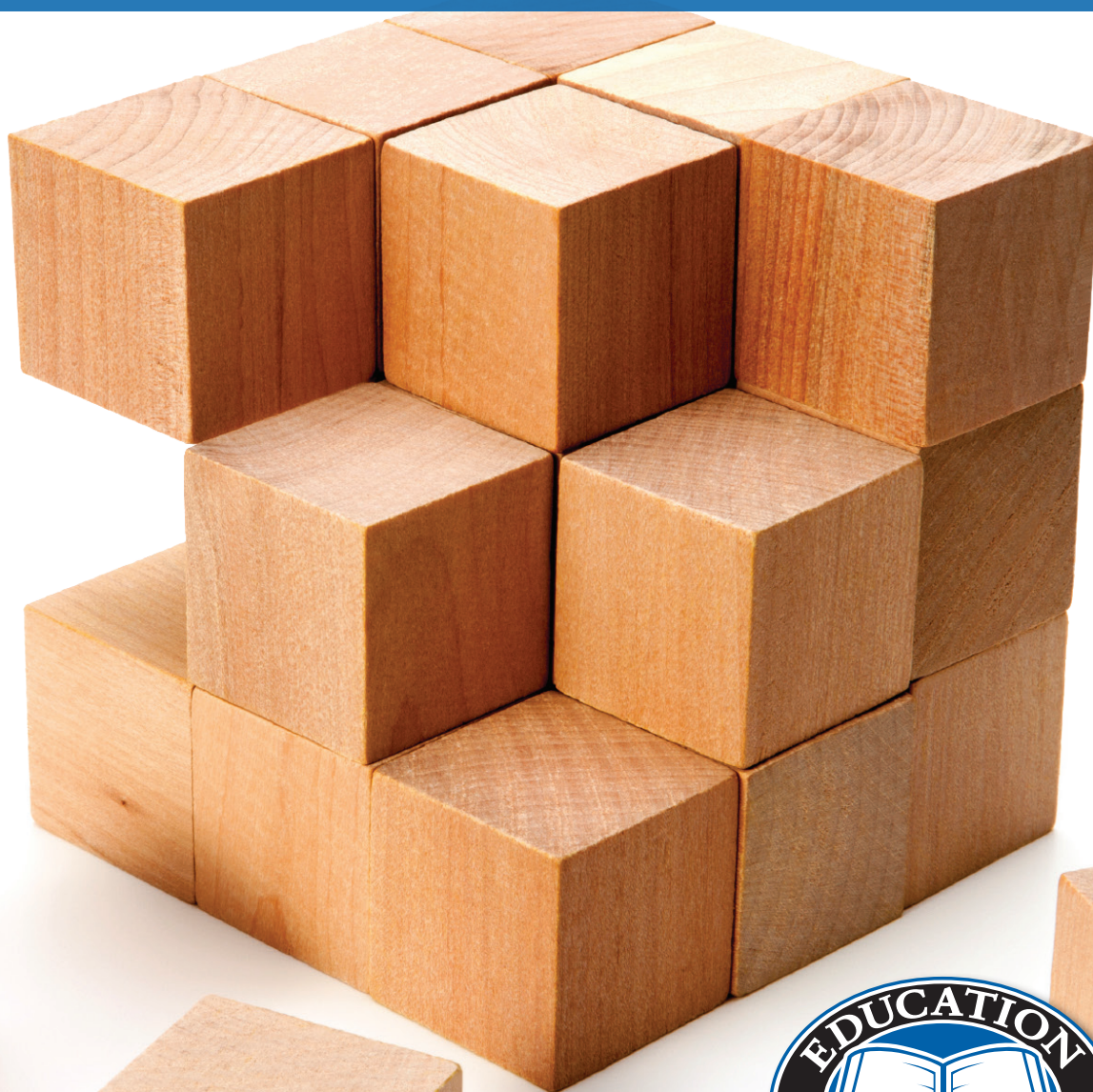# Building a Teacher Development and Evaluation Plan

Components of the Minnesota Law

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TEACHER DEVELOPMENT & EVALUATION

EDUCATION MINNESOTA

The union of 70,000 educators

Building a Teacher Development and Evaluation Plan

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Building a Teacher Development and Evaluation Plan

Components of the Minnesota Law

Introduction

During the special session in the summer of 2011, the Minnesota Legislature passed new statewide 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. The law was amended during the 2013 and 2014 sessions.

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 default state plan; or it can be the state plan. If the parties do not agree on a plan, the law states that the district must use the state plan.

