



THE COLORADO EDUCATION INITIATIVE

Who should use this Guide?

This guide is developed for district leaders who:

- Have read “Preparing Your District to Implement a New Educator Evaluation System,” “Communicating Effectively with Stakeholders,” “Selecting and Using Multiple Measures to Evaluate Educators,” “Determining Levels of Performance,” “Training and Selecting Evaluators,” and “Ensuring Data Integrity and Transparency.”
- Have established a district evaluation implementation team which is looking for examples, lessons learned and implementation tips from Colorado school districts.
- Want help envisioning how evaluation can be used to improve teachers, and who want to understand the implications of SB10-191 on staffing practices.

District Leaders Guide

Using Evaluation Results

Implementing Evaluation Systems: Learning from Pioneering Districts

In an effort to help districts implement local educator evaluation systems in line with the requirements of SB10-191, The Colorado Education Initiative (CEI) is providing a suite of resources to district and school leaders. CEI worked with three Colorado districts who recently revised their evaluation process. Although these districts implemented their new systems prior to the passage of SB191, the process that each district went through is informative. Highlighting these districts and the lessons they learned along the way will help other districts leverage their success and avoid re-living their most difficult challenges.

Three case studies provide the foundation for this work. District and school leaders can read the case studies to learn how different districts have approached similar goals. A series of District Leader’s Guides build on the case studies and provide more direct and specific guidance to district leaders as the move forward with implementation.

Brighton Case Study - Brighton educators and administration agreed that their evaluation system was a “dog and pony show.” In 2009 they revised their system, with terrific buy-in from the union, to more meaningfully support teachers.

Eagle Case Study - Eagle has spent nearly a decade developing their evaluation system and aligning it to instruction, assessment, and professional development.

Harrison Case Study - In 2007, Harrison hired a new superintendent who instituted a new evaluation system along with rigorous instructional supports, interim assessments and a pay-for-performance system.

Introduction

There are two ways educator evaluation results, or effectiveness ratings, may be used by school and district leaders:

- 1. Identify, support, and leverage educators based on their effectiveness ratings.**
Teachers and principals who are not yet effective need timely and targeted professional development so they can improve. Educators who are effective or highly effective also need opportunities to grow as professionals. For example, school and district leaders may tap effective and highly effective teachers in new ways, such as recruiting them to serve as mentor or master teachers.
- 2. Make employment decisions, enabling district leaders to recruit, reward, retain, or dismiss teachers based on effectiveness ratings.** SB10-191 requires that performance evaluations begin to inform the attainment of non-probationary status in 2013-14 and the loss of non-probationary status in 2014-2015. District leaders

should consider consulting two resources for guidance on this issue. First, [Section 3.03 \(D\)](#) of SB10-191's rules, passed by the Colorado State Board of Education, addresses how teachers' probationary and non-probationary status can be gained or lost based on a final effectiveness rating. Second, The Colorado Education Initiative has developed a suite of resources on effective staffing practices. The resources are designed to offer district and school leaders guidance on how to implement SB10-191's mutual consent provisions.

Using Effectiveness Ratings to Support and Improve Teachers

In order to effectively support and improve teachers, districts may need to rethink how they deliver professional development. Teachers and principals, like students, should have timely and targeted support in their most critical areas of need in order to improve their practice. This requires a delivery model for professional development that is different from the approaches most commonly used today.

Specifically, districts should consider using job-embedded professional development (JEPD), defined as “teacher learning that is grounded in day-to-day teaching practice and is designed to enhance teachers’ content-specific instructional practices with the intent of improving student learning. It is primarily school or classroom based and is integrated into the workday, consisting of teachers assessing and finding solutions for authentic and immediate problems of practice as part of a cycle of continuous improvement.”¹ The Brief [“Job-Embedded Professional Development: What It Is, Who Is Responsible, and How to Get It Done Well”](#) describes various formats of JEPD and provides guidance to school, district and state leaders on how to move to a more job-embedded approach.

In Eagle County Schools, teachers focus on improving student achievement through a continuous cycle of professional coaching and weekly, structured cluster group meetings. Cluster groups are not team or department meetings; rather, they are part of a well-directed, high-quality and research-driven professional development program. While each group's composition is determined at the school level, the topics covered have become increasingly district-driven over the last two years, due in part to the district's focus on learning and applying the principles of formative assessment in classrooms.

