An Interactive Planning Guide for Distributed Leadership

Introduction and connection to the MA Educator Evaluation Framework

The goal of the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Framework is to support student learning by providing educators with enhanced opportunities for professional growth and feedback for improvement. Distributing leadership is a key strategy to ensure the provision of high quality feedback. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE), a set of eight partner districts, and the Education Delivery Institute developed this interactive guide to support districts in designing systems of distributed leadership.
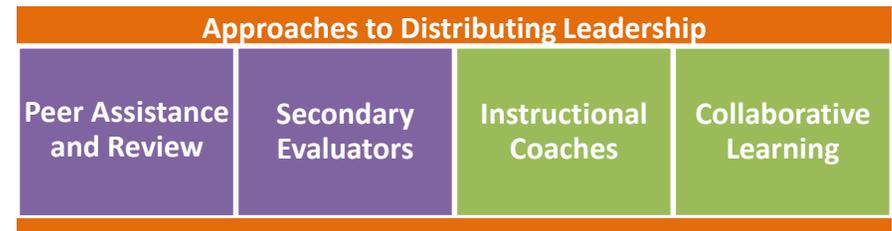
What is distributed leadership and how can it help my district?

In a distributed leadership model, responsibilities for providing feedback and support to teachers are shared by the principal and other school and/or district staff. This feedback may be given by a wide variety of educators—from peers to coaches to administrators—and be used formatively for self-reflection, collaborative planning, and/or formally used in evaluation. Implementing a distributed leadership approach creates an opportunity for districts to ensure all educators are receiving high quality feedback to improve their practice. Additionally, distributing leadership:

1. Builds a culture of trust, collegiality, and shared responsibility for all students;
2. Provides leadership opportunities for effective educators; and
3. Reduces evaluator workload.

Approaches to distributed leadership

There are four broad approaches to distributing leadership, described in the chart to the right. These approaches range from formal, evaluative approaches to less formal, collaborative approaches. Deciding which kind of approach your district is most ready for is important when considering how to set yourself up for success.

Approaches to Distributing Leadership			
Peer Assistance and Review	Secondary Evaluators	Instructional Coaches	Collaborative Learning

How should I use this tool?

This tool is an interactive guide for districts interested in using **distributed leadership** approaches to help improve the quality of feedback and instruction in their schools. Teams comprised of district- and school-level administrators, union leaders, and classroom teachers are encouraged to use this tool to determine readiness for distributed leadership and develop strategies for implementation.

Cultural Readiness	**Approaches**	**Implementation Readiness**	**Implementation Planning**
Step 1: Reflect on your culture to identify the best approach for your district	*Step 2: Learn about different kinds of distributed leadership*	*Step 3: Assess your district's readiness for implementation*	*Step 4: Start planning to implement*

Work through the four steps in this tool. Use the questionnaire in Step 1 to decide which approach you should focus on in Step 2. The whole process should take around an hour to complete on your own. You can also use different parts of the tool to inform more in-depth planning conversations with your colleagues.

Learn more about how this tool was produced and additional resources about distributed leadership.

Step 1. Cultural Readiness: Reflect on your culture to identify the best approach for your district

The districts engaged in this work continually brought up the importance of culture. To be able to establish a system of distributed leadership, districts found that the school culture needed to be one that was open and inviting to collaborative learning and shared practice. Begin by reflecting on your district's culture. Use the drop-down menus in the questionnaire below to rate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).

Statement	Rating
There are informal opportunities for teacher leadership through Professional Learning Communities, collaborative working environments, co-teaching, etc.	
We have a culture where many, low-risk opportunities exist to share instructional practice.	
There is a high level of trust between administrators and teachers which results in open dialogue about how to make improvements.	
Teachers/staff are seen and viewed as experts in their field. They are called upon to provide expertise to others.	
Teams within the district engage in regularly scheduled reflections about practice and student learning.	
Teacher input is incorporated on key decisions reflecting the school's priorities.	
Teachers are provided opportunities, time, professional development, and compensation to serve as leaders.	
Administrators are open to allowing highly effective teachers to provide observation feedback to other teachers.	
Teachers are open to receiving observation feedback from highly effective peers	
We have a shared vision of strong instructional practice.	
Total rating	

If your total was <u>25 or higher</u>, you may be ready to explore an **EVALUATIVE approach to distributed leadership**.

