Educator Evaluation Frequently Asked Questions

2016-17

The most up to date version of this document is available at:
http://www.ride.ri.gov/TeachersAdministrators/EducatorEvaluation.aspx

Last Updated On: July 7, 2016

Table of Contents

Section 1 - Cyclical Process

1.   What do state statutes say with regard to the frequency of educator evaluation?

RIGL 16-12-11 establishes provisions related to the frequency of evaluations. The legislation states that a teacher who obtains or earns a rating of "highly effective" should be evaluated not more than once every three years and that a teacher who obtains a rating of "effective" should be evaluated not more than once every two years. Furthermore, field memo guidance dated 9-18-15 provided a pause that encouraged districts to develop a mechanism to distribute educators rated Effective and Highly Effective in 2013-14 into groups in order to stagger the completion of evaluations with all tenured educators rated as Effective in 2013-2014 being evaluated by the end of the 2016-2017 school year AND all educators rated Highly Effective in 2013-14 being evaluated by the end of 2017-2018. That said, the legislation also states that any teacher who requests an annual evaluation, any teacher during his or her first year teaching under a new certificate, and any non-tenured teacher should be evaluated annually. Per the legislation, districts also have the ability to establish local policies that call for more frequent evaluations so long as such policies are in accordance with local district personnel policies and negotiated collective bargaining agreements. For example, some districts require a teacher who switches more than two grade levels to be evaluated and other districts require a full evaluation any time a teacher changes the certificate in use. Finally, a district can evaluate an educator more frequently if concerns about a teacher's performance arise so long as it is in accordance with local policy. These provisions also apply to support professionals.

RIGL 16-12-11 does not apply to building administrators, who must continue to be evaluated annually.

If you have questions about when you should be evaluated, please contact your school or district administrator.

2.   How does my evaluation differ if I am part time?

For educators who are in regular assignments and have worked for 135 days or more, their final effectiveness rating that is reported to RIDE will be used as part of the certification renewal process.

Regular employment is defined as any appointment to a tenure-track position in a public school that requires the individual to hold a certificate issued by RIDE irrespective of full time or part time status. While all components of the model will be implemented, it is under the discretion of the district evaluation committee to develop a timeframe for part time employees.

3.   Do educators on leave have to be evaluated?

If an educator in a regular assignment goes on leave during the school year, the educator should work with their evaluator to complete as much of the evaluation process as possible and appropriate. Each leave situation is unique, but any educator who works for 135 days or more during a full evaluation year will be expected to have a complete evaluation, including a final effectiveness rating.

If an educator in a part-time position goes on leave during the school year, the 135 days should be prorated based on the FTE of the educator. For example, if the educator is .5 FTE, the educator would be expected to have a final effectiveness rating if they worked the equivalent of 67.5 days.

4. Do day-to-day substitute teachers need to be evaluated using the Rhode Island Model?

While districts have the flexibility to decide how to evaluate substitutes and individuals in temporary assignments, RIDE encourages LEAs to evaluate all of their educators. While substitute ratings will not be reported to RIDE, participating in the evaluation process is a critical step toward improving teaching and learning and establishing a culture of high expectations for all.

5. Are long-term substitutes and educators in short-term positions required to be evaluated using the Rhode Island Model?

Teachers in year-long positions that have been confirmed by the local board of education should receive a full evaluation. Districts have the flexibility to decide how to evaluate long-term substitutes but RIDE encourages LEAs to evaluate all of their educators. Participating in the evaluation process is a critical step toward improving teaching and learning and establishing a culture of high expectations for all. Long-term substitute ratings will not be reported to RIDE.

6. Do teachers who renew their certification need to be evaluated despite their previous Final Effectiveness Rating?

Unless the district has a different local policy, tenured teachers in the cyclical process who renew their certifications may continue in the cyclical process as scheduled. However, if the teacher changes certificates (e.g. switching from an elementary education certificate to a reading specialist/consultant certificate), the teacher needs to be evaluated regardless of status in the cyclical process.

