

Teacher Assessment and Evaluation:

The National Education Association’s Framework for Transforming Education Systems to Support Effective Teaching and Improve Student Learning

NEA recognizes the urgent need to transform the U.S. education system to support effective teaching and improve student learning. Based on its vision of great public schools for every child, NEA has identified the core purposes and values of a comprehensive teacher growth and development system to meet the demands of the 21st century.

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING

Teaching is a demanding and complex profession.

Each school day, countless dedicated, talented teachers report to work intent on being the caring, competent, and effective educator that every student deserves. Many teaching professionals work in under resourced schools and in jobs that are incredibly challenging and complex. They can attest to the fact that teaching is not rocket science. In many ways, teaching can be even more challenging than scientific endeavors. Meeting the demands of the teaching profession requires tremendous will, ability, and preparation. It also requires continuous learning and support.

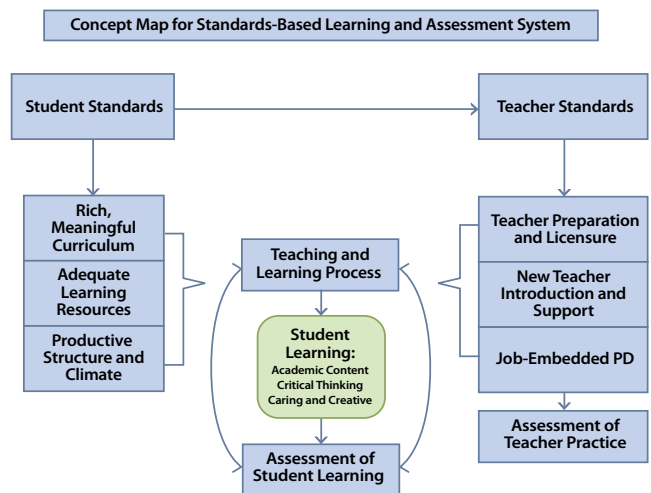
THE ROLE OF TEACHER EVALUATION

Evaluation is only one component of a comprehensive teacher growth and development system.

The U.S. public education system involves many stakeholders whose various roles and responsibilities aim to support and enhance student learning. Unfortunately, within the education system itself, there is a lack of alignment and coherence. Efforts to reform a single component, such as teacher evaluation, cannot produce a “silver bullet.” Focusing on only one component can lead to reforms that merely tinker around the edges. When trying to fix what appears to be broken, we may end up leaving flawed systems and structures intact. True reform

of teacher evaluation and assessment needs to be considered in the larger context of transforming the education system.

NEA advocates the development of new *systems* of teaching and learning that align student and teacher assessment with the ultimate goal of improving both. The following concept map shows how student learning standards can have a systemic connection with teacher education and assessment.



To design and implement productive evaluation and assessment programs, we need to recognize two essential points:

Initially, preparation and hiring are the most critical ways to assure teacher effectiveness. Before becoming

a teacher-of-record, every teacher should demonstrate subject-area knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and professional teaching ability. Current efforts to develop performance assessments for beginning teachers show promise in ensuring that teachers enter the profession with the necessary qualifications, regardless of their preparation route to the classroom. In addition, hiring practices support teaching effectiveness when the criteria used for hiring are aligned with the criteria used for evaluating teachers.

High quality professional development must be available to every teacher. Professional development programs should be based on state standards, district and school learning goals, and the identified needs of students and teachers. In addition, all new teachers should receive targeted support and participate in an induction and mentoring program. Novice teachers should have less demanding assignments than more experienced teachers and more time for planning. They should also have opportunities to observe experienced teachers.

Even the best teacher assessment and evaluation systems are likely to fail in an education system that fails to provide the necessary training and preparation to ensure that prospective teachers acquire appropriate skills, knowledge, and dispositions from the very first day of independent professional practice.

FAILURE OF THE CURRENT SYSTEM

Current systems for assessing, evaluating, and supporting teachers too often **fail to improve teacher practice and enhance student growth and learning**. Annual observations are often performed by school principals who are not adequately trained to conduct classroom observations and are unable to provide teachers with constructive, actionable feedback. The use of evaluation checklists is often meaningless when the checklists are not designed to depict good practice. Current evaluation

systems have largely failed to identify teachers' professional growth needs and failed to provide the support and professional learning opportunities required to meet those needs. We must develop ways to transform teacher evaluation systems to ensure that all students have effective, highly-skilled teachers.

