IN THIS ISSUE

Dear Illinois Educator,
Now that fall is here, we are sure your school year is well underway and you are in the midst of full PERA implementation. If you are an evaluator, your days are most likely filled with pre-observation conferences, observations and post-observation conferences. We know how busy you are, so Y*our Virtual PERA Coach i*s designed to deliver guidance and helpful information to your inbox so you don't have to search for it.

This issue of the PERA Coach focuses on the formal observation process and provides reminders of the PERA requirements regarding observations. In addition, we give you suggestions for conducting collaborative conferences with teachers. We also continue to address time management for evaluators since it remains a challenge to schedule all the observations and conferences on top of the many other job requirements.

Another question we get asked often is about evaluator certification renewal. Therefore, we share the latest information from the Illinois State Board of Education.

Teacher Evaluator Certification Renewal Information

The state released the following information regarding the process for teacher evaluator* retraining. **Information regarding principal evaluator retraining will be forthcoming.**

Evaluators who have taken the initial evaluator training (Growth Through Learning Modules or district-developed) must complete retraining "once within the next renewal cycle"(105 ILCS 5/24A-3). The chart below provides a guide for determining when retraining must be completed. Please note that retraining is connected to the *renewal cycle of the license (PEL)*.

Retraining will be offered through the Administrator's Academies. Retraining through the Administrator Academy structure will allow for the inclusion of teachers who have successfully completed initial evaluator training, but do not hold an administrator endorsement on their PEL. Two academies are required to meet the retraining requirement.

One will address teacher practice, and the other will address student growth. The academies neither need to be taken in any particular order, nor do they have to be taken together.

Districts are reminded that they have the option of developing their own retraining program, districts choosing to do so they must notify the State Board of Education no later than July 1 immediately preceding the school year in which the process or program will be implemented. The notification shall at least include the type of training to be offered, names of the individuals presenting the training, and date upon which each school district-designated trainer completed the "train-the-trainers" program offered by, or on behalf of, the State Board of Education (Part 50 Administrative Rule section 50.400(c)).

*Evaluator" as set forth in Section 24A2.5 or 24A-15 of the School Code

Sample Scenarios for First Retraining

Renewal Cycle	Date of Retraining
As a teacher evaluator, if I took the initial training in 2012 and renewed my license by July 1st, 2013.	My retraining must be completed by June 30th,2018.
As a teacher evaluator, if I renewed my license by July 1st, 2014	My retraining must be completed by June 30th, 2019
As a teacher evaluator, if I renewed my license by July 1st, 2015	My retraining must be completed by June 30th, 2020
As a teacher evaluator, if I renewed my license by July 1st, 2016	My retraining must be completed by June 30th, 2021
As a teacher evaluator, if I renew my license by July 1st, 2017	My retraining must be completed by June 30th, 2022

GUIDANCE FOR CONDUCTING OBSERVATIONS

Part 50 Rules About Observations*

Evidence of professional practice shall be collected through the use of multiple observations that include formal and informal observations. A formal observation shall allow the qualified evaluator to acquire evidence of the teacher's planning, instructional delivery, and classroom management skills and shall involve one of the following activities: an observation of the teacher in his or her classroom for **a minimum of 45 minutes at a time**; **or** an observation during a **complete lesson**; **or** an observation during **an entire class period.**

For each **nontenured teacher, a minimum of three observations** shall be required each school year, of which **two must be formal** observations.

For each **tenured teacher** who received either an **"excellent" or "proficient" performance evaluation rating in his or her last performance evaluation, a**

minimum of two observations are required during the cycle in which the current evaluation is conducted, one of which must be a formal observation.

For each **tenured teacher who received a "needs improvement" or "unsatisfactory"** performance evaluation rating in his or her last performance evaluation, **a minimum of three observations** shall be required **in the school year immediately following the year** in which the "needs improvement" or "unsatisfactory" rating was assigned, of which **two must be formal observations.**

Pre-Observation Conferences

Each formal observation shall be **preceded by a conference** between the qualified evaluator and the teacher. In advance of this conference, **the teacher shall submit to the qualified evaluator a written lesson or unit plan and/or other evidence of planning** for the instruction that will be conducted during the window of time when the formal observation may occur and make recommendations for areas on which the qualified evaluator should focus during the observation.

