

# OTES and some initial impressions

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I recently had an opportunity to carefully study the new Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES) on the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) website. The new framework was rolled out during an ODE meeting at the OSBA Capital Conference in November.

I was looking to see what, if anything, might give rise to collective bargaining issues in the near future. While I am not an educator by training, I have had considerable experience in the last 20-plus years negotiating evaluations with teacher unions, so I am familiar with teacher evaluations and what unions, administrators and board members think about them. So, here are some opening thoughts on OTES by someone who has a passing interest in the subject.

The first aspect of the evaluation framework that struck me was its almost deceptive simplicity. All teachers will be rated as "Accomplished," "Proficient," "Developing" or "Ineffective" based on their evaluations. In turn, each teacher's evaluation will

be based 50% on student growth measures and 50% on teacher performance. Sounds easy enough, but when you dig a little deeper it gets much more complicated. Thankfully, ODE has developed a couple of charts that put this process into a more visual perspective.

The first chart (below left), "Evaluation Framework," shows how 50% student growth measures and 50% teacher performance combine into the four types of ratings. It is important to note that, by large, student academic growth measures are determined through multiple measures, including value-added scores and other assessments that local boards of education can choose from. Local boards may administer assessments chosen from ODE's assessment list and/or local measures of student growth using state-designed criteria and guidance for teachers of subjects where value-added scores are not available. Perhaps an easier way of looking at this

is to say most of the student growth measures are ODE's responsibility.

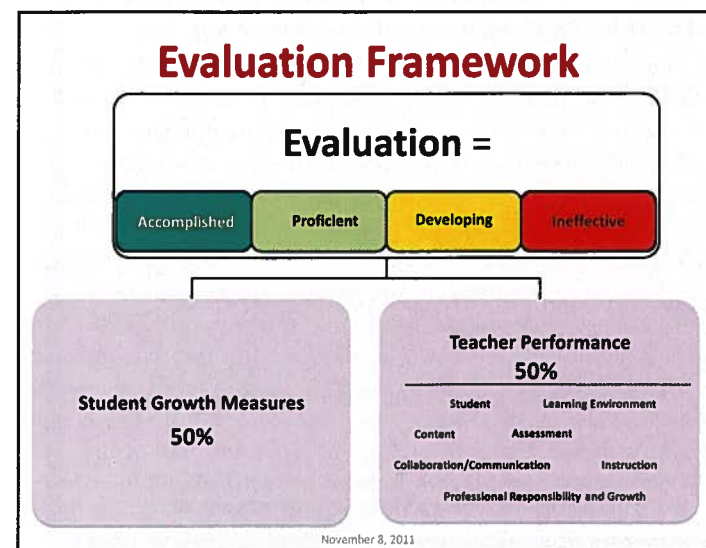
Teacher performance measures are going to be determined annually at the local level. As indicated in the chart, performance can be based on a number of factors, but the evaluation must be completed by April 1 with the teacher receiving a written report by April 10. Again, this applies for every teacher, although teachers rated "Accomplished" can then be evaluated once every two years, using the same deadlines. I believe this is the main point about

having to adopt a local board policy on teacher evaluations by July 1, 2013. Board policy will have to clearly define the teacher performance aspect of evaluations and, perhaps, some of the assessment choices relating to student growth measures.

The second chart (below right), "Evaluation Matrix," then shows exactly how evaluations factor with student growth measures to determine a teacher's performance rating. The two



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**Evaluation Matrix**

		Teacher Performance			
		4	3	2	1
Student Growth Measures	Above	Accomplished	Accomplished	Proficient	Developing
	Expected	Proficient	Proficient	Developing	Developing
	Below	Developing	Developing	Ineffective	Ineffective

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axes are student growth measures and teacher performance. Note that teacher performance is a number scale, 1 through 4, with 4 being the highest. Apparently, school evaluations will simply rate a teacher (1, 2, 3 or 4) and it is the matrix that will designate a teacher as "Accomplished," "Proficient," "Developing" or "Ineffective."

Student growth is measured as "Below," "Expected" or "Above." Again, deceptively simple. However, after looking at the matrix, it becomes

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apparent that a lot more teachers will be rated as "Proficient" or "Developing" than will be rated otherwise, because the matrix is numerically dominated by these two ratings. It is also important to note the color shadings of the various ratings. In another separate chart (not shown) proffered by ODE, green is indicated as demonstrating a high level of autonomy, yellow a medium amount and red a low amount. This autonomy level corresponds with the freedom teachers are afforded in developing their professional growth plans and selecting their evaluators for the evaluation cycle. Obviously, there are shades involved across the matrix, although the teacher performance ratings are devoid of color.

So, what does all of this actually mean? I believe that OTES is much more complicated than it first appears. School boards will have to make several choices in the evaluation process and need to prepare to evaluate every teacher every year — daunting tasks. Boards also will have to assure themselves that all evaluations are comparable and done in a consistent manner throughout the district. And boards need to prepare

themselves for the possibility that when all is said and done, many of our great teachers end up being rated as "Proficient" or "Developing," not "Accomplished." Likewise, many of our poorly performing teachers may finally end up publicly labeled as such.

Does any of this have to be bargained? Hopefully, no, but any time a board tries to make decisions about teacher evaluations, unions have shown up to demand their say in the matter. So, count on adding that complication to the process as well. □

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