



To: Senate Committee on Education

From: Jay Nichols , Executive Director

Date: January 27, 2023

Subject: Teacher Evaluation

For the record, Jay Nichols, Executive Director Vermont Principals' Association. I've been asked to discuss teacher evaluation in Vermont. In preparation for this, I spoke with approximately three dozen school principals and assistant principals. This is a summary of what I know about teacher evaluation in general and in Vermont specifically and feedback from the field.

First, almost all systems have a differentiated approach between novice teachers and veteran teachers. This is often articulated by Collectively Bargained Agreements between School Boards and Teacher Unions. These can look very different as Vermont's local control mantra is well evidenced in the area of teacher evaluation.

In Vermont, we have statutory language that applies to what we term probationary teachers. A probationary teacher is someone who is new to teaching or new to teaching in Vermont. By law, those individuals are required to be evaluated twice in each of those probationary years if a school district decides to non-renew the teacher without cause. However, the law is silent on what that evaluation needs to look like.

Principals overwhelmingly conclude that teacher evaluation should be differentiated depending on two factors: 1. The amount of time the individual has been a teacher overall and/or within the district. And 2. How skilled the teacher is or is not.

The research in the area of teacher evaluation is not succinct or necessarily clear as to how effective teacher evaluation is on improving teacher performance and student growth. The Gates Foundation spent a lot of money trying to develop teacher evaluations that were developed in what was called a Value Added Model (VAM) that looked to see the correlation and causation between student standardized achievement test scores and teacher performance. Unfortunately, despite millions of dollars to try and make the connection between standardized test scores (as a proxy for student achievement) the Gates initiative ultimately failed. Which brings us back to teacher evaluations and what works and what doesn't.

What works:

- Regular walkthroughs, informal observations that are unannounced and providing teachers with quick feedback
- Formal Observations: pre mtg, lesson plan, observe complete lesson, post mtg. CAN be effective as a tool for new teachers and for low performing teachers. Also, not a bad practice to do with all teachers on a 3-5 year cycle as part of an evaluation system
- Teacher evaluation in a formal sense pales to teacher coaching in which teachers are provided with master teachers or coaches that can provide them ongoing feedback and support
- Professional Learning Communities where teachers work collaboratively to look at student data, model practice for each other, and make instructional changes based on the examination of actual teaching (video can be a great asset here)

What Does Not Work:

- Collectively Bargained Agreements (CBA's) that restrict the ability of supervisors to visit classrooms and provide feedback on what occurs in the classroom.
- Tying individual teacher evaluations to student test scores (too many variables that can't be controlled for).
- Allowing a one time formal observation that is scheduled in advance to count as the example of what a teacher is able to do. (Frequent short walkthroughs, informal observations are much more effective).
- Too much paperwork and compliance (check the box) evaluation programs in place missing the purpose of using teacher evaluation to improve performance

Additional thoughts/concerns from the field:

- The current calendar that is top heavy with professional learning opportunities prior to school starting and at the end of the school year make it very difficult to move teacher growth in real time.
- Our current teacher preparation programs need to provide more coaching for future teachers and more apprentice programs to get potential future teachers in front of students earlier in their programs.
- Specific coaching for teachers has been much more effective than the traditional evaluation system. And at the high school level there is very little coaching of teachers.
- The current staffing shortages and student behavioral mental health crisis has made it exceedingly difficult for school leaders to get into the classroom to provide informal and/or formal feedback to teachers about their performance.
- Most systems that have a formal evaluation system that is not developed in house use some version of the Charlotte Danielson's Framework.

Connection between teacher evaluation and retention

<https://www.future-ed.org/teacher-evaluation-and-retention-what-the-research-shows/#:~:text=A%20recent%20meta%2Danalysis%2C%20synthesizing,removing%20the%20most%20ineffective%20teachers.>

A recent meta-analysis, synthesizing data from 120 studies, bears out that finding, reporting that teacher performance evaluations do not appear to negatively affect teacher attrition but may improve the workforce by keeping the most effective teachers and removing the most ineffective teachers. (Cliff Note)

State Board Rules pertaining to teacher evaluation

<https://education.vermont.gov/sites/aoe/files/documents/edu-state-board-rules-series-2000.pdf>

Teacher Leader Effectiveness Guidelines.

<https://education.vermont.gov/sites/aoe/files/documents/edu-educator-quality-teacher-leader-effectiveness-guidelines-061812.pdf>

Teacher Evaluation Review Rubric (VTAOE)

<https://education.vermont.gov/sites/aoe/files/documents/edu-educator-quality-teacher-evaluation-review-rubric.pdf>

Danielson Framework

<https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/tpep/frameworks/danielson/danielson-framework-for-teaching-evaluation-instrument-2011.pdf>

