

Memorandum

To: Teachers and Leaders Council of Nevada
From: NEPF Task Force
Date: January 9, 2019
Subject: Recommendations to Improve the NEPF

I. Six Recommendations to Improve the NEPF and Benefit Educator Practice

The Task Force proposes that the State adopt the following six recommendations to improve the Nevada Educator Performance Framework (NEPF) to benefit educator practice and student achievement:

- Change the weight of student learning goals (SLG) to 20%.
- Create greater distance between a “developing” rating and dismissal.
- Further streamline the NEPF tool to provide prompt, actionable feedback to educators.
- Appoint a leader in each school district who is responsible for local NEPF implementation.
- Offer expanded professional development aligned to the NEPF.
- Require norming of evaluators and peer observers.

By adopting these six recommendations, the State will bolster educators’ trust in the NEPF, further emphasize coaching and development, and achieve greater accuracy in appraising educator performance.

II. Details for Each Recommendation

The following provides key details for each recommendation:

(1) *Change the Weight of Student Learning Goals (SLG) to 20%.* Currently, SLGs account for 40% of a teacher’s evaluation. However, this dilutes the value of other NEPF standards and indicators in accounting for a holistic overview of the teacher’s performance. Furthermore, although a teacher might be less than effective in other indicators, that teacher might still be rated “effective” or “highly effective” so long as the SLG indicator is sufficient. In addition, there is continuing debate over what tools and data would provide valid measures for SLGs.

By changing the SLG weight to 20%, other standards and indicators would play more important roles in accounting for the holistic appraisal of the teacher’s performance, thus contributing to a more accurate appraisal of teachers generally. Furthermore, this change in weight would provide space for educators and policymakers to reach consensus on tools and data that would provide valid measures for SLGs.

(2) *Create Greater Distance Between a “Developing” Rating and Dismissal.* Under existing law, a teacher who is rated “developing” can be put on a track to dismissal, whether or not that teacher is post-probationary. This adds to the stigma of being rated “developing” when instead, the teacher should have access to coaching and development opportunities to improve and become effective.

By creating greater distance between being rated “developing” and being dismissed, evaluators would be encouraged to give more honest ratings to teachers who are actually “developing.” This contributes to more accurate appraisals of teacher performance, while also connecting teachers with further coaching and development opportunities to improve their practice.

(3) Further Streamline the NEPF Tool to Provide Prompt, Actionable Feedback to Educators.

Building on recent work to streamline the NEPF tool, reduce duplication, and save more time for teacher-administrator conversations, the State should adopt additional improvements to the tool:

- *Drop-down menus with description notes for different indicators.* This will save additional time during observations, contribute to improved norming of evaluators, and reduce the likelihood of subjective biases in documenting observable evidence.
- *An electronic format for the tool that allows evaluators to immediately share their evaluation documents with teachers.* This will further save additional time and reduce the paperwork burden, thereby expanding opportunities for teacher-administrator conversations.

(4) Appoint a Leader in each School District who is Responsible for local NEPF Implementation.

By having each school district appoint a leader who is responsible for local NEPF implementation in that district, local educators and evaluators will have a clear point of contact for information and guidance about the NEPF. Furthermore, this leader would be responsible for ensuring successful implementation of the NEPF across sites in that school district in accordance with State mandates.

(5) Offer Expanded Professional Development Aligned to the NEPF. To further emphasize coaching and development, the State, Regional Professional Development Programs (RPDP), and local school districts should expand professional development opportunities that are aligned to the NEPF and inform educators on the deeper nuances of each standard and indicator. In addition, teachers should have greater flexibility to exercise their professional judgment, in consultation with their administrators, to select courses and trainings that support their development.

(6) Require Norming of Evaluators and Peer Observers. To increase the inter-rater reliability and validity of NEPF measures statewide, the State and school districts should require norming of evaluators and peer observers. This should include the following:

- A standard induction program to the NEPF for new evaluators and peer observers.
- Periodic refreshers of the standards and indicators for inter-rater reliability and calibration.
- A checks and balance process that validates the reliability of ratings, such as a traveling cohort of evaluators and peer observers that visits different sites and districts.

III. Key Ideas Informing These Recommendations

In developing the six recommendations to improve the NEPF, the Task Force was guided by the following three key ideas under a theory of change for the NEPF:

(1) *Educators' Trust in the System.* Bolstering educators' trust in the NEPF can encourage teachers and principals to be more honest in using the system, accepting feedback, and changing their practice. Furthermore, greater trust can open sustainable opportunities for expanding coaching and development programs for educators.

(2) *Emphasis on Coaching and Development.* By shifting the NEPF's emphasis more towards coaching and development, teachers can connect with individualized attention and supports to improve their practice, better serve students, and foster improved student outcomes. In addition, this shift in emphasis can help bolster greater trust in the system with more accurate ratings, and also address the stigma that is often associated with low ratings.

(3) *Accurate Appraisal of Educator Performance.* If evaluators are encouraged to give honest ratings of teachers, then teachers would receive more accurate appraisals of their performance. A teacher who is still developing would be rated as "Developing," but this teacher and the principal would know this rating is to support the teacher in improving. Furthermore, accurate differentiation between teachers' performance would be reflected in more accurate distributions of ratings, which education leaders and policymakers could use to make more informed decisions about directing supports for educator practice.

References Consulted

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