



## Making Your Evaluation Work for You

### Advice for Educators

The Tennessee Education Association believes the evaluation of professional educators is one of many means to improve professional practice, and that the ultimate goal of the evaluation process should be the improvement of instruction. Therefore, evaluation should be a collaborative process. A cooperative approach to evaluations involving the educator and the evaluator should result in more effective instructional practices. TEA continues to receive educator questions regarding the TEAM evaluation model and continues to pursue improvements to the process.

*As preparation for annual evaluations begins, consider the following advice and suggestions.*

#### **General Suggestions**

- Review resources that might provide assistance (i.e., State Department TEAM-TN site, TNCompass.)
- Check your personnel file and discuss with your supervisor any notes or memos about your performance. If you have concerns seek advice from your TEA UniServ Coordinator prior to any related meetings.
- If applicable, review past evaluations and growth plans to build on prior feedback.
- Know the identity of your assigned evaluator and of the certified observers in your building/district.
- Become familiar with the rubric(s) and form(s) used in your district's evaluation model.
- Check the MOU and/or school district policies to become familiar with your rights regarding the evaluation system. Your TEA UniServ Coordinator can assist with finding this information.
- Know when announced observations will occur. Use the TEA Tracking Forms to track all of your observations, related conferences, and professional activities.
- Review the School Improvement Plan and be aware of any components that directly relate to your grade level and/or subject area.
- Use student and/or school achievement data, as appropriate, to directly impact your instruction.
- If you work with a co-teacher or a paraprofessional, communicate and coordinate lesson plans and observation plans.
- For announced observations:
  - If you teach the same subject more than once in the day, ask to be observed during a later class period.
  - Inform students an evaluation will occur and that they should behave normally.
  - Check your school and personal calendars when scheduling with your evaluator.
- If you teach no more than 120 days in a school year, there is no state-required evaluation, but a school district may choose to conduct classroom observations.

## **Pre-Conference Observation Advice**

*Pre-conferences are only required for announced observations.*

- If applicable, review previous refinement area.
- Be prepared to take notes.
- Bring your lesson plan and be prepared to discuss its relevance to state standards, including specific grade level expectations (GLEs) and course level expectations (CLEs).
- As needed, ask for examples of practices/strategies that meet certain indicators on the rubric.
- Based on feedback provided during the pre-conference, consider making changes to your lesson plans prior to the observation.
- Ask if videos or resources are available to assist you with the upcoming observation.
- Request recommendations to improve past areas of refinement or targeted growth.
- Ask about providing evidence and/or artifacts to strengthen your observation performance.
- Discuss and illustrate what you have done to improve your performance since the last observation.
- Review the professionalism rubric and bring it with you to all meetings concerning your evaluation.
- Discuss and request feedback on your plans for student assessment during the lesson.
- Discuss strategies for student engagement and how they support the standard.
- Discuss engagement strategies such as breakout rooms, recorded videos, resource documents available in the LMS, and assessments if teaching remotely.
- Ensure all links work prior to the lesson.
- Discuss how you will modify or supplement the curriculum.
- Be prepared to complete a self-assessment and discuss your areas of strength and improvement with the observer.
- Inform your observer of any special circumstances which might occur during your scheduled observation (i.e., goals, technology constraints, accommodations, modifications for students with IEPs or medical issues).
- Discuss classroom management expectations that include a positive learning environment.

## **During the Observation**

- Post lesson objectives and state standards and ensure your lesson plans are available for the observer.
- Ensure that standards and objectives are communicated throughout the lesson.
- Be aware of diversity in your classroom and utilize practices that respect and recognize culturally responsive teaching.
- Engage students in meaningful reflection in their personal work and support students through instructional scaffolding.
- Differentiate instruction to meet individual student's needs.

