



ADDRESSING COMMUNICATIONS CHALLENGES:

STRATEGIES FOR STATES TO EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATE WITH EDUCATORS ABOUT EVALUATION

PROBLEM OF PRACTICE SUMMARY

December 12, 2012

Biltmore Hotel

Providence, Rhode Island

Summary

All Quality Evaluation Rollout (QER) States are experiencing challenges as they communicate about the implementation of their new evaluation systems. Many of the issues involve explaining the “how” and “why” of these new initiatives, complicated by the fact that the content of the message they are trying to convey, such as the specifics around student growth measures, is quite complex. In addition, these States are oftentimes not communicating directly with their teachers and principals, but rather they work through their local superintendents or other intermediaries.

As a result, States are planning to use the Problem of Practice session at the December 12 convening to discuss ways to communicate more strategically by using new communications vehicles, developing new strategies or using new messages that will resonate with their educators. North Carolina, Ohio and Rhode Island are specifically looking for support around communicating the specifics and purpose of student growth measures. Delaware and New York need assistance in presenting the overall value and mechanics of their evaluation systems in a compelling manner. These two themes are outlined below.

Themes and Overlap

Two key themes have emerged through the Problems of Practice pre-work. States will be grouped according to these themes at the QER meeting:

Communicating the “why” and “how” of evaluation systems: Delaware, Florida and New York are all struggling with communicating the overall value and importance of evaluating educators. These States need to better outline for their stakeholders how improved educator evaluation drives student achievement and is connected to the overall reform agenda. All three States need to build a comprehensive communications plan that connects key messages, targets various stakeholders and uses different communications channels. Delaware also specifically needs some technical assistance in working to improve the State’s website as a key communications vehicle.

Communicating student growth measures: North Carolina, Ohio and Rhode Island have all identified communications challenges related to their rollout of value-added or other student growth measures. They are struggling with explaining the very complex calculations that go into these measures as well as their use in an evaluation system. Furthermore, the States are concerned about existing public misconceptions about the use of these measures and perceptions, especially among teachers, that these measures are unfair. North Carolina has a specific challenge in explaining three different types of measures of student learning, while Ohio and Rhode Island are mostly focused on their value-added measures.

State by State Problems of Practice

Delaware: Delaware's website is currently not an effective tool to explain the value of educator evaluation or help educators find resources and answers to their questions. It needs to be overhauled to provide the technical resources necessary and to communicate with various actors about process, inputs and importance. Resources need to be dedicated towards this venture to create a vehicle that is user-friendly, comprehensive and inspiring, and raises the esteem of the teaching profession.

New York: New York lacks a broad communications plan to convey the "whys" and "hows" of the teacher and principal evaluation systems. While messaging about the student performance system has been strong, there has been little effort to communicate about the benefits of the overall system. Communication must be flexible enough to account for the fact that many aspects of the evaluation system differ across the State as they are locally bargained. The communication plan must target various stakeholders, including parents and higher education faculty as well as educators. Finally, messaging must communicate the inter-relatedness of educator evaluation and the implementation of the Common Core.

North Carolina: North Carolina is struggling to explain student growth measures to its educators. The State is looking for communications channels and educator outreach strategies to get the word out about these measures and how they will be used.

Ohio: Ohio needs support in building a communications strategy to effectively and efficiently inform educators about its student growth measure. The complexity of the content is making it difficult for State leaders to explain and various stakeholders to comprehend the specifics of the growth measure that will be used and why it is important.

Rhode Island: Rhode Island is struggling with communicating the Rhode Island Growth Model, the State's value-added measure, to educators and more specifically tying in how this measure will be factored into teacher evaluation. Student growth data is generally well received when it is used for informational purposes only, but the State has struggled to effectively communicate how and why growth data will be used for educator evaluation purposes. Furthermore, since this measure will only be used for those teachers in tested grades and subjects, Rhode Island leaders must also articulate why this measure will only be used for a relatively small subset of teachers.