



Zealand Public Schools
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Evaluation District Guidelines

Zealand Public Schools

TEACHER EVALUATIONS

Selection of Teacher Evaluation Tool

During the 2014-15 school year, Zealand Public Schools Administration, working in conjunction with the Zealand Education Association, met to review the four evaluation tools that were being presented by the State of Michigan as approved options. After some consideration given to the 5D+ tool from MASSP, we settled on iObservation, which is based on the work of Robert Marzano. There were four things we really liked about this tool:

1. It has a strong research base. Robert Marzano and his research team at Learning Sciences International are respected throughout the world of education.
2. With this tool, we have the ability to compile the final evaluation throughout the year rather than asking principals or other evaluators to go through a lengthy rubric every spring.
3. The Marzano tool allowed for the opportunity to work in partnership with Hamilton and Jenison schools. Our three districts decided to partner when it comes to our training sessions, and to create a cohort group that could work together and support one another as we all transition to this new evaluation tool.
4. This tool was cost effective.

Training for Evaluators and Educators

All evaluators received three and one-half days of training from Learning Sciences International on iObservation August 18-21, 2015. The remaining two days of training was scheduled for August 9-10, 2016. All sessions took place at the Jenison Public Schools Administration Building. Building level leaders did the initial training for staff. We spent a great deal of time during the 2015-16 school year working through the aspects of the system, with a focus on Domain 1 during that first year. Subsequently, we have added Domains 2-4 as well. Training and discussion about the tool will continue on an annual basis as needed. The partnerships with Hamilton and Jenison schools have allowed both administrators and teachers to have a cohort group they can turn to and talk with about the new system.

Administrators and the central office team were trained on the Administrator Evaluation Tool on June 21, 2016 at a session that was held at Herman Miller in Zeeland.

New administrators and others who missed the initial training have had the opportunity to take part in training throughout the area, most recently a training session scheduled by the Ottawa Area ISD.



Michigan State Law

Here are a few key highlights of the state law regarding teacher evaluations:

- Teacher evaluation is a prohibited subject of bargaining. Zeeland Public Schools worked with and got input from the Zeeland Education Association in building our system and selecting our tool because we believe in the importance of the partnership with the Union.
- Districts must adopt one of four tools approved by the Michigan Department of Education. There is an option to use your own tool or to modify an existing tool, but the requirements in terms of proving the research behind your local tool are quite strenuous. Zeeland Public Schools wanted to select a pre-approved tool, with a firm research base, and settled on iObservation from Marzano.
- The rating categories Highly Effective, Effective, Minimally Effective and Ineffective must be used.
- Each teacher should be evaluated annually, unless they earned a score of Highly Effective for three consecutive years. The 2016-17 school year was the first time ZPS allowed for this exception for our most successful teachers. We did not want to offer this exception in the first year of the tool. These teachers can now be evaluated biannually, as long as they maintain a rating of Highly Effective on the years when they are on the evaluation cycle.
- Any staff rated as Ineffective or Minimally Effective should have an individual improvement plan. There must be specific goals for improvement, which can be met in no longer than 180 days. These teachers also need to have a mid-year progress report to measure their progress on these goals.

Goal Setting

In the fall, each teacher who is under the evaluation cycle that year must formulate three goals. These goals are developed with input and final approval from their evaluator. As part of the goal setting process, the teacher must design (and the administrator must approve) the way in which the teacher will be scored and the evidence they will need to provide to defend this rating.

The three goal areas are:

- **STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GOAL** – Much like Student Learning Objectives, teachers select a target area for their students to improve upon on a standardized test or a local assessment. The Student Achievement Goal can be written for all students, or for a subgroup of students.
- **SCHOOL-WIDE GOAL** – Like the Student Achievement Goal, this goal also measures the progress of a subgroup of students, but in this case ALL teachers in a building (plus the building administrators) are scored on the same goal. This goal is normally written by the School Improvement Team. This promotes a sense that we are “all in it together” when it comes to student success.



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- **PROFESSIONAL GOAL** – No longer something required by the state, from the very start of the new evaluation system in 2011, ZPS has included a Professional Goal for teachers. The Professional Goal can be curricular in nature. It can relate to coursework, training or professional development. It can be a major project the teacher is undertaking that year. The goal here is for the teacher to share with their evaluator something they are working on that year, and then have both support from their administration, as well as someone to help hold their feet to the fire.

While the percentage represented by these goals may change from year-to-year, teachers will always be made aware how much these goals count towards their final rating, and the percentages will always comply with state law.

