

2012-2013 Professional Advocacy Subcommittee on Teacher Development and Evaluation

Committee charge:

Minnesota's teacher development and evaluation statute requires the use of qualified and trained evaluators to perform summative evaluations, peer review in the non-summative years, and trained observers to serve as peer coaches. The following questions will need to be addressed:

- What qualifications are necessary to perform summative evaluations?
- What qualifications are necessary to observe as a peer coach?
- What qualifications are necessary to conduct peer reviews?
- What training will be needed for evaluators and observers?
- What training will be needed for those teachers being evaluated in order to ensure that they understand the evaluation system?

The Professional Advocacy Committee charge for 2012-2013 is to advise Education Minnesota about the qualifications and training needed by administrative and peer evaluators and observers. The committee should identify key components and best practices that will guide the state and local districts in developing high level, research-based training for peer observers, summative evaluators and for those teachers being evaluated.

The Professional Advocacy Committee (ProAC) Subcommittee on Teacher Development and Evaluation held Saturday meetings, Sept. 15 and Oct. 27, 2012, and Jan. 12, 2013. The subcommittee co-chairs met additionally on Nov. 17, 2012. The subcommittee members include: Catrina Alme (co-chair), Jamie Alsleben, Sheryl Barton, Bob Bathke, John Bellingham, Adam Beyer, Sherill Borgstahl, Laura Bratland (co-chair), Janet Kujat (co-chair), Dave Masters, Cindy Ralston (ProAC chair), Ellen Reykdal, Erik Sivertson, Denise Specht, and Lois Wendt. (See attachment for contact info and constituent groups.) Education Minnesota staff members met periodically throughout the fall and early winter to support the ProAC work. The full Professional Advocacy Committee approved the recommendations of the subcommittee on Jan. 12, 2013.

This report includes:

- A summary of statutory requirements related to qualifications and training in the teacher evaluation law
- Recommendations of the Professional Advocacy Committee and supporting rationale
 - Qualifications of personnel involved in summative and formative evaluation
 - Qualifications of summative evaluators
 - Qualifications of peer reviewers, coaches and observers
 - Training for personnel involved in summative evaluations and peer review activities
 - Training for summative evaluators

- Training for peer reviewers, coaches, and observers
- Training for all teachers subject to the evaluation system
- General recommendation relating to administrative licensure requirements
- Resources
- Appendix A: Definitions of Relevant Terms
- Appendix B: VIVA Recommendation on Subject Experts

Statutory Requirements for Qualifications and Training

In 2011, the Minnesota Legislature passed new teacher development and evaluation requirements. The language is part of Minnesota Statutes 122A.40 and 122.41, the law that governs employment of licensed teachers. Under the new requirements, all public school districts in Minnesota must have a teacher development and evaluation plan that meets statutory requirements in place by the 2014-15 academic year. The plan may be a local one developed jointly by school boards and teachers; it can be a hybrid plan that includes both locally determined elements and parts of the state model; or it can be the state model if the parties prefer, or if they are unable to develop a different plan. If the parties do not agree on a plan, the law states that the district must use the state plan.

The annual evaluation process for teachers must establish a three-year professional review cycle for each teacher that includes, among other requirements, a peer review process and at least one summative evaluation performed by a qualified and trained evaluator. For the years when a tenured teacher is not evaluated by a qualified and trained evaluator, the teacher must be evaluated by a peer review.

In Minnesota statute, the peer review process refers broadly to peer assistance, coaching and observation. Peer coaching and observation are most often used as tools for providing constructive feedback to teachers, allowing educators to observe and learn from each other. Peer review is a method of formative evaluation during the non-summative years during the three-year evaluation cycle. Summative evaluations of teacher performance have taken on greater significance in the current policy landscape. Summative evaluation procedures should enhance professional growth and provide a fair assessment of teaching practice. The summative evaluation model must be flexible enough to use with educators in a broad range of work assignments.

Qualifications of Personnel Involved in Summative and Formative Evaluations

Qualifications of Summative Evaluators

ProAC recommendations:

- A summative evaluator should have at least five years of teaching experience as a licensed, non-probationary/tenured teacher. (In most instances, this would equate to a total of eight years of teaching experience, three probationary plus five tenured.)
- A summative evaluator must have worked at a school site within the past five years.
- A summative evaluator must hold an administrative license, unless specific language is negotiated describing the roles and responsibilities of peer summative evaluators.
- A summative evaluator should be a school district employee (not a third party vendor).

