



## **Teacher Development and Evaluation for Special Education Teachers**

### **Considerations for Meaningful, Accurate and Transparent Evaluations**

Minnesota districts must craft, through joint agreement with the exclusive representative of teachers, a model for teacher development and evaluation that complies with Minnesota Statutes, sections 122A.40 and 122A.41 (hereafter referred to as the “evaluation statute”). Districts and local unions are striving to create systems that provide meaningful feedback for teacher development as well as fair, transparent, and accurate evaluation results.

Minnesota teachers represent a diverse body of teaching positions—from classroom, grade level, and subject area teachers to specialist positions like nurses, counselors, and school psychologists. While all teachers can and should participate in a common development and evaluation process, some differentiation in implementation must occur in order to provide meaningful growth experiences and accurate, transparent and fair evaluations. [See appendix a of “Teacher” in statute.](#)

The requirements in the evaluation statute offer unique design and implementation challenges for special education teachers. Even the term “special education teacher” represents a diverse spectrum of instructional responsibilities and practices, which is a main driver for specified licensure areas based on disability expertise and professional responsibilities. For example, while some special education teachers work directly with students in a classroom environment, other special education teachers may not directly interact with children or may coordinate support systems for students with minimal student interaction. The diversity of special educators’ roles leads to several questions about model design and implementation, including the following:

- How should student learning be measured for children with diverse needs?
- What does student engagement look like in these settings?
- What if a teacher does not have direct interactions with students (children)?

Educators raise these questions and more regarding the evaluation statute, and they are seeking meaningful solutions. One potential solution is the teacher development and evaluation state example model that is currently being piloted. Local districts and teacher unions may develop models that offer solutions for all teachers as well.

A group of special education teachers and leaders has met over the past year to examine the evaluation statute and the state example model in order to identify options, strategies and

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recommendations for districts and teachers to consider in their local models. This letter and the associated documents are a product of their experience, passion, and productive dialogue.

As our work evolved, the group quickly realized that the same implementation recommendations would apply for other specialized, licensed teachers, including TOSAs, speech/language pathologists, school counselors, nurses, school psychologists, media specialists, and gifted and talented staff. Therefore, we strongly recommend that teachers and organizations representing other specialized teachers consider these recommendations for their context as well.

Though Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) staff facilitated this process, this document is not meant to represent the position of the department or the commissioner. Rather, this is the product of the thoughtful and committed special educators listed below.

Finally, this team was guided by and found great value in two published resources, and they highly recommend that educators read both and consider the insights from both as they engage in the work.

- [Visit the Council for Exceptional Children \(CEC\) website to view CEC's Position on Special Education Teacher Evaluation.](#)
- [Visit the Center for Great Teachers and Leaders website for Inclusive Design: Building Evaluation Systems That Support Students with Disabilities.](#)

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## Summary of Recommendations

District and union design and implementation teams should consider the following recommendations about teacher development and evaluation specific to special education teachers. It is further recommended that other specialized teachers and professional organizations consider these as shared beliefs.

1. Local districts and unions should design one evaluation system that promotes effective teaching and learning, encourages collaboration, incorporates student outcomes, and exhibits appropriate differentiation to include and address each educator's individual role. [View Recommendation 1.](#)
2. Special education teachers must be involved in the development, implementation and continual assessment of the teacher evaluation process. [View Recommendation 2.](#)
3. Summative evaluators should develop an understanding of various roles, consult with special education teachers, and access resources in order to meaningfully develop and evaluate those teachers. [View Recommendation 3.](#)
4. Special education teachers should participate in and would benefit from peer collaborations including peers with other instructional roles. [View Recommendation 4.](#)
5. Learner outcomes can be defined and measured for all educators. For teachers who do not directly interact with Birth to 21 children/students, teachers and summative evaluators should discuss and confirm options for defining "student" and the role of student outcome data in the summative evaluation. [View Recommendation 5.](#)
6. Evaluation systems should include multiple measures of student growth that measure teacher contributions to growth in academic, developmental, behavioral, or functional domains, depending on the role of special educators and student needs. [View Recommendation 6.](#)
7. Evaluations should not use a student's progress on their goals, objectives, and benchmarks in the IEP as a measure of a special education teacher's contribution to student growth. [View Recommendation 7.](#)
8. All teachers, including special educators, impact student engagement, even when that engagement may look or sound different because special education students' needs are different. Therefore, teachers and summative evaluators should discuss and confirm which measures of student engagement are most meaningful and relevant. [View Recommendation 8.](#)

