

Stakeholder Design Committee Recommendations: Educator Evaluations

September 2015

Introduction & Background

Following the February 2015 State Board of Education (SBOE) meeting, the Strategic Planning Committee convened a group of highly-engaged and knowledgeable stakeholders to examine specific aspects of Indiana's educator evaluation policies and practices and offer recommendations for improvement. This group – the Stakeholder Design Committee (SDC) – is comprised of about 20 members who bring a wide range of experiences, knowledge and perspectives to this work. The members include teachers, principals, school corporation administrators, members of higher education with expertise in teacher performance and evaluation, as well as leaders of local associations.

Over the last six months, the SDC has considered and developed recommendations for issues that the Strategic Planning Committee identified as immediate priorities. These priorities included:

- Recommending a vision for teacher evaluation in Indiana as well as a set of belief statements and theory of action statements.
- Supporting with the design of a survey of Indiana educators about the teacher evaluation system.
- Proposing guidance for future communications based on results of the survey.
- Proposing other improvements to the state's evaluation policies or model plan.

The committee members attended a total of 7 design sessions to review materials and discuss and deliberate on a number of topics including Vision, Beliefs and Theory of Action for educator evaluations, system components, including use of student performance measures (objective measures), training and resources to support with implementation, communications structures related to evaluation, and the Statewide Educator Survey results.

To inform their analysis and recommendations the SDC considered the following:

- Current statutory and regulatory requirements for educator evaluations
- The current use of objective measures in educator evaluations, resources, trainings, and communications across the state
- Educator perception and experiences with educator evaluations, as expressed in the recent statewide educator evaluation survey
- Individual experience with or professional expertise related to educator evaluation

The SDC has already offered Vision, Belief and Theory of Action statements and the recommendations for use of objective measures for the Strategic Planning Committee's consideration. The remainder of this memorandum includes the full set of Vision, Belief and Theory of Action statements, the recommendation for use of objective measures as well as the recommendations for training and resources, and communication strategies.

Recommendations

The SDC started their design work by developing the Vision, Belief and Theory of Action statements. Then the SDC focused its time and attention to making recommendations around the use of objective measure of student learning, training and resources, and communications using these statements guide their work.

Vision, Beliefs and Theory of Action

During the initial sessions, the SDC collaborated to determine the Vision, Beliefs and Theory of Action statements for educator evaluations in Indiana. They started by developing a vision statement that defines broadly the purpose of educator evaluations in Indiana. The SDC sought to incorporate and balance the notions that educator evaluation should support educators to develop and to improve the overall quality of instruction. Once the committee agreed on

a vision, then the SDC developed a set of belief statements that aligns to the vision and defines what educator evaluation should accomplish. Finally, the SDC developed theory of action statements to help identify resources, tools, and implementation strategies which would help accomplish the defined vision and beliefs.

Vision

Educator evaluation in Indiana will be a collaborative system that strengthens teaching and learning by sustaining a culture of confidence and support for all stakeholders.

Belief Statements & Theory of Action

In order to be transparent and collaborative:

- The design and implementation of the educator evaluation system will include input from all stakeholders throughout the process.
- Training and guidance will be provided to districts to ensure that standards of quality for evaluation plan development and implementation are reached across the state.
- Responsibilities for post observation activities will be shared by both teacher and evaluators/administrators.

In order to be easy to explain and implement:

- The educator evaluation system will be simply written and reviewed by practitioners prior to implementing.
- Guidance documents will be written (revised/edited) in a user friendly format with clear explanation of the evaluation process.

In order to be fair and accurate:

- The education evaluation system will be based on quality research and professional teaching standards.
- Inter-rater reliability exercises will be conducted within districts.
- The educator evaluation system will use multiple measures.
- Training and guidance will be provided to stakeholders about different types of objective measures (i.e. student or school climate surveys).
- Multiple acceptable outcomes (i.e. growth or continuation of highly effective status) will be clearly defined and communicated.

In order to provide timely and meaningful feedback:

- The evaluation process will provide frequent opportunities for feedback between the evaluator and teacher.
- The educator evaluation system will prioritize the importance of providing timely feedback by requiring reasonable response time after observations.

In order to support continuous growth:

- Training and guidance will be provided to evaluators and teachers on the system and rubrics, including how to give and receive productive and constructive feedback which link directly with the rubric being used.
- Educator evaluation system will include a continuous communication process among all stakeholders, including an ongoing process for improvement of the system.
- Exemplars will be provided in the form of model districts who have equitable and efficient plans.
- Professional development will be provided regularly and in a manner that will insure consistency of instruction for every evaluator and teacher.
- Training and guidance will be provided to evaluators on how to support ongoing learning for teachers.

