

Frequently Asked Questions



Developed for New Educators of the Lowell Teacher Academy

Section I-Educator Evaluation System

1. Will I be notified ahead of time when my evaluation will be, and if so, when?

For new educators on one-year Educator Plans (Developing Educator Plans), a mid-cycle Formative Assessment Report is conducted by your evaluator(s) by January 15th. As a new educator, you will also receive a Summative Evaluation by April 15th.

*A **Formative Assessment** is the process used to assess progress towards attaining goals set forth in an educator's plan, performance on standards, or both.*

*A **Summative Evaluation** is used to arrive at a rating on each standard, an overall rating, and a basis to make personnel decisions. The Summative Evaluation includes the evaluator's judgments of an educator's performance against Performance Standards, and an educator's attainment of goals set forth in the educator's plan.*

2. How does the State use the information from the evaluations?

*Every year, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) receives a report from our school district, which **ONLY** includes the overall performance rating for each educator evaluated. DESE does not review any of your forms or actual evaluations. Such data is used to hold each district accountable for the evaluation of educators, as well as to monitor progress.*

3. Is it true that in your 3rd year of teaching, if you do not receive all ‘Proficient’ for all standards you are not rehired?

As per the Unit A Evaluation Handbook, in order to attain Professional Teacher Status, an educator shall achieve ratings of proficient or exemplary on each Performance Standard and overall. A principal considering making an employment decision, which would lead to PTS for any educator who has not been rated proficient or exemplary on each performance standard and overall on the most recent evaluation, shall confer with the Superintendent. A principal’s decision is subject to review and approval by the Superintendent.

Section II- Goals

1. Is there specific language to use when writing goals?

*There is not specific language to use when writing goals per se. However, goals should be specific and strategic, measurable, action-oriented, rigorous realistic, and results focused, as well as timed and tracked. Your goals should be informed by an analysis of past and current student data, as well as your **Self-Assessment**, which provides an opportunity to reflect on your practice by examining areas of strength and improvement. Goals can be both qualitative and quantitative, but must be substantiated by evidence gleaned.*

*By **October 31st** (or within 4-6 week of the Educator’s first day of employment, if the Educator begins employment after October 15th) your evaluator(s) will meet with new educators to assist in the goal setting process.*

2. How are SMART goals evaluated?

*Each educator is responsible for developing one **student-learning goal**, and one **professional learning goal**. You will need to provide evidence for how you are meeting your goals, using the “Educator Evidence Log- Professional Practice Goal” and “Educator Evidence Log-Student Learning Goal Log” (use one log per piece of evidence) located in TeachPoint. Your evaluator(s) will review the evidence that you provide for your goals, in addition to data*

gleaned from observations, to determine if in fact you have made progress towards attaining your goals.

- a. **Student Learning Goal-** A student learning goal is informed by past and current data regarding the learning strengths and needs of your current students.*
- b. **Professional Practice Goal-** A professional practice goal pertains to how the educator plans to improve, and/or what they hope to accomplish professionally during the year, which will ultimately impact student learning. This goal is focused on the needs of the educator, or team of educators, as identified via the Self-Assessment process and/or previous feedback.*

3. How are SMART Goals and Performance Standards different?

The four Performance Standards: Standard I: Curriculum, Planning, and Assessment; Standard II: Teaching All Students; Standard III: Family & Community Engagement; & Standard IV: Professional Culture, were developed by the Department of Secondary and Elementary Education (DESE) as the four components of effective teaching practices for the Educator Evaluation System. Each performance standard includes specific indicators and elements, which represent different areas of effective teaching practice within the standard. The Educator Evaluation system is essentially based on these four performance standards.

S.M.A.R.T goals however, are developed by an educator, teams, or in collaboration with administrators, to determine student learning and professional practice foci. The goals you develop will inevitably fall under the scope of one or more of the four performance standards. For example, if your professional practice goal pertains to your need to engage in more professional collaboration with your grade level team regarding curriculum planning, then this goal topic broaches Standard I & Standard IV.

4. Do we need to create new goals every year?

Goals need to be submitted annually, and can be revised. Educators who are continuing with the same goal should revise it based on a reflection of

progress the previous year, and the current year's data and students. The Self-Assessment is made to assist with that process.

Educators can change their goal, but only if they have achieved it and provided the evidence as stated in the original plan. The goal should not be abandoned until it is achieved or the evaluator rates it as "no progress" and revises it with the educator.

5. What are some effective ways to gather evidence for our SMART goals?

Data Summits and Early Release Days are held throughout September and October to help facilitate the Self-Assessment and Goal Setting processes. On these days, you will have time to collaborate with your colleagues, analyze past and current student, school-wide, and district data, all of which are evidence gathering forums that should inform your S.M.A.R.T goals. Common Planning Time, and team meetings are also data gathering opportunities.

6. How might I develop goals for a coaching or specialist position?

The type of goals developed will vary based on an educator's role. However, everyone is required to submit one student learning goal, and one professional practice goal. The work of Instructional Specialists and Coaches is focused on the instructional development of educators in connection with student learning outcomes, in order to help educators better serve and meet the needs of students.

When writing goals for this role, you might consider the various ways in which you will help and coach educators to improve, leverage their strengths, and build their capacity to impact teaching and learning. Based on your continued efforts, and clearly defined action steps that you implemented with educators throughout the year, the measurable components of your goal will be determined by the instructional practices that you observe an educator engaged in, and student outcomes- linked to the coaching and support you provided.