# Creating Flexible Models for Special Education Teacher Development and Evaluation

## Rationale for Recommendations for Design and Implementation

### Purpose and Context

The purpose of this document is to summarize and highlight the key recommendations that came from the work of Minnesota special educators in the area of teacher development and evaluation. These recommendations may also apply to other educators that have unique teaching assignments. Some items include links to other documents and resource supports for district consideration. Local Minnesota school boards and exclusive representatives of teachers are reminded that their joint agreement must comply with Minnesota statute, and those locally agreed-to definitions and practices imply that both parties interpret the evaluation statute in the same way. The recommendations listed in this document and in other referenced materials may or may not align with your joint interpretation of statute or with requirements in the evaluation statute.

### Recommendations

1. When the evaluation statute refers to “the annual evaluation process for teachers,” local districts and unions **should design one evaluation system that promotes effective teaching and learning, encourages collaboration, incorporates student outcomes, and exhibits appropriate differentiation to include and address each educator’s individual role.**
  - Some special educators--particularly those who have classroom instruction and/or support classroom instruction as a significant portion of their job--require differentiation comparable to that of teachers of different subject areas and grade levels.
  - Some special educators--particularly those who consult or work primarily with adults (such as other teachers or the student’s family) or who do not spend a significant portion of their day providing classroom instruction--require greater differentiation in order to accurately evaluate their work according to their job descriptions.
  - For more information on individual roles and performance standards, [see our recommendations for professional teaching standards and example differentiated rubrics in the appendix.](#)
2. When the evaluation statute refers to “joint agreement” between the school board and the exclusive representative of teachers, **special education teachers must be involved in the development, implementation, and continual assessment of the teacher evaluation process.**
  - While early models and stages of implementation may not reflect the differentiation necessary to meet the needs unique teaching positions (see recommendation above), districts must move in that direction.

- Special educators can be meaningfully involved in designing systems as well as modifying systems to meet their context. Special educators will be more meaningfully engaged when involved in early and ongoing conversations.
  - One example of how to differentiate activities for special educators and for evaluators is described in [The Center for Great Teachers and Leaders resource](#). [A variation of this example is also recommended here](#).
3. When the evaluation statute refers to “a qualified and trained summative evaluator such as a school administrator,” summative evaluators should **develop an understanding of various roles, consult with special education teachers, and access resources in order to meaningfully develop and evaluate those teachers.**
- School leaders must engage in meaningful and ongoing professional development in order to increase their expertise and experience across all content areas, grade levels, and specialty positions.
  - Evaluations should, when possible, be conducted by evaluators with expertise related to evidence-based service delivery models and individualized teaching practices and interventions in special education. To support useful and meaningful feedback in the evaluation, evaluators should understand how, when, and why these practices are implemented and the specific roles and responsibilities of special education teachers.
  - Evaluations should, when possible, be conducted by evaluators who have regular contact with the teacher being evaluated. A teacher may also have multiple individuals serving as summative evaluators.
  - While individual evaluators may not be subject area experts, they should seek to learn about instructional methods in various classrooms. We recommend that summative evaluators consult with special educators to further develop a common understanding of practice, roles, and methods [by implementing practices such as this recommendation](#). Evaluators and teachers who engage in this process are more likely to have meaningful dialogue about practice and to have more accurate and transparent evaluation results.
4. When the evaluation statute refers to “peer review,” “peer coaches,” “trained peer observer,” or “opportunity to participate in professional learning communities,” **special education teachers should participate in and would benefit from peer collaborations, regardless of the peer’s instructional role.** If a job-alike peer is not available, districts and teachers may use the next best fit.
- Few local districts are large enough to have job-alike peers across all grade levels and subject areas. To expect an exact job-alike peer for all instructional areas is not only impractical, but it also assumes that teachers could not learn from job-similar peers.
  - Teachers in low-incidence areas or who are otherwise geographically isolated should optimize use of regional and state networks to benefit from job-alike feedback and growth.

