# One Lens for Understanding Effective Teaching: Observation of Teacher Practice

Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS) uses the Research-based Inclusive System of Evaluation (RISE) to observe teacher practice in the classroom as one lens to understand teacher effectiveness.

In 2009, leaders from PPS and Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers (PFT) and over 100 teachers and administrators joined together to create RISE. Defining effective teaching across four domains and 23 components of practice, RISE is a differentiated system of teacher evaluation. Each year, teachers participate in one of two versions of the RISE process: the Formal Process or the Independent Growth Year, which allows tenured teachers to focus on their professional growth independently for up to two consecutive school years.

Use of the RISE framework during cycles of observation fosters teacher learning and promotes continuous growth of professional practice. As a growth-oriented model, RISE is differentiated to support novice and experienced teachers across four performance levels within the RISE rubric: unsatisfactory, basic, proficient, and distinguished.

### Research-Based Connections to the Classroom

The RISE observation rubric is based upon Charlotte Danielson’s *Framework for Teaching.* The framework represents all aspects of a teacher’s work and is derived from proven theoretical and empirical research about teaching. The four domains of the framework are briefly described below*.*

### Domain 1: Planning and Preparation

The components in Domain 1 address how a teacher plans and prepares for lessons by identifying what is important for students to learn and designing instruction that enables students to achieve those learning goals. Domain 1 work designs the plans implemented in Domain 3.

### Domain 2: The Classroom Environment

The components in Domain 2 address the conditions that a teacher creates in order for learning to take place. These conditions are necessary for the components of Domain 3 to be effectively put in place.

### Domain 3: Teaching and Learning

The components in Domain 3 address how a teacher actually engages students with the content. In this domain, the teacher implements the plans designed in Domain 1.

### Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities

The components in Domain 4 identify professional skills and responsibilities that are not visible in the classroom, but are crucial for successful classroom teaching and for enhancing the overall profession of teaching.

# Why Observation of Teacher Practice is Important

#### The Story of RISE

Teachers were once evaluated in PPS through a single rating of either Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory. The old system rated 99% of teachers as Satisfactory. There was no way to give teachers information to improve their practice, and no way to recognize excellence in practice.

As the Empowering Effective Teachers plan evolved, it was crucial to anchor the work in an equitable, fair and rigorous evaluation system. RISE is a powerful and comprehensive tool to ensure that every teacher receives fair and differentiated support and feedback to better inform their professional growth. RISE also seeks to create a system of teacher evaluation based on the continual improvement of teaching practice and the value that a teacher adds to student growth over time.

RISE was the first of the District’s multiple measures to be designed and implemented District-wide and was initially introduced over a two-year period to provide enough time for thoughtful design and testing. In the 2009–10 school year, 24 schools chose to participate in the pilot of RISE, and in 2010–11, every PPS school implemented RISE.

RISE has been put in place hand-in-hand with PPS educators. The District continues to involve teachers, school leaders, and the PFT in an annual process to improve the system through an Advisory Council each year

Teaching involves a complex set of skills and practices. PPS teachers must know their students, content, and the curriculum thoroughly—and have a broad repertoire of content-specific, culturally responsive strategies and activities to use with students to meet rigorous learning goals. Teachers must be flexible given students’ learning needs and the dynamics of the classroom, and use formative assessment to adapt instruction to maximize learning opportunities for all students. Effective teachers have established rituals and routines that foster a safe learning environment where effort is privileged, allowing students to fully engage in instructional activities, ask questions, and take part in class discussions. Effective teachers continuously work to improve their practice and knowledge of students while acting as a resource for others in their professional learning community.

# How We Use RISE

### Accelerating Student Learning and Growth

The mission of RISE is to ensure PPS students are Promise-Ready by continuously advancing the professional practice of our teachers. RISE aims to identify and assess effective teaching practice in order to accelerate student learning and growth

### Supporting Professional Practice and Growth

The RISE evaluation system does more than evaluate: it fosters teacher learning and promotes ongoing growth of professional practice. As a growth-oriented model, RISE is differentiated to support novice and experienced teachers across four performance levels: unsatisfactory, basic, proficient, and distinguished. Supervision within the system is differentiated based on tenure status, performance level, and the status of the professional as a Career Ladder teacher. Furthermore, teachers whose practice has been identified as unsatisfactory have access to intensive support to help them improve.

### Informing the Summative Rating

In alignment with state legislation Act 82, the District will use RISE results as a measure for observation of teacher practice, comprising 50% of the combined measure used to determine teacher end-of-year ratings.