

Special Edition Highlights Resources on Teacher Evaluation

Recent priorities and funding opportunities from the federal government have led to heightened attention and increased efforts on the part of states and districts related to developing and implementing high-quality, comprehensive systems for evaluating teachers. As these efforts advance, however, it is important for states and districts to consider to what extent the evaluation systems they are creating are appropriate for all educators. Special educators and English language specialists face distinctly different contexts than general educators, and these differences are relevant when creating an evaluation system intended for all teachers.

This *TQ Research & Policy Update* highlights these challenges and considerations for regional and state education stakeholders by reviewing an upcoming brief on this topic. Also highlighted in this special edition of the *TQ Research & Policy Update* is a new online searchable database describing more than 75 different teacher evaluation tools, as well as recent technical assistance efforts conducted in collaboration with our regional comprehensive center (RCC) colleagues—all focused on teacher evaluation.

New TQ Research & Policy Brief: *Challenges in Evaluating Special Education Teachers and English Language Learner Specialists*

Most teacher evaluation systems focus on student achievement and teacher practice; however, few systems have the capacity to differentiate among specialty-area educators, address the challenges in accurately measuring achievement growth for their students, and connect that growth to teacher effects. Questions arise as to how these interdependent foci may vary for at-risk populations and how evaluation systems should best reflect this variation.

These are questions that the TQ Center set out to answer in the latest TQ Research & Policy Brief: [*Challenges in Evaluating Special Education Teachers and English Language Learner Specialists*](#). The brief offers policy and practice recommendations for regions, states, and districts to help in their efforts to create valid, reliable, and comprehensive evaluation systems for all teachers as they work to improve the achievement of all students. The authors are Lynn R. Holdheide, Laura Goe, Ph.D., Andrew Croft, and Dan Reschly, Ph.D.

The National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality is funded by the U.S. Department of Education and is a collaborative effort of ETS, Learning Point Associates, and Vanderbilt University.

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With support from the Council for Exceptional Children and several national experts, the TQ Center surveyed more than 1,100 state and district directors of special education, conducted an examination of policy and relevant literature, and interviewed administrators. The goals were to define the specific challenges in evaluating special educators and ELL specialists, determine the current status of state and district policy and practice, and identify promising evaluation practices and instruments.

The purpose of the TQ Research & Policy Brief is to inform discussion of these issues and provide guidance and policy recommendations for regions, states, and districts to help in their efforts to create valid, reliable, and comprehensive evaluation systems for all teachers as they work to improve the achievement of all students. The recommendations provided within this brief hold value for practitioners at all levels and, in some respects, teacher educators charged with preparing educators.

New TQ Center Online *Guide to Evaluation Products*

Accurately measuring a teacher’s effectiveness is a complex and difficult task. Like building a puzzle, developing a teacher evaluation system requires multiple pieces that must be placed together in a purposeful way to create a holistic evaluation system.

The [*Guide to Evaluation Products*](#) can be used by states and districts to explore various evaluation methods and tools that represent the “puzzle pieces” of an evaluation system. The guide includes detailed descriptions of more than 75 teacher evaluation tools that are currently implemented and tested in districts and states throughout the country. Details for each include the following:

- Research and resources
- Information on the teacher and student populations assessed
- Costs, contact information, and technical support offered

Additional Teacher Evaluation Resources From the TQ Center

- [*Critical Decisions Guide: Building Teacher Effectiveness Systems*](#)
This online resource leads users through a series of steps to ensure that they make thoughtful decisions based on evidence and experience that result in a robust, sustainable, and comprehensive teacher evaluation system.
- [*Methods of Evaluating Teacher Effectiveness*](#)
This Research-to-Practice Brief is intended to help RCCs and state policymakers as they consider evaluation methods to clarify policy, develop new strategies, identify effective teachers, and guide and support districts in selecting and using appropriate evaluation methods for various purposes.
- [*A Practical Guide to Evaluating Teacher Effectiveness*](#)
This guide offers a definition of teacher effectiveness that states and districts may adapt to meet local requirements. It also provides an overview of the many purposes for evaluating teacher effectiveness, and indicates which measures are most suitable to use under different circumstances.

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Recent TQ Center Teacher Evaluation Event Summaries Archived on Our Website

The TQ Center recently hosted two events focused on enhancing teacher evaluation systems: a webcast and a technical assistance workshop. The goal of these events was to help states understand how best to ensure the following: (1) that all teachers are appropriately included in the evaluation system, and (2) that the evaluation system is part of a larger comprehensive system to improve and support teacher effectiveness.

Webcast. The webcast, titled *Enhancing Teacher Evaluation: Effective Practices for Evaluating Teachers of All Students*, was held on April 14, 2010. It brought together experts to discuss the existing research and strategies that address evaluating teachers of at-risk populations. Patrick J. Schuermann, Ed.D., from Vanderbilt University and the Center for Educator Compensation Reform and author of *The Other 69 Percent: Fairly Rewarding the Performance of Teachers of Nontested Subjects and Grades*, discussed special considerations and strategies for evaluating teachers of at-risk populations. Lynn Holdheide, from Vanderbilt University and the TQ Center, and Andrew Croft, from ETS and the TQ Center, discussed the survey and the TQ Research & Policy Brief on *Challenges in Evaluating Special Education Teachers and English Language Learner Specialists*. Lisa Johnson, Ed.D., from the TQ Center, reviewed the new TQ Center resource, *Guide to Evaluation Products*, a searchable online resource that provides information and links to various methods of evaluation and comprehensive evaluation systems currently in use. The [archived webcast and materials](#) are available online.

