

# Connecticut's Guidelines for Educator Evaluation

## An Implementation Guide

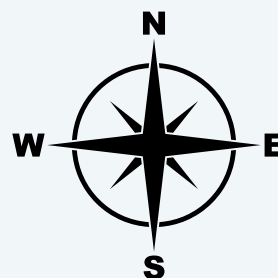


# Table of Contents

<b>1</b>	<i>A New Direction for TEVAL in CT</i>
<b>2</b>	<i>Five Steps to Improving TEVAL</i>
<b>3</b>	<i>Overview of TEVAL Changes</i>
<b>4</b>	<i>Required Components</i>
<b>5</b>	<i>Teacher Protections Stay the Same</i>
<b>6</b>	<i>PDEC Readiness Checklist</i>
<b>7</b>	<i>Mutual Agreement</i>
<b>8</b>	<i>Caution: Teacher Remediation &amp; Support</i>



# A New Direction for Teacher Evaluation in Connecticut



On June 14, 2023, Connecticut's State Board of Education unanimously passed new guidelines for educator evaluation. As a result, school districts across the state will soon need to rewrite their educator evaluation plan to align with the new guidelines. New plans will have to be approved by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) and will need to be in place for the 2024-25 school year. While districts work on their new plan over the upcoming year, they may decide to either adopt the evaluation flexibilities offered by the CSDE or keep their existing plan. The flexibilities are unchanged from last year in order to provide districts some degree of continuity during the upcoming transition year. The decision to adopt the flexibilities or keep the district's last approved evaluation plan must include the district's Professional Development and Evaluation Committee (PDEC).

The new guidelines for educator evaluation were mutually agreed to by all major education stakeholders in Connecticut: teachers and their unions, administrators and their unions, the superintendents' association, and the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education. The new guidelines are intended to simplify the evaluation process, build trust, support educator and student growth, and foster innovation rather than promote compliance. They move away from mathematical calculations of teacher performance, eliminate the requirement for ratings, allow for a differentiated process based on role and level of experience, and require no standardized indicators to measure growth. They also give more autonomy to local PDECs to design an evaluation system that meets their district's unique needs. While the new guidelines give districts more freedom, they also maintain the existing protections for teachers, such as the right to grieve any misstep in the evaluation process.

Because the new guidelines provide much more flexibility to local PDECs, it is critical that strong teacher advocates be selected by their collective bargaining units to serve on the committee, ensuring teachers have a strong voice in the creation of their own evaluation plan and that they remain integrally involved in its implementation and subsequent revisions.

This guide provides an overview of the changes to teacher evaluation and seeks to help teachers understand how they will be impacted. It also provides tools and tips to help PDEC members create a strong evaluation plan that capitalizes on new areas of flexibility within state guidelines while also ensuring teachers are protected against arbitrary and unfair evaluation practices.

# Improve Your District's TEVAL Plan in Five Steps



## 1. Build Trust

- Equal numbers of teachers and administrators on the PDEC
- Create a shared definition of mutual agreement and a process for achieving it
- Ensure evaluators are regularly trained and calibrated
- Select a teacher and an administrator to act as PDEC co-chairs
- Regularly update the TEVAL plan and seek input from teachers & administrators
- Provide an annual TEVAL orientation or refresher

## 2. Simplify

- Reduce required paperwork
- Simplify observation rubrics to focus on what matters most
- Reduce the number of observations for most teachers
- Eliminate surveys (parent feedback is no longer required)
- Reduce number of goals required
- Eliminate ratings and mathematical calculations

## 3. Differentiate

- Differentiate the process based on role and years of experience
- Keep disciplinary process and TEVAL strictly separate
- Use a separate process for teachers with a pattern of documented performance concerns

## 4. Focus on Feedback Not Ratings

- Require evaluators to provide high quality written feedback to teachers
- Evaluators should be trained in how to provide meaningful feedback
- Instead of a summative rating, evaluators should provide a written end-of-year summary of accomplishments and recommended next steps
- Feedback should be considered formative and not evaluative, although a documented pattern over time of ongoing concerns may result in placement on a support plan

## 5. Make Growth the Goal Instead of Outcomes

- Learning goals do not need to be mathematically quantifiable and may pertain to professional learning.
- Emphasize professional learning and growth instead of arbitrary targets for student learning
- Align PD plan with educator goals
- Allow groups of teachers to share a goal to promote collaboration and shared responsibility for learning