> **Click here to learn about evaluative approaches!**

If your total was <u>lower than 25</u>, you may want to focus on expanding opportunities for instructional collaboration and peer feedback through a **NON-EVALUATIVE approach to distributed leadership**.

> **Click here to learn about non-evaluative approaches!**

If you have already chosen an approach to distributing leadership you can go straight to **Steps 3 and 4 on effective implementation**.

> **Click here to learn about next steps in implementation!**

Step 2. Approaches: Learn about different kinds of distributed leadership

Evaluative approaches to distributed leadership

An evaluative approach entails expanding the pool of educators who are trained and responsible for contributing to the evaluations of other educators.

There are different ways to structure evaluative models. For example, in a Peer Assistance and Review model, consulting teachers serve as coaches and collect evidence that is presented to a panel of educators who oversee an educator's evaluation. You may also have a secondary evaluator (like a department head) who works in collaboration with the principal to conduct observations, collect evidence, provide feedback, and contribute to the educator's evaluation rating.

Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) Model	Secondary Evaluators
What is PAR? • Formal process results in a joint labor-management PAR panel determining educator's final evaluation rating. • Includes a PAR panel and consulting teacher(s). • Educator receives feedback from consulting teacher.	**What are secondary evaluators?** • Formal process results in multiple evaluators determining educator's final evaluation rating. • Involves at least two evaluators, often a principal and another educator with content/grade level expertise. • Educator receives feedback from multiple evaluators.
Goals of PAR: • Through the consulting teachers, educators have increased access to high-quality feedback in addition to feedback from their administrators. • Consulting teacher roles and PAR panel provide leadership opportunities for effective educators. • Reduces evaluator workload by distributing evaluation responsibilities.	**Goals of secondary evaluators:** • By having multiple evaluators, often at least one with a similar content or grade level background, educators have increased access to high-quality feedback. • Secondary evaluator roles provide leadership opportunities for effective educators. • Reduces evaluator workload by distributing evaluation responsibilities.
Resources: • A User's Guide to Peer Assistance and Review, Harvard Graduate School of Education • Boston Public School's Peer Assistance and Review Program • Peer Review: Getting Serious About Teacher Support and Evaluation, SRI International	**Resources:** • "Sharing the Load: Denver Public Schools Differentiated Roles Pilot", The Aspen Institute • System of Professional Growth, San Juan Unified School District ("facilitators" serve as contributing evaluators)

Key Questions for Consideration

There are some key questions to consider when implementing an evaluative approach to distributed leadership.

Issue	Key question(s) to consider	Write your thoughts here
Purpose	What is the primary purpose for expanding the pool of evaluators (provide content expertise, opportunities for teacher leadership, reduce evaluator workload, etc.)?	
Structure	What structure(s) would promote your goals? How could you leverage existing structures to support your goals (department heads, instructional coaches, etc.)?	
Training	How would multiple evaluators be trained and calibrated (including current evaluators, new evaluators added through PAR or secondary evaluator approach)?	
Collective Bargaining	Are there references to multiple evaluators or teachers as evaluators in your contract? If it is prohibitive, what steps would help to adapt this language (i.e., negotiations, an MOU, a pilot, etc.)? If it is permissive, how does this inform your structures and implementation?	

Tips from Districts for Implementing an Evaluative Approach to Distributed Leadership

"Set a high bar for evaluators, whether consulting teachers in PAR, PAR panelists, or secondary evaluators."

