



REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

Teacher and Principal Evaluation Program Update

2017

Authorizing legislation: House Bill 2242 (2017) Session Law,
Sec. 902

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Cindy Rockholt

Assistant Superintendent, Educator Growth and Development

Prepared by:

Sue Anderson, Director, Educator Effectiveness
Sue.Anderson@k12.wa.us | 360-725-6116

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Executive Summary

The revised Teacher and Principal Evaluation Program (TPEP) focuses on the continuous improvement of those professionals.

Central to TPEP is an annual evaluation of teachers and principals. The evaluations comprise eight criteria each for teachers and for principals. The scores from the evaluations fall into one of four categories: Level 1 is “unsatisfactory,” Level 2 is “basic,” Level 3 is “proficient” and Level 4 is “distinguished.”

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) annually surveys the state’s 295 school districts, collecting evaluation scores for teachers (grouped by school) and for principals (grouped by district). Survey results show most teachers’ and principals’ practices are in the “proficient” category. Teachers or principals whose practice is “unsatisfactory” are dismissed. Those who have six or more years of experience and who score at the “basic” level for two years in a three-year period are put on a plan of improvement. Their contracts are not renewed if improvement does not occur.

Districts assist struggling teachers in several ways: providing extra support from principals and teacher mentors, providing opportunities to observe exemplary peers, and providing targeted professional development.

The University of Washington released a report on TPEP in July 2017. The report concludes that:

- How a school district carries out TPEP reflects the district’s leadership capacity and beliefs about educator growth;
- TPEP’s strength lies in the use of an instructional framework to support student, teacher, and principal learning;
- Relying on scores to prompt improvement is not a productive approach; and
- Collaboration is key to the success of TPEP for teacher and principal growth.

Policy recommendations based on the current status of TPEP include:

- Provide sustained support for professional learning and collaboration;
- Pay specific attention to smaller and more remote districts, and to teachers in specialized roles; and
- Integrate TPEP with other state and district initiatives.

Introduction

A new set of evaluation processes and criteria for teachers and principals was created with Senate Bill 6696 (2010) and Senate Bill 5895 (2012). As of the 2015–16 school year, this system has been required for nearly all teachers and principals¹ in Washington. Per House Bill 2242 (2017), Sec. 902, this report details the current implementation status of the Teacher and Principal Evaluation Program (TPEP), including:

- An overview of the process: the approved instructional and leadership frameworks, the eight teacher and eight principal criteria, and the use of student growth and professional learning plans;
- The 2015–16 School Employee Evaluation Survey (SEES) results, including the total percentages of teachers and principals in each of the four summative performance ratings, and a comparison to the 2014–15 data;
- Information regarding scoring and the consequences or outcomes of evaluation;
- A review of state and district programs in place to assist struggling teachers; and
- Recommendations for improving the evaluation program.

The Evaluation Process

Frameworks and Criteria

Washington has developed eight evaluation criteria for teachers and eight for principals:

Evaluation Criteria for Teachers:

1. Centering instruction on high expectations for student achievement.
2. Demonstrating effective teaching practices.
3. Recognizing individual student learning needs, and developing strategies to address those needs.
4. Providing clear and intentional focus on subject matter content and curriculum.
5. Fostering and managing a safe, positive learning environment.
6. Using multiple student data elements to modify instruction and improve student learning.
7. Communicating and collaborating with parents and school community.
8. Exhibiting collaborative and collegial practices focused on improving instructional practice and student learning.

Evaluation Criteria for Principals:

1. Creating a school culture that promotes the ongoing improvement of learning and teaching for students and staff.
2. Demonstrating commitment to closing the achievement gap.

¹ Teachers in some specialized roles (e.g., instructional coaches, library/media specialists who do not teach, etc.) are not evaluated on TPEP because they don't perform all duties in the state's eight evaluation criteria.

3. Providing for school safety.
4. Leading the development, implementation, and evaluation of a data-driven plan for increasing student achievement, including the use of multiple student data elements.
5. Assisting instructional staff with alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment with state and local school district learning goals.
6. Monitoring, assisting, and evaluating effective instruction and assessment practices.
7. Managing both staff and fiscal resources to support student achievement and legal responsibilities.
8. Partnering with the school community to promote student learning.