Use of Student Performance Measures (Objective Measures)

In general, most SDC members expressed concern with the wide range (5-50%) of weights currently being used across districts for objective measures of student learning. The majority of committee members are comfortable defining "significantly inform" by establishing a range of acceptable weights for objective measures of student learning between 20-40%. However, the SDC would prefer to ground its recommendation in empirical evidence specific to Indiana.

To that end, the SDC is recommending an audit of the last four years of evaluation outcomes to identify successful evaluation designs and practices. This audit would examine the empirical data for a variety of system elements and implementation practices that we have been unable to examine to date, including whether there is a connection between the weights and types of objective measures and student, teacher and school performance.

In addition to the definition of "significantly inform," the committee also recommends additional guidance be issued to clarify the types of objective measures that can be used and the responsibilities of state and local entities.

Each component of the SDC's recommendations is described in more detail below.

Definition of Objective Measures of Student Learning: First, the SDC established a definition for Objective Measures of Student Learning, which is captured by the two statements below:

- Objective measures of student learning is an outcome statement of student performance requiring measureable data to support instructional goals.
- Objective measures of student learning allow a valid and reliable assessment of skill and knowledge, attitudes, and opinion with an agreed upon standard or criteria recognized by a properly qualified and/or trained individual or by an individual who is informed in its administration, scoring and interpretation.

This definition is consistent with the Belief and Theory of Action statements that speak to fairness and accuracy. In particular, this definition ensures the evaluation system will be based on quality research and professional teaching standards and will use multiple objective measures.

Acceptable Types of Objective Measures: The SDC identified several measures that, if well-designed and implemented, may meet the definition of objective measures of student learning. The approved types of objective measures that may be used include, but are not limited to, the measures listed below. Additional measures may be added to this list so long as they meet the definition of objective measures of student learning above.

- Student academic growth based on school- or teacher-generated assessments aligned to learning standards
- Student engagement levels
- Student work products assessed according to standardized rubrics
- School-wide student growth
- School-wide student achievement
- Student growth using state standardized test scores (for those grades and subjects where data are available)
- Student achievement using state standardized test scores (for those grades and subjects where data are available)
- Surveys (Students, Teachers, Parents, Community, etc.)

The SDC also recommends that the acceptable objective measures be categorized into the following categories

- 1) Student learning growth
- 2) Student learning achievement
- 3) Climate and Culture (Note: Measures of climate and culture (e.g. student, teacher, parent surveys) could alternatively be considered as part of a teacher's professional practice rating or the Educator Effectiveness Rubric (EER)¹).

Additionally, the SDC recommends that when changes are made to the approved list of objective measures or the categorization of objective measures, the State should provide updated guidance for their use.

¹Teacher Effectiveness Rubric (TER) should be renamed to Educator Effectiveness Rubric (EER) to align with the recommended vision statement that emphasizes alignment of evaluation systems for all educators.

This recommendation directly supports the Belief and Theory of Action statement that prioritizes providing training and guidance to stakeholders about different types of objective measures for purposes of fairness and accuracy.

Definition of Significantly Inform: As mentioned above, nearly all SDC members expressed concern with how inconsistently school corporations are considering student learning in assessing teacher performance. As a result, the committee agreed that a definition for “significantly inform” is appropriate, and most members agree that establishing a range would achieve the most consistent results without diminishing local decision-making. However, a few members were reluctant to support that approach.

Therefore, the full committee agreed that an alternate approach could be to define “significantly inform” by establishing standards for the acceptable use of objective measures and the desired outcomes that should result from the use of objective measures. These standards are aligned with the SDC’s Vision, Belief and Theory of Action statements, particularly with the Belief and Theory of Action Statements that speak to transparency, fairness and accuracy.

The SDC wished to present both sets of recommendations to the Strategic Planning Committee because a substantial portion of the SDC endorses both recommendations and they are both aligned with the SDC’s Vision, Belief and Theory of Action statements. The two sets of recommendations are summarized below.

Majority Recommendation: A majority of the SDC is comfortable with defining significantly inform to mean that between 20-40% of an educator’s overall evaluation rating is based on objective measures of student learning. This recommendation particularly supports the Belief and Theory of Action statement that states: “In order to be easy to explain and implement, the educator evaluation system will be simply written and vetted by practitioners prior to implementing.”

Full Consensus Recommendation: An alternative approach with which the whole committee is comfortable would be to establish standards for defining “significantly inform.”

Standards for Defining “Significantly Inform:” Some possible standards for consideration include:

- 1) Student growth and EER ratings should complement and validate each other.
- 2) Student growth and EER ratings should not contradict each other.
- 3) Student growth should be determined by the preponderance of evidence obtained from multiple measures.
- 4) The relationship between student growth and the summative evaluation should be evidenced/demonstrated through a review and analysis of district data.