Section 2 - Rhode Island Model Teacher Evaluation and Support System

1. What should I do differently when I am observed?

Nothing, you should teach as you do on every other day of the year. For announced observations, some evaluators may ask for a lesson plan beforehand, and some teachers like to share what they will be teaching in advance, but you are not expected to do anything out of the ordinary. Observations are just one of multiple ways to collect data, along with the sources of evidence and measures of student learning submitted in other parts of this evaluation. The goal with each is to provide as complete a picture of your effectiveness as possible.

2. Should teachers collect additional evidence to support their Professional Practice rating?

No, the eight components on the Teacher Professional Practice Rubric are 100% observable, and each component is rated after each observation. No additional evidence is needed to determine a rating on the Teacher Professional Practice Rubric.

3. Why are the components on the Teacher Professional Practice rubric labeled 2a through 3d?

We adapted Charlotte Danielson's 2013 Framework for Teaching to assess professional practice. The Rhode Island Model Teacher Professional Practice rubric adopted the same component numbering system used within the Framework for Teaching.

4. If I am observed more than three times, will the additional classroom observations be factored into my overall Professional Practice Rating?

Yes, the EPSS will average up to six classroom observation scores.

5. Why did the measures and weights in the Rhode Island Model change as of September 2015?

Feedback from the field indicated that the matrix approach to scoring was confusing and that a points-based approach would be a more transparent and efficient scoring method. RIDE will monitor feedback from the field through mid-year and end-of-year surveys and continue to refine the model as needed.

6. Why does student learning hold the most weight?

Although educators hold varied responsibilities, Rhode Island values first and foremost the educator's role in teaching and supporting students to grow and achieve their goals. The Educator Evaluation System Standards, which inform the development and implementation of educator evaluation in Rhode Island, state the following: "Educator evaluation emphasizes the professional practice, impact on student learning, demonstration of professional responsibilities, and requisite content knowledge for all Rhode Island Educators. An educator's overall evaluation of effectiveness is primarily determined by evidence of impact on student growth and academic achievement." However, if you look at all of the Professional Practice components in the Rhode Island Model, they equal 50% of an educator's evaluation final effectiveness rating. Therefore, we have seen a recent shift in rating weight to Professional Practice.

Section 3 - Rhode Island Model Support Professional Evaluation and Support System

1. Who will be evaluating support professionals?

Districts have the flexibility to decide who will complete evaluations of their support professionals. This could include building principals/assistant principals, central office staff, regional staff or others as deemed appropriate by the district. Identified evaluators have the opportunity to complete an in-depth evaluation training with RIDE staff each summer and early fall. .

2. Where can I obtain information about the RI Model for Support Professionals Evaluation and Support System?

You can find the guidebook, rubrics, and online modules on the RIDE website at: http://www.ride.ri.gov/EdEval.

3. Who can I contact if I have questions?

You can contact your building administrator, district's evaluation committee or access online resources on the RIDE website at: http://www.ride.ri.gov/EdEval.

For additional questions you may contact RIDE staff directly at edeval@ride.ri.gov.

Section 4 - Rhode Island Model Building Administrator Evaluation and Support System

1. What should I do differently during a school visit?

Nothing, you should act as you do on every other day of the year. For announced school visits, some evaluators may ask to observe something specific or review certain documents, but you are not expected to do anything out of the ordinary. School visits are just one of multiple ways to collect data, along with the sources of evidence and measures of student learning submitted in other parts of this evaluation. The goal with each is to provide as complete a picture of your effectiveness as possible.

2. Why is Professional Responsibilities part of the evaluation system?

It is included in the evaluation system because we believe building administrator growth and student success depend on the collective efforts in these areas.

3. When/how will I receive feedback on Professional Responsibilities?

The Mid-Year and End-of-Year Conferences provide formal opportunities to receive feedback and discuss the evidence and performance related to Professional Responsibilities, but evaluators can provide ongoing feedback as well. The components of the Building Administrator Professional Responsibilities rubric are scored holistically at the end of the year.

4. Why do building administrators write SLOs instead of SOOs?

Building administrators are the instructional leaders of their schools. Improving teaching and learning within their buildings should be at the core of building administrators' responsibilities. Therefore, the SLO measures a building administrator's impact on student learning through demonstrated progress toward academic goals.