"Consider existing district structures and how they will interact with the distributed leadership approach. For example, how can a pre-existing labor-management team develop and implement the work?"

"Language matters. For example, consider using the term 'contributing evaluator' instead of secondary evaluator or emphasizing growth and support rather than evaluation and ratings."

"Union and district must commit to the approach, communicate it to their constituents, and jointly oversee its implementation."

"Your new approach to distributing leadership won't be perfect in year 1 (or 2 or 3). Don't let that be a reason to say no!"

Non-evaluative approaches to distributed leadership

A non-evaluative approach focuses on expanding opportunities for educators to observe one another's practice, building opportunities to recognize effective educators, and establishing a more open-classroom culture.

There are different ways to structure non-evaluative models. A district could expand opportunities for educators to receive non-evaluative feedback from instructional coaches or department heads. Districts could also focus on collaborative learning among peers through lesson studies, informal peer observations, or instructional rounds.

Instructional Coaches	Collaborative Learning
What are instructional coaches? • Coaches are non-evaluative and do not give input into evaluation ratings. • Coaching role may be full-time or may be in addition to traditional teaching responsibilities. • Coaches may work with educators who opt-in to the support OR new and/or struggling educators. They may also work with teams of educators.	**What is collaborative learning?** • Collaborative learning structures give educators a chance to observe and provide feedback to one another that is non-evaluative. • It may include the identification of model teachers or model classrooms or any teacher may able to open up his/her classroom for observations. • The focus is on building a culture of collaboration and feedback among educators in a low-risk environment.
Goals of collaborative learning: • Instructional coaches can often provide more frequent and in-depth feedback and coaching to educators compared to evaluators who may have large evaluation caseloads. • Instructional coaching roles provide leadership opportunities for effective educators. • Reduces evaluator workload by having instructional coaches observe educators and provide feedback more frequently than required as part of evaluation.	**Goals of instructional coaches:** • Collaborative learning structures provide an opportunity for peers to give and receive feedback. • They provide leadership opportunities for all teachers interested in opening their classrooms and/or help structure the program. • Builds a culture of shared responsibility for all students, trust, collegiality, and encourages innovation and risk-taking.
Resources • "It Takes Two", TNTP • Literacy Coaching Clearinghouse, including "Do's and Dont's for Literacy Coaches: Advice from the Field" by Rita Bean and Diane DeFord; "Considering Literacy Coaching Responsibilities in Terms of Teacher Change" by Antony T. Smith	**Resources** • Sample Peer Observation Form • "Demonstrating Teaching in a Lab Classroom", Educational Leadership • Unmistakable Impact: A Partnership Approach for Dramatically Improving Instruction by Jim Knight

Key Questions for Consideration

There are some key questions to consider when implementing a non-evaluative approach to distributed leadership.

Issue	Key question(s) to consider	Write your thoughts here
Shared Vision	• Is there a shared vision for instructional practice? If so, what is it? • Have all stakeholders been involved in crafting this vision? • Has there been clear communications about the vision (what is it, goals/purpose, training and support to achieve the vision)?	
Purpose	• What is the primary purpose of expanding opportunities for peer observations and other collaborations (e.g., provide content expertise, build a shared vision of instructional practice, improve student outcomes)?	
Structure	• How are opportunities for collaboration structured and prioritized (release time, common planning time, videotaping, online platforms, coverage for peer observations, etc.)?	
Coordinating Supports	• How will you align priorities and opportunities for collaborative learning (across PLCs, instructional coaches, induction programs, etc.)? • What kinds of supports and professional development will you provide teachers in additional leadership roles?	

Tips from Districts about Implementing a Non-Evaluative Approach to Distributed Leadership

"Be clear about the <u>purpose</u> of the feedback - not connected to evaluation, focused on ongoing learning and reflection."

