



Phase 3: Engage School-based Educators *Select, Convene, Train and Prepare Educator Reviewers*

This phase, perhaps more than any other, is heavily informed by local context and district priorities. You can engage teachers with existing technical skills in assessment design or choose to develop literacy in a cohort of teachers that may be more representative of the schools across the district. The extensive materials and resources in the Teacher Engagement Toolkit will help you implement this phase. We've linked to these materials throughout this section.

CONSIDER KEY CRITERIA FOR EDUCATOR REVIEWER SELECTION

What are the knowledge and skills required to serve as an Educator Reviewer?

The assessment review process hinges on choosing the right teachers and other school-based instructional leaders (classroom teachers, special education teachers, reading and math specialists, curriculum coaches, assessment coordinators, etc.), and then training and supporting them in the process so they can inform the district's policy recommendations.

The ideal reviewer is an experienced educator with strong knowledge of content and standards, an interest in assessments, and a fondness for collaboratively digging into complex issues. Where possible, Educator Reviewers should also have a solid background in assessment literacy and a track record of producing measurable academic gains with their students.

Why Engage Educators?

Teachers and principals need to know the purpose of every assessment they give, how to analyze and use the data to inform instruction and how to make choices that increase student learning. They also require time to analyze that information and make choices. Redundant, low-quality and/or legacy assessments undermine the indispensable value that a few well-chosen, purposeful, high-quality assessments can provide for teachers, schools and school systems in ensuring all children learn.

Teachers have a view into the reality of assessments more than any other person in the school system. Teachers know first-hand what it's really like to use an assessment in the classroom, from the student experience to issues with administration to how the assessment supports (or detracts from) valuable instructional time. Teacher involvement generates ownership for the resulting assessment strategy—from teachers, parents and the broader community.

DEVELOP A RECRUITMENT STRATEGY AND SELECTION PROCESS

Now that you have a clear idea of your ideal reviewer and how you will make this process one that educators are eager to participate in, develop a plan for how you will recruit and select Educator Reviewers. **Think about the teachers in your district.** The project manager, in concert with the district Leadership Team, will need to decide how to balance the selection of Educator Reviewers.

This set of decisions needs to be made thoughtfully, and will require consideration of local context above all else. In many districts, there might not be a large number of teachers who are already trained in assessment design. In some cases, it might make more sense to set up a less technically rigorous, more inclusive process, while still making it feel like a good opportunity and/or providing a stipend.

WHAT STRATEGIES DO DISTRICTS USE TO ATTRACT TOP EDUCATORS TO THE EDUCATOR REVIEW TEAM?

Teachers on the review team not only will get to inform district policy, they will increase their own understanding of high-quality assessment practices. Consider key recruitment strategies below:

- Connect to career pathways or formal teacher leader programs within your district
- Develop key points that will inspire and motivate educators to participate
- Hype up the professional development aspect of this process. If your district requires a certain number of independent PD hours per year, provide credit for this time
- Craft a recruitment strategy where the top candidates are proactively recruited to apply/sign-up
- Secure principal support for release time; ensure that release time is a time that an effective teacher would feel comfortable being out of the building
- Allocate stipends, especially if little to no release time is provided
- Outline the commitments expected of team members, as well as the additional resources/support they will receive
- Develop a communication plan to inform teachers, principals and instructional team members across the district of this project and the opportunity

Determining which teachers are best qualified will likely require a simple application process that includes at least one assessment-related performance task, such as ranking the rigor of five questions on the same standard. The Teacher Engagement Toolkit has tools

and resources to help you identify the best teachers for your review process.

PREPARE AND TRAIN THE EDUCATOR REVIEWERS TO EVALUATE ASSESSMENTS

Your district should plan to create a customized professional development plan to build the reviewers’ assessment literacy in general and on this process specifically.

Assessment item analysis can be technical, and many educators (even when chosen through a rigorous application process) will need some additional training (see Teacher Engagement Toolkit) to be successful in this work. Most reviewers will need to develop a strong foundation in assessment literacy by the time the review process begins.

