Your Virtual
PERA Coach

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A publication created by the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council and the Illinois State Board of Education to guide you in implementing the *Performance Evaluation Reform Act*.

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Dear Illinois Educator,

Although the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council (PEAC) officially retires at the end of June 2017, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) will continue to support the work of PEAC and implementation of PERA. There is pending legislation for PEAC's new charge that includes gathering feedback, promoting best practice and making recommendations to ISBE.

This issue of *Your Virtual PERA Coach* focuses on the continuous improvement aspect of the process.   The evaluation process, when implemented with fidelity, should be an integrated system that incorporates reflecting, planning and analyzing.

Much information can be gained from all the sources of data used in a comprehensive performance evaluation system. This information should be analyzed and used to plan professional development opportunities and goals for the district, school, teacher, and students. The cyclical process continues to repeat with the end result being improved instructional practice and increased student achievement.

Thank you for taking us with you on your PERA journey. We wish you much success and growth as you continue to refine your performance evaluation system.

Sincerely,

The Performance Evaluation Advisory Council

The Road to PERA: Continuing the Journey

This year three-quarters of Illinois districts implemented new teacher evaluation systems incorporating student growth. As schools finish their first year using the new systems, it's a good time to pause, first

to look back and then to look forward.

In January 2010, the Illinois legislature passed the Performance Evaluation Reform Act. This legislation gave Illinois educators an opportunity to increase the amount of high quality performance feedback our state's teachers and principals receive.

PERA called for district joint committees, made up of teachers and administrators, to develop plans for incorporating student growth into the evaluation process. With input from PEAC, ISBE developed guidance and a "default model" that provided joint committees with answers to the question, "What happens if our joint committee can't come to an agreement on an element of our plan for incorporating student growth?"

Joint committees continued to meet, and eventually adopted plans for their new evaluation systems. In most districts the joint committee discussions also raised other important questions: Do we have the right assessments? Are our assessments aligned with what we're teaching? How can we find time for our teachers to work together? But at the end of the process, the overwhelming majority of joint committees reached agreement without having to default to the state model.

This year, most districts implemented their evaluation plans for the first time. Teachers worried about SLOs, types of assessments and measures of growth. Evaluators wondered how they would find the time for the conferences, the formal and informal observations and all the paperwork.

But you did it! Teachers developed their SLOs, students completed assessments, classes were observed, teachers and evaluators met, and summative ratings were assigned. Based on what we heard in our interviews with joint committee members from districts across the state, it wasn't perfect but it was a big step in the right direction. Here's some of what we heard:

- **"For the first time, we're really talking about teaching."**
- **"The process has forced us to get serious about our assessments."**
- **"It was a lot of time, but it was worth it."**

And we also heard lots of good questions:

- **"How can we develop stronger SLOs?"**
- **"Are we treating our non-classroom staff fairly with this new evaluation sytem?"**
- **"How can we get better at measuring growth for students with disabilities?"**

A Continuous Improvement Approach

Implementing a new evaluation system is a process, not an event. We need to stay focused, keep listening and keep learning so we can keep improving.

So now that you've completed a year, it's time for your joint committee to reconvene, answer a few basic questions and develop a process to keep refining your system over time.

First, did you implement your plan with fidelity? Start by collecting some data on the process, and then have an honest discussion about what you did and when you did it to identify points in the process that need more attention. Consider basic questions like, did conferences take place? Were SLOs prepared and agreed upon? Also consider system-level questions, like did our district provide all resources, supports, and training outlined in our implementation plan? Moving forward, has our district budgeted adequate resources to support continued implementation with fidelity?

Second, is the evaluation system making a difference? Do teachers think they are getting good feedback? Do evaluators see changes in practice? Do teachers and evaluators believe the SLO's are accurate reflections of growth? How can the evaluation system be improved to offer even more high quality feedback that is actionable and meaningful for teachers?

After you've discussed implementation and impact, consider what's next. Do we need more training? Do we need more team planning time? How can we use the evaluation data to inform plans for

professional development? Are we using the right assessments?

What process do we have in place to continue assessing implementation and impact over time? Will the joint committee continue to meet?

We've updated many of PEAC's guidance documents to mention this focus on continued improvement and look forward to further refinements as districts continue to implement.

