

## EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT (ESSA): Educator Evaluation Work Group Meeting #1 – June 14, 2016

---

### I. Anticipated Timeline of ESSA Stakeholder Engagement in Pennsylvania<sup>1</sup>



### 2. Scope of Educator Evaluation Work Group

While requirements for equitable distribution of effective teachers and paraprofessionals remain, ESSA is a significant departure from federal initiatives that tie teacher evaluation to student assessment results. In addition, ESSA eliminates the highly qualified teacher (HQT) requirements of No Child Left Behind, requiring that states instead establish a definition of “effective” educators, report the distribution of effective teachers as of 2017-18, and ensure that teachers and paraprofessionals serving in schools receiving federal funds meet state certification and licensure requirements. (For a more detailed breakdown of ESSA’s impact on educator evaluation, please see the [ESSA vs. No Child Left Behind crosswalk document](#).)

With this context in mind, members of the Educator Evaluation Work Group are charged with exploring the following questions and considerations to develop framework recommendations for state educator evaluation policy with respect to ESSA:

- What are the qualities of an “effective” educator?
- How can Pennsylvania ensure every student has access to an effective educator?
- Are there opportunities to improve efficiency and efficacy of the current educator evaluation and effectiveness system in Pennsylvania?
- Are there additional ways to address the complexities of teaching and learning while maintaining educator accountability for student success?

The Educator Evaluation work group discussion was facilitated by Jeanne Harmon of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). Staff from the PA Department of Education (PDE) were also available to the work group to provide support and assistance, as needed. During the second half of the day, the Educator Evaluation and Educator Certification work groups came together to discuss overlapping themes – in particular, how Pennsylvania might define “effective” educators in a post-HQT world, and how the state can ensure equitable access to effective educators for all students.

---

<sup>1</sup> Discussion notes from the April 28 breakout sessions on educator evaluation are available on PDE’s [website](#).

### 3. Emerging Themes – Educator Evaluation

Members of the Educator Evaluation work group identified several key themes during their discussions on June 14:

1. Adjust and streamline the observation tool to accommodate unique roles and contexts (different content areas, experience level, and other factors).
2. Emphasize continuous growth with focus on feedback, reflection, and educator supports (mentoring, coaching).
3. Adjust components/weighting to more accurately distinguish “effective” from “ineffective” teachers.
4. Craft a new recommended definition of “effective” educators for consideration in Pennsylvania’s ESSA State Plan, including strategies to monitor and promote equitable access to excellent educators for all students.

There was, predictably, significant diversity of opinion on other fronts. For example, one, smaller breakout group discussed the mechanics of moving to an observation-based evaluation framework and how various domain results – such as an unsatisfactory in one or more domains – would inform the final evaluation decision; however, the full work group has not yet considered this question. The breakout group contemplated how teachers would have opportunities to improve, including appropriate supports. A more detailed breakdown of the day’s discussion areas is below.

### 4. Discussion Points – Educator Evaluation

#### **Emerging Theme #1: Adjust and streamline the observation tool to accommodate unique roles and contexts (different content areas, experience level, and other factors).**

- Overall, consensus that use of the Danielson Framework is working for teachers, but that the scoring/weighting isn’t.
- Desire to streamline model and make it easier to implement at the local level.
- Many members expressed a desire to weigh observation more heavily as a component of overall scoring; perception that other data (student achievement, for instance) does not capture important educator impacts, including emotional support, relationships, and leadership.
- Importance of relevance, differentiation, and customization both at the local and individual levels, reflective of the unique structures of districts, as well as the roles and responsibilities of educators (moving away from a “one size fits all” approach to educator evaluation).
- Non-teaching professionals should not be forced into a classroom-based evaluation model.
- Allow districts to choose evaluation data (example – Classroom Diagnostic Tool) and provide flexibility to broaden categories for Teacher Specific Data.
- System should address how to ensure accurate observations, including assurance that all evaluators are trained in using the adopted framework and providing feedback.