Because the requirements are complex and unfamiliar to many, Education Minnesota created this guide to help members understand the statutory building blocks of a teacher development and evaluation plan. With a solid grasp of these components, members can begin the crucial discussion of what kind of plan will work best for their local schools, teachers and students.

Each of the components outlined in this guide needs to be addressed in a district's teacher development and evaluation plan, regardless of which model is chosen. For each component, you will find:

- **Definitions.** Everyone involved in developing the plan should have a common understanding of the terms used in the statute.

- **The relevant statutory language.** The full text of the new requirements can be found at www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/?id=122A.40, subdivision 8, and www.revisor. mn.gov/statutes/?id=122A.41, subdivision 5.

- **Background and context.** This includes a fairly detailed description of what the requirement means, and includes references to related requirements and policies.

- **Questions to consider in developing a local plan.** These will help you think through issues that might arise as you work with your district on a local plan.

What's in the Law?

The language states that teacher development and evaluation plans must:

- Establish a three-year professional review cycle for each teacher that includes an individual growth and development plan, a peer review process and the opportunity to participate in job-embedded learning opportunities such as professional learning communities.
- Coordinate staff development activities with this evaluation process and teachers' evaluation outcomes. (The plan also may provide time during the school day and school year for peer coaching and teacher collaboration.)
- Provide for all evaluations of probationary teachers currently required by law. (The plan also may include mentoring and induction programs.)
- Evaluate teachers by peer review for the years when a tenured teacher is not evaluated by a qualified and trained evaluator. (The plan also may include job-embedded learning opportunities such as professional learning communities.)
- Provide at least one summative evaluation, performed by a qualified evaluator trained in the TDE requirements during the three-year review cycle.
- Be based on professional teaching standards established in rule.
- Include an option for teachers to develop and present a portfolio demonstrating evidence of reflection and professional growth, and include teachers' own performance assessment based on student work samples and examples of teachers' work, which may include video among other activities for the summative evaluation.
- Give teachers not meeting professional teaching standards support to improve through a teacher improvement process that includes established goals and timelines.
- Discipline a teacher for not making adequate progress in the teacher improvement process.
- Use student growth and literacy data from assessments that are valid, reliable and aligned to state and local academic standards.
- Use longitudinal data on student engagement and connection, and other student outcome measures explicitly aligned with the elements of curriculum for which teachers are responsible, including data on academic literacy, oral academic language, and achievement of content areas of English learners.

Components of Teacher Development and Evaluation Plans

The Joint Agreement

Definition: The signed document in which a school board and an exclusive representative of the teachers in the district agree on the components and implementation of the annual teacher evaluation and peer review process for probationary and non-probationary teachers. A local's constitution and bylaws determine the process for reaching agreement.

Statutory language: To improve student learning and success, a school board and an exclusive representative of the teachers in the district may develop a teacher evaluation and peer review process for probationary and continuing contract teachers through joint agreement. If a school board and the exclusive representative of the teachers do not agree to an annual teacher evaluation and peer review process, then the school board and the exclusive representative of the teachers must implement the [state] plan for evaluation and review.

Background and context: Minnesota's teacher development and evaluation law honors our long history of local control. It allows teachers and school districts to sit down together and jointly design and agree upon valid, effective, research-based teacher development and evaluation plans that meet the needs of their students, schools and communities. Local unions and school districts have the option to use the state plan; create a local plan that uses parts of the state plan and develop other parts to make a hybrid local plan; or create a completely new local plan.

Contract language or a letter of agreement on the local teacher development and evaluation plan must be ratified by the general membership as provided in the local union's constitution and bylaws. Further information is available in the Education Minnesota publication "Teacher Development and Evaluation: Successfully Agreeing on a Local Plan."

> **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER IN DEVELOPING A LOCAL PLAN**
>
> - How will local union members learn that discussions are under way to reach an agreement on a locally designed teacher development and evaluation plan?
>
> - To prepare for eventual ratification votes, how will the local union leadership keep members informed about progress in the teacher development and evaluation discussions and solicit their points of view?
>
> - How will local union leaders inform members about the need to ratify the teacher development and evaluation plan and contract language or letter of agreement to implement the plan?

Teacher Growth

Individual Growth and Development Plans

Definition: An individual growth and development plan is used in setting and working toward goals for a teacher's professional growth. The plan may include professional development activities, evidence of application in the classroom or professional learning community, a timeline for completion and review of goals, documentation of collaboration with others, how progress will be noted, supports needed, and how meeting the goals will improve the teacher's professional knowledge and skills and affect student learning.

