



State Council for Educator Effectiveness

November 9, 2011

Colorado State Board of Education
Office of the Colorado State Board of Education
201 East Colfax Avenue
Denver, CO 80203

Dear State Board Members:

The State Council for Educator Effectiveness (State Council) would like to acknowledge and thank you for the thoughtfulness with which the State Board of Education (State Board) has undertaken the rule-making process for Senate Bill 10-191. The effort of Commissioner Hammond, Deputy Commissioner Dr. Sirko and Colorado Department of Education (CDE) staff to provide all interested parties an opportunity to be heard in this process is admirable. We appreciate the importance of getting this right and thank you and your staff for understanding the opportunity presented by this task. While we are pleased to see many of our recommendations reflected in the current draft of the rules, we strongly encourage certain driving themes to be further emphasized in the State Board's SB 10-191 rule-making process and throughout the General Assembly review process. ***Specifically, it is critical that the rules and implementation of said rules reflect a coherent system of evaluating, cultivating and recognizing educator effectiveness as an integral component of the broader education system in Colorado.***

We believe that the following are foundational to a comprehensive, fair and effective state system of educator evaluation.

- **Coherence of the system.** The overall coherence of the system put forth by the State Council in its recommendations needs to continue to be reflected in the rules and be adhered to throughout the General Assembly review process. The State Council's work was done in the context of long-term system development and sustainment and the recommendations therefore have a coherence and integrated nature and content that is not compatible with a process that dramatically changes one part without taking the systemic impact of that change into account.
- **Higher expectations and additional support for the profession of education.** Senate Bill 10-191 creates an unprecedented opportunity to set high expectations for our educators and in turn treat them with a high degree of professionalism by, among other things, supporting teachers and principals in cultivating expertise, receiving valuable feedback and having the structures in place for them to more effectively serve students. This opportunity should be reflected within the final version of the rules as well as guide the General Assembly review process.
- **Collaboration across stakeholder groups.** The critical role that students, parents, guardians and families need to play in the evaluation of principals and teachers should be represented in the rules and adhered to throughout the General Assembly review process.
- **The value of the pilot to inform statewide implementation.** The final rules should continue to reinforce that the lessons learned from the pilot can and should inform statewide implementation efforts.

The following is a summary of areas within the rules where we either strongly support the direction the State Board has taken to date and/or areas where we believe action is needed to ensure that the rule adoption process and the eventual General Assembly review process adhere to the principles outlined above.

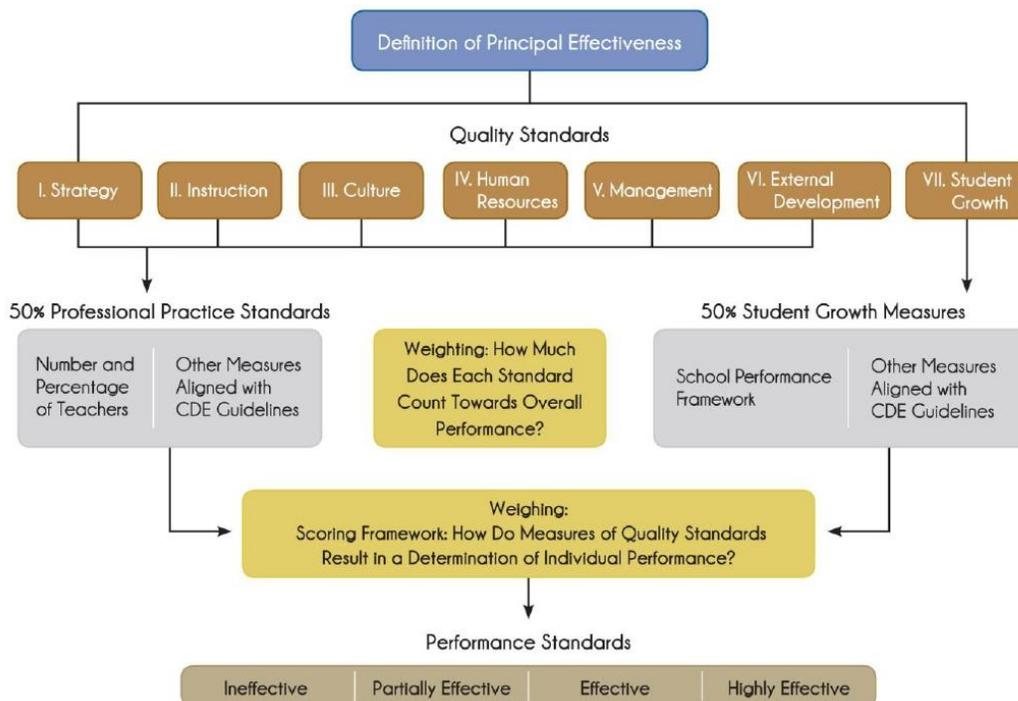
Clearly Define the Statewide Evaluation System Framework