Supporting rationale:

Due to the complexity of teaching, the selection and preparation of teacher evaluators requires careful consideration and the assurance that evaluators are experienced, capable teachers themselves. Teachers place trust in evaluators who understand the profession of teaching and have experience “in the trenches.” Thus, it is critical that personnel conducting summative evaluations have *substantial* teaching experience. In addition, teachers want to be evaluated by personnel who have *recent* experience serving in building-level roles. This ensures that evaluators understand the context of teaching, along with current realities of the profession.

An administrative license is a desired qualification for summative evaluators because in most schools and districts there is a clear distinction between the roles and responsibilities of school administrators and peers in the teaching ranks. However, it is recognized that the statutory language on teacher development and evaluation opens the door for peers to serve as summative evaluators. It is recommended that if a district and its teaching staff are ready to pursue this option, it must be carefully negotiated; specific language must outline the responsibilities of peer summative evaluators, how the data from such evaluations are kept and shared, and details about who is involved in decisions that affect employment.

Minnesota’s teacher development and evaluation requirements illustrate the importance of connecting the evaluation of teachers with quality professional development and collegial learning environments. Thus, it is essential that evaluators be part of the school system, not hired or contracted from a third-party vendor.

Qualifications of Peer Reviewers, Coaches and Observers

ProAC recommendations:

- A peer reviewer, coach or observer should have at least five years of teaching experience as a licensed, non-probationary/tenured teacher. (In most instances, this would equate to a total of eight years of teaching experience, three probationary plus five tenured.)

- A peer reviewer, coach or observer should have recent teaching experience – within the past five years. We recommend a cycle where no peer reviewer is out of the classroom for more than five years at a time.
- A peer reviewer, coach or observer should be a school district employee (not a third party vendor) unless a network of subject specialists is utilized by the district. (See VIVA recommendation, Appendix B.)
- Teachers should have the opportunity to select from a pool of trained peer reviewers who teach a similar grade level and/or subject area. In small districts this could be accomplished by a pool of subject experts from multiple school districts in the area. (See VIVA recommendation, Appendix B.)
- There should be a joint labor/management process for selecting peer reviewers.

Supporting rationale:

As with summative evaluators, experience is a critical aspect of the qualifications of peer reviewers, coaches and observers. Teachers who observe, coach and review the classroom practices of their peers must have substantial, recent teaching experience. Further, it is recommended that peer reviewers are never away from the classroom for more than five years at time. This ensures that they are abreast of the current realities of teaching and working with parents and families, and the latest professional competencies.

As recommended by the recent VIVA Minnesota Teacher Project, teachers should be observed by individuals with expertise that is closely related to the job assignment of the teacher, in terms of content and/or grade level. One way to approach this would be to ensure that teachers could choose their peer reviewer/coach/observer from a pool of trained instructional experts with a similar background. In small districts, this might be accomplished through a regional network of content/grade level specialists from multiple school districts in the area or through the development of a statewide pool of subject experts. If this were the case, we recommend that the instructional experts be teachers who are assigned to this work for no more than five years at a time. Further, no third-party vendors should be hired to conduct peer review, coaching, or observing.

The selection process for peer reviewers, coaches, and observers is very important. Some districts and locals may agree to train all teaching staff to observe their colleagues. In other places, we anticipate that peers in these roles will be released part- or full-time. If that is the case, the selection process must include teachers selected by the exclusive representative of the bargaining unit. Such a process will ensure that those peers selected to review, coach and observe their colleagues will be well-respected by both school administration and teachers. As stated in the American Federation of Teachers publication *Why Teachers Must Have an Effective Evaluation System*, “When teacher leaders are appointed by the principal without a systematic selection process, their colleagues tend to resent them and resist their efforts. However, when teacher leaders are carefully selected and, thus, are seen to deserve the position, they are likely to win support from their colleagues” (Johnson, S.M., American Federation of Teachers).