# Overview of TEVAL Changes



## 1. No Ratings are Required

- Ratings are no longer required
- The different components of the TEVAL plan do not need to be mathematically weighted.
- The evaluator writes a narrative annual report summarizing feedback in lieu of a rating

## 2. Goals Based on Growth Rather than Outcomes

- SLOs are not required
- No standardized indicator required
- Goals may pertain to a teacher's professional learning
- Beginning teachers may use TEAM goal(s)
- Mutual agreement on goals is still required

## 3. Greater Differentiation

- The PDEC can differentiate the evaluation process to match different teaching roles, responsibilities, and levels of experience.
- Teachers with more experience may have fewer observations and may set multi-year goals.

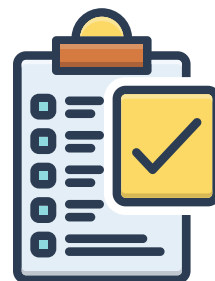
## 4. More Autonomy for PDECs

Your PDEC has more freedom to:

- Determine the number and length of the observations required
- Differentiate the process for teachers in different roles
- Differentiate the process for beginning teachers
- Customize their plan's observation rubrics



# List of Required Components



## Your New TEVAL Plan Must:

- Be written and mutually agreed to by members of the PDEC, which must include teacher(s) selected by their collective bargaining unit.
- Be based on a set of external standards like the CCT, Danielson, Marzano, Marshall, among others. The standards may be modified by the PDEC.
- Include progress monitoring conferences spaced throughout the year (Goal-setting, mid-year, summative).
- Require mutual agreement on goal(s) and indicators (formerly called IAGDs).
- Allow for significant differentiation based on role and years of experience.
- Require every teacher be assigned a trained evaluator with an 092.
- Require regular, meaningful feedback from evaluators.
- Include a self-assessment.
- Include observations or reviews of practice depending on role in district.
- Include a tiered support plan process for struggling teachers that involves the union.
- Require an annual orientation to the evaluation process.
- Ensure individual evaluation records remain confidential.
- Include protections against arbitrary or punitive evaluation practices.

# Teacher Protections Stay the Same



While the new Educator Evaluation Guidelines contain many significant changes, CEA worked hard to ensure the existing protections against arbitrary evaluation practices remain in place. The following is a list of required protections that must be included in your district's evaluation plan.

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## ✓ **The Role of the PDEC**

Every school district in the state, by law, must have a Professional Development and Evaluation Committee (PDEC). The PDEC is intended to ensure educators have a voice in their evaluation and professional development. The role of the PDEC is to develop and annually update their district's educator evaluation and professional development plan in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-220a(b).

## ✓ **Mutual Agreement**

PDEC decisions must be made through consensus or mutual agreement. While this can sometimes be time-consuming, the process of working toward mutual agreement/consensus honors the experiences and expertise of everyone at the table, builds and maintains trust, and promotes shared ownership over the evaluation and professional growth processes. In addition, mutual agreement on goals and indicators is required between an individual teacher and their primary evaluator.

## ✓ **Tiered Support Plan Process Involving the Union**

Per state statute, improvement and remediation plans must be developed in collaboration with the teacher and their collective bargaining representative and must include the following:

- Clearly identified concerns
- Targeted supports
- Clear goals
- A specific timeline and indicators of success

## ✓ **Dispute Resolution & Grievance**

A dispute resolution process that involves the union is a required component of your district's plan. This dispute process is intended to promote transparency and protect against arbitrary and/or punitive evaluation practices. The PDEC designs and mutually agrees to this process, which can be used to help settle disputes pertaining to goals/indicators, the quality of the feedback received, and other matters. In addition, teachers can also grieve any procedural violations of the evaluation process described in the district's plan or in the process outlined in state statute and guidelines.

# PDEC Readiness Checklist



The new guidelines for educator evaluation give PDECs far more freedom than in the past. Therefore, it is essential that your district's PDEC is functioning well and strong teacher advocates are selected to serve. Teachers on the PDEC must be ready to capitalize on new areas of flexibility in the state guidelines while also ensuring strong protections for teachers remain part of your district's new evaluation plan.

