

ASK THE TEAM

BY JENNI FETTERS

May 2013

High Fidelity: Investing in Evaluation Training

Question From the Field

How are states providing training for new teacher and principal evaluation systems?

High-quality training is a crucial investment in establishing and maintaining implementation fidelity as well as building educators' trust in the new process. Training approaches for educator evaluation vary both in **format** (i.e., how it's delivered) and **content** (i.e., what is provided). Train-the-trainer sessions, online professional learning modules, videos, webinars, in-person presentations—these are all examples of the formats that states use to provide training on new performance evaluation systems. In this edition of *Ask the Team*, we report on both the format and the content of state approaches to evaluation training. Specifically, our scan of state approaches to training turned up three categories of content:

- **District leadership training** empowers and supports district leadership teams by providing an overview of state-level legislative and policy changes and providing information, tools, and resources for implementation planning.
- **Educator orientation training** informs and prepares school-based educators who are being evaluated by providing an overview of the new system and detailed information, materials, and tools for completing the new evaluation process.
- **Evaluator training** cultivates and assesses the skills and knowledge of teacher and principal evaluators through an in-depth dive into instructional and leadership rubrics and practicing data collection and scoring.

States and districts are testing a wide variety of format and content combinations for providing training on evaluation, but little is currently known about their efficacy, particularly at scale. For now, we offer the following state examples as a starting point for your state's deliberations regarding evaluation training.

1. DISTRICT LEADERSHIP TRAINING

District leadership teams need knowledge, tools, and strategies for implementing new educator evaluation systems with fidelity. At district leadership trainings, participants typically learn about the broad features of the new evaluation system; new legal and policy requirements; implementation timelines; and key tools, materials, processes, and procedures (or information and resources for designing them) for a district.

States use a variety of methods, often in combination, to provide this training, such as the following:

- **Statewide conferences.** *New York* held a two-day conference for regional and district leaders that provided turnkey training to support districts in understanding the state's new evaluation requirements, developing evaluation system plans, and accessing state and regional resources for completing the process.
- **Online video or webinar resources.** *Indiana* created *DOE Dialogue: Staff Performance Evaluation*, an 11-minute video that summarizes the new legal requirements for performance evaluation, explains the state's process for reviewing and approving district evaluation plans, and gives district leaders a checklist for the review process.

Tip

If your state has early-adopter or pilot districts testing your new system, ask these district, school, and teacher leaders to support implementation training for the remaining districts in your state. Recorded video interviews and presentations from these local experts is an efficient way to share key, credible insights across a state.

State Spotlight

Ohio held a one-day, statewide Educator Evaluation Symposium and used the event to create online resources for its districts.

- The symposium provided information on the state's model evaluation system as well as alternative models, resources for identifying evaluation measures, and presentations by principals and district leaders already implementing new evaluation systems in the state.
- After the event, Ohio created a **short video** of highlights from the symposium and integrated these video clips into **two online professional learning modules** that introduce the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System. The modules include a narrated PowerPoint presentation and short video clips of Ohio principals describing how they have implemented specific aspects of the model in their districts or schools.

Source: *Teacher Evaluation System in Ohio* (<http://www.ode.state.oh.us/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEDetail.aspx?page=3&TopicRelationID=1230&ContentID=125739>)

State Spotlight

Colorado held multiple in-person events to provide information and training to district leaders.

- Eight Educator Effectiveness Symposia (four in June 2011 and four in June 2012) across the state introduced district leaders to the state's legislative and policy changes on educator evaluation.
- A one-day Educator Effectiveness Summit (July 2012) convened more than 500 educators from 94 districts to learn about the state's new evaluation policy and implementation timelines; distribute a wide variety of state resources for implementing the new reforms at the district level; and hear presentations by and collaborate with district teams, experts, and pilot districts.

Source: *Lessons Learned on Communications and Engagement: Colorado Case Study* (http://www.tqsource.org/publications/TQ_Policy-to-PracticeBrief_CO_Case_Study.pdf)

2. EDUCATOR ORIENTATION TRAINING

In the rush to support district leadership teams and train evaluators, it can be easy to overlook training for the teachers and principals who are being evaluated. Informing and preparing educators with detailed processes, materials, and tools helps reassure concerned educators and dispels myths about the new process. States also might consider reaching out to regional agencies, professional associations, and nonprofit organizations to provide this training. States use a variety of methods for educator orientation training, such as the following:

- **Train-the-trainer series.** New York used *Network Team Institutes*, which were monthly turnkey sessions with regionally based teams, to prepare a cadre of more than 800 individuals who can train educators on the new evaluation systems. All resources from the institutes are available online for individual educators or teams of educators to access on demand.
- **Online, self-paced webinars.** Indiana created an online video series and webinars for teachers that provide a quick and easy way to learn about the state's overall system, *classroom observations*, student growth data scores, student learning objectives (SLOs), and summative scoring.

