



# Illinois State Board of Education

August 2014

## Guidance Document

### Guidance on Building Teacher Evaluation Systems for Teachers of Students With Disabilities, English Learners, and Early Childhood Students

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*This document is intended to provide non-regulatory guidance on the subject matter expressed by its title. For specific questions, please contact the person(s) identified in the document.*

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Dr. Christopher Koch, State Superintendent

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# Guidance on Building Teacher Evaluation Systems for Teachers of Students With Disabilities, English Learners, and Early Childhood Students

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**August 2014**

## Type of Guidance

This guidance document provides recommendations, guidance, and examples for districts to use when considering how to evaluate educators' professional practice and for joint committees to utilize when making decisions about how to measure student growth as part of educator evaluation. The Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA) does not require any joint committees or districts to act on the considerations provided in this document.

The Performance Evaluation Advisory Council (PEAC) and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) recognize that this topic depends significantly on district context, including instructional models that are in place, the needs of students, and the availability of a district's resources. Therefore, current Illinois practitioners' voices were significantly included in the development of this document. To do this, ISBE and the IFT and IEA administered a statewide survey to teachers to which more than 8,000 teachers responded. The survey included questions about issues PEAC should consider in how teachers of students with disabilities should be included in teacher evaluation systems. Further feedback and input came from a group of special education teachers from across the state that attended the December 2013 PEAC meeting.

Additional feedback came from a group of Illinois English learner (EL) teachers who attended the February 2014 PEAC meeting and early childhood teachers who attended the April 2014 PEAC meeting. Subsequently, state and district experts from these two instructional areas have offered numerous rounds of comments and editing suggestions, as have PEAC members. In addition, PEAC has collected resources from numerous Illinois districts regarding the systems they have in place to address evaluation of teachers in these instructional areas and links to these resources are included throughout the document.

## Scope of Guidance

Making certain that the needs of students with disabilities, ELs, and early childhood students (and those in multiple categories) are met, and that their teachers are fully represented in the process of designing performance evaluation from the very beginning as well, is central to ensuring that the evaluation process leads to quality feedback on teacher performance. Educators in these disciplines serve in many diverse capacities (e.g., coteaching, in a resource room, as consultants, and in a self-contained classroom), and their roles and responsibilities vary across

contexts. Therefore, designing the system to evaluate performance in a way that will reflect the breadth and variety of their roles is imperative.

Educators across these instructional areas have expressed a desire to ensure that evaluation systems accurately and fairly evaluate their practice and provide useful feedback to improve their performance. Some of the shared concerns are an understanding of the students they serve and their instructional needs, appropriate instructional strategies and techniques for the population of students they instruct, and assessments that are authentic and accurate measures of their students' growth.

Although each of these categories of educators is unique (and in each in itself contains several types of instructional personnel and approaches), certain practices can ensure that the evaluations are fair and accurately reflect the practice of all three categories and their variations. This guidance document provides districts with five recommendations for how to include them in performance evaluation systems. A matrix overview of when these recommendations may be most relevant to the instructional assignment and context of an educator is included as well. It is important to note that, although each of these categories is discussed in a separate section in this guidance document, many educators serve students who fall into multiple categories of learners, and readers may wish to review all sections for the most comprehensive and relevant approaches.

The requirements for educator evaluation in Illinois are outlined in state statutes and regulations and detail specific requirements for measuring educators' professional practice and their impact on student growth. Additional details can be found here:

- <http://www.isbe.state.il.us/PERA/default.htm>
- <http://www.ilga.gov/commission/jcar/admincode/023/02300050sections.html>

## Summary of Guidance

States and districts are working to implement new systems of teacher evaluation and guidance from practice, and research is just beginning to emerge—particularly for evaluating teachers serving students with disabilities, ELs, and students in early childhood programs. The way forward, therefore, is to learn from existing practice, garner what we have learned from research in the profession, and make a logical decision about teacher evaluation that is most likely to result in a positive impact on practice and the profession with an emphasis on continual improvement over time. This guidance document presents our best knowledge, at this time, and provides some thoughtful recommendations for creating a system of support for these educators. Here is a short summary of the strategies outlined in this guidance:

**Strategy 1: Use Uniform Rubrics With Specific Examples of Practice:** Establish common expectations and guidelines for teachers' professional practice, but recognize the unique instructional contexts and roles of educators of students with disabilities, ELs, and early childhood students and consider how to adjust rubrics to reflect those contexts fairly (or adopt models in use in other states or districts).

**Strategy 2: Provide Additional Training for Evaluators in Specific Instructional Areas:** Ensure that evaluators have access to training on the evaluation of educators of

students with disabilities, ELs, and early childhood students (and those in multiple categories).

**Strategy 3: Use Preobservation Conferences to Share Key Information:** Provide training and resources to help educators effectively utilize the preobservation conference to share information about instructional strategies, student needs, and classroom context.

**Strategy 4: Utilize Experts With Relevant Instructional Knowledge to Support Evaluation:** Districts may opt to utilize special education, EL, or early childhood experts to help train and calibrate observers or to actually conduct observations and provide feedback as peer observers as part of the evaluation process (insofar as consistent with collective bargaining agreements).

**Strategy 5: Encourage the Use of Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) to Measure Growth:** Districts can use the state SLO template to help educators understand how to most effectively use SLOs as part of an ongoing instructional program to effectively measure student growth. For students with disabilities, student IEP goals can help inform this process but should not be used directly for that purpose.

**Strategy 6: Adopt or Modify Existing Rubrics to Evaluate Specialized Instructional Support Personnel:** Districts can choose to use rubrics that have been developed in other jurisdictions for these specialized personnel or develop committees of educators to create new rubrics. The rubrics should accurately reflect the key job responsibilities of each specialist position.

The strategies will be described in more depth in this document with a matrix to follow describing the instructional contexts in which the strategies are likely to be most relevant and effective.

## Introduction

In many cases, a single evaluation system for all educators has numerous advantages. Beyond building a common understanding of effective instruction for all teachers, a single system can facilitate better fidelity of implementation and a system in which all teachers have a clear understanding of expectations. In particular, there are several advantages to employing the same evaluation system for teachers of students with disabilities, ELs, and early childhood students:

- **Shared Understanding.** Clear evaluation systems provide common expectations and guidelines for teachers' practice; therefore, including the skills all teachers need to know and implement fosters a better understanding of how to promote the academic and social growth of all students, regardless of their needs.
- **Inclusion.** Requiring the same standards of all educators will confirm the importance of accessible and rigorous instruction for all students. It is important for Illinois to build and maintain inclusive environments in which all administrators and teachers are accountable for the progress of all students.
- **Collaboration.** For students to grow socially and academically, educators need to work collaboratively with each other as well as with other professionals to ensure that students receive high-quality instruction and any specialized instructional supports and

accommodations they need to be successful. A common rubric provides common ground and language for professionals to discuss their practice and provide feedback and support to one another.

Research and best practice suggest, however, that there are some essential differences in both the roles of and the instructional practices used by educators of students with disabilities, ELs, and early childhood students, and it is important that they be fairly measured and evaluated.

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. Is the guidance in this document binding to districts or joint committees?

No, this document is provided only as a resource to provide options for districts to consider in determining how to evaluate professional practice and for joint committees to consider in determining how to evaluate growth of teachers of ELs, special education, and early childhood students.

2. Are all educators evaluated on both growth and professional practice?

Although most educators are evaluated on both of these areas according to PERA, specialized instructional support personnel are *not* subject to the growth portion of the evaluation.

