

May 29, 2013

Advisory to the field

What you should know about latest NJDOE memo on evaluation

The latest N.J. Department of Education (NJDOE) broadcast memo on teacher and principal evaluation -- <http://education.state.nj.us/broadcasts/?month=05;year=2013;day=28#9643> -- reiterates elements of the proposed evaluation regulations which the State Board of Education voted to publish at its May 1 meeting. This is a preliminary step to final adoption.

Several of the changes were in response to NJEA testimony and a meeting between NJEA leaders and State Education Commissioner. However, NJEA believes that the NJDOE did not go far enough in placing less emphasis on elements tied to standardized tests or in making other changes to ensure that the evaluation system is fair and reliable.

STUDENT GROWTH OBJECTIVES -- The memo contains guidance on another measure of student achievement being used for all teachers – the Student Growth Objective (SGO) – which will make up 15% of each classroom teacher’s evaluation during the 2013-14 school year.

The guidance emphasizes the **individual final SGOs for the next school year cannot be set until teachers have class lists and learning data for the students they will teach next year for whom SGOs will be established. In most cases, this would be after the start of the new school year.** Departmental, school, and district goals, as well as group work, may help develop common focus and support for SGOs. However, these collaborative goals and approaches should take into account each teacher’s assigned students and information about those students’ learning. Teachers, working in collaboration with principals, will be required to have set SGOs for 2013-14 by Nov. 15.

All teachers must have at least one SGO for 2013-14; teachers without a Student Growth Percentile (SGP) may have one or two SGOs.

The NJDOE is conducting extensive workshops on SGOs this summer, encouraging districts to send three-to-five member teams, including at least one teacher. NJEA also will be conducting programs on SGOs both in July and at the Summer Leadership Conference.

VERIFICATION OF DISTRICT ACTIVITIES – The NJDOE is asking districts to verify by Aug. 1 whether they have taken certain steps.

Local associations should inform their UniServ office if the activities below have NOT taken place.

The NJDOE has promised to address any specific instances where the law or NJDOE directives have not been followed or where districts are improperly implementing the program.

- **DISTRICT EVALUATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (DEAC)** has been formed and is providing guidance for planning and implementation of evaluation policies and procedures. (Some locals indicate that the DEAC either has not met or is not being operated collaboratively so that input is welcome.)
- **EVALUATION RUBRICS AND ELEMENTS** have been tested and refined to meet district, school, and individual needs.

- **TEACHER TRAINING** in the evaluation rubric, including the “teacher practice” instrument, was completed by July 1.
- **SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PANELS** were formed by Feb. 1, including a teacher, and whether the teacher was selected “in consultation with” the local association. Local associations should keep records regarding such consultations, including a list of the association’s nominees and their credentials, a record of how the association sought to promote such consultation, and how the district responded.
- **DISTRICT PLANS** for training evaluators in teacher evaluation by Aug. 31; notifying teaching staff members of adopted evaluation policies and processes by Oct. 1; training new teachers and principals/assistant principals/vice principals on evaluation rubrics; training for principals/assistant principals/vice principals on their evaluation and their evaluators by Oct. 31.

COURSE ROSTER DATA SUBMISSION – Districts should “practice” submitting this data before June 25. The NJDOE will use this roster data to assign SGPs to qualifying teachers starting in 2013-14. (The SGPs for 2012-13 are for informational purposes only.) Members and locals need to pay special attention to how this is done. You should particularly find out how districts will assign students to teachers who are either co-teaching or are working as in-class support. Districts can assign the same students to different teachers.

Districts will officially submit rosters for 2012-13 from July 5 to Aug. 2.

DISTRICTS MAY SUBMIT A REQUEST FOR WAIVER OF CERTAIN EVALUATION PROGRAM COMPONENTS – The NJDOE has indicated that it will consider on a preliminary basis requests for “flexibility” waivers of certain evaluation regulations, even though the regulations for 2013-14 have not yet been adopted. It cites instances where a district’s evaluation rubric conflicts with proposed regulations. Specifically mentioned is the Kim Marshall evaluation plan, which requires multiple 10-minute observations, while the proposed regulations call for 40-minute and 20-minute observations.

Local associations should monitor this situation in their school districts and report to their UniServ representative any attempt by the district to seek “flexibility.”

School districts that plan to seek a waiver must file the *AchieveNJ Request for Flexibility form* with the NJDOE by July 12 through e-mail or fax. The NJDOE will notify the district whether or not flexibility will be granted by Aug. 15. The district will then have to follow up with the formal waiver request process in the fall. (No specific waiver process for the evaluation rules has been established yet. The evaluation regulations are not expected to be finally adopted until Aug. 7.)

STANDARDS & ASSESSMENTS – The memo contains a timeline for implementation of the Common Core State Standards, the new Partnership for Assessments of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessments being developed, and how these will impact teacher evaluation, particularly SGP scores.

EVALUATION PILOT DISTRICT FEEDBACK – The memo highlights feedback from teachers in the pilot districts regarding best practices in training on teacher practice models, as well as an NJDOE guidance document on training and evaluation implementation.

For more information about NJEA's support for leaders and members on all issues related to evaluation, please go to www.njea.org/issues-and-political-action/evaluation.