



INDIANA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

TO: State Board of Education Strategic Planning Committee

FROM: Ashley Cowger, Chief of Staff, State Board of Education

DATE: July 16, 2015

RE: Stakeholder Design Committee Recommendations: Use of Objective Measures of Student Learning in Educator Evaluations

Introduction & Background

Following the February 2015 State Board of Education (SBOE) meeting, the Strategic Planning Committee convened a group of highly-engaged and knowledgeable stakeholders to examine specific aspects of Indiana's educator evaluation policies and practices and offer recommendations for improvement. This group – the Stakeholder Design Committee (SDC) – is comprised of about 20 members who bring a wide range of experiences, knowledge and perspectives to this work. The members include teachers, principals, school corporation administrators, members of higher education with expertise in teacher performance and evaluation, as well as leaders of local associations.

Over the last four months, the SDC has considered and developed recommendations for issues that the Strategic Planning Committee identified as immediate priorities. As shared at the April 2015 Strategic Planning Committee, the SDC has already offered Vision, Belief and Theory of Action statements for educator evaluations for the Strategic Planning Committee's consideration. The Vision statement is included below and the full set of Vision, Belief and Theory of Action statements are included in the appendix to this memorandum.

Vision: *Educator evaluation in Indiana will be a collaborative system that strengthens teaching and learning by sustaining a culture of confidence and support for all stakeholders.*

Using the Vision, Belief and Theory of Action statements to guide their work, SDC immediately turned its attention to an outstanding concern for the SBOE and educators across the state: the use of objective measure of student learning. To inform their analysis and recommendations regarding the use of objective measures, the SDC considered the following:

- Current statutory and regulatory requirements for use of objective measures in educator evaluations
- The current use of objective measures in educator evaluations across the state
- Educator perception and experiences with the use of objective measures in educator evaluations, as expressed in the recent statewide educator evaluation survey
- Individual experience with or professional expertise related to educator evaluation

The remainder of this memorandum presents their recommendations for using objective measures of student learning in educator evaluations.

Recommendations

In general, most SDC members expressed concern with the wide range (5-50%) of weights currently being used across districts for objective measures of student learning. The majority of committee members are comfortable defining "significantly inform" by establishing a range of acceptable weights for objective measures of student learning between 20-40%. However, the SDC would prefer to ground its recommendation in empirical evidence specific to Indiana.

To that end, the SDC is recommending an audit of the last four years of evaluation outcomes to identify successful evaluation designs and practices. This audit would examine the empirical data for a variety of system elements and implementation practices that we have been unable to examine to date, including whether there is a connection between the weights and types of objective measures and student, teacher and school performance.

In addition to the definition of "significantly inform," the committee also recommends additional guidance be issued to clarify the types of objective measures that can be used and the responsibilities of state and local entities.

Each component of the SDC's recommendations is described in more detail below.

Definition of Objective Measures of Student Learning: First, the SDC established a definition for Objective Measures of Student Learning, which is captured by the two statements below:

- Objective measures of student learning is an outcome statement of student performance requiring measureable data to support instructional goals.
- Objective measures of student learning allow a valid and reliable assessment of skill and knowledge, attitudes, and opinion with an agreed upon standard or criteria recognized by a properly qualified and/or trained individual or by an individual who is informed in its administration, scoring and interpretation.

This definition is consistent with the Belief and Theory of Action statements that speak to fairness and accuracy. In particular, this definition ensures the evaluation system will be based on quality research and professional teaching standards and will use multiple.

Acceptable Types of Objective Measures: The SDC identified several measures that, if well-designed and implemented, may meet the definition of objective measures of student learning. The approved types of objective measures that may be used include, but are not limited to, the measures listed below. Additional measures may be added to this list so long as they meet the definition of objective measures of student learning above.

- Student academic growth based on school- or teacher-generated assessments aligned to learning standards
- Student engagement levels
- Student work products assessed according to standardized rubrics
- School-wide student growth
- School-wide student achievement
- Student growth using state standardized test scores (for those grades and subjects where data are available)
- Student achievement using state standardized test scores (for those grades and subjects where data are available)
- Surveys (Students, Teachers, Parents, Community, etc.)

The SDC also recommends that the acceptable objective measures be categorized into the following categories

- 1) Student learning growth
- 2) Student learning achievement
- 3) Climate and Culture (Note: Measures of climate and culture (e.g. student, teacher, parent surveys) could alternatively be considered as part of a teacher's professional practice rating or the Educator Effectiveness Rubric (EER)).¹

Additionally, the SDC recommends that when changes are made to the approved list of objective measures or the categorization of objective measures, the State should provide updated guidance for their use.

¹ Teacher Effectiveness Rubric (TER) should be renamed to Educator Effectiveness Rubric (EER) to align with the recommended vision statement that emphasizes alignment of evaluation systems for all educators.

This recommendation directly supports the Belief and Theory of Action statement that prioritizes providing training and guidance to stakeholders about different types of objective measures for purposes of fairness and accuracy.

