

Promising Practices and Implementation Tools

1. Names & Positions: David Fleishman–Superintendent of Schools
Joseph Russo– Assistant Superintendent for
Elementary Education
Cynthia Bergan– Assistant Superintendent for
Secondary Education

2. Emails: david_fleishman@newton.k12.ma.us,
cynthia_bergan@newton.k12.ma.us,
joseph_russo@newton.k12.ma.us Phone: 617–559–6100

3. Lever Addressed: Supervision and Evaluation

4. Title of Promising Practice: Roll Out of the New Educator Evaluation System

5. District(s) Where Implemented: Newton Public Schools

6. Applicable Grade Levels: Pre K –12

7. How This Practice Reflects District’s Mission & Core Values:

The new educator evaluation initiative and the district's mission and core values are clearly intertwined. The Newton Public Schools Core Values of Excellence, Innovation, Respect and Responsibility are mirrored in the new evaluation system in that both focus on high standards for students and staff, and instruction that ensures the academic success of all students.

8. Goals of This Practice:

- 1.) Improve student learning
- 2.) Create a collaborative process that includes training of all staff on this new initiative

9. Description of This Practice and How it Addresses Criteria for This Lever:

- The Newton Public School District began work on this initiative in January of 2012 by forming an Evaluation Working Group, comprised of 20 district evaluators and teacher/union leaders, to learn more about the new evaluation mandate and jointly plan what district implementation would look like; a plan that passed both Teacher Union and School Committee approval and paved the way for a district-wide roll out.
- The Evaluation Working Group then met in the summer of 2012 to plan for the professional development they felt would be needed for all staff during the upcoming 2012–2013 school year. This work included tapping the district's

technology resources to create a series of webinars designed to efficiently and effectively train over 1700 teachers and administrators in four key areas of the process:

- 1.) Overview of the New Educator Evaluation System
- 2.) S.M.A.R.T Goals
- 3.) Accompanied Forms
- 4.) Collecting Evidence

In addition, a series of exercises and worksheets were designed to supplement each webinar with tips and "how to's" about writing S.M.A.R.T. goals, what to expect when unannounced observations take place, proper use of forms etc., that both current staff and teachers new to the district are able to use as resources. Based on feedback from staff at all levels, this webinar methodology was very well received.

- The Evaluation Working Group also formulated plans to hire outside consultants, Kim Marshall and John D'Auria to work with the 80 NPS staff responsible for evaluating teachers; this includes principals, assistant principals, coordinators and department chairs. Kim Marshall focused on best practices around unannounced classroom visits, while John D'Auria addressed leadership challenges and the social /emotional issues that would come about with this change in practice; issues that would require more profound learning shifts vs. technical ones. These evaluator trainings took place simultaneously with teacher trainings during PD days in the fall of 2012. It is important to point out that a key element in the success of all teacher and administrative trainings was the communication and collaboration between the teachers, teachers union and administrators. Union representatives were present at all trainings including those for administrators, so that everyone heard the same message at the same time, which went a long way in building on the level of trust amongst all stakeholders.

- To complete these intensive trainings for such a large number of staff and administrator's, the district committed all available faculty and PD time in the fall of 2012 to roll out this important initiative. Given the myriad demands that districts faces for PD at the beginning of any school year, this focus was critical and enabled the district to move forward in the first year of implementation with a solid and consistent knowledge base.

- A survey and other feedback mechanisms elicited positive results in terms of value and where people were headed with instructional practices and enhanced collaboration. However challenges in terms of time remain.
- The Evaluation Working Group has met throughout the current school year to share experiences, assess progress, and plan for summer sessions. These sessions will focus on:
 - Identifying what the district has learned from year one implementation.
 - Identifying successes and areas needing improvement.
 - Evaluating some of the language and practices in the initial agreement to determine what may need to be tweaked or revised so that the process will be smoother moving forward.

As detailed below, this promising practice exemplifies many of the criteria necessary for successful implementation of the supervision and evaluation process as they relate to levers for positive change:

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.

Characteristics:

The district promotes a culture of continuous improvement [see “Workplace Environment” for more on growth-oriented adult culture] 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.

Teachers who have not attained professional status have annual evaluation. Teachers who have attained professional status engage in continuous Professional Growth Cycles that incorporate formal evaluations as required by state law. Each teacher, however, receives frequent substantive interaction with knowledgeable observers every year, regardless of the formal evaluation cycle. Teachers whose performance does not meet standards are placed in intensive support as described below.

The district identifies a variety of strategies for supporting and developing under-performing educators for one year of intensive remediation. Identified personnel in each district have adequate time for in-class observation and coaching of under-performing teachers.

After one year of intensive support, educators who do not meet evaluation criteria may be dismissed. The process for notification of less-than-satisfactory status is spelled out in the evaluation handbook, as is the process for creating

the remediation plan, the steps the teacher needs to take, the role of the teacher in his/her own improvement, the role of peers, as well as the specifications of who will be involved in intensive support, who will document teacher progress, and how the final decision will be made in a fair way.

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.

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.

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.

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

- The inclusivity of the process and the creation of the Evaluation Working Group, which represents teachers, union representation and administrators, has made the initial implementation of the new educator evaluation system more collaborative in nature.
- An important message to all staff that the Superintendent established at the onset of this project was one of patience and tolerance, i.e. be kind to each other and ourselves; look at the best side of this process; and try not to "overdo" during this first year of implementation. This acknowledgement by the district leadership went a long way in relaying that teachers and administrators were thoughtfully and carefully embarking on this new journey together.
- Multiple methods of periodic feedback have gleaned positive results. Most importantly, teachers were appreciative of deeper conversations with administrators about their instructional practices, which for many, was different from past communications. Although a bit overwhelmed by the numbers, principals are also enjoying and learning from the opportunity to engage in richer conversations about instruction, which may not have occurred on a consistent basis in the past.

11. How This Practice Changed The District or School:

- This evaluation initiative has created a culture shift in that teachers and administrators are generally more open to collaboration, learning from peers and sharing best practices that positively effect student achievement. Some examples of this are:
 - Administrators and Department Heads are in the classroom more regularly and teachers are open minded about the increased presence of an evaluator in their classroom. As mentioned above, this has also lead to richer dialogue about instruction between teachers and teachers and evaluators.
 - There is more of a collective understanding of carefully crafted S.M.A.R.T. goals and required forms of evidence, which teachers are also more willing to share. One example of this is at the Middle School, where teacher initiated meetings were planned to share and discuss goals with colleagues.

- All of the aforementioned factors that have contributed to positive change within NPS have enhanced the level of trust established between teachers and administrators, a cornerstone for building positive school culture and certainly a key element in the success of this roll out process. As the district reflects on the successes and challenges experienced during this first year, they plan to shift from a qualitative approach to a more quantitative view of this process, including an examination of the resulting impact between teacher goals and student learning goals.

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

1. Commitment of all PD time, staff meetings, committee meetings and release time.
2. Technology support and creation of 4 training webinars.
3. Budget support for teacher coverage when needed.

13. Tools You Used To Implement Or Advance This Practice:

See separate attachments:

1. Webinar– Module I– Intro to The Newton Public Schools Educator Evaluation System: HYPERLINK "http://vimeo.com/46066025" \t "_blank" <http://vimeo.com/46066025>
2. Webinar work sheets:

Overview of Forms

Evaluation Planning Form

Self-Assessment and Goal Setting Form

3. Teacher survey/feedback form