

## Your Virtual

# PERA Coach

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A publication created by the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council and the Illinois State Board of Education to guide you in implementing the *Performance Evaluation Reform Act*.



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Dear Illinois Educator,

Through the Virtual PERA Coach, we have provided you with information, resources and examples about the requirements and options associated with the Performance Evaluation Reform Act. We thought it would now be helpful for you to see how two Illinois districts have incorporated the requirements and their own unique interests and needs as they have begun to implement PERA as early implementers.

Therefore, the focus of this issue is to highlight the lessons learned by the Urbana and Bensenville School Districts on their path to PERA implementation. It is our hope that you can benefit from their early work in this process. We are sharing the stories of these two districts so that other joint committees can see examples which may be helpful to them in their own discussions and work. But, it is important to remember that great value lies in the discussions of each joint committee in planning to address their own local contexts and unique needs. Thank you to the staff of Urbana School District #116 and Bensenville School District #2 for sharing their stories with other school districts.



**SPOTLIGHT ON TWO DISTRICTS**

We highlight the journey two Illinois School Districts have taken on their road to implementation of the Performance Evaluation Reform Act.

Who They Are:

**Bensenville School District #2** is a Pre-Kindergarten - 8th grade district located in DuPage County, next to O'Hare Airport. It consists of two elementary schools and a middle school that houses the district's 6th-8th grade students.

**Urbana School District #116** is a Unit district located in East Central Illinois. Most of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign campus is located here. District #116 consists of an early childhood school, six elementary schools, a middle school and a high school.

	Urbana School District #116 "Outstanding Schools in an Outstanding Community"	Bensenville School District #2 "Prepare Students for a World of Opportunity"
Enrollment	4,400 PreK - High School Students	2,151 PreK - 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Students
Demographics:		
Caucasian	37%	23%
Hispanic	12%	68%
African American	36%	3%
Asian/Pacific Islander	1%	3%
Multi-racial	9%	3%
Low-Income	73%	74%



## Bensenville's Journey

### Our Story

As a Race-to-the-Top district, Bensenville District 2 has been working on PERA teacher evaluation since 2011. We jumped in because we had already begun professional development around classroom level assessment and viewed PERA as an opportunity to further this work.

As a PERA Joint Committee, we recognized that the first step in our process needed to begin by identifying where our students were on the continuum of understanding. We conducted a three- year analysis of our state and local assessment information. We discovered that our students did well with multiple-choice, discrete skill test items, but struggled significantly in the application of them in performance-type tasks.

### Lessons Learned

- The discovery of how our students did with applying skills to performance tasks taught us the importance of beginning with what your students need! THEN, make the Type I or Type II decision.
- Teacher-developed assessments will continually

### What if PERA Went Away Tomorrow? What Would We Do Differently?

Not much. We have seen increases in student achievement, more reflection and collaboration among teachers and evaluators, and the integration of high quality assessments. Our professional learning community conversations have changed drastically when talking about student progress, intervention, AND strategies for supporting each other. Take a peek at the video links located below!

Best of all, as we went about our work, we realized that we needed to calibrate our assessment scoring procedures among and across grades and disciplines. As a result, we are much more consistent and accurate in communicating student learning to each other, students, and parents. We even have a district-wide inter-rater reliability team to ensure our scoring is dependable.

### On Assessments

Keep in mind that while the Joint Committee must decide the type of assessments to be used within the 180 days, the actual development of the assessments can be completed after the 180 day window. Be sure to allow plenty of time for completion prior to the start

be revised and updated.

- The work is NOT linear. Keep moving the puzzle pieces around for customizing the best fit for your system.
- Communicate, Communicate, Communicate! Cross pollinate existing and Joint Committee meetings to preserve time and provide PERA updates and clarification.
- Remember to incorporate all staff so that the PERA Joint Committee is not viewed as a secret society!
- Give yourselves permission to make mistakes-lots of them! Your goal is to create some "Really Good" plans and assessments.
- Think of teacher evaluation as the best professional development process you can establish. This means investing in the talent that already resides in your district. Research is clear that a valid, reliable, and credible classroom level assessment system is one of the best strategies for closing achievement gaps.

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of the new school year.

### An Example of One of Our Type II Assessments

Click [here](#) to view an example of one of our Type II assessments from our third grade.

### Listen in as Our Teams Discuss Their Type III PERA Assessments

Click the videos below to see short clips from two of our team meetings:



2nd Grade Team Meeting



Middle School Team Meeting



Urbana's Journey

### Our Story

Click the video below to hear Natalee Bretz, Urbana School District #116's Director of Professional Development, give a brief overview of Urbana's path to PERA implementation.