Training for Personnel Involved in Summative Evaluations and Peer Review Activities

ProAC recommendations:

- All summative evaluators and peer reviewers should receive training in the following areas:
 - Coaching and communication, with special attention to conducting pre- and post-observation conferences
 - The specific teacher evaluation model in use, including the observation rubric
 - Finding and documenting evidence
 - Sustaining attention on the lesson being observed
 - Scoring
 - Inter-rater reliability
 - The purpose of the review: professional growth and development
 - The Minnesota Standards of Effective Practice for Teachers (MS 8710.2000)
 - Avoiding bias
 - Data privacy issues
 - Establishing and maintaining trust and confidentiality
 - Differentiation for various grade levels, content areas and job assignments
- Training should require certification or demonstration of competencies in all required areas. In addition, training should be on-going, and individuals should be required to attend review sessions at least every two years.

Training for Summative Evaluators

Summative evaluators must have focused training because of the high-stakes nature of the summative evaluation. In addition, summative evaluators must understand how to score and weigh the various components of the evaluation system. The training should be held within the district or be offered by the state. There should be no outsourcing to third-party vendors, unless such vendors pass a rigorous accreditation process monitored by the Minnesota Department of Education or Education Minnesota.

Training for Peer Reviewers

Peer reviewers must have training on coaching and mentoring that is supportive and non-evaluative. There must be an emphasis on growth and development, confidentiality and trust. The training on peer review and coaching should distinguish between coaching probationary and non-probationary teachers. Training should include an emphasis on allowing the teacher to have a say in what's observed during classroom observations, as discussed in a pre-observation meeting. The peer review process should be tied to the individual growth and development plan. If the teacher elects to do a portfolio, it should be linked to this as well.

Supporting rationale:

All personnel who work with teachers within the formative and summative evaluation processes must be trained for their roles. The statutory language on teacher development and evaluation specifically requires training for summative evaluators. This language in the statute reflects an important reality: Simply holding an administrative license and having responsibility for evaluating personnel does not give an individual the requisite skills and knowledge for effectively evaluating teaching practice. Teacher evaluation is a high-stakes endeavor, and teachers deserve to be evaluated by personnel who have been trained to provide fair, accurate, defensible judgments about teacher performance. Researchers are clear on this point: it is only through training to avoid bias, to evaluate teachers consistently, and to seek inter-rater reliability that teachers can be ensured a fair evaluation. Not only is it important summative evaluators to be trained, but is it also critical for peer reviewers, coaches and observers to be trained so that they may provide objective feedback and effective support to their teaching colleagues.

In its policy statement on teacher evaluation and accountability, the National Education Association asserts that, “Evaluations must be fair, conducted by highly trained and objective supervisors or other evaluators as agreed to by the local affiliate, whose work is regularly reviewed to ensure the validity and reliability of evaluation results” (National Education Association, 2011). Summative evaluators, peer reviewers, coaches and observers must be trained not only on observation rubrics and protocols, but also on the communication and coaching skills that are so essential to a culture of professional learning and growth. In addition, it is important that peer reviewers/coaches/observers complete training successfully by demonstrating the knowledge and competencies necessary for their roles. Working with teachers to advance their professional practice requires much more than a cursory understanding of a task; it requires mastery of a set of complex skills. In order to ensure that teachers are being observed, coached and evaluated effectively, the training must end with a demonstration of skills, and those skills must be refreshed and renewed at least every two years.

Training for all Teachers Subject to the Evaluation System

ProAC recommendations:

Although it is not specified in the statutory language on teacher development and evaluation, the subcommittee recommends that all teachers who will be evaluated under the new requirements receive training. This training should include but not be limited to:

- Information about all of the requirements in statute
- Research and best practices about each of these requirements
- Coordination of the evaluation plan with district staff development efforts
- Minnesota Standards of Effective Practice for Teachers (8710.2000)
- Roles and responsibilities of summative evaluators and peer reviewers
- Rubric(s) used in summative evaluations and peer review/coaching/observation
- Trigger(s) for initiating a teacher improvement process

- Trigger(s) for discipline
- All required forms and timelines
- Teacher rights under the evaluation system
- The related agreement(s) between the school district and the exclusive representative of the bargaining unit