Any inconsistencies in the relationships between EER ratings and student growth should be reviewed and documented for accuracy and understanding.

This recommendation particularly supports the Belief and Theory of Action statement that states: “In order to be transparent and collaborative, the design and implementation of the educator evaluation systems must include input from all stakeholders throughout the process.”

Recommendation for Additional Study: Before formally adopting a definition of significantly inform, the SDC recommends an “evaluation audit” be conducted to further study what current practices regarding the use of objective measures are yielding successful outcomes and to confirm the validity of their recommendations. Evaluation Audit: The SDC recommends that Indiana conduct an Evaluation Audit to examine the last four years of evaluation outcomes and to study a variety of system elements and implementation practices, including ranges of weights for objective measures that districts are currently using. Specific research questions should be defined by field experts and reviewed by the SDC before the audit commences.

The goal of the audit is to identify successful design components and implementation practices that strengthen teaching and learning by sustaining a culture of confidence and support for all stakeholders. These best practices can then be scaled and spread across the state.

The benefit of this audit is that it will yield Indiana-specific data on which any future recommendations can be based. In addition, this approach supports several of the SDC's Belief and Theory of Action statements, especially the following statements:

- "In order to be fair and accurate, the educator evaluation system will be based on quality research and professional teaching standards."
- "In order to support continuous growth, exemplars will be provided in the form of model districts who have equitable and efficient plans."

Division of Responsibilities between the State and the School Corporation

To ensure there is a clear designation between the state and school corporations' duties, the SDC recommends the following division of responsibilities:

The State's responsibilities regarding objective measures of student learning include:

- 1) Providing resources and guidance (e.g. list of acceptable products and processes, including exemplars) for school corporations and schools
- 2) Monitoring, reviewing and auditing the chosen types of objective measures and their use at the local level
- 3) Holding the district accountable for meeting the standards for defining significantly inform.

School Corporations are responsible for developing high quality educator evaluation plans and implementing with fidelity based on the criteria and guidance provided by the State.

This division of responsibilities supports the Belief and Theory of Action statements that speak to transparency, fairness and continuous growth.

Training & Resources

Throughout their discussions, the SDC continually returned to the need for high-quality resources to support educator evaluations. Topics of interest ranged from base knowledge resources to content specific resources such as the selection or development of objective measures and their use.

Overall, the SDC recommends that available resources should be made more user friendly and aligned with the defined Vision, Beliefs and Theory of Action of Educator Evaluations. Additionally, the SDC has identified the following topics as priority areas:

- High*
- *Evaluator & Teacher Training (Level 1)* – Base knowledge and understanding of teacher evaluation across the state
 - *Evaluator Training with ESCs (Level 2)* – Base knowledge and understanding for evaluators across the state
 - *Assessment Creation for Non-Tested Subjects* - Set of modules for test development; local norming
 - *Evaluation Data & Professional Development*

- Medium*
- *Feedback Training*
 - *IDOE Modules for Teachers* - Feedback, Observation, On-site Monitoring
 - *Superintendent Training* (Evaluation Process)
 - *Teacher Leader/Mentoring*

- Low*
- *Compensation Model* – How compensation is tied to evaluation
 - *Observations* (Procedural)
 - *Training and Resources for Higher Ed*
 - *Legislative Actions* (RE: Evaluation)
 - *Other Topics as Needed*

Division of Responsibilities between the State and the School Corporation

To ensure that there is a coordinated and cohesive effort around trainings and resources, SDC recommends a review of current trainings and resources to identify the following:

1. Which resources currently exists
2. Which resources are currently under development
3. Are the resources in alignment with the Vision, Beliefs and Theory of Action of Educator Evaluations
4. Are there are gaps in trainings and resources that need to be addressed
5. Who will be responsible for development and implementation for each training and resources

IDOE and Board staff will conduct the initial review of the current trainings and resources, identify the responsible entity and communicate action steps. Where the responsibility does not lie with the SBOE to develop and implement, SBOE will communicate next steps and objectives to responsible entity in a timely manner and with clear objectives that are aligned with the Vision, Beliefs and Theory of Action of Educator Evaluations.

Communications

Throughout the various design sessions, the SDC recognized there are a number of communication challenges within the state to transmit information, resources, or guidance to educators and key stakeholders. These challenges include:

1. Limitations with existing channels or methods
2. Quality/Integrity of message or information

It is recommended that the these challenges be addressed in order to ensure that communications regarding educator evaluations is well executed taking into account the audience, information, channels, and frequency.

Limitations with Existing Channels

The SDC agreed that when possible communications should be delivered via existing channels such as the SBOE website, Learning Connections, or through associations' newsletters or emails. This avoids creating new processes for delivering information. However, the committee members also agreed that there needs to be improvements to the existing channels to increase usage and engagement.

