McREL’s Research-based Teacher Evaluation System: The CUES Framework

Based on Classroom Instruction that Works: Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement (2nd Ed.)

This working paper was prepared to inform the field of McREL’s research-based teacher evaluation system. This system is modeled from the research findings by Andrea Beasley, Ph.D. and Helen Apthorp, Ph.D. and translated into practice through the work of Ceri Dean, Ph.D., B.J. Stone, Ed.D., Elizabeth Hubble, & Howard Pitler, Ed.D., and published in Classroom Instruction that Works: Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement (2nd Ed.) by ASCD. This paper highlights McREL’s methodology to teacher evaluation design and development.

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MCREL’S RESEARCH-BASED TEACHER EVALUATION SYSTEM: THE CUES FRAMEWORK

BASED ON CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION THAT WORKS: RESEARCH-BASED STRATEGIES FOR INCREASING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT (2ND ED.)

McREL International (McREL) is a 501(c)(3) private non-profit organization whose purpose is to improve education through applied research and development. McREL has more than 40 years of experience conducting research and evaluation, developing resources and tools, and providing technical assistance, professional development, and consultation in system improvement, the development of standards-based programs, student assessment, evaluation and policy studies, strategic planning, out-of-school-time learning, early childhood education, and leadership development. Through our substantial research and evaluation work, including evaluations of locally and federally funded projects, McREL has developed considerable expertise regarding research methodologies and concomitant data collection methods as well as rigorous and practical analytic techniques.
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INTRODUCTION

Ensuring great teaching through a system of evaluation and accountability is one of four research-based practices for guaranteeing high-quality instruction in every classroom (Goodwin, 2011). However, well designed and supportive systems for evaluating the quality of teachers have remained elusive. The Widget Effect (Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, & Keeling, 2009) found that past and current systems to evaluate teachers fail to capture the variations in performance and, subsequently, have done very little to inform decisions to resolve those disparities.

Improving teaching quality and reducing the variability within that quality is a primary responsibility of school district leaders, building level leaders, and teachers (McKinsey & Co., 2010). In recent years, research has confirmed what educators have long suspected to be true: Teacher quality is one of the strongest predictors of student success. Ambiguously defined and loosely applied teacher practices contribute to differences in students’ opportunity to learn and, ultimately, their level of success. Studies that examine the relationship between teacher and student achievement show that teacher practices account for almost twice the variance in student achievement as compared to other school-wide practices (Marzano, 2000), and that various aspects of teacher quality, such as evoking higher-order thinking skills, hands-on learning, professional development on diversity, and college major are significantly related to student achievement (Wenglinsky, 2002). Specifically, Oakes (2003) and Wenglinsky (2004) cite the critical nature of teachers’ work in overcoming achievement gaps. And as McCaffrey, et al. (2003) noted in their monograph evaluating value-added models for teacher accountability, “the consistency of findings across samples from different locations and different statistical models suggests ...that teacher effects do persist across years” (p. 15).

To counteract the variability in teacher performance on student achievement, high-performing school districts put data systems and processes in place to ensure consistently high-quality learning experiences for all students (Goodwin, 2011). Adopting and adhering to a coherent instructional delivery model that is aligned to an evaluation system provides a way to systematically identify variations in teacher knowledge, skills, and dispositions and quickly respond to and take corrective action to improve instructional quality.

Essential to a highly effective human capital strategy is a system that defines, promotes, and supports the knowledge and skills required of teachers to improve teaching and learning. Adoption of a broad common framework for classroom instructional design and planning does not stifle teacher creativity or innovation, but rather guarantees the consistent use of research-based strategies in each classroom across a school system (Marzano & Waters, 2009).

PURPOSES OF TEACHER EVALUATION

Recent educator effectiveness initiatives provide states and local school districts the unique opportunity to redefine and strengthen their teacher evaluation system. Teaching is a complex task requiring a dynamic combination of knowledge, skills and dispositions to realize a number of outcomes, most importantly the educational needs of students. Positive outcomes are obtained when systems of evaluation have trustworthy information about effective teaching.

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We developed McREL’s Teacher Evaluation System: CUES (Content, Understanding, Environment, Support) Framework, to respond to the inadequacy of previous and current evaluation systems to address the educational improvement priorities at the national, state, and local levels, and to better support teacher performance through a research-based approach to instruction, evaluation and professional growth.