Legislation governing the revised evaluation system charged OSPI with determining up to three instructional and three leadership frameworks that encompass the state's eight criteria from which districts would choose.

The three approved instructional frameworks are:

- The Center for Educational Leadership 5 Dimensions of Learning (CEL 5D+) Version 3.0
- The Danielson Framework for Teaching (2011)
- The Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model

In 2017-18, the two approved leadership frameworks are:

- The Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP) Leadership Framework
- The Marzano Leadership Framework²

Each of the instructional frameworks has been cross-walked to the state's eight evaluation criteria, on which the scoring system is based. This allows for a common scoring methodology statewide, regardless of instructional framework. The AWSP Leadership Framework is based upon the state's eight leadership criteria, so no crosswalk is needed and the scoring is already common.

Providing instructional and leadership frameworks with descriptive rubrics at four levels of performance is the most impactful element of the revised evaluation system. The framework rubrics provide a common set of standards of practice and a common language for discussing them. This facilitates specific feedback and targeted growth goals, as well as more targeted prescriptions for professional learning and support.

² Because of the very small number of districts using the Marzano Leadership Framework (fewer than ten) and the resulting difficulty in developing a cadre of statewide trainers, this model is being phased out and will no longer be available in 2018-19. Districts affected by this change are receiving resources and professional learning to transition their principal evaluators and principals to the AWSP framework.

Student Growth

Each year, every teacher and principal must set and measure student growth goals. For the teacher evaluation process, four-level rubrics describe the setting of goals for:

- a subset of students (attached to Criterion 3, Differentiation);
- a classroom of students (attached to Criterion 6, Assessment); and
- students whose teachers work together in a professional team – grade-level, content area, or otherwise determined (Criterion 8, Professional Practice).

Rubrics also describe levels of performance for the student growth results on the goals that have been set for subsets and classrooms. No results measure is included for the team growth goal.

Principals set student growth goals for:

- all/most students in the school (attached to Criterion 3);
- students of a subset of teachers in the school identified by the principal (Criterion 5); and
- students in a subgroup selected by the principal to close an opportunity gap between these students and the student body as a whole (Criterion 8).

Teachers and principals whose goal-setting and results measures lead to a “low” student growth impact rating must complete a “Student Growth Inquiry.” This inquiry requires the teacher/principal and evaluator to look more closely at what might have impacted student learning (including things like students leaving the school/class, lack of alignment between curriculum and assessments) and to work together to determine what kinds of supports are necessary.

Professional Growth Goals

In most districts, teachers and principals set annual professional growth goals. Since the advent of TPEP, these are likely tied to self-assessments of their practice on the instructional framework. Should the teacher wish to use the new Professional Growth Plan (PGP) process for certificate renewal, these can capture the growth goal and fulfill the requirement that at least 15 hours of learning or 1 PGP be tied to TPEP. This practice allows teachers to more clearly see the coherence that exists between the evaluation process and the work they already do for their own professional learning and certificate renewal.

The School Employee Evaluation Survey

Each year, school districts complete the “School Employee Evaluation Survey,” SEES. In this survey, they report evaluation data for teachers (aggregated by school), principals (aggregated by district), and other certificated and classified staff (aggregated by district). They also answer a few questions about their evaluation process, including the use of

electronic tools for evaluation management. This year’s survey asks districts to tell how they assist struggling teachers, to fulfill the information request from the 2017 Legislature.

Districts complete the survey in the fall. Results are collated, suppressed to prevent individual identification, analyzed, and reported in the early spring. In previous years, OSPI has engaged the American Institutes for Research (AIR) or the University of Washington’s Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy to analyze the results. This year, OSPI will report the 2016–17 numbers to the Legislature in January, 2018.

Table 1 reports statewide teacher evaluation results for 2014–15 and for 2015–16. It is important to note that 2014–15 data does not include all teachers; some districts were still transitioning to TPEP during that school year.

