

September 23, 2020

NJDOE Issues Educator Evaluation Guidance for 2020-21

On Sept. 21, 2020, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) issued a [broadcast](#) announcing the release of its [Educator Evaluation Guidance for 2020-2021](#). While there will be no departures from the evaluation regulations as laid out in N.J.A.C. 6A:10, the department's intention in issuing this guidance is to highlight existing flexibilities and aspects of prior guidance that are especially relevant this year.

Observations: Teacher practice, typically measured by in-class observations, will comprise 85% of each educator's annual summative score for the 2020-21 school year, similar to prior years. Because the NJDOE's regulatory definition of "observation" is flexible, the current regulations can be adapted to allow for teachers to be scored in different ways.

Districts that are utilizing fully remote instruction with no in-person component must allow teachers to complete a portfolio of practice in place of a classroom observation. To compile the portfolio, the educator should "gather artifacts of their work... which are aligned to the observation instrument's domains and indicators," which will vary across districts due to the local variability of evaluation practices. The portfolio must include a virtual learning component that is agreed upon by the teacher and their direct supervisor; this component can be an observation of live learning or an asynchronous artifact such as a video recording of a teacher introducing a new concept. The guidance indicates that the portfolio can replace a 20-minute observation, meaning that only a post-observation conference will occur (the pre-conference is unnecessary).

Districts where any portion of learning is happening in person may conduct in-person observations of instruction for the purposes of evaluation. The department states, "Traditional in-class observations remain the required method for evaluating in-class, in-person instruction. This includes hybrid models in which teachers are teaching in-class, in-person with students." Districts should "make every effort" to ensure that at least one observation is conducted in person and are encouraged to take advantage of local flexibilities in educator practice instruments; this should enable educators to account for differences in in-person learning brought about by current rules around social distancing.

Student Growth Objectives: As in prior years, student growth objectives (SGOs) are required of all educators, and they must be submitted by Oct. 31. The [2020-21 evaluation rubric weights](#) published by the NJDOE on Aug. 28 state that SGOs comprise 15% of educators' annual summative score.

Acknowledging that the process for setting and tracking SGOs will look different this year than it has in years past, the department reminds educators of the following:

- A teaching staff member may revise an SGO; the deadline for doing so is Feb. 15.
- Teachers should take care to craft SGOs that are rigorous yet attainable. The absence of data from prior-year statewide standardized assessments, and the interruptions to instruction caused by school building closures, may make this task more challenging.
- Multiple points of data should be used to determine a student’s “baseline” for SGOs, and they are meant to be collaboratively crafted by the teaching staff member and their designated supervisor. The NJDOE cautions against using a pre-test/post-test model for SGO administration this year.

Other Issues: The Educator Evaluation Guidance document also details training recommendations for administrators, regulatory requirements around evaluation policies and procedures, and Professional Development Plans and Corrective Action Plans. Following is an overview of this portion of the guidance:

- All regulatory requirements set forth in N.J.A.C. 6A:10 are in place.
- Districts must train educators on the evaluation rubrics, including the co-observation provision required of all administrators to ensure inter-rater reliability. Training must take into account the “realities of evaluation for the upcoming year” and should be tweaked “to highlight procedures and processes that will be impacted due to potential hybrid scheduling.”
- Districts must communicate evaluation policies and procedures to staff by Oct. 1.
- School Improvement Panels (ScIPs) are required to convene and should play a significant role in “making decisions regarding procedures.” DEACs are no longer required, but districts are urged to reconvene them.
- The planning of Professional Development Plans (PDPs) should take into account “issues related to the impact of COVID-19 school closures.” PDPs are living documents that may be revised during the year, and individuals who received a score of NE in 2019-20 will need to document 40 PD hours (encompassing a two-year period) in spring 2021.
- Districts should ensure that individuals on Corrective Action Plans (CAPs) are effectively supported. As is stated in the regulations, ScIPs are tasked with ensuring that administrators are implementing CAPs correctly.

As ever, the Professional Development and Instructional Issues (PDII) Division at NJEA continues to monitor NJDOE’s guidance and engage in collaboration and advocacy around emergent issues. Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, we have advocated for our members and the students they serve. Members who have questions or concerns about the implementation of this guidance should immediately reach out to their UniServ field representative and/or a member of the PDII Division.