THE PURPOSE OF TEACHER ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

Current policy discourse about teacher evaluation is mired in a rewards-and-punishment framework that too often aims to: **1) measure the effectiveness of each teacher, 2) categorize and rank teachers, 3) reward those at the top, and 4) fire those at the bottom**. Such a simplistic approach not only ignores the complexity of teaching but also overlooks the real purpose of teacher assessment and evaluation.

The *core purpose* of teacher assessment and evaluation should be to **strengthen the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and classroom practices of professional educators**. This goal serves to promote student growth and learning while also inspiring great teachers to remain in the classroom. Comprehensive systems of continuous teacher education and professional growth help teachers master content, refine their teaching skills, critically analyze their own performance and their students' performance, and implement the changes needed to improve teaching and learning. Comprehensive performance assessment systems provide targeted support, assistance, and professional growth opportunities based on teachers' individual needs as well as the needs of their students, schools, and districts.

PRINCIPLES FOR TEACHER ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

Safe and open collaboration is necessary. When assessment of teacher practices is transparent and openly collaborative, teachers can build professional

communities and learn from one another. This process can only occur in non-threatening environments of formative assessment and growth.

Measures of teacher performance are most helpful and meaningful when they are based on multiple ratings and clear teaching standards. Teachers need clear and actionable feedback based on standards for teaching and student learning that are comprehensive and transparent and on criterion-referenced assessments of teacher practice. Feedback is most useful as part of a comprehensive teacher development system. Summative evaluations of teachers should be based primarily on a single standard of effectiveness required for all teachers. After extensive support and intervention, a process to remove chronically ineffective teachers from the classroom, which guarantees due process measures, should commence.

Integrated systems must link evaluation procedures with curricular standards, professional development activities, targeted support, and human capital decisions.

Validated evaluation measures are essential. Measures of teacher effectiveness need to be based on widely accepted standards of teaching that attempt to capture a range of teaching behaviors, use multiple evaluation methods.

Teachers’ input in determining performance and learning outcomes should be part of the evaluation process. While standards for teaching practice and student learning are essential, each teacher should also help to define a set of practices and student learning objectives to be assessed. Teacher input can provide vital learning goals for the unique, contextualized circumstances of each particular classroom.

Assessment and evaluation systems need to be co-created or designed with teachers at the local level through collective bargaining or, where there is no collective bargaining, agreed to by the organization representing teachers. This may be the most important principle of all. Ideals and visions need to be balanced with local context and political reality. There is no one-size-fits-all solution at a national level. Rather, NEA needs to work with its affiliates to craft local solutions based on the principles outlined in this report.

PROCESS FOR TEACHER ASSESSMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

The following chart identifies how a successful teacher assessment and development process could proceed. It is also designed to help NEA members and affiliates take proactive leadership in redesigning policies, programs, and processes for teacher growth.

PURPOSE:	▶ Improve teacher practice in order to improve student learning
PREREQUISITES:	▶ Before becoming a teacher-of-record, every teacher must demonstrate subject-area knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and professional teaching ability.
STEP ONE:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide high-quality professional development for every teacher based on state standards, district and school learning goals, and identified needs of students and teachers. ▶ Assess outcomes of professional development. ▶ Support teachers’ new knowledge and skills.

<p>STEP TWO:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Conduct ongoing, formative assessments of teachers' skills, knowledge, and practices. The assessments should inform teacher growth and development. Assessments may be conducted by administrators, mentors, coaches, teachers themselves, or teachers' peers. Criteria should include evidence of student learning and feedback from parents and students.
<p>STEP THREE:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide individual and school wide professional education based on formative assessment results. ▶ If results of formative assessments are positive, then professional education should include self-directed learning and professional development. Ideally, it should be offered as part of a professional learning community or other supportive system. If results of formative assessments identify significant shortcomings, then professional development and intensive intervention should focus on areas in need of improvement and should be sustained for a significant period of time.
<p>STEP FOUR:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Conduct summative evaluation of each teacher. This should be done at relatively frequent intervals for new or probationary teachers and less frequently for non-probationary continuing contract teachers. ▶ Summative assessments of a particular teacher may become optional if formative assessments of that teacher remain positive over a reasonable period. ▶ Teachers who need to improve to meet quality standards should receive intensive intervention, support, and individualized professional development.
<p>STEP FIVE:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Implement evaluation results. Inform teachers of evaluation results and the impact on continued employment status, tenure, license renewal, and career ladder opportunities for high performers.
<p>STEP SIX:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Conduct a comprehensive internal and external examination of the teacher evaluation and development process. ▶ The school and district should conduct the examination in partnership with teachers and their representatives. ▶ The purpose is to identify workforce needs and support ongoing professional development.

