



**New Directions in Teacher Evaluation in Indiana
A White Paper**

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Introduction

In December, 2015 Congress passed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and ushered in a new era in school improvement. This new legislation redefines the federal role in school accountability and provides more latitude and responsibility for states in the school improvement process. Presently, stakeholders across the country are engaged in a process to develop state plans responding to the requirements of this new legislation. Plan requirements range from accountability system specifications to teacher support, recruitment, and retention.

One significant change in this new legislation is that requirements for the teacher evaluation process are no longer articulated at the federal level. Including teacher evaluation in the ESSA plan is left up to a state's discretion. Indiana legislation currently requires annual evaluations for all certified employees. The state level policy that guides implementation of this legislation will continue to inform teacher evaluation in Indiana even as the initial implementation of the federal law gets underway. This discretion creates an opportunity for teacher evaluation to be included as a critical component of the state's effort to improve schools, support teachers, and ensure highly effective teaching and learning experiences. Specifically, strategies to improve teacher evaluation can be included to strengthen the Educator Effectiveness section of the plan.

The Indiana Teacher Appraisal and Support System (INTASS), a project formed in 2012-13 and housed at the Center on Education and Lifelong Learning (CELL) at Indiana University, supports school districts implementing I.C. 20-28-11.5, the state law that changed teacher and educator evaluation in Indiana. INTASS membership includes a consortium of large urban districts, suburban districts and small, rural districts. These districts have provided input for this white paper through a review of initial drafting and in a series of conversations during the past school year. In addition, feedback was received from other stakeholders, including those with experience in the field of educational policy, and members of key professional educator organizations. Based upon INTASS's experiences with the implementation of teacher evaluation, this white paper presents ways in which policy and guidance can be improved to better support teacher evaluation in Indiana, either through inclusion in the state's ESSA plan and/or with amended legislation.

INTASS Work in Teacher Evaluation Research and Technical Assistance in Indiana

The following list of activities, products, and services provided by INTASS are examples of the work done with policy makers at the state level, institutions of higher education, educational associations, and local school district corporations to research and support implementation of teacher evaluation in Indiana.

- Developed, administered and analyzed multiple state-wide educator surveys related to teacher evaluation.
- Produced four policy briefs on the topic of teacher evaluation.
- Presented at multiple state and national conferences.
- Reviewed school corporation teacher evaluation plans across the state for quality and compliance.
- Reviewed fidelity of teacher evaluation plan implementation for select districts.
- Analyzed district evaluation plans for the 2014-16 school years (INTASS Analysis of Teacher Evaluation Plans, 2016).
- Researched and analyzed teacher evaluation ratings and student learning outcome data (Report forthcoming January 2016).
- Engaged in continuous dialogue with policy makers, leadership of state educator associations, local district leadership, and principals and teachers across the state.
- Reviewed current literature and research on educator evaluation across the country.
- Provided training and facilitated plan development and implementation at the local level across the state.
- Convened a state conference on teacher evaluation that included state and national presenters.

What We Have Learned

- Because the current Indiana growth model (IGM) does not equitably account for growth in high risk student populations (INTASS report in progress), teachers with high percentages of these students are currently disadvantaged in the current Indiana growth model.
- Compliance with state teacher evaluation legislation across the state is not consistent, due in part to ambiguity in wording in the legislation (INTASS Analysis of Teacher Evaluation Plans, 2016).
- Significant variation in plan weights for student learning data and a lack of clarity in identifying what constitutes an “objective measure” of student learning create different expectations for student learning outcomes and how they are measured.
- The quality of teacher evaluation experiences differs throughout the state because of inconsistent plan development and implementation processes (INTASS Analysis of Teacher Evaluation Plans, 2016).