Definition of Significantly Inform: As mentioned above, nearly all SDC members expressed concern with how inconsistently school corporations are considering student learning in assessing teacher performance. As a result, the committee agreed that a definition for “significantly inform” is appropriate, and most members agree that establishing a range would achieve the most consistent results without diminishing local decision-making. However, a few members were reluctant to support that approach.

Therefore, the full committee agreed that an alternate approach could be to define “significantly inform” by establishing standards for the acceptable use of objective measures and the desired outcomes that should result from the use of objective measures. These standards are aligned with the SDC’s Vision, Belief and Theory of Action statements, particularly with the Belief and Theory of Action Statements that speak to transparency, fairness and accuracy.

The SDC wished to present both sets of recommendations to the Strategic Planning Committee because a substantial portion of the SDC endorses both recommendations and they are both aligned with the SDC’s Vision, Belief and Theory of Action statements. The two sets of recommendations are summarized below.

Majority Recommendation: A majority of the SDC is comfortable with defining significantly inform to mean that between 20-40% of an educator’s overall evaluation rating is based on objective measures of student learning. This recommendation particularly supports the Belief and Theory of Action statement that states: “In order to be easy to explain and implement, the educator evaluation system will be simply written and vetted by practitioners prior to implementing.”

Full Consensus Recommendation: An alternative approach with which the whole committee is comfortable would be to establish standards for defining “significantly inform.”

Standards for Defining “Significantly Inform:” Some possible standards for consideration include:

- 1) Student growth and EER ratings should complement and validate each other.
- 2) Student growth and EER ratings should not contradict each other.
- 3) Student growth should be determined by the preponderance of evidence obtained from multiple measures.
- 4) The relationship between student growth and the summative evaluation should be evidenced/demonstrated through a review and analysis of district data.

Any inconsistencies in the relationships between EER ratings and student growth should be reviewed and documented for accuracy and understanding.

This recommendation particularly supports the Belief and Theory of Action statement that states: “In order to be transparent and collaborative, the design and implementation of the educator evaluation systems must include input from all stakeholders throughout the process.”

Recommendation for Additional Study: Before formally adopting a definition of significantly inform, the SDC recommends an “evaluation audit” be conducted to further study what current practices regarding the use of objective measures are yielding successful outcomes and to confirm the validity of their recommendations. Evaluation Audit: The SDC recommends that Indiana conduct an Evaluation Audit to examine the last four years of evaluation outcomes and to study a variety of system elements and implementation practices, including ranges of weights for objective measures that districts are currently using. Specific research questions should be defined by field experts and reviewed by the SDC before the audit commences.

The goal of the audit is to identify successful design components and implementation practices that strengthen teaching and learning by sustaining a culture of confidence and support for all stakeholders. These best practices can then be scaled and spread across the state.

The benefit of this audit is that it will yield Indiana-specific data on which any future recommendations can be based. In addition, this approach supports several of the SDC’s Belief and Theory of Action statements, especially the following statements:

- “In order to be fair and accurate, the educator evaluation system will be based on quality research and professional teaching standards.”
- “In order to support continuous growth, exemplars will be provided in the form of model districts who have equitable and efficient plans.”

Division of Responsibilities between the State and the School Corporation

To ensure there is a clear designation between the state and school corporations’ duties, the SDC recommends the following division of responsibilities:

The State’s responsibilities regarding objective measures of student learning include:

- 1) Providing resources and guidance (e.g. list of acceptable products and processes, including exemplars) for school corporations and schools
- 2) Monitoring, reviewing and auditing the chosen types of objective measures and their use at the local level
- 3) Holding the district accountable for meeting the standards for defining significantly inform.

School Corporations are responsible for developing high quality educator evaluation plans and implementing with fidelity based on the criteria and guidance provided by the State.

This division of responsibilities supports the Belief and Theory of Action statements that speak to transparency, fairness and continuous growth.

Resources: Throughout its discussion of objective measures of student learning, the SDC continually returned to the need for high-quality resources to support with the selection or development of objective measures and their use. The SDC recommends that available resources should be made more user friendly and aligned with the defined Vision, Beliefs and Theory of Action of Educator Evaluation.

The recommendation for additional resources related to objective measures is directly aligned with the Belief and Theory of Action statements that emphasize the importance of continuous growth as well as ease of explanation and implementation.

Conclusion & Next Steps

The SDC has diligently considered a wide range of policies and practices to improve Indiana’s current use of objective measures of student learning in educator evaluations. From their thorough deliberation and debate of the issues, the SDC has concluded that the above adjustments to the state’s current policies and practices would improve educator

evaluations and help Indiana achieve the Vision the SDC defined for educator evaluation. The SDC respectfully submits the above recommendations for consideration and looks forward to your questions and feedback.

Over the next several weeks, the SDC will be considering options for improving educator evaluation resources and training as well as communications practices. Their recommendations on these topics will be presented to the Strategic Planning Committee in September.