

KDP Reasoned VOICE provides current information for educators and interested stakeholders to reference when advocating a position on an educational issue. Developed by members of the Kappa Delta Pi Public Policy Committee, *KDP Reasoned VOICE* is divided into six sections: (1) summary of current events related to the topic; (2) recent and relevant research; (3) information from experts in education, (4) explanations of the various ways states in the United States have implemented teacher evaluation practices; (5) Kappa Delta Pi's position on the topic; and (6) suggested reading. Advocates are encouraged to conduct their own investigations to verify and supplement this information.

This inaugural issue of *KDP Reasoned VOICE* was conceived of and written by **Nathan Bond** and **Raymond Dagenais** (Research and Publications Subcommittee Co-Chairs) with other members of the KDP Public Policy Committee, including Marcia Bolton, Marilyn Cochran-Smith, Marilyn Cook, Carrie Gaffney, Cara Jeffries, Clinton Smith, Bill Sterrett, and Faye Snodgrass.

ISSUE NO. 1: TEACHER EVALUATION

Current Events

Teacher evaluation was a hotly debated issue between the Chicago Public Schools and Chicago teachers in September 2012. While a proposed agreement may return teachers and students to the classroom, the fundamental nature of the argument is critical to the strengthening of an educational system that defines the United States as a nation.

According to a *Chicago Tribune* newspaper article on September 14, 2012, the proposal recommends teacher evaluations "in which student performance will make up 25 percent of a teacher's performance rating in the system's first year and a higher percentage in future years." A follow-up article in the *Chicago Tribune* on September 16, 2012, stated, "Standards for teacher evaluations that could lead to firings would be eased, and some higher-rated teachers could get a better shot at being recalled after layoffs."

Teachers regard performance evaluations as constructive feedback designed to foster professional development efforts and improve teaching and learning in their classrooms. In many states, one component of performance evaluations is students' test scores. However, teachers are concerned that great reliance on student test scores as a measure of their competence and effectiveness includes many factors beyond their control.

What Research Says

Linda Darling-Hammond, an advocate for the professionalization of teachers, recommends that teacher evaluations include performance assessments to measure effectiveness. In a 2010 publication entitled, *Evaluating Teacher Effectiveness: How Teacher Performance Assessments Can Measure and Improve Teaching*, Darling-Hammond stated, "Teachers are the fulcrum of determining whether any school initiative tips toward success or failure" (p. 1). According to a large-scale study conducted on National Board Certified teachers in North Carolina, effective teachers make a difference when it comes to student achievement. These accomplished teachers were evaluated using performance assessments. Darling-Hammond states that traditional evaluation measures, including an overreliance on students' test scores, fail to provide teachers with useful feedback to foster improvements in instruction. She also references and endorses the performance assessments used in Connecticut's Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) and California's Performance Assessment of California Teachers (PACT).

Information retrieved from Darling-Hammond, L. (2010). *Evaluating teacher effectiveness: How teacher performance assessments can measure and improve teaching*.
http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2010/10/pdf/teacher_effectiveness.pdf

What Experts Say

Two educational experts debate both sides of the issue in an article in the *Wall Street Journal* entitled, "Should Student Test Scores Be Used to Evaluate Teachers?"

Yes, they should

Thomas Kane, an education professor from Harvard, says that teachers should be held accountable for the gains in learning while a student is in the teacher's class. The teacher should be responsible for the improvements made over the course of the year. Existing research shows that teachers do make an impact on student learning. Effective teachers who show gains over time are not just coaching their students to perform better on state exams; they are truly teaching them.

Kane proposes a solution. The right approach to teacher evaluation is to combine test scores with administrative observations and student surveys. In many states, teacher evaluation is still based on two factors: the number of years of teaching experience and the completion of graduate degrees.

No, they shouldn't

Linda Darling-Hammond, an education professor from Stanford, says that teacher scores should not be part of a teacher's evaluation. She argues that students have different abilities, commitment levels, and experiences outside the classroom. No two students receive the same parental support. She continues, "Test-score gains can reflect a student's health, home life, and attendance; schools' class sizes and curriculum materials; and the influence of parents, other teachers, and tutors. Because these factors are not weighed, individual teachers' scores do not accurately reveal their ability to teach."

