
AUGUST 2013



MIDYEAR PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK REPORT
ON THE
SY2012-13
Educator Growth and Development Cycle

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SUMMARY

The 2012-13 school year was the second year of the Los Angeles Unified School District's no-stakes application of the Educator Growth and Development Cycle (EGDC). In this "scale-up" phase, all school site administrators were trained in the observation process and had an opportunity to practice the EGDC with a volunteer teacher. LAUSD is now preparing for full implementation of the Educator Growth and Development Cycle in SY2013-14 as the evaluation system of record. The District continues its commitment to solicit and incorporate educator feedback—a priority we have maintained from the outset of this initiative. Critical feedback from teachers and administrators to the District in the "scale-up" phase allows us to make continuous improvements to the Educator Growth and Development Cycle.

"It provided me with the first complete and comprehensive look at my teaching, classroom management, and planning. I have been observed many times, [but] this was the first time it was meaningful."

—Teacher

The feedback summarized within this mid-year report reveals that participating educators have had positive experiences with the Educator Growth and Development Cycle to date. Some teachers are already beginning to institute changes in their instructional practice and see results in their classrooms. Feedback on the first formal observation cycle of the EGDC process also highlights key areas for improving the system and its implementation. These recommendations are summarized in the box below.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue technology platform enhancements to make it more user-friendly
- Consider the total time commitment of the EGDC process for participants in relation to their other job responsibilities
- Identify strategies to support time management and minimize the time burden without decreasing the rigor of the performance review system
- Add additional personnel to support school site operations or instructional supervision, in addition to teacher participation
- Establish accountability for administrators and teachers to carry out their roles with fidelity
- Provide examples of exemplary Self-Assessments and Lesson Design Templates
- Continue offering trainings on each step of the process throughout the school year
- Ensure that the Teaching and Learning Framework is applicable to all grades and subject matter, and is differentiated if needed.
- Ensure that teachers completing the Self-Assessment can feel safe being honest about their practice (e.g., address privacy concerns about administrator judgment)
- Calibrate the accuracy of observer scoring on an ongoing basis
- Observer training should include a focus on conducting coaching conversations



INTRODUCTION

The Los Angeles Unified School District recognizes that our most important task is to ensure that every classroom is led by an effective teacher, and that every school is led by an outstanding leader, who is surrounded by a team of excellent support personnel, all who work to improve the academic achievement of our students. Similarly, educators deserve a system that identifies, celebrates and learns from excellence, providing reliable, consistent feedback for growth and development while offering clear career pathways. National research supports this and so does our common experience.

Over the last two years, the District has begun to implement the recommendations of the Teacher Effectiveness Task Force (TETF) which was created as a result of the April 28, 2009 Board Motion, Quality Leadership and Teaching to Ensure a World Class Education For All. The core strategy for achieving this is the interconnection between multiple-measure performance reviews that provide clear and useful information to employees about their performance, and an individualized approach for supporting and developing all employees.

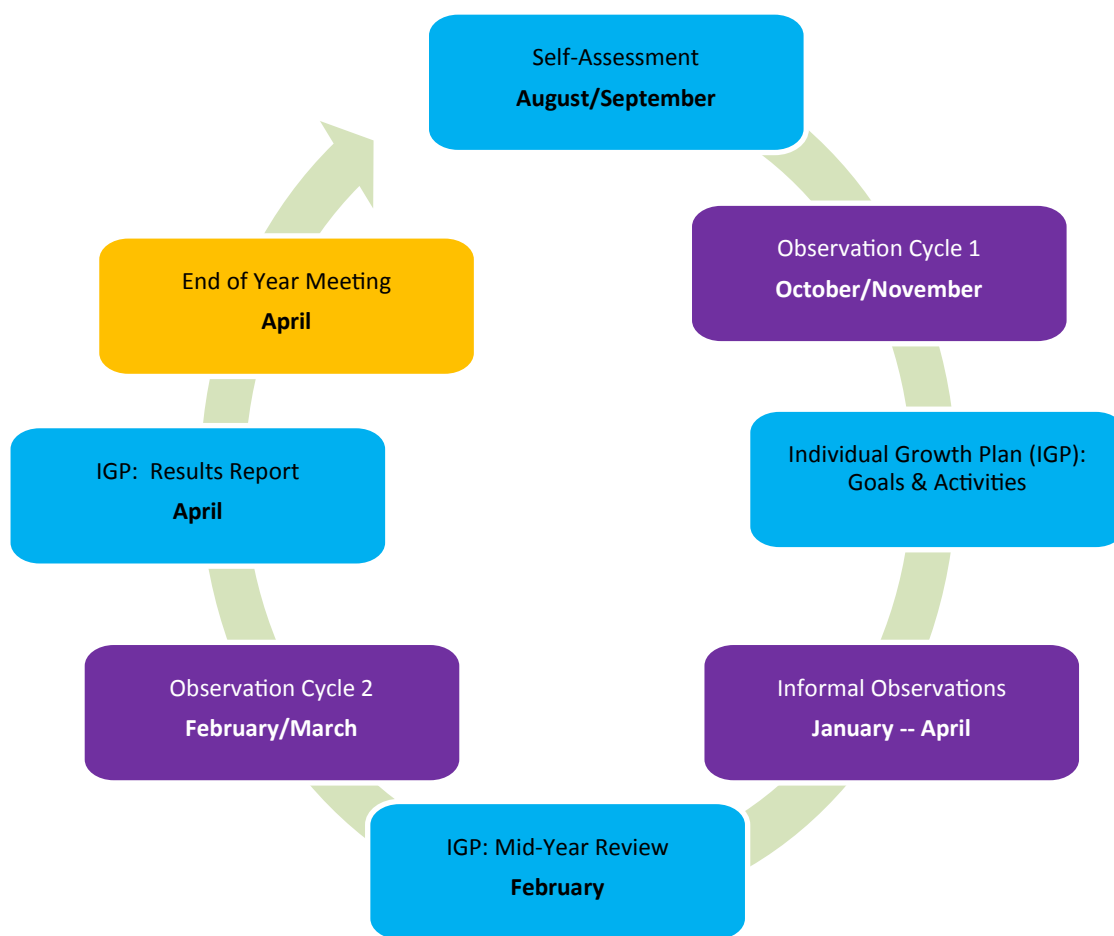
The 2011-2012 Initial Implementation Phase (IIP) of the Educator Growth and Development Cycle (EGDC) tested out the multiple measure performance review and support systems with a set of representative schools throughout LAUSD. Teachers, school leaders, and central and local district office personnel who volunteered to participate in the no-stakes IIP became the first in the District to test out the draft tools and processes of the Educator and School Leader Growth and Development Cycles. The feedback from this phase of the work was summarized into four reports and can be found on the Talent Management Division's website.

During the 2012-2013 school year, the District began to introduce the tools of the Educator Growth and Development Cycle to all teachers and school leaders. All LAUSD school site administrators completed a five-day observer training and certification process. Administrators also had an opportunity to "practice" going through an observation cycle with a volunteer teacher on their campus in a no-stakes environment. During this "scale-up" phase, the District worked to support and prepare our administrators to become EGDC observers. We also continued to collect critical participant feedback on the tools and process necessary to further develop and refine the components. The findings in this report are part of our commitment to collect, synthesize, and respond to feedback from participants. Data received from this survey continues to inform refinements to the LAUSD Educator Growth and Development Cycles and the tools associated with these processes.

The Educator Growth and Development Cycle

The Educator Growth and Development Cycle has been designed to gather evidence of teaching practice and impact on student learning outcomes through multiple measures, and to support all educators in improving their practice. The Educator Growth and Development Cycle (EGDC) consists of a series of reflection activities, formal and informal observations, observer/teacher conferencing and coaching, and professional goal setting activities, all aimed at helping teachers identify areas of strength and opportunities to improve their practice. The EGDC Observation measure includes the following components:

EXHIBIT 1: 2012-13 Educator Growth and Development Cycle—Observation of Practice measure



Methods

An online feedback survey with questions regarding implementation of the first formal observation cycle was administered from March through April 2013. Based on user records in the observation technology platform (My Professional Growth System), the 575 participating teachers and administrator pairs who had completed the first formal observation cycle received surveys differentiated by their role as teacher or observer. Survey respondents were asked a combination of close-ended and open-ended questions; in some cases, percentages may not add up to 100% when respondents were asked to “check all that apply.”

EXHIBIT 2: SY12-13 EGDC Mid-Year Feedback Survey Response Rate

	Teachers	Observers/Admins	Total
EGDC Participants Completing First Cycle	575	575	1,150
Survey Respondents	400	314	714
Response Rate	70%	55%	62%

The overall response rate for teachers and observers (site-based administrators and second observers) was 62% (Exhibit 2). Of the 400 teacher respondents, nearly half (47%) teach at the elementary school level and the remaining teach in middle schools (31%) or high schools (22%). The largest group of teacher respondents teach elementary/multiple subjects (47%), and most other teachers reported teaching core subjects (English/Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies). Three-quarters (76%) of teachers reported having over 10 years of teaching experience.

Observer respondents were mainly site-based principals (77%) and assistant principals (21%). Most respondents have over 10 years of teaching experience (62%), and one-third have over 10 years of experience as a site-level administrator. The majority of observer respondents work at the elementary level (63%).