- ☒ The PDEC includes a teacher, administrator, and a paraeducator\* selected by their respective collective bargaining units (required by state statute).
- ☒ The PDEC has equal numbers of teachers and administrators selected by their respective bargaining units.
- ☒ Different buildings and a variety of teaching roles are represented.
- ☒ PDEC members share an understanding of their role and responsibilities.
- ☒ PDEC members share a working definition of mutual agreement/consensus.
- ☒ The PDEC has an agreed upon protocol or process for achieving mutual agreement/consensus.
- ☒ A teacher and an administrator co-chair the PDEC.
- ☒ The PDEC has at least three meetings scheduled during the school year.
- ☒ There is a process in place to solicit input from teachers into the TEVAL & PD plans.
- ☒ The PDEC has a simple set of agreed upon operating norms to maintain civility and respect.



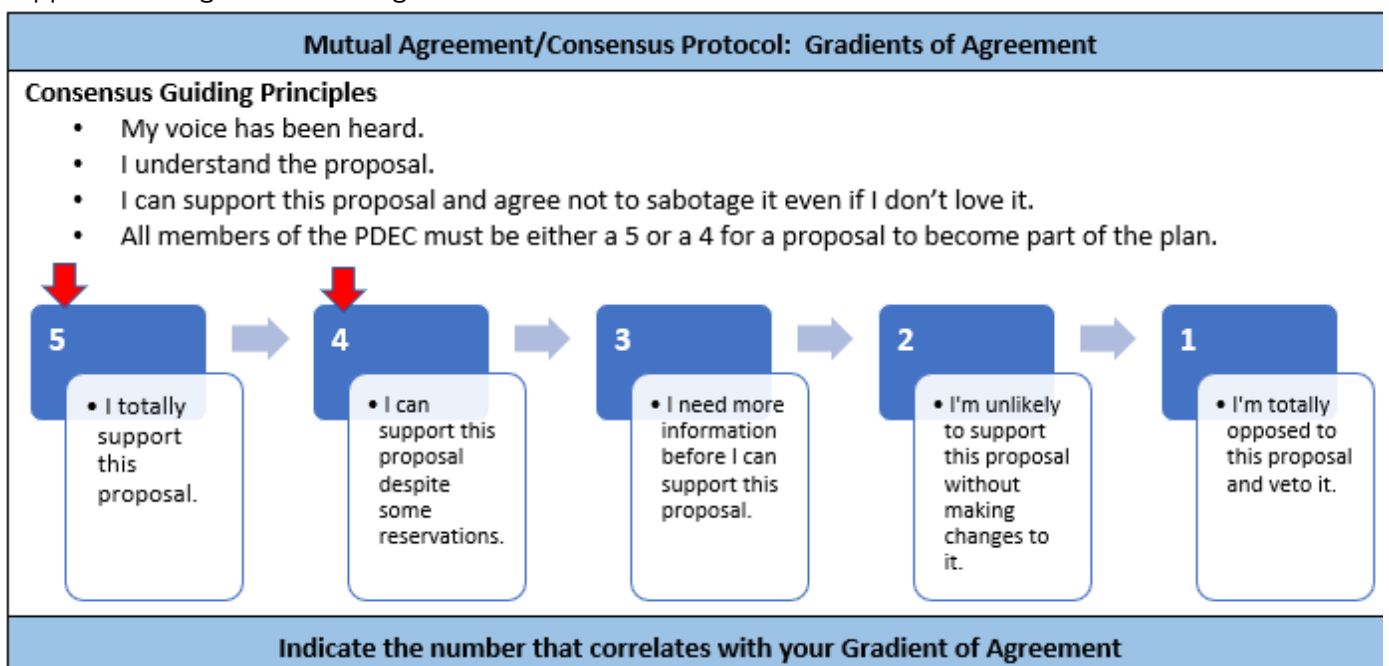
\*State statute will require a paraeducator be selected by their bargaining unit to serve on the PDEC. It is CEA's position that while the paraeducator should help draft the PD plan, they should not have input into the teacher evaluation plan, because paraeducators will not be evaluated using it.