- Educator agreement with aspects of the legislation differs by professional staff roles, e.g., superintendent, principal and teacher (INTASS Policy Brief of Educator perceptions, 2014).
- The districts using a high quality and collaborative plan development and implementation process also have high levels of satisfaction with their evaluation experiences (Surveys from SBOE recognized districts, 2015-16).
- There is tension between local control and standardization in district compliance with legislation and policy, and in plan development and implementation (INTASS Analysis of Teacher Evaluation Plans, 2016).
- There is confusion concerning what constitutes appropriate student learning measures and their use in the teacher evaluation process. Districts at times use A to F school outcome ratings only for teacher evaluation and do not address the impact of a teacher upon their students learning outcomes (INTASS Analysis of Teacher Evaluation Plans, 2016).
- There is concern about the differential teacher impact of teacher evaluation requirements upon those in accountability grades and subject matter and teachers in “non-tested” grades and subject areas.
- The lack of alignment between school accountability incentives, i.e., performance grants, and teacher evaluation, creates conflicting values in addressing student learning and teacher evaluation ratings.
- Two aspects of teacher evaluation-linking student outcomes to teacher evaluation ratings, and linking teacher evaluation ratings to compensation- create stress among teachers and evaluators.
- There is a need for state-wide technical assistance and support to districts.

White Paper Stakeholder Feedback

Over the course of the 2015-16 school-year INTASS staff engaged in a series of facilitated discussions with stakeholders in a variety of settings to gauge reactions and experiences concerning the legislative requirements, policy, guidance, and implementation of teacher evaluation since the passage of the law changing requirements for educator evaluator in 2012-13. The following INTASS principles guided these discussions that provided input and feedback for the recommendations included in this paper.

New directions in educator evaluations should:

- *Be based upon best practices.*
- *Have a solid rationale for improving instruction.*
- *Have a solid rationale for supporting teachers and students for success.*
- *Be supported financially.*

- *Be accompanied by clear guidance.*
- *Recognize and reward exemplary practices.*

INTASS research indicates that there are some positive changes to teacher evaluation resulting from the 2012-13 legislation. Generally, current evaluation experiences of teachers across the state have improved. The INTASS research also indicates that there remains considerable room for improvement in the development and implementation of high quality teacher evaluation experiences. INTASS's work in the field has afforded the project an opportunity to observe and hear from educators about the successes and concerns with implementation. It is with this focus for continuous improvement in the teacher evaluation process that we share the following considerations arranged below by specific topic areas.

Student Learning Outcomes and Teacher Evaluation

INTASS believes that student learning outcomes should include multiple sources of data. The following recommendations concerning the use of student outcomes in teacher evaluation acknowledge that they should support and inform the evaluation process and meet rigorous standards of reliability and validity.

Considerations

1. *INTASS is concerned that student growth is not acknowledged equitably in the current teacher evaluation model. Thus, it is recommended that a research initiative be conducted to determine a more valid way to recognize student growth and acknowledge teachers for it, both in the evaluation system and the performance grant awards.*
2. *Use longitudinal Individual Growth Model (IGM) data for teacher evaluations in order to optimize the validity and reliability of teacher evaluation ratings.*
3. *Engage professionals with expertise in curriculum and instruction to develop a statewide bank of valid and reliable standards-aligned assessments for teachers in accountability grades and those in non-tested areas.*
4. *Conduct ongoing research for teacher evaluation and student outcomes to establish validity and reliability of outcomes across all teacher and student groups.*
5. *State Assessment data should be returned to districts in a timely manner in order for an educator's evaluation to be completed by the end of the school year so that a teacher's evaluation and feedback can be used to support teacher growth, learning and planning for the next school year.*
6. *Guidance should be developed to ensure that locally developed and teacher developed student learning measures applied to evaluations meet clearly defined guidelines and best practices in the assessment field.*
7. *Training should be provided to teachers and administrators on assessment literacy.*

8. *At least one student learning measure should be tied to a teacher's actual classroom data.*
9. *Create clear definitions and guidance on the use of measures that are not student growth and achievement measures including surveys, discipline data, student feedback.*

Plan Development and Implementation

INTASS believes that a balance of local control coupled with some “guardrails” for consistent development and implementation is essential to ensure effective and equitable teacher evaluation experiences in Indiana.