Thirty-five percent, or 110, of the observer respondents reported that they had previous experiences with the Educator Growth and Development Cycle through last year’s Initial Implementation Phase (IIP). Eighty-six teachers (22%) responding to this survey had participated in the SY2011-12 IIP.

¹ Nearly 1,000 administrators had completed a five-day EGDC observer training and certification by the time this midyear feedback survey was administered. However, we used administrative records to identify the 575 EGDC pairs (observers and their volunteer teachers) that had completed at least one full formal observation cycle, as our questions asked for feedback on this part of the process.



FINDINGS

Teaching and Learning Framework

The LAUSD Teaching & Learning Framework describes clear expectations for effective teaching, identifying exemplary practices that will enable us to meet our goal of *All Youth Achieving*. As the foundation for instructional practices in LAUSD, the Teaching & Learning Framework also acts as a guide for teachers to analyze, reflect upon and improve their teaching practice independently, with colleagues, and/or with their administrator as part of the Educator Growth and Development Cycle. In order to analyze teaching practice, evidence of a teacher’s practice is assessed against the Teaching and Learning Framework. Administrators are trained to collect and analyze evidence using these strategies to ensure that evidence is appropriately aligned to the Teaching and Learning Framework, is representative of the teacher’s practice, and is free of bias.

Teachers and Observers participating in the SY2012-13 EGDC agreed that the Teaching & Learning Framework is a useful tool for professional growth, and that it provides an appropriate description of effective teaching for the subjects/grades they teach or supervise (over 80% agree or strongly agree, see Exhibits 3 and 4). In open-ended comments, some teachers expressed concern that the Framework and associated observation protocols might not be as applicable to certain subjects, such as special education, physical education, and kindergarten, and that their administrators might not have the instructional expertise in these areas to rate them accurately and guide their professional growth. One teacher recommended that the District, “Involve teachers from the various areas of special education in the revisions. Incorporate aspects of this practice such as the uneven and different learning needs of these students and the difficulties and frustrations involved in adaptation and explanation of practice.”

EXHIBIT 3: Teacher opinions on the Teaching & Learning Framework

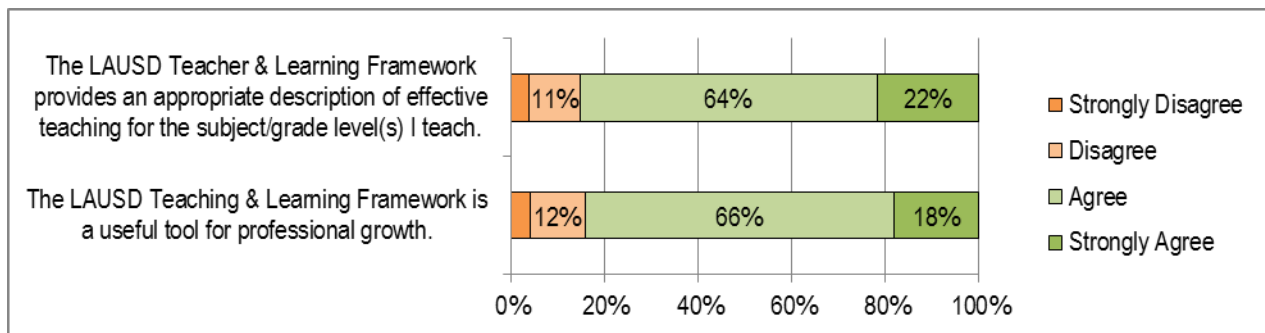
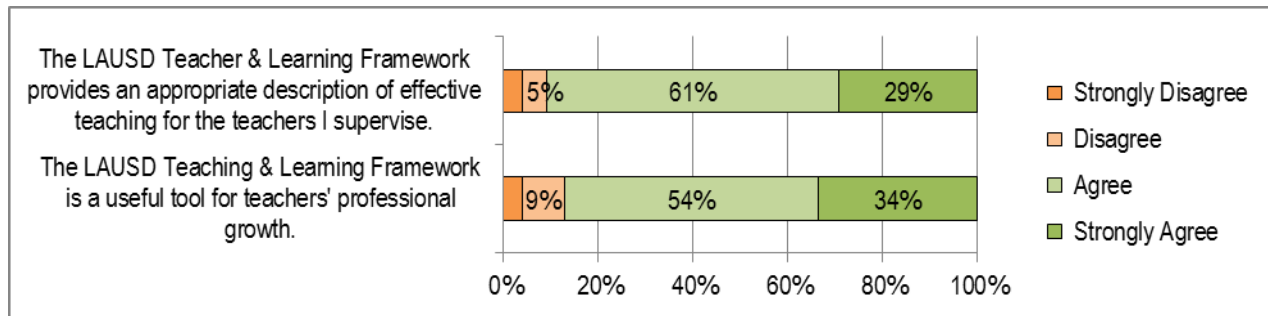


EXHIBIT 4: Observer opinions on the Teaching & Learning Framework



RECOMMENDATION

- Further demonstrate the ways in which the Teaching and Learning Framework is applicable to all grades and subject matter

Self-Assessment

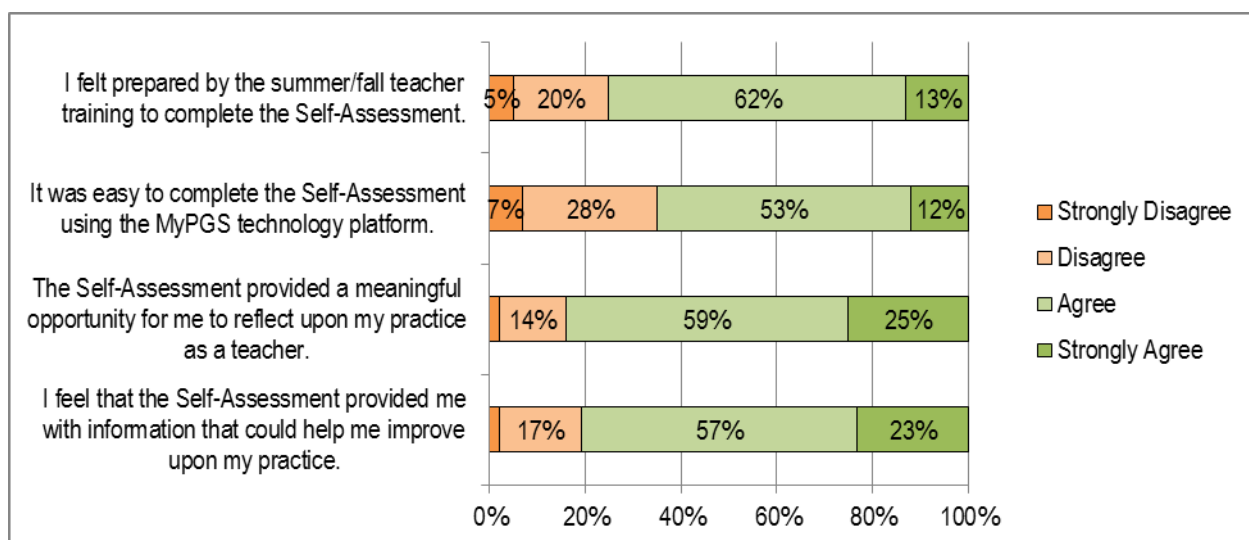
As the first step of the EGDC, teachers use the Self-Assessment to reflect on their practice and rate themselves on each focus element of the Teaching & Learning Framework using the web-based technology platform, My Professional Growth System (MyPGS). The purpose of the Self-Assessment is:

- To identify and reflect on strengths and opportunities for improving teacher practice;
- To inform appropriate objectives and activities for the teacher's Initial Planning Sheet; and
- To highlight a consistent cycle of reflection as an effective professional practice.

Over 75% of teacher respondents felt that the Self-Assessment can be a useful tool to help teachers reflect and improve upon their practice (Exhibit 5). However, a smaller proportion of teachers (65%) felt that it was easy to complete the Self-Assessment using the technology platform. Whether through additional training or through MyPGS platform enhancements, this appears to be an area for improvement.

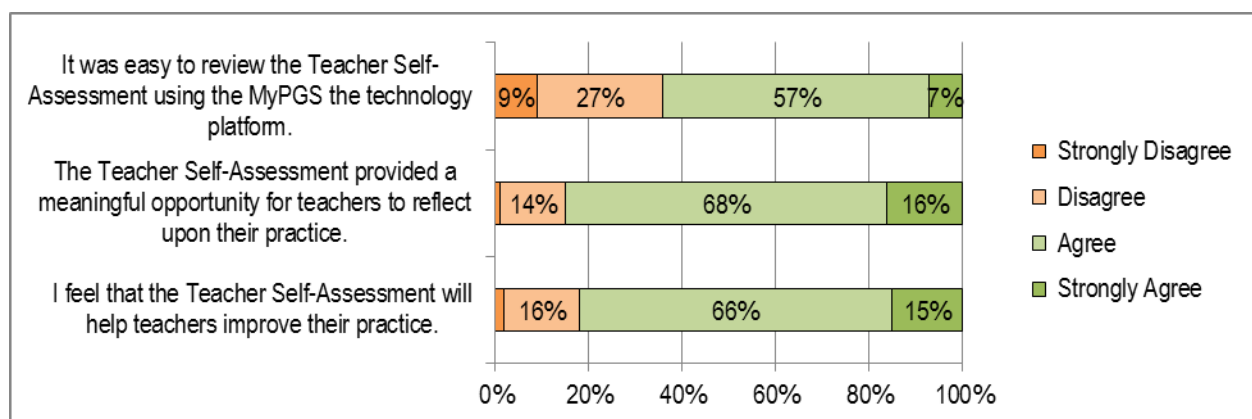
In regards to completing the Self-Assessment, 58% of teachers reported taking two hours or less, 28% of teachers spent three to five hours on this activity, with the remaining needing five hours or more. Among those teachers that spent two hours or less on the Self-Assessment, 59% felt that it took an appropriate amount of time, while 41% felt that it took too long. Among those that spent three or more hours on this activity, 75% felt that it took too long to complete. As with the introduction of any new protocol, one could expect that the Self-Assessment should take less time to complete with greater experience and familiarity. However, based on user feedback, the District could strive to ensure that the Self-Assessment is streamlined enough that it does not require the majority of teachers to spend longer than three hours completing this activity.