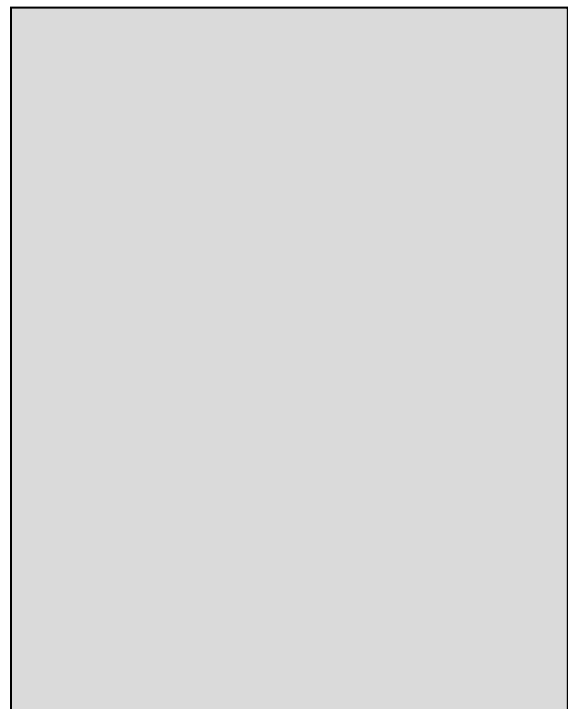
3. Do teachers have to include a minimum percentage of students in each SLO?

No. The percentage of students included should be determined collaboratively by the teacher and evaluator on the basis of their knowledge and understanding of the students and school context (including baseline and trend data); as part of the design process, however, the joint committee should develop procedures to encourage consistency across teachers in the district.

## Section 1. Special Education Instructional Providers

There are several distinct types of educators who support students with disabilities. This section in particular is focused on special education instruction providers. This includes all instructionally certified teachers responsible for providing instruction to an individual, group, or classroom of students: for example, special education teachers serving in multiple capacities and service delivery models (e.g., early childhood providers, coteachers, resource room, and self-contained classroom). These educators are subject to the growth portion of the performance evaluation process.

As described earlier, there is considerable value in establishing an evaluation system that all educators



share, with clear expectations and a sense of inclusiveness and collaboration across school staff. There are several important ways, nevertheless, in which evaluation systems can be tailored to more effectively assess the performance of special education teachers and provide them with feedback. Therefore, Illinois districts should consider the following recommendations that take into account the needs of special education instruction providers.

Strategy 1: Use uniform rubrics with specific examples of practice.

Strategy 2: Provide additional training for evaluators in specific instructional areas.

Strategy 3: Use preobservation conferences to share key information.

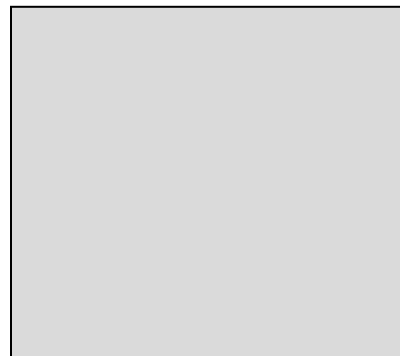
Strategy 4: Utilize experts with relevant instructional knowledge to support evaluation.

Strategy 5: Encourage the use of SLOs to measure growth.

### **Strategy 1: Use Uniform Rubrics With Specific Examples of Practice**

In this case, the district professional practice rubric remains constant for all instructional providers (including special education teachers, but explicit examples or an addendum is provided showing how the standard or indicator would be demonstrated according to student ability. This helps to ensure that all teachers can be evaluated fairly and that all teachers have an opportunity to receive a high rating, if appropriate. In most Illinois districts, Charlotte Danielson’s Framework for Teaching or a modified version of it will be the professional practice rubric. Districts may wish to consider how the various measures of instructional practice (e.g., the observation conferencing, the observation, the collection of evidence) are appropriate for use with teachers of students with disabilities. For example, they may take into account

- Specific evidence-based instructional practices for students with disabilities (e.g., direct and explicit instruction and learning strategy instruction)
- Specific roles and responsibilities of special educators (e.g., individualized education program facilitation, development, and implementation and coordination of related services personnel)
- Specific curricular standards and needs (e.g., Common Core State Standards, Illinois Learning Standards)
- Individual student needs (academic, social-emotional, physical, behavioral, etc.) and how their needs could affect scoring or rating on the rubric or evaluation tool being used



Several districts both inside and outside Illinois use this approach. For example, in Chicago Public Schools, the district has created additional materials to facilitate use of its Framework for Teaching Rubric in all classrooms that it calls Addenda. The Special Education Addendum describes some of the unique characteristics present in some special education classrooms that can help guide pre- and postobservation conferences and can help evaluators assign accurate ratings across the domains. The Addendum provides examples of special education teacher practice for observable components of the rubric and considerations of how each domain may specifically apply to special education teacher

practice. It also includes appendices with information about special education instructional models in use in the district and various approaches to coteaching.

In addition, Charlotte Danielson has recently developed a set of special education scenarios that provide extended examples of levels of performance in special education.<sup>1</sup> They are not a separate rubric but rather provide examples of practice in Domains 2 and 3 that pertain to teaching students with (1) autism, (2) multiple disabilities, (3) behavioral disabilities, and (4) mild to moderate disabilities.

### **Districts may consider the following for modifying examples or attributes in the district’s professional practice rubric:**

- Collaborate with other Illinois districts to review addenda that other districts and states are using or are planning to use.<sup>2</sup> Utilize existing resources from professional associations or rubric providers where available and determine how the additions will be integrated into the teacher evaluation system and how teachers and evaluators will be trained.<sup>3</sup>
- If the district is not satisfied with options that are already available, consider the following steps to develop examples and indicators that are more applicable. *Note:* This process is time-consuming, and it is highly recommended that it be piloted before it is implemented. Other districts that have done this work have phased it in over time.

**Step 1:** Establish a subgroup of special educators to collaboratively develop explicit examples of how the indicators and standards would look in the following situations:

- Working with specific student populations
- Performing roles and responsibilities specific to the position

**Step 2:** Establish validity. Ensure the content and face validity of additions to the rubrics through content expert and stakeholder review and feedback. Pilot the additions and obtain feedback from both teachers and evaluators and provide opportunities for the subgroup to review the processes, tools, and quality of implementation to increase confidence in the validity of the results. Over time, determine the extent to which observations of practice align with student outcome data and refine them accordingly.

### **Strategy 2: Provide Additional Training for Evaluators in Specific Instructional Areas**

In order to implement evaluation in a manner that is fair and useful to teachers, it is important to ensure that evaluators have access to training on the evaluation of educators of students with disabilities, ELs, and early childhood students. It is extremely important that teachers receive

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<sup>1</sup> See the link at <http://danielsongroup.org/special-education/>.

<sup>2</sup> See the examples from Chicago Public Schools (see ISBE website); Tazewell-Mason Counties Special Education Association(see ISBE website); Special Education Association of Peoria County (see ISBE website); and the Pennsylvania Department of Education: <http://www.pdesas.org/Instruction/Frameworks>.

<sup>3</sup> See the resources and guidance from the Danielson group about how to best apply this rubric to special education settings: <http://www.danielsongroup.org/article.aspx?page=SpecialEd>.



evaluations that accurately reflect their performance and provide meaningful feedback to improve their instruction, and a rubric is a good start. To truly support meaningful feedback, it is helpful to provide high-quality training for evaluators on how to accurately apply the professional practice rubric in evaluations of teachers of students with disabilities and give feedback that is relevant to their instructional settings.

Specific instructional area training can help provide evaluators with information that will support them in conducting accurate observations that yield very helpful developmental feedback for teachers, asking important questions in a preobservation conference, and identifying and using appropriate assessments for the content area of the observation. This training can be provided in many ways, as befits local context, but it could include in-person training sessions, resource materials, webinars, online on-demand training, or other effective vehicles for dissemination of information.

