Annual observations and evaluation ratings

A central aim of teacher evaluations is to help all teachers improve, in part by offering all teachers needed feedback on their performance every year. Having up-to-date evaluation ratings is also essential in using these ratings to inform personnel decisions (e.g., retention, recommendations for leadership positions, additional pay).

Multiple measures

The Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) project found that multiple measures (namely classroom observations, student surveys, and objective measures of student achievement) produce more consistent, stable ratings over the years, as compared to a single measure of effectiveness.ii

Objective measures

Teacher evaluation systems should include objective measures of student learning, as well as other measures. Evidence shows that teachers who increase their students’ learning positively influence those students’ long-term achievements (e.g., higher likelihood of attending college, earning higher salaries), in addition to benefiting their immediate academic outcomes.iii Because a teacher’s effectiveness can vary from year to year, multiple years of data (e.g., two years of value-added data) should be used in determining a teacher’s summative evaluation rating to increase accuracy.iv

Multiple observations with more than one trained observer

Observations serve several purposes, including providing actionable feedback to teachers and informing a summative rating that can be used in staffing decisions. Observation scores are more reliable when teachers are observed multiple times throughout the year by more than one observer.v And evaluation systems are considered stronger – and are associated with better outcomes for students – when the observers have training on the observation rubric.vi

At least three rating categories

Evaluation instruments that differentiate among various levels of teacher performance, rather than those with binary satisfactory/unsatisfactory ratings, further increase the utility and validity of evaluation systems. Traditionally, binary rating systems have offered little meaningful information because virtually all teachers received satisfactory ratings.vii More rating categories allow for more nuanced distinctions among levels of teacher performance.

A link to support and consequences

A primary purpose of teacher evaluations is to identify areas in which teachers are performing well and areas in which they need to improve. However, simply naming these areas is likely insufficient. States and districts should also provide professional development tailored to a teacher’s specific needs.viii Linking evaluation systems to positive consequences, such as additional pay, can support efforts to build a stronger teacher workforce.ix Teachers’ salaries are an effective tool to recruit and retain teachers, and to incentivize or reward certain behaviors.x Additionally, not giving salary increases to ineffective teachers sends an important signal about the significance of teacher effectiveness.
Endnotes