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT TO FOSTER TEACHER GROWTH

A comprehensive teacher assessment and evaluation system should have two distinct components: **1) ongoing, consistent, formative assessments of performance for the sole purpose of fostering professional growth and improved practice; and 2) periodic summative evaluations of teacher performance for the purpose of approving continued employment.** These two assessment components should share the same standards for growth and performance. However, they must remain distinctly separate from one another.

Teachers’ engagement in formative, ongoing assessment to improve their practice should involve neither threat of punishment nor promise of reward. Assessments should occur on a regular basis. Formative assessments should also facilitate interaction and feedback among colleagues. They should allow peers, mentors, and professional coaches to provide teachers with feedback about their practice and engage teachers in learning processes that are free from employment-related decisions. Formative assessments may also use student learning measures to inform teachers of student progress and thereby help to improve student learning.

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT TO GUIDE EMPLOYMENT DECISIONS

Summative evaluations of performance for the purpose of authorizing continued employment should occur at appropriate time intervals that comply with local bargaining agreements or state statutes. Where collective bargaining does not exist, criteria for summative evaluations should be developed cooperatively with administrators, teachers, and teacher associations.

Summative evaluations must be based on a clear set of performance standards that are identical to standards used in the ongoing formative process. They must employ a rubric of criterion-referenced assessments, in which teachers either do or do not meet acceptable standards of practice. Teachers who fail to meet acceptable standards should be offered professional development, remediation plans, and opportunities to observe peers. They should also be given sufficient time, support, and assistance toward meeting the standards. A process to remove chronically ineffective teachers from the classroom should begin only after extensive support and intervention that guarantees due process measures.

Dimensions	Formative Assessment	Summative Evaluation
Purpose	Growth and improved practice	Continued employment
Data and Evidence	Various written or observable demonstrations of teaching and contributions to student learning	Standards-based measures of practice (student performance measures are inappropriate)
Frequency	Ongoing and continuous	Periodic and scheduled

Dimensions	Formative Assessment	Summative Evaluation
Reporting Structure	Collaborative, using flexible forms of feedback	Adherence to strict guidelines, forms, and timelines
Use of Findings	Diagnostic – designed to improve practice	Judgmental – designed to arrive at a verdict
Relationship between Administrator and Teacher	Collegial – to encourage reflection and discussion	Hierarchical – to prescribe a course of action
Process	Teacher self-reflection, peer feedback, peer input, peer review, or a combination of these	Administrator or supervisor-led
Process	Open, exploratory, and integrated into practice; focused on practitioner development and practice	Precisely defined, limited to required documentation; poorly identified long-term implications for practice
Adaptability of Criteria	Allows flexibility and revision of documents in response to individual teaching and learning environments	Fixed set of responses and demonstrations that do not allow for adaptations to meet individual situations
Standards of Measurement	Individualized; multiple systems of demonstration and documentation; pursuit of excellence in one’s own practice	Limited responses (yes/no; met/did not meet); sorting or ranking

FOCUS ON PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

Teachers' continuous engagement in learning, skill acquisition, and refinements to practice is essential for meeting student learning needs. Assessment and evaluation are crucial for determining whether teachers are, in fact, acquiring and applying the content, skills, and dispositions necessary to meet school and district standards for student learning. Assessment and evaluation are also essential for identifying any additional or alternative professional learning that a teacher may need. Therefore, **professional growth** and **assessment/evaluation** should be seen as complementary and integrally-related parts of the same process. Developers of evaluation instruments and systems increasingly recognize the wisdom and benefits of designing evaluation processes that **intentionally** foster and support teacher growth.

In *Teacher Evaluation to Enhance Professional Practice* (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2000), authors Danielson and McGreal describe elements of evaluation systems that contribute to professional learning: reflection on practice; collaboration with colleagues; self-assessment and self-directed inquiry; and participation in a community of learners.