### **Districts may consider the following in providing training to support effective evaluation of teachers of students with disabilities:**

- Include specific training for evaluators of special education teachers. The examples used to augment the existing rubrics could be used as the basis of the evaluator training. Consider including an additional requirement for evaluator training and certification by including training on observing and evaluating special education classrooms.
- Provide opportunities for evaluators to receive on-the-job training through the use of a special education expert. This person could be a district administrator or teacher with whom the evaluator or group of evaluators could conduct practice observations to calibrate ratings. After the observations, the evaluator and expert can discuss the evidence that was collected and the appropriateness of the instructional approaches that were observed in the classroom. The expert also can serve as a resource throughout the year for the evaluator.



### **Strategy 3: Use Preobservation Conferences to Share Key Information**

Professional practice rubrics cannot realistically depict every type of instruction or classroom management strategy appropriate to each classroom context and student population. Therefore, the preobservation conference before a formal observation can be a way for the teacher to share the students' needs with an evaluator before the observation and select the most appropriate evidence-based instructional practice to use.<sup>4</sup>

For example, a teacher working with nonreaders would describe the empirical evidence supporting direct, explicit, scientifically based reading instruction. This would allow the educator the opportunity to provide the rationale and evidence for the instructional choice and any deviation from the professional practice rubric in its particular indicators (e.g., higher order

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<sup>4</sup> A tool from Hillsborough County, Florida, with a guide for questions for a preobservation conference is available here: [http://tntp.org/assets/tools/HCPs%20Pre-Observation%20Conference%20Guide\\_TSLT%203.12.pdf](http://tntp.org/assets/tools/HCPs%20Pre-Observation%20Conference%20Guide_TSLT%203.12.pdf).

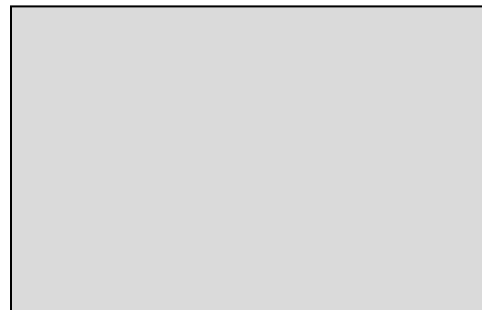
thinking skills). The teacher also could specifically discuss his or her students' needs, any relevant classroom structures to support their learning, and an explanation of how the instructional strategies are aligned with educational needs and goals for the class.

**Districts may consider the following for encouraging the use of preobservation conferencing to support effective evaluation of teachers of students with disabilities:**

- Create a revised set of questions or protocol for use within the preobservation conference that establishes an expectation for teachers to provide a rationale and supporting evidence for the instructional strategies chosen for the content and student population.<sup>5</sup> The revised set of questions could include those that elicit a teachers' knowledge of a particular concept, strategy, or skill related to the students' needs.
- Provide guidance and professional learning opportunities to prepare teachers and administrators to guide and facilitate data-driven discussions during the preobservation conference about the instructional strategies and content that fit students' needs .
- Provide guidance to administrators on conducting the formal observations of teachers of students with disabilities before conducting informal observations. That way, administrators can learn about the teacher's approach and students' needs and use them to inform future observations.

**Strategy 4: Utilize Experts With Relevant Instructional Knowledge to Support Evaluation<sup>6</sup>**

The use of special education experts, such as teachers<sup>7</sup> or administrators, both in a formative and in a summative role, can foster improvements in teaching. Utilizing special education experts such as other teachers or special education staff members from the district or cooperatives, can help alleviate an already busy evaluator and can also serve to pair teachers with evaluators of similar backgrounds and experience. Special education experts may positively affect evaluator credibility among teachers and are likely to have a positive impact on both the teacher and the peer observer's instructional practice.



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<sup>5</sup> See the examples from Tazewell-Mason Counties Special Education Association (see ISBE website); and the Tennessee Department of Education: <http://team-tn.org/observation-guidance-documents/>

<sup>6</sup> The Center for Great Teachers and Leaders has produced a report on ways to use peer observers in the teacher observation and evaluation process: [http://www.gtlcenter.org/sites/default/files/docs/GTL\\_AskTeam\\_LeveragingTeacherTalents.pdf](http://www.gtlcenter.org/sites/default/files/docs/GTL_AskTeam_LeveragingTeacherTalents.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> The use of peer observers is subject to related provisions of the local collective bargaining agreement.

## Districts may consider the following when using special education experts to conduct classroom observations:

- Establish the role of the expert observer.<sup>8</sup> For example, will the observer serve as a secondary observer and contribute to a consolidated summative rating provided by both the administrator and expert observer? Establish requirements for selecting and assigning expert special education observers. Districts should identify the number of teachers and observers in order to assign observers appropriately across the district.
- Establish the structural supports to employ special education expert observers. For example, determine how time will be allocated for observations to take place. How will other responsibilities be decreased to ensure the appropriate time can be committed to completing the observations?

## Strategy 5: Encourage Use of SLOs to Measure Growth

PERA requires that all teacher evaluations be composed of at least 30 percent student growth (25 percent for the first two years of implementation) derived from assessments of academic standards (Illinois Learning Standards or Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards, as appropriate). To do so, it is important that teachers of students with disabilities be evaluated from the results of appropriate assessments and that their students receive appropriate accommodations that will accurately reflect their performance. Such assessments should be part of the ongoing instructional program and not implemented exclusively for the purpose of educator evaluation. In order for teachers to track student progress and set rigorous targets for students, SLOs should complement the teacher’s instructional plan. SLOs are ambitious but achievable objectives for student progress set by educators on the basis of a student’s prior performance.

Attainment of SLOs can be a valuable and authentic way to measure the growth of students for the purpose of educator evaluation but also can be a useful tool to gauge learning benchmarks. They must also be based on appropriate Type III assessments—an assessment that is (a) rigorous, (b) aligned with the course’s curriculum, and (c) determined by the evaluator and teacher to measure student learning—with appropriate accommodations. In a survey of Illinois educators, special educators expressed a strong preference for utilizing assessments to measure student growth. Assessments for measuring growth could include performance assessments and teacher-created classroom assessments.

Although individualized education program (IEP) goals are one of several possible tools that may help inform SLOs, to avoid unintended consequences in the IEP process, they should not be used directly for this purpose. Note that not all students must be covered by SLOs, but they should cover as many students as possible. ISBE has developed an SLO template to help educators understand and best utilize this process.



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<sup>8</sup> The Illinois Performance Evaluation Advisory Council has developed guidance on how to include peer observers in conducting teacher evaluations: <http://isbe.net/peac/pdf/guidance/13-17-pe-teacher-eval.pdf>.

### **Joint committees may consider the following to encourage the development of high-quality SLOs for teachers of students with disabilities:**

- Joint committees should develop criteria for special educators to select reliable and valid assessments, which may include teacher-created assessments. For any teacher without an appropriate Type I or Type II assessment, the teacher will be required to use two Type III assessments. The assessments should be valid and reliable. In many cases, valid and reliable assessments already exist and the modifications and accommodations are the necessary additions.
- Joint committees should develop business rules articulating the minimum number of students and the length of time a student must be in a teacher’s class or assigned to work with a teacher to determine which students will be included in a teachers’ student growth calculation. Rules for teachers in a coteaching assignment also should be determined.
- Use SLOs as the measurement model for Type III assessments. Districts may choose to provide guidance on how the IEP differs from SLOs but also should clarify how it could be used as one of several possible tools in developing SLOs. Districts may augment the state SLO template with additional examples specific to special education teachers (developed in collaboration with local educators).
- Joint committees should consider developing specific guidance or examples to help support implementation of an SLO process, including training for teachers and evaluators.<sup>9</sup>

## **Section 2. Specialized Instructional Support Personnel**

Specialized instructional support personnel such as school counselors, school psychologists, nonteaching school speech and language pathologists, school nurses, and school social workers are subject only to the professional practice requirements of PERA. These educators may have roles and responsibilities significantly different from those of special education instructional providers. Consequently, it is important that the rubrics measuring their professional practice accurately capture and assess their effectiveness in their specific roles.