While this may not constitute an exhaustive list, we have defined six primary purposes of our evaluation system that provide a basis by which school systems need to focus attention. These priorities relate to human capital development and instructional improvement initiatives:

1. **Strengthen the knowledge, skills, and practices of teachers to improve student learning.** The rubrics and supporting research that constitute the CUES Framework is designed to articulate what teachers should know and be able to do to improve student achievement. Clearly articulated performance expectations make the challenge of continuous improvement for individuals and school systems manageable and meaningful.

2. **Increase the quality of instruction and reduce the variability within that quality among teachers and schools.** The CUES rubrics provide teachers with the guidance necessary to deliver great instruction reliably and consistently to all students. Monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the nine categories of instruction expressed in the CUES Framework assists in the deployment of effective instruction from every teacher.

3. **Distinguish the differences in performance among teachers in order to address ineffective performance and recognize effective performance.** The CUES rubrics scaffold teacher knowledge and skills across a continuum of categorical ratings that differentiate novice teacher performance from distinguished teacher performance. To effectively measure performance, the instruments must define discrete teaching competencies and describe different levels of performance (Darling-Hammond, 2012; Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, & Keeling, 2009)

4. **Systematically provide meaningful and constructive feedback to improve performance.** Helping teachers reflect on their practice requires a model that necessitates consistent and constructive feedback. Individual teachers require feedback to be aware of weaknesses in their practices and leverage their strengths. While the evaluator can effectively provide feedback to teachers on their performance in many ways, scheduled meetings between the evaluator and teacher are expected in this evaluation system process to address performance.

5. **Generate formative and summative evaluation results to inform and guide professional development.** The data collected and reported as part of the evaluation process of evaluation should be supported by related professional growth and developmental resources. Likewise, the implementation of this work must be supported by the organizational conditions and expectations of continuous learning. Evaluation results should help inform the opportunities for personal (teacher) and organizational (school and district) improvement.

6. **Align with and support district and state policy related to teacher status and continued service.** This evaluation system can be used as one way to address inadequate performance. The CUES system is intended to support well defined policies and procedures directly related to state and local performance expectations.
McREL’s Teacher Evaluation System: CUES Framework is built on decades of research that revealed nine high-yield instructional strategies that have statistically significant effects on student learning (Beasley & Apthorp, 2010). These strategies (figure 1), originally published in 2001 in Classroom Instruction That Works, were updated in the second edition of the book (Dean, Stone, Hubble & Pitler, 2012) using the most current and rigorous research available.

McREL’s nine strategies, when used effectively and in the appropriate context, result in a measurable difference in student achievement. Encompassing problem solving, research, analysis, interpretation, reasoning, and precision and accuracy, the strategies help develop the knowledge and skills students need to be college- and career-ready and economically competitive in the 21st century (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, n.d.).

Each of these strategies can be used by any teacher at any time, using both traditional teaching methods and tools and leveraging today’s technology. These high-yield strategies are captured in the formative evaluation rubrics that constitute the core of McREL’s Teacher Evaluation System: CUES Framework.

The CUES Teacher Evaluation System leverages McREL’s research-based instructional strategies and aligns with the nationally recognized performance standards developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO, 2011) through the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC, 2011).

Improving the quality of instruction and meeting current teaching and learning demands necessitates an intentional approach to planning and the execution of proven teacher practices. To simplify, McREL has organized the nine instructional categories into an Instructional Planning Framework (figure 2) that including three components:

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1. Creating the environment for learning is the backdrop for every lesson. Ensuring the conditions are optimal for every student every day is essential as teachers seek to motivate students and emphasize learning. This component helps students know what is expected of them, provides opportunities for ongoing feedback on their progress, and assures that students are prepared for and capable of learning challenging content and skills.

2. Helping students develop understanding acknowledges that students come with prior knowledge and must integrate new learning with what they already know. This component helps teachers leverage students’ prior knowledge as a scaffold to new learning.

3. Helping students extend and apply knowledge emphasizes the importance of helping students expand their knowledge and skills to situations and experiences in the real world. Figure 2 shows how the strategies are organized and how the components work together.

