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PLAYBOOK

How to Use Tools and Data to Build a More Effective Educator Development Process

New Form

Performance Summary

New Goal

Where We Are Now

Although we are no longer in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, its reverberations are still felt in classrooms and on report cards across the nation. And if we zoom out, the numbers show that we are far from back to "business as usual." The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reports a significant drop in math and reading proficiency among students. National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores have plummeted by an average of 10 points across various grade levels.

The effects of the pandemic go beyond academic performance. There are rising concerns about the mental well-being of students, with reports from organizations like the American Psychological Association (APA) showing 81% of teens are experiencing anxiety and depression compared to pre-pandemic levels.

Similarly, data collected by school districts and state education departments indicate a notable surge in absenteeism rates, with an average increase above 20% across districts. In some high-poverty areas, teacher shortages have become a pressing issue, with reports indicating up to 57% of schools in high-poverty areas have a vacancy, compared to 47% overall.

These statistics highlight the urgent need for district and school leaders to have conversations—informed by real time data—with those working hardest to ensure students are successful: educators themselves.
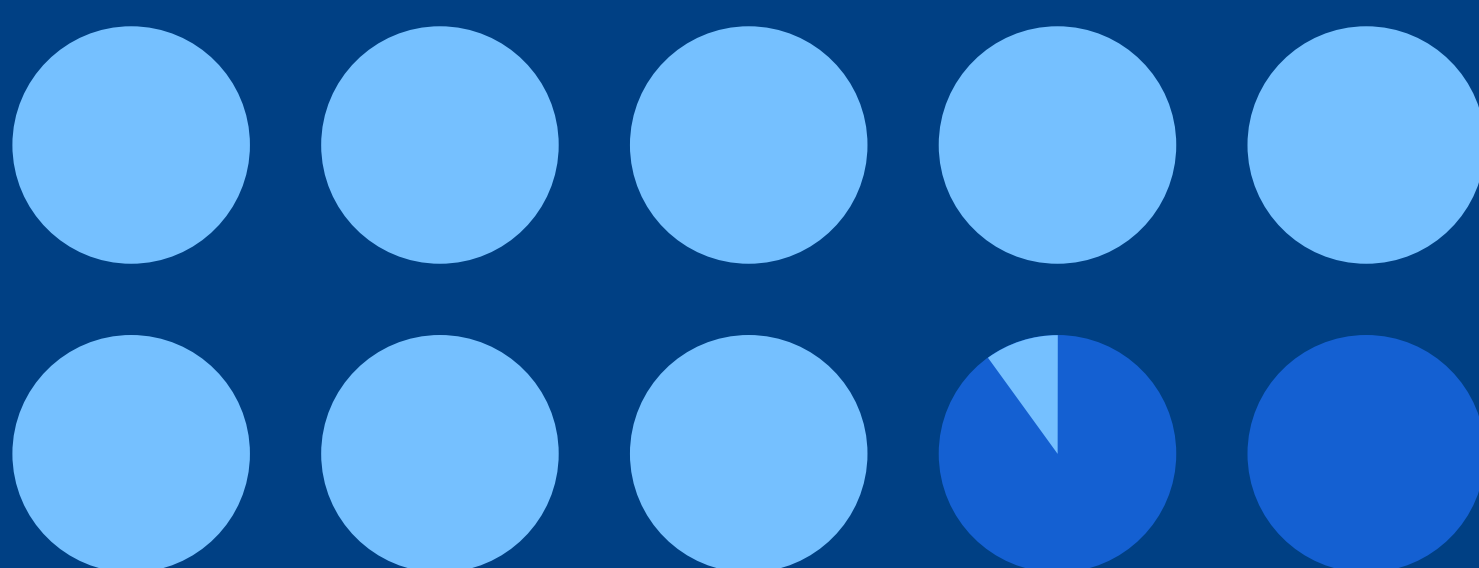
81% of teens