Observations

Throughout the school year, the evaluator working with a given teacher (most often their principal) will conduct multiple observations in their classroom. These can be pre-scheduled, but most often they will be unannounced. These “walk-through” observations can be as little as 15-20 minutes, but we acknowledge the evaluator gets the most true sense of what is happening in that classroom if they are there from the start of the hour (or the teaching segment in elementary) and stay until the end of the hour (or teaching segment in elementary). It is also acknowledged that sometimes an evaluator will enter a classroom hoping to conduct a walk-through observation, and it is just not the right day. Perhaps the class is taking a test, or having a class party. Evaluators will use good judgement and return on another day.

We strive to do a minimum of 2-3 observations for a tenured teacher and 4-5 for a probationary teacher. At least one of these observations must be unannounced.

Observations are normally done by the primary evaluator, but a secondary evaluator can be brought in as well to support the principal or to provide another set of eyes. At least one observation must be by the primary evaluator.

If teachers work in more than one building, we will determine a “home building” and that administrator will conduct their observations.

For pre-scheduled observations, the teacher will provide a copy of the lesson outline, as well as an explanation of what curriculum standards are being addressed in that lesson. For walk-through observations the same information needs to either be discussed after the walk-through or provided to the evaluator in writing. Pupil engagement must be noted in any observation.

Final Ratings

For the portion of the final evaluation score that is derived from classroom observation, we will use conjunctive scoring from iObservation. This looks at how many times a teacher is rated Innovating, Applying, and/or Developing (which are the top three ratings in iObservation) as well as avoiding scores of Beginning or Not Using (which are the lowest two ratings). Percentages may change from year to year, in compliance with state law, so check with the human resources office for more information on the scoring system used in a given school year.



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Other Important Details

Here are a few other facts that are important for anyone to know if they want to understand the evaluation system at Zeeland Public Schools:

- The iObservation system uses the terms Innovating, Applying, Developing, Beginning and Not Using (from highest to lowest rating) to describe various elements of teaching. In the end, we have to take a rating system with 5 scores and adjust it to the state required four ratings of Highly Effective, Effective, Minimally Effective and Ineffective.
- All teachers in their first three years are provided with a paid mentor. All probationary teachers should have an Individual Development Plan. These are important for their growth as a professional.
- Evaluators will meet with teachers in the spring to go over their final rating. A teacher should not become aware they are Minimally Effective or worse at the final evaluation meeting. Our goal is to work with anyone who is struggling and give them ample opportunity for improvement.
- Student growth and the individual teacher performance rating should be the predominant factor when it comes to layoff and recall. Seniority can only be used as a final tie-breaker. In the event of layoffs, we will follow the state guidelines for breaking ties between teachers with similar final rating scores, using state-mandated factors like relevant special training, significant accomplishments, disciplinary action and attendance.

Conclusion

In the end, both parties would like the evaluation process to be about coaching and improvement. It is not about checking boxes. The best observations and evaluations include two-way communication, between teacher and evaluator on what they might do to improve. At Zeeland Public Schools, we do not want this system to be punitive, but rather an opportunity for growth. We also believe we should not artificially adjust final ratings to avoid having “too many” highly effective teachers. If 70% of our teachers are highly effective, which has been the average, we believe that is a good thing and indicative of the high quality teaching staff we have in our district.

ADMINISTRATOR EVALUATIONS

Selection of Administrator Evaluation Tool

Initially, our intention was to use the iObservation tool for Administrators as well. As stated above, there was a training for administrators on their tool in June of 2016. However, in the fall of 2016, after exposure to the state approved tool from Doug Reeves, we decided as a team to make a switch. On agreement of the district Administrative Council, we will be using the Reeves Leadership Performance Rubric.



Administrative Evaluation Details

As the Reeves tool has 38 elements, we decided as a team to focus on 11 elements this first year that we feel will produce the highest yield results. While Superintendent Cal DeKuiper will give feedback to district administrators on all 38 elements, the 11 focus elements are found below. For more information on the Reeves tool, see the link on the district website.

- #1 Constructive Reactions
- #6 Integrity
- #11 Planning and Goal Setting
- #12 Student Achievement Results
- #19 Decisions Evaluated for Effectiveness
- #21 Two-Way Communication with Faculty and Staff
- #26 Formal and Informal Feedback
- #30 Delegation and Trust
- #31 Organization of Time and Projects
- #34 Use of Technology to Improve Teaching and Learning
- #37 Personal Professional Focus

Superintendent Evaluation

Superintendent Cal DeKuiper will be evaluated using the approved tool from the Michigan Association of School Boards (MASB).