There is some confusion in regard to definitions, terms and intent of the statewide evaluation system framework (statewide framework). We recommend that the State Board revise the rules to include a definition of the statewide framework for both principals and teachers; include graphic representations for both; and ensure that the rules refer back to this definition whenever a component of the framework is addressed.

Specifically, we recommend that you insert the following additional defined term into Section 1.0. The “Principal Evaluation System Framework” means the complete evaluation system that all School Districts and BOCES shall use to evaluate principals employed by them. The complete Principal Evaluation System Framework includes the following component parts: (i) definition of Principal Effectiveness set forth in Section 2.01 of these rules, (ii) the Principal Quality Standards described in Section 2.02 of these rules, (iii) required elements of a written evaluation system described in Sections 5.01 of these rules and (iv) the weighting and aggregation of evidence of performance that are used to assign a Principal to one of four Performance Evaluation Ratings as described in Section 2.03 of these rules.

We further recommend the inclusion of the following diagram illustrating the Principal Evaluation System Framework.

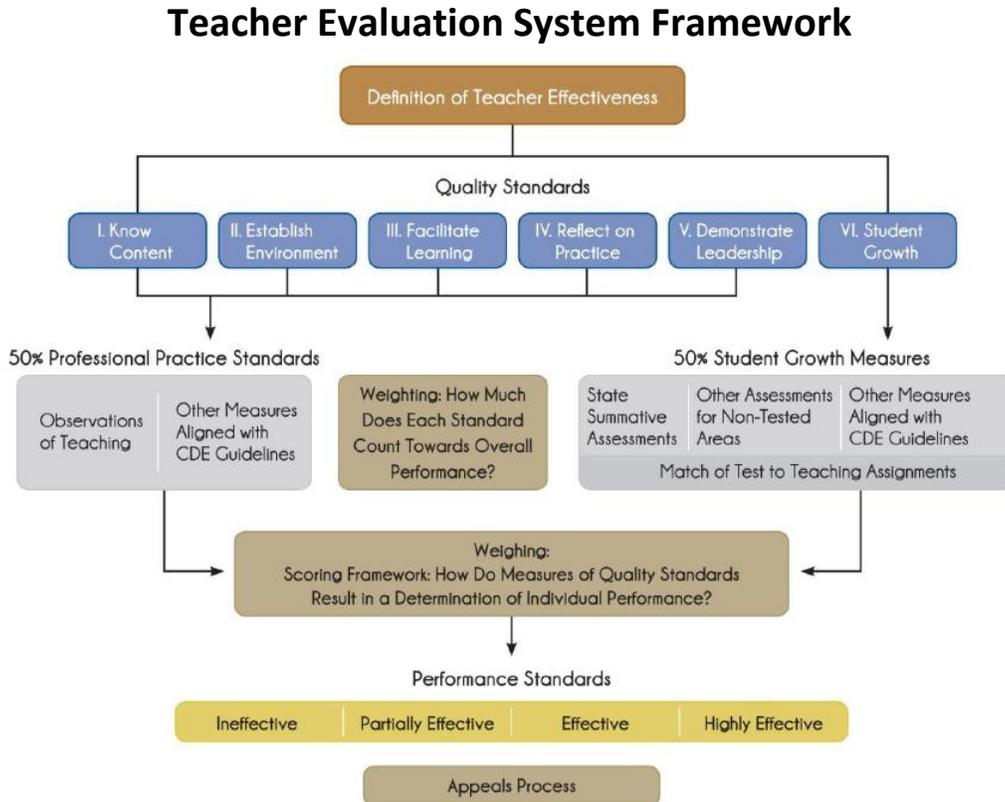
Principal Evaluation System Framework



We also recommend you insert the following defined term for teachers into Section 1.0. The “Teacher Evaluation System Framework” means the complete evaluation system that all School Districts and BOCES shall use to evaluate Teachers employed by them. A diagram of the complete Teacher Evaluation

System Framework includes the following component parts: (i) definition of Teacher Effectiveness set forth in Section 3.01 of these rules, (ii) the Teacher Quality Standards described in Section 3.02 of these rules, (iii) required elements of a written evaluation system described in Sections 3.01 of these rules, (iv) the weighting and aggregation of evidence of performance to assign a teacher to one of four Performance Evaluation Ratings as described in Section 3.03 of these rules and (v) the opportunity to appeal an ineffective rating as contemplated by SB 10-191 Section 22-9-105.5(3)(e)(vii).

We further recommend the inclusion of the following diagram illustrating the Teacher Evaluation System Framework in the definition section of the rules.



Moreover, we recommend that you revise “scoring framework” to read “scoring matrix” in sections 2.03 (A) and 3.03 (A). As discussed above, the term “scoring framework” is likely to create confusion between this item and the system framework. In order to avoid confusion, the State Council recommends that the term “scoring matrix” be used rather than “scoring framework” in sections 2.03 and 3.03 regarding Performance Evaluation Ratings for Principals and Teachers, respectively. The term framework should be reserved for the larger structure that includes all of the overarching components in the evaluation system (see the proposed definitions above). We recognize that the State Council also confused these terms in our original recommendations, but it is important that they be kept distinct so that users of the system are not confused.

