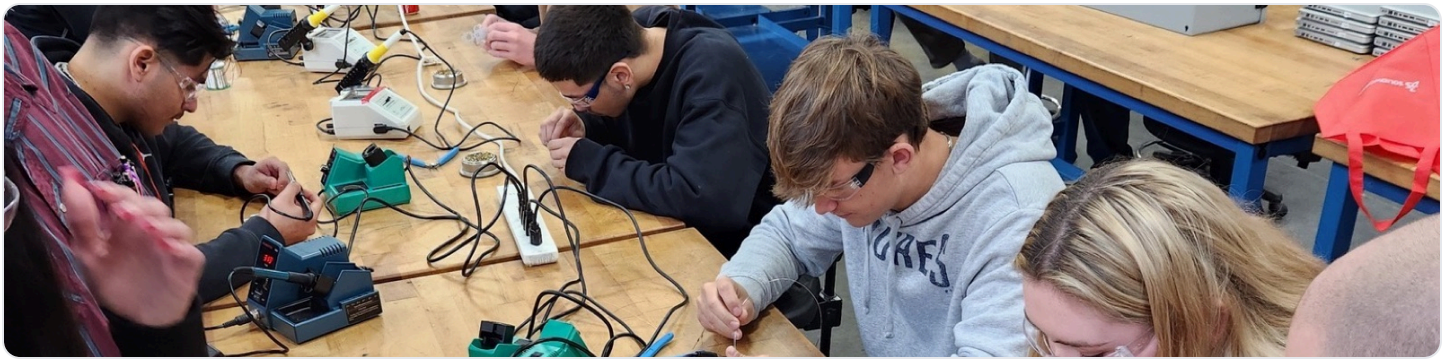
CASE STUDY · TWIN FALLS SCHOOL DISTRICT

How Districts Are Reclaiming Hundreds of Hours with Lebra Ascend and Making Teacher Evaluations More Meaningful

DISTRICT	LOCATION	PRODUCT	PUBLISHED	UPDATED
Twin Falls School District	Twin Falls, Idaho	Lebra Ascend	February 2026	April 2026



The 9,000 students in Idaho's Twin Falls School District attend nine elementary, four middle, and three high schools in south-central Idaho's Magic Valley. Located along the Snake River Canyon and home to the iconic Shoshone Falls—often called the "Niagara of the West". The district's leaders advocate for a growth mindset among its students-and among its educators.

In Idaho, teacher evaluations are tied to tax dollars. Educators must earn a proficient or distinguished rating to be eligible for raises, and districts where more teachers score high marks receive more money from the state for salaries.

Each year, Twin Falls undertakes two formal observations of all educators. This includes conferences before and after each observation, plus a follow-up meeting. Twin Falls Associate Superintendent Ryan Nesmith estimates that each observation takes four or five hours per teacher. In addition, completing a summative evaluation takes roughly two hours, for a total of approximately seven hours per teacher per evaluation cycle.

The Challenge

Improving the 'Pain Point' of Teacher Evaluations

Many of the principals in Twin Falls indicated that the amount of time and documentation required made the observation and evaluation process cumbersome, especially for teachers who were already highly effective. Nesmith echoed a common view when he described teacher evaluations as a compliance-driven "checkbox."

Superintendent Dr. Brady Dickinson, who has spent 28 years in education—including the past nine years leading the Twin Falls School District—has heard this concern many times over his career. He has come to recognize teacher evaluations as one of the most significant "pain points" for building-level administrators.



Dr. Brady Dickinson

"We were trying to figure out a way for principals to save time in doing the evaluations and make them more meaningful for both principals and teachers," he said.

The district's previous platform for teacher evaluations was designed to include a support component, but it did not foster the relationships within which professional coaching is most effective. Because principals' long list of responsibilities limits the amount of time they have to connect with teachers, the unwieldy system had become a barrier to building these important relationships.

- **Evaluations are time-consuming & compliance-driven**
- **The process is a major pain point for principals**
- **The system limited meaningful coaching & relationships**

The Solution

An AI Tool Developed with Educator Growth in Mind

After a chance encounter at a conference, Dickinson had the opportunity to work side by side with Lebra Co-Founder and CEO Matt Wenzel as the company developed its AI-powered leadership tool for teacher evaluations. Their collaboration included input from Twin Falls administrators and educators as Lebra built the platform, named Lebra Ascend.

"Lebra Ascend is all about using AI in a smart way so you don't lose the human side of evaluation or communication, but you are more efficient in your job," Dickinson explained. He found the "human-AI-human process" helpful for completing evaluations more efficiently and accurately.

Twin Falls administrators found the onboarding process to be simple and quick, taking just a few hours, and the tool itself to be intuitive to use. Not only does Lebra Ascend integrate seamlessly with the district's HRIS systems, it also aligns with state-specific requirements, including those in Idaho.

"Evaluations are really important, but being able to do them more efficiently frees up principals to do other things and frees up their personal time, because a lot of my principals were doing evaluations at home at night," Dickinson said. "If you look at the number of hours within a year that this saves a building or district, it is potentially hundreds of hours for large schools."

COMPLIANCE	GROWTH
Documentation heavy process	Streamlined documentation
Checklists and scoring	Coaching conversations
Completing required steps	Supporting professional development
Time spent on paperwork	Time spent in classrooms
Evaluation as a requirement	Evaluation as growth focused practice

The Result

Nesmith said Lebra Ascend is already helping principals at Twin Falls save around two hours per evaluation—reducing the process from approximately seven hours to five—primarily because it automatically generates summative feedback directly from the rubric for each category.

Dickinson added that for new administrators, Lebra Ascend helps them navigate the complexity of the 22 components across four domains within the evaluation framework.

Another benefit of Lebra Ascend is reduced unintentional bias, Nesmith said. Because the system generates suggested scores directly from entered evidence and rubric language, it reduces the likelihood that personal preference influences ratings. As part of the district's full-scale implementation during the 2025–26 school year, Nesmith cross-referenced previous teacher evaluations using Lebra Ascend to gauge its accuracy and found that it stayed very true to the data that had been entered.

Teachers have responded positively to the transition to Lebra Ascend. They appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback and request resources within the platform, and they can participate more directly in the evaluation process in relation to their professional goals (Individual Professional Learning Plans, or IPLPs).

"We already have incredible teachers, but we always try to have a mindset of improving," Nesmith said. "I really like that in Ascend you can provide feedback no matter how highly effective a teacher is in their role." As a result of the pilot and subsequent rollout, the teachers' union at Twin Falls has endorsed Lebra Ascend as an evaluation tool.

"When the union comes out in support of a tool, it gives it more credibility," Dickinson said. "When teachers see that, they know it's their colleagues saying it—and that's totally different than when it's your boss or your supervisor."

He cautioned that "you can't just throw input into the AI, let it do its thing, and go with whatever it spits out. The administrator has to engage with it and make sure it's giving them the results they want."

> ***"Evaluation should be about professional growth, not checking boxes," Dickinson said. "Improving the process will lead to better instruction for our kids."***

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