The qualified evaluator and the teacher shall discuss the lesson or unit plan or instructional planning and any areas on which the qualified evaluator should focus during the observation, if applicable.

> The pre-observation conference can be used to:
> *** Create a safe environment** for teachers to respond openly to questions and share thinking about their practice.
>
> ***** Collect authentic evidence of teacher knowledge and decision making around lesson design.
>
> *** Coach and guide** a teacher toward deeper reflection and to provide opportunities for lesson refinement, if needed, to maximize student learning.

Since some of the components in instructional frameworks (e.g. Domains 1 and 4 in the Danielson Framework) are non-observable, districts can choose to collect evidence for these through the pre- or post-observation conferences. Examples of this might include reviewing artifacts (lesson plans and other documents submitted by teachers) and asking questions and recording answers about these components.

Post Observation Conferences

Following a formal observation, the qualified evaluator shall meet with the teacher to discuss the evidence collected about the teacher's professional practice. The qualified **evaluator shall provide feedback** following a formal evaluation to the teacher **in writing (electronic or paper).**

The teacher shall consider (that is, reflect upon) his or her instruction and, if applicable, **may provide** to the qualified evaluator **additional information or explanations about the lesson presented**.

The qualified **evaluator shall provide feedback to the teacher about the individual's professional practice, including evidence specific to areas of focus designated during the conference preceding the observation.**

If the qualified evaluator determines that **the evidence** collected to date **may result in the teacher receiving either a "needs improvement" or "unsatisfactory"** performance evaluation rating, **then the qualified evaluator shall notify the teacher of that**

determination.

The teacher shall work with the qualified evaluator or others (e.g., professional learning team, department head), as determined in the plan, **to identify areas for improvement.**

Following an **informal observation**, the qualified **evaluator shall provide feedback to the teacher either orally or in writing (electronic or paper)** and **if the feedback is in a written format**, also **provide the teacher with an opportunity to have an in-person discussion** with the evaluator.

Evidence gathered during the informal observations may be considered in determining the performance evaluation rating, provided it is documented in writing.

* Please note these are the requirements of the Part 50 administrative rules; additional, specific requirements may also be included in your district's locally developed teacher evaluation plan.

REFLECTIVE CONVERSATIONS

The conference component of performance evaluations can provide opportunities for teachers to identify areas for which they are seeking feedback and to share with their evaluator knowledge and expertise of their content area, students, and instructional practice. Conferences are a time for evaluators to engage with teachers in collaborative conversations, provide valuable insight about their practice, help guide them to identify areas for growth, and connect them with professional learning or support opportunities. Evaluators should use coaching conversation strategies to support reflective thinking and to create more meaningful dialogue. Some suggestions include the following:

- Ask open-ended questions.
- Practice wait-time, so that the teacher can reflect and provide full responses.
- Remember to talk less and listen more.
- Ask probing questions to encourage the teacher to reflect and consider how the evaluator's feedback and guidance connects to what he/she knows about his/her classroom.
- Ask clarifying questions to learn more about instructional decisions the teacher has made about the lesson.
- Use some of the possible sentence starter stems shown below. Click here for a full-size copy.

Language of Support
Coaching Stems for Teacher Evaluators

PARAPHRASING	CLARIFYING
Paraphrasing involves either restating in your own words, or summarizing what the other person has said. Possible starter stems include: • *In other words...* • *What you are saying...* • *Your plan seems to....* • *You are saying many things...* • *From what you are saying...*	**Clarifying** involves asking a question to: 1. Gather more information 2. Discover meaning 3. Get clarity about the teacher's reasoning 4. Seek connections between ideas 5. Develop or maintain a focus Some clarifying stems include: • *Would you tell me more about...?* • *Let me see if I understand...* • *I'd be interested in hearing more about...* • *It would help me understand if you'd give me an example...* • *Tell me what you mean when you...* • *To what extent..?* • *I'm curious to know more about...*
PROBING QUESTIONS	**SUGGESTIONS**
Probing questions encourage the teacher to • Hypothesize what might happen • Analyze what worked and what didn't • Imagine possibilities • Compare and Contrast what was planned with what actually happened **Possible starter stems include:** •*What's another way you might...?* •*What would it look like if...?* •*What might happen if you...?* •*How do you decide...?*	**Possible suggestion stems include:** • *One thing I've learned/noticed is...* • *A couple of things to keep in mind...* • *What I know about___ is...* • *There are a number of approaches...* • *Sometimes it's helpful if...* • *There are a number of approaches...* Try following a suggestion with a question that invites the teacher to imagine/hypothesize how the idea might work in his/her context • *How might that look in your classroom?* • *To what extent might that work in your situation/with your students?* • *What do you imagine might happen if you were to try something like that with your students?*

