

Delaware Performance Appraisal System Second Edition (DPAS-II) Evaluation Report

Technical Appendix

Prepared for the Delaware Department of Education
by Research for Action • July 2016



RESEARCH
for ACTION

Evaluation Overview

Since 2007, the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) has engaged external evaluators to conduct annual studies of the design, implementation, and outcomes of the Delaware Performance Appraisal System (DPAS-II). Research for Action (RFA), along with one partner organization,¹ served as the external evaluator for the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years.

Evaluation Goals

RFA's 2014-2015 comprehensive report outlined key findings on how administrators and educators perceive DPAS-II and identified the issues that drove these perceptions. The 2015-16 evaluation focuses on promising practices and challenges related to the three most important issues that emerged in the 2014-2015 evaluation:

- I. **Communication** about the purpose of DPAS-II;
- II. Formative **feedback** educators receive from their evaluators; and
- III. The Component V related **goal-setting** process.

Data and Methods

Researchers conducted six site visits to Delaware schools which were identified as best practice schools. Schools were selected based primarily on data from the 2014-2015 DPAS-II survey, including indicators of fidelity of implementation and positive perceptions of the feedback and goal-setting processes. Student achievement measures and geographic diversity were also considered in the selection process.

At each site, researchers interviewed the principal and, in all but one case, an assistant principal. Researchers conducted focus groups with Group 1, Group 2 and Group 3 educators at each school. Principals at best practice schools selected educators to participate based on role and availability. Table 1 shows the definition of each educator group.

¹ Operation Public Education an organization based at the University of Pennsylvania, is dedicated to helping school systems develop new approaches to evaluating, rewarding, supporting, and empowering educators that ensure all students have access to effective teaching. For more information, visit <http://www.cgp.upenn.edu/ope/>.

Table 1. Educator Groups

EDUCATOR GROUPS	DEFINITION
Group 1 Educators	Math/ELA educators in grades 4 through 8
Group 2 Educators	Educators who report grades in subject areas outside of Math/ELA and who have a Measure B assessment available
Group 3 Educators	Educators who do not report student grades and cannot otherwise be categorized into Groups 1 or 2

Schools included four elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. Table 2 details the participant sample for site visit data collection.

Table 2. Site Visit Participants

	SCHOOL 1	SCHOOL 2	SCHOOL 3	SCHOOL 4	SCHOOL 5	SCHOOL 6	TOTAL PARTICIPANTS
Group 1 Participants	3	4	5	3	4	4	23
Group 2 Participants	6	11	4	4	4	4	33
Group 3 Participants	4	7	4	5	3	4	27
Administrators	2	1	2	2	2	3	12
Total Participants	15	23	15	14	13	15	95

Researchers conducted qualitative analyses of the interview and focus group data collected on each site visit using the protocols detailed in Appendix A and Appendix B below. The analysis framework for the site visits was highly aligned to our three foci: 1) communication about the purpose of DPAS-II; 2) formative feedback educators receive from their evaluators; and 3) the Component V related goal-setting process. Specifically, we created a set of qualitative codes that applied to site visit interviews and focus groups. We used a qualitative analysis software package, Atlas.Ti7, to analyze emerging trends in site visit data. All qualitative analyses held confidential the names of respondents and schools; no identifiers are provided in this report.

Recommendations were informed by suggestions from our study participants, promising practices we learned from our focus groups and interviews at best practice schools, ongoing challenges that educators and school administrators shared and reviews of related literature.

Our memos provide findings and recommendations for three particular aspects of DPAS-II. For more information about the DPAS-II educator evaluation system, including components, measures, and previous evaluation reports, go to <http://www.doe.k12.de.us/domain/375>.

Appendix A: Teacher Focus Group Protocol

Researcher Introduction and Instructions

Hello. My name is ___ and I work with an organization called Research for Action [or Operation Public Education]. We have been contracted by the Delaware Department of Education to evaluate the DPAS-II system for the 2015-16 school year. During our conversation today, we will ask you questions about the DPAS-II system, including the feedback you receive as part of your evaluations and how DPAS-II might influence your work as an educator.

Participation in the study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate in the study, stop participating in the study at any point, and decide not to answer any questions without consequence to you. I would also like to audio record the focus group if that's okay with all of you. The recordings just help me to ensure that I can take good notes about what everyone is saying.

*The conversation will take about 1 hour. Distribute the **Consent Forms** and have the teachers/specialists sign them. Anyone deciding not to participate is allowed to leave.*

Use the space below to list participants' names so that it's easier to remember during the conversation.

Background

1. What is your position (grade, subject areas)? How long have you been in this position?

Instructional improvement.

