

# NEA Policy Statement on Teacher Evaluation and Accountability

## As Adopted by the July 2011 NEA Representative Assembly

Consistent with NEA's belief that the "teaching profession is a cornerstone of society," "composed of individuals who meet the highest standards" of "evaluation" and "accountability," (NEA Resolution D-1), and recognizing that evaluation and accountability systems too often leave teachers without the feedback or support needed to enhance practice and advance student learning, NEA sets forth below the criteria for the types of teacher evaluation and accountability systems necessary to ensure a high quality public education for every student.

### I. High Quality Teacher Evaluation Systems

NEA believes that our students and teachers deserve high quality evaluation systems that provide the tools teachers need to continuously tailor instruction, enhance practice and advance student learning. Such systems must provide both ongoing, non-evaluative, formative feedback and regular, comprehensive, meaningful and fair evaluations. Such systems must be developed and implemented with teachers and their representatives, either through collective bargaining where available, or in partnership with the affiliate representing teachers at the state and local level.

- a. All teachers should be regularly evaluated by highly trained evaluators on the basis of clear standards as to what teachers should know and be able to do. Such standards should be high and rigorous and define the rich knowledge, skills, dispositions and responsibilities of teachers. Such standards may be based on national models such as the NEA Principles of Professional Practice, the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium Model Core Teaching Standards, the Standards developed by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, or statewide standards for the teaching profession.
- b. Evaluations must be comprehensive – based on multiple indicators to provide teachers with clear and actionable feedback to enhance their practice – and must include all three of the following components:
  - i. ***Indicators of Teacher Practice*** demonstrating a teacher's subject matter knowledge, skill in planning and delivering instruction that engages students, ability to address issues of equity and diversity, and ability to monitor and assess student learning and adjust instruction accordingly. Such indicators may include the following indicators or others chosen by a local or state affiliate: classroom observations, proof of practice (e.g., lesson plans, curriculum plans, student assessments, minutes from team planning meetings, curriculum maps, and teacher instructional notes), teacher interviews and self-assessments.

- ii. ***Indicators of Teacher Contribution and Growth*** demonstrating a teacher’s professional growth and contribution to a school’s and/or district’s success. Such indicators may include the following indicators or others chosen by a local or state affiliate: completion of meaningful professional development that is applied to practice; structured collaboration with colleagues focused on improving practice and student outcomes (e.g., by way of professional learning communities and grade or subject teams); evidence of reflective practice; teacher leadership in the school, district or educational community; collaborative projects with institutions of higher education; and positive engagement with students, parents and colleagues.
- iii. ***Indicators of Contribution to Student Learning and Growth*** demonstrating a teacher’s impact on student learning and growth. Such indicators must be authentic, reflect that there are multiple factors that impact a student’s learning beyond a teacher’s control, and may include the following indicators or others chosen by a local or state affiliate: student learning objectives developed jointly by the teacher and principal/evaluator; teacher-created assessments; district or school assessments; student work (papers, portfolios, projects, presentations); teacher defined objectives for individual student growth; and high quality developmentally appropriate, standardized tests that provide valid, reliable, timely and meaningful information regarding student learning and growth. Unless such tests are shown to be developmentally appropriate, scientifically valid, and reliable for the purpose of measuring both student learning and a teacher’s performance, such tests may not be used to support any employment action against a teacher and may be used only to provide non-evaluative formative feedback.
- c. Evaluations must be meaningful, providing all teachers with clear and actionable feedback linked to tailored professional development. Such feedback should include regular non-evaluative formative feedback – meaning feedback that serves only to inform practice and that does not contribute to formal evaluation results – as such feedback is often the most effective way to improve teacher practice. Such non-evaluative feedback may include self-reflection, peer observation and/or teacher approved surveys of students to assess engagement and learning behaviors.
- d. Evaluations must be fair, conducted by highly trained and objective supervisors or other evaluators as agreed to by the local affiliate, whose work is regularly reviewed to ensure the validity and reliability of evaluation results. If an evaluation will be the basis for any action relating to a teacher’s employment, ratings by more than one evaluator must be provided in support of the action. Where a teacher believes an evaluation does not accurately reflect his or her level of practice, the teacher must have the right to contest the evaluation, and have access to the information necessary to do so.
- e. To satisfy these requirements, evaluation systems must be adequately funded and staffed, and fully developed and validated, including by training all teachers on the new systems, before they are used to make any high stakes employment decisions. NEA recognizes that our schools do not currently have enough staff trained to provide meaningful

evaluative and non-evaluative feedback to teachers. To expand the number of people who can do so, the Representative Assembly directs NEA to examine existing mentorship, peer assistance and peer assistance and review programs, and report back to the October 2011 NEA Board meeting regarding those programs, their compliance with the requirements set forth in D-10 (Mentor Programs) and D-11 (Peer Assistance Programs and Peer Assistance & Review Programs), and to make programmatic recommendations as to whether to expand such programs or develop others in partnership with state and local associations.