Tip

Be sure to include opportunities for educators to develop an in-depth understanding of the leadership or instructional evaluation frameworks in your district or state. This ensures that district and school teams have a shared understanding of the rubric and a common vocabulary for discussing evaluation results.

Rhode Island, for example, provides teachers with the *Framework for Teaching Effectiveness Series*, a series of self-paced modules for teachers to develop an understanding of the state's Professional Practice rubric.

State Spotlight

Tennessee provides a variety of resources—from *printed guides* to *online videos*—that acquaint educators with the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System. Recognizing the widespread lack of understanding among teachers about value-added modeling and how it is used in the evaluation system, Tennessee created these user-friendly resources to translate complex concepts into laymen's terms to increase understanding and decrease anxiety about the use of this student growth measure.

Sources: *The Power of Using Value-Added Analysis to Improve Student Learning: A Guide for Educators* (http://team-tn.org/assets/educator-resources/Power_of_Using_VA.pdf) and *Teacher Model* (<http://team-tn.org/teacher-model>)

3. EVALUATOR TRAINING

To cultivate and maintain a pool of skilled and reliable evaluators, your state will need a targeted investment of time and resources. This investment is critical to maximize implementation fidelity and ensure that your evaluation system produces accurate, consistent, and legally defensible results and ultimately can improve teaching practice. Evaluator training extends beyond initial training and certification and should include ongoing evaluator monitoring with opportunities for coaching, recalibration, and strengthening of skills across time.

States generally use a variety of methods, sometimes in combination, to provide evaluator training, including the following:

- **In-person training.** State education agency, regional, or district staff provide training directly to evaluators but usually with facilitation materials, resources, and exercises created by the state (often with support from an external vendor). In the state of Washington, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction trained a corps of **Instructional Criteria and Framework Feedback Specialists (ICFFSs)** to support principals statewide in evaluating teachers. Following principals' training, these ICFFSs will provide ongoing coaching and training and will engage in ongoing training themselves to enhance their own understanding—and that of evaluators statewide—of both the observable and nonobservable parts of the instructional and leadership frameworks that are the basis of educators' evaluations.
- **Online training.** Evaluators access and complete all training modules, exercises, and any certification assessments through an online and secure platform. Examples of this type of training are provided in the following state spotlights.

Tip

Consider including a wider range of staff in addition to superintendents and principals in this training, such as district administrators, teacher leaders, assistant principals, and department heads. This creates a diverse and broad pool of evaluators that can reduce the time burden on superintendents and principals while increasing teacher buy-in and trust.

State Spotlight

Illinois contracted with a vendor to produce 10 online training modules (five for teacher evaluators and five for principal evaluators) that provide initial training, certification training, and ongoing calibration opportunities. All evaluators must complete the 60 hours of online training on their own and are required to pass a test at the conclusion of each module. For participants who fail to pass a test after two attempts, both online and in-person remediation training is available.

Source: *Growth Through Learning* (<http://growththroughlearningillinois.org/Home.aspx>)



State Spotlight

Iowa requires that evaluators (for both administrators and teachers) complete *iEvaluate*, an online, self-paced course that participants must complete within a six-week time frame. *iEvaluate* provides both initial and certification training. Because Iowa does not have a statewide model system, the course focuses on the skills any evaluator would need regardless of the system design. Participants must complete a series of assignments demonstrating mastery of the course content. For administrators, this course counts toward their licensure renewal. For evaluators who have completed the basic training, the option of additional training in **Fierce Conversations** is available, which will ensure that evaluations achieve their intent of promoting meaningful conversations that change practice.

Source: *iEvaluate* (http://www.educateiowa.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2618&Itemid=5145)



State Spotlight

Ohio provides initial, certification, and ongoing calibration training. The state uses regionally based, three-day trainings that combine face-to-face sessions and an online assessment that participants must pass to receive an evaluator credential. After completing the assessment, the state provides evaluators with continuing access to additional videos for ongoing calibration and practice through an online portal. In addition, Ohio contracted with a vendor to provide SLO training using a train-the-trainer approach.