CUES: A MODEL TEACHER EVALUATION SYSTEM

McREL’s nine categories of instructional strategies and our Instructional Planning Framework are the foundation of McREL’s Teacher Evaluation System: CUES Framework. Our research-based teacher evaluation rubrics emphasize that excellent teaching involves attending to; the content students are to learn; students’ understanding and application of the content; the environment for learning; the teacher’s role in supporting, advocating, or enacting district and school policies, procedures, and practices that support quality instruction and student learning (Dean, et.al, 2012).

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McREL applied a clearly defined and intentional theory of action in the development of the CUES evaluation system, and the result is a simple-to-follow model (figure 3). We begin with the research on effective planning and instruction and organized the findings into four (4) framework components; **Content; Understanding; Environment; and Support**. Next, the method to conduct evaluations is guided by a step-by-step annual process involving actions and activities that include; self-assessment, collaborative conferencing, goal setting, data collection, and constructive feedback. Adhering to the process allows for the consistent and fair practice of evaluation across a school district.

**FIGURE 3: CUES TEACHER EVALUATION MODEL**

It is important to note that the process for conducting evaluation is intended to support local evaluation practices and policies that govern the evaluation of teachers rather than supplant them. The last part of the model is the intended outcomes. The outcomes assume fidelity of implementation of the Instructional Planning Framework, McREL’s categories of instruction and the CUE Framework Teacher Evaluation System. Taken together, the outcomes would produce a common vocabulary and coherent approach to planning and instructional delivery, increased instructional quality while reducing variability throughout, and produce data for determining professional growth at the teacher, school and district level.

**THE CUES FRAMEWORK COMPONENTS**

Each of the four instructional framework components is supported by a number of elements that broadly define what teachers should know and be able to do. These elements go deeper into each of the framework components and begin to organize planning and instruction in a way that is manageable, identifiable, and measureable.

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FRAMEWORK COMPONENT 1: CONTENT

Content relates to the goals for instruction and includes articulation of what students are expected to know, understand, and be able to do, as well as expectations for performance (performance standards). It is the district’s role to define the essential knowledge and skills and the depth of knowledge or level of skill development that students are expected to acquire in each content area. Teachers are responsible for using the tools (e.g., curriculum frameworks, vocabulary lists, common planning templates, and common units) that districts develop to guide instructional planning so that students have the opportunities they need to acquire the essential knowledge and skills identified by the district’s approved curriculum.

Element a – Teachers align their instruction with the adopted curriculum and performance standards.

Teachers plan instruction to address the essential knowledge and skills, including content-area vocabulary, identified for their subject or grade level. Teachers know the links and vertical alignment of the grade or subject they teach. Teachers communicate performance standards to students and plan learning experiences that assist students in meeting those standards.

Element b – Teachers develop and apply strategies to make the curriculum rigorous and relevant for all students.

Teachers relate the content they teach to other disciplines and to real-world contexts. Teachers provide a balanced curriculum that helps students develop conceptual understanding as well as procedural fluency.

Element c – Teachers plan instruction appropriate for their students.

Teachers use curriculum frameworks, a variety of data sources, and agreed-upon planning templates to guide and organize short- and long-range instructional planning. Teachers also incorporate their knowledge of how students learn; the appropriate levels of intellectual, physical, social, and emotional development of their students; and the influences that affect individual student learning (development, culture, language proficiency, etc.) in instructional planning. They actively select materials and develop lessons that counteract stereotypes and incorporate the histories and contributions of all cultures.

Element d – Teachers know the content appropriate to their teaching specialty.

Teachers bring a richness and depth of understanding to their classrooms by knowing their subjects beyond the content they are expected to teach and directing the natural curiosity of their students into an interest in learning. Elementary teachers have broad knowledge across disciplines. Middle school and high school teachers demonstrate depth in one or more specific content areas or disciplines.

FRAMEWORK COMPONENT 2: UNDERSTANDING

Understanding relates to how students will acquire, integrate, and apply the articulated essential knowledge and skills and develop long-lasting understanding of content. It also explicitly identifies the criteria for demonstrating knowledge, understanding, and skills. Teachers are responsible for using an agreed-upon set of research-based instructional strategies, tiered interventions, a variety of formative and summative assessments (some of
which are common to courses and grade levels), and a variety of technologies to enhance instruction.