Supporting rationale:

To operate effectively under the new teacher development and evaluation system, teachers must have a thorough understanding of its components and requirements, including a working knowledge of all aspects of the system, their own rights and responsibilities and the responsibilities of the summative evaluators, peer reviewers, coaches and/or observers with whom they collaborate. It is essential that the training underscore the system's emphasis on teacher growth and development, and that it help foster the teaching and learning conditions necessary for student and teacher success. The evaluation system must focus on creating and sustaining collaborative professional learning that results in teacher growth and student learning. In order for the system to treat teachers impartially, every teacher must receive training and must be oriented to the expectations of the system. As the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards has stated, "Effective training and monitoring ensures that all participants have the same understanding of the purpose and outcomes, resulting in all teachers receiving fair, equitable treatment and constructive feedback" (Auchter, J.E. & Parkerson, E.K., 2011).

General Recommendation Relating to Administrative Licensure Requirements

ProAC recommendation:

The Minnesota Board of School Administrators competencies for school administrators (3512.0510) should be amended to include specific preparation standards on evaluating teachers.

Supporting rationale:

In Minnesota and across the country, the attention to effective evaluation of teaching practice is growing, and the stakes are becoming higher for individual teachers and for the profession itself. Indeed, researchers at Teachscape assert: "As the evaluation of teachers is used for increasingly highstakes personnel decisions, it becomes essential that the judgments made by evaluators are accurate and defensible, both professionally and legally" (McClellan, C., Atkinson, M. & Danielson, C., 2012). In Minnesota, the current competencies that govern the preparation of principals and other school administrators do not include robust requirements related to evaluating teaching practice. In light of the new statutory requirements for teacher development and evaluation, it is recommended that the Board of School Administrators

consider how the competencies might be amended to ensure that individuals seeking licensure as a school principal receive substantial preparation in teacher evaluation.

Resources

The ProAC Committee considered a variety of resources in examining the issues related to their charge. The list below includes selected materials considered by the committee as well as other useful resources that provide background on the issues discussed by the committee.

American Federation of Teachers (2011). *A Guide for Developing Multiple Measures for Teacher Development and Evaluation*. Available at:
<http://www.educationminnesota.org/en/issues/eval.aspx>

Auchter, J.E. & Parkerson, E.K. (2011). *Getting it Right: A Comprehensive Guide to Developing and Sustaining Teacher Evaluation and Support Systems*. National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Available at: <http://www.educationminnesota.org/en/issues/eval.aspx>

Education Minnesota (2012). *2011-2012 ProAC Report on Teacher Development and Evaluation*. Available at: <http://www.educationminnesota.org/en/issues/eval.aspx>

Education Minnesota (2010). *2010-2011 ProAC Report on Teacher Development and Evaluation*. Available at: <http://www.educationminnesota.org/en/issues/eval.aspx>

Education Minnesota (2012). *Selected Terms Defined: M.S. 122A.40, subd. 8 (M.S. 122A.41, subd. 5 for cities of the first class)*. Available at: Available at:
<http://www.educationminnesota.org/en/issues/eval.aspx>

Johnson, S.M., *Why Teachers Must Have an Effective Evaluation System*. American Federation of Teachers. Available at: <http://www.educationminnesota.org/en/issues/eval.aspx>

Kahlenberg, R. D. (2007). Peer Assistance and Review, *American Educator*, American Federation of Teachers, Fall 2007.

Minnesota Administrative Rules, Chapter 3512. Available at:
<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/rules/?id=3512>

Minnesota's Teacher Evaluation Law. Available at:
<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/?id=122A.40>;
<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/?id=122A.41>

McClellan, C., Atkinson, M. & Danielson, C. (2012). *Teacher Evaluator Training & Certification: Lessons Learned from the Measures of Effective Teaching Project*. Teachscape Practitioner Series. Available at: <http://www.teachscape.com/resources/teacher-effectiveness-research/2012/02/teacher-evaluator-training-and-certification.html>

Mead, S., Rotherham, A. & Brown, R. (2012). *The Hangover: Thinking about the Unintended Consequences of the Nation's Teacher Evaluation Binge*. American Enterprise Institute Special Report. Available at: aei.org/paper/education/k-12/teacher-policies/the-hangover-thinking-about-the-unintended-consequences-of-the-nations-teacher-evaluation-binge/

