

Educator Evaluation Guidance: The Cycle of Evaluation in a Virtual Environment

Educator evaluation strengthens, supports and enhances professional growth opportunities for teachers and administrators based on individual strengths and needs, with the ultimate goal of improving student learning. The following guidance reflects these values. As districts continue to provide online learning options for students, ODE is committed to helping districts in their efforts to provide the support and feedback educators need to be successful in the virtual teaching and learning space.

The [Oregon Framework for Teacher and Principal Evaluation and Support](#) provides general guidance to districts regarding the requirements for educator evaluation. This companion document is designed to provide additional guidance regarding the cycle of evaluation when the majority of teaching and learning are taking place in a virtual environment, including considerations for conducting observations and the collection of evidence.

ODE wishes to explicitly acknowledge the Oregon Education Association for serving as a key partner and consultant on educator evaluation in Oregon in general, and on this document in particular. We also wish to acknowledge that this guidance has been informed by conversations with educators and administrators across Oregon, along with leaders of several virtual schools. We appreciate their partnership.

Cycle of Evaluation

As many Oregon districts have developed completely virtual options for students, questions follow regarding what evaluation looks like in an online environment. While it is true that some aspects of **how** evaluation and support are provided may need to change, **what** is evaluated remains the same. Regardless of whether a school is providing in-person instruction or implementing virtual instructional models, the cycle of evaluation is as follows:



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- During **Self-Reflection** the educator conducts an assessment of their practice against performance standards.
- When **Goal Setting** the educator, in collaboration with the evaluator, uses data to identify and set one professional practice and two student learning goals.
- **Observation and Collection of Evidence** is an ongoing process during which the educator and evaluator collect evidence of educator practice using multiple measures. This process goes hand in hand with **Formative Assessment** in which the educator and evaluator periodically review progress toward goals and performance against standards.
- The **Summative Evaluation** is designed to be the culmination of multiple formative observations, reflections and professional conversations.

Shifting to a Virtual Environment

Although evaluation in a virtual setting will be new to many districts, there are schools both within Oregon and across the nation that have extensive experience with this process. ODE staff spoke with leaders of several virtual schools when developing this guidance, and learned from these conversations that the process is not significantly different.

- **Self – Evaluation:** Virtual leaders indicated that their school has a rubric aligned to the standards of professional practice and responsibility against which they ask educators to self-assess. This is done individually by teachers and shared electronically with the evaluator.
- **Goal Setting:** Educators in virtual schools set both professional practice goals and student learning goals. These goals are based on data and discussed, along with the educator’s self-reflection, during the initial professional conversation.
- **Observation and Evidence:** Evaluators in virtual schools use an electronic method for collecting and storing evidence. Both educators and evaluators have access to shared documents where observation notes are kept and additional artifacts added. Additional recommendations regarding observations and evidence collection are included in the next section of this guidance.
- **Formative Assessment:** Evaluators hold professional conversations at least twice annually with educators as well as providing both formal and informal feedback. Methods include both scheduled professional conversations after formal observations, as well as feedback emailed after informal walkthroughs.

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Recommendations from Virtual School Leaders

Leaders from the Oregon Virtual Academy, Baker Web Academy and the Idaho Virtual Academy took time to share their experience in support of this guidance. When asked what advice they had to offer districts beginning this process, one virtual school leader said “Don’t overthink it. You have all the pieces you need already. The biggest change that is required is a shift in thinking about how to ‘see’ evidence.”

- Conduct both formal (scheduled and recorded) and informal (impromptu walkthroughs) observations. Recorded observations afford more flexibility for evaluators, decrease pressure for the educator and can also be used for self-reflection purposes.
- The core “look-fors” in virtual observations are the same as those in brick and mortar schools:
 - What is the learning environment like?
 - What are the objectives of the lesson?
 - What is the level of teacher questioning?
 - How does the teacher ensure student engagement?
- Examine your existing evaluation tool/rubric with an eye to the question “What would evidence of practice look like in a virtual setting?”
 - For example, Domain 2 within the Danielson Framework for Teaching focuses on Classroom Environment. When thinking about evidence in this Domain the question to ask could be “What is the virtual experience like for students?” Evidence could include not just observations of synchronous instruction, but the educator’s use of the district’s digital platform and/or Learning Management System, community-building efforts, establishing routines and etiquette for online learning and ensuring students are able to access and understand assigned work.
- Consider using The [National Standards for Quality Online Learning](#) as a resource. The explanations and examples included for each indicator can provide valuable insight when examining your evaluation tool and developing look-for prompts.

Recommendations from Research

The Center for Education Policy Research at Harvard University conducted a randomized control trial to investigate the impact of video technology on classroom observation. Their report [Leveraging Video for Learning](#) details the resulting findings on five ways to use video: self-reflection, peer collaboration, virtual coaching, evaluation, and video libraries. The key recommendations for the use of video for evaluation are as follows:

1. **Let teachers choose videos for observation.** When teachers put their best foot forward, they are able to showcase their best work. Research shows that this approach increases perceptions of fairness in an observation.

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2. **Use video observations in tandem with in-person observations.** Administrators' presence in classrooms is important for many reasons; video can help shift the quality and focus of principal time in classrooms. Since the two need not be mutually exclusive, consider what types of evidence are best collected by video compared to in-person.
3. **Consider involving normed external observers** to create more administrator capacity, increase the reliability of the final evaluation score, and give teachers more content-specific feedback about their practice.
4. **Ensure familiarity with working technology first.** Nobody should worry about a poor evaluation because a camera was not working.

Additional Considerations

Recording Instruction - As described in [Leveraging Video for Learning](#), when used well video technology “can accelerate the process of opening up instruction to observation and feedback.” However, recording instruction raises privacy concerns for educators and students that must be addressed. As a result, the use of recorded observations should be mutually agreed upon by teachers, administrators and local bargaining units. It bears repeating that revisions to the evaluation system are required, by statute and rule, to be collaborative.

Professional Learning – In any evaluation system it is critical that all involved – teachers and administrators – receive professional learning and training on the tools, procedures, and protocols that have been agreed upon for use. The same is true for any revisions made to accommodate the circumstances that observation under Comprehensive Distance Learning may require.

Resources

- [The Framework for Remote Teaching](#) (The Danielson Group)
- [National Standards for Quality Online Learning](#) (Quality Matters and Virtual Learning Leadership Alliance)
- [Leveraging Video for Learning](#) (Center for Education Policy Research, Harvard)
- [Oregon Framework for Teacher and Administrator Evaluation and Support Systems](#) (ODE)

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