Section 5 - Student Learning Objectives (SLOs)

1. How do I know what content to focus on?

First, if possible, collaborate with other teachers who teach the same grade/subject/course, so that you are not going through the process in isolation. To determine the priority content for an SLO, begin with the standard(s) appropriate for your grade level and content in addition to curriculum materials that are currently being used in the course to determine what should be taught and what students need to know and be able to do by the end of the grade or course. Refer to grade level content standards, curriculum maps, and units of study, to consider which standards are particularly critical for the grade level or course. You may also find that historical data is useful to determine what content students have needed more support in past years. If a particular area appears to be troublesome, it may warrant additional focus in the form of an SLO. In addition, SLOs may also be informed by district and school priorities and/or building administrator SLOs.

2. Can I write absenteeism clauses into my Objective Statement such as, "For those students who are present 80% of the time?"

No, because a Student Learning Objective must include all students on the roster for the course or subject area with which the objective is aligned, and attendance clauses potentially exclude students. However, student attendance issues may apply to a revision of a SLO/SOO during the mid-year conference. Changes can be made to a SLO/SOO in extreme cases. See question #9.

3. How many standards should I include in my Student Learning Objective?

There is no correct number of standards for any teacher to include in their Student Learning Objective. The selection of standards should be strategic and include those that directly apply to the Objective Statement and corresponding Evidence Source which are connected to the curriculum, national content standards, and/or Common Core expectations for that grade or content level . Refer to the Measures of Student Learning section of the Rhode Island Model Evaluation & Support System guidebook for more information on the priority of content.

4. Do I need to include all students for whom I am responsible for in my set of Student Learning Objectives?

While we aspire for all students for whom a teacher is responsible to be included in their set of Student Learning Objectives, it is not a requirement. However, no student enrolled in a grade or course should be excluded from a Student Learning Objective for that grade or course and the SLO should include baseline data and appropriate targets.

5. I teach in a district with high mobility, so my roster often looks different by January than it does in September. How do I set Student Learning Objectives for students that I haven't even met?

You should set your Student Learning Objectives based upon the students who are on your roster at the beginning of the school year. At mid-year, you and your evaluator should sit down and compare your current roster to the roster upon which the targets were set. If there are substantial differences between your current roster and the roster upon which the targets were set, the targets may need to be

adjusted. Students who are added or removed from the roster after mid-year should not contribute to the results of the Student Learning Objective. However, teachers should continue to monitor the progress of any newly added students throughout the remainder of the year.

6. What should I use as baseline data? Do I need to conduct a pre- and post-test for each SLO?

Data that provides an indication of students' skill or knowledge level at the beginning of the course can be used as baseline data to inform the setting of targets. This could include a teacher-created or commercial assessment and focused on either the current or previous grade's standards and content.

In all scenarios baseline data is a must, however, a pre-test/post-test model is not required and, in some cases, would be inappropriate. Again, the function of the baseline assessment is to provide information about where students are starting so that appropriate targets can be set.

Baseline data can be used in two primary ways for Student Learning Objectives. The first use is for creating groups of students based upon the baseline results. Separate mastery targets for each group are then set. For this purpose the format of the assessment does not need to match the format of the assessment being used as evidence in the Student Learning Objective. For example, the summative assessment used as evidence may include a performance task, whereas a paper-based test was used to collect a baseline measure of similar skills and content. The second use of baseline data is consistent with the notion of a pre-test/post-test model. In this case baseline data from a pre-test is used to determine the starting point (baseline) for students. The results are then used for comparison purposes when progress is being measured for the Student Learning Objective. In this scenario summative data is compared to the baseline data and the same format of assessment must be used.

7. Do I have to set tiered targets?

No, tiered targets do not need to be set if all students are entering the course with the same level of foundational knowledge and skills, and they are all expected to reach a certain benchmark by the end of the interval of instruction. For example, tiered targets may not apply for teachers of an introductory class or elective in which students rarely enter with foundational knowledge and for which the objective is for all students to acquire a basic set of skills or reach a basic level of proficiency. However, for the majority of classes and courses, students will enter at different levels and tiered targets will be needed in order to ensure that they are appropriately rigorous and attainable for all students.