Source: *Ohio Department of Education District Educator Evaluation Trainings* (<http://www.ode.state.oh.us/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEDetail.aspx?page=3&TopicRelationID=1230&ContentID=125741>)



Bonus Resource

HIGH-QUALITY EVALUATOR TRAINING CHECKLIST

What are the characteristics of high-quality evaluator training? Use the following checklist to guide or evaluate your own evaluator training plans at the state level or provide this resource to districts as they design their own evaluation training plans.

Comprehensive

Does the training cover all aspects of the evaluation process, not just observation? Comprehensive training prepares evaluators to do the following:

- Conduct pre- and postobservation conferences.
- Coach educators and provide feedback for educators at varied levels of performance.
- Analyze nonobservation evidence (e.g., artifact review or student or staff surveys).
- Understand and analyze student growth data and measures.
- Combine multiple measures through a summative scoring process.
- Guide the creation of professional development plans.
- Manage time and technology to efficiently complete the process.

In-depth

Does the training cover the core knowledge and skills that evaluators need, including the following?

- Common sources of bias and strategies for minimizing subjectivity in the evaluation process
 - The educational philosophy and research base used to develop the instructional or leadership framework and observation rubrics
 - The purpose and the logic for each performance level and scale in the framework or the rubric
 - The framework or rubric structure and the core performance behaviors included in each dimension or component
-

Concrete

Does the training provide concrete, focused examples of evidence illustrating each point in the framework or the rubric scale? For observer training, evaluators should have access to the following:

- An extensive library of norm-referenced videos prescored by master evaluators, tiered by level of performance (e.g., exemplary and proficient), and covering numerous subject areas and grades
 - Short, focused video clips to demonstrate a practice or a skill, explain the scoring rationale at different performance levels, and practice scoring each subcomponent
 - Full-length observation videos to practice scoring against the full framework or rubric
-

Hands-on

Does the training provide ample time and opportunity for evaluators to repeatedly practice scoring with immediate feedback on the results, such as the following?

- In frame-of-reference exercises, participants view an example of evidence, score the example, and discuss their reasoning for assigning the score. Trainers correct mistakes or misconceptions, offer advice, and explain the expert scorer's decision.
 - Targeted training sets focused on hard-to-score sections of the framework or the rubric that evaluators commonly struggle to understand and apply.
-

Assessed

Does the training culminate in a rigorous certification test that assesses evaluators' knowledge, skill, accuracy, and reliability in scoring? A rigorous assessment could include the following:

- Scoring a full-length observation video
- Scoring short video clips and answering multiple-choice questions or other types of test items to assess an evaluator's knowledge of the rubric and ability to match evidence while relying on observation notes
- Meeting minimum requirements for rater reliability in scoring

Ongoing

Does the training plan focus on continuous training, assessment, and evaluator practice as much or more than it does on initial, upfront training? For example, does it include the following?

- Ongoing monitoring of evaluators
- On-site coaching for evaluators
- Periodic reassessment and recalibration opportunities

Sources:

Graham, M. (2011). *Measurement: What is inter-rater agreement and how can designers of teacher evaluation systems maximize it?* (Research synthesis). Rockville, MD: Center for Educator Compensation Reform, Westat. Retrieved from http://www.cecr.ed.gov/researchSyntheses/34008_CECR_RS_Inter_Rater_measurement_508.pdf

McClellan, C., Atkinson, M., & Danielson, C. (2012, March). *Teacher evaluator training & certification: Lessons learned from the Measures of Effective Teaching project* (Practitioner Series for Teacher Evaluation). San Francisco: Teachscape. Retrieved from http://www.teachscape.com/binaries/content/assets/teachscape-marketing-website/resources/march_13whitepaperteacherevaluatortraining.pdf

National Center for Teacher Effectiveness. (2011, October). *Supporting rater accuracy and consistency in classroom observation* [Webinar]. Retrieved from http://www.gse.harvard.edu/ncte/news/NCTE_Webinars.php

Reform Support Network. (n.d.). *Race to the Top brief: State development and use of video libraries to improve teacher effectiveness*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/implementation-support-unit/tech-assist/video-libraries-teacher-effectiveness.pdf>



I WANT TO KNOW MORE!

For more examples or information on this topic, including additional examples of trainings specific to student growth measures, please e-mail gtlcenter@air.org.

Jenni Fetters is a research associate at American Institutes for Research and provides technical assistance for the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders.