



Opening Doors to **Professional Communication and Collaboration**

AN OVERVIEW OF THE VIVA PROJECT OF NEW YORK'S TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

Prepared for: New York Senior Deputy Commissioner of Education, Dr. John King Jr.

Prepared by: The VIVA Project of New York Task Force

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Abstract & Summation: Classroom teachers from across New York State volunteered their time to spend hundreds of hours working together to identify the toughest educational challenges and to create solutions delivered straight from their experiences in the classroom. Empowered by cutting edge technology, and representing a range of grades, schools, and settings, teachers collaborated to create a set of ideas for measuring teacher effectiveness. A small group of teachers were identified and worked together to organize the teachers' collective thoughts, ideas, and vision into this report.

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INTRODUCTION

The VIVA Project of New York



The VIVA (Vision Idea Voice Action) Project of New York invited teachers from urban, suburban, and rural schools throughout New York State to share their ideas, their voice, and their real-life classroom experience directly with New York state policy makers. Between September 13th and October 10th, over 60 teachers representing a myriad of experiences and grade-levels signed-up to work together for the first time to create classroom-based solutions regarding teacher evaluation measures.

Facilitated online by Cindy Richards, a nationally recognized journalist with a background in covering education, empowered with the technology of the VIVA Project Idea Mine¹, and informed by their real classroom experience, ordinary teachers collaborated to identify ideas to measure teacher effectiveness. **This process was conducted in three stages:**

During the **first stage**, which lasted four weeks, teachers were asked to offer their ideas on multiple measures of teacher evaluation. Collectively, nearly 50 ideas and comments were offered.

The **second stage** began at the conclusion of the four-week idea-sharing phase and lasted between November 2nd and December 21st. A forum moderator, along with VIVA advisors, selected and assembled online a small group of teachers that became the VIVA Project of New York Task Force. These teachers, representing diverse classroom settings and professional teaching experience, were selected for their level of contributions and their ideas and commentary during the initial stage.

The third and **final stage** of the process will be completed on January 11, 2011, when members of the New York Task Force will travel to Albany to present this report in person to Dr. John King Jr., the New York Senior Deputy Commissioner of Education and his staff.

We believe in the power of inspiration that grows from real life experiences and in the power of individual voices to make big change. VIVA teachers are an example of that power in action. We are inspired by their example and grateful for their positive contribution to the strength of our democratic process.

VIVA Project of New York Task Force

- Mark Anderson (New York, NY)
- Peggy Crouch (White Plains, NY)
- Barbara Gsovski (Brooklyn, NY)
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This work is the result of the support and engagement of the New York Charter Schools Association. We are grateful for their passion for excellence in education and enthusiasm for innovation.



¹ Idea Mine is the proprietary technology and collaboration methodology of SocialSphere, Inc.

Recommendation 1

Teacher Evaluations Must Take Place in the Context of a Professional Learning Community

Recommendation 2

Multiple Measures Must be Used to Evaluate a Teacher's Performance in a Manner That is Adjusted for the Particular Context in Which the Teachers Works

Recommendation 3

Additional Flexibility and Data Will be Necessary When Using Multiple Measures of Teacher Performance for High Stakes Decisions Such as Tenure or Compensation

Recommendation 4

New Evaluation Approaches Should be Developed for Non-Tested Subjects with Significant Input from Subject Matter Teachers

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Opening Doors to Professional Communication and Collaboration



The VIVA Project of New York’s Task Force members participated in an eight-week online study group and discussion about multiple measures of teacher evaluation. Our goal is to provide Dr. John King Jr. and his staff with insights gained directly from working classroom teachers as they shape regulations to implement Chapter 103 of the New York State Statutes, which was enacted in June 2010. We limited our discussion to those measures of teacher effectiveness that go beyond student achievement tests, which we refer to as “the 60 points” factors in the new law.

Current Conditions

In many schools there currently exists a culture of “closed doors.” Teachers close the doors of their classroom and operate in isolation from each other, aside from incidental/haphazard social networking. Administrators mainly communicate with teachers through memos, infrequent (if any) formal observations, or shallow feedback on bulletin boards or door displays. This isolation is bad for teachers, bad for principals, and bad for students. It leaves teachers to sink or swim, providing them with little of the meaningful feedback necessary to improve performance. Because of this deficit of oversight and guidance from principals, they are not viewed as authentic leaders of instruction, nor do they appear to have a clear vision of the human capital assets within their building. This institutional dilemma can potentially harm students, who require a positive and structured environment—driven by professionalism and collaboration—in order to best achieve.

Necessity for Effective Feedback

Feedback with consequences for both students and teachers arrives mainly in the form of summative feedback, such as through state assessments or report cards, which generally announce whether or not one is meeting proficiencies. This kind of feedback provides little benefit for either stakeholder and is often viewed largely as punitive in nature, as consequences arrive too late to allow for corrections. Effective feedback must include summative measures, but also incorporate formative measures to explicitly guide and provide active redirections throughout the process of development. Furthermore, effective feedback accounts for a goal and provides clarity on progress towards that goal.

This necessity for formative measures and feedback extends from students all the way up to policymakers. Policymakers need to have a clear and transparent vision of what goes on inside classrooms in order to make relevant and realistic decisions throughout the process of educational reform. There must therefore be systems in place within and outside of schools to foster collaboration and communication, gather valid formative data, and provide meaningful, ongoing feedback at all levels.



Systems and Structures of School-Wide Support

Teachers also require systems and structures within the school that support their efforts in providing evidence-based, effective instruction for all their students. Such systems and structures include accepted standards of performance within the building, clearly communicated expectations and procedures, instructional coaches and leaders, Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS), Response to Intervention (RTI) models, and Professional Learning Communities. Without such supports in place, teachers are left to navigate complex academic content and behavioral challenges largely on their own.