Table 1: Teachers rated on TPEP using four-tiered system

	2014-15 Sum*	2014-15 Percentage*	2015-16 Sum	2015-16 Percentage
Unsatisfactory	96	0.2%	107	< 0.2%
Basic	1,590	3%	1773	3%
Proficient	33,852	70%	38,610	67%
Distinguished	12,164	26%	16,845	29%
Total	48,152	~100%	57,335	~100%

Results for principals show that they were more likely to receive Basic and Proficient ratings, and less likely to receive a Distinguished rating than were teachers over the same two-year period (Table 2).

Table 2: Principals rated on TPEP using four-tiered system

	2014-15 Sum*	2014-15 Percentage*	2015-16 Sum	2015-16 Percentage
Unsatisfactory	9	<1%	5	<1%
Basic	135	5%	149	5%
Proficient	2191	79%	2263	77%
Distinguished	434	16%	540	18%
Total	2769	~100%	2957	~100%

Comprehensive and Focused Evaluation

In 2015–16, districts were asked to separate out Comprehensive evaluation scores (all eight criteria) from Focused evaluation scores (only one criterion).³ Figures 1 and 2 show

³ Teachers and principals are evaluated on a Comprehensive evaluation for their first three years and then at least every fourth year thereafter if their overall practice scores at the Proficient or Distinguished level.

how the percentages for teachers and principals, respectively, compare with these two types of evaluations in 2015–16, the first year of full implementation.

Figure 1: Percentage of Teachers Rated on TPEP, 2015–16, by Comprehensive and Focused (Elfers and Achberger, 2017)

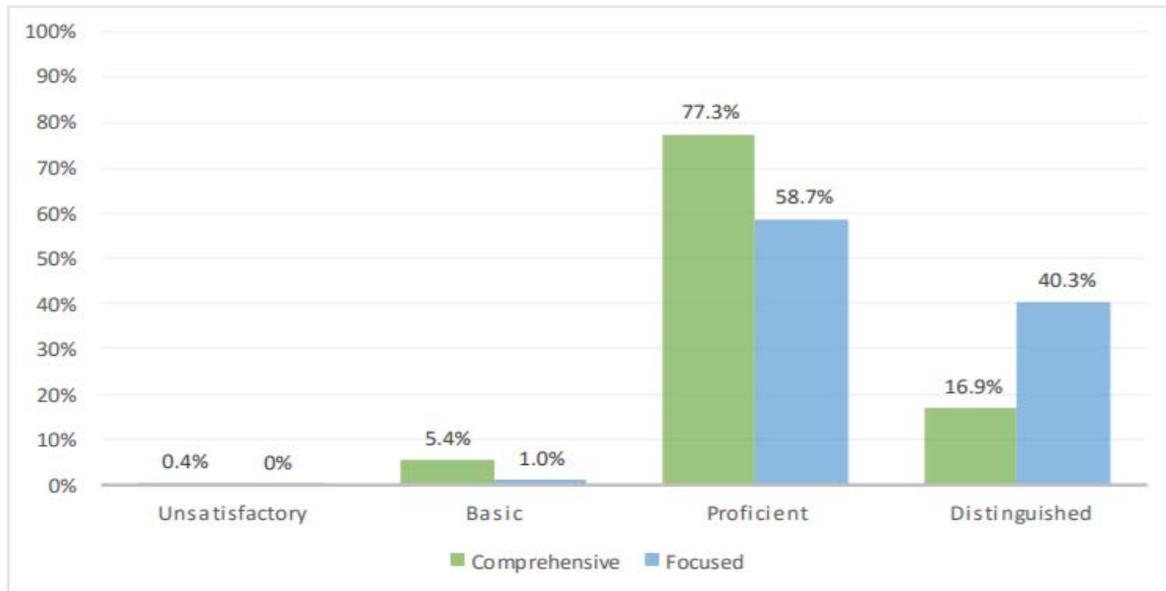
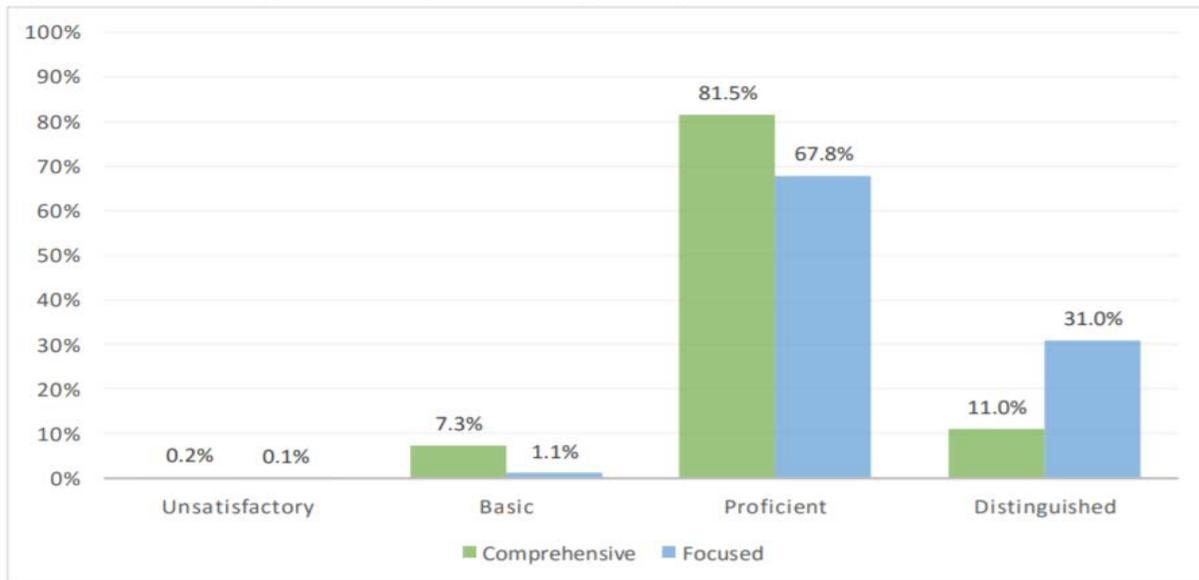


