

Illinois Performance Evaluation Growth Through Learning Training and Assessment

Background for Education Stakeholders

Performance evaluations for public school principals and teachers are changing in Illinois as a consequence of the Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA), which Gov. Pat Quinn signed into law in 2010.

The law requires all schools in Illinois (based on a PERA timeline) to implement standards-based evaluation systems that include student growth indicators for principals and teachers based on the timeline set forth in PERA scheduled to complete by 2016. To meet this goal of prequalification, principal and teacher evaluators are undergoing performance evaluation training to prepare them to accurately assess professional practice and incorporate measures of student growth into teacher and principal performance evaluations.

The requirements of PERA 2010 represent a significant cultural shift for Illinois school systems. To assist in meeting the demands of this change, performance evaluation training has been organized statewide by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to meet state evaluator training and prequalification requirements for PERA 2010 and do so in a way that ensures continuous improvement in student achievement.

This document provides background on:

- Requirements of PERA 2010
- Changes in teacher evaluations
- Changes in principal evaluations
- Training for evaluators of teachers and principals
- The Growth Through Learning project

Requirements of PERA 2010

What does PERA do?

PERA requires districts to design and implement performance evaluation systems that assess teachers' and principals' professional practice and incorporate measures of student growth as integral to the process, based on a specific timelines set forth by PERA.

For teacher evaluation, this work has been assigned to district-teacher/union teams called a "joint committee." Where an exclusive bargaining agent exists, this work will be done with the union. District joint committees will need to identify and select the measures of student growth that will be used for this purpose, as per their PERA timeline.

To put these new evaluation systems in place, district administrators are required to work with teachers/unions (through the joint committee):

- to develop the new evaluation systems, including the incorporation of student growth or adopt the state model in whole or in part
- to ensure these performance evaluation systems are research-based, valid, and reliable
- to ensure performance evaluation systems better improve student outcomes
- to be prequalified before conducting evaluations

For principal evaluation, districts are required to develop a principal performance evaluation framework or adopt the state model in whole or in part.

What is the purpose of PERA 2010?

Research shows that traditional evaluation systems for teachers and principals do not provide all the following attributes to ensure improved outcomes:

- Accurately or objectively measure how educators are doing
- Identify their strengths and areas for growth
- Align areas of growth to professional development

Conversely, well-designed evaluation systems have the potential to provide principals and teachers with:

- More opportunities for educators to reflect on their practice
- Constructive feedback
- Aligned professional development and support

When will changes in performance evaluation begin?

Some changes in PERA 2010 performance evaluation requirements will begin to be implemented September 1, 2012, with other requirements phased in through the fall of 2016.

By September 1, 2012: Principal evaluation systems must be in place statewide, evaluators must be trained prior to performing evaluations, and principals must begin to be evaluated using the new system. Specifically:

- All Illinois principals will begin to be evaluated under the new system
- All Illinois school districts must adopt a written principal evaluation system that incorporates measures of student growth
- Evaluators must be trained and prequalified in order to conduct evaluations for teachers and/or principals
- Any school receiving federal School Improvement Grant (SIG) funding must pilot evaluating teachers using a new system that incorporates student growth measures, based on the timeline set forth by PERA (Contact ISBE for more information)
- All teachers and principals will be evaluated using a new 4-category rating system (which must include excellent, proficient, needs improvement, unsatisfactory) as summative rating descriptors
- At least 300 Chicago public schools are required to begin evaluating teachers using a system that incorporates student growth measures

Additional requirements will be phased in each year after 2012.

By September 1, 2013: All remaining Chicago public schools must evaluate teachers using a new system that incorporates student growth measures. Any school designated as Cohort 1 or 2 and receiving federal SIG funding must begin evaluating teachers using a new system that incorporates student growth measures.

By September 1, 2014: A research-based study of the effectiveness of school district evaluation systems must be completed. Any school designated as Cohort 3 and receiving federal SIG funds must begin evaluating teachers using a new system that incorporates student growth measures.

By September 1, 2015: The lowest performing 20% of school districts must begin using a new teacher evaluation system that incorporates student growth measures.

By September 1, 2016: All remaining Illinois school districts must begin using new teacher evaluation systems that incorporate student growth measures.

School districts receiving Race to the Top 3 grants have alternate phase-in dates, specific to the grant requirements.

In addition, districts that are early adopters of student growth (Districts who incorporate student growth into the evaluation system prior to the PERA timeline requirement) must agree in writing with the district and the exclusive bargaining representative, signing a written agreement. This signed agreement must be sent to ISBE indicating the timeline change.

More specifics on PERA implementation can be found at www.isbe.net/peac.

Are performance evaluations protected from Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests?

Yes. Individual educators' evaluations will not be available to the public.

Are educators involved in the process for changing performance evaluation?

The Performance Evaluation Advisory Council (PEAC), whose membership comprises representatives of all education stakeholder groups, is charged with providing input to the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and monitoring the development and implementation of policies and programs to meet the requirements of PERA 2010.

PEAC has more than 30 members, including teachers, administrators, and union leaders and representatives of higher education, other stakeholders.

In addition, each school district along with its teachers or, where applicable, the exclusive bargaining agent must create a "joint committee," which will work collaboratively to develop the district's PERA evaluation system, including the incorporation of student growth.

Changes in Teacher Evaluations

How will PERA 2010 change how teachers are evaluated?

PERA requires districts to design and implement performance evaluation systems that assess teachers' professional practice and incorporate measures of student growth. Through the joint committee, district administrators must work with teachers/union representatives to develop evaluation systems that incorporate student growth. School districts and the state must ensure that these performance evaluation systems are valid and reliable and help teachers to improve student outcomes.

Beginning September 1, 2012, teachers in all districts (even those that have not yet adopted new evaluation systems) must be rated using a four-level summative performance rating:

- Excellent
- Proficient
- Needs Improvement
- Unsatisfactory

The biggest difference from current systems is that measures of student growth will become a significant factor in every evaluation once the district has fully implemented its PERA evaluation system. Districts will need to identify measures of student growth; the process of developing these measures must include teacher/union representatives through the joint committee.

PERA 2010 describes the process and timeline districts are required to follow to adopt a system incorporating student growth measures into teacher evaluations:

- Within 180 days of the first formal meeting of the joint committee, develop a plan to incorporate student growth measures into the evaluation plan
- If the joint committee cannot agree when timelines expire, adopt those aspects of the state-designed model

For teachers, PERA 2010 also requires that districts adopt or develop an instructional framework and rubric that is aligned to the Illinois Professional Teaching Standards. State rules require an instructional framework and a requirement for multiple observations of each teacher be adopted by the same date that districts begin using measures of student growth. State rules require that the instructional framework be based upon research regarding effective instruction and that they address at least planning, instructional delivery, and classroom management.

How often will teachers be evaluated?

Tenured teachers: Based on the minimal requirement under the new evaluation system, teachers with tenure who receive ratings of “excellent” or “proficient” will be evaluated every other year. Those who are rated “needs improvement” or “unsatisfactory” in any one year will be evaluated the following year.

Non-tenured teachers: Teachers without tenure will be evaluated every year.

Changes in Principal Evaluations

How will principal evaluations change?

Beginning September 1, 2012, all principals must be evaluated every year by trained and prequalified evaluators. Evaluations of principals will be required to incorporate student growth as a significant factor. The Illinois State Board of education has developed a model principal evaluation plan (http://www.isbe.net/peac/word/peac_prin_eval_model.pdf) that school districts may choose to use in all or in part.

As with teachers, principals will be evaluated on standards of effective practice that include clear descriptions of what excellent school leadership means as well as measures of student growth.

Also beginning September 1, 2012, administrators in all districts will be rated using a four-level performance rating:

- Excellent
- Proficient
- Needs Improvement
- Unsatisfactory

Performance Evaluation Training

Why is performance evaluation training for evaluators necessary?

The Illinois school code requires that any individual who conducts evaluations of teachers, principals, and assistant principals after September 1, 2012, must be prequalified and must participate in a regularly scheduled retraining program.

The rigorous performance evaluation training currently offered to school administrators, school leaders, and teacher peer evaluators is designed to prequalify evaluators and ensure evaluators have demonstrated evaluator competencies determined by the ISBE to:

- Assess professional practice
- Provide feedback to principals and teachers
- When required by state law, determine student growth attributable to individual teachers and principals.

What is included in the training?

The Illinois Growth Through Learning Performance Evaluation project provides separate evaluation training modules for principal and teacher evaluators. Each training program is rigorous, validated for accuracy and reliability, and focused on the minimum requirements set forth by the Evaluation of Certified Employees under Article 24A of the Illinois School Code Part 50 for principal or teacher evaluators.

Individual modules address the use of student growth data and indicators to evaluate teachers or principals, as well as methods and strategies for evaluating the professional practice of teachers or principals.

The training is separated into five discreet modules for teacher evaluation and five discreet modules for principal evaluation:

	Teacher Evaluator Training Modules	Principal Evaluator Training Modules
Module 1	PERA overview, understanding state requirements, standards of practice	Understanding state requirements, standards of practice
Module 2	Observation skills and evidence collection (Teachscape Framework for Teaching Proficiency)	Applying the principal performance evaluation process, requirements and expectations
Module 3	Conferencing skills – professional conversations	Collaboration in the goal-setting conference
Module 4	Reflect, measure, evaluate with teachers to improve performance	Collecting and analyzing evidence and providing collaborative, formative feedback
Module 5	Student growth	Summative evaluation conference

As part of their training, teacher evaluators are required to complete training on the Framework for Teaching Proficiency, founded on the work of Charlotte Danielson. For this portion of the teacher evaluator training CEC Partnership contracted with Teachscape (<http://www.teachscape.com/>) to provide services on evidence collection for the Growth Through Learning Program.