Teacher Evaluations as an Opportunity to Open Doors

Teacher evaluations provide an opportunity to open doors to the process of ongoing communication and collaboration. Teachers can receive feedback needed to improve their instructional delivery and also gain recognition for their successes. Principals can acquire insight into the talents of the teachers and other professional staff in their school and make organizational and professional development decisions accordingly. District leaders and policymakers can readjust resources, programs, and policies according to assessed need.

Implementing an open professional learning community can be difficult because policymakers, district leaders, and even principals have little understanding of the necessary data to document and evaluate instructional practices that will best serve a specific community's needs. In fact, teachers themselves are often the most knowledgeable about effective curricular and environmental adjustments to meet student needs. However, due to teacher isolation, lack of empowerment in decision-making processes, and little scheduled time to meet, collaborate, and examine student data to address their needs, these emerging local leaders and experts are not effectively utilized.

We offer specific suggestions about how to build a data set that can better measure teacher effectiveness on student learning, based on our collective classroom experience and professional training and that of the other teachers who participated in a month-long on-line conversation about teacher evaluation. We have limited our discussion to factors other than standardized tests scores.

Before we can define a data set to evaluate teachers' impact on student learning, we need a common definition of teacher effectiveness.

Definition of an Effective Teacher

Effective Teachers:

- establish clear goals for their students and develop a plan to reach those goals;
- build structures for continual and reciprocal feedback between themselves and their students that cover content, progress and relevance of the classroom work; and
- establish on-going partnerships with peers and parents in order to maximize their ability to meet each student's needs.

Without a common definition of effective teaching, a useful evaluation of teachers is impossible. A foundational task for our work is to articulate a clear, practice-driven definition of an effective teacher. Our definition is a practical companion to the seven teaching standards that define “what effective teachers need to know and be able to do” that were adopted by The New York Board of Regents in December 2010. From a classroom educator’s perspective, effective teachers have three main attributes: set and implement goals, develop structures of feedback and communication, and establish productive partnerships.

Effective teachers begin their yearly planning and classroom instruction with the end goal in mind—that is, “What do I want my students to learn?” All effective teachers, regardless of varying student abilities, need to develop yearly achievement goals that account for student needs and are consistent with common core standards and school curriculum. These goals must be transparent, so that subsequent planning and preparation align with and enable the continuance of student progress. To ensure continuity within grades and subject areas, effective teachers must develop lesson plans and collaborative curriculum maps with consistency across subjects. These lesson plans must provide for higher order thinking and evidence-based strategies for daily instructional delivery of content using every available resource, including technology.

Effective teachers also understand the interdependence between the classroom environment and effective instruction. They build positive relationships among students through modeling behavior and providing activities that foster mutual understanding, while simultaneously addressing the developmental and emotional needs of their students, as well as their cognitive abilities. The classroom language of an effective teacher is key to imparting higher order critical thinking and analysis skills to students. Effective teachers, through monitoring classroom language and behavior, ensure reciprocal feedback between student and teacher, and develop a framework for subsequent learning and ongoing classroom assessment. Student learning is assessed through both research based and teacher developed formative measures. Finally, effective teachers use multiple classroom measures of student growth, including progress towards Individual Education Plan and Behavior Improvement Plan goals, and portfolios of student work, assessed by rubric and teacher benchmarked analysis. All of these measures are recorded in some form to ensure transparency.

Effective teachers know that for their instruction to be effective, they need to look within and outside of their school for support—from peers, parents, administration, and community leaders. Effective teachers initiate collaboration within the school among colleagues, both for daily planning and for on-site professional development. When appropriate, they seek and attend professional activities outside of their school, so that they can continue to improve their instruction and inform colleagues of the most current practices. Effective teachers consider parents as a valuable ally, as student learning is enhanced when parents understand their child’s needs and progress. In order to ensure parent participation, effective teachers employ different methods of communication, whether by newsletter, email or phone call. Finally, effective teachers maintain accurate records of all contacts to ensure transparency.

A Practical Guide to Evaluating Teacher Effectiveness (Little, O, et al., April 2009) supports our discussions about teacher effectiveness. This report was derived from looking at 120 studies from five countries and addressing the needs of in-service teachers, K-12. The authors adopted a **Five Point Definition of Teacher Effectiveness** (Goe et al., 2008, p.8).

- 1) “Effective teachers have high expectations for all students and help students learn, as measured by value-added or other test based growth measure, or by alternative measures.”
- 2) “Effective teachers contribute to positive academic, attitudinal and social outcomes for students such as regular attendance, on time promotion to the next grade, on-time graduation, self-efficacy, and cooperative behavior.”
- 3) “Effective teachers use diverse resources to plan and structure engaging learning opportunities, monitor student progress formatively (adapting instruction as needed), and evaluate learning using multiple sources of evidence.”
- 4) “Effective teachers contribute to the development of classrooms and schools that value diversity and civic-mindedness.”
- 5) “Effective teachers collaborate with other teachers, administrators, parents and education professionals to ensure student success particularly the success of students with special needs and those at high risk for failure.”

Professional Learning Communities

An effective model for developing collaboration within a school is the Professional Learning Community (PLC) model. A PLC is where teachers and school administrators engage in a continuous cycle of inquiry and adjustment of practice based upon findings. The goal of these actions is to enhance their effectiveness as professionals so that students benefit the most. Research on PLC models has shown benefits for staff through an increased commitment to the mission and goals of the school, increased vigor in working to strengthen that mission, a shared responsibility for the total development of students and collective responsibility for students’ success, and a higher likelihood of undertaking fundamental systematic change (Hord, 1997, p. 27-28). Benefits for students include a lower rate of absenteeism, dropouts, and fewer classes skipped; greater academic gains in math, science, history, and reading than in traditional schools; and smaller achievement gaps between students from different backgrounds.



RECOMMENDATION ONE

Teacher evaluations must take place in the context of a Professional Learning Community.