Therefore, Illinois districts should consider the following recommendation for how to measure this professional practice as part of educator evaluation:

### **Strategy 6: Adopt or Modify Existing Rubrics to Evaluate Personnel With Very Distinct Roles**

Specialized instructional support personnel are integral to the academic and social success of students with disabilities. Therefore, evaluation models should reflect the respective roles and responsibilities of that discipline and represent a fair and appropriate assessment of performance. Evaluation models often are guided by the professional association standards. Evaluations also should be conscious of student privacy issues and ensure that requirements are aligned with

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<sup>9</sup> See the Illinois SLO Template (<http://www.isbe.net/assessment/htmls/balanced-asmt.htm>); Rhode Island guidance on SLOs for special education teachers ([http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Teachers-and-Administrators-Excellent-Educators/Educator-Evaluation/Student-Learning-Objectives/SLO\\_SpecEd\\_Gr1-2.pdf](http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Teachers-and-Administrators-Excellent-Educators/Educator-Evaluation/Student-Learning-Objectives/SLO_SpecEd_Gr1-2.pdf)); and Connecticut sample SLOs for special education teachers ([http://www.connecticutseed.org/?page\\_id=1966](http://www.connecticutseed.org/?page_id=1966)).

existing privacy regulations. Though not validated by research to date, states and districts are modifying existing rubrics to better reflect the specialist roles and responsibilities. This process has entailed the actual modification of indicator language in existing teacher professional practice rubrics by representative stakeholders. Many states are requiring student growth as a component of specialized instructional support personnel evaluations, but in Illinois, there is no such requirement.



### **Districts may consider the following to determine the appropriate tool to measure professional practice of specialized instructional support personnel:**

- Review existing Illinois<sup>10</sup> and other state resources<sup>11</sup> to determine whether any may meet the district’s needs or could be modified to do so.
- If the district is not satisfied with options that are already available, consider the following steps to develop a rubric that is more applicable. *Note:* This process is time-consuming and it is highly recommended that it be piloted before it is implemented. Other districts that have done this work have phased it in over time.

**Step 1:** Establish a subgroup of specialized instructional support personnel to collaboratively develop a rubric for each area of specialty.

**Step 2:** After drafting the rubrics, convene a group of practitioners to review and provide input on the rubric drafts. Revise the rubric until it is ready to pilot.

**Step 3:** Establish validity. Ensure the content and face validity of the rubrics through review and feedback from content experts and stakeholders. Pilot the use of the rubric and obtain feedback from both specialized instructional support personnel and evaluators and provide opportunities for the subgroup to review the processes, tools, and quality of implementation to increase confidence in valid results.

- Include specific training for evaluators and specialized instructional support personnel. Consider including training on the use of specialized instructional support personnel rubrics as part of the certification training that is required in the district.

## **Section 3. Teachers of English Learners**

There are several types of educators who support English learners (ELs): transitional bilingual education or transitional program of instruction teachers, English as a second language teachers, dual language teachers, general education classroom teachers, special education teachers, and other specialists.

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<sup>10</sup> See the examples of resources from Livingston County Special Services Unit, LaGrange Area Department of Special Education, and Tazewell-Mason Counties Special Education Association at <http://www.isbe.net/>.

<sup>11</sup> Other states and districts that have developed rubrics for specialized instructional support personnel: Juneau, Alaska (<http://www.juneauschools.org/uploads/hr/Evaluation%20for%20Speech%20Therapist.pdf>); Harrison, Colorado (<http://www.hsd2.org/departments/human-resources/evaluations>);

As discussed earlier, there is considerable value in establishing a common evaluation system for all educators with clear expectations and a sense of inclusiveness and collaboration across school staff functions. Evaluation systems can be tailored in several ways to more effectively assess the performance and provide feedback to teachers of ELs. Therefore, Illinois districts should consider the following recommendations that take into account the needs of teachers of ELs:

Strategy 1: Use uniform rubrics with specific examples of practice.

Strategy 2: Provide additional training for evaluators in specific instructional areas.

Strategy 3: Use preobservation conferences to share key information.

Strategy 4: Utilize experts with relevant instructional knowledge to support evaluation.

Strategy 5: Encourage the use of SLOs to measure growth.

### **Strategy 1: Use Uniform Rubrics With Specific Examples of Practice**

In this case, the district professional practice rubric remains constant for all instructional providers (including teachers of ELs but provides explicit examples of how the standard or indicator would be demonstrated taking into account student ability and the need to ensure that all teachers be evaluated fairly and that all teachers have an opportunity to receive a high rating, if appropriate. In most Illinois districts, Danielson’s Framework for Teaching or a modified version of it will be the professional practice rubric. Districts may wish to consider how the measures of instructional practice (e.g., the observation conferencing, the observation, the collection of evidence) are appropriate for use with teachers of ELs. For example:

- The type of program that the teacher is working in (dual language, transitional bilingual education, transitional program of instruction, English as a second language, etc.) and the language of instruction for the content that the teacher is delivering within that program
- The range of language development and academic language proficiency that span all content learning for ELs in both their home languages and English

#### **Districts may consider the following when modifying examples or attributes in the district’s professional practice rubric:**

- Collaborate with other Illinois districts to review addenda that other districts and states are using or are planning to use.<sup>12</sup> Utilize existing resources from professional associations or rubric providers, where available, and determine how the additions will be integrated into the teacher evaluation system and how teachers and evaluators will be trained.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> See the examples from Chicago Public Schools available on the ISBE PEAC website (<http://www.isbe.net/PEAC/default.htm>).

<sup>13</sup> The Illinois Association for Multilingual Multicultural Education has developed standards for bilingual teachers that were accepted by the Illinois Advisory Council for Bilingual Education in 2012. The Illinois State Board of Education also is currently developing standards for the bilingual/ESL endorsement for both preservice and in-service teachers utilizing both IAMME and TESOL standards. Another respected professional organization in the field to consult would be the Center for Applied Linguistics.

- If the district is not satisfied with options that are already available, consider the steps below to develop examples and indicators that are more applicable. *Note:* This process is time-consuming and it is highly recommended that it be piloted before it is implemented. Other districts that have done this work phased it in over time.

**Step 1:** Establish a subgroup of teachers of ELs to collaboratively develop explicit evidence the observer would look and listen for in evaluating the standards in the following situations:

- Educating ELs in different program models
- Serving ELs at different language development levels
- Instructing students of various age and grade levels using developmentally appropriate methods
- Teaching specific content to ELs
- Performing roles and responsibilities specific to the position and program

**Step 2:** Establish validity. Ensure the content and face validity of additions to the rubrics through content expert and stakeholder review and feedback. Pilot the additions and obtain feedback from both teachers and evaluators and provide opportunities for the pilot subgroup to review the processes, tools, and quality of implementation to increase confidence in valid results. Over time, determine the extent to which observations of practice align with student outcome data and refine it accordingly.