are experiencing anxiety and depression compared to pre-pandemic levels

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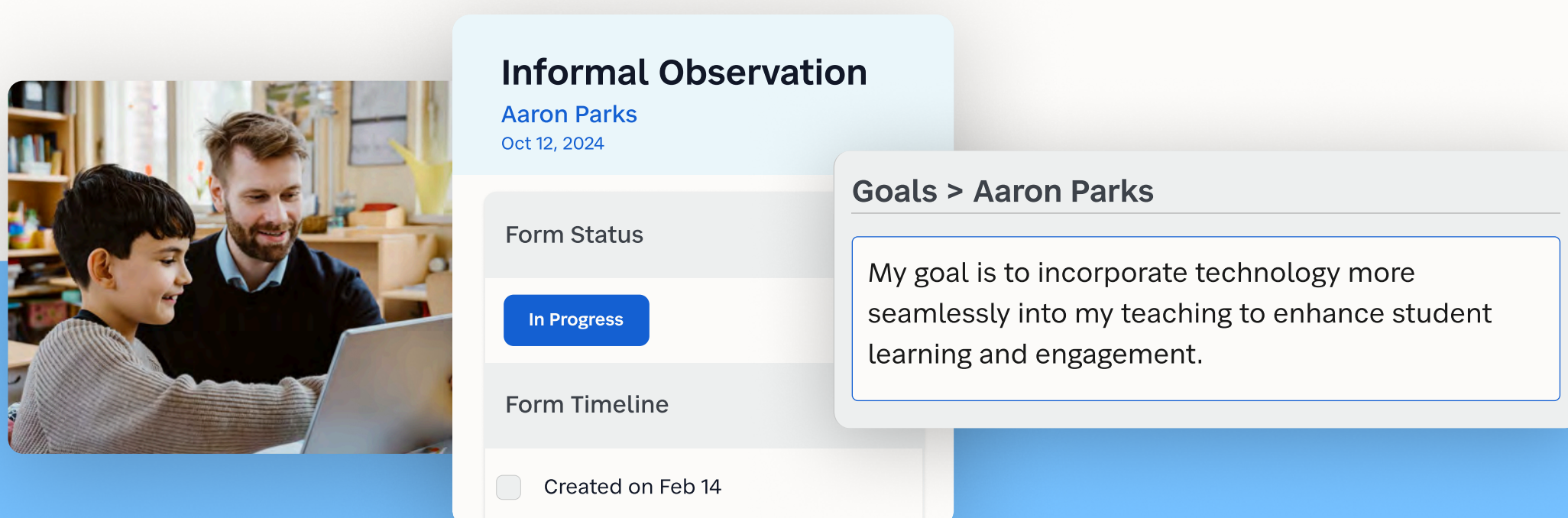# The Educator Development Process is Ready for a **Digital Transformation**

Everyone in the school system—educators, leaders, students, and families—benefits from having access to data that informs better program decisions.

Collecting real-time data is hard, especially with non-customizable solutions that aren't built for that type of job. We can't use old-school solutions to solve today's dilemmas. We need new solutions for a new era. Digital technologies allow for efficient data collection and analysis, flexibility, customization, and features like visualizations and recommendations.

We need the right digital tools in place to capture—and level-up—teaching and learning activities effectively.

This playbook shows leaders how to create a system that streamlines observations and feedback, making them real-time, accurate, and efficient. With this infrastructure, we can track learning and growth and improve communication, note-taking, conversations, and progress towards goals. Identifying strengths and weaknesses in instruction is crucial for improving student outcomes, not to mention the path of the educator him or herself.

We can't use old-school solutions to solve today's dilemmas. We need new solutions for a new era.

Informal Observation
Aaron Parks
Oct 12, 2024

Form Status

In Progress

Form Timeline

☐ Created on Feb 14

Goals > Aaron Parks

My goal is to incorporate technology more seamlessly into my teaching to enhance student learning and engagement.