Keys to Successful Implementation of PLC

According to Dufour, establishing an effective PLC requires a fundamental shift in focus for the school, from that of teacher instruction to that of student learning. The focus is therefore on the effectiveness of instruction on student learning—what is actually implemented—not simply the intent. As in the RTI model, the focus is primarily on intervention, not remediation. A principal's primary leadership responsibility should be to maintain an effective PLC in each school and all their decisions must refer back to that goal.

A functioning PLC fosters authentic, meaningful collaboration amongst all stakeholders in the building. This requires coordination between all teachers, service providers, and specialists. PLC teams convene to examine student data and make adjustments to instruction and curricula in accordance with school-wide goals. These PLC teams work to clarify optimal teacher practices, create common assessments, and demonstrate ongoing improvement of instruction. This work is guided by standards; school and student goals are based on data obtained and triangulated from benchmarked formal and informal assessments. Goals are specific and measurable, aligned at all levels as a school-wide effort. Progress towards goals are reviewed and measured with interim assessments.

The structure of a PLC must be firmly established from the onset. The administration must establish specific and consistent time blocks during the school week for teams to meet. Teams are organized horizontally by grade or subject, or vertically by cluster (e.g. K-2, 3-5, 6-8). Each team establishes goals, procedural group norms, and protocols for collaboration and analysis of student work. Teams meet weekly to establish consistent instructional calendars, assessments, and instructional strategies. The administration then sits in with teams to aid in facilitation and to monitor progress. These results are made public to all teachers to communicate and share accomplishments and challenges.

School quality reviews and school leader evaluations should include indicators of PLCs. District leaders and superintendents should also be expected to be modeling and using the process of inquiry in PLCs at a district level, examining school data and collaborating and communicating their learning with principals. New York's regulations should carry the model up the entire chain so that cross-communication between districts occurs as a regular course of business. As an implementation incentive, the state should highlight and possibly reward those districts that are most effective in cross-district sharing. These investments would more effectively utilize funds now spent on outside contractors.

“We are seeking a culture shift, and a perfect scenario would be a PLC where all teachers are learners and choose to grow.”



RECOMMENDATION TWO

Multiple measures must be used to evaluate a teacher's performance in a manner that is adjusted for the particular context in which the teachers works.

Relationship Between PLCs and Teacher Evaluations

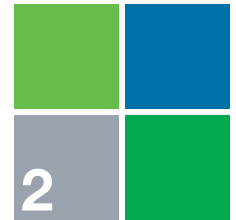
Teaching is a highly complex professional endeavor. Teachers must not only be content specialists, with a formidable breadth and depth of academic knowledge—accompanied by the ability to perform strategic task analysis that allows them to differentiate their instructional delivery to meet the needs of diverse learners—but also must be leaders capable of motivating students and increasing their performance. In addition to being reflective and analytical thinkers, planning lessons and curricula that address higher cognition and student engagement, and looking at student data and determining strategic interventions, teachers must also be on-the-spot decision makers, capable of problem-solving crises, recalibrating approaches to instructional delivery, and addressing the developmental and immediate emotional needs of their students. Lastly, teachers must possess strong interpersonal capabilities, interacting and responding sensitively and authoritatively to a variety of stakeholders with a diversity of needs and perspectives.

Evaluations of teachers must therefore be similarly complex in order to do justice to the professional demands of effective teaching. An authentic evaluation of a teacher would not only consider student performance and progress using multiple measures, but also the context in which a teacher is working. Contextual conditions cannot be determined solely by indicators such as socio-economic statuses of students, or ELL or IEP labeling by the district. Contextual conditions can more effectively be addressed through the multiple perspectives of those who work within the building.

Furthermore, teachers—as the ones most intimately and imminently knowledgeable of the contextual conditions within their building and community, as well as the stakeholders with the greatest awareness of the complexity of the demands of their profession—should be granted substantive voice on the performance of their peers, as well the opportunity to reflect on their own performance and hold a meaningful conversation about their performance with those who would evaluate them.

Systems of teacher evaluations can work to address this issue by empowering teachers to become actively involved in the evaluation process through becoming evaluators themselves, both through self-assessment and through collaborative team evaluations of each other under the PLC model. A teacher team, with a trained team leader elected by peers, can serve as the building peer evaluation team, performing observations and teacher evaluations utilizing the same rubric used by administrators. This will not only serve to provide multiple perspectives that can better recognize contextual conditions within a teacher's classroom, but furthermore enhance PLCs and facilitate teacher buy-in to the process of evaluation.

“Feedback should come from all stakeholders.”



However, we believe that principals and assistant principals, as building leaders and as those directly accountable for teacher performance, should continue to observe and evaluate their teachers. Their evaluations should be combined with teacher self-assessment, peer evaluations, and the other methods of measurement to be discussed below—all based on the same criteria. Most critically, we stress that all administrators and school leaders that will perform the evaluation process will require systematic ongoing training and support in order to perform complex evaluations. These trained evaluators should be able to demonstrate competency in the use of evaluative instruments prior to engaging in any evaluations. **The following measures of evaluation must be included:**

1 Administrator Observations (Principals, Assistant Principals, Trained Outside Raters)

The principal and administrators in the building should serve as the chief instructional leaders, establishing goals for the school and setting clear expectations for performance. Administrators therefore require a vision of their teachers' capabilities through the process of direct observation, combined with multiple inputs from other sources of data. The principal's role as an instructional leader should also include informal, non-evaluative walkthroughs that help foster ongoing conversations and formative feedback about expectations. The principal should act to create systems of teacher teams to interact, monitor, and evaluate ongoing progress using agreed upon formats and scheduling.

Principals, other administrators, and any outside raters should be trained to evaluate teachers based on a specific, standardized evaluation instrument until they have demonstrated competency. The process of evaluation should include both pre- and post-observation meetings to ensure effective, face-to-face conversations about instruction. The principal should then allocate time for teacher evaluation teams to meet with the principal and other school leaders, and define consistency amongst teachers.