8. Do I have to set mastery or progress-based objectives and targets?

The Student Learning Objective form in EPSS no longer requires educators to specify whether or not they are setting mastery or progress-based objectives and targets, although it is helpful to think about the type when setting the objective and targets. A Student Learning Objective can be written to measure students' mastery of standards, students' progress toward standards, or both. They are simply two different ways to think about and measure student learning. Depending on the content, baseline data, and evidence source(s), one type of objective and corresponding targets may be more or less appropriate than the other. For example, if the objective is for students to acquire a set of skills or meet a certain minimum level of proficiency, a mastery objective is the most appropriate. However, if the

objective is for students to make a certain amount of progress on a continuum, such as reading level, a progress objective is the most appropriate. In some cases, it might make sense to set a mastery target for some students (75% of students will meet proficiency) and a progress target for others (25% of students will improve their performance by two or more levels on the rubric from the baseline to the final assessment).

9. Can Student Learning Objective be revised mid-year?

At the Mid-Year Conference, the educator and their evaluator will review available student learning data and reexamine the Student Learning Objective to determine if adjustments should be made. Adjustments may be made if:

- Based on new information gathered since they were set, objectives fail to address the most important learning challenges in the classroom or school.
- New, more reliable sources of evidence are available.
- Class compositions have changed significantly.
- Teaching schedule or assignment has changed significantly.

10. Is there guidance around whether or not to include student data at the end of the year for students who are not present for the full year?

There is no minimum number of days that a student must be present in order for their data to be included. However, students added to an educator's roster after the mid-year or who are no longer on an educator's roster at the end of the interval of instruction (e.g., quarter, semester, year) should not be included in the final compilation of results for a Student Learning Objective.

For students with chronic absenteeism who are not progressing as expected, educators should include applicable student attendance data (e.g., five students were chronically absent for more than 50% of class time) as part of the evidence for a Student Learning Objective. The process for scoring individual Student Learning Objectives begins with a review of the evidence, and the evaluator should consider relevant student attendance data when scoring an individual Student Learning Objective as Exceeded, Met, Nearly Met, or Not Met. Additionally, the Mid-Year Conference represents an opportunity to revise the supports and interventions in place to help student(s) who are not progressing as expected, and accelerate their progress.

11. I teach multiple courses. Therefore, how should I determine for which classes I write SLOs?

Some teachers, especially at the secondary level, teach multiple courses. The teacher and the evaluator should make decisions together about which area(s) of their teaching assignment to focus their Student Learning Objectives. Generally, teachers should focus Student Learning Objectives on courses in which they teach the most students in their teaching assignment, and courses in which there are areas of need.

12. If I teach a course that does not last a full year do I still set Student Learning Objectives?

Yes, all teachers need to set at least two Student Learning Objectives, but the timeline should be condensed to match the duration of the course. Teachers can either set an Student Learning Objective that applies across groups of students and aggregate results to measure attainment (e.g., a year-long Student Learning Objective that combines fall and spring semester students for the full year), or set Student Learning Objectives that apply to a single semester or a shorter interval of instruction (e.g., quarters).

13. Can I write two Student Learning Objectives for fall semester and not have any for the spring?

No, a set of Student Learning Objectives cannot be set for just one half of the school year and not the other. The intent is for SLOs to document the impact that teachers are making on student learning throughout the year and not just part of the year.

14. If I teach a semester-long class twice in the year (fall, spring), can I repeat the same Student Learning Objective in two different semesters and just change the targets?

Teachers should write two SLOs that each have a different content focus. However, if a teacher teaches the same course multiple times in the year (e.g. fall and spring), then the SLO should include both sets of students. When writing the SLO, the teacher should set the targets for the first semester students. At the mid-year conference, the teacher should add the second semester students' baselines and targets to the SLO.

15. How do Student Learning Objectives connect to standards?

Student Learning Objectives should be aligned to state and national standards, including the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in English language arts and mathematics, Industry Standards (CTE), the Next Generation Science Standards, and other national content standards the pertain to the learning objective.

16. Is it acceptable that my department or my grade-level team has decided to share a Student Learning Objective?

Absolutely, the practice of collaboration and sharing of objectives by teams of educators (e.g., 2nd grade team, 9th grade ELA teachers, or Science Dept.) in the Student Learning Objective writing process is encouraged whenever possible. However, identical Student Learning Objectives cannot be used by teams of teachers unless they are co-teachers of the same students. Teams of teachers who are sharing a Student Learning Objective might have the same language in most sections, but must have distinct baseline data results and corresponding targets accounting for the students on their class roster.

