Empowering Effective Teachers

Setting the Context: Progress in Pittsburgh

In Pittsburgh, we recognize that effective teachers are the #1 school-based factor for improving student outcomes.

A teacher’s effectiveness has more impact on student learning than any other factor under the control of school systems, including class size, school size, and the quality of after-school programs.[1]

We now have ways to understand and respond to differences in teacher effectiveness.

Until recently, PPS could not accurately recognize differences in teacher effectiveness, much less respond to them in meaningful ways.

Like in many school districts, PPS teachers received a single Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory evaluation rating. This failed to provide meaningful information to foster growth, with 99% of teachers being rated as if they were all the same.

Just like in other complex professions, there’s no single tool that can do justice to the work teachers do.

That’s why we’ve worked so hard to be able to look at teaching through multiple lenses.

In the last three years, we have adopted new tools that identify differences in teacher effectiveness, and provide useful information to improve teaching.

**In PPS, we now have ways to understand and respond to differences in teacher effectiveness:**

![Diagram showing Observation, Student Learning and Growth, and Student Feedback]

With these tools in place, PPS is ahead of the curve.

This summer, with the passage of Act 82 of 2012, Pennsylvania joined at least 24 other states that require measures of student achievement as part of teacher evaluation.\(^1\)[1].\(^1\)[1]

**Starting in 2013-14, teacher evaluation will be based 50% on observation and 50% on student outcomes.**

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\(^1\) Act 82 of 2012, Signed by Governor Corbett July, 2012  
Teachers are using new information and feedback to improve results for students

- 70% of PPS teachers agree that the new observation system “supports and encourages my professional growth.”²

- 80% of PPS teachers say they are using feedback from observations to improve teaching and determine areas of growth.³

- Many schools are already using RISE to open classroom doors and facilitate peer-to-peer collaboration.

- Teachers are accessing their Tripod and VAM results to discover opportunities for professional growth, and turning them into action in the classroom.

Still, in PPS, the hardest work is still in front of us

- Having all of this new information is great. *But it is how this information is used that will determine our success.*

- We’re using results to promote teachers into strategic roles and to recognize teams and schools for their extraordinary achievements.

- But we are just at the beginning of realizing the power of new information to impact student learning.

Using observation alone, we already have much more information about teacher effectiveness in PPS

Since 2010-11, end-of-year ratings have been based on the 12 “power components” of our new observation rubric, which is based on Charlotte Danielson’s *Framework for Teaching*.

The charts below show how the distribution of teacher effectiveness has changed from 2008-09 to 2011-12.

This distribution will continue to change as we improve administration of our new observation system and move to a system of multiple measures for end-of-year ratings in 2013-14.

**Comparison of Distribution of Teacher Effectiveness in PPS, 2008-09 to 2011-12**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distribution of teacher effectiveness in Pittsburgh Public Schools, 2008-09</th>
<th>Distribution of teacher effectiveness in Pittsburgh Public Schools, 2011-12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unsatisfactory</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distinguished</td>
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**Data Notes:**
In 2008-09, the number of unsatisfactory ratings issued is estimated to be less than 1% of all ratings.
Data for 2011-12 is preliminary and based on data from September 2012. It includes 1,651 teachers who were teaching in PPS through the 2011-12 school year prior to this summer’s workforce reductions and evaluated through RISE or EIP.
End of year ratings for 2011-12 were based on RISE scores and Employee Improvement Plan ratings.
Now, we are working on developing a Combined Measure of Effective Teaching

What is a combined measure of effective teaching?

A combined measure of effectiveness, sometimes called a teacher effectiveness measure, brings together multiple measures to reach an overall estimate of a teacher’s effectiveness.

New legislation requires a combined measure

This summer, a comprehensive education bill was signed by Governor Corbett (Act 82 of 2012). The legislation requires that teacher, principal, and professional staff evaluation includes multiple measures.