2 Peer Observations

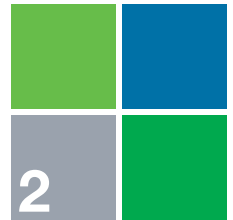
Teachers chosen within the school community as leaders would serve as a PLC focused on teacher evaluation and professional development. These peer evaluators would observe teachers utilizing the same specific, standardized instrument which the principal and other administrators use in their evaluations. Therefore, these school leaders would also require training and must develop competency using this evaluative instrument.

These teams of teachers would assess growth of their peers towards common goals in collaboration with the teachers they are observing and with administrators. As leaders, they would also aid in coordinating teacher team meetings, update student growth data, and coordinate meetings with other school teams within the district.

"I think as teachers we must bear in mind that this evaluation process should not only be about teachers. There should be feedback and data that come from this evaluation process that helps to improve the whole school, and even the overarching education system."

Bulleted numbers 1-6: Please note that this numbering system does not indicate hierarchical order.





3 Student Progress Assessments

To aid in determining student growth beyond that of standardized assessments, progress-monitoring data based on individualized benchmarks should also be included in any evaluation of a teacher's effectiveness. Viable measures of reading would include DRA, DIBELS, TCRWP, ECLAS, and other evidence-based reading diagnostics, as well as conferring notes and running records. Curriculum-based measurements (CBMs) and performance-based assessments can serve as effective measures of progress in language arts, science, and mathematics. Other forms of progress measurement could include student notebooks, lab sheets, and other reasonable content benchmarks that are determined valid by the district.

4 Student Surveys

Based on extensive research conducted by the Tripod Project and the MET Project, student surveys have been demonstrated to correlate highly with value-added measures of teacher effectiveness. This measure can thus serve as an effective measure not only for teachers of students who do not take tests, and also as valuable data to correlate with value-added measures. Furthermore, student surveys can provide powerful feedback for teachers, especially when examined in conjunction with teacher self-assessments and feedback from observations.

Using the MET Project's survey instrument, this survey should be given to students twice a year. Midyear surveys will be used to support other measures, indicating areas for targeted professional development. End of the year surveys can add to the summative teacher evaluation rating.

5 Teacher Self-Assessment

To aid in the process of self-reflection as well as to establish teacher voice in the selection of professional development opportunities, a teacher will take a self-assessment (mid-year) after the first formal observation, based on the same evaluative instrument categories used by their observers. This initial self-assessment can be used in conversations with an observer in post-observation conferencing to establish a consensus on current strengths and areas for future growth. This consensus then can be used in the selection of professional development, as well as in informing future observations and final evaluation. Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching includes four different forms of teacher self assessment, including the end of the year summative assessment (using all domains with student evidence) that is first written by the teacher, then given to the supervisor for a final evaluation conference. Thus, a teacher has an opportunity to reflect on instructional behaviors and ideas throughout the year, and to continue conversations with the evaluator.

6 Student Portfolios

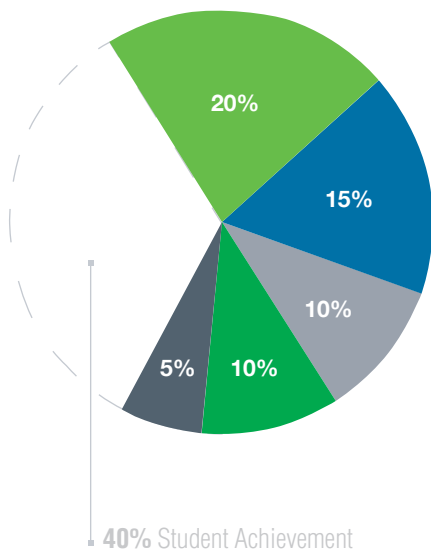
Student portfolios were discussed as a potential alternative measure of student progress and a demonstration of teacher effectiveness. However, due to the possible increase in teacher paperwork and workload, as well as the fact that assessment of portfolios are time-consuming and not cost-effective, we elected not to include this as a viable measure in our recommendations.

“Effective education requires clear communication and reflective assessment from both the student and teacher. Thus, educating students is not a one way input road, but a communicative partnership loop between student and teacher.”

Our Weighting of Recommended Measures

All of these measures that are recommended are relatively meaningless in improving teacher practice unless these measures are brought together to create an authentic conversation between the teacher, evaluators, and peer support teams. These measures, taken together, should create a clear vision for areas of strength and areas requiring targeted professional development, but simply establishing them on paper will not be enough to create the kind of self-reflection and meaningful dialogue around effective instruction and practices that needs to occur for a teacher to develop. Therefore, in weighting these measures, it is important to note that we are not suggesting that any one measure should preclude another in attaching consequences to these evaluations. We are rather noting that certain measures should carry more weight when they are brought to the table for discussion. These measures must all be part of a collaborative conversation between the teachers and their evaluators.

TEACHER EVALUATION MEASURES
(Weighted)



Administrator Observation

We assign this measure a weight of **20%**. We weight this measure heavily because, as chief instructional leaders and determiners of personnel decisions, administrators should hold critical input into the evaluations of the teachers they have under their jurisdiction.

Peer Observation

We assign this measure a weight of **15%**. We weight this measure heavily because we believe this weighting accounts for the importance of developing an effective PLC in drawing teachers into the process of decision-making within the school.

Student Progress Assessments

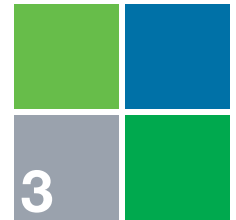
We assign this measure a weight of **10%**. We include this measure at this weight because we believe that measurement of student progress must be individualized to address specific student needs. Some students, especially ELL or SWDs, may not perform well on standardized tests due to severe academic delays or deficiencies, and progress must be determined by other measures such as those outlined above. Furthermore, teachers of students who do not take state tests must also be able to demonstrate student growth.