All teachers are required to have an individual growth and development plan. In addition, a teacher improvement process is required for those who do not meet standards under the evaluation system (see page 13). Districts must also adopt a written plan for evaluating probationary teachers, consistent with the new statutory language, that includes one evaluation in the first 90 days of service and at least three evaluations each year.

Statutory language: To develop, improve and support qualified teachers and effective teaching practices and improve student learning and success, the annual evaluation process for teachers must establish a three-year professional review cycle for each teacher that includes an individual growth and development plan.

Background and context: Professional development is the process by which teachers expand their professional skills and knowledge throughout a career. It is most successful in a structured, supportive and collaborative environment that promotes professional learning and student growth.

Minnesota law requires that an individual growth and development plan be part of a three-year professional review cycle. Professional goals in the plan may come from self-assessments; grade-level, professional learning community, building or district goals centered on student learning; or personal motivation to acquire new professional skills or knowledge. In addition, the plan should include strategies, resources and experiences to assist the teacher in achieving the goals.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER IN DEVELOPING A LOCAL PLAN

- What resources and reference materials will be provided to teachers for the development of individual growth and development plans?

- With whom will the teachers collaborate in creating their individual plans?

- Will the individual plan align with student learning goals, district learning goals, building learning goals or all of these?

- How will professional learning communities be aligned with individual plans?

- For probationary teachers, how will mentoring/induction programs incorporate individual growth and development plans?

- How will the district support the professional development activities specified in individual plans?

- How will the individual plan be used for other requirements such as the reflective practice relicensure requirement?

Professional Learning Communities

Definition: A group of educators committed to working collaboratively in an ongoing process of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve. Professional learning communities operate under the assumption that the key to improved learning for students is continuous, job-embedded learning for educators.

Statutory language:

- The annual evaluation process for teachers may include job-embedded learning opportunities such as professional learning communities.

Background and context: "Learning organizations" have long been recognized in the business world as promoting increased productivity, creativity and effectiveness. The same is true of schools. Teachers who feel supported in their own ongoing learning and teaching practice are more committed and effective. When teachers have the opportunity to inquire and learn together, they develop wisdom and successful practices that can be shared with colleagues.

Success with professional learning communities depends on a positive school culture based on mutual trust, respect and support for teaching and learning. At some schools, this might require a profound change in the prevailing culture. It also takes continuous work to sustain a supportive culture, including celebration of successes and affirmation of the difference teachers have made in the lives of students and communities.

Professional learning communities also need a clearly articulated vision for professional collaboration that is tied to district and building goals, student learning objectives and the individual growth and development plans of the participating teachers. To be effective, PLCs must be embedded in teachers' daily work and teachers must receive training on the characteristics, focus and norms of effective PLCs.

Job-Embedded Professional Development

Definition: 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.

Statutory language: The annual evaluation process for teachers must coordinate staff development activities under [Minnesota Statutes] 122A.60 and 122A.61 with this evaluation process and teachers' evaluation outcomes. [The annual process] may provide time during the school day and school year for peer coaching and teacher collaboration.

Background and context: Research and experience show that high-quality, differentiated professional development increases teacher success. Effective professional development takes place within the contract school day or year and involves significant amounts of time spread out over six to 12 months. Some of the world's most successful education systems (Finland, Japan, Canada and others) provide up to four hours per day of professional learning time for teachers.

Minnesota statute requires school districts to coordinate their local teacher development and evaluation plan with district- and building-level staff development efforts. It is critical that the local plan include these requirements from the state's staff development laws:

- Research-based strategies for improving student learning
- Opportunities for teachers to improve their skills over time
- Opportunities for teachers to use student data as part of their daily work
- Attention to both content knowledge and instructional skills
- Alignment with state and local academic standards
- Opportunities for professional collaboration
- Encouragement of schoolwide growth in professional teaching practice

> **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER IN DEVELOPING A LOCAL PLAN**
>
> - What plans are in place to ensure that professional development is integrated with the evaluation system to avoid redundancy and duplication of effort and ensure a cohesive system of support?
>
> - How is district- and building-level professional development tied to individual growth and development plans? Professional learning communities? State continuing licensure requirements?
>
> - What flexibility does the collective bargaining agreement provide for compensating teachers' time when development and evaluation activities exceed the contract day or year?

Mentoring and Induction

Definitions: 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.

Statutory language: To develop, improve, and support qualified teachers and effective teaching practices and improve student learning and success, the annual evaluation process for teachers may include mentoring and induction programs.

