

# Do Your Evaluations Make You a Better Career and Technical Education Teacher?

By Catherine Jacques

Here are four questions for career and technical education (CTE) teachers to consider:

1. Are your performance evaluations conducted by an expert in your field?
2. Do you receive great teaching ideas and support from your evaluator as part of your performance feedback?
3. Are meaningful and relevant student growth and outcome measures incorporated into your evaluations?
4. Are you a better CTE teacher because of your evaluations?

If you answered “yes” to all four questions, congratulations! Your evaluations are likely promoting your professional growth. If you did not, here are some criteria of great evaluations and of how your school, district and state education leaders can ensure that your evaluations support your growth as a teacher.

CTE teachers should look forward to evaluations, confident that they will receive detailed, meaningful feedback that will help them grow in the profession. Evaluation systems can generate rich information to inform professional learning, but only when the system design and

processes hold credibility among CTE teachers and promote opportunities for professional growth and support.

CTE teacher-evaluation systems that generate continuous improvement have three essentials:

- Strong, meaningful performance measures that clarify what good teaching for CTE teachers looks like; that fit the unique roles, responsibilities and contexts in which CTE teachers work; and that identify what student outcomes should look like in high-performing CTE programs.
- Fair and accurate evaluations by knowledgeable, well-trained evaluators.
- Evidence-based performance feedback that helps CTE teachers better understand (1) their impact on students; (2) what, specifically, they’re doing well and in what ways they need to improve; and (3) professional learning opportunities that focus on where CTE teachers should spend their limited time to improve their performance.

### Meaningful Performance Measures

All evaluation measures should represent the goals that CTE teachers have for their



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“Evaluation measures, processes and results should reflect what CTE teachers are doing (or not doing) to promote student success, and should provide CTE teachers with the feedback and support they need to improve.”

students, such as gaining content knowledge, earning industry credentials and graduating from high school on time. Evaluation measures should also produce data that evaluators can use to give CTE teachers meaningful feedback. These measures should help CTE teachers better understand what great teaching in their content areas looks like and how they can move toward becoming great teachers.

### Practice Measures

Measures of teacher practice often include observation rubrics that evalu-

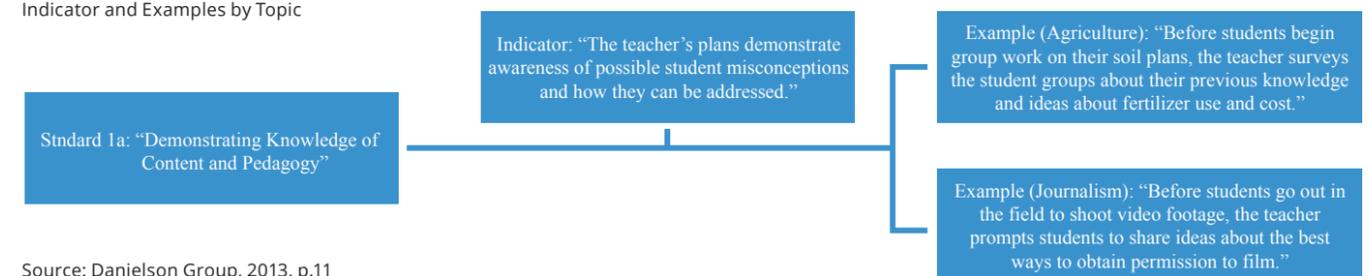
ators use to observe classes and gather evidence of effective practice. Practice measures can give CTE teachers specific information on their general instructional practices, including how well they plan their lessons and collaborate with colleagues. In most districts, the same rubric is used to evaluate all teachers, regardless of their grade or subject area. Using one practice rubric means that all teachers are held to the same professional standards and performance expectations.

To generate meaningful feedback, however, evaluators must be able to apply the practice measures accurately and con-

sistently in CTE classrooms. Examples of what different performance levels look like in CTE classrooms ensure evaluators—especially those who lack expertise in CTE content areas—can gather accurate observation data and provide better performance feedback. See Figure 1.

CTE teachers, instructional leaders and content-area experts should be involved in crafting examples to describe precisely what great, good or unsatisfactory teaching practices look like in CTE classrooms. Using CTE teacher-vetted examples of practice can lead to fair ratings and, most important, to specific

Figure 1. Performance Measurement: Standard, Indicator and Examples by Topic



Source: Danielson Group, 2013, p.11

### Great Evaluations Step-by-Step

Effective evaluators do not focus solely on final performance data. When the evaluation system is well-designed, the evaluator (usually the principal):

- Gathers substantial evidence on each CTE teacher across several observations and multiple measures of performance throughout the year.
- Reviews the evidence from observations conducted by other observers (such as peers or other administrators).
- Collaborates with peer observers to meet with the CTE teacher to discuss performance results from their observations.
- Schedules and prepares for one-on-one conferences to allow the proper time and setting for in-depth performance conversations and professional development recommendations.
- In conferences with CTE teachers, reviews performance results and identifies school or district professional development opportunities that can address identified areas of need.

By the end of the evaluation cycle, evaluators should have a clear picture of teachers' strengths and areas for growth. Evaluators also should know what professional development opportunities teachers have already pursued to improve their practice.

feedback that is immediately relevant to CTE teachers and is designed to help them improve their practice.

Moreover, peer observers, such as exemplary CTE teachers from across the district or region, community college professors or industry experts trained to conduct observations, can share meaningful information and advice on CTE teachers' practice. Using peer observers can also help improve reliability in the system by allowing multiple observers to contribute to the overall practice score. Better feedback means better teaching over time.