# Mutual Agreement



Major decisions by the PDEC must be made through mutual agreement, **not** by majority vote. Mutual agreement should be defined as consensus, which is when everyone around the table reaches an outcome they can all support (even if there are minor misgivings). Mutual agreement or consensus can be difficult to achieve, especially if there are strong conflicting views. The following mutual agreement/consensus protocol, or "Gradients of Agreement" tool, was adapted from the Connecticut Department of Education, and it may prove useful when mutual agreement is difficult to reach. The protocol also serves as an important reminder that not everyone has to be perfectly happy with a decision, but in the absence of major concerns, all can agree to support it and agree not sabotage it



## Mutual Agreement Protocol Tips:

- When it is time for the PDEC to make an important decision, each PDEC member should rate their level of agreement using the above chart. They may write the number that corresponds to their level of agreement on a sticky note, fold it, and pass it to one of the PDEC chairs. Alternatively, the PDEC may utilize an anonymous virtual poll to tabulate responses.
- The PDEC chairs quickly count the sticky notes or analyze the poll responses, and if everyone on the committee indicated either a 5 or a 4, the decision should be considered mutually agreed upon. If any one person on the PDEC is below a 3, however, there is no agreement and discussions and compromise should continue.
- It may help to focus first on areas that have broad agreement and then circle back to tackle the components that are more divisive.
- If, after sincere and repeated efforts to reach mutual agreement have failed, the PDEC chairs may mutually decide to average all the votes together. If the average of all votes is a 5 or 4, the decision may be considered mutually agreed upon.

# Caution: Remediation and Support Plans



The elimination of ratings may become problematic when an evaluator wants to put a teacher on a formal support plan due to performance concerns. Under the previous guidelines, a developing or below standard rating would signal the need for formal support. Without ratings, however, the decision to put a teacher on a plan could be highly subjective. Without a process in place to control that subjectivity, any teacher could be placed on a plan at virtually any time. For this reason, it is **essential** your PDEC create a detailed, explicit support plan process that requires:

- An on-going pattern of performance concerns that are documented in the feedback to the teacher.
- Prior documentation of meetings with the teacher and their union representative that demonstrate there were previous attempts to informally address the evaluator's documented concerns. A support plan should never be a surprise to a teacher, and teachers should always be given support and afforded time to improve prior to the consideration of a formal plan.
- Multiple sequential tiers of formal scaffolded support (modeled after SRBI).
- Union involvement at **every** step of the process.

For support plan guidance, exemplars, and sample language, please visit the certification and TEVAL page on CEA's website at:

<https://cea.org/certification/> or contact Kate Field, CEA's teacher evaluation specialist, at [katef@cea.org](mailto:katef@cea.org).

# CEA TEVAL Workshops

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CEA is Here to Support You and Your District's Transition to the New TEVAL Guidelines.

## PDEC TUNE-UP (2 hours)



Make sure your PDEC is functioning well and is ready to create a new TEVAL plan. This session is designed for PDEC members (including administrators if possible) and provides:

- An overview of the new guidelines for PDECs
- Recommended PDEC norms & procedures
- A review of PDEC responsibilities
- Practice reaching mutual agreement using a consensus protocol.
- Exemplar components of a model plan.

## Growth Without Ratings (1.5 hours)



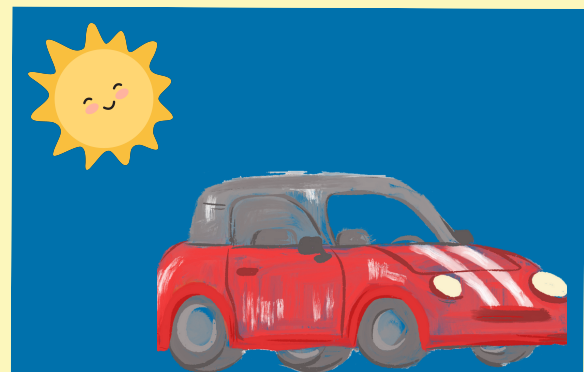
Designed to support PDECs as they rewrite their TEVAL plans, this workshop focusses on how to create a supportive process that fosters growth without ratings. Sample observation rubrics and summative reports without ratings will be provided.

## New Directions in TEVAL (1 hour)



This workshop is designed for teachers to help them understand how the new TEVAL Guidelines are likely to impact them. Examples of goals will be shared with participants and an overview of educator rights and responsibilities related to TEVAL will also be provided.

## TEVAL Mini Workshops (45 mins)



These brief workshops have a narrow focus on one specific aspect of TEVAL and are designed for teachers and/or PDEC members.

- Goal setting for teachers
- Dispute Resolution (Teachers and/or PDEC)
- Support plans (PDEC and/or local leaders)
- Feedback (teachers and/or PDEC)

To request a workshop contact: [myprofession@cea.org](mailto:myprofession@cea.org)