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- Districts and teachers may consider using distance technology to conduct peer review.
  - Teachers may find value in utilizing the portfolio option in order to conduct peer review. [Read more about portfolios.](#)
5. When the evaluation statute refers to “student,” **teachers** (who do not directly interact with Birth to 21 children/students) **and summative evaluators should discuss and confirm options for defining “student” and the role of student outcome data in the summative evaluation.** Learner outcomes (student growth and student engagement) can be defined and measured for all educators. In rare instances, where neither “adult learner” or Birth to 21 students are a natural fit, the evaluator and teacher should address how they will apply student outcome data in the summative evaluation.
- The evaluation statute twice refers to student outcomes (student growth on valid and reliable assessments aligned to academic standards; longitudinal data on student engagement and connection).
  - Teachers, whose primary learning audience is adult learners or other teachers, can set growth goals for those learners and identify appropriate measures. Similarly, these same teachers can collect longitudinal data on learner engagement that is relevant to their context.
  - However, teachers and summative evaluators may also discuss and confirm that “student” refers to Birth to 21 learners and the growth and engagement measures must be derived from Birth to 21 student outcomes.
6. When the evaluation statute states that 35 percent of summative evaluation results must be based on student academic growth, **evaluation systems should include multiple measures of growth that measure teacher contributions to growth in academic, developmental, behavioral, or functional domains, depending on the role of the special educator and on student needs.**
- Measures of student growth should be a fair and accurate representation of both student growth and the special education teacher’s contribution to that growth.
  - For the purpose of development and evaluation, all special educators could examine baseline data, set growth targets for the students they serve, and measure progress using appropriate assessment(s). This is similar to the state example model’s process for establishing student learning goals. [Read the Student Learning Goals Handbook](#) that supports Minnesota’s example model for teacher development and evaluation.
  - Special educators may also utilize a shared performance goal with other educators to measure student growth, though this should not be the primary or only measure.
  - [Find links to example student growth measures for special education teachers.](#)

7. Also in regards to the requirement in the evaluation statute to base 35 percent of evaluation results on student academic growth, **evaluations should not use a student's progress on their goals, objectives, and benchmarks in the IEP as a measure of a special educator's contribution to student growth.**
  - Using student progress on IEP goals may compromise the integrity of the IEP, shifting its focus from what is designed to be a child-centered document to the performance of the teacher.
  - Since an IEP is often implemented by multiple team members, student attainment of IEP goals may or may not reflect an individual special educator's impact on student growth.
  - [Note: The development, management, revision, and implementation of IEPs *must* be a source of evidence for a special educator's practice and responsibilities, as these activities are a significant job function for special educators.]
8. When the evaluation statute requires the use of longitudinal data on student engagement and connection, **all teachers, including special educators, impact student/learner engagement, even when that engagement may look or sound different based on a student's needs. Therefore, teachers and summative evaluators should discuss and confirm which measures of student engagement are most meaningful and relevant.**
  - Systems must include a definition of engagement, list potential longitudinal data sources for engagement, and determine the role of student engagement data in their development and evaluation process.
  - [Read more about student engagement data sources.](#)

## Appendix

### Definition of “Teacher” in statute

There are multiple definitions of “teacher” in Minnesota statutes, and not all of them agree with one another. For this work, MDE refers districts to the definition of “teacher” in Minnesota statutes 122A.40 and 122A.41, where the evaluation language is embedded. The definition includes any employee “required to hold a license from the state department.” Therefore, any employee who must have a license to hold a certain position in a district must be evaluated. Local districts and unions must jointly agree to which positions must be evaluated per the evaluation statute and which positions will be evaluated through a differentiated process. [For more information about teaching positions that may fall under the evaluation statute, see Education Minnesota’s guidance.](#)

### Teacher Improvement Process and Discipline

When the evaluation statute refers to a “teacher improvement process” and disciplining teachers for “not making adequate progress” in a teacher improvement process, local districts and unions should be mindful of potential challenges. Decisions to discipline teachers should not be arbitrary or capricious. While these are considerations for any teacher, regardless of position, evaluation models and teacher improvement process goals and timelines must provide accurate results, based on evidence and conclusions that are neither arbitrary nor capricious.

- Districts should consult Minnesota statutes and school board policy for discipline decisions. The decision to discipline is a managerial right and not subject to joint agreement.
- On page 7 and 8 of the CEC position, they summarize potential challenges for high stakes decisions with special educators.

### Professional Teaching Standards

#### Areas to Consider

What areas of teacher development and evaluation work should districts and their teachers keep in mind as they seek to jointly agree to meaningful, fair, transparent practices for special educators?