Who must be trained?

Anyone conducting evaluations after September 1, 2012, must be prequalified.

Up to 13,500 administrators, school leaders, and teacher peer evaluators are scheduled to complete performance evaluation training in Illinois. Of those, more than 2,500 district superintendents and administrators who are responsible for the evaluation of principals and assistant principals must complete principal evaluation training before conducting evaluations.

Approximately 11,500 school leaders, including teacher peer evaluators responsible for the evaluation of teachers, must complete teacher evaluation training before conducting evaluations. PERA 2010 allows for teachers to become peer evaluators, although the local union must agree to the use of peer evaluators.

Evaluators can begin observing teachers and principals once they complete Modules 1, 2, and 3. For teacher evaluators, completion of module 4 by November 1 will prequalify them to evaluate if the district is not implementing student growth. Module 5 must be completed by evaluators whose districts are implementing student growth.

All principal evaluators who will be evaluating principals and assistant principals must complete modules 4 and 5 by November 1 to be prequalified to evaluate.

What are the requirements to becoming prequalified? Training modules include assessments (or self-assessments in the case of Module 3) that measure an evaluator's understanding of what is minimally required of evaluators to effectively assess the performance of a teacher or principal in order to comply with PERA 2010 and state requirements concerning evaluation of certified staff. Among the topics included in assessments are:

- Content around components, timelines, and outcomes of teacher and principal evaluation process under the minimum requirement set forth by the rules
- Specific minimum requirements for evaluating teachers or principals on professional practice and student growth

Each module includes clear objectives to aid evaluators in understanding the content of each training module and what is required for assessment.

How are the assessments for prequalification scored?

Online, validated assessments are included for training Modules 1, 2, 4, and 5. Teacher and principal Module 3 contain a self-assessment in place of an objectively scored assessment.

When an assessment is present in the module, it includes a score of pass or not pass. Evaluators obtain a pass score for each module assessment in order to move on to the following module or assessment.

How will I know if my administrator or school leader is prequalified to evaluate me?

The ISBE Educator Certification System (ECS) portal will provide a listing of all Illinois administrators and their prequalification status. ISBE will send out a notification once this is available.

When the system is in place, please note that documentation of prequalification status will require continuous updates, as evaluator prequalification is ongoing, and updates on the ECS portal will require a lag time between prequalification status, reporting to ISBE, and updating ECS.

What happens after evaluators are prequalified?

Teacher and principal evaluator training offered prior to September 1, 2012, is foundational training that is designed to support districts in meeting the minimum requirements of state law. However, additional training will need to be developed, disseminated, and incorporated into new principal and teacher evaluation tools in order to:

- Increase capacity for the use of multiple measures of performance
- Develop professional practices
- Fully consider the needs of educators working in particular areas, such as working with English-language learners or with early childhood programs

Districts and joint committees should continue to work together to develop ongoing programs of training both for evaluators as well as for those being evaluated to ensure the district evaluation system achieves and maintains a high level of fidelity.

Evaluators will be required to participate in a re-training program every five years in order to maintain qualified evaluator status.

Growth Though Learning Project

Who is organizing the Performance Evaluation Growth Through Learning project?

ISBE selected the CEC Partnership Group – made up of six entities – to design and implement the performance evaluation training program. The Consortium for Educational Change (CEC) is the lead organization and fiscal agent for the Performance Evaluation Growth Through Learning project. Five partners supporting the CEC in the project are:

- Center for the Study of Educational Policy at Illinois State University
- DuPage Regional Office of Education
- Teachscape
- The Danielson Group
- Value-Added Research Center at the University of Wisconsin

CEC and its partners have developed training content, materials and assessments, and worked with additional organizations and statewide committee of experts to validate the assessments. The CEC Partnership Group also has provided technical assistance to districts developing highly effective teacher and principal evaluation systems, including providing web-based support and an on-line library of resources.

The not-for-profit Consortium for Educational Change is a network of Illinois school districts and professional organizations whose mission is to improve student achievement by assisting member districts and schools to become collaborative, high-performing organizations. CEC helps schools and districts accelerate student learning through collaboration among teachers, educational support personnel, school administrators, school board members, and parents through a variety of forums and activities designed to stimulate and promote change in school structures and relationships.