DC MODEL TEACHER EVALUATION SYSTEM

PILOT PROGRAM 2015-2016

EXTERNAL EVALUATION BRIEF

OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

A Study Commissioned by OSSE

Completed By
Collaborative Communications Group

MN Associates, Inc.

Introduction & Background

The DC Model Teacher Evaluation System (DCMTES) is a comprehensive framework designed to assist local education agencies (LEAs) in the District of Columbia assess the performance of their teachers. Two components make up DCMTES: 1) observation and feedback on teacher performance in classroom instruction and, 2) student learning objectives (SLOs). Within the observation and feedback component, teacher performance is reviewed across four main categories:

▶ **learning environment**

▶ **delivery and instruction**

▶ **planning and preparation**

▶ **professional foundations**

Teachers are rated along a four-point scale from highly effective to ineffective. The Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) contracted Collaborative Communications Group (Collaborative) to assist with the planning and implementation of DCMTES. MN Associates, Inc. (MNA) was sub-contracted to conduct the external program evaluation of the pilot implementation.

DC Model Teacher Evaluation System Timeline

Year 1 (SY 2014-2015)
Development & Refinement of the System (Domains and Rubric)

Year 2 (SY 2015-2016)
Implementation Pilot Program

▶ Three-Day Summer Institute (July)

▶ Preparing for Staff Roll Out & Yearlong Planning (August)

▶ Goal Setting with Teachers and Building Observation and Feedback Routines with Reviewers (September)

▶ SLO Review Process (October)

▶ Community of Practice (CoP) Sessions with Site Visits (November-June)

▶ OSSE LEA Institute and Advisory Group Panel (May)

Year 3 (SY 2016-2017)
DCMTES available for adoption and implementation by all LEAs

The DC Model Teacher Evaluation Framework serves as the foundation for effective teacher evaluation processes; including observation, feedback, and coaching.
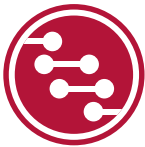
The framework has 26 domains divided into 4 categories. Each category includes indicators that describe effective teaching in each domain. The model teacher evaluation rubric provides definitions of effectiveness for each indicator of the framework.

Learning Environment

Delivery Of Instruction

Planning And Preparation

Professional Foundations

EFFECTIVENESS DEFINITIONS INCLUDE:

Highly Effective: Evidence of exceptional performance; outstanding knowledge, implementation, and integration of teaching standards along with evidence of leadership initiative and willingness to model and/or serve as a mentor for colleagues as measured by both exemplary teacher and student actions.

Effective: Evidence of solid performance; strong knowledge, implementation, and integration of teaching standards; clear evidence of proficiency and skill in the component/criterion as measured by satisfactory student actions and results.

Minimally Effective: Evidence of mediocre or developing performance; fundamental knowledge and implementation of teaching standards is uneven or rudimentary. Integration of teaching standards is inconsistent. Teacher is making progress towards proficiency with mixed student actions and results.

Ineffective: Little or no knowledge and minimal implementation of teaching standards. Does not meet minimal teaching standards and needs substantial improvement. Students are not meeting either behavioral or academic expectations.

How the Pilot Was Implemented

▶ **DCMTES as a pilot was implemented at two levels: at the OSSE level and within the participating LEAs. At the OSSE level, the pilot was generally implemented as planned. Across and within the LEAs, implementation of the pilot could be characterized as varied.**

▶ **LEA implementation varied according to the institutional characteristics of the LEA; level of commitment by the LEAs; how the LEAs conducted classroom observations using the DCMTES tools; and in the context of other concurrent programs and initiatives happening in the schools. Variation also occurred because LEAs wanted to capture teachers' progress toward LEA-specific performance domains. Variation also occurred because the DCMTES tools, particularly the classroom observation tool, were evolving as the pilot progressed.**

▶ **Despite all these variations in LEA implementation, there were three observed common practices across the LEAs: opening the teacher evaluation process with teacher self-assessment, taking raw observation notes of what transpired in the classroom, and treating SLOs as a more distinct, though still connected process from the teacher evaluation process. SLOs were seen more as goalposts rather than major drivers in the day-to-day activities of the school.**