Let's look at three districts who are using data to create positive learning cultures and better outcomes in their schools. These districts emphasize five key components of effective educator development:

◆ Clear understanding of who is involved and affected

◆ Specific, measurable goals and milestones

◆ The time and people needed to achieve those goals

◆ An easy-to-use digital tool that captures the right data

◆ Actionable reports that are valuable at all levels, from the classroom to the district

By embracing digital tools and following principles outlined by The Brookings Institute, (timeliness, accessibility, accuracy, among others) we can transform the educator development process and start to reverse the pandemic learning decline.

What improvements can make information more helpful to education decision-makers?

Improvement	Percentage
More timely	69%
More accessible	66%
More disaggregated	54%
More accurate	54%
More trustworthy	53%
More comparable over time	49%
Easier to understand & use	45%
No improvements needed	5%

Source: Custer et. al. 2018.
Notes: Respondents could select upto three improvements for each data source.

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CASE STUDY

IDEA Public Schools

IDEA is a public charter network that serves students in Texas, Louisiana, Florida, and Ohio. Founded in 1998, IDEA has 91 schools, 42,000+ students, and 7,000+ educators. IDEA's mission is to ensure that every student is accepted to and prepared for college.

**For 13 consecutive years, 100% of IDEA students have been accepted to college.**

GOAL TIMELINE

- Started on Oct 12
- Goal-Setting
  Submitted on Feb 14
- Mid-Year Checkpoint
  Submitted on Dec 11
- End of Year Summary
  Not yet started
- Not yet achieved

Framework
- A. Planning and Preparation
- B. Classroom Management
- C. Delivery of Instruction
- D. Monitoring and Assessment

The Goal

Leverage technology to support every educator in the network.

The Challenge: Meeting High Expectations as the Network Expands

As IDEA Charter Network grew, maintaining high expectations for educators while effectively onboarding, training, and supporting new staff members became a priority. The network's leadership knew that consistency and integrity in coaching processes were crucial. They faced the challenge of finding a solution that streamlined observation and coaching across the network, while still maintaining consistent performance expectations.

The IDEA leadership team decided on the following action steps to facilitate their widespread observations and growth process.
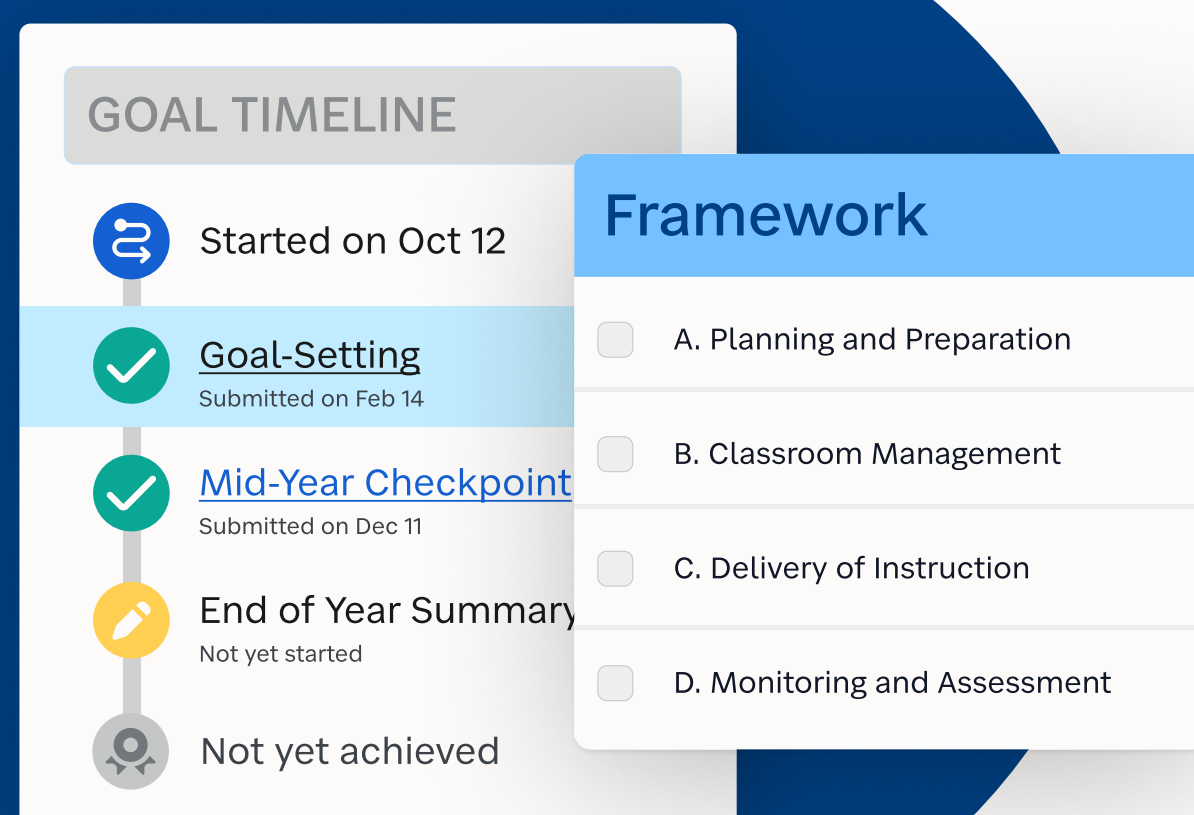
Step 1: Embracing Digital Tools for Onboarding, Training & Coaching

