

Evaluation Success Story:

# Aligning Student Success and Staff Evaluation

At Noxubee County School District, years of academic challenges and a state-led takeover left the district in urgent need of change. Building a stronger foundation for students and educators alike meant rethinking how instruction was delivered, supported, and evaluated. Without a system that could adapt to the district's unique needs, staff evaluations felt disconnected from classroom instruction, and meaningful growth was hard to track.

For Dr. Washington Cole and his leadership team, that disconnect was a major roadblock. He envisioned a district where evaluation wasn't just a compliance measure—but a powerful tool for instructional alignment and educator development. When he found [Evaluation](#), he saw the opportunity to create a system that was not only customized to local and state guidelines but truly designed to support the people doing the work every day.

## The Challenge

When Dr. Cole joined Noxubee County in 2021 as part of a broader turnaround initiative, he brought with him a deep understanding of accountability and instruction, shaped by his years as a public school educator and as Chief of Staff at the Mississippi Department of Education. One of the first areas he identified for improvement was staff evaluation.

At the time, the district's evaluation tools were difficult to use and lacked the flexibility to support local needs. Evaluations felt disconnected from what was happening in classrooms, and it was nearly impossible to pull meaningful insights from the data.

**“We were trying to ground our evaluations in real classroom data—test scores, observation notes, instructional trends—but without the right system, it was hard to make sure everything aligned,” Mr. Richard Baliko, Chief Administrative Officer, explained.**

“We couldn’t always tell if scores truly reflected performance, and that made it difficult to use evaluations to drive real growth.”

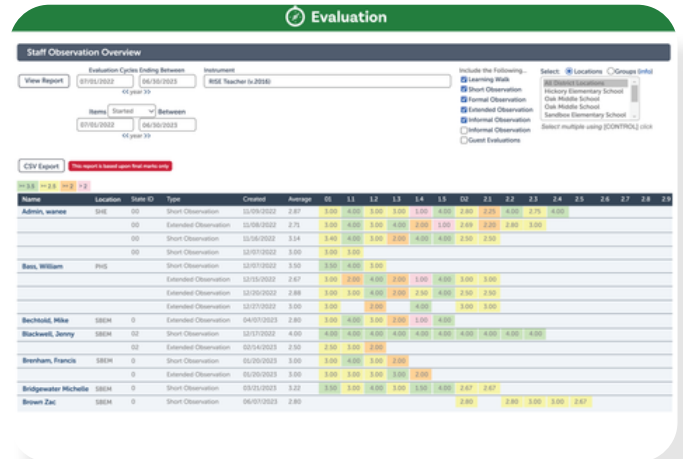
Even when teams were able to gather classroom and assessment data, it rarely translated into meaningful action. The district lacked a way to identify patterns, ensure consistency across evaluators, or connect evaluation outcomes to instructional improvement. It was time for a change.

As a result, the process felt more like a compliance exercise than a tool for growth. What Noxubee County needed was a system that could bridge the gap between evaluation and instruction—one flexible enough to evolve with the district’s goals and ultimately support what matters most: student success.

## The Solution

[Evaluation](#) provided the foundation the district was looking for. From the start, Dr. Cole and his team embraced the platform’s flexibility, customizing the evaluation process to reflect both Mississippi’s state requirements and the district’s local instructional priorities.

“What stood out most was how customizable the platform is,” Mr. Baliko said. “I kept asking, ‘Can we do this? What about that?’ And every time, the answer was, ‘Yes, we can do that.’ In the end, I got almost everything I needed.”



Rather than using Evaluation just to observe and score, the district designed it as a support tool—integrating lesson plan tracking, walkthroughs, and locally developed rubrics to ensure evaluations reflected real classroom instruction.

“Our evaluation system has to move in the same direction as our instruction,” he explained. “That’s why we’re tying it directly to lesson plan tracking—it all needs to work together.”

District-level automation features like end-of-year rollover, status tracking, and customizable checklists replaced time-consuming manual processes, streamlining the experience for administrators and teachers alike.

“The rollover process is smooth—no complaints from teachers—and it’s definitely more accessible than the state platform,” Mr. Baliko said.

Evaluation also brought new visibility into evaluator scoring trends. Tools like heat maps and side-by-side comparisons helped the district flag inconsistencies and build stronger inter-rater reliability.

## The Results

With Evaluation in place, Noxubee County has built a more structured, supportive, and data-informed evaluation process—one that aligns with instruction and drives professional growth across the district.

“We were a chronically underperforming district for years,” Dr. Cole shared. “When I stepped in as superintendent, we started to see steady progress—climbing from the bottom of the entire state to a C rated school district, with the high school earning a B rating two years in a row.”

While no single tool can take full credit for that transformation, Dr. Cole sees Evaluation as a vital part of the district’s improvement.

“I’m not saying the evaluation platform is the sole reason,” he said, “but you can’t get those kinds of results without a strong evaluation system that tracks what matters.”

The district even chose to invest in Evaluation over the state’s free platform because of its added functionality and impact. “We’re willing to pay for this because of what it gives us,” Dr. Cole added.

The shift has also increased buy-in from teachers and school leaders, who now see evaluation as a tool for growth—not just compliance. With better access to information and fewer logistical headaches, the focus is where it should be: high-quality instruction, educator development, and student success.

Today, Noxubee County is moving forward with a clearer connection between teaching and support—equipping educators to grow in their craft and helping students thrive in the classroom and beyond.

## The Product

[Evaluation](#), powered by Education Advanced, Inc., is a tool built to increase the efficiency of the staff evaluation process and facilitate educator growth with data. With a collaborative, web-based performance portal that’s tailored to meet each district’s needs, school administrators can efficiently document every step of the staff evaluation process — including walk-throughs, self-evaluations, supporting evidence, reporting, and performance analytics.



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