



Ribas Associates and Publications Inc.
596 Pleasant Street
Norwood, MA 02062
Phone 781-551-9120
Fax: 781-349-8160
Website: ribasassociates.com

The 15 Components that Lead to an Effective District-wide Educator Evaluation System

by William B. Ribas, Ph.D., President,
Ribas Associates and Publications Inc.

Introduction:

I have been actively involved in the development and implementation of educator evaluation systems for more than 32 years. The roles I held during this work include elementary, middle, high school teacher, union officer including a local vice president, a contract negotiation chair, a grievance chair, assistant principal, principal, director of student services, and assistant superintendent for human resources. I have served on teacher and administrator evaluation development and implementation committees as a teacher union representative, principal representative, assistant superintendent representative, and a neutral labor-management facilitator. In my seven years as an assistant superintendent, I was responsible for the supervision and evaluation of over 1,000 professional teachers, school clinicians (e.g. guidance counselors, psychologists and others) and paraprofessional staff. For the past 13 years, my team of educator evaluation experts and I have consulted to over 100 school districts in Virginia, Maryland, New York, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Maine assisting them with developing and implementing effective educator evaluation and development systems. In my various roles, we have participated in the evaluation of thousands of individual teachers, school clinical staff, administrators, and paraprofessionals.

The fifteen components below are the culmination of all of these experiences. They are intended to provide districts with an easy to use checklist to determine what the district has in place and what the district needs to put in place to have an optimal educator evaluation system. For many of you, items 1 and 2 have been completed. However, very few (if any) districts have effectively implemented items 3-15.

Districts who wish assistance addressing their effectiveness in the components below or wishing assistance improving performance in any of these areas may contact us at the phone number or email noted on page 1.

The 15 Components that Lead to Effective District-wide Educator Evaluation

1. Use labor-management collaboration to construct (or modify the present) educator evaluation system (including performance standards, procedures, forms, and student performance assessments). Some states have mandated that districts develop a completely new system. In other states, districts are only required to make revisions of present systems. In either case, it is strongly recommended that these processes be completed in a collaborative labor-management forum. This can be done without forgoing management responsibility for ensuring a high-quality education for every child.
2. Assess the present system in relation to new state requirements and specifically indicate those areas in the present systems that need to be changed and/or enhanced.
3. Provide training for educator evaluators in evidence gathering, analysis, documentation, and conferencing for the purpose of performance evaluation:
 - Lesson and clinical service observation (short and long);
 - Artifact collection and analysis;
 - Observation of non-classroom responsibilities (e.g. duties, family communication, teacher collaboration, and team participation, faculty meeting participation);
 - Analysis and use of student performance data;
 - Guided observations to provide on-site coaching and practice of the competencies learned in the bullets above;
 - Parent surveys;
 - Staff surveys;
 - Student feedback;
 - Collection and analysis of parent, student feedback; and or staff feedback;
 - Effective evaluation interviews (p.k.a. conferences) with educators; and
 - Calibration training to raise the level of inter-rater reliability:
 - Video observation calibration;
 - Live calibration observation.

4. Train administrator evaluators in evidence gathering, analysis, documentation, and conferencing for the evaluation of principals and other non-union administrators (a.k.a. assistant superintendents), and of unionized administrators. Items to address should include:
 - Building and/or department observation visits;
 - Student assessment data analysis;
 - Student work review;
 - Parent surveys;
 - Staff surveys;
 - Student feedback;
 - Community feedback;
 - Effective evaluation interviews (p.k.a. conferences) with the administrator;
 - Document audits of the evaluation work completed with teachers; and
 - Calibration training in districts with multiple evaluators of the administrators.
5. Provide training for educators and evaluators in:
 - Self-assessing their performance based on their performance rubrics and student assessment data;
 - Developing professional growth plans that include measureable goals and action plans for achieving those goals; and
 - Gathering and analyzing evidence related to their student achievement goals and the performance rubric, and generating “next steps” for their professional development.
6. Provide training and coaching in the specialized skills of supervising and evaluating the unsatisfactory (a.k.a. level 1), needs-improvement (a.k.a. basic, level 2), and barely proficient: tenured (PTS) teachers, clinical staff, and administrators:
 - Training includes, but is not limited to, understanding the causes of low performance, the gathering and documenting of multiple data sources, conducting difficult evaluation meeting, development of improvement plans and directed growth (a.k.a. assistance) plans, legal concepts related to educator discipline and dismissal, and progressive discipline.
 - Coaching in how to work effectively with an unsatisfactory, needs-improvement, barely proficient teacher or administrator. Working on one of these evaluations is one of the most stressful, time-consuming, and complex activities administrators do in their career. It is important for any evaluator with a teacher, clinical professional, or administrator on a directed growth (a.k.a. enhanced goals) or improvement plan to receive coaching from a person with a high level of knowledge and experience in this area at critical points during the evaluation year.
7. Adopt and/or develop valid and reliable assessments to measure the growth of students in every classroom and the performance of non-classroom professionals (e.g. psychologists, counselors, nurses). Train all professional staff to use that data in performance self-assessments and the supervision and evaluation of educators.
8. Conduct a file cabinet assessment audit of completed evaluation documentation. This assesses the quality and consistency of the educator evaluation documentation the supervisors and evaluators complete. The results are then used to plan the remedial training for the evaluator noted in the next item.
9. Provide remedial training and coaching for evaluators based on the results of the file cabinet assessment audit of evaluations.
10. Create a connection document that connects the performance rubrics to observable behaviors that represent those rubrics:
 - Teacher and clinical support staff rubrics need to be connected to the current research and practice on standards-based teaching, differentiated instruction (including working with special education and ELL students), professional learning communities, and other district initiatives.
 - Administrator rubrics need to be connected to clear, observable criteria that represent each item in the rubric.

11. Develop a district educator supervision and evaluation implementation guide or web page that includes the district educator evaluation rubrics, procedures, forms and all exemplar documents, criteria sheets, and other components that ensure implementation with fidelity and consistency for many years to come.
12. Conduct teacher, clinical staff, and administrator training in effective educator practices that align with each of the educator performance rubrics. This training should include a common understanding of the observable behaviors that demonstrate proficiency on the rubrics.
13. Conduct educator and evaluator training in the concepts of collaborative work teams and professional learning communities for the purpose of preparing and implementing effective professional development action plans for improving performance in relation to their SMART goals through collaborative professional development activities, such as:
 - Creating team norms
 - Self-assessment of the team's effective functioning as a team;
 - Induction seminars for newly hired educators
 - Creating team goals
 - Mentoring
 - Peer observation
 - Action research
 - Examining student work-study groups
 - Examining student-assessment data study groups
 - Lesson study
 - Professional reading study groups
 - Developing common assessments
 - Other team functions.
14. Use labor-management collaboration to monitor the implementation of the new educator evaluation system during the first three years of implementation.
15. The forgotten educators in most districts are the paraprofessionals. This group of staff members in school districts has grown the fastest in the past ten years. Districts need to conduct a review of their present paraprofessional evaluation and system and make a plan for improving the evaluation and development of these educators. Ribas Associates has developed a high effective and time efficient process for those districts that do not presently have an effective system.

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