DOE Website

- **Current State:** Currently, the DOE Website provides numerous resources on various topics. However, based on an analysis of website data, the site usage is limited with approximately 12,478 sessions accessed by 3,466 users from August 1, 2014 through June 1, 2015.²
- **Opportunity:** There is an opportunity to leverage the existing site to create a public information hub that targets specific audiences to provide robust resources and guidance to the educator community. Increasing awareness to the site and slight improvements to the organization and clarity of the site can help improve utilization.

The Learning Connection

- **Current State:** The Learning Connection is a portal available to teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders to help support implementation of IDOE's strategic initiatives. It provides data, resources, and tools for school improvement. In order to access the portal, users must register for an account. Currently, there are approximately 2,400³ users registered: 45% administrators, 23% teachers, and 32% other⁴. A number of SDC members have expressed concerns with the quality of the resources since the resource is designed to be an open forum for all members to contribute. There are no current review or audit protocols to check the quality of materials posted. Members also cited concerns with the frequency of the automated

² SBOE Evaluation Website analytics compiled August 2015

³ The Learning Connections analytics compiled August 2015

⁴ Other users includes community organization members, retirees, higher education members, human resources personnel, other corporation staff, program directors, Title I coordinators, and IDOE staff.

emails the portal generates indicating that there were too many generic email updates. These updates are sent out frequently and do not contain content tailored for specific audience. As a result, some SDC users have indicated that they filter or simply delete Learning Connection communications.

- **Opportunity:** To improve utilization and usefulness of this tool, the purpose of the tool should be clearly defined and benchmarked with how the tool is currently being used by members to ensure that the tool is serving its intended purpose. Further the automated communications being pushed from the tool should be reviewed and tracked to ensure that the messages are useful for the intended audience. Consider improving access to teachers and using the Learning Connection to deliver common messages about evaluations by providing users more controls or options to opt-in or out of newsletters or bundles to provide more streamlined and differentiated experience.

Associations' Newsletters and Emails

- **Current State:** Many stakeholders depend on their associations to provide pertinent information regarding educator evaluations as well as other topics.
- **Opportunity:** In order to best leverage this channel, associations should partner very closely with the SBOE and IDOE to ensure that message or information is accurate, clear, and delivered in a timely manner.

Quality/Integrity of Message or Information

Communications to educators should be clearer and aligned with the Vision, Beliefs and Theory of Action. Further, messages around the evaluation system and components of the system should emphasize the importance of continuous growth and support ease of explanation and implementation.

The SDC identified a number of common topics that should regularly reviewed and shared among the educator community:

General Topics/Updates

- *Vision, Beliefs and Theory of Action of Educator Evaluations:* All communications and activity should be aligned to the Vision, Beliefs and Theory of Action of Educator Evaluations. Recent surveys revealed that there is not a shared understanding of the vision or purpose of educator evaluations in the state which can lead to inconsistent communication and information. Ensuring stakeholders understand the Vision, Beliefs and Theory of Action and aligning communications to it can help stakeholder buy-in and improve engagement.
- *Online Resources:* There are a number of online resources currently available to educators in the state. Regular communications should be sent to ensure that stakeholders know what resources are available online and where they can go to access materials. All resources should be aligned with the Vision, Beliefs and Theory of Action.
- *Upcoming Trainings and Events:* Stakeholders should be informed regularly of or have access to upcoming trainings and events around the state and in their community.
- *Frequently Asked Questions*

Process/Content Specific Topics

- *Plan Components:* Information about evaluations and specific evaluation plans should be made available for stakeholders. This includes any updates or changes to existing plans, up to date data, or other topic specific information that is needed for successful implementation of the plan in the school corporation.
- *Objective Measures:* Resources related to objective measures should emphasize the importance of continuous growth as well as ease of explanation and implementation. Further, resources should be made more user friendly and aligned with the defined Vision, Beliefs and Theory of Action of Educator Evaluation.
- *On Site Monitoring:* Information about SBOE's On Site Monitoring process including guidance, timeline, resources should be provided to corporations and educators on a regular basis.
- *Accessing Data:* Stakeholders should receive evaluation data updates and be provided with information and resources on how to use data as part of evaluations. Board and IDOE staff will review current process and determine any gaps in information to be included with regular updates.

Conclusion & Next Steps

The SDC has diligently considered a wide range of policies and practices to improve Indiana’s educator evaluations. From their thorough deliberation and debate of varying topics and issues, the SDC has concluded that the above adjustments and guidance to the state’s current policies and practices would improve the design, implementation and perception of educator evaluations and help Indiana achieve the Vision the SDC defined for educator evaluation. The SDC respectfully submits the above recommendations for consideration and looks forward to your questions and feedback.