**Teacher and Principal Evaluation 2020-2021 Overview**

**Purpose:**

Now that the 2020-21 school year has begun, many questions have arisen about how to conduct school business. The Office of Coordinated School and Support at the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) has created this guidance document for districts around the question of **teacher/principal evaluation**. This guidance aims to support district leaders in making decisions, within whatever constraints exist, that best connect the dots among social-emotional learning, instruction, and operations.

Every district’s overall system of educator effectiveness should focus on the support and development of its educators, and teacher and principal evaluation should play just a small role in this system. The guidance in this document seeks to assist districts in supporting and developing their teachers and principals in the district’s current context while ensuring all students have equitable access to effective teachers and principals, whether learning is occurring in person, remote, or a hybrid setting.

Health and safety are, of course, the top priority for schools. We, therefore, assume that protocols are in place to address these critical needs, and this teacher/principal evaluation guidance picks up from there. The following foundational values, then, undergird this guidance:

**Equity** - We must ensure our students, especially those who have been historically underserved, maintain access to high-quality teaching and school leadership.

**Quality** - While flexibility and innovation must be pursued, we must not back down from our standards for quality.

**Flexibility** - We must pursue flexibilities in regulations and innovations to ensure students have access to high-quality teaching and school leadership.

**Safety** - Learning cannot occur if the school community does not feel safe in their environment.

**Decisive** - Given the size and scope of the challenge, we must move deliberately and make tough choices. We will make mistakes, and we will adapt quickly as variables on the ground change.

# **Impact of COVID-19:**

Key topics regarding teacher/principal evaluation that are impacted by COVID-19 include:

* Providing the opportunity for all students to have effective teachers/principals, while
  + including teacher/principal evaluation in an overall district plan for the support and development of teachers and principals
  + implementing evaluation practices based on a research-based instructional model and standards of effectiveness for teachers and principals
  + meeting the requirements of state statute
  + supporting teachers/principals
  + developing teachers/principals

**Goals:**

School district/school system leaders are faced with a host of daunting new questions to answer and decisions to be made about teacher/principal evaluation. The goal of this guidance is, therefore, to be clear and straightforward, while also looking to transition into practices that mirror the needs of students and educators as outlined by the newly revised [*Nebraska Teacher and Principal Performance Standards*](https://cdn.education.ne.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/TeacherPrincipalPerformanceStandards2020.pdf) (NTPPS). As districts consider teacher/principal evaluation, their conversations should focus on the immediate needs of their students and staff by:

* Supporting the wellbeing, including the mental health, of students and staff and encouraging meaningful connections.
* Keeping learning coherent, focusing on the highest priorities for each grade level and content area, and moving forward—whether learning is occurring in person, remote, or a hybrid setting.
* Meeting the needs of each student, including those most vulnerable, and addressing unfinished learning across remote and in-person contexts.
* Aligning teaching and school leadership roles, responsibilities, and structures to the new reality of teaching and learning.
* Designing schedules that accommodate this new reality, including new protocols consistent with public health guidance, and that prioritize vulnerable student populations, including structures for continuing learning and ensuring equity in remote environments.
* Challenging the status quo through innovative processes within your organization that close the opportunity gaps that currently exist for students.

**Key Questions:**

**What does state statute say about teacher evaluation?**

[Nebraska Revised Statute 79-828(2)](https://nebraskalegislature.gov/laws/statutes.php?statute=79-828) requires districts to conduct classroom observations of probationary teachers once each semester. Districts may need to consider their definition of “classroom observation” depending on the physical setting of the school, as per their district policy.

**Are there waivers about teacher evaluation in light of the pandemic?**

No. Districts may or may not be adhering to their district policies this year in regards to the evaluation of **non-probationary** teachers; however, administrators should develop new pandemic-appropriate ways to support the priorities of growth for **all** teachers and school leaders, to ensure teachers and school leaders feel supported, trusted, and motivated to elevate their practice, regardless of the physical setting of the school. Tools such as phone or Zoom evaluation conferences, remote and/or video observations, electronic and/or email signatures, etc., may be necessary, a per district policy.

**What should educational leaders be considering in regard to systems of teacher and principal evaluation during and post-COVID-19?**

A shift is also underway to respond to the COVID-19 crisis by rethinking the structures and systems currently in place, not only by the NDE but also by other educational organizations, as well as by districts themselves. Subsequently, these systems can respond proactively and prioritize the necessary supports, while leveraging innovation and progressive thinking.

