

## Teacher Evaluation

### INTRODUCTION

**Teacher quality** is one of myriad factors that impact student achievement and student success. Numerous studies have concluded that social and economic factors, school resources, language proficiency, class size, parental involvement, and teacher quality all play a role in student learning. The California Federation of Teachers believes that for students to learn effectively, state and local policy-makers must provide adequate resources for students to have the supports they need to be successful.

Teacher evaluation is a critical component of education policy that will assist California in developing a world-class education system that serves all children well. Faced with a severe teacher shortage in the coming years, it is critical that California develop a robust teacher evaluation system that helps attract, train, and retain high-quality educators.

California school districts develop their own teacher evaluation systems with guidance from The Stull Act, passed by the Legislature in 1971. Under this law, districts and schools have maximum flexibility to determine their system of teacher evaluation, and because of this, the process for evaluating teachers varies widely throughout the state. In some districts, this inconsistency creates inferior evaluation systems that do little or nothing to help teachers improve their practice over time, fueling the public perception that public schools are failing.

With the recent implementation of the Common Core State Standards, there is a need to develop an evaluation system in California that is aligned with these new standards, curricula, and instructional strategies. In addition, the new Local Control Funding Formula eliminated the categorical funding streams associated with teacher induction, evaluation, and professional development, so policy-makers must determine the resources needed to implement an effective teacher evaluation system and provide those dollars to districts and county offices of education.

### CFT POSITION

The CFT believes that every child has a right to a high-quality education in a school that is staffed by competent and caring education professionals. Based upon this core belief, the CFT has developed the following positions on teacher evaluation.

- **The primary goal of any teacher evaluation system is to provide a process for teachers to improve their practice throughout their careers.**

There are, however, additional advantages of an effective teacher evaluation system, including identification of exemplary teachers who can serve as mentors or master teachers, identification of struggling teachers and how they can be helped, and confirmation of fair and reliable personnel decisions.

- **Base teacher evaluation on the California Standards for the Teaching Profession.**

These standards should be used throughout a teacher's career from pre-service to mid-career to veteran status. A committee of teachers and administrators should review the standards periodically to ensure they are updated when new research reveals information related to high-quality teaching and learning.

- **Call upon the California Department of Education to develop a model teacher evaluation system that districts can adopt or modify when developing their own systems.**

Teachers and administrators must work collaboratively when designing evaluation systems. ***These evaluation systems must be bargained locally between the exclusive bargaining representative and the district.*** Local evaluation systems should include classroom observations, review of lesson plans aligned to the curriculum, and multiple measures of teacher effectiveness and student learning. In addition, an evaluation system could include important factors such as a teacher's contribution to a positive learning environment and overall school quality, as well as collaboration with colleagues.

■ **Evaluators must be well trained and knowledgeable about what constitutes high-quality teaching and learning.**

Evaluators must be experienced in using evaluation tools, providing effective feedback, and connecting teachers to tailored professional development based on results of the evaluation. In addition, evaluators must have content knowledge of the subject being taught. Evaluations must be both formative and summative — formative so that teachers are observed on multiple occasions and given consistent feedback that informs practice — and summative so that valid personnel decisions can be made.

■ **Connect teacher evaluation directly to professional growth opportunities.**

Teacher evaluation should be seen as a continuum, from pre-service to induction to pre-retirement. Teachers should be provided with the resources they need to participate in professional growth throughout their careers to continually improve their practice. Part of this professional growth should be job-embedded and include time for teachers to collaborate daily on planning lessons, share instructional practices, discuss individual student needs, and analyze classroom and schoolwide achievement data.

■ **Consider the quality of instruction in light of the context within which the teacher is teaching.**

California has one of the largest and most diverse student populations in the country. Because of the size and diversity of the system, teachers in California are faced with varying educational situations. Therefore, variables such as class size, educational resources, socioeconomics, student demographics, number of languages spoken by students, and student disabilities must all be considered when evaluating teachers.

■ **Encourage districts to adopt Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) programs that pair exemplary veteran teachers with teachers who are new to the profession and those who may be struggling and need assistance.**

Well-designed Peer Assistance and Review programs in districts throughout the nation rely upon a joint committee of teachers and administrators to oversee and implement the teacher evaluation process and make recommendations for personnel decisions. PAR programs can accomplish several important objectives related to teacher evaluation.

- Increase the capacity within a school or district to carry out high-quality teacher evaluations by calling on accomplished veteran teachers to assist administrators in conducting teacher evaluations.
- Encourage collaboration between teachers and administrators during design of the evaluation system, and ownership during its maintenance.

- Provide new or struggling teachers with mentoring and support in areas of weakness.

■ **Examine multiple measures of student achievement when evaluating teachers.**

The measures must be valid and accurate. Multiple measures of student achievement can include pre- and post-tests based on the curricular content of a specific class, assessments that document learning progress, portfolios of student work, or work products such as reports, papers, or scholarly research projects. Student learning measures should include “authentic” assessments that are performance-based.

■ **Do not use standardized test scores or Value-Added Measures (VAM) to make high-stakes decisions about teachers.**

First, there is absolutely no evidence that standardized test scores are a valid and reliable measure for determining a teacher’s effectiveness.

Second, as stated in *Greatness by Design* — California’s blueprint document for improving the teaching profession — the National Research Council’s Board on Testing and Assessment concluded that “VAM estimates of teacher effectiveness...should not be used to make operational decisions because such estimates are far too unstable to be considered fair or reliable.” In addition, a 2005 RAND Corporation report concluded, “The research base is currently insufficient to support the use of VAM for high-stakes decisions about individual teachers or schools.”

■ **Collaboration between state policy leaders and educators is essential to determine the effectiveness of the current teacher induction program.**

The California Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) program was designed to provide an induction program for beginning teachers. Induction services are provided by various entities, including school districts, county offices of education, and institutions of higher education. BTSA was once funded through the state, but in 2009 financial support for the program was folded into “flexibility” funding.

Since the 2013 implementation of the Local Control Funding Formula, it is unclear if funds are available and how they are being used to support a teacher induction program. Beginning teachers should not be required to pay for their induction program, yet some beginning teachers have paid upwards of \$4,000 out of their own pockets to participate in the program. The state needs to conduct a study on the effectiveness of the current induction program and create an action plan to significantly improve it.

## CONCLUSION

In order for California to create a world-class public education system that serves all children well, policymakers must first provide the resources necessary to meet the diverse needs of its student population. In addition, California policymakers must create an education system that attracts, trains, and retains teachers.

One important component of that system is the development of a teacher evaluation system that supports ongoing professional growth for educators. This career-long support must be the ultimate goal of any teacher evaluation system. To achieve this, the teacher evaluation system must be fair, valid, reliable, and based on sound research about adult learning and professional growth.

The California Federation of Teachers believes this position paper outlines the essential components of such a teacher evaluation system.

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