> I do find comments in these meetings [to be] very beneficial, to hear other schools and some of the struggles and successes that other schools have had around this tool and just in general. We rarely take the time as educators to go visit other schools, to communicate with other leaders. We're so busy doing our own thing, I think...This has been good, [the] coming together.
>
> – LEA point of contact remarks on community of practice sessions

About the LEAs Participating in the Pilot

▶ **All of the LEAs who participated in the pilot were part of the cohort of 14 LEAs who helped develop DCMTES in 2014-2015 school year.**

▶ **Each pilot LEA had to sign off on an memorandum of understanding (MOU) with OSSE with the following participation requirements: on-time attendance to monthly community of practice (CoP) sessions; a designated point of contact (POC); completion of pre/post work assignments for the monthly CoP sessions; full adoption of DCMTES; and collection and dissemination of anonymized teacher observation data, sample student learning objectives (SLOs) and survey results for evaluation. In return, OSSE has committed to providing a $10,000 grant for each LEA, technical assistance, tools, and other resources.**

PARTICIPATING LEAS AT A GLANCE

LEA Point of Contact (POC)	Grade Span	Number (Percent) of Piloting Teachers	School Specialty
Bridges POC: Early Childhood Administrator	**PreK-4 (Expanding to Grade 5 in SY2017-18)**	**8 (100 percent of PreK-K teachers)**	**Early childhood education, particularly students with special needs**
Cedar Tree POC: Executive Director	**PreK-Kindergarten**	**12 (71 percent of 17 teachers)**	**Early childhood education**
IDEA POC: Head of School/ CEO	**Grade 9-12**	**5 (15 percent of 33 teachers)**	**Comprehensive high school**
Roots POC: Vice Principal	**PreK-Grade 5**	**8 (100 percent of lead teachers)**	**African-centered learning environment**
Thurgood Marshall Academy POC: Director of Curriculum and Instruction	**Grade 9-12**	**6 (19 percent of 32 teachers)**	**Law and justice-themed college preparatory**
Washington Math Science Technology POC: Curriculum Specialists	**Grade 9-12**	**30 (100 percent) of teachers**	**STEM-focused college preparatory**
Washington Yu Ying POC: Assistant Principal	**PreK-Grade 5**	**45 (100 percent all instructional staff including lead teachers, non-academic teachers, and learning support specialists, i.e., for English language learners and students with disabilities)**	**Chinese immersion**

About the Teachers Being Evaluated

▶ **Majority of teachers responding to spring 2016 survey had a bachelor's degree (36.8%) or a master's degree (56.1%).**

▶ **On average, teachers responding to the spring survey had 10.9 years of teaching experience but 4.9 years of experience teaching at their current school.**

▶ **Since most of the respondents teach the elementary grades, most (61.4%) taught all subject areas.**

▶ **Last year, 36.7% of teachers reported having had two observations while 28.6% had four or more observations last year. Four teachers reported that they have not been observed at all.**

▶ **For those who were observed, turnaround for feedback from their evaluations happened quickly—within one to two days (54%).**

▶ **Nearly 81% of the teachers who responded to the spring survey said they received training on DCMTES. Over 42% said they received at least two hours of training and nearly 23% received more than five hours of training.**

▶ **Slightly more than 50% believed that DCMTES is better than their previous evaluation system, and nearly 54% found that DCMTES is more useful in providing guidance to the teachers. However, 72.8% said they felt DCMTES would be beneficial for their growth given time.**

▶ **Teachers' tentative and ambivalent responses seem to reflect the newness of DCMTES.**

▶ **A majority of the respondents (69.6%) also express confidence that the person who will evaluate them is knowledgeable and will assess them professionally.**

▶ **Nearly 88% of teachers believe that any evaluation process should aim "at providing useful information for teachers to improve their performance." They are less comfortable when the teacher evaluation process is used as a summative assessment involving high stakes outcomes (i.e. retention, promotion, or dismissal).**

Aspects of the Pilot Program That Worked Well

▶ **Classroom Observation Tool**

▶ **Community of Practice (CoP) Sessions**

▶ **Site Visits**

▶ **Videos and Discussions**

Aspects That Need Improvement

▶ **The development and rollout of what became the classroom observation tool/checklist took longer than anticipated.**