Recognizing the value of digital tools, IDEA Charter Network integrated them into their onboarding, training, and coaching processes. Embracing technology, the network created a streamlined experience for educators, providing access to resources, engaging in 1:1 conversations, and offering ongoing support. SchoolStatus Boost became an essential piece of the puzzle, facilitating communication, knowledge sharing, and collaboration.

Step 2: Customization for Enhanced Coaching Processes

IDEA Charter Network leveraged digital tools' customization capabilities to enhance their coaching processes. By utilizing SchoolStatus Boost, they tailored their frameworks to align with their high standards for teaching and leadership. This customization ensured focused and comprehensive coaching processes that aligned with the network's goals.

Step 3: Centralized Data and Real-Time Reporting

One of the significant benefits of using digital tools for educator observation and coaching was the ability to centralize data and access real-time reporting. With SchoolStatus Boost, IDEA Charter Network stored and analyzed observation data, gaining valuable insights into instructional strengths and areas for improvement. Real-time reporting enabled tracking of progress towards goals, identification of trends, and data-driven decision-making to support educator growth.

Step 4: Encouraging Collaboration & Educator Development

Digital tools created opportunities for collaboration and career development among educators within IDEA Charter Network. SchoolStatus Boost facilitated cross-building dialogue, sharing of best practices, and learning from one another. The network fostered a culture of continuous learning by providing educators access to resources, participation in virtual professional development sessions, and exploration of new instructional strategies. SchoolStatus Boost amplified the power of collaboration and ongoing development.

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"Because our network is so large and expansive, we've relied on digital tools to support our onboarding, training, and coaching work. Every IDEA leader and teacher has access to a platform which enables 1:1 conversations but also network-wide visibility into the ongoing observation and feedback cycle. We use this to pull out emerging trends, which drives how we think about professional learning opportunities."

Richel Raich-Cantu, Director of On-Demand Training, IDEA Public Schools

IDEA Charter Network's journey in leveraging digital tools for teacher observation and coaching is an ongoing process. By embracing technology, customizing coaching processes, centralizing data, and encouraging collaboration, the network unlocked the full potential of digital tools in enhancing educator growth and student success.

Richel Raich-Cantu works with a teacher during her classroom coaching rounds

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CASE STUDY
Wahoo School District's Journey

Wahoo School District, located in the heart of rural Nebraska, is committed to providing a high-quality education to its broad community of over one thousand PreK-12 students.

With a strong sense of pride in their town's history and heritage, Wahoo's dedicated team of 86 educators strives to support student success. Recognizing the importance of timely and actionable feedback for educator growth, the district embarked on a search for a digital solution to enhance their educator growth processes.