EXHIBIT 5: Teacher opinions on the Self-Assessment



Observers generally agreed that the Self-Assessment can help improve teacher practice (over 80%, Exhibit 6). However, some observers did feel that reviewing the self-assessment in the technology platform could be made easier (36%). Respondents did not elaborate on this challenge in the open-ended portion of the feedback survey.

EXHIBIT 6: Observer opinions on the Self-Assessment



In open-ended comments, teachers requested additional examples be provided, and wanted either improved technology or a shortened Self-Assessment format to shorten the time needed to complete this step. As one teacher suggested, "Have examples if teachers want to know what a certain level of a standard 'looks like.'" Another recurring recommendation from teachers was to change the technology platform to allow teachers to return to the Self-Assessment after marking it as "complete" in order to make edits. "It would be helpful to be able to revise your Self-Assessment after completion as you reflect more on your answers...I felt that my reflections weren't as accurate as they could of been after I had more time to process the rubrics in a more meaningful way," shared a teacher.

Both teachers and observers noted that the Self-Assessment will only be a useful tool for reflection and improving practice if teachers are honest about areas for improvement. An observer noted, "We have done the Teacher Self-Assessment with the whole staff as a learning exercise and for the most part, teachers score themselves Effective or Highly Effective even after reading the rubric and there being no evidence of effective practices." A teacher highlighted the need for a trusting relationship between teacher and administrator if Self-Assessments are automatically shared with the administrator (as they were in SY2012-13): "I should not overestimate myself, but I also didn't want to devalue myself in writing in such a way that my Administrators can access online as part of my evaluation process. This scares me a lot."

When prompted, teacher respondents shared ideas on how other teachers can make use of the Self-Assessment to improve their practice. Some teachers felt that the Self-Assessment helped guide areas of their lesson planning that needed greater attention. Many respondents noted that reflection is critical for teaching professionals, and the Self-Assessment provides an opportunity to dedicate time for this purpose. "We all have tendencies. Some are good some are not so good. Reflection helps make the change," commented one teacher. Another common theme was using the Self-Assessment as a tool to highlight areas for growth.

"It is extremely long and thorough! But, I believe the more I divulged in this assessment, the clearer I could see my own practice."

–Teacher

"If a teacher is completely honest in answering the questions, then the teacher can use the assessment as a guide for self-improvement. Teaching needs to be a continual cycle of learning and improving how to instruct children to maximize the classroom learning."

–Teacher

*"The Self-Assessment really made me consider **WHAT** I actually do in planning and teaching a lesson. It forced me to look at my practice with a critical eye."*

–Teacher

"Oftentimes, teachers perceive instruction holistically. The Self-Assessment enables teachers to break down the different parts of teaching into easier parts so that teachers can dissect and improve upon [their practice]."

–Teacher

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide examples of exemplary Self-Assessments and additional trainings
- Consider MyPGS platform enhancements or revisions to the Self-Assessment form to make it easier to complete and review
- Allow teachers to return and make edits to their Self-Assessment after completing that step in the technology platform
- Ensure that teachers completing the Self-Assessment can feel safe being honest about their practice (i.e., address privacy concerns about administrator review and how the Self-Assessment will be used)

Lesson Design Template

The EGDC has two formal observation cycles; each includes a formal, scheduled classroom observation based upon a pre-planned lesson, a pre-observation conference to discuss and clarify questions about the lesson design, and a post-observation conference. Teachers build a lesson plan using a guided template within the technology platform; they also have an option of uploading an attachment instead. The purpose of the Lesson Design Template is:

- To guide teachers through the lesson planning process for the Formal Observation Cycle via questions that are aligned to the LAUSD Teaching and Learning Framework;
- To provide an opportunity for the teacher and administrator to identify strengths and areas for improving the instructional plan prior to the observation; and
- To provide evidence of Standard 1: Planning and Preparation.

Eighty-eight percent of teachers opted to submit their lesson plan to their observer using the Lesson Design Template on the technology platform. The majority of teacher respondents felt that using the Lesson Design Template served its purpose; to plan a lesson within the context of the Teaching and Learning Framework, and to improve the instructional plan prior to the formal classroom observation (Exhibit 7). In open-ended comments, teachers cited a preference for using the proffered Lesson Design Template because it was convenient, provided a comprehensive approach to plan their lesson around the Teaching & Learning Framework, would make evidence collection easier for their observer, and because they wanted to gain familiarity with the full EGDC process. Among the few teacher respondents that chose not to use the Lesson Design Template (and uploaded their own version to the platform), teachers cited difficulty with technology or preference for another lesson design format with which they were already more familiar. Exhibit 7 above also highlights the need to provide additional training or support to teachers on how to fill out the Lesson Design Template online, and continue to make improvements to the online Template.

On average, the Lesson Design Template was more time-consuming for teachers than completing the Self-Assessment. Thirty-two percent spent two hours or less on the Lesson Design Template and 47% took three to five hours, with the remaining 21% spending five hours or more. Among those teachers who spent two hours or less completing the Self-Assessment, 48% felt that it took too long, compared to the 70% who felt that it took too long to complete when spending three to five hours on this activity.

Teacher respondents requested additional examples of strong lesson designs, with specific exemplars for different grades and content areas. Others felt that more in-depth training on this step would have been useful. They shared, "My training did not cover this aspect in any detail besides making me aware of it and where to find it. More time should be spent on how to use the template and what is expected," and "I couldn't remember all of the steps I had to do. Next time do the training, 2 weeks later, do the lesson."

When discussing the technology platform, a few teachers experienced difficulty copying and pasting into the online template and navigating to the right place in the platform to complete this step. Several teachers also suggested the District add an auto-fill capability for the student data section. The most common request from teachers was to shorten or simplify the template, noting that some questions seemed repetitive. "I found that I was repeating myself because some of the questions either overlapped, or asked the same basic thing in a slightly different way," elaborated one teacher.