Student Surveys

We assign this measure **10%**. We value this measure at this weight because student surveys based on a validated instrument such as that offered by the Tripod Project have been demonstrated to correlate highly with value-added data. Furthermore, if the project of education is one of student-centered learning, then we must take student input seriously. This feedback is highly useful to teachers for self-reflection on the delivery of their instruction and the management of their classroom environments.

Teacher Self-assessment

We assign this measure a weight of **5%**. Though this component of an evaluation is not specifically a measurement of a teacher's effectiveness, it is a necessary piece in fostering a framework for discussion and in establishing consensus and agreement between evaluators and teachers.



RECOMMENDATION THREE

Additional flexibility and data will be necessary when using multiple measures of teacher performance for high stakes decisions such as tenure or compensation.

Considerations for the Attachment of High Stakes Consequences

The December 2010 report, *Learning About Teaching*, the preliminary report of the Measuring Effective Teaching project, reinforced the core of our thinking about multiple measures of teacher effectiveness. The initial release of data from this large scale study provoked much discussion but did not change many of our opinions. We remained steadfast because, not surprisingly given the scope and nature of the study, the MET data confirmed our classroom-based ideas. As we thought about any provisos or further considerations that New York officials should give when multiple measures are used for high stakes decisions (rather than as diagnostic and prescriptive tools to drive excellence in teaching), we kept one point from the MET project top of mind. In the context of high stakes decisions, multiple data points, both over time (ideally three years or more) and across different classrooms of students with the same teacher take on more importance as the need for data reliability and consistency increase. We believe it is extremely important for New York officials to keep this point in mind in order to craft an evaluation and incentive system that is transparent and fair to both students and teachers.

Administrator Observations

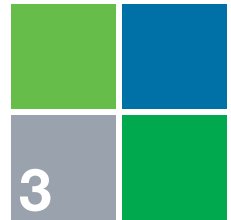
The attachment of high stakes consequences may add greater weight to this measure, as allowing teachers to make decisions regarding high stakes consequences for their peers could have possible detrimental effects. However, we have had much discussion about whether a principal or other administrator should have any evaluative influence at all, with the power to assign consequences directly given to the hands of the peer evaluators. Such weighting determinations may ultimately be dependent on the context of the school. If a school has a high degree of teacher autonomy under an efficient system of PLC, then administrator observations need not carry as much weight in relation to peer evaluations.

Peer Observations

Attaching this measurement to high stakes, as in principal observations above, can be a highly controversial issue. One perspective is that peer evaluations should continue to hold significant weight even with the attachment of high stakes consequences, as they may be rendered inconsequential otherwise. Another perspective is that peer evaluations should be used as data—in conjunction with the other measures listed here—with a final decision given by the principal carrying the weight of consequences attached to them. Furthermore, peer evaluations could end up being a negative platform for disgruntled teachers if not structured effectively.

“An authentic evaluation of a teacher would not only consider student performance and progress using multiple measures, but furthermore the context in which a teacher is working.”





Student Progress Assessments

With the attachment of high stakes consequences, we believe that this measure becomes all the more important. However, there is the danger of teachers skewing the evidence to present greater student growth than has actually occurred. This risk can be averted through ongoing monitoring of student data by school leaders and administration. In addition, the choice of student progress assessment tools is an important factor to consider and control when this information is used in high stakes decision-making. DRA, DIBELS, also ECLAS are well known and research-based benchmark reading assessments, Easy CBM for curriculum based measurements, and Scantron's ED Performance for performance based assessments. NYC's Acuity program also provides the ability to use progress-monitoring features. The more computer-based a program is, such as ED Performance, Acuity, or some of EasyCBM, the harder we think it is for a teacher to modify the student data, as DRA/DIBELS and other such assessments are generally simply a matter of input into a data system. Districts could also choose other tactics for documenting student progress, such as basic running records.

Progress-monitoring data should not be used to evaluate teachers in the same manner as that of value-added data—that is, with the simple correlation of a teacher's impact to that of student progress gains. Effective progress-monitoring demonstrates good pedagogy and data-keeping practices on the part of the teacher. If a student does not demonstrate adequate progress via progress-monitoring data, what has a teacher done to alter their instruction? This is the kind of question that can only be answered via deeper analysis by an evaluator using a valid instrument. We therefore recommend that progress-monitoring data be included as a component of any standardized rubric in teacher evaluation, but not as a stand-alone data set for high stakes decision-making.

Student Surveys

There is some danger in students becoming aware of the consequences of their surveys on their teachers, which could skew the validity of this measure, especially for older students who become aware of the impact of their feedback. It therefore becomes imperative that surveys are administered appropriately, with clarity given to students that their feedback is anonymous and cannot be traced to their source. Furthermore, these surveys—as with all of the measures being recommended here—should only be utilized for high stakes decisions when data has been gathered over multiple years to determine patterns and validity.

Teacher Self-Assessment

With high stakes consequences attached, the only danger is that teachers may have a tendency to rate themselves far higher. However, we believe this tendency will be averted by the discussion that will be had with peer and administrator observers. If there is a significant discrepancy between the observer's instrument and the teacher's self-assessment, that would be an opportunity for meaningful dialogue and engagement with the teacher. While this measure is integral to the observation weighting, we weight it not because it should be used specifically in the determination of high stakes consequences, but because we believe it must be recognized as a critical part of any sort of authentic conversation that would take place in the process of evaluation. It is just a piece used in the discussion of teacher performance, and the teachers reflections should be correlated with the evaluation data instead.





RECOMMENDATION FOUR

New evaluation approaches should be developed for non-tested subjects with significant input from subject matter teachers.

Non-tested subjects present a unique hurdle in the face of New York's new teacher evaluation law. We think this hurdle can and should be turned into an exercise to improve the applied science of assessing both student growth and teacher impact. To skip this opportunity and jump directly to additional testing would not only be regrettable; it would deprive New York of the ability to make a substantial contribution to American teaching.

