

Clark County School District

Department Evaluation Subcommittee of the Superintendent's Executive Advisory Group

A Framework for Appraising Department Adequacy: Applying Criteria to Form a Summary Judgment

FRAMING

The District is developing a framework for evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of its departments. The aim is to ensure funds directly support the mission. That mission is to marshal people, time, and money to achieve the vision:

All students progress in school and graduate, prepared to succeed and contribute in a diverse, global society.

Evaluating departments is how we ensure that resources are applied to the highest priorities. A single question drives this:

Can the goods and services of a department be provided more-efficiently without compromising effectiveness?

PURPOSE AND EFFECT

The work of this Subcommittee arises out of a larger effort. Understanding the aim of that larger effort gives purpose to the Subcommittee work. That larger effort is driven by the Superintendent's Executive Advisory Group.

That Group was convened to provide advice to the District on improving return-on-investment, or ROI. The Department Evaluation Subcommittee was assembled to assist by developing a framework for evaluating any District department.

The Subcommittee method has been to develop a generic framework for evaluating any department. It then applied the framework to a particular case (the Graphics Department served as a straw man).

THEORY OF ACTION

This undertaking relied on a chain of logic. The logic explains how change will lead to improvement. The reasoning involves a set of linked propositions and is sometimes called a "theory of action." (Haertel, National Academy of Science, 2009).

If we . . .

- Develop repeatable processes that link data on financial and operational performance;
 - Use these to calculate the return on investment for schools, departments, and programs;
 - Are forthright and transparent with our community about what is working and what is not; and
 - Use the insights to transform how we allocate scarce resources;
- . . . then resources will be used more productively, student performance will improve, and public confidence will grow.

SUBCOMMITTEE PROCESS AND LEVELS OF REVIEW

The Subcommittee has proposed a framework that includes four levels of review.

1. Do the goods and services of a department impact mission-critical functions in a positive way?
2. Does the department operate within the confines of administrative policy directives?
3. Does the department meet performance standards in the areas of efficiency, effectiveness, and satisfaction?
4. Is the department making expected progress toward its vision of the future in five years?

LEVEL 1: ABSOLUTES

This gauges impact on mission-critical functions:

- Safeguard integrity of information
- Ensure safety of assets (human and other)
- Manage operational risks by ensuring project risks are documented within *Eclipse* (project management software)
- Produce goods or services essential to teaching and learning for which there is no better alternative

Note: This review is incorporated in the regular cycle of internal auditing. The District auditor is the owner. The line of reporting to the Superintendent is through the executive team sponsor (CFO). Records the auditor reviews include financial data on department performance. These are “fully loaded” to reflect costs directly related to department operation and those indirectly-related (but without which the department cannot perform).

Rule: Deficiencies that are minor are noted as audit exceptions and are included in the management letter to the CFO and Superintendent. Material deficiencies call into question the department’s license to operate and require the District auditor to give the CFO and Superintendent immediate written notice.

LEVEL 2: POLICY DIRECTIVES

This gauges whether the department performance meets organizational expectations. The department:

- Is directed to function in a budget-neutral way each year or
- Is permitted to operate even though expenditures exceed revenue (subsidized by general fund or another source) or
- Is directed to contribute revenue to the general fund each year

Note: The Chief Financial Officer of the District is the owner for this level of review. The line of reporting to the Superintendent is through the Deputy Superintendent of Educational and Operational Excellence. Records that form the basis for this review are those produced by the internal District auditor. These include financial data on department performance. These are “fully loaded” to reflect costs directly related to department operation and those indirectly-related (but without which the department cannot perform).

Rule: The appraisal in this area is binary. Either a department fulfills its obligation without exception (and thus meets expectations) or it does not.

LEVEL 3: PERFORMANCE AGAINST STANDARDS

This gauges whether the department meets performance targets related to efficiency, effectiveness and satisfaction.

- Are the “fully loaded costs” for department operation competitive when compared with private providers (\pm 5%)
- Are department assets (staff, equipment, etc.) fully utilized?
- Are satisfaction reviews uniformly positive and upwardly trending over time?

Note: The head of each department is the owner for this level of review. The line of reporting is through the Chief (to whom the head reports) to the Deputy Superintendent of Educational and Operational Excellence and on to the Superintendent. Records that form the basis for the review of the department (relative to outsourced solutions) are those produced by the Purchasing Department and the Chief Financial Officer. These include financial data on department performance. These are “fully loaded” to reflect costs directly related to department operation and those indirectly-related (but without which the department cannot perform).

Rule: The appraisal in this area is standards-based. Judgments of adequacy require a department to meet or exceed each of the three standards in this area (efficiency, effectiveness, and satisfaction). A subpar judgment in any one of the three areas results in a subpar overall judgment at this level.

LEVEL 4: PREPARATION FOR THE FUTURE

This gauges how adaptable the department is to changing conditions. It asks:

- Is the department’s mission statement aligned to the District mission and supportive of District strategic imperatives?
- Has the department articulated its vision of the future in five years?
- Is the department making expected progress toward its vision of the future in five years?

Note: The head of each department is the owner for this level of review. The line of reporting is through the Chief (to whom the head reports) to the Deputy Superintendent of Educational and Operational Excellence and on to the Superintendent.

Rule: The appraisal in this area is based on document analysis and direct observation. A subpar judgment in any one of the three areas (department mission, department vision, and department progress toward vision) results in a subpar overall judgment at this level.

ROLLUP INTO A SUMMARY APPRAISAL

	Does not meet expectations	Partially meets expectations	Meets expectations	Exceeds expectations
	0	1	2	3
Level 2: Policy directives				
Level 3: Performance vs targets				
Level 4: Progress toward vision				
Rollup: Overall appraisal				

Note: Level 1 “Absolutes” (mission critical functions) does not appear because it is considered a pre-requisite.

Rule: To be judged adequate all ratings must be ≥ 2 . The overall appraisal judgment is equal to the lowest rating received for any single dimension.