

# CAPTURING THE LEARNING POINTS



## Time-Saving Strategies for Principals

*“Every person I have talked to has reported that the new system has made them better teachers. They’re also saying it’s more work, more in-depth, and involves more time.”*

—JENNIE BELTRAMINI, NBCT, teacher leader, Anacortes School District

**W**ashington’s Teacher/Principal Evaluation Pilot project made one thing clear: one of the greatest concerns voiced, a very real concern, was the amount of time involved in implementing the new evaluations.

*“Historically, the norms were simply two 30-minute observations followed by a postconference, occasionally preceded by a preconference but not always. It was quick and easy, but it didn’t offer a lot of opportunity to really think about practice, to think about how to improve as a teacher. It didn’t even offer a forum to have those types of conversations with the evaluator because it was a rushed, check-check process.*

*While this evaluation process is better, time is a real concern for both teachers and evaluators. The rubric really gives us a common language and a specific focus for communication and allows for much, much deeper conversations about practice than have occurred in the past. These deeper conversations, digging up the evidence or determining what is appropriate evidence for each of the components, all take more time.*

*To a degree, there is no way to shortcut this process, but as people become more experienced with using the rubrics, they are becoming more comfortable with what type of practice is being described and where their practice falls. That will ultimately bring about that time saving.”*

—BETTI GREGG, NBCT, Consulting Peer Educator, Kennewick School District

*“If we’re going to ask people to get better at their practice, we can’t rely on their college degree. You can’t do this [work] without some time and some focus. You cannot write it down on paper and tell people to make it happen and have it happen. It takes people’s time. It takes working together and talking and learning together. It’s hard work and it’s complex work, and it’s not going to happen by just turning it over [to the schools].*

*It’s [The new evaluation system is] shifting the focus of our principals and their time. There isn’t more time, but this model takes a lot more time. We are hoping that principals are becoming more efficient at implementation down the road. It’s certainly shifting their emphasis toward instruction and student learning. [This] is a good thing, but it’s also taking time away from other broader leadership issues: connecting with the community, connecting with parents, [and] connecting with students other than in the classroom. [The] whole-school climate and culture is getting less attention, and that’s a bit of a concern because all of our schools need to be safe places to be.”*

—DR. PAUL STURM, Superintendent, Pullman School District



This document is part of a series of five documents to share tools and best practices for implementing Washington’s new teacher and principal evaluation legislation. These ideas have been drawn from interviews with district leaders, principals, and teachers who have participated in the Teacher/Principal Evaluation Pilot (TPEP) project. The hope is that the lessons learned from their experiences will address some of your concerns and lead you toward greater success. The other four topics in the series are as follows: *Early Decision Making and Engaging Stakeholders in Educator Evaluation*, *Developing Effective Observations That Are Reliable and Result in Professional Conversations*, *Measuring Student Growth*, and *Implementing New Evaluations: A Teacher’s Perspective*. These ideas are the result of interviews with the leadership of five pilot school districts (Kennewick, North Mason, Anacortes, Pullman, and Medical Lake) and Educational Service District 101.

## Time Savers for Leadership Setting up the New System

Washington’s pilot districts acknowledged the validity of the concern around time. Implementing a new evaluation system will no doubt require time, but by employing time savers simultaneously, it is possible to keep this extra time to a minimum. The following two checklists of time-saving strategies are based on the suggestions gathered from TPEP pilot districts.

	Check
Take time in August to schedule all your teachers’ evaluations and conferences for the fall. This will be more efficient than waiting until the school year starts, and it will send the message that this work is the year’s priority.	
Show teachers examples of high-quality artifacts, student growth goals, and self-assessments so that they can model their work on excellent work versus guessing at what you want.	
Assure your teachers that this is not a portfolio-gathering exercise; evidence that is collected consists only of materials that teachers are creating, regardless of the evaluation.	
Blend the new evaluation system with Common Core State Standards initiatives.	
Assume that having everyone digest the new system will take time and allow for it from the start. Don’t think that if the teachers hear about the new evaluations once or twice, you’re done with training. Invest the time at the start of the year and then things will become more streamlined when people gain fluency. This is easier than playing catch-up.	
Consider evaluating one group around the same time (e.g., the entire second grade team). This will allow them to use any of their collaboration or planning time to support each other and gain more fluency in the framework.	
Dedicate early release or collaboration time for faculty to learn the materials to be successful.	
Hire an outside trainer to deepen everyone’s fluency in the frameworks while alleviating staff of this training responsibility.	
Hire additional support staff to take some of the administrative duties of principals while this is being launched.	
Consider using eVAL to streamline your system and make evaluation data available to both educators and evaluators so that both can add detail into the framework, working on the same document at the same time. (eVAL is the state of Washington’s Web-based tool for managing and documenting the evaluation process.)	
Develop districtwide negotiated forms so all administrators are on the same page (e.g., pre- and postconference forms and artifact review forms).	
Share examples of completed forms, such as calendars, with teachers and evaluators. Streamline the forms for principal evaluation. For example, make most of the recommended forms “optional” and use them as discussion starters instead of something that must be filled out.	

## Key Questions for Consideration

-  Which existing examples of high-quality artifacts, student growth goals, and so on, can be shared, and what types of examples must be identified to provide educators with templates so that they do not need reinvent the wheel?
-  What, if any, initiatives, activities, or duties can you limit, eliminate, or reassign to focus your entire team on this work for the year?
-  What options are there to seek support from district staff or school directors to hire additional administrative or other staff to alleviate the time burden?
-  What messages can you craft to convey that your team is already doing impactful work and that time spent documenting and deepening strong practice is well worth it?
-  What are the biggest time-draining endeavors for teachers, principals, and district staff? Is there a way to collect this information from your staff and take action to try to address them?
-  Are there existing convenings among evaluators in your district or across neighboring districts where opportunities can be built into the agenda to share time-saving strategies that work for your context?

## Time Savers for Evaluators on the Job

	Check
Type your observations directly into the rubric as you are observing a class. (Don't take notes and then go back to translate them onto the tool because that will take more time than you have.)	
Not all evidence needs to be written comments. Use your smartphone to take pictures to put in the rubric and use your smartphone to record audio of students. (Note: Please get permission from your students' parents to record them.)	
Spend an extra 15 minutes at the end of your visit to complete your observations while you're still in the classroom. This idea seems to add 15 minutes, but the idea is that those 15 minutes will help you complete the notes versus trying to get back to them once you go back to your office and are competing with voicemail, phone calls, e-mails, people stopping you in the hall and so forth.	
Share initial observation notes with the person observed. Invite them to add more evidence you may have missed. This will enrich the tool and also give you a head start on the postobservation discussion.	
Pre- and postconferences need to have some clear structure. While these conversations are the heart of the process, without structure, they can take one to two hours. These conversations have been called "rich, meaningful, fruitful, helpful, and productive." But to be valuable, they also must be succinct.	

*"The eVAL tool has helped save hours and hours of work on the final evaluation. Because it is designed to act like a collection tool, all of the evidence collected (artifacts, observation data, notes, reflections, etc.) are compiled for the evaluator in the summary report, organized by the state criteria. The beauty of this process is that it organizes the entire year of work - all those conversations, the goal setting, the discussions about supporting evidence, all of it! - into one place, where a teacher and principal can sit side-by-side and clearly and collaboratively score the final summary report in about 30 minutes. I regained dozens of hours I used to spend writing anecdotal narratives and focused on the quick and easy scoring with my teachers, and then wrote a "claim-evidence-impact" statement as a summary."*

—SHELLEY PETILLO, principal, Everett School District