Background and context: Mentoring and induction programs are an optional component in Minnesota's teacher development and evaluation statutes. They are important because early career support allows new teachers to develop strong teaching skills more quickly.

At this stage of development, teachers' needs include an introduction to the school and its procedures, emotional support at the stressful beginning of a career, and guidance to help them establish classroom expertise and a pattern of professional learning.

Minnesota is fortunate to have a set of published guidelines for educator induction, "Minnesota Educator Induction Guidelines" (2009, http://ed.mnsu.edu/cmi/tsp_guidelines.pdf). This document was developed by the Teacher Support Partnership, an organization made up of Education Minnesota, the Minnesota Department of Education, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities and the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.

According to these guidelines, successful, comprehensive induction programs should include:

- **Administrative leadership.** Administration must provide time for mentors' and mentees' professional learning and collaboration, along with sufficient time, personnel and other resources.

- **Professional learning.** Opportunities should include orientation, professional seminars and workshops that promote teacher development and reflection, differentiated learning opportunities based on individual teachers' needs, and regularly scheduled opportunities for networking.

- **Mentoring.** Mentors must meet selection criteria and be trained, at a minimum, in the roles and responsibilities of mentoring and the skills of coaching. The mentoring relationship should focus on linking teaching practice and student learning and assisting the beginning teacher in his or her professional growth.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER IN DEVELOPING A LOCAL PLAN

- Is the design of the mentoring and induction system agreed to and supported by both teachers and the district?

- Does the system provide mentoring and a range of other support mechanisms?

- How is the system aligned to professional teaching standards? The elements of formative and summative evaluations? District professional development efforts?

- How are mentors selected and trained?

- Is followup training required so mentors keep their skills up to date?

- How are mentors compensated— financially, with release time, or in other ways?

- Is the mentoring process non-evaluative to ensure fairness and trust?

- Do probationary teachers get the resources they need to understand the mentoring and induction system, the evaluation system and related professional development efforts?

- Do probationary teachers get to observe effective instruction at their grade level and/or content-area teaching assignment?

Development and Evaluation

The Peer Review Process

Definition: 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.

Statutory language: The annual evaluation process for teachers must establish a three-year professional review cycle for each teacher that includes a peer review process. For the years when a tenured teacher is not evaluated by a qualified and trained summative evaluator, the teacher must be evaluated by a peer review process. Observation and interview notes shared between the peer coach and the teacher may only be disclosed to other school officials with the consent of the teacher being coached.

Background and context: 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 non-summative years during the three-year evaluation cycle.

Peer coaches or observers meet with the teacher before an observation to discuss goals and context. The coach observes the teacher's lesson, instructional period or other interaction with students, and then a post-observation conference is held to provide feedback. For peer assistance and coaching systems to be successful, communication must be open and trust must be established between the teacher whose practice is being reviewed and the coach or mentor. The teacher must be confident that the observation and accompanying discussions will be kept confidential.

The 2014 Legislature amended the law to protect the notes shared between a teacher and his or her peer reviewer/coach. Observation and interview notes shared between the peer coach and the teacher may only be disclosed to others in the district with the consent of the teacher.

Peer assistance and coaching are prevalent in Minnesota as a critical component of formative observations in districts with alternative teacher professional pay systems (ATPPS/Q Comp). A common model for formative peer observation and coaching, although not the only one, is Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Effective Teaching.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER IN DEVELOPING A LOCAL PLAN

- What roles will peer reviewers play in the formative evaluation process—observing, coaching, mentoring or other?
- How will peer reviewers be selected? What qualifications are necessary? Will every teacher be a peer reviewer?
- What training will be provided to peer reviewers?
- Will followup training be required to keep peer reviewers' skills up to date?
- What steps will be taken to ensure trust among teachers and their peer reviewers?
- How does your plan document interactions between the peer reviewer and the teacher?
- Do you need to consider redesigning forms or protocols in light of the new language protecting the notes shared between the peer coach and teacher?
- How will time be provided during the work day for peer conferencing?
- How does the peer review process differentiate among different types or categories of teachers?
- Will the same observation tool be used in both formative and summative evaluations?
- Will peers play a role in the summative evaluation process? If so, how will this be negotiated?
- How will data from peer reviews be treated? Who will see it? Where will it be stored? Will it be used in the summative evaluation process?
- If the teacher disagrees with the outcome of the peer review, what options does he or she have to appeal?
- Who oversees the effectiveness of peer reviewers? Are peer coaches/reviewers evaluated and if so, by whom and according to what standards?