Considerations

1. *Create a standard plan format to ensure comparability of content and quality across plans. An electronic template, using researched based components of high quality teacher evaluation plans should serve as the standard format. (Please note that this recommendation allows an accurate review of plans developed and submitted, something that at best, is now difficult because plan alignment across districts is virtually impossible due to lack of a standard format.)*
 - Create common expectations for evaluator training using research based standards.
 - Require the addition of walk-throughs (frequent, short 5-10 minute observations) in the evaluation process to ensure a more valid understanding of a teacher's instruction.
 - Require an explicit connection between the teacher evaluation plan and the district improvement plan.
 - Require the formation of a staff oversight committee, including teachers, to oversee plan design and implementation and provide continuous feedback to ensure a highly effective process.
 - Clearly specify measures used in the evaluation of each certified employee in the evaluation plan.
 - Include a description related to evaluation data and the alignment to district and school professional development in the evaluation plan.
2. *Amend legislation to allow flexibility in the teacher evaluation cycle for evaluating teachers and enable time for focused differentiated and individualized teacher support in the following ways:*
 - Evaluate new teachers each year for the first three years.
 - ✓ Engage new teachers in a two-year professional growth plan.

- ✓ Address teacher retention by providing new teachers with a highly effective mentor and/or a statewide approved course of study to support their success and job satisfaction.
 - ✓ Delay use of IGM data until year 3 for beginning teachers.
 - ✓ Create standards for reflection and feedback during the evaluation process.
 - ✓ Change the label of “Improvement Necessary” to “Developing” for teachers in their first three years.
 - ✓ Continue to calculate and report negative impact for new teachers.
- Evaluate teachers past three years of experience every 2-3 years on a rotating schedule. Any teacher could be evaluated yearly depending upon principal discretion and teacher performance.
 - Teachers considered Improvement Necessary and Ineffective should continue to be evaluated annually.
 - Plans must meet all legislative and policy requirements in order to be eligible for implementing a flexible teacher evaluation schedule.
 - Require focused professional growth activities for teachers in the off years of the evaluation cycle (i.e. self-guided opportunities such as a focus on action research, personal growth plans, etc.).
3. *Establish criteria for plan quality and implementation that go beyond compliance.*
 - Re-establish a statewide on-site monitoring process with support for districts to develop and implement high quality teacher evaluation plans.
 - Provide incentives for districts to engage in a well-planned and implemented teacher evaluation effort that supports teacher development and respects teachers as professionals in the evaluation process.
 4. *Provide guidance on the use of artifacts (documentation) to inform a teacher’s rating.*
 - Clearer guidance on this issue is needed on a state-wide level. Qualitative measures such as artifacts and portfolios should complement quantitative measures and provide a teacher with an opportunity to share aspects of their practice that may not be observable.
 5. *Devote adequate resources and technical assistance to ensure that districts implement a highly effective educator evaluation process.*
 6. *Develop a plan requirement for goal setting with clear criteria and training in the use of assessment for instruction in the evaluation of instruction.*

Incentives

INTASS believes that incentives should be developed for school corporations to develop and implement high quality teacher evaluation plans with fidelity.

Considerations

1. *Continue to have State Board of Education and Indiana Department of Education recognition for districts who have high quality evaluation plans implemented with high fidelity.*
2. *Create “flexibility” zones by awarding waivers or grants to districts who exceed standards of compliance to create plans of innovation based on specific standards, research and/or with a research initiative.*
 - Allow teachers and districts earned autonomy and creative latitude to create and research unique aspects of teacher evaluation.