17. What if I am the sole teacher for a particular grade and subject combination? Should I set Student Learning Objectives alone?

The practice of setting Student Learning Objectives in isolation is not a recommended practice. If a teacher does not have a team with which to develop Student Learning Objectives, they are encouraged to collaborate with teachers of the same course across the district or with teachers of other grades/content areas within their school. Though these teachers might teach different content, they may be able to assist in reviewing baseline data, identifying priority content areas, creating high-quality assessments, or administering and scoring the evidence.

18. Can a building administrator set a Student Learning Objective that teachers have to adopt as their own?

A building administrator is ultimately responsible for approving the Student Learning Objectives for the teachers on their case load and can require teachers to adopt certain elements of a Student Learning Objective, including the objective statement, standards, and evidence source. However, certain elements of a Student Learning Objectives must be differentiated for the teacher's specific assignment and students. The targets, for example, should be set based on the students' specific baseline data.

19. What if I teach one course but my main responsibilities are administrative (such as a Department Chair or Librarian)? Will I be evaluated as a teacher, including Student Learning Objectives, even though my teaching assignment is only a small portion of my job?

Educators whose main responsibility is not teaching, but who do teach a course, should discuss with their evaluator which evaluation model makes the most sense based upon their role and responsibilities.

20. Can I use the same Student Learning Objective as last year, even if I have different students?

If an educator is teaching the same course and the objective statement remains a critical focus of the student learning in that class, teachers are encouraged to continue working with a Student Learning Objective from the previous year. Teachers should revisit any previously used Student Learning Objective at the beginning of each interval of instruction to make any necessary revisions, including, updating baseline data and targets for the students currently in that class.

21. Can a district require an educator to use a particular assessment or assessment type in an SLO?

District and school administrators may set additional expectations or parameters related to the SLO, including assessments. However, it is encouraged that all administrators consider the appropriateness of the use of each assessment given the learning needs of the students in the class and the specific standards of the course.

22. Are there completed Student Learning Objective samples posted by grade level on the RIDE website?

Yes, there are Student Learning Objective samples by different grade level and content area posted on the RIDE [website](#).

Section 6 - Student Outcome Objectives (SOOs)

*answers to many SOO questions can be found in the SLO section

1. How do I decide what to make the focus of my SOO?

First, if possible, collaborate with other similar Support Professionals so that you are not going through the process in isolation. To determine the priority of content for a Student Outcome Objective, ask yourself:

- What are the most important knowledge/skill(s) I want my students to attain by the end of the interval of service?
- What is the specific outcome that I am working to achieve with my students?
- Is the objective focused on important content/skills or conditions that facilitate access to learning?
- Is the SLO appropriate for the interval of instruction or service delivery, or is it too narrow or broad?

2. How large does my group need to be for my SOO?

While we aspire for all students for whom a Support Professional is responsible to be included in their set of Student Outcome Objectives, it is not a requirement. There is no size minimum; rather, the number of students included is dependent on the individual context of the Support Professional. However, no student enrolled in a program or service should be excluded from a Student Outcome Objective.

3. Can a group of Support Professionals use the same SOO?

Absolutely, the practice of collaboration and sharing of objectives by teams of support professionals (e.g., two Reading Specialists or all Library Media Specialists in a district) in the Student Outcome Objective writing process is encouraged whenever possible. However, identical Student Outcome Objectives cannot be used by teams of Support Professionals unless they are working together with the same students. Teams of Support Professionals who are sharing a Student Outcome Objective might have the same language in most sections, but must have distinct baseline data results and corresponding targets accounting for their own students.

4. Can Student Outcome Objective be revised mid-year?

At the Mid-Year Conference, the support professional and their evaluator will review available student outcome data and reexamine the Student Outcome Objective to determine if adjustments should be made. Adjustments may be made if:

- Based on new information gathered since they were set, objectives fail to address the most important knowledge or skills in the classroom or school.
- New, more reliable sources of evidence are available.
- Group compositions have changed significantly.
- Support schedule or assignment has changed significantly.