The evaluation statutes require that teacher development and evaluation systems be based on Minnesota teaching standards in rule (8710.2000). Each licensure area has specific standards that stem from this rule and further detail standards.

Any teacher evaluation system should define teaching practices as well as describe levels of performance for practices. In most instances, a rubric is used to define the practices and describe levels of performance. Danielson, Marzano, and Marshall are among several research-based rubrics of practice that many Minnesota districts are using to develop and evaluate teachers.

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Challenges in implementing evaluation systems with fidelity are reduced when a singular evaluation system and consistent performance standards for all teachers are in place. Creating a separate evaluation system for various positions may prevent the creation of an inclusive environment in which all administrators and teachers are accountable for the progress of all students.

This is not to say that a singular design ensures fairness and consistency for all teachers. While practices may be common across teaching assignments, some teaching positions have unique job responsibilities that may not be explicitly addressed in the rubric. In order for an evaluation system to be meaningful, fair and transparent for these educators, the definition of teaching practice or standards should allow for the unique roles of teachers.

The use of pre-observation planning conferences can be instrumental for individual teachers and evaluators to review student needs and the selection of instructional practices. These points of contact allow special education teachers the opportunity to provide the rationale and evidence for instructional choices and possible deviation from performance standards and rubrics in particular areas.

## **Research and Recommendations**

What actions or advice from special education leaders and professional organizations should be a part of the conversation?

The following statements come directly from the Council of Exceptional Children's Position Statement. [View full position statement.](#)

- All educators must be included in one evaluation system that promotes an effective teaching and learning environment, encourages collaboration, and is appropriately differentiated to include and address each educator's individual role and performance standards.
- Evaluation systems must be developed using research-based standards.
- Evaluation systems must be implemented with fidelity and integrity.
- Evaluation systems may include, but are not limited to, observations; evidence of a teacher's professional growth and contribution to the school and professional community; evidence of student work and learning; artifacts of practice; and surveys of a variety of individuals, including colleagues, parents and students.
- Evaluation systems must identify appropriate professional development opportunities for teachers based on the results of their evaluations.
- Evaluation systems should be regularly examined in light of evolving research to ensure that they are based on current approaches and best practices.

The following statements are from the special educator advisory group.

- Local district evaluation models' performance standards and rubrics should be used consistently to evaluate all teachers, including special education teachers. However, the standards and rubric should be sufficiently flexible and inclusive to reflect unique classroom contexts. Evaluators and teachers should have the knowledge, skills, and flexibility to apply these consistent performance standards and to consider appropriate evidence of performance that reflect the unique roles and responsibilities of many special education teachers.
- Evaluators should engage with special education teachers to review the performance standards for all teachers. Identify implications for special education teachers when performance standards are used to evaluate special education teachers.
- Even though performance standards and rubrics should remain consistent for all teachers including special education teachers, they should be strengthened to include specific examples of how practices would be demonstrated according to a range of student abilities and needs by taking into account the following:
  - Specific instructional practices for students with disabilities
  - Specific roles and responsibilities of special education teachers (e.g., individualized education program (IEP) facilitation, IEP development, IEP implementation, coordination of related services personnel, and consultation with general education teachers)
  - Specific curricular needs (e.g., secondary transition services, social and behavioral needs, and functional communication skills)
  - [Example of a differentiated rubric](#)
- Clearly identify special education teachers' specific roles and responsibilities. Based on these roles and responsibilities as well as the performance standards for all teachers, articulate clear performance expectations that are mutually agreed upon by individual special education teachers and evaluators.
- The use of [focused instructional frameworks for specialized teachers](#) can be instrumental for individual teachers and evaluators to review student needs and the selection of instructional practices. These conversations and this activity allows special education teachers—particularly those in highly specialized areas—the opportunity to provide the rationale and evidence for instructional choices and possible deviation from performance standards and rubrics in particular areas (e.g., higher-order thinking skills). This practice also creates structures within pre-observation planning conferences that facilitate teachers providing rationale and supporting evidence for instructional strategies chosen based on content and student needs.
- Provide appropriate training and ongoing support to evaluators. Evaluators should be able to facilitate ongoing coaching, provide feedback, and appropriately use teacher performance standards in the unique contexts of individual special education teachers.

## Resources

What resources or tools may districts and teachers want in order to do the work?

