



## COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

### Background

School districts across the country – including Minneapolis Public Schools – are engaging in efforts to redesign teacher evaluation systems. A key reason is that teachers have not participated in regular, objective and meaningful two-way dialogue about their practice and have had little guidance about what was expected of them in the classrooms.

In the Minneapolis Public Schools, we have one clear and unambiguous priority: great teaching in great schools. Teachers are critical to our success with kids and great teaching is the foundation for achieving our vision of “every child college and career ready.”

To more effectively support teachers, MPS staff are working collaboratively with principals and teachers to design and implement a comprehensive, districtwide, professional system for teacher evaluation (TE). This TE system will help us celebrate successes, share what works, find ways to improve where needed and strengthen our entire teaching and learning framework.

We all want to do this well, and we are learning together as we go. It is critical that all everyone understand the teacher evaluation system, value it and can successfully implement it. It will take time to adequately train coaches and observers, involve teachers in implementation, communicate effectively and learn from our mistakes.

### Outcomes

An effective teacher evaluation system will:

- Create a professional culture of respect and trust
- Continuously improve teaching and learning to increase student achievement
- Engage teachers in reflective practice to improve student learning
- Focus and align all district and school work on the needs of students
- Increase instructional leadership across the district
- Enhance and institutionalize support structures for educators

Working collaboratively, teachers, principals and district administration are committed to ensuring the teacher evaluation system is a professional, sustainable and supportive process.

## Formal Observation Process

All formal observations use a common rubric – the Standards of Effective Instruction (SOEI) - which have four domains:

- Planning and Preparation
- Classroom Environment
- Classroom Instruction
- Professional Responsibilities

The SOEI were designed for the primary purpose of ensuring teaching quality and student achievement. They were developed to align with the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, Educational Testing Services (PRAXIS), the National and Minnesota Interstate New Assessment and Support Consortium Standards, and the Minnesota State Standards of Effective Practice for Teachers.

Each observation has three stages:

- Planning / Pre-conference
- Observation
- Reflection / Post-conference

More than 260 principals, coaches and instructional leaders have been trained as certified observers through a rigorous four-day training process. These observers work directly with teachers throughout their observation cycle and provide valuable, objective feedback on teachers' implementation of the four SOEI domains.

## Teacher Engagement

Having teachers actively involved in developing and supporting the TE system is critical to its success. Some ways teachers are currently involved:

- *Teacher Evaluation Advisory Group (TEAG):* A group of 30 teachers meets monthly to: provide regular feedback on the TE system; inform district leadership on what's working or not working; help develop teacher training; and create multiple communication avenues with other teachers. Members of this group applied and were selected jointly by the district and MFT.
- *Teacher Evaluation Round Tables:* Open discussions held four to six times per year in various locations around the district where teachers can ask questions, voice concerns, provide feedback and dialogue with other teachers about teacher evaluation.
- *Focus groups:* Periodic focus groups engage teachers in providing their viewpoints about specific aspects of the teacher evaluation system.
- *Volunteers:* During the last half of 2011-12, teachers at all sites will be able to volunteer for a formal observation. These teachers will be able to access additional SOEI training, engage further in reflective discussion about their teaching practice and help shape further refinements to the TE system.
- *Surveys:* Once a teacher completes a formal observation, he or she is able to respond to an anonymous on-line survey seeking observation process feedback.
- *TE Think Tank:* A select group of teachers join district administrators, coaches and principals in monthly meetings to make major decisions about TE development and implementation.

## What are teachers saying?

As of December 2011, 182 teachers had responded to an anonymous survey after their formal observation. Some highlights:

- 84% understood the formal observation process before participating
- 88% felt their formal observation was objective (based on evidence, not subjective)
- 90% plan to use information from the formal observation to improve their practice

## Timeline

- In 2010-11, several schools piloted the formal observation process and Standards of Effective Instruction (SOEI) rubric.
- In 2011-12, the focus is on formal observations, which are being phased in districtwide. Turnaround schools and probationary teachers are all receiving three formal observations throughout the year, while all other schools will conduct formal observations for tenured teachers who volunteer in the second half of the year. This will ensure that all schools are involved in the development of the teacher evaluation system in 2011-12 and able to provide input on the process.
- Decisions about 2012-13 and beyond are still being refined – but the ultimate goal is to have a comprehensive teacher evaluation system in place throughout the district by 2014-15.

## Learn more

- Visit [http://www.mpls.k12.mn.us/mps\\_teacher\\_evaluation\\_process.html](http://www.mpls.k12.mn.us/mps_teacher_evaluation_process.html)
- Contact Maggie Sullivan, director of strategic planning, at [Maggie.sullivan@mpls.k12.mn.us](mailto:Maggie.sullivan@mpls.k12.mn.us) or 612.668.0179.