Figure 2: Percentage of Principals Rated on TPEP, 2015-16, by Comprehensive and Focused (Elfers and Achberger, 2017)



Three main factors help explain higher scores on the Focused evaluations: First, teachers and principals on a “Focused” evaluation are able to concentrate their efforts on providing evidence and engaging in professional learning on one criterion and one Student Growth

goal, rather than eight criteria and three Student Growth goals. This leads to a greater likelihood of success. Second, educators who do not achieve a comprehensive score of “3” or “4” are not allowed to be on the Focused evaluation, so the population participating in the Focused process was already selected for proficiency. Third, principals and teachers, fearing a “Basic – 2” (and the resulting first step to probation) if they took a professional risk, often selected a criterion on which they felt certain of success.

Scoring and the outcomes of the evaluation system

From the outset, the intentions of Washington’s revisions to the evaluation system have had two goals: 1) to ensure that teachers and principals serving were of a certain level of effectiveness (accountability), and 2) to provide clear feedback for developing their expertise (growth). Successfully pursuing both of these goals while navigating the tension between them is key to gaining the most benefits to Washington students.

Scoring teacher and principal performance – Comprehensive

A Comprehensive evaluation is assigned to teachers on provisional status⁴, those whose previous Comprehensive score was a “Basic” or below, and continuing contract teachers in every fourth year of employment in a district. It is assigned to principals in their first three years in the role, and then at least every fourth year thereafter. This type of evaluation requires evidence of the educator’s practice be examined and rated on all eight state evaluation criteria.

It also requires teachers to set student growth goals for a subset of students (attached to Criterion 3); a classroom of students (attached to Criterion 6); and the students whose teachers work together in a professional team—grade-level, content area, or otherwise determined (Criterion 8). They must determine the amount of student growth using at least two different measures. Principals must examine an area of student growth for the student body as a whole, for the students of a subset of teachers the principal selects, and for a subset of the student population identified for the purpose of closing opportunity gaps between this subset and the student population as a whole.

The methodology for determining a criterion score is a district decision. The methodology for using the eight criterion-level scores to determine the summative comprehensive score is defined by the state, as is the methodology for determining the student growth impact score.