EXHIBIT 7: Teacher Opinions on the Lesson Design Template

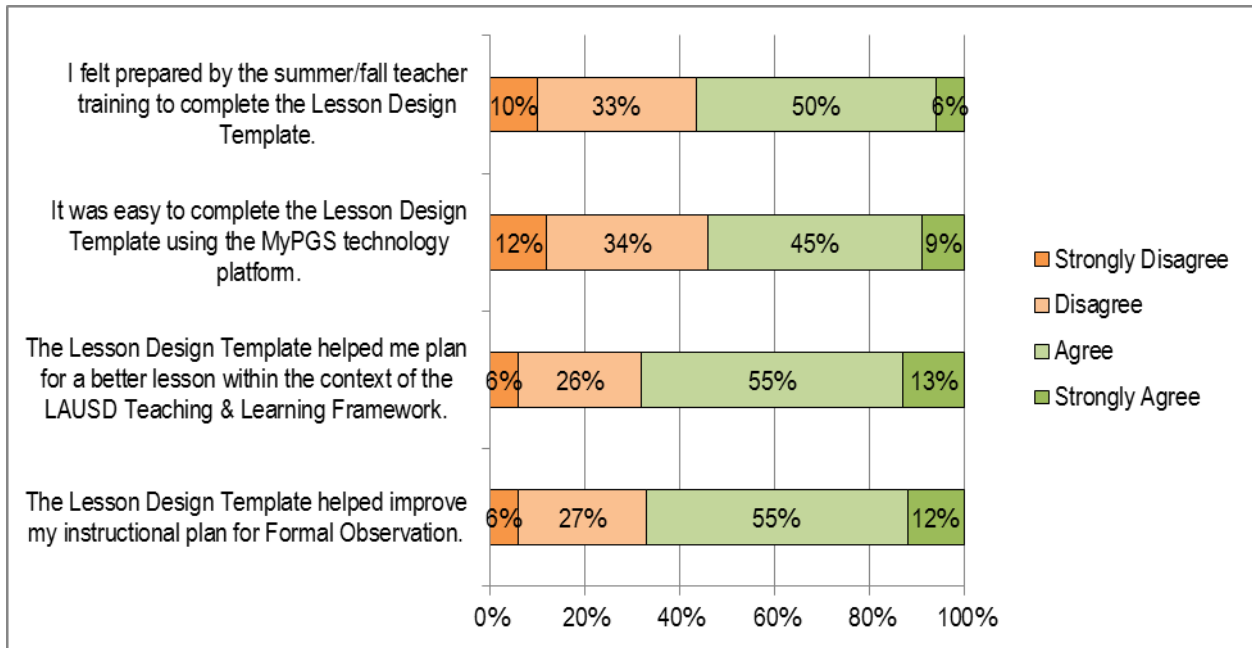
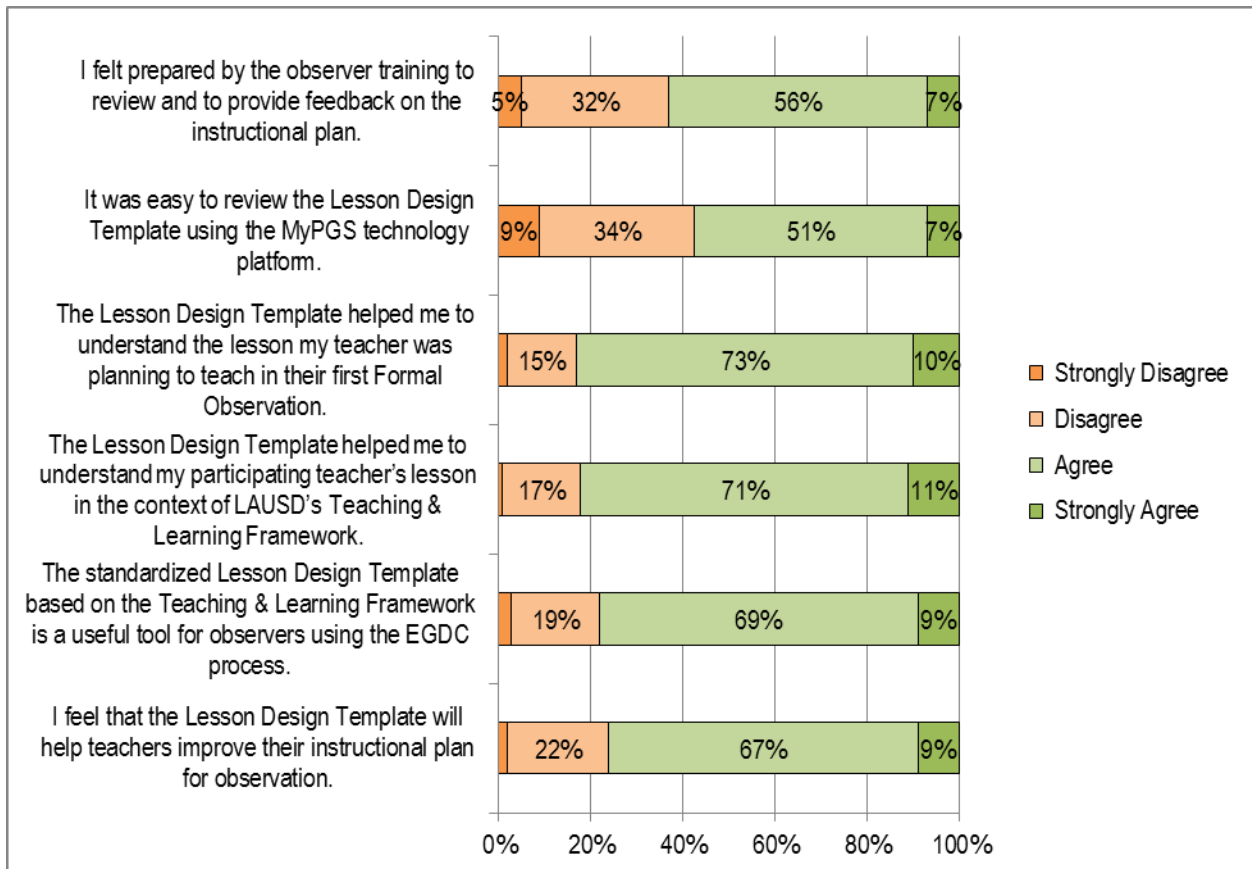


EXHIBIT 8: Observer Opinions on the Lesson Design Template



Observers expressed similar sentiments to their teacher counterparts with regards to the need for better preparation to review and comment on the Lesson Design Template, as well as viewing the completed lesson plans on the technology platform. Observer respondents generally had more positive feedback about how the Lesson Design Template can be a useful tool for both teachers and observers going through the EGDC process (Exhibit 8). Several expressed appreciation for the auto-tag function in the platform that automatically aligns evidence from the teacher’s Lesson Design Template to the appropriate areas of Standard 1: Planning and Preparation.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide examples of exemplary Lesson Design Templates and additional trainings
- Consider MyPGS platform enhancements or revisions to the Lesson Design Template to make it easier to complete and review
- Provide a link in the form to the teacher’s MyData student data
- Eliminate any redundancies in the Lesson Design Template

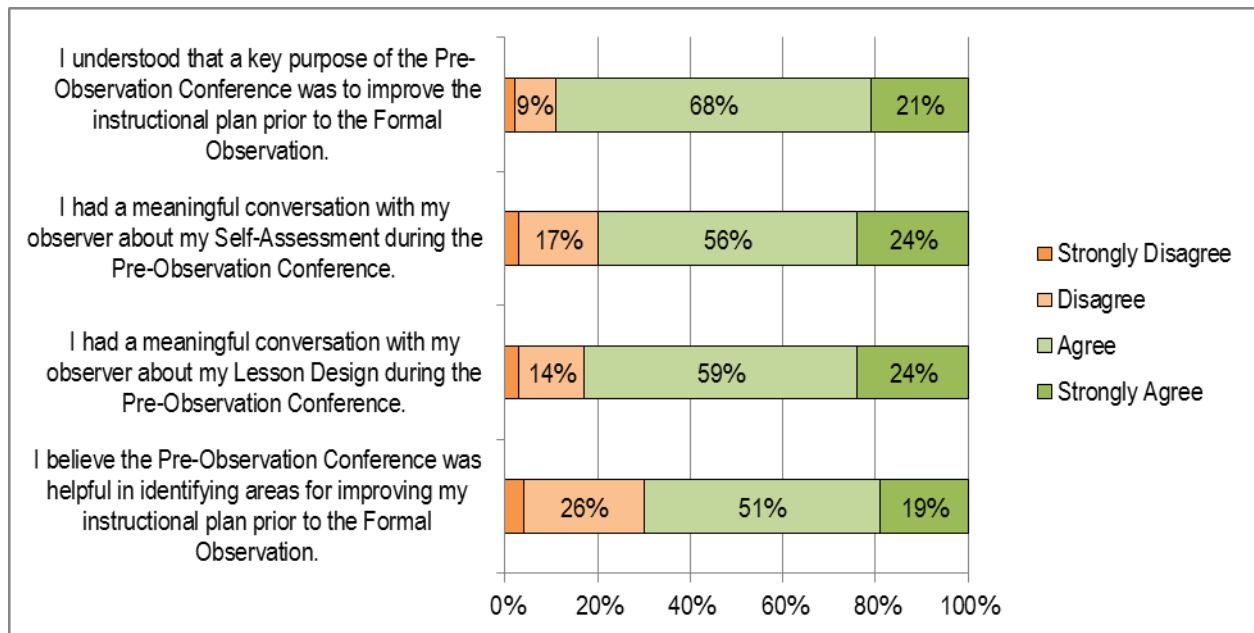
Pre-observation Conference

Before each formal observation of practice, the teacher and observer(s) meet:

- To provide the teacher and administrator with an opportunity to discuss the lesson plan;
- To provide an opportunity for the teacher and administrator to identify strengths and areas for improving the lesson plan prior to the observation; and
- To provide evidence for Standard 1: Planning and Preparation.

Survey respondents reveal that the typical Pre-observation Conference lasted less than one hour, with up to one-third of these meetings taking up to two hours. Most teachers felt that they understood the purpose of the Pre-observation Conference accurately (89%), and that they had opportunities for meaningful discussion with their administrators about the Self-Assessment (80%) and lesson plan (83%, Exhibit 9). Seventy percent of teachers received useful feedback about improving their lesson plan, and 48% actually made changes to the lesson design prior to the formal observation (not shown). Some teachers thought that they should receive reminders about changing the lesson plan after the Pre-observation Conference. “Remind teachers that the Pre-observation Conference is an opportunity to make changes to the lesson based on what the observers want to see or expect to see,” suggested a teacher.

EXHIBIT 9: Teacher opinions on the Pre-observation Conference



Based on the feedback displayed in Exhibit 10, observers also had positive experiences with the Pre-observation Conference. Observers tended to believe that this meeting was more helpful for preparing teachers for observation (88%) than teachers did (70%). Some observers (40%) felt that more training would have been useful in order to lead their teachers through these conferencing opportunities.

Nearly all the observers (96%) who responded to this feedback survey reported reviewing their volunteer teacher’s lesson plan prior to the Pre-observation Conference (not shown). Other common activities to prepare for the Pre-observation Conference included reviewing the teacher’s Self-Assessment (80%) and reviewing the formal observation protocols (67%).

Several observers noted that it could be difficult to schedule dedicated time to meet for conferences and the formal observation. Others found it difficult to remember what they learned in the summer training about facilitating these conferences. “Too much time elapsed between the training and the actual application during the pre-conference. I found myself going back and forth to my notes to refresh my memory,” explained an observer.