- Communicate expectations and ensure directions are clear and concise.
- Consistently provide feedback whether verbal, written, or a sequence of both.
- Implement high quality activities throughout the lesson that reinforce multiple avenues of problem solving and promote inquiry.
- Structure content so that it is personally meaningful to students.
- Allow students choice by which they demonstrate mastery through the virtual platform such as video/audio recordings, blogpost, etc.
- Use technology to provide students the opportunity to interact with context (i.e., labeling diagrams, completing virtual experiments, interactive response.)

### **Immediately Following the Observation**

- Email your observer within 24 hours of the observation requesting the date of the post-conference and whether you should submit any artifacts prior to that date.
- Recognize that self-scoring is an option but is not required.
- Complete the portion of the [TEA Evaluation Tracking Form](#) for each observation and add documentation to support work done for the Professionalism Rubric.

### **Post-Conference Observation Tips**

- Be prepared to take notes.
- If you are asked to self-score, discuss evidence supporting the scores you assign.
- Ask for and expect positive comments regarding your area of reinforcement and strengths.
- Ask for and expect feedback on your area of refinement or area that needs improvement.
- Ask the observer/evaluator for specific strategies to improve areas of refinement and document the strategies provided.
- Ask your observer to suggest a colleague whom he/she considers exemplary so you might observe that person's teaching.
- Request suggestions for professional development that may assist you with refinement areas.
- Request a copy of the observation rating/report to place in your files.
- Do NOT risk insubordination by refusing to sign the observation rating documents. Signing the document does not indicate agreement, only that it has been shared with you. You may also request more time to process the information prior to signing the document. If you are given more time, be sure to get that in writing.
- Carefully consider any comments or reflective statements you wish to share on the observation rating document. You may want to discuss these with your TEA UniServ Coordinator before putting them in writing.
- Don't assume negative comments indicate your job is in jeopardy but do take them seriously.
- Notify your TEA UniServ Coordinator of any problems or issues with your evaluation.
- After the post-conference, follow up with the observer via email. Acknowledge the meeting and ask for any additional feedback regarding refinement or reinforcement.

- Ask when the next announced observation will occur.

### **Document! Document! Document!**

- Create a file to keep all records, notes and forms pertaining to your instructional practice.
- This file could include:
  - Phone logs
  - Consider using the record feature associated with the platform (i.e., Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, etc.)
  - Share technological challenges that impact your teaching and learning environment
  - Correspondence with parents and documentation from meetings with families
  - Paperwork completed by you or your evaluator
  - Participation in professional development events
  - Notes about students
  - Documentation from meetings with families
  - Data used to improve your teaching
  - Samples of student work
  - Documentation of students assigned to your class (i.e., district requests, parent requests, inclusion, etc.)
  - Documentation of time-to-teach issues (i.e., building-level interruptions, students being pulled out of your class, etc.)
  - Working conditions that impact instruction or teaching practice
  - Your attendance records
  - Student attendance record(s)
  - Notification of summative evaluation report
  - Notification of continued employment
  - TVAAS student-claiming sheets and other TVAAS data

Due to TEA efforts, Tennessee Code Annotated 49-1-302 requires “the development of a local-level evaluation grievance procedure to provide a means for evaluated teachers and principals to challenge **only the accuracy** of the data used in the evaluation and the adherence to the evaluation policies adopted by the State Board of Education.” Documentation is important because the State Board rule requires specific reasons and documentation for the grievance to be processed. Trained TEA staff and advocates can represent TEA members throughout the grievance process.

TEA is prepared to ensure that school districts implement all evaluation policies fairly and objectively. Be sure you understand and are prepared for the evaluation process by reviewing the guidelines and tips contained here. TEA believes an effective evaluation system will encourage and promote a common vision of effective teaching and collaboration among all educators in support of student achievement.

Successful evaluation models  
promote a reflective process, shared involvement, and educator ownership.

Decide to make the process work for you  
by being an active, informed participant in your evaluation process.

Additional resources can be provided by contacting your UniServ Coordinator.