Performance Awards

INTASS believes that a focus of awards based on ISTEP proficiency should be changed to focus upon student growth. Indiana funds nearly \$40 million annually in school performance awards to Highly Effective and Effective teachers based upon ISTEP and ECA proficiency scores. Since this award is based on student proficiency scores (as opposed to student growth), the money is inequitably and disproportionately distributed to teachers in high income districts.

Considerations

1. Consider the following options for performance grant awards:
 - Distribute performance grant awards to districts across the state, based on growth for use as part of their compensation model and base pay.
 - Award performance dollars to teachers based on student *growth*, rather than student *proficiency*. Based upon current INTASS research, this would require a change in the current growth model to a model that explicitly accounts for the growth achieved with at risk student populations.
 - Award performance dollars to districts who show improved student growth to support educator professional development.

Compensation

INTASS believes that teachers who are rated in need of improvement should be supported to improve and should not be penalized by withholding increases in compensation.

Considerations

1. *Amend legislation to provide differentiated compensation to all ratings except a rating of ineffective.*

- However, there should be an expectation that a teacher does not remain in the “Improvement Necessary” category. Thus, there has to be a time frame specified by which a teacher moves to Effective category to continue to receive compensation.

Training/Professional Development

INTASS believes that teacher evaluation data should be used to provide targeted support to evaluators and teachers based on individual needs.

Considerations

1. *Provide continuous or annual training of evaluators with certification requirement and recertification every 2-3 years.*
2. *Establish legislative priorities to fund mentoring and professional development, including mentor teacher programs, residency programs or online coursework to provide needed support to teachers at all skill levels.*
3. *Provide educators training in assessment literacy, the use of assessment data and instructional planning and goal setting.*
4. *Provide in person and online coursework and training, available to all public school educators.*
5. *Incorporate educator evaluation data as part of the district’s school and district improvement efforts, e.g., individual, grade level, content area, school and district professional development.*
6. *Use educator evaluation data to align individual, school, and district-wide professional growth for educators with their strengths and areas for improvement.*
7. *Provide funding for districts to incorporate teacher evaluation data into a school or district school improvement effort*
8. *Build a statewide platform where videos can be submitted, reviewed, categorized by quality level, and tagged by areas that are of common interest and need on a state-wide level.*

Collaboration

INTASS believes that teacher evaluation should be a collaborative process.

Considerations

1. *Require that district educator evaluation plans incorporate teacher and administrator input in the development, implementation, and monitoring process.*
 - Plans should include an assurance page on the creation and ongoing involvement of an oversight committee of district stakeholders.
 - Plans should include an assurance page signed off by the organization representing teachers in the district.

Conclusions

After two decades of school reform, educator evaluation emerges as the culmination of a litany of strategies to address achievement gaps and concern for the comparative academic performance of students in a global economy. And, after two decades of research to determine the most significant influences upon academic performance, teacher quality emerges as the most significant of a multitude of variables in the research literature.

Clear guidance along with explicit incentives and consequences for educator evaluation plan development and implementation are essential for highly effective teaching and learning. School improvement efforts must include the development and support of teachers in order to truly improve the growth of students towards college and career readiness standards. When done effectively, educator evaluation engages all stakeholders in the improvement of teaching and learning experiences through an instructional partnership of teachers and their evaluators. Educators deserve an evaluation process designed to ensure their success (See Attachment A). ESSA offers an opportunity to reframe the school reform movement in a constructive, energizing, and supportive initiative for educators and students.

INTASS continues to believe that educator evaluation is about educator development, rather than a vehicle to remove ineffective teachers---a system that aligns professional development opportunities for educators with both their strengths and areas of growth. Our research demonstrates that high quality educator evaluation plans implemented with fidelity honor the culture of commitment to students in districts, improve the climate of collegiality in districts, and optimize the teaching and learning process. It is important that educator evaluation continue to move forward in a reflective and thoughtful manner that honors the intent of Senate Bill 1 to ensure high quality teaching and learning in Indiana's classrooms.

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Appendix A: INTASS Graphic for Teacher Evaluation in Indiana