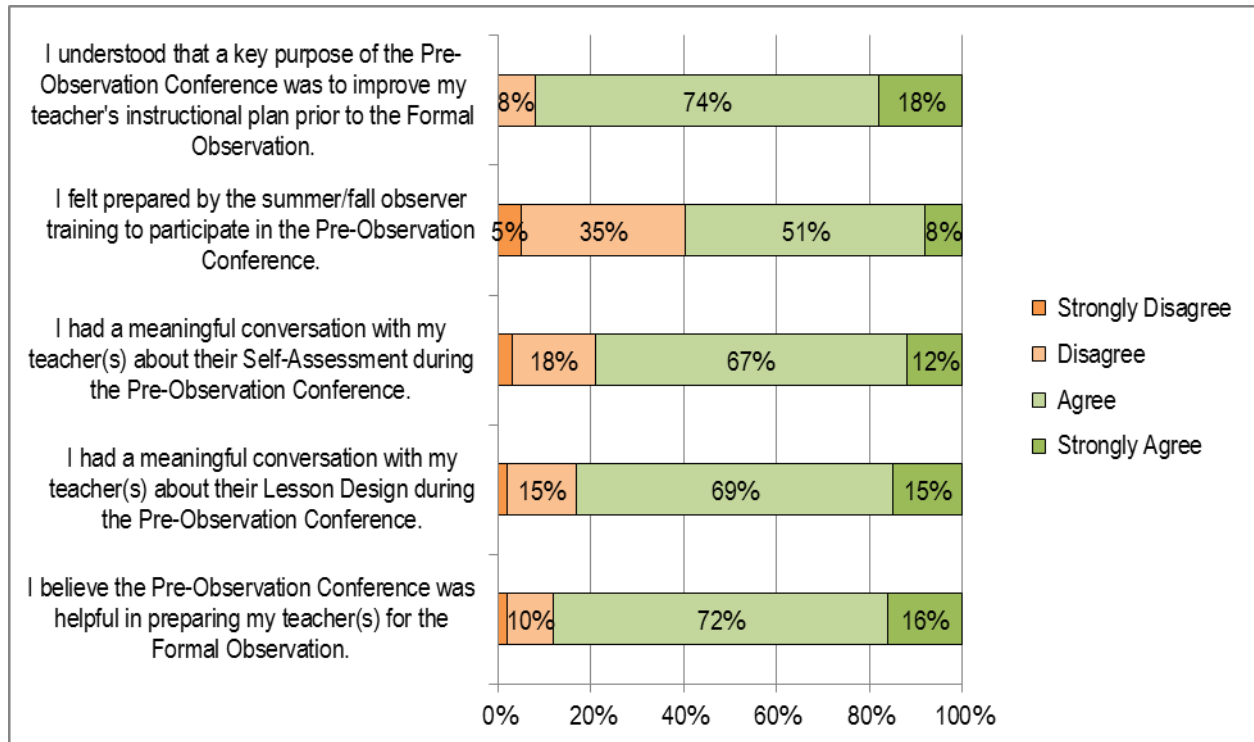
“It was a great way to see the administrator’s point of view on the lesson that is going to be taught. The administrator gave me good suggestions on how to improve in my lesson.”

-Teacher

“The Pre-observation Conference gave me the opportunity to put the teacher at ease and focus on what they were sharing.”

-Observer

EXHIBIT 10: Observer opinions on the Pre-Observation Conference



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Remind teachers that they have an opportunity to revise the Lesson Design after meeting with their observer in the Pre-observation Conference
- Provide additional trainings on conducting the Pre-observation Conference closer to the suggested deadline
- Share advice with observers on how to schedule and manage EGDC activities

Formal Observation of Practice

During a formal Observation of Practice, the observer visits a teacher's classroom and collects evidence for 30-90 minutes or the full duration of aforementioned lesson. This provides an opportunity:

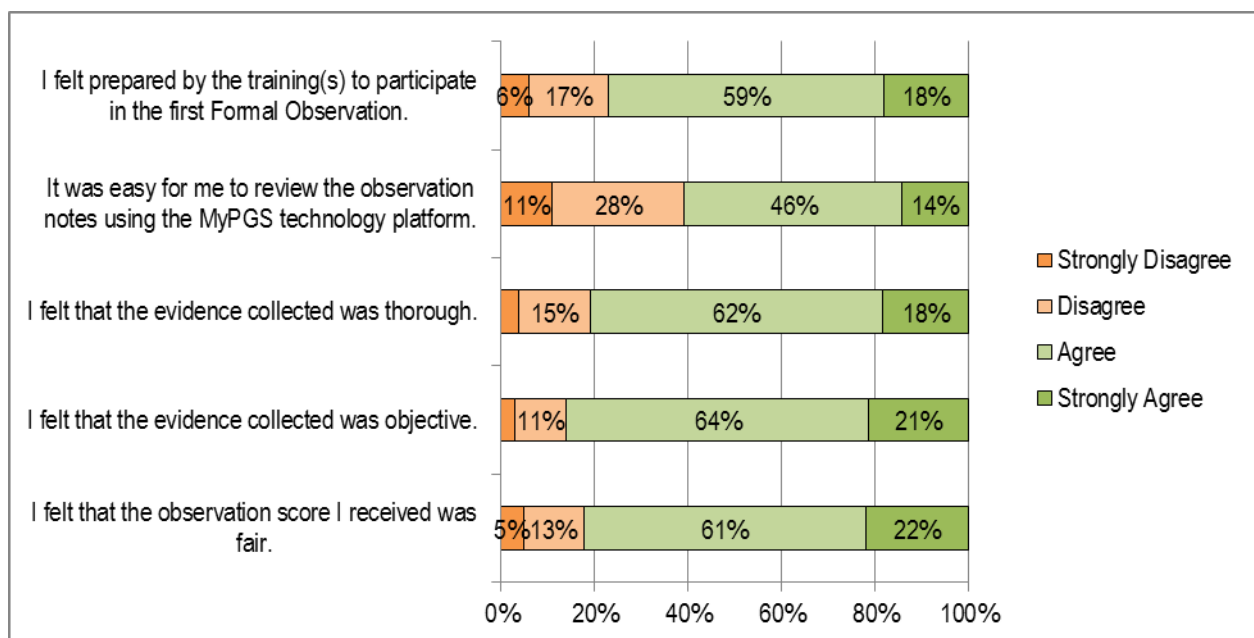
- For the teacher to demonstrate instructional practice in order to receive feedback that will support professional growth and development; and
- To provide the administrator with a source of evidence for assessing Standard 2: The Classroom Environment and Standard 3: Delivery of Instruction.

After the lesson, the observer aligns evidence collected during the lesson observation to elements in the Teaching & Learning Framework and shares this with the teacher. The observer is also responsible for scoring each element of practice on a range of four performance levels: Ineffective, Developing, Effective, or Highly Effective, as described in the Teaching & Learning Framework Rubrics.

During the SY2011-12 Initial Implementation Phase, some participants reported difficulty scheduling time for conferences and the actual observation. During the SY2012-13 implementation of the EGDC, 88% of teachers executed the entire lesson plan during the formal observation. Approximately one-half of observations were longer than one hour. Observers reported that the formal observation was rescheduled 16% of the time; the primary reasons being a reschedule initiated by the participating teacher, a school emergency, or urgent parent or disciplinary needs. Among observer respondents, 87% claimed to have viewed the teacher's entire lesson during the formal observation, and 65% of these observations were longer than one hour.

Teacher respondents generally felt prepared to participate in the formal observation (77%, Exhibit 11). Although some teachers (39%) experienced difficulty viewing observation notes in the platform, teachers widely agreed that the evidence collected by their observers was thorough and objective, and that the observation score received was fair (80% or greater).

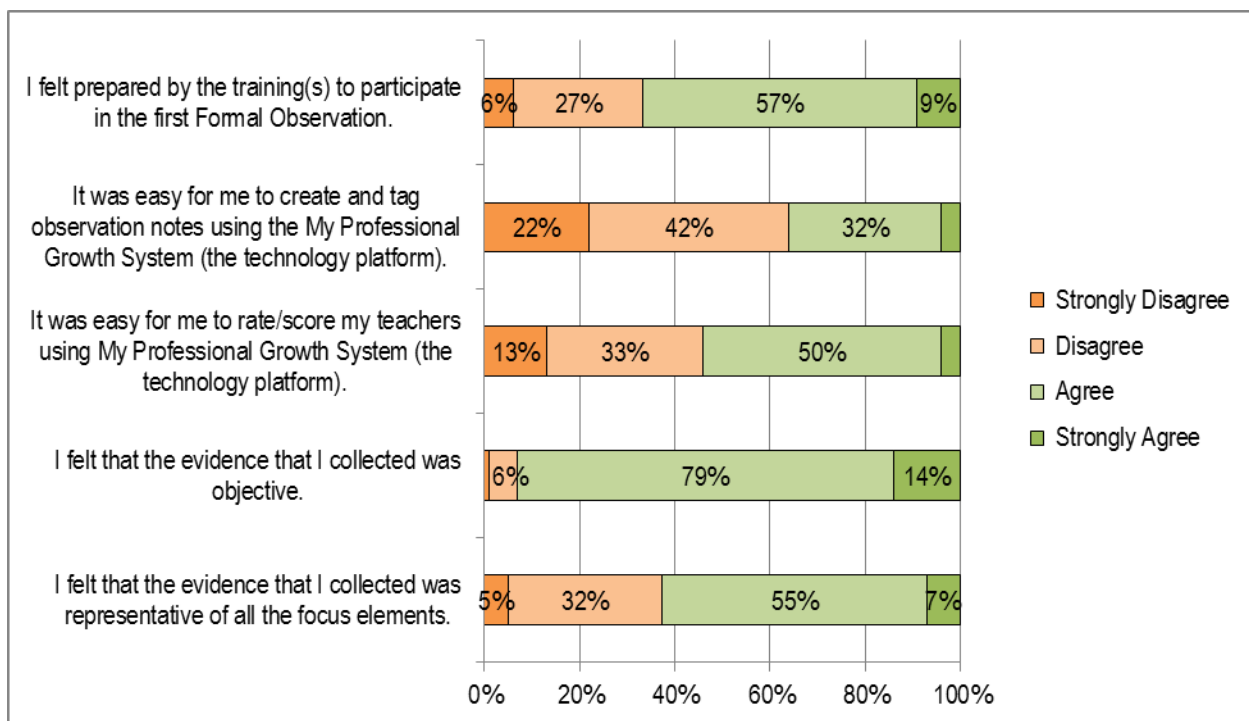
EXHIBIT 11: Teacher opinions on the Formal Observation of Practice