▶ **CoP Sessions could have benefitted from deeper participation of experienced DC educator(s) with strong background(s) in curriculum, instruction, and/or coaching.**

▶ **No middle schools in the pilot.**

▶ **LEA adherence to MOU requirements wavered.**

DCMTES Tools and Resources Developed During Pilot

● **Framework**

● **Classroom Observation Rubric**

● **Classroom Observation Tool**

● **Teacher Action Plan Template**

● **Communications Toolkit**

● **Guidance and Resources Related to SLOs**

For more information visit: http://learndc.org/classrooms/about/teacher-and-leader-evaluation/dc-model-teacher-evaluation-system

Early Reports of Changed Practices from LEAs

▶ **Participating in the DCMTES pilot fueled an overhaul of how the LEA has handled human capital development for the entire charter school system.**

▶ **Participating in the DCMTES uncovered the divergence of teacher quality ratings when compared against student performance and the lack of standardization and norming across the different individuals responsible for carrying out the teacher observations and evaluations.**

▶ **There have been lessons learned that are leading to changed practices in the future:**

  1) **start evaluation process early in the year,**

  2) **be more proactive and provide direct and targeted support to new and struggling teachers, and**

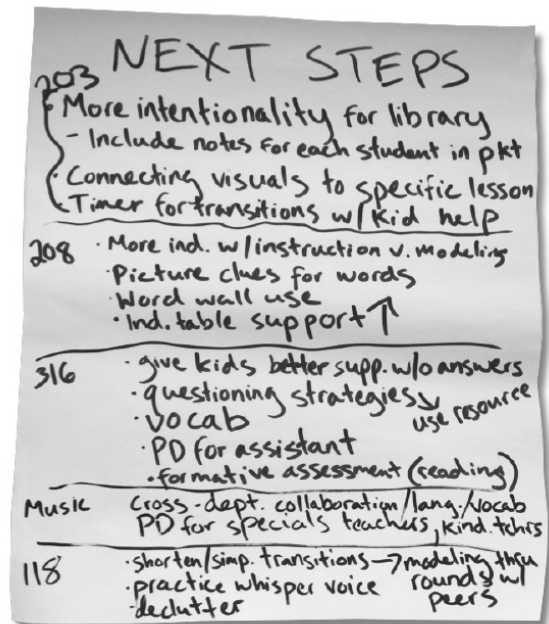 3) **provide regular space and time to listen to teachers' needs.**

Recommendations

Overall, the program worked well and was well-received. As OSSE considers the next steps for the program, findings from the evaluation reveal ways that the state agency can improve and allow for greater adoption by the LEAs:

Logistical Improvements

▶ **Tie and time release of grants/stipends to regular attendance at future CoP sessions.**

▶ **Have more site visits to schools.**

▶ **Consider video or web-conferencing for non-site visit sessions.**

Areas for Enhancement

▶ **Create supplemental guides for using the DCMTES to address special cases (e.g., non-academic teachers, novice teachers, teachers of special needs students, etc.).**

▶ **Create an online community (e.g., Google + Community), starting with the pilot LEA alumni.**

▶ **Convene pilot LEA alumni quarterly to continue support for DCMTES implementation.**

EXAMPLES OF FEEDBACK FROM CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS DURING A SITE VISIT

▶ **Encourage collaboration among teachers across LEAs, particularly around common issues and best practices, and to provide input on how to determine percentage weights of various of DCMTES contributing factors.**

▶ **Encourage collaboration among teachers within LEAs, particularly across subject areas to allow for greater transparency and objectivity when reviewing teacher performance of teachers in non-academic areas.**

Further Research

Additional research is needed to explore where changes documented during the pilot period continue or evolve over time. Possible questions to explore include:

▶ **What practices and thinking continued after the participating LEAs completed the pilot program?**

▶ **What practices failed to catch hold?**

▶ **What were the barriers that hindered or curtailed continuation of those changed practices and thinking?**

▶ **What were the contributing factors that continued or furthered the changed practices and thinking?**

▶ **In what ways can OSSE continue to help the LEAs sustain the changes they experienced through the pilot program?**