Promising Practices and Implementation Tools

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3. Lever Addressed: Supervision and Evaluation

4. Title of Promising Practice: Alignment of the New Educator Evaluation System in Whitman-Hanson

5. District(s) Where Implemented: Whitman-Hanson Regional School District

6. Applicable Grade Levels: Pre K -12

7. How This Practice Reflects District's Mission & Core Values:
The new educator evaluation system and the district's mission, vision, core values and strategic plan are inextricably linked, in that all are student centered, focused on instruction and embody high expectations for everyone in the district.

8. Goals of This Practice:
   1.) Improve upon instruction
   2.) Improve upon how the observer understands what is happening in the classroom
   3.) Improve upon the quality of feedback to teachers

9. Description of This Practice and How it Addresses Criteria for This Lever:
The initiative to improve upon the supervision and evaluation process at Whitman-Hanson Regional School District began in 2007, when the Leadership Team agreed that the entire process needed to be looked at and revamped, because what existed was not getting at the heart of good instruction. To that end, a committee made up of union and non-union personnel was formed to revise the traditional system of pre-observation, scheduled observations and post observation meetings, which often seemed contrived. Both evaluators and those being evaluated also felt that this traditional method didn't always reflect accurate instructional practice.

This oversight committee spent a year researching what other districts where doing in this area, while at the same time rethinking district goals to get a clearer handle on effective instruction and how to best support teachers; commending those doing well and supporting those who needed more help. This work resulted in a strategy that was very different from the traditional supervision and evaluation practices and close to the system adopted by DESE 4-5 years later.

The strategy that evolved from this district work included:
- SMART goal setting with everyone at the beginning of the year
- Mid-year goals, offering a point of time for reflection
- End of the year self-evaluation, i.e. how did I do with my set goals?

For teachers with non-professional status and on improvement plans, this process was on an annual basis; those teachers on professional status were on a 2-year cycle. Also, instead of being based on pre-observation and a set observation time, the evaluation was focused on learning walks and walk throughs, sitting down with the evaluator and watching the class being taught. The close relationship and continual involvement of the Whitman-Hanson Education Association, contributed to the adoption and implementation of this new agreement in 2008, with the understanding that it was a way to improve teaching and learning. It wasn't perfect, wasn't a "gotcha" and would need to be reviewed periodically. Several trainings were subsequently offered to teachers and evaluators by a trained in-house expert on how to write meaningful and attainable SMART goals, and by an outside provider on how to conduct effective walk throughs.

In 2012, the district was accepted as an early adopter of the New Educator Evaluation System and union, administration and School Committee worked with the DESE to share what lessons they learned in their 4 year quest to strengthen the Whitman-Hanson supervision and evaluation practices. This collaboration included DESE visits to the district, involvement in webinars, and attendance and presentations at a number of conferences.

Over time and through an on-going commitment to continually improve, teachers and administrators learned how to write better SMART Goals. By the time the district became an early adopter, these goals were richer and more connected within departments, grade levels and buildings. Being early adopters of the new system also served to strengthen these goals and make the district

process even better, so that building goals and teachers' goals fused together more tightly. Two powerful examples of this alignment are at the high school level, where the development of group literacy goals of teachers were the same as the goals of the principal and assistant principal; and at the elementary level, where the goals of all the teachers referenced student writing, which was also the goal of the principal. This consistency and collaboration underscores one of the key tenets of the new evaluation system, which is to all pull together in the same direction to improve student learning.

As detailed below, this promising practice exemplifies many of the **criteria necessary for successful implementation** of the Supervision and Evaluation process relative to school improvement:

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.

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 expectation for classroom visits changed, so that rather than a buildup of anxiety about what day a teacher would be observed, there is more of an open door policy and relaxed atmosphere around frequent walk throughs of building or district evaluators.

The collaborative relationship with the WHEA throughout the entire process was a key factor in the seamless transition to new S&E practices. While there may not be agreement on all issues, there is a continual flow of respective and honest communication between union and administration.

Support and involvement of the School Committee has also been a critical factor throughout the entire initiative to improve supervision and evaluation practices in the district. While all committee members stayed in the loop, the chair has played a particularly key role in that he attended all early adopter meetings and even presented with the Superintendent at MASS, DESE and MASCD conferences.

The goal writing process involves face-to-face time with evaluators to talk about issues teachers most care about in terms of the profession. Teachers are also required to zone in on just two goals that really matter and can be measured and accomplished in a year's time. Mid-year is also a time to reflect on goals and adjust if needed. These factors lend a level of personalization and respect to the current evaluation process that might not have existed before.

Collaboration amongst groups, such as Curriculum Coordinators, grade levels and departments to write common goals is a powerful process that greatly contributes to the success of the new system.

11. How This Practice Changed The District or School:
The process of refining and improving supervision and evaluation practices at W-H has changed the culture and enhanced trust and collaboration amongst teachers and between teachers and administrators. One of the many powerful examples of this is that prior to adoption of the New Teacher Evaluation System the district did not rank teachers in terms of performance, and if the teacher needed to be on a developmental plan it naturally evolved. To adjust to the State requirement to do so, the Union and Administration agreed that since the rubric for exemplary in all areas was close to unattainable, the goal was to reach proficiency in Whitman-Hanson.

The Superintendent models goal setting and how the system works for everyone. Her goals are clearly linked to the Strategic Plan and rubric, which is also a practice that all principals replicate as part of their goal setting process. Linking the strategic plan into evaluation process is a way to keep it alive and in the forefront of the district's work. The Superintendent uses all of the same required evaluation forms and once presented to the School Committee, her four goals are distributed to everyone in the district so they are transparent and clear. This process has been a powerful way of leading by example and assisting teachers and administrators with their goals as well.

The expectation communicated by the Superintendent is to "work smart" and give value to all the necessary forms that come with the new system, but not have these forms drive the bus, so that the focus is on working with students and not about the paperwork. Evaluators and teachers also choose which of the indicators to focus on within the four standards based on what is appropriate

for their goals.

Rubrics have become an excellent tool that have kept goal discussions focused and made all of the good work in W-H that was achieved before the adoption of the New Educator Evaluation System even better.

12. Resources (time, money, materials etc.) Required For Successful Implementation:
      1. Funding for PD, supportive materials and outside workshops
      2. RTTT grant funds to purchase an electronic database program entitled Baseline Edge
      3. Membership in North River Collaborative to provide on-going professional development in the most cost effective manner

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

See separate attachments:
Documents from Baseline Edge database program:
      1.) Administrator Self-Assessment Form
      2.) Staff Self-Assessment Form
      3.) Classroom Walk Through Template
      4.) Educator Goals -Superintendent
      5.) Formative Assessment Form
      6.) Summative Assessment Form
Other:
  7.) Supervision and Evaluation-Power Point