5. Can I use the same SOO next year?

If a Support Professional is acting in the same role with similar students and the objective statement remains a critical focus of the student outcomes in that situation, Support Professionals are encouraged to continue working with a Student Outcome Objective from the previous year. Support Professionals should revisit any previously used Student Outcome Objective at the beginning of each interval of service to make any necessary revisions, including, updating baseline data and targets for the students included.

6. How do I write an SOO if I work in more than one school?

If a Support Professional works in more than one school then the Support Professional should discuss with the Building Administrators in those schools to determine who will be the primary evaluator. The Support Professional could have one SLO in each school.

7. Are there completed Student Outcome Objective samples posted on the RIDE website?

Yes, there are Student Outcome Objective samples posted on the RIDE website.

Section 7 - Evaluation System Reporting Requirements

1. Why do LEAs need to submit evaluation data to RIDE?

Standard Six of the Evaluation System Standards establishes the expectation that LEAs report evaluation data to RIDE. RIDE uses evaluation data for certification renewal decisions as well as to monitor the quality and fidelity of evaluation systems and to guide RIDE in improving evaluation systems across the state. In addition, RIDE requires all employing agencies to report the performance status and assignment of all certified employed educators including any person who is dismissed for performance-based related reasons.

2. What data elements will LEAs report to RIDE?

LEAs using the Rhode Island Model will report the following data elements to RIDE through the EPSS: Professional Practice ratings (PP), Professional Responsibilities (PR) ratings, Student Learning Objective ratings, and final effectiveness ratings.

In June 2016, Achievement First, Coventry, and districts using the Innovation Consortium model will report the following data elements to RIDE through the EPSS: Professional Practice ratings (PP), Professional Responsibilities (PR) ratings, combined PP and PR scores, Student Learning Objective ratings; and final effectiveness ratings.

3. Will RIDE release evaluation data to the media?

The Access to Public Records Act in Rhode Island is clear that "information in personnel files maintained to hire, evaluate, promote, or discipline any employee of a public body" is "exempt from public disclosure." Educator evaluations definitely fall within this category, and therefore the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) will not release individual evaluation results to the public or to the media. Former RIDE Commissioner Deborah Gist sent a letter to all educators in March 2012 that further explained this safeguard.

Section 8 - Certification Renewal and Educator Evaluation

1. Why is my evaluation tied to my certification renewal?

We believe that implementing a fair, accurate, and meaningful evaluation and support system will help improve student outcomes. The primary purpose of the Rhode Island Model is to help all educators become more effective in their work. In the past, certification renewal was tied to professional development and education credits. Effective January 1, 2012, the renewal decision for all educator certifications that are issued after January 1, 2012, regardless of model, is based exclusively on performance. An educator's performance for the purposes of certification renewal is determined by the evaluation ratings the educator receives from state approved, local evaluation systems.

More information on certification can be found at: [Renewal Based on Performance](#)

2. When will evaluation ratings count toward certification renewal for educators in regular assignments and part-time assignments?

For educators who are in regular assignments for 135 days or more, their final effectiveness rating that is reported to RIDE will be used as part of the certification renewal process. Regular employment is defined as any appointment to a tenure-track position in a public school that requires the individual to hold a certificate issued by RIDE. Substitute teachers (per-diem or long-term), individuals working pursuant to a limited-period appointment, and holders of an emergency permit do not hold regular employment.

3. How does a final effectiveness rating of *Developing* impact certification renewal?

If an educator earns at least one final-effectiveness rating of *Developing* or higher, the Professional Educator Certificate will be renewed as a five-year Professional Educator Certificate. In some cases, the educator will also need to submit evidence of professional development for ratings of *Developing* or *Ineffective*. RIDE will audit individuals to ensure that standards for the submission of professional development meet expectations that apply to either performance category. If an educator earns all *Effective* or *Highly Effective* ratings, they will not need to submit evidence of professional development as part of the certification renewal process. More information regarding certification renewal can be found [here](#).

4. How will educators in private schools or educators who are not currently working become recertified if evaluation ratings are used for certification renewal of public school teachers?

Educators not currently working in Rhode Island public schools can renew current certificates by submitting an application and paying the appropriate fees on time.