

## Connecticut Cautiously Optimistic of Teacher Evaluation System

Teachers are optimistic of the system, but say they need more guidance and resources.

By Allie Bidwell, Staff Writer



 (ISTOCKPHOTO)

**WHILE TEACHERS AND** administrators in Connecticut are cautiously optimistic in their views on the value of a new statewide teacher evaluation system, they also are concerned about a perceived lack of training to help teachers set learning objectives and an increased workload on principals.





just 17 percent of teachers said they felt being observed in the classroom was a "very valuable" experience. Another 38 percent said it was somewhat valuable, 26 percent were neutral and the remaining 19 percent said it was "not very" or "not at all" valuable.

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"The report reflects many of the concerns and issues teachers have been tackling," Connecticut Education Association Executive Director Mark Waxenberg said in a statement. "We must all continue to work together with the stakeholders to revise the plan and get it done right for the best interest of the students in the classroom."

SEED -- [Connecticut's teacher evaluation system](#) that relies heavily on student performance and growth measures -- was pilot tested in 14 school districts during the 2012-13 school year. Although the majority of teachers said being observed in the classroom was at least somewhat valuable, many said they felt the observation rubric does not accurately assess teacher quality.

Of the 533 teachers surveyed, 16 percent said they strongly disagreed that the rubric accurately assesses teaching quality, 19 percent disagreed and 32 percent were neutral. Just 6 percent said they strongly agreed.

And although about three-quarters of teachers said they spent more time setting goals for student learning objectives (SLOs), many still struggled with setting goals that are "rigorous" and "attainable," as required by SEED. Less than half of the 44 percent who spent "a lot more time" setting these goals said the time spent was very valuable.

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"These findings may be due to the fact that teachers and specialists reported that they received minimal training or information about SLOs as they developed them and thus





Administrators had a slightly more rosy outlook on the evaluation system, but expressed concern about the amount of time required and the substantial increase on their workloads. One principal, for example, said in the survey that the system was "overwhelming" and "took a huge chunk away from other duties."

"One principal kept track of the hours he spent on SEED and found that on average, he devoted more than 60 percent of each day to evaluation, which he felt compromised his ability to focus on developing the school's faculty as a whole," the report says.

Melodie Peters, president of Connecticut's chapter of the American Federation of Teachers, said in a statement that the teachers union is committed to working with state officials toward recommendations made in the report, such as giving teachers more opportunities to learn about SEED and providing more guidance in setting SLOs.

Many teachers, for example, said they want more opportunities for professional development. Very few teachers received specific recommendations of professional growth opportunities in meetings following their evaluations, the report says.

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In some cases, this was due to the fact that there were few resources at the district level to dedicate to professional development. In other cases, it was due to the focus on other aspects of the evaluation system.

"Going forward, we intend to remain fully engaged in the process of effectively implementing a better and more effective evaluation system," Peters said. "Applying the hard work, reflection, care, persistence and intellect of great teachers to this task is the way to ensure it's done right."

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