7. *What can I use as student data in an Art class?*

Student data can be any work (individual and collaborative) that you require students to produce as part of your Art class. For example, a portfolio that represents student work for the entire semester or year, drafts and the final product, paintings, collages, sketches, two/three dimensional art pieces, written art assignments, presentations, exhibitions; all constitute student data in an Art class. Since so much of the art experience is based on perception and interpretation, it is important for an Art teacher to know and to inform students on how he/she intends to measure their progress and effort, and grade such work before assigning it to students.

You, and other Art teachers in your department, or across the district (if you are the only Art teacher at your school), can collaborate together to develop common assessments for the Arts based on the Massachusetts Curriculum Framework and Standards for Art: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/arts/1099.pdf>. to be given as mid-term and final exams. You can also create pre and post assessments to assess students' art skill level at the beginning and end of the course.

Section III-TeachPoint

1. *Navigating the TeachPoint website was confusing. How do we upload evidence?*

- a. How to Navigate TeachPoint:** *TeachPoint developed a **brief video tutorial** specifically for educators, which provides **useful tips for navigating the website**. To access the Educator Training video, go to the following website: <https://teachpoint.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/articles/200879577-Video-Educator-Training>*

To access additional tutorials and articles found on the TeachPoint Help Desk, go to the following website: <https://teachpoint.zendesk.com/hc/en-us>

- b. Live Webinars:** *You can also access TeachPoint's **Live Webinar Schedule**, which lists various weekly interactive training sessions on different topics with a TeachPoint representative, which provides you with an opportunity to ask questions. To access the Live Webinar*

Schedule, go to the following website: <https://teachpoint.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/articles/201102338-Live-Webinar-Schedule-and-Registration>

- c. **How to Upload Evidence:** Our district has created a *video tutorial* that provides detailed instructions on how to *upload and submit evidence to TeachPoint*. To access the Evidence Submission Tutorial, go to the following website: http://www.lowell.k12.ma.us/pages/lpsd/depts/Personnel/Educator_Evaluation
- d. **Additional Support:** If you need *additional support* with TeachPoint, and/or experience difficulty with your account, please contact the Office of Personnel & Recruitment to schedule an appointment.

Section IV-Evidence

1. What is considered a valid piece of evidence?

Evidence is considered valid if it embodies and is representative of a Performance Standard. When determining the type of evidence to submit for a particular standard, you might ask yourself:

- 1. How does this piece of evidence reflect the performance standard(s)?*
- 2. What story does this piece of evidence tell?*
- 3. What component of my professional practice and/or student learning does this evidence capture?*
- 4. Am I simply submitting this evidence just to “get it done”?*
- 5. Am I proud of what I am submitting as evidence? Why, why not?*

*With each piece of evidence that you submit, you are required to provide a **rationale**, which helps you to clarify both for yourself and for your evaluator(s), why you feel moved and inclined to share a particular piece of evidence. The rationale is particularly important, because it affords you the opportunity to explain how you characterize the evidence, and why you selected such evidence, which ultimately conveys whether or not you possess a sound understanding of the Performance Standard(s).*

*If you still have additional concerns regarding evidence submission, this is a good opportunity for you to consult with your evaluator(s) and/or colleagues. For your reference, the district has created a video to assist you with qualifying evidence for submission. To access the **Educator Evidence Submission Video**, go to the following website:*

http://www.lowell.k12.ma.us/pages/lpsd/depts/Personnel/Educator_Evaluation

Remember that it is the quality of evidence that is most important.

2. How many pieces of evidence are needed for each standard?

Two pieces of evidence are required for Standard III: Family & Parent Engagement and two pieces of evidence are required for Standard IV: Professional Culture. You are also required to submit evidence that documents your progress towards goals. You are not required to submit evidence for Standard I & Standard II; however, your evaluator(s) will look for professional practices that demonstrate how you are meeting or exceeding Standard I & II during observations.

Section V-Observations

1. How many people observe me as part of my evaluation?

At the beginning of the school year, you will be informed of your primary and contributing/supervising evaluators. Primary evaluators determine your performance ratings and evaluation. Contributing/supervising evaluators shall be responsible for developing an educator's plan, supervising progress through formative assessments, evaluating progress toward attaining educator plan goals, and making recommendations about the evaluation ratings to the primary evaluator at the end of the educator plan. The contributing/supervising may be the primary evaluator or his/her designee.

*As a new educator in your first year, you can expect to have a minimum of 5 observations, 4 of which will be unannounced, and 1 announced (you will schedule the date of the announced observation in advance). In years two and three, expect to have a minimum of 3 unannounced observations. You can request an announced observation. Your first observation will be conducted by **November 15th**.*

Section VI-Confidentiality

1. Who has access to my evaluation documents?

Only your current primary and contributing evaluators and the district System Administrator in the Office of Personnel & Recruitment can view your evaluations in TeachPoint.

2. What happens to my evaluation documents at the end of each school year?

*The Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary education will receive a report with **only your ratings for each standard**, as well as **your overall rating**. They will not receive any additional documents, which contain feedback or evidence provided. You can still view your evaluation documents from the previous year. To view your evaluation documents from last year, simply select “Last Year” from the drop box view at the top of your TeachPoint screen once you have logged in to your account.*

3. What happens to my evaluation documents if I change schools?

*Your evaluation documents will become available to your new evaluator(s) **only after you have transferred schools** within the district.*

4. What happens to my evaluation documents if I leave Lowell Public Schools?

*If you leave the district, your evaluation documentation **will not carryover** to a new district.*