**Element a – Teachers create the environment for learning by setting objectives and providing feedback.**

Teachers know and use instructional strategies (setting objectives & providing feedback) that motivate and focus student learning, provide feedback to students on their progress with learning, encourage students to actively engage in and “own” their learning, and provide opportunities for students to share and discuss their ideas, develop collaboration skills, and learn how to reflect on and monitor their learning.

**Element b – Teachers create the environment for learning by reinforcing effort and providing recognition.**

Teachers know and use instructional strategies (reinforcing effort & providing recognition) that exemplify the belief that all students can learn and help make that belief a reality. Reinforcing effort is a process that involves explicitly teaching students about the relationship between effort and achievement, and acknowledges student effort when they work hard to achieve.

**Element c – Teachers create the environment for learning by using cooperative learning.**

Teachers know and use the instructional strategies (cooperative learning) that provide students opportunities to interact in ways that enhance and deepen learning. Cooperative learning, when well-designed and executed, enables social interaction with others. Such strategies foster an environment in which students can reflect upon their newly acquired knowledge, process what they are learning, and actively communicate in order to develop a common understanding about various topics.

**Element d – Teachers help student understand new knowledge by using cues, questions, and advance organizers.**

Teachers know and use the instructional strategies (cues, questions, and advance organizers) to help students access their prior knowledge and put that knowledge to use learning new information. Effective use of this strategy includes focusing on what is important, using explicit cues, asking inferential questions, and asking analytic questions.

**Element e – Teachers help students understand new knowledge by using nonlinguistic representation.**

Teachers know and use the instructional strategies (nonlinguistic representation) to help students represent knowledge as imagery. These strategies are powerful as they tap into students’ natural tendency for visual image processing, which help them construct meaning of relevant content and skills and have a better capacity for recall.

**Element f – Teachers help students understand new knowledge by using summarizing and note taking strategies.**

Teachers know and use the instructional strategies (summarizing and note taking) to help students distill information down to its most salient points to aid in understanding, memorizing, and learning the relevant material. Note taking refers to the process of capturing key ideas through writing, drawing, or audio recording for later use. Summarizing and note taking help students deepen their understanding of information because these strategies involve higher-order thinking skills.

**Element g – Teachers help students understand new knowledge by assigning homework and providing practice.**

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Teachers know and use the instructional strategies (assigning homework and providing practice) as opportunities for students to learn or review content and skills outside of the regular school day. Effective use of homework is an opportunity to connect background knowledge to an upcoming unit by providing advance organizers such as engaging students in making observations, watching videos, initiating conversations, and completing reading assignments. Practice allows for repeating specific skills or reviewing small amounts of information to increase recall, speed, and accuracy of skills and knowledge.

**Element h – Teachers help students extend and apply knowledge by using strategies that involve identifying similarities and differences.**

Teachers know and use the instructional strategies (identifying similarities and differences) to help students learn to process material by comparing information, sorting concepts into categories, and making connections to existing knowledge. Using these strategies helps students make sense of the world.

**Element i – Teachers help students extend and apply knowledge by using strategies that involve generating and testing hypotheses.**

Teachers know and use the instructional strategies (generating and testing hypotheses) to help students apply knowledge by using two thinking processes that can be used alone or in tandem with each other. One of these processes is deduction, which involves using general rules to make a prediction about a future event or action. The second process involves inductive reasoning by making inferences that are based on knowledge that students already have or information that is presented to them.

**Element j – Teachers integrate and use technology in their instruction.**

Teachers know when and how to use technology to maximize student learning. Teachers help students use technology to learn content, think critically, solve problems, discern reliability, use information, communicate, innovate, and collaborate.

**Element k – Teachers use a variety of methods to assess what each student has learned.**

Teachers know when and how to use multiple indicators of student performance, including formative and summative assessments, to evaluate student progress and growth. Effective use of assessment will inform teacher planning in order to meet the needs of all students.

**Element l – Teachers adapt their teaching to meet the needs of all students.**

Teachers know when and how to differentiate instruction and use tiered interventions, inclusion, and other models of effective practice to meet individual student needs. Teachers collaborate with a range of support specialists to help plan, organize, and execute educational services to special populations of students.