Teachers or principals who score an “Unsatisfactory” on their Comprehensive evaluation are dismissed. Those with more than five years of experience whose score is “Basic” for two

⁴ “Provisional status” for teachers is the first three years of teaching (two, with the permission of the superintendent) or the first year in a new district if the teacher has two years of successful teaching in another WA district.

out of three years are put on a plan of improvement, and may be non-renewed if a third “Basic” score is received.

Teachers or principals who receive a “Low” student growth rating must complete a Student Growth Inquiry, regardless of their overall Comprehensive score. This requires that they and their evaluators look more closely at the reasons for low student growth, and institute appropriate remedies.

Scoring teacher and principal performance – Focused

Teachers on continuing contracts, and teachers and principals whose overall performance is at the “Proficient” or “Distinguished” level may be placed on a Focused evaluation.⁵ For this, the teacher/principal and evaluator decide on one of the eight criteria to be the professional growth focus for the year. The educator also sets a student growth goal.

As noted above and reported to the Steering Committee by teachers, principals, and district leaders, educators on the Focused evaluation were most often choosing a criterion in which they were already successful. They were not choosing one that would be challenging, and therefore might result in a score of “Basic,” because a “Basic” rating would begin the road to probation.

To remedy this, the Steering Committee recommended that the scoring methodology for the Focused evaluation change to carry the Comprehensive score forward. This would allow teachers and principals who had already proven their overall competency by receiving a “Proficient” or “Distinguished” Comprehensive rating to concentrate on professional learning in a challenging area without fear of taking that first step to probation. An evaluator has the right to move a teacher or principal back on the Comprehensive evaluation if the Focused evaluation process did not produce an acceptable level of reflection and effort. They could also do this if observations and other evidence indicated a need for more intensive evaluation. By law, either the evaluator or the teacher/principal may determine the move back to the Comprehensive evaluation.

In August 2016, portions of Washington Administrative Code 392-191A were changed to reflect this modification in scoring methodology. Districts were given two years to implement it. OSPI has engaged the University of Washington’s Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy to study the effects of this change through both randomized sample surveys and case studies. The results of the study will be released in December 2018.

Outcomes of the evaluation system

In Washington—as in most states with revised evaluation systems—the majority of teachers and principals score at the “Proficient” or “Distinguished” levels. However, school districts report that a number of teachers exited the system in advance of needing to be

⁵ Either the evaluator or the educator being evaluated may make the decision not to transition to the Focused evaluation.

evaluated on TPEP, thus avoiding the possibility of an unsatisfactory score and dismissal. Some were concerned about their ability to score at the Proficient level; others were at or beyond retirement age and did not want to participate in what they saw as a complicated and lengthy process of evaluation. Because few districts administer exit surveys for departing employees, and results of such surveys are notoriously inaccurate, it is not possible to determine exact numbers who exited for these reasons.

Districts also exit marginally-performing teachers during the years of provisional status (the first three years of teaching or the first year of teaching if a teacher has completed two successful years in another WA district). During this period, teachers may be non-renewed at the district's discretion, regardless of their TPEP scores.

Educator Growth

For the vast majority of educators, the evaluation system has its most significant impact as a tool for growth. Robust support from the Legislature (and additional funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation) has allowed OSPI, in partnership with Educational Service Districts (ESDs), school districts, professional organizations (Association of Washington School Principals, Washington Education Association, Washington Association of School Administrators), educator preparation programs, and nonprofits to offer important professional learning based upon the instructional and leadership frameworks. State funding is provided in two allocations:

- **TPEP Teacher Training Grant proviso**—For fiscal year 2018, \$5 million is allocated for the TPEP Teacher Training grant for teacher professional learning in the instructional frameworks; this amount is reduced to \$4 million in fiscal year 2019. Allocations are based on floor funding of \$500 per district, with an additional amount per teacher headcount determined each year (\$74 in 2017-18). The funds allow districts to provide the required eight hours of training for new teachers or those new to the district's chosen framework and the evaluation process, as well as to support a deeper dive into selected areas of the framework for all teachers.
- **TPEP Program funding** —The TPEP operating budget (\$3.686 million) supports program staff as well as:
 - Consolidated Service Agreements with the nine ESDs to provide TPEP training for teachers, principals, and district leaders
 - Grants to districts (through the iGrants system) for administrator training in the instructional and leadership frameworks
 - Thrice yearly convenings of the framework authors/designees to and of the statewide network of instructional and leadership framework specialists (over 130 specialists) to update framework trainings and skills. Their current focus is on cultural competency

