

5 REASONS

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performance evaluations is a
colossal mistake



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'Using Google Docs, I'm not convinced that everyone's year-end evaluation made its way to their personnel file'

Documenting and organizing teacher performance evaluations can be tricky, and cloud-based solutions help ensure all evaluators, educators and contributors review the most-recent information. But not all cloud-based tools are created equally, and some — such as Google Docs — can lead to poor results.

Leaders from six school districts shared their experiences building effective evaluation processes that help educators and evaluators collaborate, document and track performance to help improve educational outcomes — and how Google's no-cost spreadsheet tool can get in the way.

HINDSIGHT ISN'T ALWAYS 20/20

Performance evaluations can contribute to instructional improvement and student gains when they're part of an overall strategy that involves providing continuous, meaningful feedback.

"We really strive to use a coaching approach to our educator evaluations because we recognize that adults and students perform better in those conditions," said **Diana Reaume, superintendent** of Quillayute Valley School District No. 402 in Washington.

So how do districts ensure they're prepared to have meaningful conversations that drive instructional improvement? By creating a cohesive, living document of each employee's progress from information gathered during mid-year check-ins, observations, walkthroughs, peer reviews and summative evaluations.

With this information easily accessible and up to date, supervisors and employees can reflect on performance, focus on coaching and create meaningful professional learning plans — a strategy Willamette Leadership Academy in Oregon is implementing.

"The plan is to have myself or one of my other administrators do walkthroughs about five times a month and then do formal observations once a month and formal evaluations twice a year," said **Maj. Jeremy Coombs, principal** of the high school. "We'll also have some of our teachers do quick walkthroughs of each other, and they'll look at their student learning goals and their performance to see what they need to adjust."

Google Docs falls short in its ability to effectively aggregate that information, especially when compared to automated solutions such as Perform — TalentEd's K-12 education-specific performance management solution — which helps districts such as Comal ISD in Texas provide meaningful, agile feedback year-round.

"We really like Perform for that timeliness," said **Mandy Epley, executive director of human resources and customer service** at the district. "You're able to affect change early, rather than only having a punitive conversation at the end of the year."



HIDDEN COSTS MAY SURPRISE YOU

How many times have you seen principals scrambling at the end of the year because an evaluation is missing or a task was skipped? How often have you seen administrators with multiple spreadsheets trying to keep track of who has been evaluated, whose form is missing and whether or not all of the necessary steps have been completed?

An evaluation solution should make it easy for principals and administrators to document and analyze various types of evaluation information quickly and comprehensively, so they can spend more time focusing on what matters most — student achievement.

Using Perform, leaders at Madison County Schools in Kentucky do just that.

"We set it up so it's foolproof," said **Dustin Brumbaugh, Ed.D., director of human resources** at the district. "In our district, we have different processes for tenured and non-tenured positions, so we configured Perform to ensure teachers are assigned the correct evaluation process — which removes human error and frees administrators to focus on providing good feedback."

Cumbersome, manual documentation processes

and workflows also have financial consequences. Consider this: If five principals and one member of HR or IT spend 5 percent of their time documenting evaluations in Google Docs, developing manuals for how to use them, building spreadsheets to track the different pieces of the evaluation process, fixing manual entry errors, performing manual calculations and searching for documents, that costs a district roughly \$24,600 per year.

Using an automated solution can help address this issue. In fact, according to Hobson ROI, districts that use Perform:

- ▶ Reduced time spent tracking evaluation tasks completion by 80 percent.
- ▶ Cut principals' time spent working on teacher evaluations by 30 percent.



VALUABLE DATA GETS BURIED IN MULTIPLE FORMS

When using Google Docs to support performance management, it's easy for things to slip through the cracks, say leaders at Lake Orion Community Schools in Michigan.

"Some of our schools were using Google Docs, and I'm not convinced that everyone's year-end evaluation made its way to their personnel file," said **Rick Arnett, assistant superintendent for human resources** at the district.

But even when all evaluation data is collected in Google Docs, analyzing data held in multiple forms and spreadsheets to track district performance across various domains and competencies remains a challenge.

With Perform, districts unlock performance data with the click of a button, then use that information to analyze and address professional learning needs at the district, school and individual level.

"Using Perform, we look at performance data, and we use that to drive professional development activities," said **Marie Kuehler, director of human resources and customer service** at Comal ISD.

"That's been a huge tool for our director of professional learning."



THE RISK OF DATA INTEGRITY ISSUES

Data security should be a major concern when sharing sensitive information on any cloud-based solution, and Google Docs can leave schools and districts open to security breaches. For instance, when an employee leaves a school, they may still have access to — and the ability to edit — information in Google Docs.

Diana of Quillayute Valley School District mentioned that data security was an important consideration when switching from a Google-based performance management solution to Perform.

"We ran it through our tech department to make sure it met our security standards," she explained. "The security component is very important to us."

But data security isn't the only concern. Evaluators must also follow consistent processes to ensure data integrity in the event of an audit — and that's where having a K-12 education-specific performance management solution really shines.

"When someone appeals an audit, the committee doesn't review how the employee was scored. They sit down and review whether the evaluator correctly followed the process," Dustin of Madison County Schools explained. "Perform helps with the compliance of following that process to a T."



SENDING THE WRONG MESSAGE



When performance evaluation processes lead to coaching and personalized professional learning, instructional effectiveness and retention can both improve. But selecting a performance management tool based solely on cost and convenience — rather than impact — can send the message that evaluations aren't a priority.

That's why Burlington Community School District in Iowa relies on Perform instead of Google Docs.

"We want our teachers to be able to do the best they can each and every day," said **Jeremy Tabor**,

SPHR, director of human resources at Burlington.

"And we want to give them the information, the tools and the resources to do that."



Call 877-637-5800 or visit talentedk12.com to learn how Perform can help your school or district support successful performance management.