

5

Formative Assessment: Self-Directed Professional Growth Process

Introduction

Those continuing contract teachers not involved in summative assessment participate in formative assessment each year. This process comprises the heart of the division's approach to professional development: self-directed, collegial, and results-based. Offerings from the Staff Development Department, as well as training opportunities from other sources, may be incorporated into the individual growth plans of teachers and used to support the achievement of goals.

In the formative process, the teacher conducts a self-assessment and selects, with the approval of an administrator, suitable goal(s) for focus. The teacher then joins a support team, develops a growth plan, and implements that plan. The process is directed by the teacher and results in documentation of enhanced skill. Examples of documentation include but are not limited to planning documents, samples of student work, records of communication with families or participation in professional events, and videotapes of classroom practice. These documents are then available as part of the teacher's professional evidence for submission during the summative assessment process.

Steps in the Process

The formative process has a number of steps which are described below. All the forms needed to support the process and a timeline for implementation are provided at the end of the narrative description.

1. Self-assessment and teacher-administrator conference.

The teacher completes a self-assessment by using the component level rubrics found in this section and recording responses on the survey (Form 5:9-5:10). The self-assessment process is designed for each teacher to thoughtfully consider every component in each domain and accurately determine the specific level of his or her performance for each. If more detailed descriptions about a particular component are desired, the narratives and performance level tables found in Chapter 6 can be used. These tables and descriptions break each component into its elements and may provide the direction needed.

The teacher then analyzes that assessment for evidence of patterns of strength and weakness. Based on this analysis, the teacher determines an area of practice for focused attention and improvement during the coming school year. This area for focus is used to formulate a growth goal and may consist of a single aspect of teaching (such as the use of technology), or it may span a number of the individual areas (for example understanding the cultures of one's students and improving questioning and discussion techniques.) **But in all cases, each teacher's choice of goal(s) and the resulting plan developed from the goal(s) must be oriented to the division's mission, the School Improvement Plan for the building in which the teacher works, and the students being taught.**

The teacher's thoughts for a growth goal, together with options for a support team, are discussed during a conference with the administrator or designee. Naturally, the administrator/designee

may have his or her own suggestions for suitable growth areas for the teacher. The conference provides an opportunity to compare notes on perceptions of need and then arrive at consensus regarding a growth goal. While the growth goal should represent consensus between the teacher and the administrator/designee, in those rare cases where there is significant disagreement as to appropriate areas for focus, the recommendations of the administrator must prevail.

The teacher-administrator/designee conference is conducted prior to **November 1**. The teacher brings the Self-Assessment Survey and Worksheet (Form 5:9-5:10) and is prepared for the discussion. **The Self-Assessment Survey and Worksheet is for teacher use only and need not be copied for the administrator/designee unless the teacher wishes to do so.** The teacher also brings a completed copy of the Formative Support Option Form (Form 5:15) to the conference and submits it at this time.

2. Administrative finalization of formative support teams and notification of teachers by November 1.

After all teacher-administrator/designee conferences have been conducted, the administrator(s) will know of teachers' growth goals and those aspects of practice to which teachers believe they can make a contribution to the work of their colleagues. It is then the administrator's responsibility to finalize the formative support teams for the school, and to notify the staff of those teams. The administrator may wish to involve the school's administrative team, Teacher Assessment Lead Team, or the teachers themselves in determining the membership of the formative support teams.

Formative support teams may consist of teachers who already work together, for example in a high school department or on an instructional team. Alternatively, they may be comprised of teachers with similar responsibilities, for example, they teach 5th grade students but do not currently share students or otherwise work in a team. Or, a team may consist of teachers from different schools who, for a particular and compelling reason, want to work together. Naturally, the logistics of meeting are easier to arrange when people work in the same school. But two or three teachers might be neighbors who drive to work in a carpool, which offers them the opportunity for sustained professional conversation on a daily basis. Likewise, a support team could be formed by art teachers, media specialists, or special education teachers from different schools, as long as the focus and activity of the support team is continued professional development for all support team members.