Some teachers worry that current proposed systems will negatively affect collaboration and create disincentives to teach the most challenging students. Further, focusing on multiple-choice tests emphasizes skills that students really don't need for this modern age. She adds, "Federally imposed teacher-evaluation policies insist on using state tests that do not measure growth, are poor measures of higher-order thinking skills, and penalize teachers of the neediest students."

Darling-Hammond proposes a solution. She points to models used in other countries. She writes, "In Singapore, for example, teachers are evaluated by trained observers based on how they support the whole child, from social and emotional development to academic learning; how they strive to improve their practice; and, most important, how they work with other educators to improve practice across the school." Studies show that frequent feedback from others helps teachers to improve and increases student learning.

Information retrieved from *The Wall Street Journal*, June 24, 2012.
<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304723304577366023832205042.html?KEYWORDS=Linda+Darling-Hammond>

What States Are Doing

In August 2012, Sara Mead, a researcher with Bellwether Education Partners, published an analysis of the state laws regarding teacher evaluation. One of her research questions focused on the evidence of student learning used as a factor in teacher evaluation. She found the following:

- All 21 states in this analysis require some evidence of student learning to be incorporated in teacher and principal evaluations.
- Four states do not permit a teacher to be rated highly effective or effective unless they achieve a set threshold on the learning gains component: Delaware, Florida, Indiana, and Rhode Island. (Arkansas and Maryland proposed regulations that would also take this approach.)
- Ten states require data on student learning to constitute at least 50 percent of a teacher's evaluation: Colorado, Connecticut (45 percent individual, 5 percent school-wide), Idaho, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Nevada, Ohio, Oklahoma, and Tennessee.
- Four states require student learning data to constitute less than 50 percent of a teacher's evaluation: Arizona, Illinois, Minnesota, and New York.
- Washington and New Jersey (the two newest laws) require student learning to be included in a teacher's evaluation, but do not prescribe a set percentage or threshold.

Information retrieved from the Bellwether Report.

<http://bellwethereducation.org/recent-state-action-on-teacher-effectiveness>

Teacher Evaluation in West Virginia: A Common Core State

West Virginia learned from experience that judging teacher performance using students' standardized test scores creates an inadequate evaluation process. Last year, the state piloted a new evaluation system in 25 schools, and it worked extremely well. It was expanded to 136 schools this year, with plans to implement it in every school during the 2013–2014 school year. The new evaluation system aligns with the framework of teaching in the 21st century. The standards in the framework range from curriculum to professional development and connect to the common core of teaching in the 21st century.

The evaluation system for teachers is divided into three stages, defined by the number of years teaching and four performance levels. The four performance levels are applied to each of the seven standards that a teacher needs to meet. From lowest to highest, the four performance levels are unsatisfactory, emerging, accomplished, and distinguished. Each teacher must achieve "accomplished," if not "distinguished," at all three stages of the evaluation system. In the initial stage, a teacher in his or her first through third years of teaching is required to write a self-reflection based on the given standards and rubrics. The teacher at this stage is observed four times in the classroom and is required to provide evidence of the work that he or she thinks qualifies him or her as a "distinguished" teacher.

For a teacher with four to five years' experience, the intermediate stage, only two teacher observations are required, while teachers with six years' or more experience, the highest stage, do not have any observations during the school year. These evaluations are worth the first 80 percent of a teacher's evaluation. The last two standards, student learning goals and school-wide growth in math and reading, comprise the final 20 percent of a teacher's evaluation.

The evaluation system follows a rigid timeline for its completion. Educators must complete their self-reflection by October 1 and continue working on student learning goals. Observations

are also due by specific dates. The educator completes the year with an administrative conference at which the summative performance rating is given.

The evaluation process provides two courses of action for continuous improvement. The first plan provides support to meet the professional's needs through mentoring, programs of study, and professional development. This step is intended to be a preventative step in the evaluation process. The other available option is the corrective action plan, which does not come into fruition from the support plan, but addresses instances of misconduct that may require immediate action, as defined in W. Va. Code 18A-2-8 (WVEA). The corrective action plan is implemented for an 18-week period. If there is insufficient improvement within the period, then an educator can be terminated. A corrective action plan consists of three components: an identified area of unsatisfactory performance within the standards to be addressed; a timeline for implementation of the changes; and a referral for support from other educators.