**How does the observation process change in a hybrid or remote setting?**

Observations of practice are an essential component of supporting educator growth as they provide the basis for feedback and support within both face-to-face and virtual teaching environments. Within hybrid or remote instructional models, evaluators may not be able to physically observe every lesson in a classroom setting, yet they may continue to observe virtual lessons and confer with educators to provide coaching and feedback around their instruction. To determine the best model for conducting virtual observations, educators and evaluators are strongly encouraged to work closely with their local leadership teams and school boards to review local policies and consider how such designations as “formal” and “informal” as well as “announced” and “unannounced” will be applied within hybrid or remote environments. Attention should also be given to how and when feedback will be delivered and what model will best suit local educators and evaluators in discussing observation evidence and “next steps” for educator growth and development. For guidance, see [Teacher Observation, Feedback, and Support in the Time of COVID-19](https://gtlcenter.org/products-resources/teacher-observation-feedback-and-support-time-covid-19-guidance-virtual-learning).

**Recognizing that teachers might not have been trained at a deep level around teaching in a remote setting, is there any guidance on how to approach that?**

In this unprecedented time of school closures, districts are facing new challenges in evaluating and supporting their professional staff. Remote settings might include virtual classrooms, teleconferencing, or student access to physical materials. No matter, districts must ensure students are being taught as effectively as is practical to expect. Therefore, providing support that teachers and school leaders require is critical at this time.

Providing feedback and support to educators through the evaluation process can both equip them as they adjust their practice to a remote setting, as well as guide focus areas for future growth once students and teachers return to in-person learning. As always, it is appropriate to use multiple forms of evidence (e.g., collaboration notes, lesson plans, parent communications, student work samples, notes from walk-through data, etc.) regarding the educator's performance to support the evaluation.

**What supports for educator development are the Nebraska State Board of Education (SBOE) and the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) putting into place as districts navigate pandemic-impacted structures.**

In April of 2020, the SBOE made a commitment to a common language of effectiveness for all Nebraska school teachers and leaders by approving revisions to the *NTPPS*. These standards provide a structure designed to address the complexities of teaching and leading. The NDE is committed to organized and intentional collaboration with key partners to develop and implement a system using these standards as the foundation to support the educational community in addressing equity in schools. The system is called Supporting Educator Effectiveness through Development (S.E.E.D.) The major shifts in the new NTPPS are an increased focus on data-driven decision making and equity. For guidance in engaging in conversations about these topics, see [Leading for Equity in our Schools](https://moodle.education.ne.gov/).

**Are the *Nebraska Teacher and Principal Performance Standards* an Instructional Model?**

Yes. The previous version was called the *Nebraska Teacher and Principal Performance Framework (NTTPF)*, but to avoid confusion with other NDE processes, they are now called *standards*. The performance standards are considered the instructional model representing the standard for effective teaching and school leadership in Nebraska.

**Are there any resources that would provide an introduction to the standards? Where are these housed?**

The NDE provides videos of conversations about the standards through the lens of a student, teacher, principal, educational service unit (ESU), educator preparation programs (EPP), and NDE personnel. Listen to Nebraska educators speak from their perspective about the standards, the support they offer teachers and principals, and the alignment of work across the state educational system. The links will be found on the following webpage: <https://www.education.ne.gov/educatoreffectiveness/>.

**Considerations:**

Consideration needs to be given to the following points when evaluating educators during this time of disruption and innovation:

* Utilize teacher and principal voice to develop evaluation processes that account for feelings of anxiety due to teaching/leading in an uncertain environment.
* Conduct and provide feedback in new systems for observation, support, and coaching across a mix of in-person, remote, and hybrid settings.
* Monitor support for staff and identify gaps in capabilities in new areas such as remote learning and student care.
* Maintain strong relationships with staff to bolster morale and retention.
* Communicate any changes or modifications in expectations and ensure robust supports are in place to effectively meet expectations such as:
  + Academic vision and goals for the school year
  + Values as a system in achieving those goals
  + Remote setting expectations (Highlight the changes across the system from remote learning last spring. Specifically, call out where expectations are more rigorous and where schools/teachers have local discretion.)
  + The instructional materials each teacher will use (Each teacher should know the exact curricula he/she will use and the aligned technology and materials needed.)
  + The assessments each teacher will administer (Each teacher should know the assessments they will administer, the technology needed for those, the schedule, and how they will and will not use the data.)
  + Grading and attendance policies (Each teacher and school should know the grading and attendance policies for all three scenarios, be trained on data systems, and be clear on their unique role in upholding those policies.)
  + The schedule and staffing role of each teacher (Each teacher should know their exact role in each schedule consideration for in-person, remote, and hybrid settings.)
  + Professional learning (Each teacher and principal should know their development priorities, their professional development plan for the year, and the calendar of learning.)