Diversity within the membership of a support team helps to bring multiple views to the table and aids growth of all its members. Factors such as gender, background, age, years of experience, grade levels or subjects taught, and teaching style can be considered to add an element of diversity to support team membership. However, a balance must be achieved if the team is to function at an optimum level. Too much diversity may lead to difficulties that result from a lack of commonality among members. This may divert the attention to the team and make it difficult for them to identify a direction or pinpoint a focus. However, too little diversity may not create an environment of inquiry that is so vital to

professional growth. Teachers should be asked to identify individuals who can challenge and probe their thinking. These individuals should be considered for membership on the same support team. Ultimately, support teams should function in the spirit of challenge rather than contentment.

There are three types of support teams. Each type serves to provide its members with encouragement, ideas, and professional critique that fosters professional dialogue.

Types of Support Teams

- **Coach-Advisee**

One person in the support team is an "expert" in the area(s) that the support team is exploring and is willing to act as a coach while others begin their learning. Areas of "expertise" might include such things as cooperative learning, 4MAT or other instructional strategies, multiple intelligences, classroom management, and the use of technology.

A Coach-Advisee team is structured around the amount of experience with the topic rather than seniority in the building or classroom. The coach in this support team structure many times has chosen some aspect of leadership as his or her growth goal.

- **Collegial Friends**

Members of this support team have in common the desire to explore and grow in the same area(s). There is little distinction between the levels of expertise on the topic(s) under exploration. This group has no one person defined as the leader. All support team members assume equal responsibility for gathering and sharing information, techniques, ideas, and assistance.

In some instances, a Collegial Friends support team may be composed of teachers with different growth goals. This works well when teachers have previously established a collaborative working relationship and agree to support each other in their learning, even though their goals are in different areas.

- **School-Division Cohort**

Members of this support team may come from within the school itself or from across the division. It is also possible that support team members come from outside the division, as in the case of college professors. These teams are structured around a topic of study (e.g. an aspect of art or music), a task which adds value to the school or division (e.g. curriculum writing), or graduate work to enhance instructional effectiveness. Many teachers choosing this option for a support team desire additional leadership activities for professional growth.

There are no restrictions as to the number of members on a support team. A team might consist of two individuals who would like to serve as peer coaches for one another. Alternatively, a team might include five teachers who share an interest in multiple intelligences and want to explore its role in the design of knowledge work.

Several elements will contribute to the membership of the different support teams, in addition to the preferences of teachers. These include:

- information the administrator has regarding the strengths of each teacher regarding instruction and collaboration.
- the non-classroom responsibilities (for example, serving as a mentor or supervisor of student teachers, serving on division-wide committees and task forces) that may affect the times individual teachers are available for collegial work.
- the daily and weekly schedule of the school and the ease with which teachers can establish convenient meeting times that can be sustained during the entire year.

Regardless of the composition of the support teams, their membership should be established and publicized to the faculty of a school no later than **November 1** of the year. This schedule provides the maximum amount of time for teachers to work in their teams.

3. With assistance of support team, teacher designs growth plan; submits to administrator by December 1.

During November, the support teams begin their regular meetings. These should be conducted at least monthly, and may be more frequent, as desired by the team's members. The first order of business is the development of a Self-Directed Professional Growth Plan (Form 5:16) by each teacher and its review by members of the support team.

The activities written into each teacher's growth plan are the means to the end. They are the engagement that will foster movement toward the goal. Depending on the growth goals selected, the activities identified in the growth plan may involve primarily each teacher working independently of other team members, or they may involve the members of the team working together.

Some Activities for Professional Growth

Some possible activities to support a growth goal include the following:

- observation of and discussion with teachers known to be skilled in the area identified for focus,
- attendance at workshops, courses, and Staff Development Council offerings,
- focused reading of books and articles, watching of videos of practice, and discussion with members of a support team or a study group,
- collection and analysis of student work from one's own teaching,
- interviews with members of the community and attendance at community events,
- creation and analysis of videos of one's own classroom,
- analysis of test results to determine areas of need for one's students.