Initial Planning Conferences
The start of the year provides an opportunity for initial planning conferences and reflective conversations.

Suggested topics for beginning of the year conferences with teachers include:

- The evaluation **process/timeline** that will be used (including the number of observations that will be conducted for each particular teacher)
- Professional growth **goals** that might have been set at the end of the previous year or goal setting for beginning teachers (Goals can include district goals, building goals, team goals, and individual teacher goals and might be determined from previous student data)
- **Data** to be used to measure student growth (including approval of Type III assessments and growth targets)
- **Feedback** (from students, parent, peers, etc.)

Mid-Year Conferences
Another opportunity for reflective conversations can occur at the midpoint of the evaluation cycle. The district's Joint Committee should have identified a uniform process for this mid-point review during which the teacher collects formative data. The mid-year conference is sometimes held in conjunction with a pre- or post-observation meeting. The teacher and evaluator discuss the formative assessment results and progress toward meeting the growth target. This type of conference allows teachers to see all of their evaluation data in one context prior to any personal consequences and while they still have an opportunity to improve their practice. Teachers can use the midyear evaluation conference to discuss progress made so far, what supports have been helpful, and what midcourse corrections still need to be made. This formative data shall not be used to determine the teacher's summative rating for student growth.

Click here for an editable sample protocol*, shown below on the left, developed by PEAC,

with example questions to guide the mid-cycle discussion. This template was designed for use with SLOs, but can be modified to use with any type of student growth goal.

Click here for an additional editable sample protocol*, shown below on the right, developed by Bensenville School District #2. It contains questions that ask the teacher to look for trends in the data and to identify root causes for the results.

*These samples and examples are a small part of a comprehensive evaluation plan. Each evaluation plan has been locally created in each school district based on discussion and consideration of local needs, culture, climate and context. Samples are provided as a resource to evaluators but should not be considered to be competing with the expectations and requirements of locally developed plans.

TIME MANAGEMENT FOR EVALUATORS

Evaluators continue to ask how to find time for all of the observations and conferences required as part of a performance evaluation system. Investing the time for these essential components helps to ensure that the process results in improved instruction and student growth.

Evaluators should reflect upon and reassess the activities they do each day. There are only so many hours in a day so additional activities can't be added to an already packed day without removing some nonessential activities.

Evaluators, especially principals, should determine what non-administrative activities can be delegated to others. For example, is it necessary for a building principal to escort the fire official on an inspection of the fire extinguishers or is this something a custodian can do? Can building secretaries open and prioritize/sort mail and toss out the junk mail before it goes to the principal?

Additional tips for evaluators include:
* At the start of the school year, sketch out a tentative observation and conferencing schedule on your calendar; this ensures you meet district expectations and deadlines.
* Use a laptop computer as an efficient method of recording observation notes, post conference notes, and the summative evaluation.
* After an observation, remain in the classroom or return immediately to your office to double-check your notes and enter any remaining notes you did not record.
* Analyze the data at your earliest convenience.
* Make the post observation conference appointment during the pre-observation

conference, to ensure it is a priority in your schedule.

The August issue of *Your Virtual PERA Coach* featured a section on time management for evaluators. It contained additional suggestions experienced evaluators use to help them manage their time for observations and conferences. Topics covered included scheduling, a sample spreadsheet to organize the required observations and conferences, and ideas to help with efficiency during observations. Click here for a copy of the August issue.