After viewing the formal classroom observation, observers must take the evidence notes captured during the lesson, “tag” excerpts from the notes that align to the various elements of the Teaching and Learning Framework, and score each element of practice based on the Framework rubrics and evidence gathered. This part of the process tends to be the most time-consuming step for observers. Approximately one-third of observer respondents spent two hours or less tagging and aligning evidence in the MyPGS technology platform. Nearly half of observers (47%) spent between three to five hours completing this step. Out of all the observers, 85% felt that tagging evidence took too long, including 70% of the observers that spent *two hours or less* performing this task. There does not appear to be a clear pattern associated with length of time spent tagging evidence and opinion on whether this task took too long. It is possible that school site administrators, already burdened with many other responsibilities, view *any* additional time spent on “new” job responsibilities as taking too much time.

Concerns about time, in addition to adapting to a new technology platform, could be reflected in the observer feedback shown in Exhibit 12. Many observers (64%) experienced some difficulty tagging their observation evidence, and some (46%) also had difficulty scoring teacher practice within the technology platform. Another area the District should examine closely is around what factors might be preventing some observers (37%) from collecting sufficient evidence on all the focus elements, as instructed in the observation protocols.

EXHIBIT 12: Observer opinions on the Formal Observation of Practice



Both teachers and observers shared concerns about capturing evidence and scripting the lesson during the Formal Observation. “It is difficult for administrators to script the entire lesson and remember all the things that happened. It is difficult for them to hear everything. I think things are missed when the entire lesson has to be scripted...However, to the best of her ability given the constraints, [my] administrator gave an objective summary of the lesson,” explained a teacher. An observer added, “It is too difficult to attempt to scribe everything that is being said. It’s difficult to discriminate what should be scribed and what is not important. I’m still not sure how to document what’s not said. It’s difficult to document students’

² 61 elements in the Teaching and Learning Framework, the District prioritized a smaller number of Focus Elements to help educators focus their observations and growth planning. During the SY2012-13 EGDC, there were 21 focus elements.

and [the] teacher's behaviors objectively, while also trying to scribe what is being said."

Several observers felt that the focus on typing the scripted lesson was a barrier to collecting enough evidence to represent all of the focus elements. An observer suggested transcribing software, "There still needs to be a way to transcribe written notes from script to type. It is difficult to score some elements because there is a lack of evidence." Several teachers felt that this issue could be addressed by videotaping their lesson. "I believe videotaping the lesson should become mandatory. I personally feel it is an integral piece to the observation, reflection, and growth process...Additionally, both observer and teacher could refer back to the video if for any reason there were a discrepancy," shared a teacher.

In open-ended comments, observers echoed the opinions displayed in the graphs above with regards to the difficulty of tagging evidence in the platform. "It takes a long time to tag evidence. There has to be a friendlier, faster way to make classroom observations!" noted an observer. While some observers feel that MyPGS platform improvements can make this step easier and faster, other observers acknowledge that they are on a learning curve with this process, and trying the EGDC will take longer the first time. One observer said, "The objectivity of this Framework is wonderful and it does help rate the teacher according to the rubric; however, it is still [difficult] learning the new Framework and being able to tag everything appropriately."

Teachers discussing their observation score noted that EGDC participants need to adapt different expectations around scoring: "I feel that there is this competitive feeling to get 3 and 4 rather than learn and grow in practice." Teachers, many of whom accustomed to receiving "Meets Expectations" ratings in the STULL evaluation, are not used to a four-level rating system. Some expressed displeasure at having areas of practice that need development, and felt that observers were purposefully scoring lower than their lesson deserved. Another teacher said, "A challenge was how the principal and I interpret the rubric. She was much harder than I anticipated and she wouldn't change her mind after much conversation." Several teachers also expressed frustration that the observers they worked with this year had not completed the steps in their role in a timely fashion, such as sharing observation notes and scores. As one teacher explained, "Not having someone to work with that values the process [has been a challenge]. I have had to make it known that I am waiting for the next step in the process several times. I have also found that my contact person has not been helpful in the challenges I have experienced with my administrator. It is not my place to supervise my supervisor."

"With all the emphasis placed on the administrator recording every word I spoke, there was not enough attention paid to non-verbal interaction or student engagement to provide thorough evidence collection."

-Teacher

"The formal observation allowed me to look at the components of the lesson. Because this was new it took me a lot of time to review the rubrics to make sure that I was correctly marking each component."

-Observer

"My observer scripted the entire lesson from beginning to end. I was very impressed with her documentation of all the interactions, questions, responses, and classroom management. She picked up on many things I was unaware of."

-Teacher

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Explore methods to help observers capture evidence, or provide additional training to increase typing speed and explain how to capture visual evidence
- Add user enhancements to the technology platform to improve tagging evidence and scoring elements
- Keep observers accountable to accomplishing their tasks in a timely manner
- Calibrate the accuracy of observer scoring on an ongoing basis, with detail paid to how observers score elements when there is insufficient evidence

Post-observation Conference

Shortly after the formal observation of practice occurs, the observer and teacher meet for a Post-observation Conference:

- To provide the teacher with an opportunity to share student work and to reflect on the success of the lesson;
- To allow the administrator and teacher an opportunity to review the evidence collected during the lesson through the lens of the rubrics of the LAUSD Teaching and Learning Framework;
- To provide the teacher and administrator with an opportunity to discuss teaching practice and next steps for the teacher's professional growth; and
- To allow the administrator to gather additional evidence related to Standard 2: The Classroom Environment, Standard 3: Delivery of Instruction, and Standard 5: Professional Growth in preparation for rating.

The typical Post-observation Conference lasted less than an hour (70% of teachers reporting, 63% of observers). Participating teachers felt that the purpose of the Post-observation Conference was clear (Exhibit 13). However, there appears to be minor confusion about using the conference as an opportunity to discuss student progress (21% misunderstood). In addition, while the Post-observation Conference protocol does not recommend discussing the scoring of teacher practice, both teachers (69%) and observers (77%) reported doing so. Despite this, most teachers (approximately 80%) reported that the Post-observation Conference was a meaningful opportunity to discuss their practice. Observer responses, depicted in Exhibit 14, shared similar positive experiences with this step in the EGDC process.

The value of the Post-observation Conference tended to vary by the teacher's perception of their observer's instructional skills and coaching abilities. "My observer was thorough and made me feel like we were planning together to improve instruction. She didn't act like she was evaluating me. I felt safe to succeed or to fail." Others felt that their observer could have done a better job. As one teacher shared, "[The] Post-observation conference took place in passing and I was given nothing to help improve my practice. Although I value this process, it has not transpired the way I thought it would. I have received virtually no input or support from my administrator."

