using district-created rubrics or scoring tools. The final rating for this component of the evaluation would need to be agreed upon by the teacher and the evaluator. Rubrics might focus on the quality of each reflection, the quality of the evidence or some combination of the two.

The role of the evaluator: The evaluator’s role in teacher self-evaluation is important to ensuring that the process is rigorous and that the reflections are meaningful in terms of teacher learning and professional growth. Specifically, evaluators need to do the following:

- Work with the teacher to identify a predetermined set of teaching standards or domains within the teaching framework that will be the basis for the self-evaluation. Evaluators should focus on those standards or domains that are of greatest need by the teacher but also align to the goals of the school or district. Casting too wide a net can lead to an unfocused reflective process, and casting too narrow a net can lead to too narrow an impact.
- Review the preevaluation. Evaluators can help teachers review past performance ratings and feedback from observations in order to focus the self-evaluation process. Evaluators might also provide the teacher with the results of assessments, student feedback and evaluations, or other information on which the self-evaluation is based.
- Review the timeline and check-in points for the process to ensure that any ongoing reflections, document or artifact collection, and additional information is collected, organized and ready for submission.
- Schedule time to review the reflection based on the districts scoring rubric. Since this is a teacher self-evaluation, it should be the task of the evaluator to ask probing questions and to review the evidence and artifacts that the teacher provides, and then to agree upon a final summative score.

The role of the district: District leaders will need to define what is expected, if and how self-evaluations will be scored, and what role the evaluator has in the process (including what happens if the evaluator and the teacher disagree on the final rating), as well as the tools that both the teacher and evaluator use during the process. These actions will help ensure that the self-evaluation process has both meaning and impact. Specifically, the district needs to do the following:

- Create a form or protocol for the development of a teacher self-assessment to promote consistency and fairness across schools.
- Clearly define the model of self-evaluation, including how a final summative score will be determined and what level of collaboration is needed between the teacher and the evaluator.
- Create a scoring rubric that defines the different performance levels and the scope of what is to be considered when teachers are assigning the self-evaluation score both at the beginning and end of the process.
- Develop a timeline that includes the initial self-evaluation, interim check-in dates, and the window for final submission by teachers and review of materials by evaluators.
- Create exemplar self-evaluations for training and guidance.
- Create training for both teachers and evaluators.

Financial cost. Using self-evaluation generally requires a smaller financial commitment from districts than some other alternative measures for evaluation. Although districts will need to develop guidance and guidelines for both teachers and evaluators, conduct trainings and produce scoring rubrics and templates for teachers to use, there are few additional costs for this measure.

Validity. Self-evaluations for use in teacher evaluation are questioned by critics for their fairness at providing a valid measure of teacher effectiveness. Skeptics rightfully acknowledge that self-

evaluation is inherently biased. Districts will want to address these concerns by providing training and tools that increase consistency and fairness while acknowledging the importance of self-evaluation for the process of teacher self-reflection. Limiting the weight of the self-evaluation and combining it with other measures of teacher effectiveness reflects the emphasis on multiple-measure evaluation. If done well, the use of self-evaluation can support a balanced system based on a state's or district's framework for teaching.

Recommendations on Using Self-Evaluation as a Measure in Teacher Evaluation

The following is a summary of guidance, best practices, and recommendations to districts that choose to implement self-evaluation as a part of their educator evaluation system:

- Tie teacher self-evaluation to the district's framework for teaching. Ensure that the same standards and expectations are clearly communicated among administrators, instructional leaders, evaluators, and teachers.
- Tailor the design of the self-evaluation system and the tools, including the rubrics and guidance documents, to meet the district's needs and conditions in the following ways:
 - If there are components of the teaching framework that reflect district priorities, those components should be highlighted in the self-evaluation process. For example, if planning and preparation are a priority in the district, teacher self-evaluation can be focused around this domain. Examples that highlight specific goals, evidence, and outcomes focused on planning and preparation would be developed and used in training with administrators, evaluators, and teachers.
 - For teachers who are not new to the district, consider using past observations or other past performance data as the basis for at least some of the domains that teachers reflect on for their self-evaluation. Domains highlighted in past evaluations as areas in need of reinforcement can be selected for further concentration through the self-evaluation process.
- Include teachers, principals, and union leaders in planning for the system. For example:
 - Provide forums for teachers and principals to share their views on self-evaluation at multiple points in the development and implementation phases. Allow educators multiple opportunities to raise questions prior to finalizing the system's design.
 - Provide clear examples of how certain types of self-evaluation would look in practice. Actively address any concerns that may come up from practitioners while emphasizing fairness with teachers and evaluators.
- Incorporate the following best practices:
 - Provide clear rubrics to use for scoring for both the beginning-of-year (if applicable) and end-of-year summative scoring.
 - Provide examples and exemplar self-evaluations that can be used as models.

- Involve principals and other evaluators early in the design process. Training should ground self-evaluations in the district’s standards for teaching and evaluation expectations.
- Create opportunities for ongoing training and collaboration among administrators and teachers.
- Consider the union’s role in designing and communicating about the system. Successful collaborations can enhance stakeholder support and build trust in the system. Use building representatives as key point persons in the district to communicate the value and parameters of the self-evaluation process.

Resources

A number of states have built teacher self-evaluation into their multiple measures evaluation systems. The National Board for Professional Teacher Standards also includes self-evaluation in their requirements for board certification. The following examples highlight the resources that support the implementation of self-evaluation:

- The Washington State Teacher/Principal Evaluation Project has resources focused on many different aspects of teacher and principal evaluation including a teacher self-assessment form which can be found at: <http://tpep-wa.org/wp-content/uploads/ksd-measures-evidence.pdf>
- New York state has multiple resources for districts looking to incorporate teacher self-reflection into teacher evaluation. Among those resources are the following:
 - A teacher evaluation rubric, which can be found at <http://usny.nysed.gov/rttt/teachers-leaders/practicerrubrics/Docs/marshall-teacher-rubric-jan-2014.pdf>
 - A teacher self-assessment guidance document, which can be found at <http://usny.nysed.gov/rttt/teachers-leaders/practicerrubrics/Docs/SilverStrongSelfAssessmentRubric.pdf>
- The Kentucky State Department of Education has resources available that include information on the self-reflection process that is a part of its Professional Growth and Effectiveness System. Those resources can be found at <http://education.ky.gov/teachers/PGES/TPGES/Pages/TPGES-Self-Reflection-and-Professional-Growth-Planning.aspx>.
- The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards has resources on their use of teacher self-reflection, which can be found at <http://www.nbpts.org/>.

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