The Goal: Differentiated Feedback and Professional Learning Experiences

Driven by a growth-focused approach, Wahoo aimed to implement a tool that would empower educators through proactive feedback, rather than a punitive approach. The district sought to provide constructive, explicit, and responsive feedback to their staff in a timely manner. Previously, Wahoo used a Google form-based system aligned with the Marzano Instructional Framework, encompassing feedback on all 43 elements. However, the Google form system's static nature prevented the dynamic dialogue leaders needed for effective and personalized professional development.

The Challenge: Tracking and Coherence at the District Level

Wahoo faced the challenge of uneven tracking and a lack of coherence in their observation and coaching processes. Without a central platform, it was nearly impossible to effectively track the outputs from informal and formal observations at the district level. Recognizing the need for a flexible and customizable tool, Josh Snyder, the Director of Learning, worked closely with the district team to pilot several options.

The Solution: Embracing a Digital Transformation

After careful consideration, school leadership made a unanimous decision to adopt SchoolStatus Boost. The platform allowed for flexibility and customization, and aligned feedback with the instructional model embraced by the district. It also stored every coaching conversation, enabling instructional leaders to identify gaps in informal walkthrough frequency, extract data trends, and provide timely feedback to all educators. This enabled differentiation of professional learning supports based on individual needs.

The Outcomes: Differentiated Professional Learning Opportunities

Wahoo School District's implementation of SchoolStatus Boost resulted in significant positive outcomes:

1. **Customization:** The observation and professional development process became customizable, aligning with Wahoo's specific goals and instructional model.

2. **Educator Ownership:** The platform empowered educators to set their own growth goals and take ownership of their professional development journey.

3. **Timely Feedback and Communication:** The digital tool facilitated prompt and two-way communication, ensuring explicit, specific, and actionable observations.

4. **Streamlined Scheduling and Management:** Easier scheduling and calendar management improved efficiency for both administrators and educators.

5. **Centralized Reporting:** Real-time reporting provided a comprehensive view of progress toward goals at the individual, department, school, and district levels.

6. **Collaboration and Connection:** The platform facilitated connection and collaboration among educators with similar professional development goals, fostering a culture of shared learning.

7. **Professional Growth and Learning:** The digital solution encouraged increased visitation to other school districts, promoting continuous learning and growth opportunities.

"Whether we are conducting informal walkthroughs or year-end evaluations, every learning and growth touchpoint can be found in one place."

Josh Snyder, Director of Learning

Josh Snyder shared his enthusiasm for the transformation, stating, "Whether we are conducting informal walkthroughs or year-end evaluations, every learning and growth touchpoint can be found in one place." Wahoo's instructional leaders now have the ability to provide clear action steps, ongoing supportive feedback, and valuable professional development resources within SchoolStatus Boost.

This shift in thinking and planning for professional learning has led to observed professional growth among the district's educators.