#### **Emerging Theme #2: Emphasize continuous growth with focus on feedback, reflection, and educator supports (mentoring, coaching).**

- Observation as a collaborative, job-embedded process focused on providing useful feedback for educators to aid continuous improvement.
- Supports for educators will ensure effective response to feedback (caveat that districts don’t always have money or staff to provide adequate supports).

- Assure educators – particularly new educators – have tools to authentically participate in evaluation and continuous improvement process.
- System should provide opportunities for genuine growth with colleagues, through differentiated supervision models, peer support, professional development.
- Evaluation system should reinforce mutual responsibility on the part of evaluators and evaluatees.
- Focus on continuous improvement is useful to promote professional growth and talent management.
- Pennsylvania should create a system that informs professional development to help every educator become the best they can be (valued, embraced, and respected).
- Educators must be advocates for their own professional growth.

**Emerging Theme #3: Adjust components/weighting to more accurately distinguish “effective” from “ineffective” teachers.**

- Revise scoring weights to acknowledge local context and unique roles.
- Focus on student growth rather than snapshot achievement.
- Some work group members emphasized that the evaluation system should use appropriate evidence of student learning, including SLOs and other measures of effectiveness used for building level data (PA School Performance Profile); however, others expressed frustration with SLOs, saying they are onerous and present significant implementation challenges at the local level.
- No evaluation system is designed exclusively for professional development, and continuous improvement cannot be defined in the absence of outcomes.
- Timeline for data collection and feedback should be ongoing, rather than an end-of-the-year exercise, to provide more timely and meaningful opportunities for educators to improve practice.
- School leaders must target decisions about retention and support (including recognizing educators who are getting better-than-expected results) and be held accountable for those decisions.

**Emerging Theme #4: Craft a new recommended definition of “effective” educators for consideration in Pennsylvania’s ESSA State Plan, including strategies to monitor and promote equitable access to excellent educators for all students.**

- In the afternoon, Educator Evaluation work group members collaborated with individuals in the Educator Certification work group to explore how Pennsylvania might define “Effective/Ineffective” (ESSA) versus “Qualified” (No Child Left Behind).
- No consensus as yet, but participants explored the following questions:
  - If we aren’t using the easy-to-measure criteria (i.e., certification), what will our measures be?
  - What is the threshold for experience that would circumvent/bypass traditional certification?
  - Effectiveness is a measure of output, but measures are often about input (preparation). What are evidence-based predictors of educator effectiveness?
- Overall, work group members identified the following characteristics that might define effective vs. ineffective teachers:
  - **Effective teachers** are properly credentialed and demonstrate subject matter and instructional competence for the core content area(s) they teach. These teachers engage students in learning, and demonstrate effective practice, including continuous growth and improvement. They also have annual satisfactory evaluations (which consider student growth data).

- **Ineffective teachers** are not properly credentialed (have not completed an approved teacher certification program), and are incompetent in subject matter and instructional practice for the core content area(s) they teach. These teachers fail to demonstrate proficiency in one or more of the four Danielson Framework domains (or an approved alternate measure). An ineffective teacher is one who has failed to improve after they are given an improvement plan and appropriate supports.
- When exploring definitions of “ineffective/effective” versus “qualified” teachers, work group members discussed maintaining some basic requirements associated with HQT status remain (such as bachelor’s degree requirement), but that the system shift from input-based to output-based.
- Work group members also discussed the following as possibilities for a system of educator preparation and evaluation under ESSA:
  - Grace period for new teachers (two years?);
  - Effective teacher status should be tied to the educator evaluation system after they have entered the teaching role (whether certified in that discipline or not);
  - LEAs should determine skill sets required to be considered effective that are demonstrated through evaluation;
  - Establish similar system to career and technical education teaching staff.
- Still to come: What is an “effective” principal?