The list of possible activities to support a growth goal is virtually endless. The critical consideration is how a certain activity enables a professional educator to move towards an important

goal. The activities themselves are never good or bad; they are merely more or less useful for the purpose of improvement.

When developing their growth plans, teachers should also consider the resources they may need to implement their plan. For example, if they want to visit the class of a certain teacher, it may be helpful to have a substitute teacher for a few hours of one day so the visit and a follow-up conversation may be conducted. In addition, teachers should give thought to the nature of documentation that will result from implementing activities in the plan. For example, in the case of the visit to a colleague's class, a teacher will produce observation notes and a summary of what was derived from the visit and the conference.

A Sample Professional Growth Plan is included as an illustration (see 5:6).

Each teacher is expected to provide to the administrator/designee a copy of his or her Professional Growth Plan by **December 1**.

4. Teacher implements growth plan.

The heart of the formative process consists of the actual implementation of the growth plan. It is during these months (**December- May**) that teachers perform the real work of professional development, carrying out the activities they have identified as likely to help them advance towards their growth goal(s). During the implementation of their plans, it is expected that teachers will engage in:

- regular meetings with their support team. Support teams meet at least once per month but can get together more frequently if they decide to do so,
- personal reflection on the new concepts and ideas being explored, and
- preparation of documentation of activities that can serve as evidence of performance during the summative evaluation process.

As a record of their meetings, support teams complete a Formative Support Team Meeting Log (Form 5:19) on which they note the date and time, members present, topics discussed, and resources or support needed to advance their work. These forms are filed with the administrator/designee following each meeting and serve as the basis for administrators locating the resources needed.

There are instances where support teams are not functioning and are not meeting the needs of the team members. If teachers find that this is the case with their team, it is the teachers' responsibility to solicit assistance from the administrator/designee in remedying the situation. The purpose of a support team is, after all, to support growth and to provide a forum for professional conversation and reflection. If a support team is not fulfilling that mission, then its members must seek a remedy from the administrator.

Formative Assessment
Self-Directed Professional
Growth Plan here

5. Teacher reflects on progress toward goal(s).

As the final activity of the formative process, teachers review the evidence they have collected and the professional growth activities in which they participated throughout the year. They reflect on their growth goal(s) and how the evidence of their activities contributes to the progress towards the goal(s). Lastly, teachers reflect on the assistance provided to them from other members of their support team. As a vehicle for this reflection, they complete the Formative Assessment Summary (Form 5:20-5:21) and submit it to their administrator/designee prior **to the teacher's last contract day**. Teachers who desire to continue the Professional Growth Plan during the summer may request an extension from their administrator. With approval, the Formative Assessment Summary may be submitted after the last contract day.

It is recommended that support teams, during their last meeting of the year, share their summary forms with others in their team. Most teachers will find the process affirming, and will appreciate hearing their colleagues report on how helpful they have been in their professional development.

6. Teacher documents professional growth.

Teachers may also find that they can profit from an organized system to maintain their plans and documents from one year to the next. If well conceived and carried out, the professional growth activities should yield planning documents, student assessment procedures, samples of student work with teacher feedback, videos of classroom practice, logs of professional activities and the like, that will be useful during the summative evaluation process to document performance. **Taken together, the documentation produced during the timeframe of the formative process will constitute a comprehensive portrait of the teacher that can be presented during the summative evaluation.**

Quick Reference:
Formative Assessment
Process Timeline

Teacher Responsibilities

Dates

**Formative Self-Assessment
Survey and Worksheet**
Form 5:9-5:10

November 1

**Formative Self-Assessment
Summary and Conference
with Administrator/Designee**

November 1

**Formative Support Team
Option Form**
Form 5:15**

November 1

**Formative Support Team
Meeting Log** (one per team)
Form 5:19**

As per each meeting

**Self-Directed Professional
Growth Plan**
Form 5:16**

December 1

**Teacher Formative
Assessment Summary**
Form 5:20-5:21**

**Teacher's last
contract day**

**Teacher completes form and submits it in writing to administrator or designee.

Formative Support Team Option Form

This is to be completed by the teacher and taken to conference with administrator/designee before November 1.