### Summary of Our Model

70% of our teacher evaluation model is based on observation of Teaching Practice using the Danielson Framework for Teaching; 30% of our teacher evaluation model is based on Student Growth using a Simple Growth Model around Student Growth Objectives (SGOs).

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Overview of Urbana's Journey

## Our Top 10 List of Lessons Learned (and are continuing to learn)

#10 We found it critical that our model should focus on GROWTH OF ALL STUDENTS OVER TIME -- regardless of where each student might be in their learning journey.

#9 It's useful to focus Student Growth Objectives (SGOs) on 'big ticket' items that are CENTRAL TO EACH DISCIPLINE and that recur across time. It's also useful for teams of teachers to work together to create department/course or grade-level SGOs. Having a co-created SGO increases ownership and buy-in and also increases the need for and value of collaboration time.

#8 The document we found to be critical to the development of our model is the [Architecture of Accomplished Teaching](#) from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. This is the document that helped shift our thinking of a Student-Growth Model from something that was being pushed on us by legislation to what we really have been about as educators all along.

#7 BUILD CAPACITY among all staff (administrators and teachers) for assessment literacy; know and adhere to standards for high quality assessment and incorporate the work around formative assessment practices in every classroom.

#6 It's essential that Student Growth Objectives and the accompanying assessments are aligned both in terms of content and degree of complexity with the learning standards they are measuring. This seems like a simple concept, but this is where we are making huge discoveries about assumptions we made -- and where we are doing the most work in terms of the evidence we gather about student progress.

#5 It is important to have a fair, consistent, simple, and equitable

# Urbana's Timeline to PERA Implementation

Click [here](#) for a full-size timeline

2011-2013	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Informal research and study group (teachers and administrators) - 18 months	PERA Joint Committee formed and development of PERA Model for: • Evaluation and Supervision • Student-Growth Model SOD full implementation SGO field-testers in Spring 2013 Danielson training of trainers in April Roadshows to all schools in April & May 2013	"No Stakes" year for Student Growth -- Simple Growth Model and SGOs for Student-Growth Re-Calibration Committee convened in Spring 2014 SSEP full implementation using Danielson Framework Purchase of Teachscape as online tool	Full implementation with modification and refinement of Student Growth Model and SGO Process Re-Calibration Committee convened in Spring 2015	Full implementation with continued modification and refinement of Student Growth Model and SGO Process
<small>Key to Abbreviations Used:  SOD = Sequence of Dismissal (105 ILCS 524A-4)(AC 50.200)  SGO = Student Growth Objective  SSEP = Supportive Supervision and Evaluation Plan (as revised to meet current School Code and ISBE Rules and Regulations)</small>				

## Selecting a Student Growth Model Criteria We Used for Selection

The Model had to:

- be fair and applicable to all teachers; job-based and flexible
- be measurable, and understandable without needing to have a degree in statistics
- Be focused on Student Growth. Students had to be at the heart of the model.
- be based on curriculum we teach
- honor continuous learning pathways for both students and teachers

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[Urbana School District #116 Website](#)

way to SCORE and give a RATING to a Student Growth Objective. We do not want the student growth process to be a "gotcha" nor do we want our teachers "playing the numbers game" with the rating scale. We have made improvements to our Student Growth Rating Scale so that it measures the total amount of students meeting their Projected Growth Objectives by comparing pre- and post-assessment data of student's individual or tiered projected growth goals. This accurately reflects the growth and learning of students in all classroom settings.

#4 RECALIBRATE. Each spring, we pull together a small group with equal representation of administrators and teachers' union members to recalibrate on the entire PERA process, including Student Growth. The purpose of these meetings is to build consistency among evaluators, revise language and/or guidelines to provide clarity, and simplify the process for all involved while still abiding by the legislation.

#3 It's critical to build CONSENSUS and CONSISTENCY among evaluators for all components of the evaluation process. We work on this at our regularly scheduled administrators' meetings.

#2 We have found that the most COMPELLING REASON to use Student Growth as part of an evaluation system hasn't been about compliance, but has been about the value added to our professional conversations about teaching and learning. This is only possible because of the strong working relationship between our administration and our teachers' union.

And the Number One lesson we have learned about this work so far . . .

#1 YOU HAVE TO DO THE WORK. Read the law; do the research. PEAC has developed some guidelines for implementing PERA, and several districts (like ours) are in full implementation. You can certainly use these as models and examples, but no two districts are alike. There is great flexibility built into the law that allows districts to fully customize 'Student Growth' to be a true fit for their local context. Take advantage of the flexibility and build a system that works for you.

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## 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 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.

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## Previous PERA Coach Issues

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

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

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

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

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

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

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