

Promising Practices and Implementation Tools

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- 3. Lever Addressed:** Supervision and Evaluation
- 4. Title of Promising Practice:** Implementation of the New Educator Evaluation System
- 5. District(s) Where Implemented:** Fitchburg Public Schools
- 6. Applicable Grade Levels:** All PreK-12
- 7. How This Practice Reflects District's Mission & Core Values:** The successful implementation of the educator evaluation system is based on the collaborative efforts of teachers, administration, Teacher's Union and School Committee, and as such, mirrors the districts mission for all stakeholders to work together to "insure the effectiveness of learning experiences that are differentiated to meet a variety of student learning styles, needs and interests."
- 8. Goals of This Practice:** 1.) To focus resources and staffing on high leverage initiatives, which will both improve student academic achievement and impact accountability ratings of individual schools and district. 2.) To maintain a comprehensive education program that engages all students at all times and in all ways.
- 9. Description of This Practice and How it Addresses Criteria for This Lever:** Early in the implementation process, a joint committee was formed comprised of 18 Fitchburg Public Schools staff members; half teachers and half administrators, and co-chaired by the Superintendent and Teacher Union President. This leadership model was especially important and relayed the message to teachers that the implementation of this new system uses the same instrument, rubric, timelines etc. to evaluate teachers, principals and the superintendent. Therefore all are embarked on this journey and moving in the

same direction together.

Applying the same strategies related to interest based bargaining used in the district that year, the committee started out by identifying common interests and areas that would be affected by this new evaluation system. The group was pleased to learn that the robust list that followed was mainly student centered, and therefore all decisions moving forward were made by consensus and with this shared focus and commitment in mind. These decisions included:

- Creating an evaluation system adapted from the state model.
- Recommending an electronic instrument to address the scope of implementing the system, especially as it relates to the task of the principals.
- Formulating a sub committee to review electronic instruments/ web based programs, and ultimately choosing Teacher Compass by Pearson. This program also serves as a useful professional development resource, in that teachers and principals can click on a particular instructional strategy and view videos that model that strategy. In addition, this web based program is paperless so that each evaluation write-up becomes a work in progress, during which the teacher and principal can upload their evidence and have an ongoing dialogue about instruction and student engagement, until the principal submits their formative assessment. Face to face meetings can also be scheduled by a teacher or principal on an as requested or as needed basis.
- Changing the name of the group to an on-going Joint Labor Committee whose continued task has been to review progress and address any related issues brought before them. For example, in January teachers and principals were concerned about fitting in the 6 observations initially expected. So as a group, they discussed and agreed to change the number to 4 for this year. Adjustments such as these have resulted in more ownership of the process and proved to the teachers that the system was not being done to them but with them.
- Creating a second sub-committee to research lesson plan templates based upon an Understanding by Design approach and focused on

objectives, standards and assessments. By the end of the school year, this sub-committee will recommend an electronic version and related implementation and training strategies that will also encourage increased teacher collaboration when planning instruction.

Training for teachers and evaluators that underscored the connection between evaluation, standards, and curriculum frameworks, began before the start of the 2012 –2013 school year and will continue indefinitely. Specifically:

- Four modules were completed by September and the remainder completed at the individual school level.
- One on ones and small groups continue to be available to discuss rubrics, as well as time during the additional 29 hrs. of PD added to contract this year, as approved by the principal.
- A Race to the Top team identified at each school, will be trained by MTA using a train the trainer model to continue needed training in the modules for current and new teachers.
- Evaluators have completed five 3 hr. sessions with the Center for Educational Services that focused on inter-rater reliability, which ensures consistency throughout the district regardless of the school (4 elementary, 2 middle and 2 high schools). Additional sessions are planned for May.

Criteria Addressed Within This Practice: Supervision and Evaluation

The district provides frequent, on-going high-quality feedback focused on professional growth to maintain high standards of performance aligned with the Common Core of Professional Knowledge and Skills.

The district promotes a culture of continuous improvement through a combination of formal evaluations and ongoing, informal instructional feedback. Reflection, self-assessment, and self-improvement are designed into the evaluation system for all teachers.