## **II. High Quality Teacher Accountability Systems**

NEA believes that teachers are accountable for high quality instruction that advances student learning. High quality teacher accountability systems, developed and implemented with teachers and their representatives either through collective bargaining where available, or in partnership with the affiliate representing teachers at the state and local level, should be based on the following principles.

- a. All teachers are responsible for providing a high quality education to students and supporting the efforts of colleagues and their school as a whole to do the same. To fulfill that responsibility, teachers have the right to a safe and supportive working environment including ongoing non-evaluative feedback on their practice that supports teachers' efforts to innovate and the right to regular, confidential evaluations.
- b. All teachers have the responsibility to continually enhance their practice and to stay current in subject matter and pedagogical approaches by reflecting and acting on feedback received, accessing professional development opportunities provided and collaborating with colleagues to enhance instruction. To fulfill that responsibility, teachers have the right to increased autonomy over instructional practices, time during the school day for collaboration with colleagues, a decisionmaking role in professional development, and the right to have such development tailored to enhancing skills identified as needing improvement in both non-evaluative feedback and in evaluations, as well as the ability to pursue advanced coursework and degrees as part of professional development.
- c. If, through a high quality evaluation system, a teacher's practice fails to meet performance standards, a teacher should be provided with clear notice of the deficiencies and an improvement plan should be developed by the teacher, local association and employer. The improvement plan should provide the teacher with a reasonable opportunity – including time, high quality professional development and support – to meet expectations. In addition, the teacher should receive regular and frequent feedback from the district and the local association regarding his or her progress during the support program period. What constitutes a reasonable opportunity will depend on the nature of the deficiencies identified, but in no event should an improvement plan exceed one school year. During the period in which a teacher is implementing an improvement plan, the district shall provide a support program mutually agreed upon by the district and the local association, which shall include the assignment of an accomplished teacher to assist

the teacher not meeting performance standards in improving his or her practice and to ensure a quality education for that teacher's students.

- d. If a teacher fails to improve despite being given a reasonable opportunity to do so, or otherwise fails to meet expectations, the teacher may be counseled to leave the profession or be subject to fair, transparent and efficient dismissal process that provides due process. Such a process should include: notice to a teacher of the basis for the dismissal; early disclosure of all evidence on which the dismissal is based; an early mandatory meeting between the teacher, employer and the teacher's representative to discuss possible resolution; and, failing such resolution, a prompt hearing before an impartial decisionmaker on the charges.
- e. NEA believes that it is appropriate and fitting for accountability systems to continue to differentiate between the rights and responsibilities of probationary teachers, meaning those teachers in their initial years of employment who may be nonrenewed upon notice at the end of a school year, and career teachers, meaning those teachers who have successfully served through the probationary period and may be dismissed only for cause as defined by state law or local agreement or policy.
  - o Probationary teachers should receive ongoing support for at least the first two years of their employment from locally developed and fully supported induction programs. The focus of such induction programs should be supportive and non-evaluative, designed to provide beginning teachers with the support they need to learn and thrive in the teaching profession. Districts should be encouraged to partner with colleges and universities to develop joint induction programs. No beginning teacher should go for weeks, much less years, without receiving any feedback on their practice.
  - o Probationary teachers should become career teachers if they meet or exceed expectations at the conclusion of their probationary employment period as defined by state law. A probationary teacher should have the right to require that the school district conduct the necessary evaluations within this time period, so that an appropriate determination can be made as to career status.
  - o Probationary teachers who meet or exceed expectations at the conclusion of their probationary employment period as defined by state law, and who are not granted career status, should have the right to contest that denial before an impartial decisionmaker.
  - o Once a probationary teacher has attained career status, that status should not be lost and should be portable from one school district to another within a state. If a career teacher's performance fails to meet expectations, the teacher may be counseled out of the profession or dismissed pursuant to a fair, transparent and efficient dismissal procedure that provides due process.
  - o Career teachers have the responsibility to reflect upon and enhance their own practice and to support and enhance the practice of their colleagues, particularly

probationary teachers. NEA encourages local affiliates to institutionalize opportunities for career teachers to provide such support and enhance the practice of their colleagues by way of including in collective bargaining agreements or local policies provisions supporting professional learning communities, partnerships with local/regional institutions of higher education, mentorship and peer assistance programs.

### **III. The Role of the Association in High Quality Evaluation and Accountability Systems**

The development, implementation and enforcement of high quality evaluation and accountability systems are top priorities of NEA and its affiliates, presenting new opportunities and work for the Association and its affiliates. The Representative Assembly therefore directs that NEA support that work by providing the training, resources (including model fair dismissal procedures and other model language) needed to develop, implement and enforce high quality evaluation and accountability systems that enhance instruction and improve student learning.