The authors conclude:

Some newly developed evaluation systems require that teachers conduct a self-assessment, establish professional growth goals, and participate in a study group with colleagues to pursue a topic of common interest....Then, in addition to classroom observations, teachers are asked to submit evidence of their professional skill in the form of planning documents, samples of student work (with a commentary), and other elements of their professionalism (such as parent communication, contributions to the school and district, etc.) Assembling and selecting these documents requires

deep reflection on practice; describing them to an administrator engages the teacher and administrator in professional conversation.

Similarly, in *Research Brief—Teacher Evaluation* (The Principals' Partnership, May 2007), Gary Marx of Eastern Michigan University notes:

*Efforts to improve the technical quality of evaluation systems over the past two decades have not produced evidence of improved teaching and increased student achievement. Thus, newer thinking treats teacher evaluation as an organizational problem that includes improving school climate, having the principal become an instructional leader, and **building links between school improvement, professional development, teacher evaluation and student learning.***

Marx recommends that principals interested in robust and useful teacher evaluations take the following action:

*Assess school culture and climate to ensure that the evaluation environment is supportive of ongoing professional learning. **The literature cites school cultures that focus on teaching and learning for all students, collaboration among teachers, and teacher reflective practice as characteristics of supportive evaluation environments.***

In 2000, the NEA Foundation for the Improvement of Education issued a report stating that schools where teachers focus on student work, interact with colleagues to plan how to improve their teaching, and continuously bring new skills and knowledge to bear on their practice are also schools that produce the best results for children.

Because of NEA's access to millions of classroom teachers, supporters in Congress, and affiliates that can influence policy at the local and state levels, it is in a unique position to promote models of teacher evaluation

that strengthen teaching and thereby increase student growth and learning. By initiating and supporting strategic partnerships with universities, researchers, administrator organizations, and teacher leaders, NEA is poised to accelerate the development and dissemination of effective evaluation models.

USING EVIDENCE OF STUDENT LEARNING

Using evidence of student learning and other student outcomes is a fundamental component of the teacher learning and development process. Teachers must understand how their teaching practice influences student growth and learning. They need to use that understanding to adjust their practice in ways that allow them to become more effective.

Unfortunately, the use of student learning measures to improve teaching practice has too often translated into using “value-added” analyses of state standardized test scores as the primary, or even sole, means for making summative decisions about teachers. Such use of test data is inappropriate for many reasons that are well-documented. The following are just some of the problems and concerns associated with so-called value-added methodology:

A single test score cannot accurately represent student learning. Students need to acquire a broad array of skills, knowledge, and critical thinking tools that a single multiple-choice standardized test cannot reflect.

Teachers’ measured effectiveness tends to vary considerably with the use of different statistical methodologies. Significant percentages of teachers—more than 50 percent in some cases—who may be rated as “effective” using one method would be rated “ineffective” under another method with the same student test data. In addition, researchers have found that teachers’ effectiveness ratings differ from class to class, from year to year, and even from test to test, even

when ratings are within the same content area.

Teachers’ ratings are influenced by differences among groups of students who are assigned to them. Students are not randomly assigned to teachers, and statistical models cannot fully adjust for the fact that some teachers are assigned a disproportionate number of students who may be exceptionally difficult to teach because of poor attendance, homelessness, severe family problems, or other challenges. Some teachers may also have disproportionate numbers of students who are English language learners, have special education needs, or face other roadblocks that tend to distort students’ test scores.

It is impossible to fully identify the influences of a student’s other teachers and additional factors that affect student performance. No single teacher accounts for all of a student’s learning.

Value-added analyses do not provide any information to explain teachers’ performance. They offer no feedback to identify what makes a teacher effective or ineffective.

Approximately 70 percent of all teachers are engaged in subject areas for which no test data are available.

Over the past several years, numerous studies have concluded that value-added methodology is neither fair enough, nor reliable enough, nor valid enough to be used as a basis for high-stakes decisions about teachers. It is difficult, if not impossible, to find any education researchers who support the use of value-added methodologies for high-stakes decisions about teachers, other than several researchers who have developed and promoted the use of value-added methodologies.

Despite the clear limitations of value-added methodologies, many states, districts, and even teacher associations are embracing the use of such methodologies, primarily in pursuit of federal grants during a time when resources are scarce. NEA urges that

teacher assessment and evaluation systems consider including value-added measures only within a clear and meaningful system of multiple measures of evidence.