National Education Association (2011). *Promoting and Implementing the National Education Association Statement on Teacher Evaluation and Accountability: An NEA Toolkit*. Available at: http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/2011NEA_Teacher_Eval_Toolkit.pdf

VIVA Minnesota Teachers Idea Exchange II (2012). *Strengthening Our Practice: A Classroom Teachers' Approach to Teacher Evaluation*. VIVA Teachers. Available at: <http://www.educationminnesota.org/en/issues/eval.aspx>

Appendix A: Definitions of Relevant Terms *

Formative evaluation

The formative steps of the evaluation cycle are meant to enrich and support each educator's professional development. A teacher may select inquiry about new practices, additional study about instructional strategies and other professional learning that will expand a teacher's skills and knowledge enriching his/her impact on student learning. This may take one of many shapes, from class work or workshops to individual research, or from action research to collaborative learning.

Job-embedded professional development

Planned and purposeful learning that occurs while teachers and administrators engage in their daily work. Participants collaborate with colleagues on professional learning goals, learn by doing, reflect on their experiences and share new insights with one another.

Mentoring/Induction programs

Mentoring is a structured, non-evaluative support process in which a highly skilled and experienced educator facilitates a colleague's development, with a focus on improving instructional practice. It is a cornerstone of an induction program, which is a system of school and district strategies to support beginning and transitioning teachers and promote continuous improvement in their practice.

Induction systems may include orientation, a network of teacher support, seminars and workshops, and structured mentoring focused on standards of professional practice and professional growth.

Peer Review Process

A system in which teachers' performance is reviewed by their colleagues. Essential components of the process include mentoring and professional development, teacher collaboration, peer coaching and professional learning communities.

Personnel data

Personnel data are government data maintained on employees and service providers. Much personnel data is public such as name, salary, title and job description. However, as provided in 122A.40 and 122A.41, in the absence of discipline, teacher evaluation data is considered private.

Qualified and Trained Evaluators

Educators with deep understanding of teaching and learning who have completed training to facilitate implementation of a certain teacher development and evaluation process, who have demonstrated these skills and knowledge and are committed to ongoing professional learning.

Summative evaluation

An evaluation that occurs at the end of an evaluation cycle and is considered the final evaluation in the cycle. (In contrast, a formative evaluation is conducted during the cycle for purposes of growth and development.) Summative evaluations are evaluator judgments of educator performance against standards and/or progress made toward completion of a performance plan.

Teacher improvement process

A specific plan for the few continuing-contract teachers who do not meet professional teaching standards. It includes realistic and specific goals, supports and timelines. In contrast to the individual growth and development plan—which all professional educators use to map their ongoing professional development—the teacher improvement process is a much more specific and prescribed remediation plan.

* From the Education Minnesota publication: *Selected Terms Defined: M.S. 122A.40, subd. 8 (M.S. 122A.41, subd. 5 for cities of the first class)*. Available at:
<http://www.educationminnesota.org/en/issues/eval.aspx>

Appendix B: VIVA Recommendation on Subject Experts

The following is an excerpt from *Strengthening Our Practice: A Classroom Teachers' Approach to Teacher Evaluation* by the VIVA Minnesota Teachers Idea Exchange II (2012). Available at: <http://www.educationminnesota.org/en/issues/eval.aspx>

Teachers in districts of all sizes have expressed that being observed, coached and/or evaluated by someone who understands research-based best practices for their particular discipline would be an essential element of any evaluation model. In some school districts there may be personnel that can serve as evaluators and/or coaches. In other school districts, there may simply not be enough personnel to take on those roles. It is important that the evaluation process not become an additional burden to teachers by taking them out of the classroom on a regular basis to observe other teachers. A limited number of teachers who can serve as instructional coaches means more time out of the classroom and reduced quality of instruction for students.

Proposed Solution:

Provide full and sustainable state funding to develop a statewide pool of subject experts who are trained as instructional coaches for any district needing personnel to serve in this role. Statewide pools of subject matter experts should be available to all regions (use the Minnesota Association of School Administrator MASA job site regions) of the state.