Educator Reviewers often enter the process with different levels of assessment literacy. Our toolkit can help bring team members up to speed.

We provide in depth resources on a range of assessment topics. Consider where your team members may have gaps based on past efforts in this area. If you are unsure where to start, we recommend using the [Reform Support Network’s Assessment Design Toolkit](#), beginning with the following modules: Purposes, Rigor and Alignment. Illinois has also developed some great assessment literacy resources as part of their audit process: [Illinois SBOE assessment literacy](#).

//Implementation Tip: Local context should heavily inform your approach to selecting Educator Reviewers. Some questions you might ask prior to the selection process:

- Will you give priority to teachers who have less assessment experienced, but have strong instructional expertise, or whom you are grooming for leadership? Or teachers who have all of the skills needed?
- Will you choose only the teachers who complete perfect performance tasks?
- Will you choose teachers who need training in assessment purposes over those who might need training in alignment of items?
- Will you choose teachers who demonstrate understanding of assessment design, but have not had strong results with students themselves?
- Do you have existing structures (Curriculum Fellows, master teachers) that would easily transfer to team members?

WHAT ARE WAYS TO DETERMINE THE SIZE AND STRUCTURE OF THE EDUCATOR REVIEWERS TEAM ?

Assuming you are taking on this project for all core subject areas (ELA, Math, Science, Social Studies/History), for all grade levels, there are several possible configurations.

- Teams would be by subject grade and would each have 3-5 members, a teacher, district content person, and school leader (could be instructional coach, AP, dean, principal)
- Teams could break down by:
 - simple grade bands (K-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12)
 - crossing grade bands to check for vertical alignment (K-3; 3-5; 5-8; 8-12)
 - deep dive on one subject, like K-12 Science
 - deep dive on looking at assessments across one grade level (starting with capstone grades or grades where data is weak—e.g. 2nd, 5th, 8th, 10th, 12th)

Together with Achievement Network (ANet), we developed the [Local Assessment Screening Educator Rubrics \(LASER\)](#). These rubrics provide a simple, clear set of criteria for the Educator Reviewers to evaluate assessments *given by more than one teacher covering at least one week’s worth of instruction* by evaluating quality; alignment to standards; and overall instructional usefulness. The rubrics have been through two rounds of educator use and feedback already, and under the guidance of our partners at ANet, will undergo two more educator feedback loops in August and September 2015.

This playbook is accompanied by a Teacher Engagement Toolkit which includes English language arts (ELA) and mathematics rubrics; training materials on assessment literacy and on the LASER rubrics; examples to help calibrate all reviewers; and guidance for making strong qualitative judgments and recommendations.

ANet helps schools boost student learning with great teaching that’s grounded in standards, informed by data, and built on the successful practices of educators around the country

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PHASE 3: LESSONS FROM SYRACUSE

Ensure that teachers conducting reviews have strong assessment literacy skills.

SCSD provided basic training to teachers conducting the reviews; however, input from the team members suggested that additional training and support on how to apply the rubric could have been helpful. This toolkit provides additional assessment literacy training that can help.

Be clear on the roles and responsibilities of Educator Reviewers.

SCSD staff provided a basic level of background of the project, the assessment review process and the roles of the teachers on the team. Many of the teachers had previously served on similar advisory committees. For some teachers, however, being empowered to recommend district-level policy changes was a new role and Syracuse district staff needed to reinforce the key role that the teachers were playing in reviewing each assessment and making a recommendation to the district

Give Educator Reviewers time to practice and work together.

Syracuse staff provided examples of assessment items and reviewed them together with the teachers. They also allowed the teams to practice together. More practice could have been useful, both to familiarize the teachers with the tools and with each other. The assessment literacy training materials highlighted in this toolkit will help to provide more opportunities for teachers and teams to practice this work before beginning their reviews.

Be thoughtful about team structure.

Here’s how the Educator Reviewer teams looked in Syracuse:

- 5 teams, organized by content areas: ELA, Math, Science, Social Studies, ESL
- Each team consisted of 3–8 educators with representatives from elementary, middle and high schools, as well as educators with special education experience