Name _____ School Year _____

Growth Goal _____

List the names of three or four colleagues with whom you would be willing to work on a Formative Support Team.

To assist in the development of opportunities for professional growth, designate the Formative Support Team model you prefer:
(Refer to page 5:3 for a description of each.)

- _____ Coach-Advisee
- _____ Collegial Friends
- _____ School-Division Cohort

List the areas of expertise in which you would be willing to mentor or coach others. These areas should be identified through your Self-Assessment Survey.

Administrator/Designee Signature

Date

How to Develop and Complete a Professional Growth Plan

Step 1 Identifying Your Growth Goal

This is done at the beginning of the year and is chosen based on the results of your Self-Assessment. The goal can either be a component in which you want to either develop new or expand existing expertise.

The goal is agreed upon by you and your administrator.

Step 2 Determine Activities and Resources That Will Help You Achieve Your Goal

Activities may include but are not limited to the following:

- Reading books, articles, and other professional literature
- Attending seminars, conferences, or other professional development sessions
- Enrolling in graduate courses
- Observing in others' classrooms (within and beyond your school)
- Videotaping your class and reflecting on the instructional episode
- Keeping a journal of actions and reflections related to the goal
- Designing action research

Step 3 Determine the Timeline for Your Plan

Determine a logical time frame for each step of your plan.

Step 4 Share Your Growth Plan With Your Support Team

Asking others to review your plan and make suggestions of activities helps you become aware of a greater body of resources and activities and strengthens a plan. It also helps others become familiar with your goal and direction so they can lend support.

Step 5 Work Through Your Plan, Making Revisions as Necessary

Carry out your plan with the support and suggestions of your support team. As you become aware of additional resources and/or activities, revise your plan to include these.

Step 6 As Your Plan Nears Completion, Reflect on the Activities and the Learning You Have Gained as a Result

As you prepare for the completion of your growth plan, reflect upon the following:

- Have I put my energy into achieving my goal?
- If not, what held me back or distracted me?
- If so, which of my activities was most valuable?
- Which was the least valuable?
- What did I learn from each activity in which I engaged for professional growth?
- How did I get others to help me learn?
- What was the benefit for my students?

Step 7 Fill Out the Formative Assessment Survey

Step 8

Determine What You Want to Share With Your Support Team and Administrator

Even when a plan was not completed or an activity was not successful, learning can occur if you choose to reflect and be realistic in your reflection. Ultimately, the purpose of a professional growth plan is learning, not completing a plan.

As you prepare for your final support team meeting, determine

- What professional growth activities you will share.
- Why you chose these particular activities during the year.
- What benefit you gained from these activities.
- What was not worth the effort and why.
- What you would do differently if you had it to do over again.
- How your support team helped you grow.
- What additional things your support team could have done for you.
- What your students gained as a result of your efforts.

Also determine how you will explain this to your support team and administrator so that your message is clear.

Step 9

Share Your Results and Celebrate

Formative Support Team Meeting Log

Complete one form per support team for each meeting held. Submit a copy to the administrator/designee.

Meeting Date _____ Time _____ Place _____

Members Present _____

Topics Discussed

Administrative Support, Feedback, Resources, and/or Staff Development needed

Next Meeting Date _____ Time _____ Place _____

Submitted by _____ Date _____

Formative Assessment Summary

To be completed by the teacher and shared with Formative Support Team before the last contract day. A copy should also be filed with the administrator/designee before the last contract day.

Name _____ School Year _____

Support Team Members _____

Type of Support Team _____ Coach-Advisee
_____ Collegial Friends
_____ School-Division Cohort

Describe the professional growth activities in which you participated this year to achieve your growth goal. (Attach additional pages as necessary.)

What results were achieved through these activities?

How did you utilize your support team to achieve these results?

How did you contribute to your support team members' professional growth?

Other comments and/or reflections.

Teacher's Signature

Date