A test for music and art is both impractical and undesirable. We believe that subjects such as music, art, PE and areas where students are allowed to express their own process of creativity should not be tested. While we are not psychologists, it seems that the underlying effects of testing (as it is) tend to negate student learning and self esteem. Faced with the prospect of being tested in each activity in which one participates, the natural process of creativity is inevitably stifled by the fear of "doing something wrong." A person's creative ability cannot be tested effectively. Consider for instance students who "can't draw": testing their artistic ability can only add to academic struggles they might have. But given these considerations, the question of how we should test the teacher's effectiveness remains.

In non-tested subjects, the first step needs to be to establish consistent curricular expectations in New York—are we teaching for content, performance, or both? We do not believe that further testing will benefit either teachers or students in these areas (under current conditions) without first achieving clarity on the content and performance knowledge or skills expected. While we believe that monitoring done in a controlled and variable way could be useful—such as randomized testing using small student samples each year—it does not make sense to begin testing in the absence of any sort of curriculum for these subjects (and already there is a substantial deficit in the area of curriculum for any given subject area, as noted in the most recent issue of *American Educator* {Vol. 34, No. 4}).

Part of the reason why we are pushing so strongly for multiple measures of both students and teacher performance is that testing only demonstrates a severely limited, narrow slice of the picture. For teachers without value-added information, the other measures we suggest will take precedence. We have not had any discussion yet as to how these measures and their weights would then change. A model to examine would be IMPACT's evaluation of teachers without value-added data. We suggest that administrator and peer observations, in addition to student surveys, would then take on the remainder of the weighting to make up for the absence of value added. **We envision the following evaluation approach:**

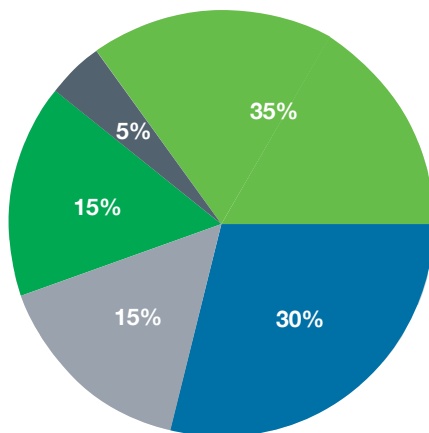
Administrator observations: 35%, Peer observations: 30%, Student Surveys: 15%, progress monitoring data: 15%, teacher self-assessment: 5%.



Careful attention and discussion should be given to such matters as content and performance expectations, and these areas can be measured with portfolios and observations before any decisions about weighting or evaluation metrics are made. New York officials should be searching for solutions regarding ways in which an art or music teacher might monitor the progress of their students, and what assessments and benchmarks should be used. This conversation should include a heavy dose of feedback from practicing teachers, and effort should be made to translate conclusions and tactics to tested subjects as well. Such an effort would not only put New York State at the forefront of the field in evaluating student progress in non-tested areas, it could also lend important depth to multiple measures of teaching effectiveness across the board.

TEACHER EVALUATION MEASURES FOR NON-TESTED SUBJECTS

(Weighted)



- **Administrator Observation**
We assign this measure a weight of **35%**.
- **Peer Observation**
We assign this measure a weight of **30%**.
- **Progress Monitoring Data**
We assign this measure a weight of **15%**.
- **Student Surveys**
We assign this measure **15%**.
- **Teacher Self-assessment**
We assign this measure a weight of **5%**.



RECOMMENDATION FIVE

Adjustments for teachers of students with disabilities or English Language Learners should be consistent across the state.

Adjustments to Evaluation Instruments for Teachers of ELL/SWD

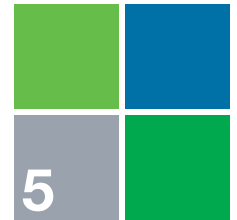
It is critical that any evaluative instrument used differentiate especially for the teachers of student populations that typically require substantially refined and technical instructional and classroom management approaches to demonstrate growth and effectiveness, such as students designated with ELL or SWD status. Furthermore, any evaluator that would observe a classroom of primarily ELL or SWD students, such as a self-contained classroom or bilingual classroom, should have an awareness of the specific needs of those students, such that their evaluation and follow-up feedback accounts for an understanding of the type of accommodations, classroom management approaches, and differentiation of instructional delivery that the teacher is demonstrating.

Currently, the IMPACT evaluations are one of the few to differentiate substantially for teachers of different sub-populations, with variant weightings of measures dependent on those populations. However, as IMPACT is relatively new, its validity in determining teacher effectiveness based on these methods of differentiation are as yet unsubstantiated.

In any evaluative instrument that is elected for use, we strongly recommend consideration of the following addendums for evaluative rubrics of teachers of ELL/SWDs:

- Demonstrating knowledge of students: Teachers must actively seek out knowledge of students with a BIP, IEP, 504 plan, or ELL/LEP plan. Additionally, the teacher actively obtains information about how these plans have been implemented in the past
- Setting instructional outcomes: In order to set instructional outcomes effectively a teacher should utilize previous knowledge of the needs, plans and annual goals of all students in the class.
- Designing student assessments: In designing student assessment, a teacher ought to take into account the needs of individuals and the differing response/feedback methods.
- Developing an environment of respect and rapport: A teacher should be sensitive to all the differences among students in the class.