1. **(For Context) To get started, please share with me three things that are important to understand about your school this year.**
2. Goals of DPAS-II:
 - a. What do you see as the main goal of DPAS-II?
 - Probe: Compliance with state statute, regulations; Using DPAS-II as a formative feedback tool for teachers; Using DPAS-II as an accountability tool
 - b. Why do you perceive that to be the main goal of DPAS-II?
3. What have your trainings on DPAS-II focused on in the last year?
 - a. How have they helped you understand how to use DPAS-II?
 - b. How have they influenced your perception of the goals of DPAS-II?
 - c. Who has run trainings?

4. **What are your administrator’s main messages about the goals of DPAS-II during trainings? Over the school year?**
 - **Probe:**
 - i. **Why DPAS-II is important**
 - ii. **DPAS-II utility for teachers and/or administrators**
 - iii. **Underlying purposes/goals of the evaluation system**
 - iv. **Elements of the evaluation system: Evaluation measures (e.g., Components I-V); Evaluation processes (e.g., observation, conversation); Mechanics of the summative rating process**

5. **In what format does your administrator communicate with you about the purpose of DPAS-II (meetings, email)?**

6. **How can your administrator improve communication about DPAS-II?**

7. **How useful has the DPAS-II evaluation process been in supporting your work as an educator?**
 - **Probe about utility of various steps in process: goal-setting conferences, walkthroughs, pre-conferences, observations, post-conferences, summative rating conference.**

8. **Questions about DPAS-II as formative tool**
 - a. **To what degree does DPAS-II serve you as a formative tool for improving instruction?**

 - b. **How could DPAS-II be made more useful in improving your instruction?**

9. **What are some best practices that you have seen in your school or district around messaging DPAS-II as a formative feedback tool that you can share?**

10. **How can the following stakeholders improve messaging that the purpose of DPAS-II is a formative tool for improving instruction?**
 - a. **Your evaluator**
 - b. **Your district**
 - c. **DDOE**

High quality feedback.

We are going to ask you a few questions about the feedback you received as part of the evaluation process.

1. **What does “high quality feedback” look like to you?**
2. **Probe: Written vs. oral feedback, Level of detail, Frequency of feedback**

3. **What are some examples of high quality feedback you have received as part of your DPAS-II evaluation?**
 - a. **Was this written or oral feedback?**
 - b. **How detailed was that feedback?**
 - c. **How frequently did you receive this type of feedback over the course of the year?**

4. **What are some examples of low-quality feedback you received as part of your evaluation?**
 - a. **Was this written or oral feedback?**
 - b. **How detailed was that feedback?**
 - c. **How frequently did you receive this type of feedback over the course of the year?**

5. **What could be improved about the feedback you receive as part of DPAS-II?**

6. **Have you observed change in feedback over time (over the course of the year, multiple years, etc)?**

7. **How, if at all, have you changed your practices as an educator as a result of DPAS-II?**

8. **If you have not shared them all already, what are some additional best practices around administrators generating and delivering high-quality feedback that you would like us to know?**

Goal setting.

1. **Tell us about your goals and targets you set this year for the Student Improvement component of DPAS-II (component V).**

2. **How do you come up with DPAS-II goals and targets?**
(Goals for Measure A, B and C. Examples: class average, individualized).
 - a. **what influenced you to take that approach?**
 - b. **What role did your evaluator play?**

2. **How do you select which assessments (Measure As, Bs, and Cs) you use?**
Probe: Do you have choices, access to several options? How much does this change year to year?

3. **How useful are the DPAS-II goals you set in your day-to-day teaching?**
 - **Probe: are they attainable? Do they help you measure student progress?**

4. **In general, what has gone well in the goal-setting process? How has goal-setting been useful?**
5. **What have been some challenges in the goal-setting process?**
6. Some educators have identified a tension between setting DPAS-II goals with high expectations and the potential for receiving a lower rating as a teacher if students fall short of that goal. Do you see this as an issue for you or other teachers at school? If so, how have you approached this issue?
7. **If you have not shared them all already, what are some additional best practices in goal setting that you would like us to know?**

General.

1. Overall, what do you think has contributed to successful implementation of DPAS-II in your school? What innovative practices have helped your school implement DPAS-II?

Probes:

- a. Leadership
- b. Feedback structures/meetings
- c. Training

2. What have been some of the challenges with DPAS-II implementation and how have those challenges been addressed?

Probes:

- d. Leadership
- e. Supports
- f. Timing

3. Is there anything else you would like to add about DPAS-II that we did not cover? (probe: communication about its purpose, high quality feedback and goal-setting)

Appendix B: School Administrators Interview Protocol

Interview Date:

Interviewee:

School:

Interviewer:

Interview Reflections:

Brief Introduction to RFA external evaluation: Research for Action is conducting an external evaluation of the DPAS-II educator evaluation system in Delaware. We are hoping to learn from your experiences and interactions with the DPAS-II system.

Give the **Consent Form** and have the interviewee sign.