[The example model published by the Minnesota Department of Education](#) includes a [Performance Standards of Teacher Practice Rubric](#). One meaningful way of implementing this or any rubric would be to leverage pre-observation planning conferences. That is, individual evaluators and individual teachers in specialized areas should describe what the instructional practices and standards look like for practitioners in specialized areas.

A summary of quality pre-observation planning conference is as follows:

1) An evaluator (or other appropriate staff) creates a two-column table [see example](#). On the left-hand side is the language that is used for all teachers in your local model. In this example, we are using the performance standards for teacher practice that are used in the Minnesota example model. The right-hand side is left blank.

2) Evaluators and special educators (and any other appropriate staff) work together to describe how the descriptions of performance for all teachers look for special educators. [In this example](#), our team filled in the right-hand side of the “Professionalism” domain as it pertains to special educators who are consulting teachers. The example is meant to illustrate this process/practice; the example is not meant to define the expectation for teachers.

[Note: The [professional teaching standards in Minnesota Rule 8710.2000](#) may be helpful in this conversation.]

3) The resulting performance standards with special educator clarifications are then used by evaluators, peer reviewers and teachers in development and evaluation conversations.

Special educators who engage in this activity:

- Actively engage in the development and evaluation process.
- Reflect on their job responsibilities and seek connections to practices that unite all teachers.
- Contribute to a system that may create more meaningful conversations and interactions about their specific role.
- Offer an opportunity to connect with job-alike educators in other settings in the construction of this tool.
- Build relationships with evaluators.

Evaluators who engage in this activity:

- Learn more about the professionals they are evaluating and seeking to develop.

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- Benefit from job-embedded professional development to grow their own skill set.
- Have a more nuanced and differentiated tool to guide interactions.
- Feel better prepared and informed to conduct evaluations.
- Build relationships with special educators.

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## **Sample Differentiated Rubric**

The following examples illustrate how an existing rubric (left-hand column) can be differentiated for specialist teaching positions. In the example on the next page, a teacher has elements in Domain 4 listed on the left and example language describing what that element may look like for some consulting special education teachers.

A different domain is also shared below that leaves the right-hand column blank. This example illustrates a starting point for a conversation between evaluator and teacher.

**Domain 4: Professionalism**

**INDICATOR 4A: Reflects on teaching practice.**

*How do you reflect on your teaching?*

<b>Elements</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>i. Uses self-reflection to improve instruction</b> <b>ii. Uses feedback to improve instruction</b> <b>iii. Plans for professional growth</b>	Consulting teachers use self-reflection, feedback, and professional growth plans to improve professional practices beyond instruction, including delivery of service, relationships with other adults, and roles specific to their job descriptions.

**INDICATOR 4B: Engages in professional development.**

*How do you continue to improve your practice?*

<b>Elements</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>i. Participates in professional development</b> <b>ii. Collaborates with colleagues regarding student learning</b> <b>iii. Contributes to school and district culture of learning</b>	Consulting teachers actively pursue professional development opportunities within and outside of their organization.  Consulting teachers also facilitate collaborative referral, evaluation, planning, and programming processes. Teachers collaborate to deliver services.  Consulting teachers also contribute to the culture of learning by conveying the rights and responsibilities of students, by helping colleagues understand student needs, and by advocating on behalf of students and their needs.

**INDICATOR 4C: Maintains professional responsibilities and communicates with families.**

*How do you conduct yourself as a professional?*

<b>Elements</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>i. Adheres to standards of ethical conduct</b> <b>ii. Maintains accurate records</b> <b>iii. Completes tasks in an organized and efficient manner</b> <b>iv. Communicates with families</b> <b>v. Understands the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of students, their families and the community</b>	Consulting teachers, in particular, must satisfy the due process, data privacy, procedural safeguards, and ethical requirements of special education processes.  Consulting teachers, in particular, produce and maintain accurate reports, plans and student data that are required by due process procedures and the school system according to the timelines for each.  Consulting teachers assist families in identifying resources, priorities and concerns in relation to the child's development and education.  Consulting teachers work collaboratively with family members including children and youth, in designing, implementing, and evaluating individual educational plans and programs.  Consulting teachers assess the impact of gender, familial background, socioeconomic status, and cultural and linguistic diversity on assessment results and the special education referral, planning and programming process.