Director of Learning, Josh Snyder, tracks his notes and coaching conversations to make his feedback more rapid and useful
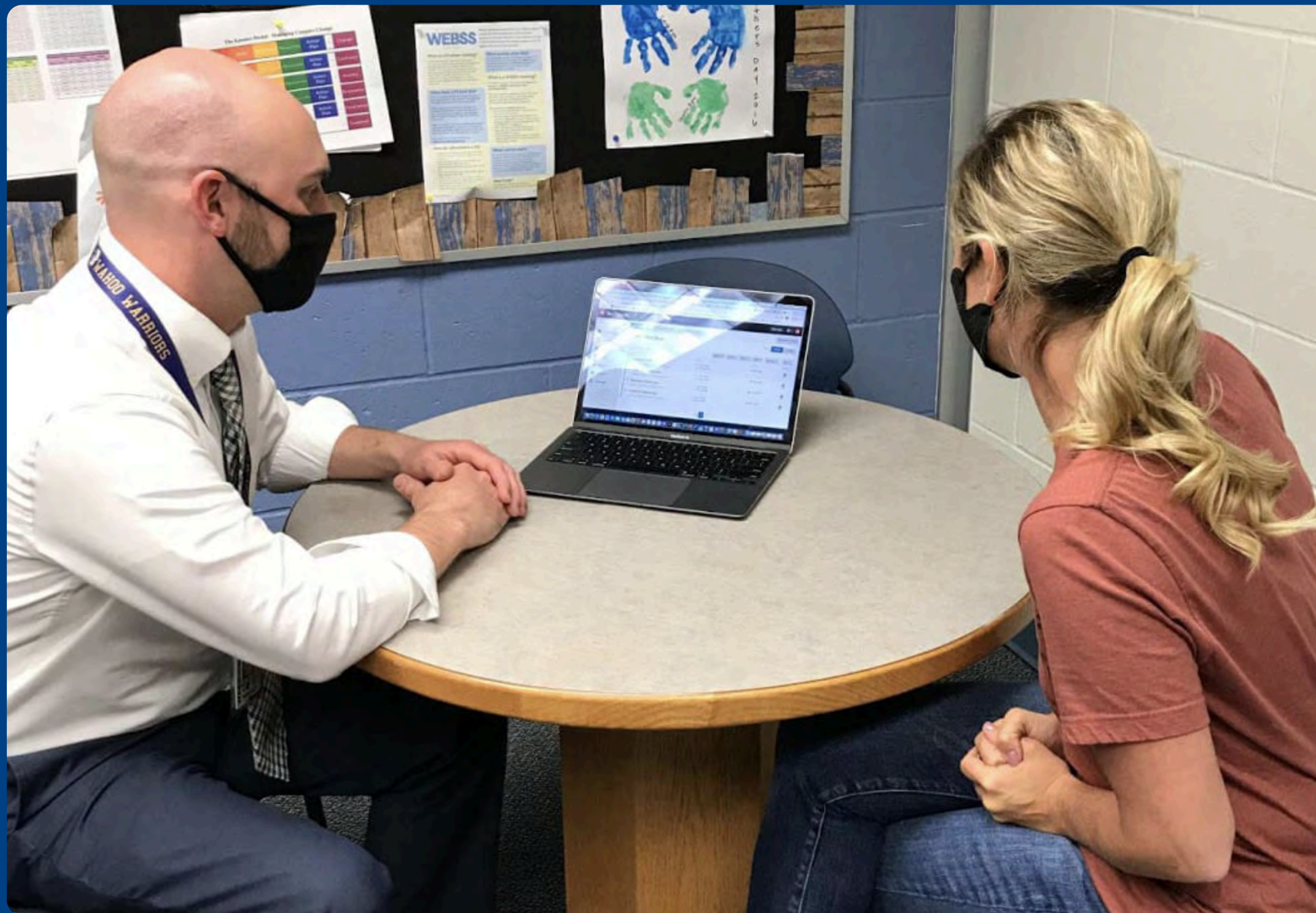
CASE STUDY

Camden City School District's Development Pivot

Located in New Jersey, the Camden City School District serves over 6,000 students across 19 schools.

With a strong commitment to improving traditional district schools and unifying educational options throughout the city, Camden ensures that every family's choice guarantees their child a high-quality education.

The Goal: Customizable Educator Evaluation That Meets State-Wide Requirements

As part of their dedication to enhancing teaching practices, the district embarked on a search for a flexible observation and evaluation system that would meet state-wide requirements and support the growth of their educators. They wanted to implement a customizable system that would support educator evaluation while meeting state-wide requirements. The Teach NJ Act necessitated a reliable and flexible approach to align with the new evaluation standards that linked tenure decisions to evaluation outcomes.

The Solution: An Efficient, Adaptive Tool to Identify Instructional Strengths and Weaknesses

A committee of educators and school leaders conducted a thorough comparative search. They were looking for a way to conduct observations that would be user-friendly for both educators and leaders, and would enable educators to plan for both informal and formal observations and access documents and meeting notes in one place.