- Priority should be given to have administrators who have English as a second language (ESL) or bilingual credentials to be the evaluators of teachers of ELs. In addition, if the language of instruction is a language other than English, priority should be given to administrators who speak and understand the language of instruction. For districts that do not have administrators with these credentials and skills, include training related to ESL or bilingual instruction specifically for evaluators of teachers of ELs. The examples used to augment the existing rubrics could be used as the basis of the evaluator training. Consider including an additional requirement for evaluator training and certification by including training on observing and evaluating EL classrooms.

## **Strategy 2: Provide Additional Training for Evaluators in Specific Instructional Areas**

In order to implement evaluation in a manner that is fair and useful to teachers, it is important to ensure that evaluators have access to training on the evaluation of educators of EL students so that they may be aware of key differences in best practice in instructional strategies and classroom practices in these settings. It is extremely important that teachers receive evaluations that accurately reflect their performance and provide meaningful feedback to improve their instruction, and a rubric is a good start. To truly support this effort, it is important to provide high-quality training for evaluators on how to accurately apply the professional practice rubric in evaluations of EL educators and give feedback that is relevant to their instructional settings.

Specific instructional area training can help provide evaluators with information that will support them in conducting accurate observations that yield very helpful developmental feedback for teachers, asking important questions in a preobservation conference, and identifying and using appropriate assessments for the content area. Training can be provided in many ways that local context requires, but it could include in-person training sessions, resource materials, webinars, online on-demand training, or other effective strategies for disseminating information.

### **Districts may consider the following in providing training to support effective evaluation of EL educators:**

- Include specific training for evaluators of EL educators. The examples used to augment the existing rubrics could be used as the basis of evaluator training. Consider including an additional requirement for evaluator training and certification by including training on observing and evaluating EL/bilingual classrooms.
- Provide opportunities for evaluators to receive on-the-job training through the use of an EL or bilingual expert. This person could be a district administrator or teacher with whom the evaluator or group of evaluators could conduct practice observations to calibrate ratings. After the observations, the evaluator and expert can discuss the evidence that was collected and the appropriateness of the instructional approaches that were observed in the classroom. The expert also can serve as a resource throughout the year for the evaluator.

### **Strategy 3: Use Preobservation Conferences to Share Key Information**

Professional practice rubrics cannot realistically depict every type of instruction or classroom management strategy appropriate to each classroom context and student population. Therefore, the preobservation conference before a formal observation can be a way for the teacher to share the students' needs with an evaluator before the observation and select the most appropriate evidence-based instructional practice to use.<sup>14</sup>

For example, a teacher working with recent arrivals or newcomers would describe the empirical evidence supporting newcomer strategies and native language or English development strategies. This would allow the educator the opportunity to provide the rationale and evidence for the instructional choice and any deviation from the professional practice rubric in its particular indicators (e.g., higher order thinking skills). The teacher also could specifically discuss his or her students' needs, any relevant classroom structures to support their learning, and an explanation of how the instructional strategies are aligned with educational needs and goals for the class.

A second example could be an explicit preobservation conversation between the evaluator and the teacher on the selection of language and content objectives for the lesson and how the attainment of these objectives will be measured.

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<sup>14</sup> A tool from Hillsborough County, Florida, with a guide for questions for a preobservation conference is available here: [http://tntp.org/assets/tools/HCPSS%20Pre-Observation%20Conference%20Guide\\_TSLT%203.12.pdf](http://tntp.org/assets/tools/HCPSS%20Pre-Observation%20Conference%20Guide_TSLT%203.12.pdf).



### **Districts may consider the following for encouraging the use of preobservation conferencing to support effective evaluation of teachers of ELs:**

- Create a revised set of questions or protocol to use within the preobservation conference that establishes an expectation that allows teachers to provide a rationale and supporting evidence for the instructional strategies chosen for the content and student population. The revised set of questions could include those that elicit a teacher’s knowledge of a concept, strategy, or skill related to the students’ needs.
- Provide guidance and professional learning opportunities to prepare teachers and administrators to guide and facilitate discussions during the preobservation conference about the instructional strategies and content on the basis of students’ needs and an analysis of data.
- Provide guidance to administrators in conducting the formal observations of teachers of ELs before conducting informal observations. This way, administrators can learn about the teacher’s approach and students’ needs to inform future observations.

### **Strategy 4: Utilize Experts With Relevant Instructional Knowledge to Support Evaluation<sup>15</sup>**

The use of EL experts, such as teachers<sup>16</sup> or administrators, both in formative and summative roles, can foster improvements in teaching. Utilizing EL experts such as other teachers or EL staff from the district or cooperatives can help improve the quality of the observation, provided that the EL expert is carefully selected and meets the following criteria:

- Successful teaching experience of ELs
- Rated as proficient or distinguished
- Experience mentoring preservice or in-service teachers
- Having the ability to objectively observe lessons
- Being able to ask guiding questions in a coaching model

These EL experts will be especially helpful in working with administrators who do not have an endorsement for or training on ELs. EL experts may positively affect evaluator credibility among teachers and are likely to have a positive impact on both the teacher and the peer observer’s instructional practice.

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<sup>15</sup> The Center for Great Teachers and Leaders has produced a report on ways to use peer observers in the teacher observation and evaluation process:

[http://www.gtlcenter.org/sites/default/files/docs/GTL\\_AskTeam\\_LeveragingTeacherTalents.pdf](http://www.gtlcenter.org/sites/default/files/docs/GTL_AskTeam_LeveragingTeacherTalents.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> The use of peer observers is subject to related provisions of the local collective bargaining agreement.

### **Districts may consider the following when using EL experts to conduct classroom observations:**

- Establish the role of the expert observer.<sup>17</sup> For example, will the observer serve as a secondary observer and contribute to a consolidated summative rating provided by both the administrator and expert observer? Establish requirements for selecting and assigning expert EL observers. Districts should identify the number of teachers and observers in order to assign observers appropriately across the district.
- Establish the structural supports to employ EL expert observers. For example, determine how time will be allocated for observations to take place. How will other responsibilities be decreased to ensure the appropriate time can be committed to completing the observations?

### **Strategy 5: Encourage the Use of SLOs to Measure Growth**

PERA requires that all teacher evaluations be composed of at least 30 percent student growth (25 percent for the first two years of implementation) derived from assessments of academic standards. To do so, it is important that teachers of ELs be evaluated using appropriate assessments and that their students receive appropriate accommodations that will accurately reflect their performance. These assessments should be part of the ongoing instructional program and not implemented exclusively for the purpose of educator evaluation. In order for teachers to track student progress and set rigorous targets for students, SLOs should complement the teacher’s instructional plan. SLOs are ambitious but achievable objectives for student progress set by educators on the basis of a student’s prior performance.

To ensure SLOs are ambitious and achievable, joint committees should provide direction and training on common issues that will arise during the development of SLOs, such as the following:

- Assessments should be reliable and valid for ELs and reflect the specific English learners in the specific classroom. When utilizing assessments with multiple norming groups, the norms for ELs created for those assessments must be employed when measuring student growth for ELs. One general principle is that the assessments used to measure student growth should match the language of instruction. Therefore, if the student is being taught core subjects in the home language as required by state rules and regulations, then the assessments should also be in the home language. If home language assessments are not employed, it is common for teachers to be asked to provide core instruction for ELs exclusively in English, which contradicts Illinois school code.
- State assessments such as Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners (ACCESS), Illinois State Achievement Test (ISAT), Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE), and future Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessments are not appropriate Type I assessments for ELs. Academic achievement assessments such as ISAT, PSAE, and PARCC are not valid or reliable measures of student performance on

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<sup>17</sup> The Illinois Performance Evaluation Advisory Council has developed guidance on how to include peer observers in conducting teacher evaluations: <http://isbe.net/peac/pdf/guidance/13-17-pe-teacher-eval.pdf>.

standards for ELs because they are not administered in a language of proficiency. Furthermore, the WIDA consortium has clearly stated in its student growth reports that ACCESS scores should not be used for teacher evaluation. Also, these assessments do not provide two data points in the same year, as required for teacher evaluation. Therefore, it is necessary to consider Type II and III assessments as more appropriate measures of EL student growth.

