

Transforming Education in Rhode Island



The Race to the Top Opportunity

Race to the Top Steering Committee Quarterly Meeting

Monday, November 14, 2011, 4:30-6:30 p.m.
The Rhode Island Foundation

Meeting Minutes

- I. Welcome & Objectives
 - a. Welcome, *Colleen Jermain & Neil Steinberg, Co-Chairs*
 - b. Objectives of Today's Meeting, *Neil Steinberg*
 - i. Gain a deeper understanding of the purpose and components of the educator evaluation work happening now under Race to the Top.
 - ii. Ask questions and give feedback on the implementation of educator evaluation in Rhode Island.
 - iii. Leave today's meeting with the information needed to talk about educator evaluation with your colleagues and networks.
- II. A Closer Look: Educator Evaluation in Rhode Island
 - a. Questions to Consider, *Commissioner Gist*
 - i. How is the evaluation system being received by educators now that it is underway?
 - ii. How are administrators finding the time and capacity to conduct the necessary observations and meetings that make up the evaluation process?
 - iii. Is it fair?
 - iv. How will we know the system is working? What will success look like?
 - b. Presentation, *Mary Ann Snider, RIDE*
 - i. [See Educator Evaluation in Rhode Island presentation to Steering Committee]
 - c. Panel Discussion, *Rhode Island Educators*
 - i. Clare Arnold, Director of Curriculum and PD | North Smithfield, RI
 - Discussed the role of facilitating the implementation of the educator evaluation system in North Smithfield. Clare discussed tactics to provide

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professional development (PD) opportunities for educators on the evaluation system.

- Success: holding after-school workshops for teachers to work on their self-assessments, professional goals, and student learning objectives. These have created a sense of urgency about improving practice and student learning. North Smithfield wants all of the work leading up the summative ratings to be meaningful and valuable to educators.
- Challenge: time capacity, and the creation of appropriate student learning objectives for non-traditional teachers (i.e. PE teachers, specialists, classroom aids, etc.)

ii. Sandra Forand, Intermediary Service Provider | East Providence, RI

- Explained that East Providence has their own evaluation supports in the district; Sandra is on a one year leave from her principal position in a middle school in order to support educator evaluation. Discussed how the system has been rolling out in the district where Intermediary Service Providers (ISPs) have been conducting teacher meetings on a small group and individual basis across the district.
- Teachers are collaborating to create their professional growth goals and, consequently, have been opening their classroom doors more often and sharing teaching practices. Principals have started or are completing conducting individual beginning of the year conferences.
- Sandra stated that her post-observations conversation with the first teacher she evaluated was “the best professional conversations I have ever had with a teacher.”
- Success: District evaluators all evaluated the same lesson and then met to calibrating their consistency.
- Challenge: Calming the anxiety of teachers as they recognize the process is overwhelming.

iii. Colleen Mercurio, District Evaluation Officer | Warwick, RI

- Highlighted experiences working in an early adopter district that is implementing the full evaluation system this year. Colleen is working to build building leadership capacity for principals and administrators.
- Success: conversations in the district have moved from compliance to self-motivated conversations that are so different and deeper than they have ever been before. Teachers are viewing this work as hugely valuable and they are committed to doing the work. Principals are giving up faculty time to continue giving support to teachers on the evaluation system.
- Challenge: Communicating effectively with all educators, given the size of the district.

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- d. Discussion Questions, *Steering Committee Members*
- Does Rhode Island have one, single evaluation model?
 - In the RTTT application, we indicated that there would be one RI Model. The application was written at the same time that the RI Department of Education was supporting innovation districts for a grant to support educator evaluation.
 - The two current models reflect a statewide approach, even though they do not look exactly alike. We continue to work to resolve the question if we should attempt to create a statewide system or have the two models exist side-by-side.
 - Can you elaborate on how professional development (PD) and other coursework for teachers is woven into the “Support and Development” piece of the Continuous Improvement Cycle?
 - At the end of each school year, every educator who is evaluated is required to have a summative professional growth plan. Part of this process is to identify with your evaluator what the supports are that you need from your school, district, and leaders. Educators are able to seek opportunities for PD and ways to grow that are tailored to their needs. For example, if a teacher identifies the need for classroom management PD, they may choose to observe a colleague in the same building and that becomes part of their PD plan.
 - This process will ensure that PD is most closely tied to actual practice.
 - What percentage of the teaching population have growth scores?
 - With the current statewide test, the NECAP, about 25% of teachers. When the new statewide assessment, PARCC, is implemented in 2014-2015, that percentage will be larger.
 - What are district capacities to carry the educator evaluation work out well on an ongoing, annual basis?
 - There is no doubt that the educator evaluation system is a huge undertaking. Principals are being asked to think differently about their roles in a building. However, we believe that one of the most important things we can do is to shift the focus onto quality instruction.
 - RIDE is hearing from both schools that have been successful and schools that are struggling to implement the evaluation system. We are learning from both scenarios to learn what conditions need to be in place to be successful.
 - Once the process becomes cyclical, it will not need as much of a lift. We are implementing the system in year two of the Race to the Top grant in order to maximize opportunity to provide support and training while the grant monies are available.

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- There was an article published in the Providence Journal on the New Teacher Induction program which gave an inside look at the collaborative support the program is providing to new teachers. The mutual support conversations built into New Teacher Induction model are also happening for all educators under the evaluation system.
- Hearing from the panel has been so helpful, are we having these kinds of conversations about educator evaluation across the state?
 - At the state level, we are beginning to run focus groups to gain a deeper understanding of implementation at the district level.
 - Partnering professional organizations are helping us to schedule and organize drop-in sessions and additional focus groups.
 - The RIDE educator evaluation team meets monthly with assistant superintendents, Commissioner Gist meetings with the superintendents' association twice a month, and other professional organizations have been so helpful in communicating about RTTT-related projects.
- Are you getting a sense that those being evaluated feel that this system is fair?
 - We will likely need to get through the full year of gradual implementation before people feel comfortable and confident with the process. Panelists agreed that this system is fairer than evaluation has ever been and gives teachers timely feedback regarding their practice that they deserve.
 - The rubric was designed by a teacher, approved by RI teachers, and the work is being carried out by teachers. The rubric matrix acts as a checks and balances system, all information is well calculated and balanced.
 - Teachers have expressed some concerns over the growth model, particularly with the testing schedule in the Fall, and content-specific evaluation pieces.
- What is the role of the technical advisory committee?
 - The technical advisory committee meetings 2 – 4 times a year to check for technical soundness and assure fairness of the system. National experts sit on the committee to be a critical eye for a balance of the system.
 - Historically, educator evaluation systems have never had technical advisory committees – RI is treating it with as much rigor as a technical advisory committee would for statewide student assessment systems.

III. Wrap-Up, *Colleen Jermain*