Continuous Improvement

Reflect, Plan and Analyze
The evaluation process fits nicely into a Reflect, Plan and Analyze format. This model can be used at all levels as teachers reflect upon their students' data and their lessons then plan appropriate instruction and analyze the results. Teams of teachers or departments can do the same with their shared data and team goals. School-level evaluators and district administrators analyze the data for school or district-wide trends. Lastly, the PERA Joint Committee uses the district's quantitative and qualitative data to assess the evaluation process system-wide.
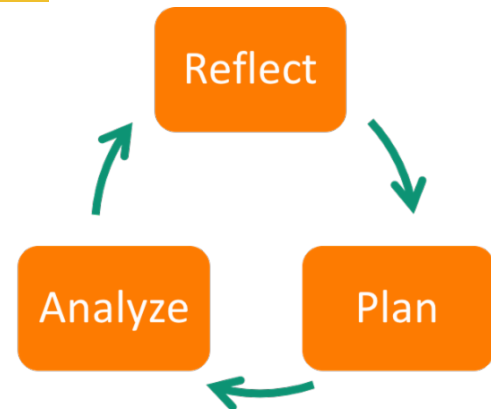
End of the Year Meeting Suggestions for the PERA Joint Committee
The end of the year is an ideal time for districts' Joint Committees to reflect upon how the performance evaluation system functioned and to discuss any modifications that need to be made to the process. Reflection time should also be included as a regular part of end-of-the year discussions held at the individual, department/team and school levels.

Reflect upon the year and how the evaluation process went for teachers and administrators.

- What were the success stories?
- What were the challenges?
- What lessons were learned?
- What changes need to be made to the process, forms, timelines, etc. to make the evaluation system run as effectively and efficiently as possible?
- Who will make these changes and how will the changes be communicated?

Analyze the data (both student growth and instructional practice information) gained from the evaluation process;

Look for trends in the evaluation data. Trends can be found in assessment data, from coded/aligned observation evidence, or from recurring themes that are discussed during pre/post observation conferences.

Plan the timelines for the year, adjusting if needed, for changes in the starting or ending dates of school.

Use the trend data found in the analysis component to plan for goal-setting (individual, department/team, school and district) and professional development opportunities.

As an example, it might be noticed that students score low in critical thinking or that teachers are not asking many higher level thinking questions in their classes. A meaningful professional

development activity might be to bring in resources that focus on questioning/discussion techniques and to spend time at team meetings to develop quality questions.

Set a schedule for the Joint Committee to meet during the following school year. Consider meeting at least twice a year, quarterly, or more often, as needed.

End-of-Year Conversations About Student Growth

Summative Conferences

During the spring, summative conferences take place to review student growth and professional practice data. The PERA Joint Committee should create or adopt forms that describe the summative process and contain guiding questions for teachers and evaluators to consider in advance to ensure reflective conversations.

Sample questions include the following:

- Did your students make significant learning gains?
- Did you have to make adjustments to the growth targets you set for students?
- Did you have to make adjustments to your instruction in response to the data?
- What were some of the instructional practices that allowed your students to grow and learn this school year?
- What practices did not promote growth?
- How can you prepare/change your instructional practices for next year to drive improved student learning?
- How can you use data more effectively to drive instruction and ensure that all of your students are successful next year?
- Based upon what you learned this year, how might you change the general student growth goals you set for next school year (keeping in mind that each group of students is different and might have different baseline data)?
- What has been the area of your greatest professional learning and growth this school year? To what can you attribute that growth?

Example Student Growth Conversation Form
(Can be used for mid-year or summative conferences)

1. Identify relevant student data to review. Consider formative assessments, summative assessments, and indicators of student growth.		
2. Identify trends in the data. Consider the following questions: • How did the class do overall? • What did students do well on? • What concepts or skills did students struggle with? • How did the sub-groups perform? Did some students in the sub-group stand out with exceptional performance or poor performance relative to the other students in the group? • Did students meet their growth targets?	Strengths:	
	Areas for Improvement:	
3. Identify root causes. Consider the following questions: • Why did students succeed on the areas of strength identified above? • Why did students struggle with some concepts? • Why did certain students perform well? • Why did certain students struggle? • What teacher actions contributed to student performance?		

A sample student growth conversation form. Click here for the full-size editable document that you can use to modify for your district's use and guiding questions.

Note: This sample form is based on local Joint Committee discussion and is not intended to replace your local Joint Committee's work.

Summative Forms

The PERA Joint Committee should have developed a clear process and forms to help make the end-of-the-

year summative conversations run smoothly and provide documentation for the teacher and district about the teacher's evaluation. The forms should be easy to understand and provide guidance to ensure accuracy of determining final evaluation ratings.

*Click here to see a full-size editable copy of an end-of-year conference form Bensenville School District #2 uses to record teacher's progress toward their professional practice and student growth goals. The form contains charts for determining the teacher's student growth rating.
Note: Bensenville's form was created based on their Joint Committee discussions and is not intended to replace your local Joint Committee's work.

A form used in Bensenville School District #2

Additional Website Link and Resources

Illinois State Board of Education's PERA and PEAC web page This site contains links to guidance documents and resources to help teachers, administrators, PERA Joint Committees, and School Boards implement the Performance Evaluation Reform Act.

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