Type II and III assessments should reflect the language of instruction, as indicated in state-approved program models. If the student is being taught core subjects in the home language, then the assessments should be in the home language. If the student is being taught on an ESL or sheltered English model, then the assessments also should be assessments that are appropriate in ESL settings and address language acquisition. Specifically, assessments that are developed according to the WIDA English Language Development Standards are warranted. If students are being taught in dual language contexts, then assessments in both languages would be appropriate.

- All Type II assessments should be reliable and valid for ELs and reflect the specific ELs in the specific classroom. When utilizing assessments with multiple norming groups, the norms for ELs created for those assessments must be employed when measuring student growth for ELs.
- The following are examples of Type II assessments that could be appropriately used for student growth:

For academic growth in Spanish of Spanish TBE program students

- *Rigby PM*
- *Evaluación de Desarrollo de Lectura*
- Fountas and Pinnell (in Spanish)
- *Medidas Incrementales de Destrezas Esenciales (MIDE)*
- *Supera\**
- *Logramos\**
- *Aprenda\**

For academic growth in English of transitional bilingual education or transitional program of instruction students

- Northwest Evaluation Association *Measures of Academic Progress* (if used appropriately)
- *Developmental Reading Assessment*
- Fountas and Pinnell
- It is critical to collect initial baseline data from these Type II assessments and then make projections of expected student growth. A student's English language proficiency level, as determined from ACCESS, can help to inform which assessments to use and projected student growth if the assessment is administered in English.

- For languages that do not have standardized tests that can be used as Type I or Type II, a school district should develop local Type II assessments in the students’ home language. When not possible, student growth should be measured on Type III assessments developed in the students’ home language and language of instruction.
- Transitional bilingual education or transitional program of instruction program directors should analyze the assessment results of student growth for teachers serving transitional bilingual education or transitional program of instruction program students. Further, such EL growth results should be aggregated for entire school buildings and be used as an alternative academic achievement indicator.

Attainment of SLOs can be a valuable and authentic way to measure the growth of students for the purpose of educator evaluation but also can be a useful tool to gauge learning benchmarks. They must be based on appropriate Type III assessments—an assessment that is (a) rigorous, (b) aligned with the course curriculum, and (c) determined by the evaluator and teacher to measure student learning—with appropriate accommodations. Growth measure assessments could include performance assessments and teacher-created classroom assessments. ISBE is developing an SLO template to help educators understand and best utilize this process.

**Joint committees may consider the following to encourage the development of high-quality SLOs for teachers of ELs:**

- Joint committees should develop criteria for the selection of valid and reliable assessments to measure student growth for teachers whose classrooms include ELs. For any teacher without an appropriate Type I or Type II assessment, the teacher will be required to use two Type III assessments. The assessments should be valid and reliable. In many cases, valid and reliable assessments already exist, and the modifications and accommodations are the necessary additions.
- Joint committees should develop business rules articulating the minimum number of students and the length of time a student must be in a teacher’s class or assigned to work with a teacher to determine which students will be included in a teacher’s student growth calculation. Rules for teachers in a coteaching assignment also should be determined.
- Use SLOs as the measurement model for Type III assessments. Districts may augment the state SLO template with additional examples specific to EL teachers (developed in collaboration with local educators).
- Joint committees should consider developing specific guidance or examples to help support implementation of an SLO process, including training for teachers and evaluators.

## **Section 4. Early Childhood Educators**

There are several types of early childhood educators. In Illinois, early childhood is defined as children from birth through Grade 3, but for the purposes of teacher evaluation, this guidance is relevant for teachers of students in PK through third grade. Educators of these children include both early childhood educators and early childhood special educators who provide instruction to an individual student or a group or class of students. There also are educators who teach blended

classrooms that include typically and differently learning students with an array of needs. Early childhood students have a wide range of skills and needs that educators must address through early childhood standards and a curriculum that address academic, social-emotional, and physical development. It is important to both students and teachers for there to be alignment between relevant Illinois learning standards and curricula, instructional practice, and assessment.

Early childhood teachers also are instructing an increasing number of children from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds. Young dual language learners in particular require opportunities to develop language and conceptual skills in English with continual support in their home language to ensure academic achievement in English as their second language. Promoting linguistically and culturally responsive instructional practices is critical as children begin school.

As described earlier, there is considerable value in establishing a common evaluation system for all educators with clear expectations and a sense of inclusiveness and collaboration across school staff functions. There are several ways in which evaluation systems can be tailored to more effectively assess the performance and provide feedback to early childhood teachers. Illinois districts should consider the following recommendations that take into account the needs of early childhood teachers.

Strategy 1: Use uniform rubrics with specific examples of practice.

Strategy 2: Provide additional training for evaluators in specific instructional areas.

Strategy 3: Use preobservation conferences to share key information.

Strategy 4: Utilize experts with relevant instructional knowledge to support evaluation.

Strategy 5: Encourage the use of SLOs to measure growth.

## **Strategy 1: Use Uniform Rubrics With Specific Examples of Practice**

In this case, the district professional practice rubric remains constant for all instructional providers (including early childhood educators), but explicit examples are provided of how the standard or indicator would be demonstrated while taking into account student ability and the need to ensure fair evaluation of all teachers and the need for all teachers to have an opportunity to receive a high rating, if appropriate. In many Illinois districts, Danielson’s Framework for Teaching or a modified version of it will be the professional practice rubric, though that is not required by the state. It is important note that this rubric (as well as several others) has not been validated for use with teachers of children from birth through Grade 3. Thus, rubrics may need to be accompanied by specific examples of professional practice in the early childhood setting in order to ensure fairness to all educators. Districts may wish to consider how the various measures of instructional practice (e.g., the observation conferencing, the observation, the collection of evidence) are appropriate for use with early childhood educators and accommodate the range of development that can be expected in many early childhood classrooms; for example:

- Current examples in the Danielson Framework and many other rubrics are geared to later elementary and high school. What the evaluator sees and collects as evidence may look very different in the early childhood classroom. For example, for indicator 3b, Questioning and Discussion Techniques, in the Distinguished category, the description includes “students themselves ensure all voices are heard,” “students initiate higher-order

questions,” and “students invite comments from their classmates during discussion.” In the early childhood classroom, children may not have acquired the skills yet to initiate these types of activities. That does not mean the teacher has not used thoughtful questions and has not solicited input from students.

