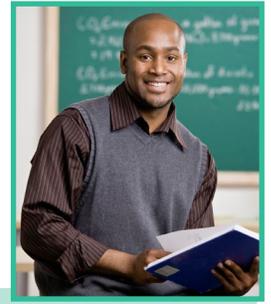


CAPTURING THE LEARNING POINTS

Implementing New Evaluations: A Teacher's Perspective



"I've learned that on all levels, we all want the same thing. We all want to move forward in our careers—all being district office, evaluators, and teachers. We all want to improve student learning. When you can all work together, you realize that we really are on the same page."

—RACHEL STITES, teacher, North Mason

This is a first-hand account from a teacher about the changes to the evaluation system as she experienced them, and it is being shared in an effort to paint a picture of what the process can look and feel like. Rachel Stites is a first-grade teacher in the North Mason School District. She has seven years of teaching experience and is on the Instructional Leadership Team, as well as a part of the TPEP pilot work. Her own words follow.

A Teacher's Perspective

We were **motivated to dive in to changing our evaluations** because we wanted to improve student learning and teacher effectiveness. Historically, the norm was either one or two observations and then you had a final evaluation, and it was either you met the standard or you didn't. There weren't any conversations about what the next steps would be to improve. It told me things I already knew I did well and, yet, I wanted more clarity about what I could work on.

To make sure **everyone felt comfortable using the new tools**, we had a lot of training on the scoring. We took up staff meeting time. We had longer staff meetings where we would focus on each domain and we would be given these little scenarios, then together we would plunk it in the rubric where we felt it was and then have a lot of discussion about it.

The main results are that **we are more focused on improving student learning**, and we are all using the same language to talk about our own instruction. We've been doing "learning walks," and I suspect that without that common understanding and common language, everyone may not have been willing to let others into their classroom to see their instruction so that we can learn from them. This has created an atmosphere of trust that allows us to talk even more openly about how we can improve practice.

Measuring engagement is different in each class, and it would look different with each area of the subject that is being taught. Sometimes it might look like students in a book; other times you might walk in, and they may seem off task to you, but when you get down and really listen to what the kids are talking about, they are having a discussion around the concept that they are learning or the subject that's being taught.



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 *Time-Saving Strategies for Principals*. 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.

I've even extended this way of thinking to my classroom by inviting students to set their own goals for writing. I told the kids that this year we were going to focus on setting goals in writing. Using the rubric that we create in class for their own writing, we would score our work, and we were going to do that every month. They would score themselves, and then I would give them a score as well. We have a weekly journal where they write every Monday about what they did on the weekend, and once a month they will score themselves, and then the following day, I try to meet with as many as I can to talk about whether there is a discrepancy between their score and my score. This allows me to change their goal if needed. I know that I've grown as a teacher because I've been keeping track of their scores, I have evidence of their writing, and how the scores that they gave themselves compare to the scores that I've given them. The students and I have gained a more clear shared understanding of what achievement looks like, and their scores are improving!

Since implementing the new system, **my teaching has changed**. I'm more focused on specific goals—using the rubric has really focused not only my learning but also the conversations I have with my evaluator on what my next steps should be to improve.

To enhance **my time spent on evaluation activities**, I am going to collaborate on this work next year. One of my colleagues who is also going to be on focused evaluation and I decided to set the same goal so that we can work together as a team a little more closely than we do at present.

The main advice to educators in the state of Washington is to talk and listen to each other. And if I could ask every teacher and principal in the country to focus on one thing, I would suggest they focus on student engagement and learning. When you know your students and can meet them at their level, and you can differentiate instruction for them, they will all be engaged in the learning. The higher the engagement, the more learning is going to take place.