It is important to draw a distinction between peer coaching and peer evaluation. Peer coaching is part of a formative process aimed at professional growth and development. If a peer serves as a summative evaluator, he or she must be qualified and trained to serve in that role, and the specifics must be negotiated.

Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) is a more formalized system that should be bargained collectively. Peer Assistance ensures that teachers receive support and guidance to improve their teaching performance. Peer Review is a process in which colleagues assess the performance of other teachers. It should not exist without an assistance component that includes mentoring and professional development.

In all cases, if peers are compensated for their role in the evaluation system, it must be negotiated. Districts must also consider how data from peer observations are used and what kind of appeals process should be developed for cases where the teacher disagrees with the results of a peer observation.

Summative Evaluations

Definition: 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.

Statutory language: The annual evaluation process for teachers must:

- Establish a three-year professional review cycle for each teacher that includes at least one summative evaluation performed by a qualified and trained evaluator such as a school administrator. Training for summative evaluators must be specific to TDE.

- Include an option for teachers to develop and present a portfolio demonstrating evidence of reflection and professional growth and include teachers' own performance assessment based on student work samples and examples of teachers' work, which may include video among other activities for the summative evaluation.

- Be based on professional teaching standards established in rule.

Background and context: Summative evaluations of teacher performance have taken on greater significance in the current policy landscape. It is critical that Minnesota school districts take seriously the need to develop summative evaluation procedures that 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. It must also be tied to other required elements; that is, it should be based on goals established in the individual growth and development plan, supported by professional development activities and linked to the efforts of professional learning communities.

Historically, teacher evaluation has not been a mandatory subject of bargaining in Minnesota unless the district and the exclusive representative have formally agreed to participate in ATPPS/Q Comp. In these districts, teacher evaluation is tied to compensation and therefore must be negotiated.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER IN DEVELOPING A LOCAL PLAN

- Have teachers and the district clearly defined what constitutes a summative evaluation?

- Does the summative evaluation differentiate among different types or categories of teachers?

- What evidence will be included in the summative evaluation process?

- What evidence of reflection and professional growth will be included in the summative evaluation? How will it be incorporated into the process?

- Will student work samples be included in the summative evaluation? If so, how will they be defined and incorporated?

- What role, if any, will information from formative evaluations have in the summative evaluation process?

- What are the necessary qualifications for those who perform summative evaluations? Who will determine whether an individual is qualified?

- What training will be required for those conducting summative evaluations? Who will provide the training? How will inter-rater reliability be ensured? Is the training specific to TDE?

- In your plan, is the training for summative evaluations based on effective best practices specific to teacher development and evaluation?

- Will follow-up training be required to keep evaluators' skills up to date?

- Is the appeal process—including timelines—clear, reasonable and subject to grievance?

In practice, most summative evaluation processes follow these steps:

1. **Pre-observation conference.** The teacher describes goals of the lesson and any special circumstances the evaluator needs to understand. The evaluator provides appropriate feedback. It is important for the teacher and the evaluator to be clear on what the observation will include.

2. **The observation.** The evaluator observes the lesson using information from the pre-observation meeting.

3. **Post-observation conference.** The evaluator shares his/her evaluation and discusses the rating and evidence with the teacher. This conference is ideally held within 24 hours of the classroom observation.

The statute requires that a summative evaluation be performed by a qualified evaluator trained specifically in TDE. In a locally designed plan, this may include an administrator or a peer. Who will perform the summative evaluation is a subject of negotiation between the teachers union and the district. In any case, Education Minnesota recommends that all final decisions about a teacher's employment status be made by administrators.

All personnel who conduct summative evaluations must receive training. Among the important topics that should be addressed in training are coaching skills, orientation to the evaluation instrument, observation skills and procedures, evidence-gathering procedures, scoring practice and inter-rater reliability, and controlling for bias. Those conducting summative evaluations must undergo followup training regularly to ensure that they are up to date in their skills and aware of any changes that have been made to the system. It is also important for all teachers to receive training on summative evaluation procedures.

The Portfolio Option

Definition: A professional portfolio is a collection of a teacher's work that documents professional growth and includes the teacher's own reflections on and assessment of his or her work. If the portfolio is used as an evaluation tool, there must be clearly defined criteria for the portfolio's content and how it will be assessed and used to make judgments about student learning.

