



TO: Dr. Nikolai P. Vitti, Superintendent, Duval County Public Schools
Duval County School Board Members
Terrie Brady, President, Duval Teacher United

FROM: Jacksonville Public Education Fund, on behalf of Teacher Roundtable
Steering Committee and Participants

DATE: July 21, 2015

RE: Recommendations for improving the teacher evaluation process

Over the last several years, the Jacksonville Public Education Fund has supported teacher leadership in many ways, by celebrating and elevating excellence in teaching through the EDDY Awards, sparking teacher innovation through funding from PowerUP Jax, partnering with The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida and Duval County Public Schools on the Quality Education for All Fund to recruit and retain great teachers and leaders, and connecting teachers to community conversations about key education issues through ONE by ONE.

Many of the teachers working with the Jacksonville Public Education Fund have asked the organization to provide the space for teachers to have deeper conversations with one another about the key policy issues facing educators today. Over the last year, this gave birth to a new Teacher Roundtable aimed at giving teacher leaders an opportunity to share their ideas with one another and more broadly across Duval County and the State of Florida, empowering them to advocate for their profession. The Teacher Roundtable has been guided by a group of teachers of the year who formed a volunteer Steering Committee to choose a format for the initiative and select the topic for the first Teacher Roundtable events.

The teachers on the Steering Committee were aware of House Bill 7069 and its effects on teacher evaluation components. That is why the issue of teacher accountability and autonomy was chosen as the topic of the first Teacher Roundtable event. Since the Legislature recently granted school districts the flexibility to reduce VAM scores from 50 percent of a teacher's evaluation to 33 percent, it is our hope that the Teacher Roundtable recommendations could be helpful, should the district choose to take advantage of this flexibility and explore the option of including additional factors in Duval teacher evaluations.

The first Teacher Roundtable event was held on Saturday, May 16. A follow up Teacher Roundtable event was held on Saturday, June 27. Approximately 50 teachers from a diverse array of schools throughout the district, most of them current or former teachers of the year, were actively involved and are committed to working with decision-makers to bring their ideas to the table. Through this process, the teachers identified three key recommendations around the topic of teacher accountability:

- The factors in a teacher’s evaluation should be expanded beyond a single observation and a VAM score. We suggest the addition of factors such as student artifacts, teacher self-assessment, and feedback from colleagues with subject area expertise and feedback from families.
- Evaluators should be better trained, both in content-related pedagogy and in the specific tools used to evaluate teachers (eg, the CAST).
- Student-based factors should play a stronger role in teacher evaluations. Many believe that evaluators should increase their interactions with students during observations to learn more about their work and talk with them about their own learning. Some also believe that opportunities for students to provide direct feedback are important and should be included in the overall evaluation.

With a better understanding of priorities public school teachers share, it is our hope that local leaders will see these ideas and the Teacher Roundtable as a resource as they work together to bring about improvements to our public schools with a goal of ensuring that all students and teachers meet their full potential. The Teacher Roundtable Steering Committee and Jacksonville Public Education Fund staff would welcome any opportunity to meet to share more findings or discuss opportunities for next steps.

Background and Details about the Teacher Roundtable

While the Teacher Roundtable is an initiative of the Jacksonville Public Education Fund, decisions about the structure, topic and format are teacher-led. The Steering Committee of teachers and Jacksonville Public Education Fund staff worked to develop the focus and structure of the events, which were open to all public school teachers in Duval County; e-mailed invitations were sent to current and past school-level teachers of the year, DTU building reps, teachers who have participated through ONE by ONE and PowerUP Jax, and the personal networks of Steering Committee members.

Drawing on the successful format of the ONE by ONE community conversations, volunteers facilitated table conversations using guiding questions developed by the Steering Committee to focus teachers’ thoughts and discussions on the topic of accountability and the current teacher evaluation system, the topic selected by teachers for the first event.

After the high-energy, robust conversations at the first event, each table reported out their ideas. The Jacksonville Public Education Fund documented these conclusions, so that the teachers’ ideas could be summarized and provided to key stakeholders. That summary is attached.

Soon after the first Teacher Roundtable event, the Steering Committee met to review the teachers’ responses and to decide on how to best put those responses into a format for others to read. The Steering Committee structured the second Teacher Roundtable event to allow the teachers to revisit the main themes of the first Roundtable, prioritize them and create specific recommendations from those action areas.

The second Teacher Roundtable was held on Saturday, June 27. The teachers first prioritized the themes from the first event. Teacher participants went deeper with these priorities by voting for the top three action areas, and constructing belief statements about each one, detailed above. They further discussed tangible, proactive ways

these possibilities could inform the way a teacher is evaluated. A full summary of notes from these areas and the specific ideas surfaced by teachers at the event is attached.

