12 Norms for Evaluation

1. “Proficient” is the broadest rating/descriptor and is the default selection absent any evidence to the contrary or specific, unanswered requests for evidence.

2. Critical communication window comments are a necessary precursor to Needs Improvement ratings at the element level; particularly for teachers with professional status on self-directed growth plans. It is possible that newer teachers or those on other types of plans may have issues that emerge and are identified for improvement at any point in the course of the growth cycle.

3. Needs Improvement ratings are not “satisfactory.” Needs Improvement ratings indicate that practice ought to be enhanced in some way. A small number of Needs Improvement element ratings within a proficient evaluation is perfectly acceptable and does not necessarily reflect poorly on a teacher’s practice overall.

4. Evidence (which includes communication window comments from teachers and evaluators as well as uploaded artifacts) is not required for every element on the evaluation rubric. Artifacts, certainly, are not required for every element. Evidence should be focused primarily on SMART Goals and areas for improvement highlighted in the approved growth plan.

5. Evaluators properly have some influence on the specifics of any growth plan (generally to encourage alignment to planned PD activities in the building and district), but they should not be choosing goals or dictating action steps to teachers on self-directed growth plans. Administrators can require re-writing of goals or action steps that are non-specific, part of a teacher’s routine practice, or not measurable.

6. Teachers have full autonomy in choosing what evidence they feel demonstrates achievement of their goals or improvement of NI elements. Evaluators will apply reasonable professional judgement in assessing the strength of the evidence. No teacher will be required by an evaluator to create a document or use a specific format to track data or evidence without mutual agreement.

7. Educators’ statements during their summative evaluation conferences constitute evidence. When an evaluator has not noted a deficiency until the summative conference and a teacher answers, the evaluator should take them at their word and confirm how regularly or thoroughly a practice might be done during the following growth cycle.

8. The summative evaluation conference is not a time for surprises. Needs improvement elements should align to topics which included clear critical feedback during the evaluation cycle.

9. A self-assessment rating of Needs Improvement is a way to draw attention to specific elements for feedback throughout a cycle. If no comments were made about this area, the self assessment rating itself does not constitute evidence of a deficiency. Mentioning a self assessment rating in a summative comment might make sense, but it should be accompanied by evidence supporting the evaluator’s contention that the educator still deserves a Needs Improvement rating.

10. Evaluators and educators should consult the rubric regularly, particularly at the time of the formative evaluation, so they can look for evidence where they are uncomfortable with gaps and so that educators will know what to work on before the cycle closes with summative ratings.

11. Needs Improvement Elements on the rubric should always be accompanied by a comment.

12. Private venting and personal complaints from third parties does not constitute evidence. When a teacher complains about a colleague, administrators must work to mediate the dispute transparently and promptly. Anonymous complaints must not carry any weight in evaluations.