- One or two “TPEP Colloquia,” where districts share their best ideas for TPEP implementation
- Support for AWSP and WASA to provide professional learning about TPEP to school and district leaders
- Development of a cadre of specialists who deliver professional learning in feedback conversations for professional growth
- Research on TPEP implementation and principal retention by the University of Washington
- Administration and analysis of the School Employee Evaluation Survey
- Support for teacher and principal preparation programs in teaching candidates about the state’s four-tiered evaluation system
- Facilitators who ensure the coherence of the National Board process with TPEP for candidates seeking certification of accomplished teaching
- Updates and enhancements to the state’s electronic evaluation management tool, eVAL

The second of two TPEP grants made by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which will conclude in January 2018, has been supporting several other key initiatives:

- A complete overhaul of the eVAL tool, now known as eVAL 2.0, with features that better support the evaluation process as currently practiced in Washington
- Professional learning for principals and their evaluators on eVAL
- Development of a curriculum and cadre of WEA-sponsored teacher leaders to train peers in key principles of formative assessment
- Pilot of student perception surveys in eight districts, and the development of a student perception survey question bank to be housed in eVAL
- Research on TPEP implementation by the University of Washington Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy (complementing the research commissioned by OSPI)

Assisting Struggling Teachers

Perhaps the greatest advantage of an instructional framework and its rubrics is the ability to specifically match a teacher’s practices to those that have been determined effective, and to those that are not. This common language allows for targeted support and clear measures of progress.

When a teacher struggles, the principal generally monitors teacher practice more closely and more often. In informal requests for information about assistance, districts also cited engaging both district administrators and their teachers’ associations to collaborate on assisting struggling teachers. Some districts report accessing their Beginning Educator Support Team (BEST) mentors and instructional coaches in the effort.

Districts can access funds from the TPEP Teacher Training grant (see above) to provide additional supports, including:

- Sending struggling teachers to ESD-sponsored classes targeted to specific evaluation criteria
- Providing substitute teachers so struggling teachers can observe exemplary peers (best done with other exemplary teachers/instructional coaches, who can point out key instructional moves or other highly effective practices)
- Ensuring one or more teachers in each school have received the instructional framework “Teacher Training of Trainers” professional learning so they can assist all peers in better understanding the framework

A question about how the district supports struggling teachers has been added to the 2017 SEES, and will be reported to the Legislature along with the other results of that survey in January 2018.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The TPEP Steering Committee members have reviewed and agree with the conclusions and policy implications cited in the University of Washington report on TPEP implementation. Please see Appendix A.

References

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Conclusions and Policy Implications (Elfers and Plecki, 2017)

With partial funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, OSPI commissioned a study on TPEP implementation. The researchers used both case studies of nine school districts in Washington and a randomized sample survey of teachers, principals, and district administrators statewide to learn how districts are putting TPEP into practice. Following are the conclusions and policy implications of what they learned.

Conclusions

1. How TPEP is implemented in schools and districts is a reflection of the organization's leadership capacity and belief systems.

The long-term sustainability and success of the evaluation policy may be linked to the ways in which districts think and talk about teaching. According to many educators, the conversation should be centered around instruction and professional growth, rather than scoring and “checking off a box.” Districts communicate the primary purposes of TPEP, and this can influence whether or not educators see the policy as a means to continuous improvement or as simply a requirement to be met. Districts can also prioritize the creation of a trusting and collaborative culture that supports improvement efforts and coherently integrates the evaluation system into the broader set of initiatives and activities aimed at improving student and professional learning. Findings from this study support the primacy of the school leader in establishing trust, creating conditions and serving as an instructional leader for TPEP to be understood as an opportunity for continuous growth. Principals and assistant principals shoulder the majority of responsibilities for the evaluation, and the workload of school leaders can be overwhelming. In many cases, districts have added additional administrative staff and other supports to help evaluators manage these responsibilities.

2. The strength of TPEP is in its use of an instructional framework to support continuous growth of student and professional learning.