"Pay attention to the culture in your building and make sure your approach fits the needs and meets people where they are while moving toward more collaboration. Sometimes you need to take smaller steps to build a solid foundation!"

"Consider starting with a common need across a majority of educators so no one feels singled out. For example, social and emotional learning is a hot topic for new and veteran teachers. Peer observations or coaching could be focused on this or a new district curriculum so it feels more collaborative and less threatening to try new instructional approaches, share ideas, and receive feedback."

"Explain how your approach will connect to other structures within the district (e.g., PLCs, team meetings, coaches, etc.) and how it is distinct from other structures/roles."

"Consider carefully who will oversee the coaches or collaborative learning process. Curriculum leads may be a better option than a principal to keep the focus on instructional practice."

"Set protocols for observations and feedback discussions so everyone knows what to expect and their role."
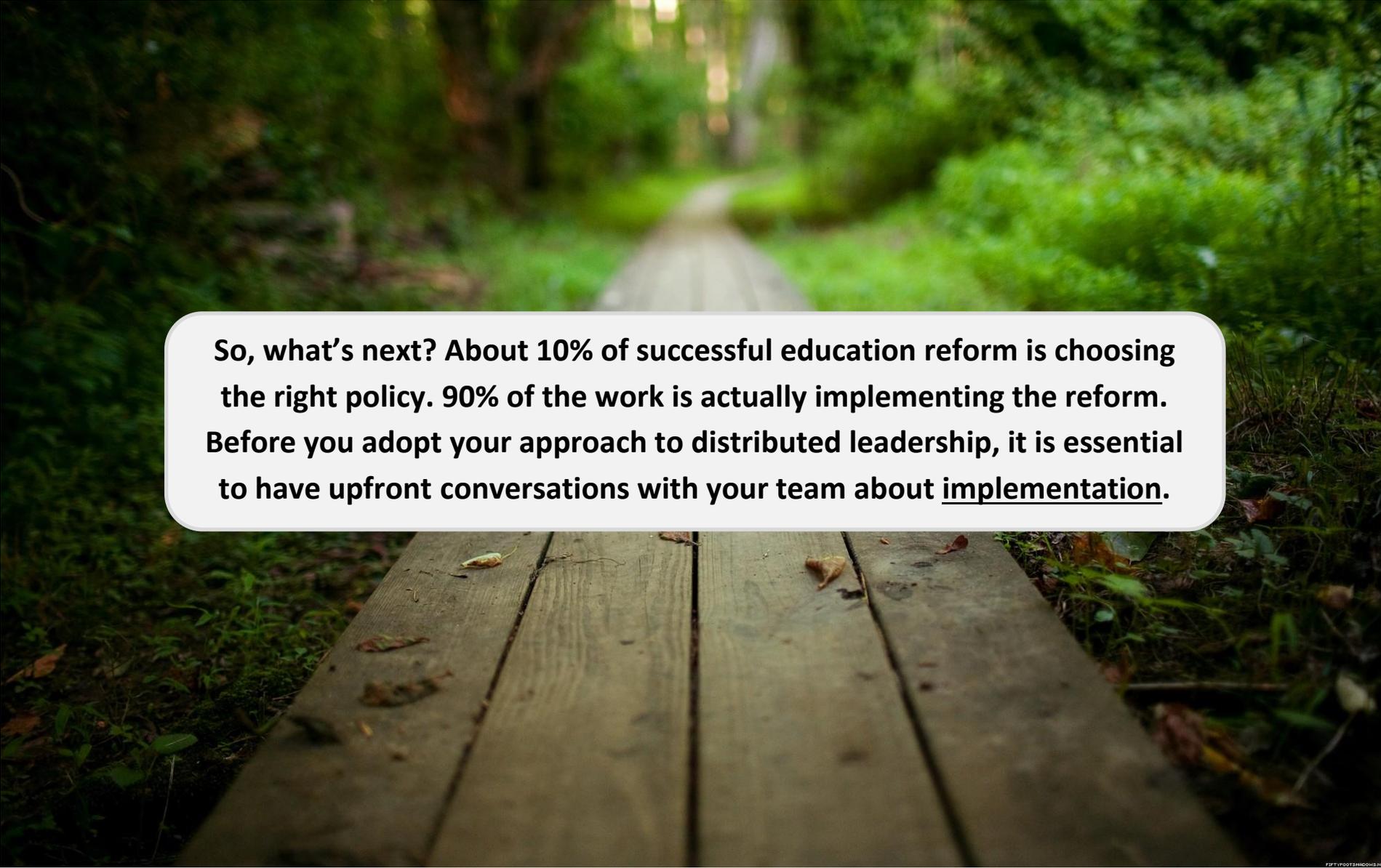
So, what's next? About 10% of successful education reform is choosing the right policy. 90% of the work is actually implementing the reform. Before you adopt your approach to distributed leadership, it is essential to have upfront conversations with your team about <u>implementation</u>.