- For teachers and principals, the legislation gives equal weight to professional practice and student outcomes (50/50).
- The legislation gives districts until 2013-14 to implement a teacher evaluation system and until 2014-15 for principals and other professional staff.
- It ensures that individual ratings are not subject to disclosure under the Right-to-Know Law.
- It grants some flexibility to individual districts to develop a unique rating tool, so long as it works within the legislated framework and is of equal rigor.

Why is a combined measure valuable?

- It is stronger and more accurate than a single measure.
- It will be useful for making decisions, monitoring progress, and improving support.

Most importantly, we believe that effective teachers make a difference in students’ lives. At PPS, we are committed to identifying effective teaching using multiple measures to support our teachers as we work together to ensure that all of our students are Promise-Ready.

PPS’ Approach

This summer, PPS modeled the approach to reaching a combined measure defined by state legislation (Act 82):

- 50% Classroom Observation and Practice
- 50% Student Outcomes
  - 15% Building Level Results
  - 15% Teacher Specific Data
  - 20% Elective Data
Because the legislation also provides districts some flexibility to propose an equally rigorous rating tool, PPS also modeled seven additional variations in order to see which one holds teachers accountable for factors most within their control.

Teachers, administrators, and experts provided input about all eight models, and identified what was important to them when making their recommendations for PPS. They thought it was important to:

- Hold teachers accountable at higher weights for factors most within their control;
- Treat teachers equitably across schools, students, grades, and subject areas;
- Emphasize growth measures (Value-added measures) over attainment measures; and
- Build on the work that we have already done in Pittsburgh.

We ended up with a model that is similar to the one defined in Act 82. Like Act 82’s model, PPS’ model proposes using 50% classroom observation and practice and 50% student outcomes. Two differences we are proposing include:

- Reducing the weight of building level results from 15% to 5%, and Elective Data from 20% to 15% in order to increase the weight of Teacher Specific Data to 30%.
- Using our own value-added model instead of PDE’s building level formula.

This approach is still under development and has not been approved by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE).

**Figure 1: PPS Combined Effectiveness Measure Information Framework**
Additional Information: Defining Effective Teaching

So, what does it mean to be an effective teacher in PPS?

- Most people can think of an extraordinary teacher that had a lasting impact on their life, but what was it that made this teacher so special?

- Through RISE, we began to establish a common language to identify and describe effective teaching.

- Now, we need to continue simplifying and zeroing in on a concise definition of what it means to be an effective teacher in PPS.

- Through our work with teachers on RISE, VAM, and Tripod, conferring with national experts such as Dr. Pedro Noguera and Battelle for Kids, and consulting the Measures of Effective Teaching project, Charlotte Danielson’s *Framework for Teaching*, our own *Pathways to the Promise* and more, we have developed the following description of an effective teaching in Pittsburgh Public Schools.

- To see how the components of this definition align with the tools that we are using to understand teacher effectiveness in PPS, refer to Appendix D.

An effective teacher in Pittsburgh Public Schools is a professional, who knows his or her subject, and teaches it well, inspiring and engaging all students as individuals, and accelerating learning so that all students are Promise-Ready.
This chart maps each characteristic of an effective teacher to one or more of our measures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Measures</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A professional</td>
<td>RISE Domain 4: Professionalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knows his or her subject</td>
<td>RISE Domain 1: Planning and Preparation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaches it well</td>
<td>• RISE Domain 3: Teaching and Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Tripod Student Survey</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inspiring and engaging all students as individuals</td>
<td>• RISE Domain 2: The Classroom Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• RISE Domain 3: Teaching and Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Tripod Student Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accelerating learning</td>
<td>Value-added measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All students are Promise-Ready</td>
<td>Our ultimate measure of success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Students master academic content, develop behaviors and habits, explore ambitions and dreams)</td>
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For more information on our progress, there are many resources located on the *Empowering Effective Teachers* website ([www.empoweringpittsburghteachers.org](http://www.empoweringpittsburghteachers.org)). We hope you take the time to learn more and reach out to our office with any unanswered questions.