

## **PERSONALIZED LEARNING POLICY PLAY #10:** MODIFY TEACHER EVALUATION FRAMEWORKS TO FOSTER THE COLLABORATIVE TEACHING THAT OCCURS IN PERSONALIZED LEARNING CONTEXTS

### **CONTEXT**

More than 35 states have established new educator evaluation policies requiring evaluations to include evidence of impact on student learning. While these policies are based on an admirable goal—improving teacher effectiveness—they also reflect assumptions about how schools are organized that do not always apply in personalized learning contexts. Many of the new evaluation systems assume that each teacher is responsible for teaching a certain subject to a specific, identifiable group of children, and that a single teacher is accountable for each child’s learning in a given subject. Students participating in personalized learning models, however, may receive instruction in the same subject from multiple educators. For example, a student may receive math instruction by rotating among different modalities such as face-to-face instruction with a lead educator, instruction with an online educator, and online practice under the guidance of a paraprofessional. As a result, this student’s learning gains may not clearly map to an individual teacher.

Further, many state and district evaluations include formal observations of teachers’ classroom practice—such as Charlotte Danielson’s Frameworks for Teaching—that were designed for use in traditional classrooms using whole group instruction, and may not reflect effective practices in the kind of one-on-one and small group learning contexts that predominate in personalized learning settings.

This disconnect can create a challenge for schools seeking to implement personalized learning models. Without careful policy design, the mandate to incorporate student learning in individual teacher evaluations could present a barrier to implementing personalized learning models.

### **PLAY IN ACTION**

States and districts should provide flexibility for new models of educator evaluation that include appropriate metrics of impact on student learning in personalized learning contexts. Most states are building evaluation systems that include multiple measures of educator performance, including student learning outcomes, classroom observations, and, in some cases, peer or student surveys. States and districts should ensure that the multiple measures used in educator evaluation systems are broad enough to include appropriate indicators of teacher effectiveness in personalized learning contexts. Because blended learning models leverage technology to regularly collect data on student progress, these models produce a wealth of real-time data on teachers' impact on student learning that could be included in evaluations, as appropriate to the model used in a particular school.

States and districts could also create policies that allow a student's or a group of students' progress to be attributed to multiple educators, rather than to a single teacher of record. In 2013, New Hampshire released a model teacher evaluation system that allows for "shared attribution" of student academic growth. Under this model, schools may decide whether a student's results on state assessments should be shared among multiple educators. This type of system has a precedent in policies that require teacher evaluation systems to include school-wide student growth as a component of teachers'

evaluations. Nevada is one state that requires each teacher's evaluation to include school-wide student growth.

### **IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS**

Many existing state teacher evaluation policies already give local districts and schools flexibility to implement models that incorporate formative measures of student learning or hold groups of teachers collectively responsible for the learning outcomes of a group of students. In these states, districts simply need to be creative in taking advantage of the flexibility already in the laws. States can also help schools and districts by issuing guidance that explicitly addresses the application of teacher evaluation policies in personalized learning contexts.

If existing state policies create a barrier to innovative approaches for evaluating teachers in personalized learning settings, policymakers have two options: change the policies, or offer waivers to districts and schools implementing personalized learning models. Because many states have recently reformed their educator evaluation systems and these policies are controversial in some states, policymakers may prefer a waiver approach over reopening teacher evaluation policies at this point in time. If policymakers choose to offer waivers to schools using personalized learning models, these waivers should include clear parameters to ensure that the schools and districts

receiving them continue to include appropriate measures of student learning—at either an individual or a group level—in their teacher evaluations.

In addition, schools and districts that apply for waivers should be required to explain how their evaluation systems will address several key design questions. For example, schools and districts that attribute students' learning gains to multiple teachers will need rules and policies for doing so. A simple option might be to hold all teachers in schools, grades, or subjects that implement personalized learning models collectively responsible for the progress of students in those schools, grades, or subjects—as is already the case in states that include school-wide growth as a component of teacher evaluations. While these models would be simple to implement—and may have the benefit of encouraging collaboration among groups of teachers—they have also encountered opposition from teachers in some states, who feel it is unfair to hold them accountable for learning results of students with whom they do not work directly.

Alternatively, schools and districts could design systems that hold teachers accountable for learning gains of only those students with whom they work directly over the course of the year. Such systems could hold all educators working with one student equally responsible for that student's progress, or assign educators

a weight according to the amount of time they spend with the student over the course of the year. Either approach would require schools and districts to establish systems for tracking which teachers in personalized learning models work with which students. Schools would also need to define the minimum amount of time a teacher would have to spend working with a particular student for that student's results to factor into the teacher's evaluation.

States should allow schools and districts that receive waivers for new evaluation systems to decide for themselves how to address these design questions. But states should track these decisions in order to learn from the design choices that different schools and districts make. States should also track evaluation data in schools and districts receiving waivers so that policymakers understand how these results compare with those produced by other evaluation systems in the state, as well as how they vary based on the design choices that schools and districts make.

Revising classroom observation rubrics to appropriately reflect teacher performance in personalized learning environments is a more complex challenge. Because personalized learning models are relatively new, there is limited research on what effective instruction looks like in these settings. States and districts should consider creating or joining consortia in order to work with instructional

experts and researchers who can provide insight into which practices are crucial to supporting student learning in personalized learning contexts. In addition, evaluators will need training on how to use existing rubrics appropriately in personalized learning contexts.

#### **CONTACT FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Bryan Hassel, Public Impact:  
bryan\_hassel@publicimpact.com

Karen Cator, Digital Promise:  
karen@digitalpromise.org

Carrie Douglass, CEE-Trust:  
carrie@cee-trust.org

Mark Kostin, Great Schools Partnership:  
mkostin@greatschoolspartnership.org

#### **RESEARCH AND RESOURCES**

A Bellwether report discusses **unintended consequences of teacher evaluation** systems. To view the report, visit: <http://bellwethereducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Teacher-Quality-Mead-Rotherham-Brown.pdf>

For a discussion of how blended learning models can be integrated into **evaluation systems**, see: <http://gettingsmart.com/2013/07/carving-a-place-for-blended-learning-in-the-era-of-teacher-evaluation/>

The **New Hampshire** Department of Education released a report with an overview of its **model evaluation system** created by the Phase II New Hampshire Task Force for Effective Teaching. See: <http://www.education.nh.gov/teaching/documents/phase2report.pdf>

For slides from a U.S. Department of Education webinar on the use of **school-wide growth** in **teacher evaluation**, see: <http://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/growthmodel/ntgswebinar14262013.pdf>

For a discussion of the first year of implementation of a **revised evaluation system in Tennessee**, see: <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/communities/tle2-year-1-evaluation-report.pdf>

For more details on the **IMPACT evaluation system** in Washington, DC, see: [http://dcps.dc.gov/DCPS/In+the+Classroom/Ensuring+Teacher+Success/IMPACT+\(Performance+Assessment\)/IMPACT+Guidebooks](http://dcps.dc.gov/DCPS/In+the+Classroom/Ensuring+Teacher+Success/IMPACT+(Performance+Assessment)/IMPACT+Guidebooks)