EXHIBIT 13: Teacher opinions on the Post-Observation Conference

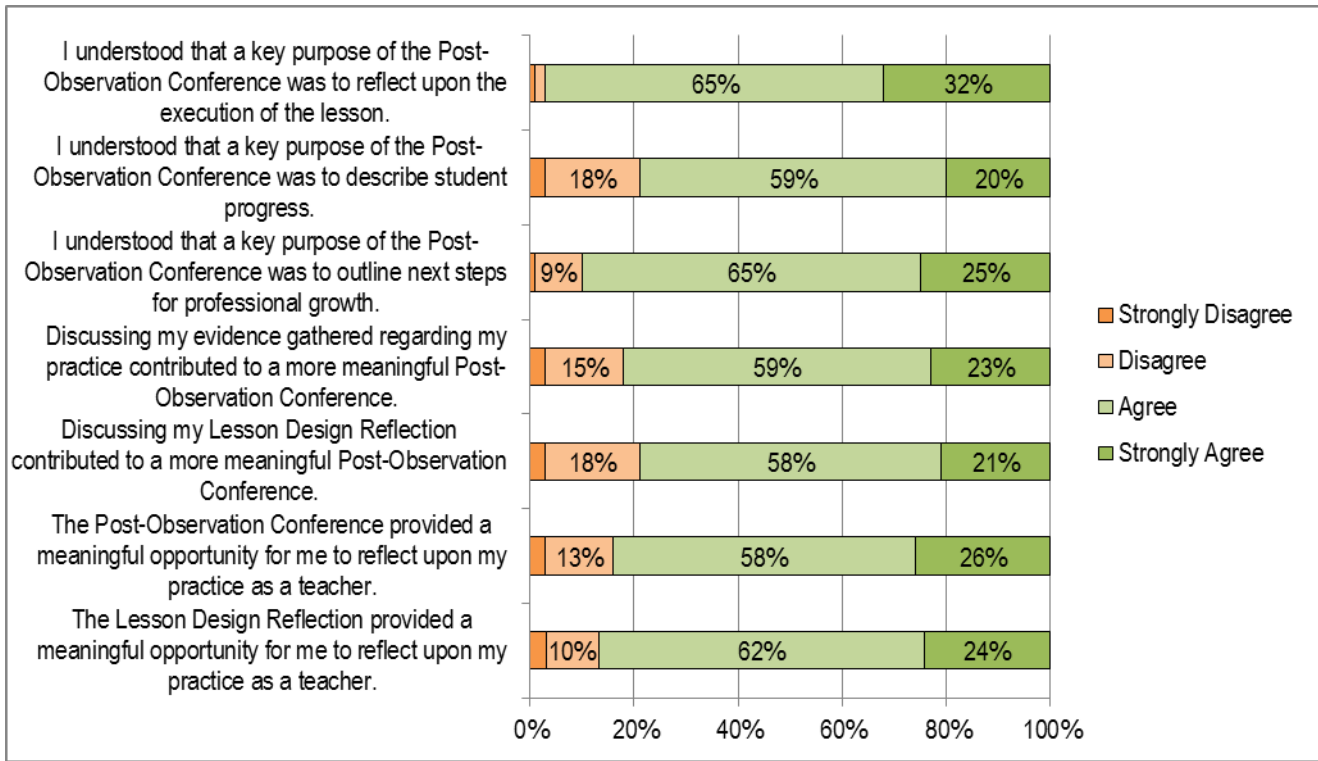
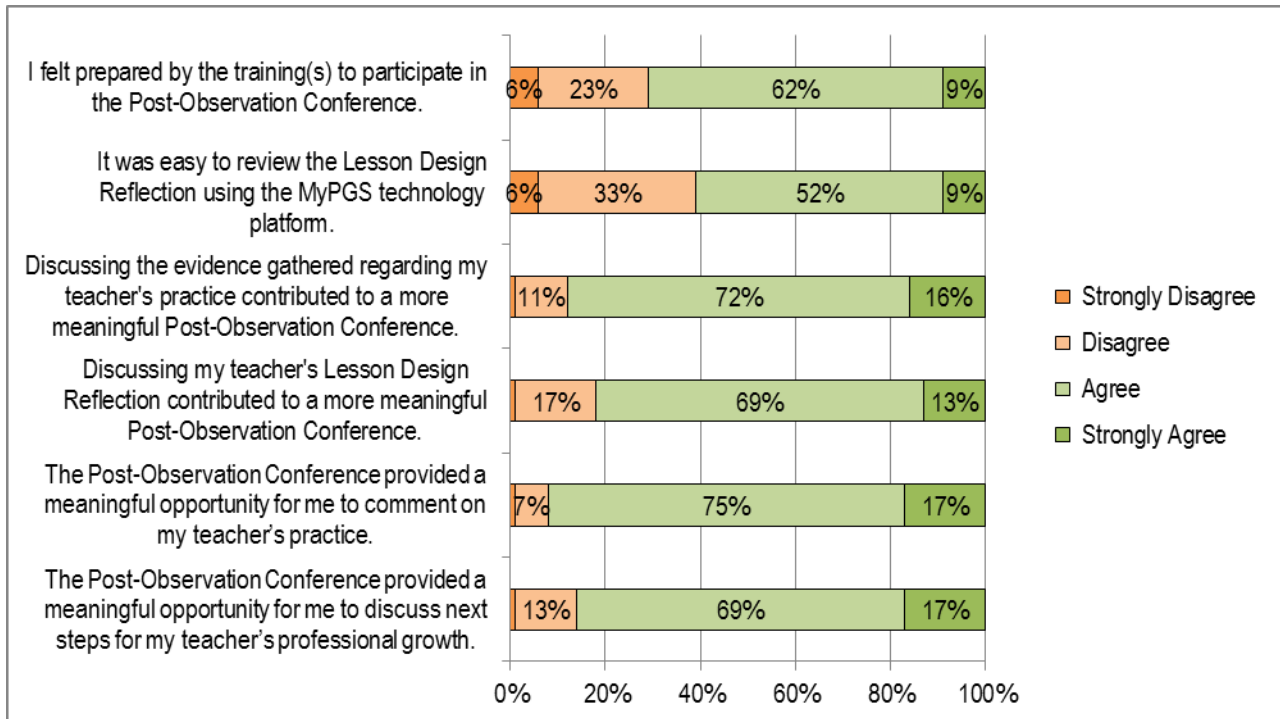


EXHIBIT 14: Observer opinions on the Post-Observation Conference



“When meaningful conversations exist, and assistance and guidance is sought and provided by the parties involved, then great things can happen. It really depends on the people who are part of the process.”

–Teacher

“I was fortunate to work with an administrator who understood the process of teacher evaluation very well due to her background knowledge as a coach coordinator and her participation in the pilot program. She made this a positive experience by asking the right questions and allowing me to reflect upon my practice and find better ways of delivering my lesson. I work closely with many colleagues. Unfortunately, they did not have a similar experience. I think principals, as the leaders of this process, need to be well trained so they can provide the same kind of support [that I had] and make this a positive and effective experience.”

–Teacher

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Focus observer training on conducting coaching conversations based on evidence collected in the formal observation
- Clarify how scoring should be discussed in the Post-observation Conference

General Comments after the First Formal Observation Cycle

Challenges and Recommendations

Common themes that emerged around the overall process focused on participant support and training, improving the technology platform, and identifying solutions to minimize the time burden. Participants experienced frustration while using the MyPGS platform to complete the EGDC process. These issues ranged from technical glitches in the platform, need for enhancements to platform design and function, users' technology skills and comfort, and the internet or hardware capabilities available at school sites or at home. One teacher wanted support with "Filling everything out online. I'd like a better in-service or examples of how to do this." Other teachers added, "There are so many steps on the platform that it is difficult to see what needs to be done next and some of them are unclear," and, "There were many times when I thought I had completed a section and my administrator could not access what I had input. There were also many times when she thought she had completed a section and I could not go any further. We could not figure out what we were doing wrong. Those technical glitches were frustrating and very time consuming." An observer expressed concern with his or her skills, saying, "I am not a fast typist so I can't keep up with the typing the evidence as the lesson moves forward. I would need to know short hand to keep up with collecting valuable evidence from each lesson."

Another major theme participants shared was the time commitment required of teachers and their observers to successfully complete all the steps in the EGDC process. "Each step of the EGDC—the lesson design, conferences, observations, and reflections—can be accomplished in manageable time chunks. But when added together, the amount of time committed is significant—perhaps more so than was intended when the EGDG was designed," commented one teacher. Both teachers and observers were concerned with the additional burdens of time on administrators, when they already have so many competing responsibilities in their job duties. Observers shared, "There is not enough time in the day to do my job; I am doing the work of three people. To be able to do this would be wonderful, but would require an instructional principal and an operational principal at every school, and, "The actual time it takes to follow this process along with day to day duties is the biggest challenge regarding observations of any type. This should be the primary focus of a school site, yet there are so many other responsibilities that it is almost impossible to provide the type of feedback necessary for any one observation cycle."

A handful of observers noted that, in order to implement the EGDC successfully with multiple teachers, administrators need more support at the school site. Some suggested freeing up their operational responsibilities to allow them to focus on instruction. Others suggested bringing in additional observers to reach a larger number of teachers. "Observing and evaluating teacher's teaching practice should be a Principal's primary function. If the Educator Growth and Development Cycle is going to succeed, Principals will need more help with operations on their campus to free up time and energy to focus on the robust and rigorous evaluation process that the EGDC provides," asserted an observer.

An observer suggested, "I believe there should be some school site personnel that completes the total observation cycle as their primary function for the entire school. If you have a staff of 40+ teachers and it is approximated that the cycle takes 5-7 hours to complete (including the observation), that computes to nearly two full working months. It would be great to dedicate a specific person who can provide this type of personalized attention on improving their practice as educators for our youth. This administrator would also be able to provide the disciplinary actions that are also necessary with observations beyond the EGDCs." Another observer had a similar recommendation: "Consider having teams of observers collect evidence and tag it. The administrator can then complete and score." Teachers also acknowledged the challenges of observer time; with one adding, "The principals will need to utilize the EGDC process for only a handful of teachers on staff each year. Perhaps a principal targets a few teachers who are developing and a few who are effective. The teachers who are effective should have their next cycle deferred for as long as the contract allows in order for the principal to have the time necessary to offer meaningful assistance and support to those who are developing."

Other issues around time included time management and scheduling opportunities to conference and conduct observations. One teacher shared, "Overall challenges would need to be time. Matching time

"It is time consuming. However, given the importance of our work, it should take time."

-Teacher

"The Educator Growth and Development Cycle will improve the quality of teaching in classrooms if the challenges of time management and accurate data collection can somehow be overcome."

—Observer

"It has been a good experience—time consuming and nerve wrecking, but a great experience to help me as an educator."