**Prioritized Standards within the *Nebraska Teacher and Principal Performance Standards(NTPPS)***

To support districts as they work to innovate and respond, the NDE has identified 5 “priority” standards for teachers and 6 for principals from the NTPPS. Using the lens of best practice and research, these 11 standards could serve as the focus of effectiveness during this time of uncertainty.

These prioritized standards could serve as the basis for conversations between teachers and principals, and principals and their supervisor/superintendent, during the evaluation process.

* Collaborative conversations around evidence of effectiveness in these areas will enable teachers and principals to feel supported, yet at the same time, not overwhelm them with the enormity of meeting all standards of effectiveness.
* Identification of areas of strengths in these indicators would help teachers and principals feel supported and give them confidence.
* Identification of areas of weakness would assist evaluators in knowing which avenues to pursue to best support and develop educators.
* Certainly local context may inform other priority standards, and districts might consider other nuances of their instructional model that rise to priority.

For guidance, see [Teacher Observation, Feedback, and Support in the Time of COVID-19](https://gtlcenter.org/products-resources/teacher-observation-feedback-and-support-time-covid-19-guidance-virtual-learning), [Professional Learning Overview](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.launchne.com%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2020%2F10%2FProfessionalLearningOverview1082020.docx&data=02%7C01%7Ccory.epler%40nebraska.gov%7C06a1a56dffb547a0b0b908d86bc04620%7C043207dfe6894bf6902001038f11f0b1%7C0%7C0%7C637377820840087998&sdata=sNltjGnS5g5lcU%2BA%2FB22F9l2Fn0NkVNNngmJUkAspzY%3D&reserved=0), and [Leading for Equity in our Schools](https://moodle.education.ne.gov/).

**PRIORITIZED INDICATORS WITHIN THE TEACHER PERFORMANCE STANDARDS**

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| **Standard:**  **Instructional Strategies** | **Standard:**  **Learning Environment** | | **Standard:**  **Professionalism** |
| **Indicator f.** Models cultural competence and responsiveness by implementing and sustaining evidence-based, district-supported curriculum, instructional materials, and strategies that confront and eliminate institutional bias and student marginalization | **Indicator d**. Establishes, communicates, and maintains high expectations, effective routines, procedures, and clear standards of conduct to create a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment for all students | | **Indicator b**. Develops and sustains productive and appropriate relationships through communication with students, colleagues, administrators, families, and the larger community in an effort to support and enhance each student’s academic success and well-being |
| **Standard:**  **Planning and Preparation** | | **Standard:**  **Assessment** | |
| **Indicator f**. Uses multiple sources of relevant data to tailor culturally responsive learning experiences that address students’ academic, physical, social-emotional, and mental health needs, with specific attention toward equitable opportunities and outcomes for all student groups | | **Indicator b.** Uses a variety of district- supported classroom-based assessments that confront and eliminate institutional bias and student marginalization, meet all students’ developmental needs, and ensure each student has the opportunity to demonstrate understanding | |

PRIORITIZED INDICATORS WITHIN THE PRINCIPAL PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

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| **Standard:**  **Vision for Learning** | **Standard:**  **Continuous Improvement** | **Standard:**  **Staff Support and Development** |
| **Indicator e**. Ensures each student’s instructional experience is based on intentional and district supported use of high quality instructional materials and aligned to innovative and impactful programming personalized to the interests and needs of individual students and groups of students | **Indicator d**. Manages the process of change within the school, communicating the need and process for change so that it is fully understandable, consistent, and transparent, and utilizing the collective efforts of all members of the educational community | **Indicator c**. Observes instructional staff formally and informally and provides specific, actionable, and timely feedback to improve instructional practice, and takes action to provide each instructional staff member with the supports and development needed |
| **Standard:**  **Operations and Management** | **Standard:**  **Professional Ethics and Advocacy** | **Standard:**  **Culture for Learning** |
| **Indicator h.** Manages and monitors the school’s site, facilities, services, and equipment to maintain a safe, clean, healthy learning environment | **Indicator f**. Engages in purposeful, positive conversations and activities throughout the educational community to advocate publicly for the importance of education, the needs of students, staff, and self, and educational priorities | **Indicator f.** Models cultural competence and responsiveness and collaborates with the educational community to create, implement, and sustain systematic instructional protocols and practices that confront and eliminate institutional bias and student marginalization |

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