Workshop. The technical assistance workshop, titled “Enhancing Teacher Evaluation: A Critical Lever for Improving Teaching and Learning,” was held May 10–11, 2010, in Washington, D.C. This invitational workshop for RCC staff and state teams focused on issues, research, and strategies related to the creation and use of teacher evaluation as part of a comprehensive system to improve teaching and student learning. Topics included steps in creating quality evaluation systems; issues involved in evaluating teachers of students with disabilities and English language learners; and the use of evaluation results to target professional development, certification, and career opportunities. The workshop also included conversations on the use of evaluation in teacher tenure decisions and engaging stakeholders in systemic reform. The [archived workshop materials](#) are available online.

Redesigning Teacher Evaluation One State at a Time: TQ Center Stories From the Field

The TQ Center has been working with the **New England Comprehensive Center (NECC)** to provide support for the New England Collaborative for Educator Quality and Effectiveness, a consortium of all NECC states—Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. This support is designed to address the continuum of enduring pressing teacher quality and effectiveness issues in the region.

The New England Collaborative has held a number of meetings in 2009 and 2010 to strategically plan its work through the identification of goals and leverage points to move the work, both as individual states and as a regional consortium, forward. The TQ Center, along with REL Northeast & Islands (REL NEI), is providing technical assistance and support in the following ways:

- Helping NECC think through the content and structure of the initial meeting.

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- Providing resources and content expertise during the meetings.
- Providing on-demand support as the needs of the group change.
- Having TQ Center staff present at meetings.

Discussions and primary goals of this group include the following:

- Arriving at a shared definition of teacher effectiveness.
- Considering research and concepts on systems to measure and support teacher effectiveness.
- Developing an understanding of approaches and models for measuring student learning and growth in the context of teacher evaluation.
- Sharing of experiences, efforts, policies, and practices related to teacher effectiveness and evaluation under way in each state.

The **Northwest Regional Comprehensive Center (NWRCC)** held its Spring Symposium May 19–20, 2010, in Portland, Oregon. The symposium, titled “Defining and Evaluating Teacher Effectiveness: SEA Roles and Responsibilities,” was designed to engage participants in considering issues of teacher effectiveness—What is it? How is it measured? What is the SEA’s role in setting policy and developing guidance? The symposium was structured for SEA teams, with each SEA bringing up to eight team members.

Outcomes for SEA teams were as follows:

- Develop a shared understanding of the multiple components included in a comprehensive and robust definition of teacher effectiveness.
- Increase understanding of methods for measuring teacher effectiveness.
- Identify action steps to promote effective dialogue among stakeholders about improving teacher effectiveness.

The TQ Center supported NWRCC with assistance in planning the meeting and securing presenters. In addition, Sabrina Laine, Ph.D., and Laura Goe, Ph.D., from the TQ Center presented during the meeting. The [symposium materials and resources](#) are available online.

Additional TQ Center Resources and Upcoming Events

***TQ Connection* Online Forum: Upcoming Discussion**

The TQ Center plans to continue with *TQ Connection* discussions during the summer. Stay tuned for more information on the following discussion:

- **Topic:** Research Synthesis on Teacher Preparation in Response to Intervention
Dates: August 16–20
Expert Facilitator: Daniel J. Reschly, Ph.D., Vanderbilt University

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ELL-Specific Resources

During the past year, the TQ Center has added a focus on teachers of ELLs to online resources. Current TQ Center resources include the following:

- **TQ Center Policy-to-Practice Brief:** [*Teaching English Language Learners: A Complex System*](#). This brief reviews the components necessary for supporting English language instruction. It focuses on the impact of these components through the preparation and recruitment of teachers of ELLs.
- **TQ Connection Issue Paper:** [*Preparing Teachers of English Language Learners*](#). This paper addresses the challenges of preparing general education and ELL teachers for classroom contexts that include a diverse array of languages and cultures. It also includes an Innovation Configuration for evaluating teacher preparation programs and professional development in this area.
- **TQ Center Policy Database:** [*Certification and Licensure for Teachers of English Language Learners*](#). This policy database provides an overview of state-level policies related to ELL teacher certification and licensure currently in place across the country.
- **TQ Tips & Tools Key Issue:** [*Recruiting Teachers for Schools Serving English Language Learners*](#). As the number of ELLs continues to grow in a more diverse range of districts, education leaders need to develop creative and comprehensive recruitment strategies to ensure that all ELLs in the district can be served by highly qualified teachers. This Key Issue includes strategies and resources that can help.

TQ Center's Technical Assistance Toolbox

The TQ Center provides a wide range of technical assistance to build the capacity of RCC and state education agency (SEA) staff to help them advance their teacher and leadership quality efforts. The [Technical Assistance Toolbox](#) contains examples of the types of technical assistance available from the TQ Center, answers to frequently asked questions, and descriptions of how to use our large collection of content-rich resources to assist in your efforts to improve educator quality in your region and state. The Technical Assistance Toolbox focuses on three areas: equitable distribution, special education, and teacher effectiveness.

Specific to **special education**, the TQ Center can help in a variety of ways:

- Review and disseminate information on state policies and practices related to preparing and certifying general and special education teachers.
- Review state strategies addressing highly qualified teacher requirements for special education teachers.
- Provide an online discussion forum through which participants gain access to experts and content-rich resources to learn about research and strategies related to general and special education.
- Provide resources on the research base and practice of various components of classroom-based RTI.
- Work with regions and states to improve preservice and inservice preparation of teachers to implement RTI in classrooms.

For examples and resources from the TQ Center's "Technical Assistance in Action" related to special education, please visit [Technical Assistance Toolbox: Special Education](#).

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