They landed on SchoolStatus Boost, a digital platform that would provide the necessary tools and systems.

The Pivot

Then came 2020-2021.

Unwilling to let go of the platform they had implemented, but aware that it no longer served their needs, they realized they needed to adjust their process on a dime, same as they did with teaching. Adopting the Danielson Framework, they implemented a revised system that incorporated a linear portfolio component aligned with a remote working model, which was especially important at the time. This allowed for efficient communication, continued educator evaluations, and anticipated improvement in educators' professional development.

Key Steps:

Collaboration

◆ Adapted the Danielson framework to the new requirements

◆ Ensured compliance with state regulations while meeting the district's needs

Implementation

◆ Integrated a linear portfolio component to facilitate communication between administrators and educators

◆ Enabled educators to gather evidence in a remote setting to support evaluation processes

One of the 19 schools in the Camden City School District

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Outcomes and Benefits:

1. Streamlined Workflows and Accessibility

◆ Educators and support staff gained access to tools, data capabilities, and reports

◆ Enhanced flexibility allowed for virtual walkthroughs aligned with the Danielson framework

2. Customization and Unification of the Development Process

◆ Educators were able to customize observation, coaching, and educator development based on specific rubrics

◆ Meetings, evidence, and feedback were unified, creating a centralized source of truth for comprehensive feedback cycles

3. Enhanced Feedback and Progress Tracking

◆ Educators could upload videos, images, and documents for ratings and feedback

◆ Real-time reporting enabled tracking of progress towards goals and provided valuable insights

4. Consistent Coaching and Completion Rates

◆ Notes, scores, and feedback were stored centrally, ensuring completion of observation cycles

◆ A complete portfolio of evidence facilitated communication and tracking

Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, Camden City School District successfully implemented an innovative solution to adapt their educator growth process. By leveraging technology and addressing specific challenges, the district established a dynamic framework that promotes instructional excellence and facilitates a meaningful growth path for educators.

With over 67,000 observations conducted, the district continues to meet their teaching and learning requirements, providing a high-quality educational experience for all students.

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Using Digital Tools for
Effective Educator Feedback

This guide explores three districts with unique goals and challenges. Despite their differences, they all recognize the importance of digital tools in supporting development plans for educators. These districts prioritize real-time data and have established procedures to support the entire feedback process. They also understand the potential of digital tools in promoting conversations centered on helping every learner succeed. The Educator Feedback Hierarchy below summarizes shared attributes and offers implementation guidance through guiding questions.

Measurement & Results

- Are you measuring the impact of educator learning on student outcomes?

- Is teaching more effective because of your feedback process and the related professional learning initiatives?

- Are you able to measure the ROI of adult learning initiatives?

Supported Growth

- Are educators' individual professional learning goals being actively supported with multiple opportunities (conferences, institutes, workshops, seminars, etc.)?

- Are digital observation tools in place to encourage feedback and open communications?

Goal Setting & Alignment

- How do classroom, department, and building goals and the educator feedback process align with district goals?

- Do educators and leaders work collaboratively to set goals that are district-aligned?

State & District Mandates

- Are educators meeting state and district requirements?

- Do the language and rubric for observations and feedback line up with your overall goals, requirements, and mandates?

Recommendations for Leaders

Here's how to get started on transforming your district's educator growth process:

1. Develop a clear strategic vision and implementation plan for educator growth

2. Put sustainable systems and structures in place that support all growth and coaching activities

3. Collect real-time data that shows progress toward goals

4. Set up consistent, transparent communications about progress and actions for the entire district and/or school community, including progress updates, shared resources, and scheduled check-ins

5. Use reporting to measure and make adjustment to how development work lines up with district goals and key initiatives over time

6. Celebrate your successes with the community!

If you're looking for the right program to transform your district educator growth process, we can help! The SchoolStatus Boost platform provides a comprehensive, empowering, user-friendly approach to supporting educator professional growth.

Book a personalized demo today and see why IDEA, Wahoo, and Camden City all chose SchoolStatus Boost

Book a Demo