**Domain 1: Planning**

**INDICATOR 1A: Aligns learning targets with standards and student data inform planning**

*How do you set targets for learners and use data to inform planning?*

<b>Elements</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>i. Plans units and lessons effectively</b> <b>ii. Selects learning targets and activities</b> <b>iii. Applies content knowledge and understanding of how students learn</b> <b>iv. Uses student data to inform planning</b>	Consulting teachers...

**INDICATOR 1B: Uses content, resources and student knowledge to design coherent instruction**

*How do you use resources to design your program or instruction?*

<b>Elements</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>i. Designs coherent instruction</b> <b>ii. Creates interdisciplinary and extended learning experiences</b> <b>iii. Uses available resources and technology</b> <b>iv. Designs culturally relevant instructional strategies</b>	Consulting teachers,,

**INDICATOR 1C: Plans for assessment and differentiation**

*How do you plan to assess and differentiate instruction?*

<b>Elements</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>i. Plans formative and summative assessments</b> <b>ii. Plans for differentiation</b>	Consulting teachers...

## **Teacher Portfolio Resources**

Like other professionals, teachers are evaluated based on evidence of their growth and achievement over time. A professional portfolio is a way of collecting and presenting what you have accomplished. Creating a professional portfolio involves considerable effort and should be planned out over the course of a year.

Portfolios encourage reflective practice connected to evidence and artifacts, and portfolios document the practices we'd like to preserve and even pass on to others.

When teachers take the time to evaluate their own practices, those practices usually improve. When examples of accomplished practice are shared through portfolios, it can provide guidance on instructional strategies for use in other classrooms.

### **Potential Solution for Itinerant Educators**

While professional teaching portfolios are a valuable tool for any educator, they present a potential solution for special educators who work across multiple districts or buildings.

Itinerant educators, such as many low-incidence special educators, work in multiple settings and with multiple principals and special education directors. This reality poses a challenge for their development and evaluation system. Who is the summative evaluator when a teacher works across multiple sites? How can that same teacher best grow from evaluation activities?

By taking an active role in their development and evaluation—particularly by being the primary source for gathering evidence of practice—teachers who develop and share a portfolio could realize many benefits, including:

- Reflection on practice through connecting evidence with instructional frameworks and job responsibilities.
- A tool to share practice with peers or summative evaluators
- Ownership of professional growth and evaluation

If itinerant educators were to develop and maintain a professional portfolio, this practice could increase the relevance and accuracy of their evaluations.

### **What to Include**

A professional teaching portfolio is a record of evidence and artifacts that demonstrate accomplishments, practice, and student impact. It is more than just a list of lesson plans and activities teachers have done for their district. Each artifact should be specifically aligned to an element of the educator's evaluation system. For example, an artifact that demonstrates the development, management, revision, and implementation of an IEP should be connected to the professional responsibilities domain of the state model's instructional framework.

Several artifacts could be included in a professional teaching portfolio, including:

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- Background information including your resume, your educational philosophy, and you're teaching goals.
- Reflections on practice, including lessons, student engagement, and student academic growth.
- Summaries of unit plans, lessons, and scope and sequence
- list of resources used in the lesson
- Videotape of teaching
- Student work examples and your feedback
- Descriptions of your role on any professional organizations or committees that are involved in.

Each artifact should be connected directly to an element in the evaluation system. This may be accomplished by a brief caption or summary of each artifact or by a summary page listing artifacts in one column and a reference to a specific domain and indicator in the instructional framework, as in the example below.

<b>Artifact</b>	<b>Domain.Indicator.Element*</b>
May 3 video lesson	Domain 2 (Environment) and 3 (Instruction)
(Name redacted) sample IEP	4.B.ii; 4.C.i-v
Unit Plan summary	1.A.i-iii and 1.C.ii

\*Examples are referencing the [Performance Standards of Teacher Practice](#) in the state model.

## Measures of Student Growth Resources

This section includes links to resources for student achievement, including definitions, measures, and methods for incorporating into a teacher development and evaluation plan. Measurement of student academic growth comprises 35% of a teachers summative evaluation results.

We believe that Student Learning Goals are sufficiently adaptable to be utilized by all teachers. The [state model includes a handbook](#) describing how to set, approve, review and score student learning goals for teacher development and evaluation.