- The Center for the Study of Educational Policy at Illinois State University is currently conducting a study to validate the Danielson rubric in early childhood classrooms in Illinois and is developing resources for supporting the use of this nationally validated teacher evaluation tool.
- Evaluators must be familiar with developmentally appropriate instruction for young children. Young children learn through opportunities to guide their own learning as they interact with their environment, materials, and peers. Therefore, the evaluator may find that young children are engaged in more play-based, hands-on, or independent learning activities, and evaluators will likely see less whole-group direct instruction than with older children. Play-based and hands-on learning activities are significant means through which children gather and process information, learn new skills, and practice old ones.
- Evaluation systems should recognize the importance of looking at whole-child development in the early childhood classroom because success in multiple interrelated domains provides a critical foundation for students’ school success. In the early childhood classroom, academic learning is defined more broadly than just literacy and mathematics, and teachers and evaluators should consider multiple domains of development and how the environment and instruction addresses those domains. The core domains of school readiness, as defined by the congressionally appointed National Education Goals Panel, include the domains of language and literacy development; cognition and general knowledge, including early science and mathematics concepts; approaches to learning: physical well-being and motor development; and social and emotional development.
- Evaluators should consider the individual student needs and characteristics of children in the early childhood classroom, including ELs and children with special needs. Children in the early childhood classroom, particularly in preschool, demonstrate a wide range of development as a result of family, community, and environmental factors such as previous early learning experiences. Taking into account development and skills of individual students will be important to address in pre- and postconferences and observations.
- It is important for evaluators to be aware of the curriculum and standards appropriate for the classroom being evaluated, including the Illinois Early Learning Guidelines (birth to three), the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards (preschool), the Illinois Kindergarten Standards, and the Illinois Learning Standards.
- In early childhood programs, particularly preschool, often there are two teachers (or a teacher and a teacher aide) in the classroom. The teacher should plan for and articulate the roles of both adults in the classroom and during activities.

## Districts may consider the following for modifying examples or attributes in the district’s professional practice rubric:

- Collaborate with other Illinois districts to review addenda that other districts and states are using or are planning to use.<sup>18</sup> Utilize existing resources from professional associations or rubric providers, where available, and determine how the additions will be integrated into the teacher evaluation system and how teachers and evaluators will be trained.
- If the district is not satisfied with options that are already available, consider the following steps to develop examples and indicators that are more applicable. *Note:* This process is time-consuming, and it is highly recommended that it be piloted before it is implemented (before being used for impactful decision making about students or teachers). Other districts that have done this work have phased it in over time.

**Step 1:** Establish a subgroup of early childhood educators to collaboratively develop explicit examples of how the indicators and standards would look in the following situations: early childhood general education, early childhood special education, blended classrooms, and Grades K–3.<sup>19</sup>

**Step 2:** Establish validity. Ensure the content and face validity of additions to the rubrics through content expert and stakeholder review and feedback. Pilot the additions and obtain feedback from both teachers and evaluators and provide opportunities for the subgroup to review the processes, tools, and quality of implementation to increase confidence in valid results. Over time, determine the extent to which observations of practice align with student outcome data and refine them accordingly.

## Strategy 2: Provide Additional Training for Evaluators in Specific Instructional Areas

In order to implement evaluation in a manner that is fair and useful to teachers, it is important to ensure that evaluators have access to training on the evaluation of educators of early childhood students so that they may be aware of key differences in best practice in instructional strategies and classroom practices in these settings. It is extremely important that teachers receive evaluations that accurately reflect their performance and provide meaningful feedback to improve their instruction that takes into account the skills and abilities of the children they teach, and a rubric is a good start. To truly support this effort, it is helpful to provide high-quality training for evaluators on how to accurately apply the professional practice rubric in evaluations of early childhood educators and give feedback that is relevant to their instructional settings.

Specific instructional area training can help provide evaluators with information that will support them in each of the other identified strategies, including accurate observations that yield very

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<sup>18</sup> See examples from Chicago Public Schools (see link on PEAC website); Pennsylvania ([http://static.pdesas.org/content/documents/8\\_13\\_13\\_FINAL\\_ECE\\_Rubric%20Formatted%2010\\_28\\_13%20revised.pdf](http://static.pdesas.org/content/documents/8_13_13_FINAL_ECE_Rubric%20Formatted%2010_28_13%20revised.pdf)); New Jersey (<http://www.state.nj.us/education/ece/eval/Evidence.pdf>); and Tennessee (<http://team-tn.cloudapp.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Observation-Guidance-Documents.pdf>).

<sup>19</sup> Note that this work is already underway in Illinois through the Center for the Study of Educational Policy (CSEP) at Illinois State University, as was mentioned earlier.

helpful developmental feedback for teachers, important questions and areas to cover in a preobservation conference, and how to identify and use appropriate assessments for the specific content area. This training can be provided in many ways, as befits local context, but could include in-person training sessions, resource materials, webinars, online on-demand training, or other effective strategies for dissemination of specific information.

### **Districts may consider the following in providing training to support effective evaluation of early childhood educators:**

- Include specific training for evaluators of early childhood educators. The examples used to augment the existing rubrics could be used as the basis of evaluator training. Consider including an additional requirement for evaluator training and certification by including training on observing and evaluating early childhood classrooms.
- Provide opportunities for evaluators to receive on-the-job training through the use of an early childhood expert. This person could be a district administrator or teacher with whom the evaluator or group of evaluators could conduct practice observations to calibrate ratings. After the observations, the evaluator and expert can discuss the evidence that was collected and the appropriateness of the instructional approaches that were observed in the classroom. The expert also can serve as a resource throughout the year for the evaluator.

### **Strategy 3: Use Preobservation Conferences to Share Key Information**

Professional practice rubrics cannot realistically depict every type of instruction or classroom management strategy appropriate to each classroom context and student population. Therefore, the preobservation conference before a formal observation can be a way for the teacher to share the students' needs with an evaluator before the observation and select the most appropriate evidence-based instructional practice to use.

For example, a teacher working with four-year old children would describe the developmental levels and learning goals of children in the classroom and how they pertain to the activities that the evaluator is likely to see. For example, the teacher may engage in minilessons with the whole group, small groups, or individual children. Children will be given ample time to engage with practice and demonstrate mastery of specific skills that go beyond rote memorization of facts.

### **Districts may consider the following for encouraging the use of preobservation conferencing to support effective evaluation of early childhood educators:**

- Create a revised set of questions or protocol to use within the preobservation conference that establishes an expectation for teachers to provide a rationale and supporting evidence for the instructional strategies chosen for the content and student population.<sup>20</sup> The revised set of questions could include those that elicit a teachers' knowledge of a particular concept, strategy, or skill related to the students' needs.

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<sup>20</sup> See this resource from Pennsylvania:

<http://static.pdesas.org/content/documents/Guiding%20Questions%20For%20Early%20Childhood%20Teachers%206-20-2013.pdf>.



- Provide guidance and professional learning opportunities to prepare teachers and administrators to guide and facilitate discussions about the instructional strategies and content to address students' needs and an analysis of data during the preobservation conference.
- Provide guidance to administrators in conducting the formal observations of early childhood educators before conducting informal observations. That way, administrators can learn about the teacher's approach and students' needs to inform future observations.

## **Strategy 4: Utilize Experts With Relevant Instructional Knowledge to Support Evaluation<sup>21</sup>**

The use of early childhood experts, such as teachers<sup>22</sup> or administrators, in both formative and summative roles, can foster improvements in teaching. Utilizing early childhood experts, such as other teachers or early childhood staff from the district or cooperatives, can help alleviate an already busy evaluator and also can serve to pair teachers with evaluators of similar backgrounds and experience. Early childhood experts may positively affect evaluator credibility among teachers and are likely to have a positive impact on both the teacher and the peer observer's instructional practice.

### **Districts may consider the following when using early childhood experts to conduct classroom observations:**

- Establish the role of the expert observer.<sup>23</sup> For example, will the observer serve as a secondary observer and contribute to a consolidated summative rating provided by both the administrator and expert observer? Establish requirements for selecting and assigning expert early childhood observers. Districts should identify the number of teachers and observers in order to assign observers appropriately across the district.
- Establish the structural supports to employ early childhood expert observers. For example, determine how time will be allocated for observations to take place. How will other responsibilities be decreased to ensure that appropriate time can be committed to completing the observations?