Educators are evaluated in alignment with the Common Core of Professional Knowledge and Skills.

The evaluation instrument of the district provides for comment and feedback to teachers on the full range of roles, responsibilities, and skills of professional teaching including Relations with Parent and Community, Contributing Member of the Staff, Performance of Routine Business and Duties and one's Own Professional Growth.

The district provides evaluators with extensive professional development and support to ensure compatibility and congruence with one another,

proficiency in observing and analyzing instruction, and skill at communicating instructional feedback. Evaluator professional development is provided each year to those new to the evaluator role, and periodic updates are conducted for all personnel.

Evaluations incorporate multiple sources of data and use student results in a reasonable and responsible way.

Evaluation responsibilities of a school are organized to ensure that the personnel caseload for each evaluator is reasonable and effective.

Professional Culture

The superintendent at the district level and the principal at the school level ensure there is an articulated set of core values that drive behavior and decisions as well as an organizational culture that supports open and honest communication, continuous professional improvement, data-based decision-making, and joint responsibility for student learning and achievement.

District and schools are characterized by a climate of shared responsibility for continuous improvement.

District and school culture is characterized by trust and willingness to discuss “undiscussable” issues.

Superintendents and principals are evaluated on their ability to build a workplace culture of non-defensive examination of teaching practice and leadership practice in relation to student results. Superintendents and principals receive professional development to enhance this capacity.

10. How This Practice Was Implemented So It Was More Successful Than Others:

The inclusivity of the process has unified the district in a way that nothing else has done before. It has also been a transparent and collaborative process highlighted by the work of the Joint Labor Committee.

Communication has also been key for successful implementation across the district. Throughout the process, the Superintendent has provided updates to teachers, school committee and parents, strategically highlighting aspects of the new system, and modeling newsletters for principals so that information relayed to all is both clear and consistent.

11. How This Practice Changed The District or School:

The new educator evaluation system has been the most pervasive introduction

of any initiative this superintendent has experienced, in that it permeates every facet of the school district and has changed the culture of Fitchburg Public Schools in a positive way. One indicator is the increased collaboration at all levels throughout the district, highlighted by the work of the Joint Labor Committee, the commitment to work in teams to create SMART goals aligned to school improvement initiatives, and the expanded opportunity to engage in team lesson planning and peer observations.

Another example is the creation of a Student Program Support Administrator position in every school, which has provided the principal and assistant principal the needed time to be in classrooms 2–3 hrs. per day. Besides the obvious show of support and understanding of the release time needed for principals to be in classrooms, positive side effects of their consistent classroom presence have been fewer discipline issues, increased student attendance and administrators getting to know students on a more consistent basis.

There is also built in accountability at all levels that has created positive changes in reflection of practice, student/teacher, principal/teacher and principal/student interactions. Principals must also submit a log to the Superintendent each Friday, indicating which classrooms were visited and how many hours were spent in classrooms overall. This expectation has actually helped principals prioritize the myriad duties and responsibilities that can fill any given week. These factors have made the job of raising the bar much easier for the superintendent, with hopes that they ultimately translate into increased student achievement.

12. Resources (time, money, materials etc.) Required For Successful Implementation:

- Utilized Race To the Top district funding for trainings
- Purchased a web based software program to effectively implement the new system
 - and provide additional resources to teachers and administrators
- Purchased iPads or laptops for all Administrators
- Transformed existing Educational Team Leader position into 8 new Student Program Support Administrator positions
- Negotiated half days of professional development and 29 additional hrs. of professional development

13. Tools You Used To Implement Or Advance This Practice (surveys, needs assessments, technology tools, rubrics, feedback Forms etc.)

See separate attachments:

- 1.) District Newsletter
- 2.) Superintendent's Educator Evaluation Update– Jan. 2013
- 3.) Superintendent's Educator Evaluation Update– Feb. 2013
- 4.) DESE Educator Evaluation e-Newsletter–March 2013
- 5.) Summary of the Evaluation Process for the Fitchburg Public Schools