A Student Learning Goal (SLG) is a measurable, long-term academic growth target that a teacher sets at the beginning of the year for all students or for subgroups of students. SLGs demonstrate a teacher's impact on student learning within a given interval of instruction based upon baseline data gathered at the beginning of the course. Each SLG includes:

- The student population or sample included in the goal;
- The standards the SLG will align with;
- The assessments that will be used to measure student progress and goal attainment;
- The period of time covered by the SLG;
- The expected student growth (or outcomes); and
- The rationale for the expected student growth.

### Critical Differences Between SLGs and IEPs.

For special educators, there needs to be careful separation between IEP goals and objectives and student learning goals. Both IEPs and SLGs are student specific and are used to document achievement of students in certain, determined areas. Both are based on assessment data and both are continuously monitored and refined based on interventions.

The critical difference between IEPs and SLGs is that the two serve different and important purposes. The integrity of the IEP must be maintained as a child-centered document rather than being used to measure the performance of a teacher. Special education teachers must be able to construct IEPs based on the needs of the child and without compromising IEP goals due to pressures (real or perceived) from the teacher's own performance appraisal. Also, IEPs are individual measures for individual students based on individual needs; whereas, student learning goals are measures of a teacher's impact on groups of students based on common needs.

### Potential Data Sources for Measuring Student Growth

In order to create high-quality student learning goals, educators capitalize on their literacy in standards, assessments, and data.

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Special educators, perhaps more than any other type of teacher, work in a data-rich setting with a variety of assessment tools. Additionally, special educators are often intimately familiar with any data available for the students they work with; therefore, special educators are in a strong position to use student learning goals well.

The following is an example list of possible assessment sources, grouped by category, and it is not meant to be exhaustive.

<b>Assessment Type</b>	<b>Assessment Name</b>
Criterion- and Norm-Referenced Tests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behavioral Assessment Scale for Children (BASC)</li> <li>• Brigance</li> <li>• PIAT (Peabody Ind. Achievement Test)</li> <li>• PLATO (credit recovery)</li> <li>• ACT</li> <li>• KTEAll</li> <li>• Woodcock Johnson</li> <li>• PALS/DRA/QRI</li> <li>• GRAD test</li> <li>• MCA assessments</li> <li>• Star Reading</li> <li>• NWEA</li> <li>• WIAT</li> <li>• DIBBELS</li> <li>• AIMWEB</li> <li>• Study Island</li> </ul>
Benchmark Tests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specialist-made benchmark test based on the standards of the profession/field/content</li> <li>• President's Physical Fitness Test</li> </ul>
Educator-Authored Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quizzes</li> <li>• Tests (Pre- and Post-tests)</li> <li>• Authentic assessments/portfolios/writing samples/running records</li> <li>• Grade analysis by nine weeks/interim reports</li> <li>• Semester/end-of-course examinations</li> <li>• Conference logs</li> <li>• Compass</li> <li>• Reading level assessments</li> <li>• Therapy logs</li> </ul>

## Student Engagement Resources

This section includes links to resources for student engagement, including definitions, measures, and methods for incorporating into a teacher development and evaluation plan. The language in the evaluation statute states that plans “must use longitudinal data on student engagement and connection, and other student outcome measures explicitly aligned with the elements of curriculum for which teachers are responsible.”

Design teams of district, charter and teacher leaders are encouraged to utilize three guiding questions when designing and implementing their student engagement measures.

1. How do teachers, evaluators, and peer reviewers define “student engagement”?
2. What measures of student engagement would provide meaningful data for teacher reflection, development, and evaluation?
3. What role will student engagement data play in your local teacher development and evaluation model?

Consistent with our overall recommendations, evaluators and teachers should discuss what engagement looks, sounds and feels like in their grade level and subject area. For special education teachers, this conversation should include how student engagement may look or sound different because special education students’ needs are different.

### Definitions

We cannot measure what we cannot define; therefore, teachers, peer reviewers and evaluators should work from a consistent definition of engagement, which should be determined by the design team. [Minnesota’s example model](#) uses the following definition:

*Student engagement is an organizing framework for examining a student’s commitment to and involvement in learning, which includes academic, behavioral, cognitive, and affective dimensions. It is influenced by the context of family, peers, community, and school. Within the classroom, a teacher can influence student engagement through relationships with students and the relevance and rigor of instruction.*

Freshwater education district uses the following definition:

*Student Engagement is the active participation in challenging activities and the involvement in enriching educational, therapeutic, and diagnostic experiences which are connected to real world learning. Student engagement should occur within the following areas; academic, behavioral, cognitive, and affective. When students are made to feel valued in the learning environment and provided with challenging learning opportunities, their engagement will increase and their behavior will improve.*

In both definitions, the authors include different dimensions or lenses of engagement (academic, affective, behavioral, cognitive) in order to highlight that true engagement is more nuanced than students “sitting in desks” with “eyes on the teacher.”