## **Strategy 5: Encourage the Use of SLOs to Measure Growth**

PERA requires that all teacher evaluations be composed of at least 30 percent student growth (25 percent for the first two years of implementation) as derived from assessments of academic standards. In doing so, it is important that early childhood educators be evaluated using appropriate measures of student growth that are aligned with relevant state learning standards.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> The Center for Great Teachers and Leaders has produced a report on ways to use peer observers in the teacher observation and evaluation process:

[http://www.gtlcenter.org/sites/default/files/docs/GTL\\_AskTeam\\_LeveragingTeacherTalents.pdf](http://www.gtlcenter.org/sites/default/files/docs/GTL_AskTeam_LeveragingTeacherTalents.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> The use of peer observers is subject to related provisions of the local collective bargaining agreement.

<sup>23</sup> The Illinois Performance Evaluation Advisory Council has developed guidance on how to include peer observers in conducting teacher evaluations: <http://isbe.net/peac/pdf/guidance/13-17-pe-teacher-eval.pdf>.

<sup>24</sup> Examples of strategies from other states are available in a March 2014 report from CEELo: [http://ceelo.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/CEELO\\_policy\\_report\\_ece\\_teachereval\\_march\\_2014.pdf](http://ceelo.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/CEELO_policy_report_ece_teachereval_march_2014.pdf).

To get an accurate picture of young children’s growth, educators should use authentic measures of assessment that use observation and artifacts of children’s work to document their growth and development at multiple times throughout the year. Ideally, these assessments should cover multiple areas of a child’s development, as indicated in the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards and the Illinois Learning Standards, and not focus exclusively on literacy or numeracy. We know the integration of knowledge and skills across multiple domains of development help children attain the foundational skills needed to be successful in school.<sup>25</sup>

To ensure SLOs are ambitious and achievable, joint committees should provide direction and training on common issues that will arise around the development of SLOs, such as the following:

- Ensure that assessments and performance tasks be developmentally appropriate for early childhood students. Early childhood teachers must be involved in developing and selecting assessments that allow their students to show growth that is developmentally appropriate. If assessments do not include developmentally appropriate expectations that take into account a range of development, student growth may not be demonstrated, even though student growth has occurred. In an example from one district, where three-year-olds had the task of finding words in a sentence and four-year-olds had the task of finding spaces and upper-case letters in a sentence, the students could not perform the task but had demonstrated growth in their literacy development as defined by the curriculum and demonstrated during the teacher’s instruction. The rubric and expectation for development was not detailed or appropriate to the children being assessed.
- Provide clear guidance to teachers and evaluators on how assessments should be and could be modified to accommodate students. Teachers need guidance to know how to modify assessments and tasks. They also need guidance to help them know whether it is appropriate to modify an assessment or task. For example, it is not appropriate to use an assessment task that requires early learners to have mastered keyboarding because fine motor and letter recognition skills are not yet fully developed.
- Provide clear and appropriate guidance on the length of assessments and tasks. Because early childhood assessments must be administered one-on-one to classrooms of students, they can consume a significant amount of instructional time.
- Assessments should be part of the ongoing instructional program and not implemented exclusively for the purpose of educator evaluation. In order for teachers to track student progress and set rigorous targets for students, SLOs should complement the teacher’s instructional plan and align with Illinois’s learning guidelines. SLOs are ambitious but achievable objectives for student progress set by educators on the basis of a student’s prior development and performance data if they are available.

Attainment of SLOs can be a valuable and authentic way to measure the growth of students for the purpose of educator evaluation but also can be a useful tool to gauge learning benchmarks. They also must be based on appropriate Type II or III assessments—an assessment that is

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<sup>25</sup> Lori Connors-Tadros from the Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes at the National Institute for Early Education Research has been working with Ohio to develop guidance for teachers and administrators to develop sample early childhood SLOs: <http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Teaching/Educator-Evaluation-System/Ohio-s-Teacher-Evaluation-System/Student-Growth-Measures/Student-Learning-Objective-Examples/Student-Learning-Objectives-English-Example>.

(a) rigorous, (b) aligned with the course’s curriculum, and (c) determined by the evaluator and teacher to measure student learning—with appropriate accommodations. Growth measure assessments could include performance assessments and teacher-created classroom assessments. ISBE has developed an SLO template to help educators understand and best utilize this process.

**Joint committees may consider the following to encourage the development of high-quality SLOs for early childhood educators:**

- Joint committees should develop criteria for early childhood educators to select reliable and valid assessments. In many cases, valid and reliable assessments already exist and are in use to measure children’s growth. Teachers can determine the appropriateness of using these assessments as a whole or in part to set appropriate learning goals and measure growth of their students.
- Joint committees should develop rules articulating the minimum number of students and the length of time a student must be in a teacher’s class or assigned to work with a teacher to determine which students will be included in a teacher’s student growth calculation. Rules for teachers in a coteaching, push-in, and pull-out assignments also should be determined. In addition, guidelines should be established for classrooms that offer only a half-day instructional model.
- Joint committees should adopt a broad definition of “academic learning” for children from birth to third grade that includes the development of a child across multiple domains, including cognitive, social-emotional, and physical development.
- Joint committees should suggest that teachers and evaluators select two or three SLOs from within both the cognitive and social-emotional sections of the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards for evaluation with reasonable targets for growth goals aligned to the benchmarks outlined in the standards.
- Joint committees should recommend SLOs as the measurement model for Type III assessments. Districts may augment the state SLO template with additional examples specific to early childhood educators (developed in collaboration with local educators). Multiple artifacts or examples should be collected to support the documentation of student progress.
- Joint committees should consider developing specific guidance or examples to help support implementation of an SLO process, including training for teachers and evaluators to understand rigorous goals in an early childhood setting.

## Summary Matrix of Recommendations

As has been mentioned, the strategies are relevant for educators in particular instructional settings. The matrix that follows describes the situations in which these strategies may be most applicable and when joint committees or districts may want to consider their use.

Student Population	Teacher Role and Instructional Setting	Strategy 1: Use Uniform Rubrics With Specific Examples of Practice	Strategy 2 Provide Additional Training for Evaluators in Specific Instructional Areas	Strategy 3: Use Preobservation Conferences to Share Key Information.	Strategy 4: Utilize Experts With Relevant Instructional Knowledge to Support Evaluation.	Strategy 5: Encourage Use of SLOs to Measure Growth.	Strategy 6: Adopt or Modify Existing Rubrics to Evaluate Specialized Instructional Support Personnel.
Special Education	1. General education teacher with special education students	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	2. Special education teacher coteaching with general education teacher	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	3. Special education teacher providing push-in support to students	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	4. Special education teacher in resource room	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	5. Special education teacher in low-incidence self-contained classroom	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	6. Instructional service provider (social worker, physical therapist, etc.)			✓		✓	✓

Student Population	Teacher Role and Instructional Setting	Strategy 1: Use Uniform Rubrics With Specific Examples of Practice	Strategy 2 Provide Additional Training for Evaluators in Specific Instructional Areas	Strategy 3: Use Preobservation Conferences to Share Key Information.	Strategy 4: Utilize Experts With Relevant Instructional Knowledge to Support Evaluation.	Strategy 5: Encourage Use of SLOs to Measure Growth.	Strategy 6: Adopt or Modify Existing Rubrics to Evaluate Specialized Instructional Support Personnel.
English Learner	7. Dual language	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	8. English as a second language	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	9. Transitional bilingual education	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	10. Transitional program of instruction teacher	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	11. General education teacher serving current and former ELs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	12. Special educator serving current and former ELs with disabilities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Early Childhood	13. Educator of ages 3–5 developmentally appropriate students	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	14. Educator of ages 3–5 with students with special needs (or blended)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	15. K–3 general educator	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	16. K–3 special educator	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	