-Teacher

schedules between mine and my observer was a slight issue. Being flexible among both of us allowed us to work this out." An observer requested, "Management tools should be developed so that Administrators can keep track of individual teachers and make sure that everything is completed as planned." Observers had various suggestions to make the EGDC process less time consuming, such as making the MyPGS platform more user-friendly, cutting down the number of steps in the process, reducing the number of observed focus elements, and providing technology solutions to aid in the

evidence collection and scripting process. Some teachers wanted more opportunities for collaboration around the EGDC process with peers, or even peer observations. "Teaming up maybe in pairs of two in our own grade level. So we can share and discuss our growth. I felt lonely other than my administrator helping me." Both teachers and observers wanted clarification on how their counterparts would remain accountable to implementing the EGDC process objectively and with fidelity. A teacher commented, "I truly think this is a great idea for teachers to reflect on their teaching but it needs to have more accountability on the administrator's side. Most teachers had the same complaint, [that] the administrators were not as involved due to other work-related situations." Similarly, observers expressed, "For a teacher who does not want to change, the process is challenging," and, "Consider a teacher who wants to be difficult about participating in the process. Who will do there data entry if they refuse to? Can we write up a teacher for failing to use a computer?"

"It was very helpful to have support staff to guide me through the process and be able to ask questions. I hope there will continue to be support meetings and staff for the beginning stages of implementation."

-Teacher

In open-ended comments, survey respondents emphasized the importance of continued support and resources for the educators learning and implementing the EGDC process. Some teachers wanted ongoing training opportunities, and for the additional trainings to be scheduled closer to specific activity deadlines. "The summer training was good but it mainly took us through the self-assessment and observation cycle. The Growth Plan wasn't really discussed. The orientation really needs to be more complete. I also think that teachers need to understand what is required of the administrators because I truly feel that they have more work to do as a result of this (than we as teachers do)," said a teacher. Another added, "I would suggest EGDC have a mentor teacher onsite who can assist with the process." Observers also wanted additional support opportunities, such as, "More PD spent on the conversation piece of pre- and post-[observation] conferences," "Videos of certain parts of the process for teachers and administrators to view if needed, and for the District to, "Keep providing more workshops to practice and experience this new approach."

Benefits

When asked to share the benefits of participating in the EGDC thus far, survey respondents showed appreciation for opportunities to focus on self-reflection, identify specific areas for growth and goal-setting, increase instructional-focused interactions between the teacher and administrator, conduct objective conversations based on the common language of the LAUSD Teaching and Learning Framework, and apply recommendations for improvement directly into the teachers' classrooms.

Some teachers were glad to have been part of the early stages of EGDC implementation as a way to shape the initiative, get ahead of the curve by learning the process early, and to share their knowledge with peers. Teachers mentioned, "I was paid a little extra and I got to explain it to my colleagues. I feel it had some credence with them because of that," and, "I have learned what will be expected of me as part of the evaluation process." Another teacher said, "I am very proud to be a part of this. I think it is one of the more authentic forms of performance improvement that has ever been designed by the district."

Teachers and observers felt that the Teaching and Learning Framework and its rubrics were useful to set common expectations and language around effective teaching practice. An observer commented, "I really like the Teaching and Learning Framework as our language of instruction and that expectations are universal and clear," while a teacher added, "I know what good teaching should look like as defined in the EGDC standards and rubrics. I know what to aim for, and I have goals for myself as an educator."

Using the language of the Framework, participants were able to have more objective conversations about the evidence gathered through the observation. "I think that the specific use of evidence from the observations, and from artifacts and data have made conversations about my instruction more focused and in-depth. These conversations have been the most valuable, and have helped me to reflect on my instruction and on the impact of my instruction on my students," shared a teacher. Another teacher added, "It allows us to really back up our arguments with evidence and good teaching, not just, 'I have always done this that way.'" Some observer comments followed a similar vein: "It's wonderful to have objective evidence as a third point in a conversation. Having to tag pieces to elements also allows me to think critically about what I am and am not seeing and always leaves teachers areas for growth, which I think is critical for all professionals."

As early as Spring 2013, EGDC participants already reported changes and improvements to their teaching and instructional leadership practice. The self-assessment, accompanied with feedback from observation notes and conferencing opportunities, are designed to focus on the teacher's professional growth and development. Through this process, the teacher and observer can more accurately pinpoint areas and goals for improvement. An observer shared, "The teacher I worked with was able to identify areas for growth from the evidence I collected. The Teaching and Learning Framework rubrics helped him to see what is expected in terms of effective and highly effective practice. Following our post-observation conference, he made changes to his lesson plan for the next period and reported improved student outcomes to me that same day." A teacher commented, "This experience has helped me identify weaknesses to work on as well as [having] validated my strengths. I enjoyed having an administrator come in because they could see the hard work that I put into my lessons and we could discuss how I could make them even better."

Teacher respondents reported making adjustments to their lesson planning and becoming more aware of the needs of all the students in their classroom as a result of EGDC participa-

"I believe that the rubric has allowed administrators to provide teachers with more effective feedback relating to their practice and overall performance based upon actual evidence versus personality and perspective."

-Observer

"The notes that the observers take were the best! I really got to 'see' myself in action. I loved that."

—Teacher

"Our target area was 'Quality and Purpose of Questions,' and the teacher has significantly improved in her ability to ask open-ended questions that require critical thinking and thoughtful response."

—Observer

"It has allowed me to be more trusting of my principal, who is my observer, since we have the time to describe my strengths, weaknesses, and lesson plan. I feel like she respects me and has learned to understand my teaching style. And by her giving me substantial and focused feedback, I am able to witness her instructional expertise."

-Teacher

tion. For example, "I was able to know in details exactly 'who' my students are. I became more conscious of differentiated instruction," and, "It provided me with the opportunity to be more specific in my lesson objectives when designing the lesson. I was able to focus on the needs of my students - students at ELD 1 need extra support as well as students struggling with grade level material." Greater awareness of expectations for effective teaching has prompted some teachers to change their lesson delivery, as well. Teachers shared, "My overall benefit that I have experienced...is taking the time and effort to put more detail into my lessons. It was a breath of fresh air to be the facilitator and have the students learning in groups," and, "My students are more empowered in their learning. They are discussing more and their conversations are more meaningful, because I have learned more about asking questions that require thinking."

Observers also reported improvements in their observer skills and instructional leadership abilities. Respondents shared anecdotes such as, "I have increased my ability to see and understand the elements of effective instruction," and, "I have become better at providing meaningful feedback so that teachers can improve the academic achievement."

A number of teachers appreciated the focused time dedicated towards understanding and improving upon their teaching practice. "The process is intensely reflective. The act of writing the lesson plan and responding to the prompts requires a teacher to think about both the logistics of the lesson as well as the concepts being taught," said a teacher. Another added, "For me, the most valuable part of the cycle by far, was the self-evaluation. I am naturally the type to reflect on my practice, but I have never reflected with the depth that the self-evaluation demanded. I thought it was hugely valuable. I know that the process has focused me in new ways, and caused me to creatively approach my personal areas of weakness."

Teachers (who had positive relationships with their administrators) felt that the experience of increased interaction with their administrator was beneficial. "I have appreciated the opportunity to reflect on my practices. I appreciate the information my principal shared with me regarding the particular lesson I did and how I could improve on it. She even came in and did a demo lesson for me which I really appreciated," commented one teacher. Another felt validated by the time the administrator spent focused on his/her teaching, saying, "The EGDC provides multiple chances for discussion of individual practice and meaningful interaction with administration. In the area of special education...it is rare to be listened to and interacted with over this...It is encouraging, energizing and greatly appreciated."

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Identify resources to help participants improve their technological skills
- Continue technology platform enhancements to make it more user-friendly
- Consider the total time commitment of the EGDC process for participants in relation to their other job responsibilities
- Identify strategies to support time management and minimize the time burden without decreasing the rigor of the performance review system
- Add additional personnel to support school site operations or instructional supervision
- Provide school site support for the teachers participating in the EGDC (e.g., technical questions, completing Self-Assessment and Lesson Design Template)
- Provide opportunities for participating teachers to interact and collaborate with each other
- Establish accountability for administrators and teachers to carry out their roles with fidelity
- Continue offering trainings on each step of the process throughout the school year



CONCLUSION

The Los Angeles Unified School District recognizes the value of learning from Educator Growth and Development Cycle participant experiences in order to improve the program. Feedback from the SY2011-12 Initial Implementation Phase played a key role in shaping the design and support provided during this SY2012-13 “scale-up” phase. As the District moves into full EGDC implementation during the 2013-14 school year, we are already making adjustments to the tools and process based on the district-wide experience of the scale-up phase. For example, we are hiring 25 additional Teaching and Learning Observers to support school site administrators with their observation load, and offering leadership opportunities for teachers to support their peers through the 2013-14 Teacher Growth and Development Cycle process. We have also reduced the number of focus elements to 15, revised the Teacher Self-Assessment and Lesson Design Template, and engaged with the MyPGS web developers to enhance platform usability—particularly around the observation evidence and scoring functions. As we finish collecting year-end feedback from 2013-14, we are confident that participants will offer additional recommendations. This initiative continues to be devoted to testing our new system, consulting with our teachers and principals, receiving advice and feedback from them about the system, and providing related training and professional development.

“I have benefited from this experience in that I have returned to the mental state of developing and delivering effective lesson plans. I had been trained well in college and lost that motivation when I started teaching. I noticed that my administrators did not come into classes and observe much so I felt no accountability. Now I feel like what I am doing really does count again.”

-Teacher

“It is not a one-size-fits-all [approach], which is a weakness of some school-wide professional development, but rather one that is tailored to each teacher's individual needs and interests. My evaluators were very professional and supportive in this process and [it] made my experience much better.”

-Teacher