Statutory language: The annual evaluation process for teachers must include an option for teachers to develop and present a portfolio demonstrating evidence of reflection and professional growth, and include teachers' own performance assessment based on student work samples and examples of teachers' work, which may include video among other activities for the summative evaluation.

Background and context: Under Minnesota's new statutory requirements, teachers have the right to elect the portfolio option for all or part of their summative evaluation.

More generally, a professional portfolio allows teachers to take an active role in the evaluation process. According to Charlotte Danielson and colleagues, "A professional development portfolio provides teachers with a framework for initiating, planning, and facilitating their personal/professional growth while building connections between their interests and goals and those of the school."[1]

A portfolio also provides the opportunity to articulate a vision, develop goals and document progress toward them, interact with peers, reflect on the learning experience and share insights with others. The portfolio protocol used by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) is one model to consider. It uses paper and video to document teacher practice, along with samples of student work. Teachers are assessed not only on the evidence itself, but also on their reflection and analysis, and portfolios are scored by trained reviewers.

[1]*Danielson et al, "Teacher Evaluation to Enhance Professional Practice," p. 110*

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER IN DEVELOPING A LOCAL PLAN

- Are resources available to help teachers understand how to develop a portfolio to effectively showcase their teaching?

- Is it clear what elements are to be included in the portfolio?

- Will student work samples be included in the portfolio, and how will they be defined?

- Is it clear which pieces of a teacher's portfolio may be submitted for evaluative purposes and which are to be kept confidential for purposes of reflection and growth?

- Will the portfolio be developed and refined over the three-year evaluation cycle, or will it be limited to the summative year?

- Will the parameters for the final product be clearly defined so teachers do not feel compelled to create products beyond those required?

- Who will evaluate the portfolio, and what training will they receive?

The Teacher Improvement Process

Definition: A teacher improvement process is an individually customized improvement plan to be used by teachers who do not meet professional teaching standards as identified by the summative evaluation.

Statutory requirements:

- The annual evaluation process for teachers must give teachers not meeting professional teaching standards support to improve through a teacher improvement process that includes established goals and timelines; and

- [The evaluation process] must discipline a teacher for not making adequate progress in the teacher improvement process that may include a last chance warning, termination, discharge, nonrenewal, transfer to a different position, a leave of absence, or other discipline a school administrator determines is appropriate.

Background and context: The teacher improvement process is used when a teacher fails to meet professional teaching standards via the other components of the evaluation system. It is critical that the teachers and the district agree on the triggers and documentation necessary to place a teacher on an improvement plan. Also critical is a plan for support so the teacher can improve.

A smart plan is built on these practices:

- The teacher's current level of performance is clearly identified, explained and documented.

- The areas needing improvement are spelled out, and clear, specific, measurable expectations are established. Larger goals are best broken into action steps or objective benchmarks.

- A plan for support is developed and resources are provided to ensure the teacher receives the assistance necessary to meet standards.

- The specific, measurable level of performance necessary to complete the process is established and made clear to the teacher.

- Measurement conditions, criteria and procedures are established up-front in the plan.

- Timelines are realistic and focused on adequate progress, not just deadlines. Education Minnesota recommends the teacher be given six months to a year to meet the expectations of the teacher improvement process, with the opportunity to exit early if expectations have been met.

- The teacher is offered peer assistance from a trained coach or mentor, separate from the summative evaluation, to help him or her meet standards.

> **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER IN DEVELOPING A LOCAL PLAN**
>
> - What triggers a teacher's placement on a teacher improvement plan? How will the district demonstrate and document that the teacher is not meeting professional teaching standards?
>
> - What supports will be provided to help teachers placed on an improvement plan become more successful?
>
> - How, if at all, will the peer review process be integrated with the teacher improvement process?
>
> - Does the teacher improvement process provide at least a one-year time frame for improvement within the three-year cycle?
>
> - How does a teacher exit the teacher improvement process?

> **DISCIPLINE**
>
> - Nothing in the new statutory teacher evaluation language changes or replaces other provisions of Minnesota law governing employment of licensed teachers. While the new language requires districts to discipline a teacher who is not making "adequate progress" in a teacher improvement process, the level of discipline is not mandated by the statute.
>
> - Teachers subject to discipline should have the local union's support in ensuring that the district follows the process agreed to in the local plan.

Measurement

Measures of Student Growth

Definitions

Growth scores indicate the academic progress a student makes between two points in time. Simple growth models document the change in the scores of individual students during a particular measurement period. This contrasts with value-added growth models, which use more complex mathematical formulas to predict scores and estimate the effects of school-based factors on student learning.