USING MULTIPLE MEASURES

Education analysts now commonly accept the notion that using multiple measures of student learning and teacher effectiveness is a necessary component of teacher assessment and evaluation. However, the current political environment has contributed to a misconstruing of this notion. Some school districts have used student achievement, often measured by a single test, as the key measure of teacher effectiveness. In some instances, student achievement has accounted for 50 percent of a teacher's evaluation. Such myopic reliance on a single measure fails to capture the complexities and nuances of teaching. It also fails to recognize the wide range of ways in which teachers contribute to student growth and learning.

To be effective, a teacher assessment and evaluation system must employ a carefully constructed set of multiple measures. At NEA's Multiple Measures of Student Learning Working Group meeting in August 2010, Laura Goe identified several specific benefits of such an approach. For example, she said the use of multiple measures strengthens teacher evaluation by providing a more complete picture of a teacher's contribution to student learning; by increasing confidence in the results of a teacher's evaluation; and by increasing the information available about collaboration for student success.

Goe also said the use of a carefully constructed set of multiple measures contributes to teachers' professional growth by creating opportunities for teachers to learn from their colleagues, and by providing teachers with greater insight into how their instruction is affecting student learning.

Furthermore, the use of appropriate multiple measures

sets the stage for improved teaching and learning by offering more complete evidence about student learning growth, particularly in areas where students are not tested; by offering more complete evidence of learning growth for English language learners and students with disabilities; and by contributing to a comprehensive view of students' strengths and weaknesses.

EXAMPLES OF MULTIPLE MEASURES

The following examples identify multiple measures of student learning and multiple measures of teacher effectiveness that could be integrated into a comprehensive teacher evaluation system:

Multiple measures of student growth and learning:

Standardized test scores are only one indicator of student growth and learning and should not be the *primary* source of information used for measuring student growth. Other forms of evidence and data include:

- ▶ Local and district-wide achievement test results
- ▶ Student work that shows evidence of student growth
- ▶ Subject matter assessments
- ▶ Students' oral and written presentations
- ▶ Learning goals developed by the teacher or principal
- ▶ Project-based inquiry activities
- ▶ Teacher-generated information about student growth and goals
- ▶ Formative and summative student assessments
- ▶ Evaluations of effective engagement, critical thinking, self-efficacy or a combination thereof.

Multiple measures of teacher effectiveness: Student learning data should not be the only significant source of information for measuring teacher performance, nor should it be the primary source.

Other possible sources include:

- ▶ Assessment of teacher practice based on comprehensive standards of practice, which could include classroom observations, administrator evaluations, and teacher-evaluator conferences
- ▶ Use of portfolios, evidence binders, conference presentations, and instructional artifacts to show demonstrated attainment and use of new knowledge and skills
- ▶ Use of information provided through formative assessments, peer reviews, professional learning communities, and other forms of feedback and support
- ▶ Evidence of student growth and learning based on multiple measures

CONCLUSION

Effective teaching contributes to student learning, regardless of the circumstances and conditions. When a school also has strong leadership, adequate resources, and the meaningful engagement of stakeholders, effective teaching has the power to transform public education and ensure great public schools for every student.

Teachers are responsible for making their own practice as effective as possible. Teachers also need to take control of their own profession and share in the school system's responsibility for transforming education. For far too long, policymakers outside of the teaching profession have offered short-sighted solutions to improving education that overlook the value and complexity of teaching as a profession. Unfortunately, teachers have often failed to recognize shortcomings in the system or neglected to respond with new ideas and innovations. Identifying a comprehensive, rigorous process for

assessing, supporting, and evaluating teachers is a critical first step toward reclaiming the profession of teaching.

Teachers must continue to address key questions about their profession, such as: What forms of preparation do prospective teachers need for success in today's classroom? How can new teachers demonstrate the skills, knowledge, and capacity required for competent practice from the outset and for accomplished practice over time? What current practices do we need to reform, transform, or eliminate? With what do we replace them? How can compensation systems that support professional pay and professional development help teachers improve their practice in meaningful ways?

Teachers possess the knowledge, the experience, and the will to address these challenges.

Neglecting to do so would most assuredly result in a decline of professionalism in teaching. With the appropriate framework for support and feedback, teachers will be able to make continual improvements in their practice and continue to ensure that every student has access to a great education.

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