Student surveys are another measure of practice that can be useful to CTE teachers. These surveys capture the motivation, support and encouragement CTE teachers provide to their students. Because student motivation and teacher-student relationships are linked with student success (Decker, Dona, & Christenson, 2006; Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002), student surveys can be important measures of a CTE teacher's effectiveness. Research shows that pairing student surveys with observation and student-growth measures provides more valid evaluation results (MET Project, 2013).

#### Student Growth and Achievement Measures

Promoting student learning is one of a teacher's most important responsibilities. Finding standardized or common assess-

ments that accurately measure teachers' contributions to student growth and achievement in CTE areas, however, can be challenging.

Industry certification attainment, for example, is an important measure of student success; but certification cannot be used to measure teacher effectiveness in terms of student growth because it can only be assessed at one point in time.<sup>1</sup> Industry certification is also difficult to use as a measure of achievement because, typically, results from industry certification examinations are the property of the students and the testing agency, and they are not routinely shared with states or districts.

In addition, although existing standardized pre- and post-assessments can measure student knowledge gains, they do not capture how well students perform tasks in practice like demonstrating decontamination techniques or executing an emergency protocol. Also, such assessments rarely capture important "soft skills"—communication, problem-solving and teamwork, etc.—that CTE teachers promote in their students. Student gains in these types of skills are best captured through rubrics or portfolios. Table 1 describes growth and achievement measures that can be included in CTE teacher evaluations.

One way to measure teacher impact on both student growth and student achievement is by using student learn-

ing objectives (SLOs). SLOs are written by teachers (and approved by building or district leaders). SLOs can accurately define the growth goals of specific groups of students and capture unique classroom circumstances. Several states use SLOs to measure student growth for many or all teachers, and an increasing number of states are developing SLOs for CTE teachers.<sup>2</sup>

#### Fair and Accurate Evaluations

As effective measures of CTE teacher performance are developed, it is important to keep in mind that fair and accurate evaluations build bridges between teachers' technical skills and the pedagogical skills they need to help students succeed. To support and reinforce this connection, CTE teachers and industry leaders should be actively involved in designing and reviewing evaluation systems that are fair and accurate for all CTE teachers.

Working together, CTE teachers and industry leaders:

- Determine whether evaluation measures accurately and specifically express desired student goals and outcomes.
- Determine whether evaluation measures accurately reflect the classroom context in which CTE teachers work.
- Develop supplemental guidance and examples to connect broad teacher practice measures with specific CTE teacher actions in different fields at different performance levels.
- Review and create assessments that accurately and objectively measure student outcomes.
- Share ideas on potential benefits and challenges of evaluation processes (e.g., timing of conferences,

scheduling observations).

- Serve as peer observers for evaluation of other CTE teachers in their districts or regions.

Evaluators must be knowledgeable of CTE teachers' industries and classroom content and of relevant pedagogical practice. If the primary evaluator (often a principal) does not have CTE-content expertise, peer observers can help gather evidence and provide content-specific feedback. Evaluators must also be well-trained in all measures and processes so that all teachers are held to similar standards.

#### Evidence-based Performance Feedback

Great evaluations provide meaningful information to *both* teachers and administrators. These conferences (e.g., pre-observation, post-observation, mid-year performance and end-of-year performance

Table 1. Possible Growth and Achievement Measures for CTE Teacher Evaluations

Possible Growth Measure	Possible Achievement Measure
Growth in content knowledge	Industry certification attainment
Growth in demonstrated practical skill	Student graduation rates
Growth in "soft skills" like communication and professionalism	Student participation in CTSO activities or competitive events
Growth in academic skills	End-of-course achievement results

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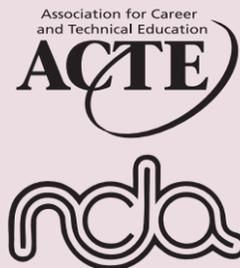
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conferences) focus on evidence gathered during observations and on student performance data as bases for evaluation feedback. Together, these opportunities for feedback and discussion among teachers, observers and evaluators will help CTE educators better understand their evaluation results, and it will shift the focus of evaluation from teacher accountability to continuous teacher improvement.

**Making It Happen**

Of the four questions posed at the beginning of this article, the most important is Question 4: Are you a better CTE teacher because of your evaluations? What steps can you take to make CTE evaluations in your school or district look like this?

You and other CTE teachers are the key: Share this evaluation vision with school, district and state leaders, and advocates. Create a sample evaluation plan or list of recommendations for all CTE teachers in your school to generate conversations on improving CTE teacher evaluations. When you have a voice in ensuring that evaluations are done right, your answer to Question 4 will be "Absolutely yes." ■

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**ENDNOTES**

1. Student growth measures must be rigorous, comparable across classrooms and include measures of student gains between two points in time. Student growth usually refers to the gains students make in skills and knowledge over the course of a school year (Goe & Holdheide, 2011).
2. For more information on developing SLOs for CTE teachers, see the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders' (GTL) recent webinar, "Supporting 21st Century Educators: How States Are Promoting Career and Technical Educator Effectiveness," at [www.gtlcenter.org/products-resources/supporting-21st-century-educators-how-states-are-promoting-career-and-technical](http://www.gtlcenter.org/products-resources/supporting-21st-century-educators-how-states-are-promoting-career-and-technical) and brief

at <http://www.gtlcenter.org/products-resources/21st-century-educators-developing-and-supporting-great-career-and-technical> (Jacques and Potemski, 2014). See also the GTL Center's Student Learning Objectives Resource Library at [www.gtlcenter.org/learning-hub/student-learning-objectives](http://www.gtlcenter.org/learning-hub/student-learning-objectives) (Center on Great Teachers and Leaders, 2014a, 2014b).

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# Techniques