Value-added is a term that originated in the business world to describe an enhancement of a product or service by the entity creating or providing it. Translated to education settings, it refers to efforts to correlate student learning growth with a particular school, teacher or intervention.

Value-added modeling is a statistical technique that uses multiple years of student achievement data to estimate the effects of school-based factors on student learning. These complex mathematical models calculate a predicted score for each student and compare it with actual performance. They seek to filter out non-school factors such as family and socioeconomic background to isolate the effect of a teacher, school or system.

A student learning goal (SLG) is a measurable, long-term student academic growth target that a teacher sets at the beginning of the academic term or school year. These goals demonstrate a teacher's impact on student learning within a given interval of instruction, based upon baseline data gathered at the beginning of the course. [1]

Valid assessments measure what they claim to measure.

Reliable assessments produce consistent results, yielding similar results when used in similar conditions.

Statutory language: The annual evaluation process must use data from valid and reliable assessments aligned to state and local academic standards and must use state and local measures of student growth and literacy that may include value-added models or student learning goals to determine 35 percent of teacher evaluation results.

Background and context: In 2013, the Minnesota Legislature removed the requirement that value-added data be used for evaluating teachers when such data are available. Now, all teachers will have 35 percent of their evaluation based on growth data from assessments that are valid, reliable and aligned to standards, providing more flexibility to joint union/district teams in designing TDE plans.

The new statutory language requires student learning data to be drawn from valid and reliable assessments. Valid assessments are simply those that measure what they claim to measure. Validity can be established for any type of student assessment, from a paper and pencil test to a rubric used for scoring a musical performance.

(continued on next page)

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER IN DEVELOPING A LOCAL PLAN:

- Will part of an individual teacher's growth score be based on grade-level, content area or building-level data? How much?

- How will mixed teaching assignments and team teaching be addressed so that growth scores are a fair reflection of a teacher's contribution to student learning?

- What training will teachers receive on using growth data for instructional decisions?

- What data systems will be developed to ensure that growth data are accurately and fairly applied within the evaluation system?

- Who will conduct growth score calculations, and how will it be ensured that they are done accurately?

- What protections are in place to ensure that growth data are kept confidential as personnel data under Minnesota law?

- How will non-classroom teachers (such as school counselors and teachers on special assignment) be treated under this component of the evaluation system?

- What growth measure(s) will be used for them?

- Does your plan already include measures of literacy among the student growth measures in the evaluation?

- Do you need to modify your plan so literacy is included for each teacher?

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[1] Adapted from *"Student Learning Goals Handbook,"* Minnesota Department of Education, 2013

Reliable assessments are those that produce consistent results; they yield similar results when used in similar conditions. Like validity, reliability can be established for a wide range of student performance measures. The new statutory language also requires that assessments are aligned to state and local academic standards. Since districts and teachers already align their curriculum, lessons and assessments to standards, this change in requirements is something most local districts will find easy to manage.

It is required that teacher evaluation systems use state and local measures of student growth and literacy in evaluating teachers. Growth models (a.k.a. gain models) document changes in the scores of students between testing periods. These models answer questions about the progress of individual students or groups of students over time. Value-added models are a specific type of growth model. And, although this approach is no longer required in Minnesota, it is allowed as one approach to measuring growth. Another approach referenced in the statutory language is student learning goals (SLGs). SLGs are part of the state teacher evaluation pilot model, and the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) has published a handbook that describes how SLGs can be used. This handbook can be found at MDE's Educator Evaluation Website: http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/EdExc/EducEval/.

Education Minnesota has taken the position that student performance data are an important tool for instructional decision-making, but should not be used for high-stakes employment decisions. Value-added scores are known to be unstable when applied to a particular teacher from year to year. Mixed teaching assignments, team teaching and student mobility add further complexity.

Since value-added methods are not proven reliable, and because understanding how to use student achievement data for instructional purposes is a critical skill for teachers today, Education Minnesota believes it is more fitting to emphasize the skill of using the data, rather than the scores themselves.

Although Minnesota districts are now required to use growth data for teacher evaluation, they may consider a range of options, such as basing some of an individual teacher's rating on collective grade-level or school performance or using a combination of measurements.

Student Engagement and Connection

Definition: A framework for examining a student's commitment to and involvement in learning, including academic, behavioral, cognitive and affective components. Student engagement is influenced by family, peers, community and school. Teachers can influence student engagement through their relationships with students and the relevance and rigor of their instruction.[2]

Statutory language: The annual evaluation process for teachers must use longitudinal data on student engagement and connection, and other student outcome measures explicitly aligned with the elements of curriculum for which teachers are responsible. It must include data on all students, including English language learners.