Evaluators' Perspective

Two principals from different settings (one at the elementary level and the other at high school) share their thoughts about their practice and tips for managing all the observations and conferences:

Nicole Robinson,Co-principal
Tioga School, Bensenville

- Being in the classroom has to be scheduled into the day just like any other meeting. If it's not scheduled, I find I will get stuck in the office because there are constant emails, parent calls, etc. that will take away my attention from the most important part of my job. This year my co-principal (Carlos Azcoitia) and I have scheduled two coaching days each week, where we spend almost the entire school day in classrooms. We communicated this with staff so they understand that we may not be as responsive by email on those days, but there is always one principal available in the office on any given day. On one of my recent coaching days, I was able to get into 18 classrooms and I conducted several informal observations as well as SLO meetings with teachers in their classrooms during their plan periods.

- For time management in meeting deadlines, I set three observations a week beginning in mid to late September to stay on track. Again, if I don't schedule them in advance, then I will get behind. It's essential to plan a few weeks ahead and stay on track. Otherwise, you will have to rush through observation feedback and teachers deserve better. (Thankfully, our evaluation plan is very forgiving when you have to go past a suggested deadline!)

- I think besides the time management, it is my mindset about teacher evaluation that makes it easier for me. I believe that without a deep commitment to implementing a strong and effective evaluation system, we are disrespecting the profession. Teachers deserve to have instructional leaders and evaluators who care about their growth and development and are willing to put in the time it takes. Thinking back to when I was a teacher during the old evaluation system, I very rarely was given high quality, specific feedback on how I could grow. I don't ever want to do that to any of the teachers I support. Also, students suffer when they aren't exposed to high quality teachers and it is through the evaluation process that I can determine the quality of each educator. Because teacher quality is my number one priority, I won't allow the time to be compromised.

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Dr. Steve Koch, Principal
Prairie Ridge High School, Crystal Lake

- Plan ahead with the big picture in mind. Over the course of the semester there are only so many weeks, and several of these are already shortened for holidays. So in the beginning of the semester I'll contact all of my teachers whom I'm observing and at least agree upon the week that the observation will take place. This allows me to spread them out and not get into a bind later in the year. Typically, the more veteran the teacher, the earlier in the year I'll schedule their observation. I try to keep to one or two a week at most; Monday or Tuesday pre-conference, Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday observation, and Thursday or Friday post-conference; nothing on the same day, of course.

- Regarding time-saving tips - I haven't really found many. It's a time consuming process. After the observation, I send a copy of the transcript/notes I've taken to the teacher, and found that this really informs the post-conference. I try to capture as many quotes as possible so the teacher can see/hear the lesson again after teaching it. This doesn't save time, per se, but I've found good notes improve the quality of the post conference.

- I use Google calendar to help me organize my schedule, and now TalentEd this year to organize the data.

- As for delegating, I definitely use my administrative team to share the load of observations. We have a google sheet that we use to divide up the faculty not just for observations, but also for walkthroughs – this allows us to make sure that we are getting into 100% of our classrooms, and also keeps us from tripling up on any particular teacher by accident. It helps us all to plan out our visits for our own schedule and make sure we're doing our primary job: supporting teaching and learning.

Additional Website Links and Resources

Illinois State Board of Education's PERA webpage This site contains information and links to resources about the Performance Evaluation Reform Act.

Performance Evaluation Advisory Council's (PEAC) webpage This site contains links to guidance documents and resources to help teachers, administrators, PERA Joint Committees, and School Boards implement the Performance Evaluation Reform Act.

Previous PERA Coach Issues

Click the following links to view previous issues of Your Virtual PERA Coach

August 2016 Issue - start of the year requirements, an evaluation timeline and time management

May 2016 Issue - how to use evaluation data and sustainability

[April 2016 Issue](#) - getting ready for implementation and preparing an on-going communications plan

[March 2016 Issue](#) - spotlight on two district's journey to PERA implementation

[February 2016 Issue](#) - focus on optional weightings and determining Summative Ratings

[January 2016 Issue](#) - continued focus on assessing student growth and student learning objectives

[December 2015 Issue](#) - focus on assessing student growth

[November 2015 Issue](#) - focus on developing a communication plan and evaluating teacher practice

[October 2015 Issue](#) - focus on getting started and the work of the PERA joint committee

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