- Establishing a culture for learning: In establishing a culture for learning, evaluation must focus on student improvement as it applies to individual IEPs, BIPs, 504s, or ELL/LEP plans. Evaluators should see a progression in a student’s quality and quantity of work and not necessarily use that outcome as the only marker of learning.
- Managing student behavior: When managing student behavior, it is important to know if a student has had a functional behavioral assessment (FBA), if it has resulted in a behavioral intervention plan (BIP), and how to properly go about implementing that document.
- Using questioning and discussion: In using questioning and discussion techniques, a teacher should allow for a variety of feedback mechanisms, whether verbal or written.
- Additional duties: This is a very extensive and varied category, depending on the school district, school, special education department, as well as individual teacher and the role in which the school uses them. Additional duties could include managing caseloads, creating IEPs and other documents, communicating with other staff members, assuming co-teacher responsibilities, attending annual review meetings, testing students, and other responsibilities depending on that teacher’s individual role.

“Progress monitoring is a type of formative assessment, not summative. It operates in tandem with standardized testing. For many children with exceptional learning needs, their progress is not justly nor adequately depicted by the data contained by the current standardized measures.”





RECOMMENDATION SIX

Use existing rubrics to evaluate New York teachers, but adapt them for specific local circumstances.

Existing Rubrics That Could Be Used to Conduct Teacher Evaluations

In order to standardize teacher evaluation, an effective framework is required. *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching*, by Charlotte Danielson, has been widely used, normatized for K-12, and shown to be an effective measure for teacher evaluation. Other rubrics to consider are IMPACT, CLASS, and Kim Marshall's Teacher Evaluation Rubrics. IMPACT differentiates evaluations for a number of different types of teaching situations, such as whether a teacher has value-added data available, or for teachers of students with disabilities (SWDs). CLASS targets grades K-2 quite effectively and could therefore be considered for K-2, with the Danielson Framework utilized for 3-12. While Kim Marshall's rubric seemed very teacher friendly, we felt that Danielson's was more direct and well-constructed and covered the same territory. We would strongly suggest that any rubric used must account for and differentiate based on a teacher's level of experience, student population taught (see the previous section for adjustments that we recommend to the Danielson rubric for teachers of ELL and students with disabilities), as well as the presence of professional support readily available to that teacher.

Danielson's rubric is based on a set of components of instruction that have been documented through empirical research as promoting improved student learning. Furthermore, the components of instruction are aligned to the INTASC standards and are grounded in a constructivist approach to learning and teaching. The components of professional practice are a comprehensive framework reflecting the complexity of teaching. **The framework is divided into 22 components clustered into four domains of teaching responsibility:**

- Planning and Preparation (Domain 1);
- Classroom Environment (Domain 2);
- Instruction (Domain 3); and
- Professional Responsibilities (Domain 4).

Each component defines a distinct aspect of the domain; two to five elements describe a specific feature of a component. Levels of teaching performance (rubrics) describe each component and provide a roadmap for improvement of teaching.





Teacher standards and expectations need the highest level of consistency across school districts, while measures in each domain that focus on student populations and community specific measures should receive the highest level of local flexibility. **For example:**

- Domain 1: Planning and Preparation, 1b Demonstrating knowledge of students
- Domain 2: Classroom Environment, 2a Creating an environment of respect and rapport, 2d Managing student behavior
- Domain 3: Instruction, 3a Communicating with students, 3c Engaging students in learning
- Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities, 4c Communicating with families

“Contextual conditions can more effectively be addressed through the multiple perspectives of those who work within the building. Furthermore, teachers—as the ones most intimately and imminently knowledgeable of the contextual conditions within their building and community, as well as the stakeholders with the greatest awareness of the complexity of the demands of their profession—should be granted substantive voice on the performance of their peers, as well the opportunity to reflect on their own performance and hold a meaningful conversation about their performance with those who would evaluate them.”





CONCLUSION

Opening Doors to Professional Communication and Collaboration

The prospect of evaluating teachers is fraught with controversy and different stakeholders will have divergent perspectives on what measures are most important in determining an individual teacher's effectiveness. When viewed through the lens of leveraging teacher evaluations as a means for building more effective systems of professional collaboration and structures of feedback within and outside of schools, evaluations can be seen as a critical and positive opportunity for establishing meaningful dialogue between students, teachers, administrators, and policymakers. An effective teacher evaluation is not simply about accountability for the teacher; it is also about accountability for the training of teachers, the support within a school and district for its teachers, the leadership and direction of school leaders, and the policies and programs that affect daily teacher practices.

Evaluating a teacher is not about checking items off of a checklist. It is about having an authentic conversation on improving instruction and professional practice. Teacher evaluators must be involved in fostering consensus, and informed through data sourced from multiple perspectives and measures, leading to targeted professional development. This process requires professional collaboration under the efficient framework of a true professional learning community. No stakeholder in any school community should operate in isolation. Teacher evaluations provide a unique opportunity to open the doors to greater transparency, greater involvement, and greater accountability from all parties involved in the complex enterprise of education.



VIVA Task Force of New York Members



MARK ANDERSON New York, NY

I teach a 5th grade 12:1:1 classroom in an elementary school in East Tremont in the Bronx, NY. This is my second year teaching. I moved to New York in 2008 from South Lake Tahoe, CA, where I worked as a department manager in housekeeping and grounds operations at the Stanford Sierra Camp and Conference Center for several years. After moving to New York, I worked as a store manager at Trader Joe's in Queens before I was accepted as a NYC Teaching Fellow in 2009. I am currently completing a Master's Degree program in middle childhood special education at City College.

I teach both because I want to do something meaningful to give back to my society, and because I am interested in public affairs and want to understand the effects of policy decisions on a ground level in the highly political field of education.

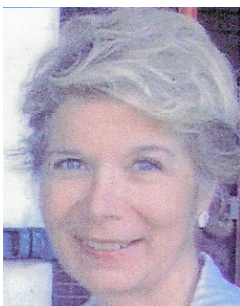


PEGGY CROUCH White Plains, NY

I received a Masters in Education from Fordham University and am certified from N-6. Four years ago, I received my second certification in TESOL from Long Island University, Westchester Campus. For the past 15 years, I have taught in the Mt. Vernon, NY school district. Mt. Vernon's population is over 90% African American with an increasing population of Spanish speaking immigrants.