Step 3. Implementation Readiness: Assess your district's readiness for implementation

Now that you've identified your approach to distributed leadership, it's time to start thinking about your readiness for implementation. Use the drop-down menus in the questionnaire below to rate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree), and write a brief rationale to capture why you gave that rating. Use your reflections as a starting point for **discussion about implementation** with your team.

Approach to distributed leadership		
Select your approach to from the drop-down list.		
Question	**Rating**	**Rationale**
My district has a clear aspiration and associated measurable goals that articulate what we are trying to achieve with distributed leadership.		
My district has a clear person or group responsible for managing the process of implementation and ensuring everyone remains focused on the goals.		
My district uses data to identify trends in performance and understand the root causes behind our data.		
My district has a clear, written plan for implementing distributed leadership setting out who needs to do what, and by when, in order to achieve our goals.		
My district holds regular, structured, evidence-based conversations to review progress, solve problems and make decisions to move implementation forward.		
My district prioritizes building the capacity – that is, the skill and will – of staff and other key individuals to deliver on our vision of distributed leadership.		
My district regularly and effectively communicates about the purpose and implementation updates with the most influential internal and external stakeholders.		
Leaders in my district deliberately identify, cultivate, and maintain effective relationships with key stakeholders necessary for effective implementation.		

This questionnaire is developed from the Education Delivery Institute's Delivery Capacity Rubric, which contains a more in depth set out questions to help you understand your system's capacity to deliver on its goals. See: https://www.deliveryinstitute.org/product/1b-delivery-capacity-rubric

Step 4. Implementation Planning: Start planning to implement

Now that you have spent time thinking about your cultural readiness and implementation readiness to begin distributing leadership, you can start planning. Before you start rolling out your approach to distributed leadership, it is critical that your team understands the vision for the work and the high-level plan for implementation. A "strategy profile" is a tool for helping teams get clear about the different elements of their plan.

Begin by reflecting on growth areas in your cultural readiness for implementing an approach to distributed leadership. Go back to **Step 1** and select three areas of cultural readiness where you scored a 1 (strongly disagree) or a 2 (disagree). Input those statements into the table below and write out some notes as to how you plan on addressing your gap areas prior to implementation. This reflection will help focus your attention when you begin mapping out your plan for implementation.

Step 1 cultural readiness statements with lowest scores *(strongly disagree or disagree)*	Reflect on how you plan on addressing these gap areas prior to implementation

Use the table below to create a strategy profile for distributed leadership in your district. You don't need to provide a lot of detail, just enough to give everyone who might be involved in implementation a high-level understanding.

Your answers to the questionnaires in **Step 1** and **Step 3** should give you a sense of where greater clarity is most needed. For example, in Step 1 did you agree that your district already has a "shared vision for strong instructional practice"? In Step 3 did you agree that you had identified and cultivated stakeholder relationships? In not, then focus your attention on the corresponding elements of the strategy profile.

