



## 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,

We continue to look for ways to support you in your implementation of the Performance Evaluation Reform Act. We have held focus groups and regularly talk to members of various school districts and organizations across the state. In doing so, we hear some common themes.

The recurrent themes relate to the amount of time the evaluation process takes, how to manage the data, and how to make the evaluation process more collaborative with a focus on growth rather than compliance.

In this issue, we will review some strategies used in school districts to help address these common topics.

Please let us know if there are specific topics or questions you would like to see addressed in upcoming issues of the PERA Coach by using this [link](#) or the one at the bottom of this issue.

Sincerely,

The Performance Evaluation Advisory Council

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**Finding Time for Evaluation**

Districts report that implementing the performance evaluation process with fidelity takes a lot of time. Time is spent in reflective conversations (goal-setting, pre/post observations, mid-term, end-of-year conferences), conducting observations, documenting evidence,

managing data, etc. Investing the time helps to ensure that the process results in improved instruction and student growth.

Click [here](#) to download tips from evaluators about being more efficient with scheduling and to view a sample spreadsheet used to keep track of observations.

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## Increasing the Focus on Collaboration

Once a performance evaluation system is established, the focus can move beyond compliance and toward being more collaborative.

### Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

Many districts increase collaboration between teachers by creating professional learning communities (PLCs). Rick DuFour and Douglas Reeves defined professional learning communities as "an ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recursive cycles of collective inquiry and action research in order to achieve better results for the students they serve".

Guiding questions should be used to keep the focus on results. Suggestions for four questions, based on DuFour's work are:

- What do we want students to learn and be able to do?
- How will we know if students have mastered essential learning?
- What will we do for students who have not mastered essential learning?
- What will we do for students who have already mastered the content?

Click [here](#) to download an editable copy of a template that can be used for recording minutes and notes from a PLC meeting.

#### Intentional PLCs

One of the most common types of PLCs is a grade-level or content-based team. However, effective PLCs are also those chosen by teachers based on a shared interest or identified area for growth.

These intentional PLCs can be made up of small groups of educators that regularly meet in person or online to set goals, talk through challenges, do book studies, and hold each other accountable for growth.

Collaborative learning opportunities can also occur when teachers watch their colleagues teach during classroom visits. Click [here](#) to read more about various models used in **peer observations**.

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## Collaborative Conversations

Pre/post observation conferences are times when teachers can identify areas for which they are seeking feedback and to share knowledge and expertise of their content area, students, and instructional practice with their evaluators. Evaluators can engage with teachers in collaborative conversations, provide valuable insight about their practice, help guide them to identify areas for growth, and connect them with professional learning or support opportunities.

Evaluators should use coaching conversation strategies to support reflective thinking and to create more meaningful dialogue. Some suggestions include the following:

- Ask open-ended questions.
  - Ask probing questions to encourage the teacher to reflect and consider how the evaluator's feedback and guidance connects to what he/she knows about his/her classroom.
  - Ask clarifying questions to learn more about instructional decisions the teacher has made about the lesson.
  - Use sentence starter stems to guide the conversation. Click [here](#) for examples of coaching sentence starters.
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## PERA Implementation Best Practice

### Plan a Joint Committee Meeting in the Spring

The spring is a good time of year to schedule a meeting with your district's PERA Joint Committee. Use this time to review/recalibrate the PERA process. Check for consistency among evaluators, revise language, and/or guidelines.

Get feedback about the student growth model:

- Have the right assessments been determined?
- Are they aligned with what is being taught?
- Do they focus on student growth objectives that are key for each subject?
- Do they provide accurate reflections of growth and learning of students in all classroom settings?

Get feedback about the effectiveness of the evaluation process:

- Do evaluators see changes in practice?
  - Do teachers find the process meaningful?
  - How can the evaluation system be improved to offer more high quality feedback that is actionable and promotes growth in teachers?
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## Evaluator Retraining Cycle

### Reminder

#### When Evaluators Need to Take Retraining

Evaluators who have taken the initial evaluator training (Growth Through Learning Modules or district developed) must complete retraining "once within the next renewal cycle" (105 ILCS 5/24A-3). The chart linked below provides a guide for determining when retraining must be completed. Note that retraining is connected to the *renewal cycle of the license* (PEL).

Re-training cannot be taken early. It must be taken in the NEXT renewal cycle following the initial pre-qualification training, or re-training credit cannot be awarded. Furthermore, both teacher and principal evaluators must have successfully completed the initial training before completing re-training. Re-training credit cannot be awarded without having first completed initial training. Click [here](#) for a chart showing sample timeline scenarios for retraining for evaluators.

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## Questions and Sharing

### We Want to Hear From You

We want our upcoming issues of the PERA Coach to be responsive to your needs and to reflect the work that is occurring in school districts throughout the state.

What questions do you have about PERA implementation?

Would you be willing to share any success stories or lessons learned as you have implemented PERA in your district ?

Use this [link](#) to submit your questions or to provide contact information to share your PERA story.

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### Additional Resources

[Illinois State Board of Education Webpage - Educator Evaluations - PEAC web page](#) This site contains links to guidance documents, resources, and past PERA Coach Newsletters to help teachers, administrators, PERA Joint Committees, and School Boards implement the Performance Evaluation Reform Act.

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### Additional Subscriptions

Would you like other members in your district/organization to receive future issues of the Virtual PERA Coach?

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## Questions or Topic Suggestions

Use this [link](#) to submit questions or topic suggestions for future issues

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