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### FRAMEWORK COMPONENT 3: ENVIRONMENT

Environment relates to practices that maintain a classroom culture that supports all students in learning a rigorous and relevant curriculum. At the teacher level, these practices relate to developing positive relationships between teachers and students, creating a psychologically safe classroom environment, and helping students develop productive habits of mind.

**Element a – Teachers provide an environment in which each child has a positive, nurturing relationship with caring adults.**
Teachers treat students as individuals and appreciate the differences and value the contributions of each student in the learning environment. Teachers maintain high expectations, including graduation from high school, for students of all backgrounds. Teachers are perceptive listeners and are able to communicate with students in a variety of ways even when language is a barrier. Teachers help students’ articulate thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively.

**Element b – Teachers foster engaging learning environments.**

Teachers create an environment that is orderly, inviting, respectful, supportive, inclusive, and flexible. Teachers teach the importance of cooperation and collaboration. They use cooperative learning to strengthen social ties, improve communication and collaborative skills, interact with people from different cultures and backgrounds, and develop leadership qualities.

**Element c – Teachers promote positive student attitudes about learning and productive habits of mind.**

Teachers use a variety of strategies that foster positive perceptions about the classroom and learning. They model what it means to be a lifelong learner and provide students with a rationale and strategies for lifelong learning. Teachers use their depth of knowledge of the subjects they teach to direct students’ natural curiosity into an interest in learning. Teachers encourage students to develop productive habits of mind by making critical thinking, creative thinking, and self-regulated thinking visible and valued in the classroom.

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**FRAMEWORK COMPONENT 4: SUPPORT**

Support relates to policies, procedures, and practices that are necessary to support high-quality teaching and learning for all students. Teachers contribute to high-quality teaching and student learning by following district policies; implementing procedures and practices at the school and classroom levels; providing leadership that supports these policies, procedures, and practices when appropriate; and challenging them when they are not accomplishing the goal of supporting student learning.

**Element a – Teachers work collaboratively with families and significant adults in the lives of their students.**

Teachers communicate with parents/guardians and help them understand how they can encourage and support students’ learning. They promote collaboration between the school and the home and community in order to foster trust and understanding and build partnerships with all segments of the school community. Teachers seek solutions to overcome cultural and economic obstacles that may stand in the way of effective family and community involvement in the education of their students.

**Element b – Teachers work collaboratively with school personnel to create a purposeful community.**

Teachers participate in and provide input into the selection of professional development that meets the needs of students and their own professional growth. Teachers promote professional growth for all educators and collaborate with their colleagues to improve the profession. They participate in the hiring process (directly or indirectly) and collaborate with their colleagues to mentor and support teachers to improve the effectiveness of their departments or grade levels.

**Element c – Teachers participate in the implementation of initiatives to improve the**
Teachers analyze and use local, state, and national data to develop goals and strategies in the school improvement plan that enhance student learning and teacher working conditions. Teachers advocate for positive change in policies and practices affecting student learning.

**Element d – Teachers take on leadership roles at various levels in the education system.**

Teachers advocate for students, the school, and the profession at the school, district, state, and/or national level. They work collaboratively with colleagues to enact system change in support of learners. Teachers work collaboratively to advance professional practice, contribute to the establishment of positive working conditions in their schools, and demonstrate high ethical standards. They work with colleagues to build a shared vision and supportive culture and share responsibility and accountability for student learning.

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**THE CUES RUBRICS**

Teaching is a complex task requiring a dynamic combination of knowledge, skills and dispositions to realize a number of outcomes, most importantly the educational needs of students. Research-based systems of evaluation provide the necessary guidance to focus teacher practice specifically on the knowledge and skills that demonstrate positive effects on student performance. Positive outcomes are obtained when systems of evaluation have trustworthy information about effective teaching. They must incorporate explicit performance criteria (Toch & Rothman, 2008) and capture the differences in teacher performance (Darling-Hammond, 2012; Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, & Keeling, 2009) in order to guide continuous learning and skill development. To accurately measure performance and guide improvement, analytic rubrics have been developed from our research finding on effective instruction (figure 4). Analytic rubrics offer focused attention and specific feedback to the individual performance tasks (Nitko, 2001) associated with improving instructional quality. The rubrics are designed in such a manner that teacher practices scaffold down and across a rating scale. This scaffolding design serves to differentiate performance at the various levels and provide specific targets on which to formulate meaningful and measurable improvement goals.