Finally, we request that you reserve a section in the rules for the appeals process for teachers. Reserving a section of the rules will demonstrate that an appeals process for teachers is under development.

Refine Principal and Teacher Quality Standards

Principal and Teacher Quality Standards are central and critical components of the statewide system for educator evaluation. Please consider that these guide every other component of the system, including the tools and resources to evaluate teachers and principals against said Quality Standards.

We recommend you eliminate Section 3.02(A)(2) Element b and 3.02(A)(3) Element c. Literacy and numeracy skills are foundational to learning across a broad range of content areas. The language previously added to the overarching Quality Standard I [Section 3.02(A)] sufficiently emphasizes the importance of literacy and numeracy for all teachers. However, the addition of considerable detail in regard to literacy and math [Section 3.02(A)(2) Element b and 3.02(A)(3) Element c] confuses Quality Standard I, thereby undermining the importance of literacy and numeracy. Retaining the current language in Elements b and c creates several problems including the following.

- Excessive detail at the element level frustrates the intended purpose of the Quality Standards to directly inform the development and use of rubrics and other instruments that School Districts and BOCES use to collect evidence of performance against those Quality Standards. The current level of detail is unmanageable and is likely to result in an unreasonably large and detailed performance evaluation process.
- The Teacher Evaluation System Framework was designed to provide districts with the flexibility contemplated by statute to “satisfy Quality Standards in a manner that is appropriate to the size, demographics, and location of the school district or board of cooperative services” [CRS 22-9-104(d)]. The level of specificity in 3.02(A)(2) Element b and 3.02(A)(3) Element c is inconsistent with the intent to allow necessary flexibility at the district level for evaluating teachers.
- Including such a detailed focus on literacy and math has the potential to convey a lack of importance for other areas of the *Colorado State Model Content Standards*. This perceived prioritization of some standards over others runs contrary to the Department’s commitment to “*all standards, all students.*”
- Further, differentiating by teacher type [3.02(A)(2)(a), (b) and (c); 3.02(A)(3)(a) and (b)] is counterproductive to the value of setting common expectations for high performance for all teachers. This differentiation undermines the state and local districts’ ability to train and support everyone in the system to share an understanding of said definition.