Background and context: Quantifying student engagement is difficult, and local school districts should consider a variety of approaches. Possibilities (discussed below) include surveys of students and/or parents, observations of student engagement and connection in the classroom setting and a reflective process in which individual teachers monitor student engagement in their own classrooms.

The statute calls for longitudinal data, meaning data collected repeatedly over time. Education Minnesota recommends data on student engagement be gathered over the three-year evaluation cycle. This helps teachers identify trends to be addressed in reflection and continuous improvement, and it mitigates the impact of a difficult year or group of students.

In trying to measure student engagement, it must be understood that teachers can only be held accountable for aspects that are under their control, such as classroom climate, clear and appropriate expectations, positive relationships with students and efforts to engage students in active learning. Teachers and school districts also must come to agreement on the use of data on student engagement and connection.

Student engagement surveys

Several for-profit companies provide surveys that address student engagement and connection, but districts should look carefully before they buy. These surveys usually come at a steep price, and often they are not designed to measure engagement in a particular classroom setting or with a particular teacher. On the other hand, it is difficult and expensive for districts to design and administer their own surveys.

If the district decides to use a survey, these are important things to keep in mind:

- **Population.** The survey population (the group whose input is being gathered) must be carefully identified so no one is left out, and correct mail or email addresses must be secured. Unless everyone whose opinions are relevant to the issue being studied receives a survey and has an opportunity to complete it, the data cannot be considered valid.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER IN DEVELOPING A LOCAL PLAN

- Have the teachers and the district agreed on a workable definition of student engagement and connection for purposes of teacher development and evaluation?

- How will student engagement and connection be measured? What data will be collected?

- Will the teacher's own reflection on student engagement and connection be included as part of this component?

- Will the system differentiate effectively among grade levels, content areas and non-classroom teaching assignments?

- Will longitudinal data encompass the entire three-year review cycle so student engagement and connection is factored fairly into the evaluation system?

- Will teachers be held accountable only for factors under their control? Will efforts be made to ensure that teachers are not evaluated on student behaviors resulting from conditions outside the teacher's influence?

- Does the data that informs students engagement in your plan include data on all students, including English learners?

- **Question design.** Questions must be well understood and cover only one concept, and the information or opinion sought must actually be held by all those being surveyed. If the survey is being administered to people for whom English is a second language, translations should be provided.

- **Piloting.** The survey must be piloted with a subset of the survey population to make sure the questions are valid and the design is user-friendly. The pilot can be done with various methods, including focus groups. Afterward, the survey should be revised.

- **Survey administration.** Regardless of who designs the survey, schools often administer it. A secure system for tracking survey responses must be developed to enable followup contacts; multiple reminders are often necessary to get a good response. A response rate of 60 percent or more is generally needed to ensure the results reflect the opinions of the overall survey population.

- **Data analysis.** The data gathered in the survey must be analyzed to determine the significance of the responses. Ideally, this should be done by someone with survey experience and a solid understanding of statistical analysis. Faulty interpretation of data can be dangerous, especially when applied to employment evaluations.

Observation tools

It can be difficult to find or create quality observation tools for student engagement and connection. One model familiar to many educators, Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching, includes a component (3c) called Engaging Students in Learning. Education Minnesota is not endorsing this model, but it may provide a starting point.

The Danielson model provides four levels of attainment: Unsatisfactory, Basic, Proficient and Distinguished. Teachers are assessed by trained evaluators. The elements of the component are activities and assignments, grouping of students, instructional materials and resources, and structure and pacing. Indicators include:

- Activities aligned with the goals of the lesson

- Student enthusiasm, interest, thinking and problem-solving

- Learning tasks that require high-level student thinking and are aligned with lesson objectives

- Students highly motivated to work on all tasks and are persistent even when the tasks are challenging

- Students actively "working," rather than watching while their teacher "works"

- Suitable pacing of the lesson: neither dragging nor rushed, with time for closure and student reflection

Reflective process

Given the difficulty of finding objective ways to measure student engagement, some recommend that teachers conduct their own assessment. If a district chooses this route, teachers would receive training and support to observe their own students for behaviors and other evidence of active engagement in the learning process. They would then reflect on the experience, determine goals and tie this effort into the individual growth and development plan or the portfolio.

[2]*Subcommittee on Student Achievement Data, Teacher Evaluation Working Group, Minnesota Department of Education*

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