## Measures

There are a variety of measures of student engagement that evaluation plans should consider, provided that the measures align with the definition. In [Minnesota's example model](#), a list of sources is copied here.

Teacher Sources	Student Sources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Levels of rigor in classroom instruction and assignments</li> <li>• Strategies for connecting content to students' lives</li> <li>• Relationships with students</li> <li>• Frequency monitoring student behavior</li> <li>• Strategies for minimizing classroom disruptions and off-task behavior</li> <li>• Management of transitions</li> <li>• Efficiency and consistency of classroom routines</li> <li>• Organization of learning groups</li> <li>• Communication of explicit learning objectives</li> <li>• Facilitation of student questions and responses</li> <li>• Quality and frequency of feedback</li> <li>• Instructional match to student abilities and needs</li> <li>• Use of multiple teaching methods</li> <li>• Delivery of instruction at a quick, smooth, efficient pace</li> <li>• Clarity of directions</li> <li>• Use of homework to enhance learning</li> <li>• Use of student-mediated strategies               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Metacognitive strategies</li> <li>○ Study skills</li> <li>○ Self-monitoring procedures</li> <li>○ Self-management skills</li> <li>○ Student goal-setting</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student responses to a perception survey</li> <li>• Student responses to teacher interactions</li> <li>• Student attention to learning activities</li> <li>• Assignment completion rates</li> <li>• Levels at which students express ideas and pose questions relevant to learning</li> <li>• Levels at which students initiate and complete tasks</li> <li>• Levels at which students are on-task and working independently or in groups;</li> <li>• Student body postures</li> <li>• Frequency of disruptions</li> <li>• Levels at which students regulate emotions and behaviors to meet classroom demands</li> <li>• Levels at which students express a desire to do well and to learn</li> <li>• Levels at which students enjoy the class, content, and teacher</li> <li>• Levels at which students see themselves represented in the class or content;</li> <li>• Classroom community</li> <li>• Levels of rigor in student goals</li> </ul>

Evaluators, peer reviewers and teachers can look for evidence of student engagement from any of these and other sources.

Student perception surveys are one measure that design teams are exploring for teacher development and evaluation. The [Measures of Effective Teaching \(MET\)](#) study found that student survey results are predictive of student achievement gains and that surveys produce more consistent results than classroom observations or achievement gain measures. As important as accurate and consistent results are for evaluation systems, student surveys can also provide feedback for continuous improvement.

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If student perception surveys are explored, districts and charters must plan for implementation in order to realize the benefits. From the design of the instrument (individual item wording, readability, response scales, etc) through the administration (survey fatigue, scheduling, web-platform/paper), reporting (readable, understandable, actionable information), to the professional development for teachers and administrators to understand and interpret all of the above, best practice in survey implementation requires investment to realize impact.

The Colorado Legacy Foundation has produced a [Student Perception Survey Toolkit that you can access here](#). MDE has developed student perception surveys that are available for districts to use, and MDE is working on producing a handbook similar to Colorado's in the near future.

For special educators, depending on the students they serve and student needs, student perception surveys may or may not be appropriate. If a special educator's students can produce accurate, reliable responses to survey items, and if the teacher interacts with a significant n-size of students, then surveys are as valuable for that teacher as it would be for a generalist.

### **Role in Evaluation System**

While longitudinal data on student engagement must be used in local development and evaluation plans, the statute does not state what role that data must play in local systems. Whereas 35% of a teacher's evaluation must be based on student academic growth, there is no assigned weighting to student engagement data. In [Minnesota's example model](#), 20% of a teacher's evaluation results must be based on student engagement data, and that weight is not required in statute.

Therefore, local plans must determine how that data is used. Is the data exclusively for teacher development, reflection, planning, and continuous improvement? Is the data used both for development and evaluation? If used as part of the evaluation system, how is it used by the evaluator? Is it holistically or numerically included?