Following the event, participants submitted their input to help select the fall's Teacher Roundtable topic, and decided on professional development. In the meantime, the Steering Committee and other participants will be empowering teachers to move from conversation to action, which starts with sending this report to you and will also include an op-ed submitted to the newspaper and an email sent to the initial list of invitees.

The Teacher Roundtable Participants and Steering Committee, along with the staff and board of Jacksonville Public Education Fund, would like to commend you for your efforts to engage public school teachers around the important work of determining the future direction of Duval County Public Schools. We offer our support in any way possible to continue building on this positive relationship between the school district and its outstanding teachers.

We look forward to hearing your thoughts on this report.

Attachments:

Teacher Roundtable conversation themes from May 16

Teacher Roundtable prioritized action areas and specific ideas from June 27



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Teacher Roundtable June 27 Table Discussion Action Areas

Take Action: Autonomy and Accountability

Our May 16 Table Discussion Question Responses were charted, shared and summarized (attached). Based on those responses, the Steering Committee further organized these into 6 "Action Areas" with regard to Teacher Accountability and Autonomy.

The following summary was shared with June 27 participants, and following that, they voted for the top three Action Areas and discussed tangible, proactive ways these possibilities could inform the way a teacher is evaluated. Tables constructed specific Belief/Platform Statements with possible examples and/or action steps.

"Action Areas"

Topic 1 – The role of student voice in teacher evaluation

Student testimonials, observe student engagement, students taking ownership, individualize student growth, students strive

Topic 2 –Using multiple measures of teacher effectiveness

Frequent informal observations with feedback and conversations, share – collaborate- receive feedback, outside the classroom support, testimonials of peers- students- families, individualized student growth, evidence of learning beyond one measurement, update-modify-rethink rubric, evidence of professional collaboration

Topic 3 – The importance of administrator/teacher collaborative relationships

share – collaborate- receive feedback, professional conversations, general sense of community, consider the whole teacher, peer collaboration/relationships, coaching

Topic 4 – Considering frequency, duration and purpose of classroom visits

Open-door policy, frequent informal observations with feedback and conversations, more observation time, the rubric is not reflective of one visit, share – collaborate- receive feedback, professional conversations, general sense of community, consider the whole teacher, peer collaboration/relationships, coaching

Topic 5 – Providing evaluators with the necessary tools and background

Evaluators must understand content, demographic and campus; time-frames and periods of observation need to be thoughtful; lens of observer needs to be thoughtful and unbiased, jury/panel of peers/administration, trained observers, coaching model for administrator observation

Topic 6 – The role of teacher autonomy in evaluations

Consider the whole teacher, foster administration/teacher/peer relationships – "we are all human", more autonomy for teachers and leaders, incorporating the characteristics of what makes an excellent teacher, qualitative assessment and data

Teacher Roundtable – May 16 event

Table Discussion Summary of Responses:

Question: What makes an excellent teacher?

Responses, generally, fell into four areas of what defines an excellent teacher...

I. “More than just a job”

An excellent teacher is a person that is humble, passionate, and has integrity. And these qualities drive their instruction and the feel in their classroom.

II. Lifelong Learner

An excellent teacher is fluid and remains open to learning. They are not afraid to risk, fail and/or adjust accordingly, as well as do what they know is right.

III. Multi-faceted

An excellent teacher wears many hats and has many jobs, and handles this multi-faceted career with grace, humor and professionalism.

IV. Problem Solver

An excellent teacher seeks solutions and strives to do what works and what is best for their students, peers, community and building.

Question: What is the ideal way to identify an excellent teacher?

Responses, generally, fell into four areas of ways to identify an excellent teacher...

I. Evidence is in student learning and student response

Student testimonials, observe student engagement, students taking ownership, the product, individualize student growth, students strive,

II. It takes multiple measures to consider the whole teacher. One 10 minute visit is not enough.

Frequent informal observations with feedback and conversations, share – collaborate- receive feedback, outside the classroom support, testimonials of peers- students- families, individualized student growth, evidence of learning beyond one measurement, update-modify-rethink rubric, evidence of professional collaboration

III. It takes frequent visits, conversations and building of relationships.

Open-door policy, frequent informal observations with feedback and conversations, more observation time, the rubric is not reflective of one visit, share – collaborate- receive feedback, professional conversations, general sense of community, consider the whole teacher, peer collaboration/relationships, more coaching,

IV. Evaluator expertise needs to be considered and addressed.

Evaluators must understand content, demographic and campus; time-frames and periods of observation need to be thoughtful; lens of observer needs to be thoughtful and unbiased, jury/panel of peers/administration, trained observers, coaching model for administrator observation

Question: What needs to happen next?