My educational experience began in White Plains, in 1989, where I was a building substitute while I had young children at home. I taught a 2nd grade inclusion class while the teacher was on a year's maternity leave. In 1995, I was hired in Mt. Vernon as a science lab teacher. That position was excised, and I was transferred to Graham Elementary School, where I have remained. At Graham, I have taught 1st, 4th, and 5th grades. My greatest experience is in 5th grade (15 years), regular education, but I have also taught 5th grade inclusion. ESL students are most often placed within my classroom since I have that certification and the knowledge base for ESL strategies.

I prefer the constructivist approach to education. I am trained in TERC investigations, reading/writing workshop and love to explore and investigate as a means to understand science concepts. I teach because I love to be a part of the process in helping young children learn to love learning. Sharing and growing together as learners makes my heart happy! Children have such an amazing perspective, and I am lucky to be a part of this experience.



BARBARA GSOVSKI Brooklyn, NY

In my forty years in education, I have earned an M.A. in Diagnostic-Prescriptive Teaching (GWU), an M.S. in Early Childhood Education (Bank St. College), and a Ph.D. in Early Childhood/Elementary Education (NYU). I began teaching in a northeast Washington, D.C. public school as the third 2nd grade teacher of that class mid-year. I was fortunate as my M.A. program had required me to continually reflect on my practice, and then adjust to what would work. So when the devastating obstacles thrown daily at my students collided with my relative inexperience, I had no choice but to observe and adapt my practice continually. In my next 20 years as an early childhood teacher in private settings (NYC and Brooklyn), my D.C. experiences continued to influence how I taught and what I wanted my young students to achieve. All of my graduate training programs influenced my practice as a graduate student supervisor for Teachers College and a learning specialist in schools and private settings. I have now come full circle, working in Harlem as a remediation specialist at the Northside Center for Child Development, again, sadly confronting the same obstacles my D.C. students faced so many years ago. Looking ahead, I want to use all of my educational experiences to influence the policy on how we are educating our youngest children, and specifically, how we educate teachers to teach them.



FRANCO WALLS Tonawanda, NY

As a special education teacher, I don't always feel as if the results attained by my students are entirely due to the learning environment or teaching dedication I have put forth. That being said, if I am part of a whole that is being evaluated, and I am an active participant in the learning process for all students—including high, low, and average achievers, I have no problem with student performance factoring into teacher evaluation. After all, a student's academic progress is our "product,"—and like any business model, we should be judged accordingly. If for some reason a specific member of the whole is failing at producing positive progress with his/her "products," then remediation or intervention should occur. If the intervention and/or remediation does not work, the teacher should be put on probation or released, regardless of tenure status or experience.

New Voice Strategies

Action

New Voice Strategies, a Massachusetts nonprofit corporation operates the VIVA (Vision Idea Voice Action) Project. The VIVA Project is the creation of a group of seasoned, passionate advocacy professionals who believe in the power and wisdom of individual citizens in the public square. Technology is opening new opportunities for individuals to be active, relevant participants in big picture conversations and decisions. Combining our zeal for participatory government with inventive uses of wiki technology, we're creating websites and conversations that will add new voices to our country's important public policy decisions. Our first websites launched in September 2010, engaging classroom teachers directly in one of the most important discussions our country is having now—decisions about the future of American public schools.

This work is the result of the support and engagement of the New York Charter Schools Association. We are grateful for their passion for excellence in education and enthusiasm for innovation.

Board of Directors

JOSE CERDA III, chair, is the vice president for public policy and strategy at IFF, a Midwest regional CDFI. Jose has over 20 years of experience in public policy and government. He served on the domestic policy staff in the Clinton White House, was chief of policy for the City of Chicago, and worked on Chicago's Empowerment Zone.

JILL BASS taught in the Chicago and New York City public schools for 14 years. She has a master's in instructional leadership from the University of Illinois at Chicago and has been a professional developer, curriculum writer, educational consultant, and instructional coach. She is currently director of the Mikva Challenge's National Center for Action Civics, overseeing curriculum development and teacher training.

MATTHEW BREWER is an associate with the law firm of Bartlt, Beck, Herman, Palanhar & Scott, LLC. He is a graduate of Stanford University, where he served as student body president, earned his JD from Yale University and MBA from Harvard University.

ELIZABETH EVANS, founding CEO, is a recognized national leader in building unconventional alliances and bringing innovative approaches to solving difficult policy problems. For the last decade, her work has focused on education reform, and she has spent her career promoting the interests of children. She was executive director of the Illinois Network of Charter Schools (INCS), where

she was the chief architect of a successful statewide campaign that culminated with Illinois being the first state in the nation to enact comprehensive charter law reforms in 2009. Before joining INCS, Elizabeth was part of the Illinois Facilities Fund leadership team, where her responsibilities focused on Illinois government relations, communications, and advocacy. Elizabeth also worked at the Civic Committee of The Commercial Club of Chicago and was a political organizer in Washington, DC and Michigan. She practiced law from 1990 to 1998 for the US Securities and Exchange Commission Enforcement Division and as a staff attorney in the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit.

KIPLUND "KIP" KOLKMEIER is of counsel to the Political Law and Government Relations practice groups of Perkins, Coie, LLC & Kolkmeier Consulting. His legal practice focuses on state legislative lobbying in Illinois, corporate and governmental ethics issues, administrative rulemaking and executive agency lobbying, PAC management, state and federal campaign finance issues, and association management. He previously was a partner at the following law firms: Sidley & Austin, Altheimer & Gray, and Wildman, Harrold, Allen & Dixon.

ASHLEY WARLICK teaches elementary school in the Cambridge, MA Public Schools. She has a concentration in teaching students with special needs and brings a strong interest in the arts to her work. She serves on the Board of Directors of her school's affiliated nonprofit organization, which brings urgently needed resources to the students at the school.