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Assuming the primary purpose of evaluation is to support continuous learning and improvement; we believe the rubric design should reflect that purpose. Our rubrics begin with the framework component followed by a set of elements that support the framework component. Teacher practices, taken from the research on effective instruction, make up the contents of the rubrics. The practices are organized down and across a continuum of ratings by describing teacher practice beginning at a “Developing” level and continuing through a “Distinguished” level. The rubrics establish clear links among framework components, elements, and practices and connect the important criteria on which teachers will be assessed, evaluation scores are derived, and performance plans are generated.

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FAIR, RELIABLE AND MEANINGFUL RATING SCALE
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Rather than a deficit approach to rating teacher performance by attempting to describe gaps in knowledge and skills of teacher practice captured in a rating category labeled unsatisfactory or ineffective, our rubrics are explicit about what teachers should know and be able to do. The CUES rubrics are aligned and measure behaviors found in each of the framework component elements. The practices are aligned to five ordinal performance levels. From lowest to highest performance level, these categories are: Not Demonstrated, Developing, Proficient, Accomplished and Distinguished. Our rating scale (table 1) exemplifies a growth approach to evaluation.

**TABLE 1: PERFORMANCE RATING SCALE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Rating</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developing</td>
<td>The teacher demonstrated adequate growth toward achieving proficiency on the standard(s) or element(s).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td>The Teacher demonstrated basic competence on the standard(s) and element(s).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accomplished</td>
<td>The teacher exceeded basic competence consistently the standard(s) and element(s).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distinguished</td>
<td>The Teacher consistently and significantly exceeded basic competence on the standard(s) and element(s).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Demonstrated</td>
<td>The teacher did not demonstrate competence on nor demonstrate adequate growth toward achieving a minimum rating of developing on the standard(s) and element(s). Note: if a teacher falls in this rating, a comment from the evaluator is required.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How rating results are used should be predicated on policy established at the local and state level. McREL’s performance ratings are intended to complement rather than supersede those policies. Our rating scale is intended to provide the latitude necessary to inspire novice teachers while creating urgency for improving performance of struggling experienced teachers. For example, a rating of “Developing” describes beginning level performance. For a novice or beginning teacher such a rating would indicate that their performance for an evaluation cycle is on a trajectory toward “Proficient” or basic competence of the specific performance criteria described by the element within a standard. However, if over a period of time, say consecutive years, performance does not improve from “Developing” to “Proficient” then the policies governing teacher evaluation would

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determine courses of action related to teacher status. Our rating scale is designed to support teacher growth while holding them accountable for their performance.

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**SCORING METHOD**

Consistent with analytic rubric development and the scaffolding of practices within each rubric, scoring is performed using a cumulative and additive approach (figure 5). Whether using the rubrics as a self-reflection tool or performance data collection tool, the method for completing the rubric and interpreting the results are identical. To complete a rubric begin with the “Developing” column reading down the column marking the descriptors (performance criteria) that “fit” the observed performance (teacher knowledge, skill and disposition). Continue this process for the succeeding columns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not Demonstrated (Comment Required)</th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Accomplished</th>
<th>Distinguished</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimum requirement not met.</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td><img src="checkbld/checkbld/checkbld/checkbld" alt="Designs learning experiences that help students develop conceptual understanding." /></td>
<td><img src="checkbld/checkbld/checkbld/checkbld" alt="Assists students in understanding the personal relevance of the content." /></td>
<td><img src="checkbld/checkbld/checkbld/checkbld" alt="Plans lessons that include connections to other disciplines." /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not looked for</td>
<td><img src="checkbld/checkbld/checkbld/checkbld" alt="Designs learning experiences that help students develop procedural fluency." /></td>
<td><img src="checkbld/checkbld/checkbld/checkbld" alt="Plans lessons that include content in real-world contexts." /></td>
<td><img src="checkbld/checkbld/checkbld/checkbld" alt="" /></td>
<td><img src="checkbld/checkbld/checkbld/checkbld" alt="" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FIGURE 5: RUBRIC SCORING**

Teacher performance ratings are predicated on all the descriptors being checked in a particular rating and all descriptors checked in the previous ratings. Each performance rating level holds key knowledge and skills expressed by the practice(s) in a rating category. Each rating category builds on the knowledge and skills from the previous rating categories thus providing a pathway for performance improvement.

