



Illinois State Board of Education

February, 2015

Guidance Document

Recommendations for Supporting Evaluators of Teachers, Principals, and Assistant Principals

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

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Recommendations for Supporting Evaluators of Teachers, Principals, and Assistant Principals

The Illinois Performance Evaluation Advisory Council (PEAC) is charged with submitting recommendations to the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) regarding the prequalification (certification) and retraining (recertification) requirements for teacher, principal, and assistant principal evaluators, including peer evaluators. Based on legislative requirements, the state’s policy goals, and a review of relevant research, this document provides recommendations for ISBE and districts or groups of districts on how best to support evaluators. Note that the Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA) does not require any joint committee or district to act specifically on the recommendations provided in this document.

Background: Requirements and Research on Evaluators

If new performance evaluation systems are going to realize the promise of changing and improving teaching and school leadership, states and districts should implement comprehensive professional learning that is integrated across the evaluation system.

As illustrated in its current Administrative Code 50, Illinois intends to build a comprehensive system of evaluator support from initial certification through recertification by means of ongoing professional learning. Initial certification of evaluators can provide assurance that evaluators possess at least a minimum level of accuracy in scoring before they conduct evaluations and build confidence in the results (Measures of Effective Teaching Project, 2014). In addition, ongoing support after certification improves accuracy and consistency in scoring (Cash, Hamre, Pianta, & Myers, 2012).

Goals of Supporting Evaluators

As outlined in Chapter 50.420 of the Illinois Administrative Code, certification, recertification, and ongoing training must ensure that evaluators demonstrate their ability to do the following:

- Understand, recognize, and control for personal bias.

Excerpt From Title 23 of the Illinois Administrative Code

- Beginning September 1, 2012, an evaluator cannot conduct observations until he or she has completed and passed the state-developed assessment for rating professional practice and student growth.
- After an evaluator is “qualified,” she or he must participate in ongoing retraining at least once during his or her five-year renewal cycle. If the evaluator does not complete retraining and her or his license is renewed, the evaluator cannot conduct evaluations until retraining is completed.
- Retraining can be accomplished at the district or regional level in partnership with supporting organizations (e.g., Illinois Administrator Academy (IAA), Illinois Principals Association). The retraining program must include content on increasing evaluation skills, including providing feedback, goal-setting, professional development planning, and collecting, aligning, and scoring evidence and analyzing data. This content can be delivered in a variety of formats.

- Understand and use observation frameworks to competently assess educator practice in multiple content areas with multiple student populations.
- Understand and use Type I, II, and or III assessments¹ appropriately to determine teachers' and administrators' contributions to student growth
- Demonstrate high levels of interrater reliability when synthesizing multiple and varied sources of evidence to construct low-in-bias ratings that reflect an individual educator's current level of performance.
- Develop collaborative, supportive, targeted professional development plans that consider past results, contribute to professional growth, and assist educators in aligning professional development and goal-setting to school improvement goals.
- Provide constructive feedback that is based on evidence and that facilitates educators' translation of evaluation findings into actionable steps that can guide their professional development.
- (For principal and assistant principal evaluation) Understand the Illinois Standards for Principal Evaluation, including the review and use of evidence to determine professional competence relative to each of the standards' indicators.

Recommendations

Early research suggests that professional learning activities should include ongoing opportunities for evaluators² to develop and refine their observation skills by:

- Engaging in observation practice activities at least three times annually (Joe, Kosa, Tierney, & Tocci, 2014)
- Discussing underlying beliefs, common language, and interpretation of the observation tool (Meyer, Cash, & Mashburn, 2011)
- Participating in job-embedded observations of classroom practice (Meyer et al., 2011)
- Comparing their evidence and ratings to master-scored evidence and videos (McClellan, Atkinson, & Danielson, 2012)
- Demonstrating their proficiency periodically to ensure rater reliability (Bell et al., 2009)
- Reviewing and analyzing multiple video examples of teaching for each competency at each performance level (McClellan et al., 2012)

¹ For more information about Type I, II, and III assessments, see page 3 of Illinois State Board of Education, 2014b, *Implementing the Student Growth Component in Teacher and Principal Evaluations* (Joint Committee Guidebook), at <http://isbe.net/peac/pdf/student-growth-component-guidebook.pdf>

² The research cited addresses promising practices for evaluators of teachers and has not been specifically replicated for evaluators of assistant principals and principals.

These types of professional learning activities can be integrated into the certification, ongoing support, and recertification of evaluators through a collaborative effort among stakeholders in Illinois. PEAC provides two recommendations that, when combined and implemented with fidelity, build a comprehensive system for supporting evaluators of teachers, principals, and assistant principals. These recommendations include:

1. **Recommendation to ISBE: Initial evaluator prequalification (certification)**—ISBE should continue to provide “prequalification” training and assessment for all new evaluators. While PEAC recognizes that PERA allows districts to develop their own prequalification processes, there are very few districts with the time, expertise, or resources necessary for building an effective evaluator training, assessment, and certification system at the local level. To that end, PEAC recommends that ISBE should continue to improve the statewide, video-based evaluator training, assessment, and certification system. With some improvements, this system can provide consistent standards and methods by which all evaluators in the state can be prepared, assessed, and certified. ISBE should continue to set standards for minimum levels of accuracy and reliability that evaluators are expected to meet to become certified. In addition, ISBE should continue to be responsible for ensuring that all evaluators, whether they are state or locally trained, meet this baseline level of accuracy and reliability before they begin to evaluate teachers, assistant principals, or principals.
2. **Recommendation for local support: Ongoing support and retraining (recertification) for evaluators**—After an evaluator is “qualified,” the evaluator must participate in at least one retraining to become recertified once during his or her five-year certification cycle. In addition to the training required for recertification, PEAC recommends that evaluators have access to additional, ongoing local support. To accomplish this, PEAC recommends that districts and Regional Offices of Education work together to provide ongoing support, although the form of this support may vary across the state. Examples of the types of activities that may be appropriate are provided in the next section.

To ensure consistent, statewide practices for recertification, PEAC recommends that the “official” recertification course for all evaluators be offered through the IAA. Since only administrators can earn credit through the IAA, PEAC recommends that ISBE recognize successful completion of IAA recertification courses by nonadministrator evaluators (e.g., peer evaluators) as evidence of having satisfied evaluator recertification requirements.

Formal recertification and ongoing supports should have the same goals; i.e., to ensure that evaluators maintain, continue to strengthen, and are able to demonstrate their capacity to conduct performance evaluations accurately and consistently. Adults learn best when they self-direct, build new knowledge on preexisting knowledge, and find relevance and personal significance in what they are learning—grounding theoretical knowledge in actual events (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000; Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1998). Therefore, the ongoing professional learning opportunities should be made available to any evaluator (peer, department chair, assistant principal, principal, superintendent) and be structured such that evaluators are able to apply their learning, receive feedback, and make adjustments in their practices.

After supports are in place, they should be revisited and refined on a continuing basis to ensure that evaluators have the support they need, when they need it. This refinement should be based on available evidence of its effectiveness, changes in requirements, and the experience of educators and evaluators in the field.

Examples of the types of professional learning activities to include in ongoing local support and in formal IAA evaluator retraining courses include:

Observation of practice

- Provide opportunities for all evaluators (i.e., administrators and those serving as peer evaluators) to engage in observation practice and feedback multiple times each year.
- Provide video clips of teaching and school leadership that illustrate key competency areas and varying performance levels.
- Provide examples of observation ratings, evidence, bias, and interpretation for critique, analysis, and discussion using the language of the rubric.
- Arrange for pairs or groups of evaluators to conduct classroom and schoolwide walk-throughs focused on particular dimensions of the observation rubrics for teachers and administrators.
- Model the use of preobservation conferences to share key information between teacher and evaluator.
- Arrange for evaluators to conduct joint observations with content- or program-specific experts (i.e., special education, English learners, early childhood) to enhance their capacity to apply rubrics appropriately for teachers in specialized disciplines.
- Arrange opportunities for groups of observers to discuss observation evidence as it relates to the rubric, and determine ways in which to provide meaningful feedback to teachers and administrators.
- Offer opportunities for practice using master-scored videos to compare accuracy of evidence collection, alignment, and ratings to ensure the accuracy and consistency of ratings.

Student growth

- Provide district-specific guidance on appropriate Type I, II, and III assessments to determine teachers' and administrators' contributions to student growth.
- Provide guidance on methods for analyzing and determining ratings based on multiple measures of student growth.
- Offer summaries of relationships between student growth and observational data.
- Provide opportunities for evaluators to review and practice scoring student learning objectives (SLOs) together.
- Provide sample SLOs and associated ratings.

Evaluating teachers working in specialized disciplines, including students with disabilities, English learners, and early childhood students³

- Provide specific examples of practice and associated ratings for teachers in specialized disciplines to show how uniform rubrics can be appropriately applied across varying classroom contexts.
- Model the use of preobservation conferences to share key information between teacher and evaluator.
- Utilize experts with relevant instructional knowledge to support evaluators in understanding how to apply rubrics appropriately for specialized disciplines.
- Provide examples of the use of SLOs to measure student growth for teachers in specialized disciplines.

Summative ratings, feedback, and improvement plans

- Provide frameworks or guidelines and opportunities to practice synthesizing multiple and varied sources of evidence to construct summative ratings that reflect an individual educator's current level of performance (i.e., "excellent", "proficient", "needs improvement," and "unsatisfactory").
- Provide examples of effective feedback conversations, including guidance for those serving as peer evaluators.
- Offer opportunities for evaluators to participate in role-plays of feedback conversations.
- Provide examples of improvement plans addressing specific needs for teacher and administrator growth.
- Offer opportunities to practice writing professional goals and development plans or feedback on such goals and plans for educators with varying performance ratings.
- Review and critique teacher or administrator professional development plans to ensure alignment with ratings.

³ For more specific guidance regarding suggested approaches to the evaluation of teachers working in specialized disciplines, please refer to Illinois State Board of Education, 2014a, *Guidance on Building Teacher Evaluation Systems for Teachers of Students With Disabilities, English Learners, and Early Childhood Students* at <http://isbe.net/peac/pdf/guidance/14-3-teacher-eval-sped-ell-preschool.pdf>

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