Further, we recommend you create assurances for the process of “meeting or exceeding” quality standards as outlined in 2.03 and 3.03. The State Council recognizes the language in 2.03 and 3.03 that allow districts to “meet or exceed” the quality standards for both principals and teachers. In addition, we note that there is a crosswalk process built into the rules, and requirements in section 6.04 of the rules for purposes of reporting data. We urge the State Board to create assurances that the process CDE uses to crosswalk locally developed standards is meaningful. The determination of “meets or exceeds” should assure that district developed standards are substantively similar in a *qualitative manner*, to the quality standards outlined in the rules. Over time, the State Council is interested in examining results throughout the implementation process, particularly through the Pilot, Partner and Integration District processes. This will not be possible without a meaningful assurance process in place.

Include Input from Teachers and Principals

In order to be consistent with the law, to ensure alignment between the principal and teacher systems, to elevate teachers in their profession, and to align with the recommendations from the State Council on Educator Effectiveness, the State Council once again strongly urges that systems be designed in collaboration with

principals and teachers as well as their association, where one exists. Further, we recommend that the determination of which assessments of student growth will be used in evaluating principals and teachers be made in collaboration with principals and teachers and their association, where one exists. See 5.01(F)(3)(c); 5.01(F)(7); 5.01(F)(8)(c); 5.01E(7).

Comments on Evaluation Ratings and Weighting

The following section includes recommendations in regard to first year teacher effectiveness ratings and appreciation of changes made to the current version of the rules in regard to Performance Standards.

We recommend that a first year teacher with a rating of partially effective count toward their effectiveness rating IF they receive two additional, consecutive years of effectiveness ratings. In the final iteration of the rules, please consider that the Council wishes to reiterate that for a teacher in their first year in the profession, a rating of partially effective will be considered the first of three consecutive years of effective performance needed to earn nonprobationary status. Nonprobationary status in this instance would only be earned if the teacher is subsequently rated effective or above in the consecutive two years.

Further, in regard to sections 2.03(D) and 3.03(D), written notification should be given to educators regardless of their final rating. Thus, we recommend you strike notification in 3.03(D)(1)(a) “Teachers and principals shall receive written notice of their Performance Evaluation Rating” as it seems to promote that only teachers with an “ineffective” rating will receive such notification.

We support the amended language in regard to weighting in sections 5.01(E) (4), 5.01(9). The State Council appreciates that the State Board amended the language around Weighting of Performance on Teacher and Quality Standards – 5.01(E)(9) – to include that “each of the Teacher Quality Standards I-V (Professional Practice) shall have a measurable influence of the final Performance Evaluation Rating.”

Continue to Prioritize and Maximize the Learning Potential of the Pilot

We acknowledge and appreciate that the rules have been amended to recognize the learning potential of the pilot phase. Further, we sincerely hope that the rule adoption process and the General Assembly review process continue to support the rules as they stand in this regard.

Specifically, section 6.0, *Supporting Piloting and Implementation of Requirements for Local Performance Evaluation Systems: Duties and Powers of Colorado Department of Education*, captures the value of a learning orientation toward the work of educator effectiveness. There are many critical issues (e.g. exact and appropriate weighting of evaluation criteria, measures of student growth, etc.) without enough data and information to support full-scale adoption. It is important that the pilot phase be fully leveraged to answer key “unknowns” before full-scale implementation. The State Council is looking forward to monitoring the pilot phase to identify lessons learned and make informed recommendations that impact statewide implementation.

Thank you for your ongoing efforts to ensure SB 10-191 rules promote a comprehensive, high quality and meaningful system of educator evaluation in Colorado. We very much appreciate your consideration of this letter.

Sincerely,

Colorado State Council for Educator Effectiveness