Responses, generally, fell into these areas of what should/ could happen next...

- Important cross-level conversations
- Opportunities to influence decision-makers
- Improve training for administration
- More autonomy for teachers and leaders
- Create a multi-faceted/ formal and informal/ more frequent visit/ conversation-driven model of evaluation
- Foster administration/teacher/peer relationships – “we are all human”
- Explore alternatives – other countries, structures, research

The role of student voice in teacher evaluation

Belief statements

- We believe that all students, regardless of age, should reflect on and articulate in a quantifiable manner how their teacher helped them grow academically, socially and emotionally throughout the school year.
- Observers should examine artifacts of student work and not just behavior in the moment.
- Our students have a role in their own learning. Teacher evaluations should include observations of student autonomy and leadership skills to demonstrate that students are taking responsibility for their own learning.

Specific ideas

- Written responses
- Students are invited to participate in all leadership teams/committees in the school to have ownership in order to have a voice
- Administrator conversations with students about what's working and what's not working
- Student surveys and reflections of the teacher and/or the class
- Student selected artifacts to show growth over time with reflection
- Interviews with students
- Surveys with short responses
- Collaborate with teachers to select student artifacts to examine
- Engage in conversations with students during the observation (what are you learning?)
- Student data collection
- Students using data to improve their learning

Who needs to hear this?

- School Board
- Administrators/Principals/Assistant Principals
- PTA
- SAC
- Superintendent

Using multiple measures of teacher effectiveness

Belief statements

- To accurately determine teacher effectiveness, evaluators should employ multiple measures from a variety of sources, such as from peers, students, families and all school administrators.
- We believe that multiple individuals should provide feedback to teachers and administrators.

- Multiple measures, such as a teacher's ability to reflect on his/her practice, student artifacts that show growth over time, and families' opinions on the teacher's communication need to be taken into consideration when determining a teacher's effectiveness.
- The most important factor in evaluations should be based on multiple facets and observations. The final observation should not be the end all be all.

Specific ideas

- Peers
 - Include grade level/team
 - Include departments/department heads
- Students
 - Should be age appropriate to understand the process
 - Use verbal artifacts/survey
- Families
 - Survey parents
- School Administration
 - Principals, all Aps, District (Regional)
- Videotape teaching with feedback from:
 - Self-selected peer
 - Observer (admin)
 - Self-selected other (such as coach, parent, PTA, department head, another peer, etc)
 - Self-review (CAST self)
- Frequent visits with written feedback
- Research other counties in Florida that teachers feel evaluation systems are more effective
- Final evaluation should consist of an accumulation of evaluations or visits
- Student artifacts that show growth over the year
- Teacher reflection on lessons
- Families being heard
- Teacher/administrator written and verbal communication
- IPDP (held accountable and checked)

Who needs to hear this?

- Superintendent
- School Board
- Assistant Superintendent
- Region Chiefs
- PTSA
- DTU Community Liaison

Providing evaluators with the necessary tools and background

Belief statements

- We believe that teachers should be evaluated by a team (including one person of the teacher's choice) to provide a more unbiased and realistic view of the whole teacher. Administrators need to be trained appropriately in all subject areas.
- Evaluators are provided with training on content area and the CAST evaluation system so they can identify what a highly effective teacher looks like.
- We believe that teachers should be central in the training of administrators and preparation

Specific ideas

- Administrators training
- Early release collaborative training (for example, what CAST looks like in science) teachers as trainers
- Emphasize any content obstacles during the pre-conference (give it the rigor it deserves) or any outliers
- Longer evaluations (45-60 minutes)
- Frequency
- Using school resources (such as reading or math coach) to help with the evaluation process
- Proper training on the CAST evaluation and rubric (looking for school-wide trends)
- Knowing the children and situations (digging deeper into conversations (whether formal or informal))
- Roundtable conversation with team
- Increase minimum observation time to 30 minutes
- Tools – Content specific
 - Based on student products and how the CAST Rubric is applied to each individual teacher/subject (ie, math vs music)
- Team – group of individuals (based on selection – admin, grade level, district and peers) qualified to identify content learning effectiveness.
- Team does not have to observe as a group – may observe/visit periodically throughout the year before March

Who needs to hear this?

- Administrators
- Coaches
- District leadership