Participation in the study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate in the study, stop participating in the study at any point, and decide not to answer any questions without consequence to you. I would also like to audio record the interview if that's okay with you. The recordings just help me to ensure that I can take good notes about what everyone is saying.

The conversation will take about 30 minutes.

Background Questions

1. What is your position, and what does your job entail? How long have you been at this position?
What were you doing previous to this position?
2. What is your role within the DPAS-II system?
Probes:
 - a. Certified evaluator
 - b. Involvement in official school, district, or statewide efforts to improve DPAS-II
 - c. Affiliations with DASA, Rodel Foundation, other organizations

Instructional improvement

8. **(for Context)To get started, please share with me three things that are important to understand about your school this year.**
9. Goals of DPAS-II:
- a. What do you see as the main goal of DPAS-II?
 - Probe: Compliance with state statute, regulations; Using DPAS-II as a formative feedback tool for teachers; Using DPAS-II as an accountability tool
 - b. Why do you perceive that to be the main goal of DPAS-II?
10. Trainings:
- a. Have you provided your teachers with any trainings on DPAS-II?
 - b. What have your trainings that you have provided focused on?
 - c. What have your trainings that you have received focused on?
- Probe for b&c: Have these focused more on how to complete various parts of DPAS-II or on how to use DPAS-II as a tool for improvement”?
11. **What are your main messages about DPAS-II during trainings? Over the school year?**
- **Probe:**
 - i. **Why DPAS-II is important**
 - ii. **DPAS-II utility for teachers and/or administrators**
 - iii. **Underlying purposes/goals of the evaluation system**
 - iv. **Elements of the evaluation system: Evaluation measures (e.g., Components I-V); Evaluation processes (e.g., observation, conversation); Mechanics of the summative rating process**
12. In what format do you communicate with teachers about the purpose of DPAS-II (meetings, email)?
13. **How can you improve communication about DPAS-II?**
14. **How useful has the DPAS-II evaluation process been in supporting your work as an administrator?**
- a. **Probe about utility of various steps in process: goal-setting conferences, walkthroughs, pre-conferences, observations, post-conferences, summative rating conference.**
15. **To what degree does DPAS-II serve as a formative tool for improving instruction?**

16. What are some best practices that you have seen in your school or district around messaging DPAS-II as a formative feedback tool that you can share?

17. How can your district improve messaging that the purpose of DPAS-II is a formative tool for improving instruction? How can DDOE improve its messaging?

High quality feedback.

We are going to ask you a few questions about the feedback you provided as part of the evaluation process.

9. What does “high quality feedback” look like to you?

- **Probe: Written vs. oral feedback, Level of detail, Frequency of feedback**

10. What are some examples of high quality feedback you have given as part of your DPAS-II evaluation?

- a. Was this written or oral feedback?**
- b. How detailed was that feedback?**
- c. How frequently did you receive this type of feedback over the course of the year?**

11. Does “high quality feedback” look different for Group 1 teachers, Group 2 teachers or Group 3 teachers? If so, please explain.

12. Can you give an example of a piece of feedback you gave as part of DPAS-II that improved a teacher’s practice?

13. What could be improved about the feedback you give as part of DPAS-II?

14. Have you observed change in feedback over time (over the course of the year, multiple years, etc)?

15. How, if at all, have you changed your practices as an administrator as a result of DPAS-II?

16. If you have not shared them all already, what are some additional best practices around administrators generating and delivering high-quality feedback that you would like us to know?

Goal setting.

- 1. Tell us about the goals and targets you help teachers set this year for the Student Improvement component of DPAS-II (component V).**
- 2. How do your teachers come up with DPAS-II goals and targets? (Goals for Measure A, B and C. Examples: class average, individualized).**
 - A. what influenced you to take that approach?**
 - B. What role do you play?**
- 3. How do your teachers select which assessments (Measure As, Bs, and Cs) you use?**
 - **Probe: Do you have choices, access to several options? How much does this change year to year?**
4. Regarding the assessments your teachers have access to - how well suited are they to their goals for DPAS-II Component V? What role do you play in helping to choose the assessments?
- 5. In general, what has gone well in the goal-setting process? How has goal-setting been useful?**
- 6. What have been some challenges in the goal-setting process?**
7. Some educators have identified a tension between setting DPAS-II goals with high expectations and the potential for receiving a lower rating as a teacher if students fall short of that goal. Do you see this as an issue for you or teachers at school? If so, how have you approached this issue?
- 8. If you have not shared them all already, what are some additional best practices in goal setting that you would like us to know?**

General

1. Overall, what do you think has contributed to successful implementation of DPAS-II in your school? What innovative practices have helped your school implement DPAS-II?

Probes:

- a. Leadership
- b. Feedback structures/meetings
- c. Training

2. What have been some of the challenges with DPAS-II implementation and how have those challenges been addressed?

Probes:

d. Leadership

e. Supports

f. Timing

3. Is there anything else you would like to add that we did not cover?