Consider the example in figure 5. The teacher received check in all the practices in “Developing” and the first practice in “Proficient” along with the practice in the “Accomplished” column. Benchmarked against the performance criteria of this rubric and applying the cumulative and additive scoring method this teacher’s performance would be considered “Developing”. By all account, this teacher is doing quite well. However, they are missing a key set of practices that will improve student performance by connecting their lessons to real world experiences (practice 2 in the developing column). This missing check provides a targeted opportunity for this teacher to improve their planning and instruction. Upon consistent application of this practice this teacher would then be considered “Accomplished” for this particular element.

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As stated earlier, our theory of action in rubric development doesn’t start with a deficit measure or category attempting to describe ineffective or unsatisfactory practice. Instead we use the “Not Demonstrated” category to provide direct and succinct feedback when the minimum requirements are not met as described by the “Developing” column. In the event that the “Not Demonstrated” column requires use, the evaluator is expected to provide a brief descriptive narrative on specifically what the teacher needs to know and be able to do in order to move, at a minimum, their performance to the “Developing” level. Our scoring method enables direct and specific feedback and guidance to improve performance.

**THE EVALUATION PROCESS**

Teacher evaluation is administered through an annual cycle (figure 6) that is supported by short-cycle processes of data collection (formal and informal in-class observations) and formative feedback. Combined with short-cycle data collection are expectations of gathering multiple sources of data in the form of artifacts and evidence to substantiate performance ratings and evoke professional conversations related to improving instructional quality. The procedures and protocols for each step in the annual process empower teachers to take an active role in their evaluation.

Having a clearly defined process reduces the ambiguity about the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder associated with the evaluation of teachers. This process offers a fair delivery of a system that integrates actions and activities designed to facilitate self-reflection, goal setting, data collection, and constructive feedback. This model complements many district and state policies governing teacher evaluation.

While the primary purpose of this evaluation system is to provoke professional growth and improve the quality of teaching and learning for all students, the process will result in annual performance ratings for every teacher. These ratings will produce meaningful data, individual and aggregated, that can be used by leadership teams for making import resource allocation and policy decisions. The procedures and protocols for completing each step of this model should be determined on a local level, provided they ensure that evaluation data is systematically collected, associated feedback and improvement opportunities are regularly provided, and that teachers receive a formal evaluation and performance status designation by the end of each academic year.

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CONCLUSION

Regardless of the circumstance, effective teaching contributes to student learning. It has been established that differences in teacher performance provide the best explanation in the variability of student performance once student background factors are controlled for.

Investing on our teachers by deploying fair, reliable and rigorous evaluation systems provide the opportunity to change the odds in favor of all students. By utilizing a clearly articulated planning and instructional framework and guided by evaluation instruments that articulate and differentiate performance, teachers and their supervisors will be able to make continual improvements in instructional quality. McREL urges school systems to consider the following as they move to implement systems to support and evaluate teachers.

1. The feedback teachers receive on their performance evaluation be coordinated with district-implemented professional development that is continuous, linked to the approved curriculum, and allows for adequate time and resources to include coaching, modeling, peer or multiple observers, and mentoring.
2. Non-negotiable artifacts and evidence supporting teacher performance be critically examined to ensure quality and adherence to their intended purposes.
3. The models of professional practice adopted by the school system align with best-practice research for improving student achievement and are communicated via the evaluation instruments.
4. The policies that govern the evaluation of teachers are aligned with the intended purposes, processes and procedures for conducting teacher evaluation.

Teacher evaluation instruments are a first step in engaging teachers and their supervisors in crucial conversation about improving teaching and increasing learning and the ongoing development of the knowledge, skills and dispositions required to successfully fulfill the requirements of a complex and dynamic profession. If adhered to and frequently monitored, evaluation can support many essential systems that are associated with a quality human capital management strategy.
REFERENCES


Based on Classroom Instruction that Works: Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement (2nd Ed.)