The district ensures the cluster groups are effective by:

- Following a protocol that ensures conversations are focused on student achievement
- Providing leadership by both mentor and master teachers, with facilitation provided by a master teacher
- Working with small groups of teachers (four to six participants)
- Meeting for at least 70 minutes a week


As an example, a teacher might bring in a sample of student work to get feedback from other teachers. The teacher can identify what the student struggles with and ask group members what other instructional strategies he should consider using.



Guiding Questions

Questions for the district evaluation implementation team are:

- How will districts provide support to probationary teachers?
- How will educator evaluation results be linked to professional learning?
- What resources will be used to provide job-embedded professional development?
- How will common planning time for teachers be built into the schedule so they can collaboratively reflect upon effective instructional strategies?
- How will opportunities for teachers to observe other effective teachers be provided?
- How will professional learning communities be used to help teachers improve instruction?
- What resources, including time and personnel, will be dedicated to educator improvement?
- How will teacher evaluation results be used to determine advancement in systems with multiple career pathways (such as mentor and master teachers)?
- What mechanism will be established to get educators' views on the evaluation system and professional learning activities, and how will their feedback be used for improvements to the system?
- How will a district determine which professional learning opportunities have the best outcomes in terms of student growth, and how will it implement them?
- What effective remediation strategies will be provided? How will a district know they are successful?
- How will dismissals be handled?²
- How will individual teacher strengths and skills be leveraged to inform the development of other teachers?



Research suggests that asking educators to reflect on their practice improves self-directed learning.

Implementation Tips

Pioneering districts suggest the following implementation tips and lessons learned.

- **Provide extensive training, supervision and professional learning opportunities to district staff.** A superintendent in one of the pioneering districts conducted trainings in systems thinking, developing action plans, conducting classroom walk-throughs, curriculum alignment, demonstrations of learning (formative assessments) and multiple response strategies. District staff then trained school-based staff and supported implementation.
- **Identify effective, research-based instructional strategies and train principals and teachers in their use.** A pioneering district trained teachers in differentiated instruction, using formative assessments to improve instruction, intervention strategies and collaborative learning.
- **Encourage educators' reflections as an important aspect of improving their practice.** Research suggests that asking educators to reflect on their practice improves self-directed learning.³ Reflection can take a number of forms, including debriefing lessons in a peer group, journaling individually, or participating in feedback conversations after observations.
- **Undertake multiple educator evaluations to provide more feedback that leads to more instructional improvement.** One pioneering district conducted eight short spot observations for teachers during the academic year. Evaluation criteria were aligned to the quality standards rubrics and provided quick feedback on observed instructional practices.
- **Consider a multi-tiered coaching system.** One district used mentor teachers, master teachers and principals in different coaching and evaluation roles.

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- **Use professional learning communities (PLCs) to improve instructional practice.** All pioneer districts used PLCs to analyze data, review student work, or learn new instructional strategies.
- **Use evaluation results to improve instructional practice and leadership.** Dismissing ineffective teachers will make some difference in student achievement. Improving instructional practice will make the most difference.
- **Be willing to conduct second evaluations by another evaluator if there is a dispute in an educator's rating.** In one district, if there was a disagreement with a principal's rating then a district office individual or team conducted a second observation.
- **Be willing to dismiss ineffective teachers.** One pioneering district found that the number of legal suits diminished after the validity of the ratings was upheld in previous cases.

Conclusion

There are two primary uses of educator evaluation results. One is to use evaluation results to guide professional learning, and the other is to place teachers in a rating system that affects their employment. Pioneering districts placed more emphasis on professional learning than dismissing teachers because district leaders knew that teachers needed to improve their instructional practices to ultimately improve student achievement.

(Endnotes)

¹ Andrew Croft, Jane G. Coggshall, Megan Dolan, Elizabeth Powers. *Job-Embedded Professional Development: What it is, Who Is Responsible, and How to Get It Done Well*. National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, Mid-Atlantic Comprehensive Center, National Staff Development Council. April 2010.

² Chris Cesarez. *Lessons Learned from the Field: Strategies for SB-191 Implementation*. Power Point presentation at the Colorado Association of School Executives Conference. July 2011.

³ Robert Garmston and Arthur Costa. *Cognitive Coaching: A Foundation For Renaissance Schools*. (Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers). 1994.



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