Element	Tips	Notes
Description	• Describe your strategy for approaching distributed leadership in a sentence or two • Push for clarity – everyone on your team should understand what you plan on doing • Push for brevity – keep your description accurate but concise	
Leader	• Who is the single person responsible for making sure implementation happens? • Many people will likely be involved in implementation, but who is responsible for bringing it all together?	
Success	• What would success look like? Why/how do we believe our approach will have an impact? • Push for a clear explanation of cause and effect (If we… Then…)	
Sources of Evidence	• What data can you use to measure progress?	

Milestones	• What are the 3-5 biggest key events in the roll out of your approach to distributing leadership?	
Risks/Mitigation Strategies	• What could go wrong? How will you make that less likely to happen? What will you do if something does go wrong?	
Stakeholders & Communications	• Who do you need to engage in the planning or implementation of your approach? What do you need them to do differently? • How will you communicate your new approach to distributed leadership to groups in your district?	

For a full exercise guide to use with your team, refer to the Education Delivery Institute's Defining Strategies Using the Strategy Profile guide. See:
https://www.deliveryinstitute.org/product/3a-defining-strategies-using-strategy-profile

Conclusion

> "High quality feedback is a priority for educators and evaluators alike. What many districts are noticing, though, is that the traditional methods of giving and getting feedback are not sufficient. As a district, embarking on a process of creating a joint teacher-administrative leadership team and committing the team to working through a series of questions and action steps to develop a plan around distributed leadership, can be a transformative experience. The process outlined in this resource represents a progression that puts districts on the road to developing a greater variety of ways for teachers to improve their instruction. At the same time, these distributed leadership pathways also create interesting leadership roles that push teacher leaders, teacher collaborators, and district leadership to become more reflective about teaching, and more reflective about giving and getting effective feedback." *– A summary from a district implementing a distributed leadership approach as a member of the PLN.*

If you would like further information or support from ESE, or would like to share your own experiences for the benefit of colleagues across Massachusetts, please contact: EducatorDevelopment@mass.edu. If you would like additional support with implementation of your approach to distributed leadership, you can download guidance documents and tools from the Education Delivery Institute's website: https://www.deliveryinstitute.org/, including:

- Defining strategies using the strategy profile
- Prioritizing strategies using a 2x2 matrix
- Constructing a delivery chain

Further distributed leadership resources

- Transforming Schools: How Distributed Leadership Can Create More High-Performing Schools, Bain and Company, 2016
- Shanker Blog: Getting Serious About Measuring Collaborative Teacher Practice, April 2016 (see referenced studies linking collaboration with outcomes)
- Seeing it Clearly: Improving Observer Training for Better Feedback and Better Teaching, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2015
- Building Trust in Observations: A Blueprint for Improving Systems to Support Great Teaching, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2014
- Thanks for the Feedback: The Science and Art of Receiving Feedback Well by Douglas Stone and Sheila Heen
- Difficult Conversations by Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, and Sheila Heen
- Leverage Leadership by Paul Bambrick-Santoyo

How this tool was produced

In 2015-16, ESE partnered with a team of eight Massachusetts districts to create a professional learning network, focusing on ways to distribute leadership in order to provide educators high-quality feedback on their practice. ESE would like to thank the following districts for candidly sharing their work, opening their doors to collaborate with ESE and other districts, and being pioneers in this work in Massachusetts: Arlington Public Schools, Billerica Public Schools, Boston Public Schools, Groton-Dunstable Regional School District, Manchester-Essex Regional School District, Quabbin Public Schools, Revere Public Schools, and Wakefield Public Schools.

Additionally, this tool and the professional learning network would not have been successful without the planning and implementation expertise provided to ESE and participating districts by the Education Delivery Institute. This tool is based on the diagnostic and planning process the Education Delivery Institute used with the districts in the network, and draws on the experience and advice of leaders in those districts.