Information retrieved from <http://www.wvea.org>

Teacher Evaluation in Tennessee: A Right to Work and Common Core State

Since receiving the "First to the Top" funding from the federal government to reform public education, the Tennessee State Department of Education and the state legislators have made massive changes to the teacher evaluation process. These state legislators passed laws tying tenure to teacher evaluation scores and tying teacher evaluation scores to student achievement. Though unionized, as a Right to Work state, Tennessee state code dictates that teachers cannot strike as a bargaining strategy.

Tennessee teachers are scored in two ways. Fifty percent is comprised of student achievement data. This percentage is further divided in two ways: 35 percent is based on student growth based on the Tennessee Value Added Assessment System (TVAAS); and 15 percent is based on additional measures of student achievement as agreed upon by the districts. The remaining 50 percent is based on qualitative measures, such as teacher observations in the areas of planning, instruction, environment, and professionalism.

It is important to note that more than two-thirds of Tennessee's teachers do not use the TVAAS method to measure student growth for their subjects. These teachers, including those for special education, physical education, music, art, and other untested subjects, use school-wide testing scores for subjects and students they do not teach. For example, special education teachers are required to use the school-wide score for literacy or math for their grade levels. Special education student progress is not measured in TVAAS.

Teacher Evaluation in Texas: A Non-Union and Non-Common Core State

Teacher evaluation in Texas occurs through an annual 45-minute observation by a school administrator or other qualified appraiser. When evaluating teacher performance, the administrator uses the Professional Development and Appraisal System (PDAS), an evaluation process developed in 1995 by teachers and other stakeholders across the state. The PDAS centers on eight domains: active and successful student participation; learner-centered instruction; evaluation and feedback of student progress; management of student discipline; professional communication; professional development; compliance with policies and operating procedures; and improvement of all students' academic performance.

An administrator uses a rubric with four graduations of quality: exceeds expectations; proficient; below expectations; and unsatisfactory. When a teacher scores well on the PDAS, he or

she is often exempt from an annual evaluation. In these cases, the outstanding teacher is evaluated only once every five years. However, when a teacher scores unsatisfactory in one of the eight domains, then he or she and the administrator develop an intervention plan. Failing to meet the requirements of the plan is grounds for termination. A due process is in place for disagreements with the evaluation process.

In addition to the observation, the PDAS process includes a preconference at the beginning of the year, a post-conference at the end of the year, documentation of ongoing professional development, and a self-report form in which the teacher identifies ways to improve students' scores on state standardized tests. According to state law, student and teacher performance are connected. As part of Domain VIII (Improvement of All Students' Academic Performance), the campus's overall rating from 1 to 4 is added to the teacher's PDAS score. This domain also evaluates a teacher's efforts to enhance student academic performance, increase student attendance, identify and assist at-risk students, and improve campus performance rating.

Information retrieved from the Texas Education Agency website and the Region XIII website.
www4.esc13.net/pdas

Kappa Delta Pi's Views on Teacher Evaluation

KDP's mission is to "sustain an honored community of diverse educators by promoting excellence and advancing scholarship, leadership, and service," which requires teachers to be well-trained and committed to serving their students. Once they enter the profession, teachers must continue learning in a collaborative manner. Among other key characteristics, teacher quality should encompass:

- Knowledge and understanding of learning standards.
- Professional preparation, motivation, and commitment.
- Lifelong learning, reflection, and growth as professionals.
- Critical thinking about their own practice and professional dispositions, as well as seeking and incorporating feedback on their performance.
- High ethical standards that exemplify the virtues teachers seek to inspire in students.
- Collaborative work with colleagues, parents, and community members to promote an inclusive and holistic learning environment.
- Research-based best practices that maximize teaching and learning.
- A teacher evaluation based on fair and reasonable criteria developed with input from teachers.

Information retrieved from KDP's website highlighting the organization's position statements.
<http://www.kdp.org/aboutkdp/positionpapers.php>

Further Reading

The following reference list includes information that could shape future discussions of teacher evaluations.

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