Fact Sheet #13: Multiple Data Sources

DOCUMENTING TEACHER PERFORMANCE WITH MULTIPLE DATA SOURCES

Use of Multiple Data Sources
Documentation is the process of recording sufficient information about the teacher’s performance to support ongoing evaluation and to justify any personnel decisions based on the evaluation. The basic question is: How will the teacher demonstrate performance of the identified standards? The complexity of professional roles in today’s schools requires a performance evaluation system that reflects that complexity of the job. Given the complexity of teachers’ work, attempting to document the work with one method or data source simply is not sensible or feasible. Peterson et al. concisely provided the rationale for using multiple data sources in teacher evaluation when they stated, “no single data source works for all persons…because good teaching comes in a variety of forms and styles.” Multiple data sources enable the supervisor to obtain a more accurate picture of performance and assist the teacher in increasing student success.

Using multiple data sources in the teacher evaluation process offers numerous advantages over single source data collection processes. Some of the advantages are:

- A more complete portrait of a teacher’s performance.
- Data collection in more naturally occurring situations. Integration of primary and secondary data sources in the evaluation.
- Greater objectivity and reliability in documenting performance.
- Documentation of performance that is more closely related to actual work.
- A more legally defensible basis for evaluation decisions.
- More teacher support and involvement in teacher evaluation when they feel that it is pertinent to their own performance and fair in its use of information in their individual case.

What Data Sources Will Be Included in the Teacher Assessment on Performance Standards (TAPS)?

Required:
The following types of data sources are required components in TAPS for documenting teacher quality. The rich data about teacher performance provided by these sources will identify areas of individual strengths and weaknesses and inform appropriate professional activities.

- Formal Observations: The evaluator conducts a structured, planned observation — either announced or unannounced — typically of a teacher who is presenting a lesson to or interacting with students.
- Informal Observations: Informal observations, such as the walkthroughs/frequent brief observations, are intended to provide more frequent information on a wider variety of contributions made by the teacher. Evaluators are encouraged to conduct informal observations by observing instruction and work in non-classroom settings.
- Documentation: This includes artifacts that provide documentation for the teacher performance standards. Documentation should emphasize naturally occurring artifacts from teachers’ work (i.e., lesson plans, instructional units, student assessment).
- Surveys of Instructional Practice: Student survey results will inform the rating of standards 3, 4, 7, and 8 at the Formative and Summative Level and will impact the TEM score.

The following information sources may also be useful in documenting teacher performance. These suggested data sources for teacher
evaluation can be used for both tenured and non-tenured teachers.

- Self-Assessment: Self-assessment is a process that teachers reflect on their practice in order to understand, critique, and improve it.
- Other data sources (e.g., conferences, examination of student work, learning team meetings, conversations with students and parents, etc.) that are perceived as appropriate by the local school districts.

**How will Multiple Data Sources be used in the Evaluation?**

Some teacher standards are better documented through classroom observation (e.g., Instructional Strategies or Positive Learning Environment) whereas other standards may require additional documentation. For example, Standard 2 – Instructional Planning - may necessitate review of the teacher’s lesson plans and Standard 5 - Assessment Strategies - may necessitate review of the teacher’s classroom assessments. Such evidence often is collected by the teacher and presented in documentation as a complement to the supervisor-conducted observations.

These data sources are not stand-alone, but are complementary to each other and should be integrated in the process of evaluation to provide a richer portrait of teacher performance. The flaws of one data source are often the strengths of another, and by combining multiple sources, evaluators can make more solid judgments regarding teacher performance and make decisions that are supported by multiple types of data. For instance, when comparing observations, documentation can contain a variety of materials that reflect many of the tasks of teaching (either within or without the classroom) and provide evidence related to standards of performance that are easily observable.

Good evaluation and supervision uses a combination of data sources to gauge teachers’ performance on the standards. In contrast with traditional teacher evaluation systems which depend on checklists and obligatory yearly classroom observations, the TAPS intends to use different data sources to engage teachers in ongoing assessments that continually provide feedback and the opportunity to examine knowledge, practices, and effectiveness so that they may continue to grow as professionals.

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