TPEP implementation is directly related to educators' knowledge about effective instruction, and the instructional framework can help support those conversations. The evaluation process requires a deep understanding of goal setting for student and professional growth and the use of evidence to assess progress toward these goals, both on the part of teachers and administrators. Given these elements of the evaluation, the instructional framework can serve as a unifying factor and help create coherence for staff as they work together on issues of professional practice.

3. Relying on scoring to prompt improvement is not a productive strategy.

The data indicates that most Washington teachers receive a summative score of proficient, and a few receive a distinguished rating. Few teachers receive a summative rating of basic or unsatisfactory. Thus, summative data is not helpful in providing educators with the kind of detailed feedback necessary to guide conversations about instructional improvement and student learning. While our examination of criterion scores in a handful of districts indicates a small amount of variation, this data alone does not provide sufficient detail to be reliable for general planning or professional development purposes. Gauging progress solely on the basis of changes in summative or criterion scores, either at the school or district level, does not provide sufficient evidence to inform strategies for improvement, nor will it necessarily help inform decisions about hiring, staffing, or contract renewal.

4. TPEP cannot be done in isolation.

Collaboration is a fundamental element of the evaluation system as a means by which educators work together to improve professional practice and student learning.

Collaboration applies in a very specific sense to the work of teachers with one another and their school leaders within the local context. But it also applies to the process itself, and the extent to which educators (whether at the classroom, school, district or state level) are able to create and engage in consistent procedures that generate confidence in the usefulness and fairness of the system. Teachers and administrators prioritized the provision of professional development in collaboration with others as the most important and valued aspect of TPEP. The collaborative nature of TPEP activities will need to be supported for long-term sustainability.

Policy Implications

1. There is a need for continuous professional development and collaboration to support TPEP implementation, for both teachers and administrators.

Evidence from multiple sources included in this study points to the need for ongoing professional learning opportunities for teachers and administrators. In addition to the onboarding of those teachers and administrators new to the profession or to a specific framework, educators in this study expressed a need for “refreshers” for those who have been working with TPEP for some time. This type of training may best be done in collaboration with others and may best be accomplished at the local level. In this study, educators noted the shift in providing professional development at district and school levels, using educators within a district as local experts.

2. Differentiated supports are needed to address special circumstances.

This study demonstrates the differential impact of the state’s teacher evaluation policy in light of factors such as size and location of the district, grade levels served, and types of teaching responsibilities and assignments. In particular, we found that small and rural or remote districts often have no readily available opportunities for collaboration and are in need of supports that help them connect with others and mediate the workload. Similarly,

schools that have only one evaluator (typically small elementary schools in districts of all sizes) are in need of supports and opportunities for calibration. In addition to characteristics of districts and schools, teachers serving in specialized roles (e.g., music, PE, instructional coaches) often feel that the evaluation is not applicable to many aspects of their work. Attention should be paid to adaptations that can mediate this problem.

3. Sustaining TPEP to support continuous improvement.

An ongoing challenge for the state involves supporting and sustaining the long-term efforts of schools and districts to productively engage staff in the evaluation process. As a number of educators who participated in this study have noted, TPEP may be at risk of becoming “stale” and marginalized if workload issues are not addressed and supports are not forthcoming. Additionally, promoting the purpose of continuous improvement is a message that needs continual emphasis so that the routines established for conducting evaluation to do not devolve to a simple process of “checking the boxes.” Integrating TPEP with other state and district improvement initiatives can help support its sustainability. One example for consideration would be for teacher certification systems to become more integrated with TPEP. Narrow views of the purposes of TPEP, for example, viewing its primary purpose as one of “firing bad teachers,” fails to recognize the complexities and potential involved in building a system that supports continuous growth. TPEP is not causing a large proportion of educators to consider leaving the profession, but principals are most at risk, given their significant workloads. Efforts to streamline some TPEP processes should be considered, including ways to be strategic about focusing on critical aspects of the comprehensive evaluation based on teacher needs. Maintaining a focus on building professional capacity of educators at all levels in the system seems warranted for TPEP to realize its full potential.

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Chris Reykdal • State Superintendent
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
Old Capitol Building • P.O. Box 47200
Olympia, WA 98504-7200