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May 31, 2012

**TO:** Chief School Administrators  
Charter School Lead Persons

**FROM:** Peter Shulman, Chief Talent Officer *PS*  
Division of Teacher and Leader Effectiveness

**SUBJECT: Educator Evaluation System Implementation Update**

This memo provides an update on our ongoing work to improve educator evaluations in New Jersey. Please share this information broadly with administrators, teachers, and other stakeholders in your district.

## 1. UPDATES AND RESOURCES

### Teacher Evaluation

#### **Excellent Educators for New Jersey (EE4NJ) Teacher Evaluation Cohort 2 Pilot Selection Process**

The submission period for applications to the EE4NJ Teacher Evaluation Cohort 2 Pilot Notices of Grant Opportunity closed on April 26 and the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) is now reviewing 49 applications. NJDOE intends to notify selected districts in June and the grant start date is July 15.

#### **Teaching Practice Observation Instrument Review**

The Office of Evaluation is identifying a process for developing a list of approved teaching practice observation instruments that meet the state's requirements, outlined in our [FAQs](#). This process will allow providers, districts, and other stakeholders to submit instruments for review by the Department. Once an instrument is evaluated through a formal review process and found to meet our requirements, it will be added to the list of approved instruments. Districts will be able to submit instruments they have developed or modified for consideration against the specified criteria, and will still be required to follow public contracts law in procuring the services of any instrument provider. We will be outlining this process in more detail and launching it in the coming months. We urge districts to review the department's instrument requirements closely as they embark on their instrument selection process.

### **Educator Evaluation Technology Platform**

In the coming months, the state will be working to develop or secure an educator evaluation technology platform to assist districts in conducting evaluations and collecting related data. Our goal is to provide this as an optional tool at no cost or at a reduced cost to districts, and to ensure it is adaptable for use with all approved observation instruments on the list described above. We will provide more information about this platform in future memos.

### **NJ Spotlight Events on Teacher Evaluation Pilot**

In recent months, NJ Spotlight has hosted two roundtable events to discuss the state's teacher evaluation pilot work. The first panel, held on March 10, covered progress on the pilot to date and included as panelists two teachers, a principal, and a superintendent participating in the pilot, as well as two NJDOE employees leading evaluation activities. This panel discussed lessons learned and ongoing implementation work, as well as the experiences of the educators on the ground. Video transcripts can be accessed at [http://www.njspotlight.com/evaluation\\_roundtable/](http://www.njspotlight.com/evaluation_roundtable/).

On May 12, NJ Spotlight hosted a second panel to discuss progress made in training educators in the new teaching practice frameworks, and to share experiences from the field. Panelists in this session included two teachers, a principal, and a school improvement supervisor participating in the pilot, as well as one NJDOE employee. Their discussion focused largely on Charlotte Danielson's *A Framework for Teaching*, which is one of several frameworks being used by pilot districts. Panelists also touched upon the use of student achievement measures in the teacher evaluation system. The video transcript will be posted on the NJ Spotlight website in the coming weeks.

### Principal Evaluation

#### **Excellent Educators for New Jersey (EE4NJ) Principal Evaluation Application Process**

The submission period for applications to the [Notice of Grant Opportunity](#) (NGO) for the 2012-13 principal evaluation system pilot program closed on May 30. The NJDOE conducted a technical assistance session for this NGO on May 17; the presentation from this session may be found [here](#), and updated FAQs have been posted [here](#). In addition, a set of resources for principal evaluation work has been posted to the [Resources](#) page of our website. Districts selected for the pilot will be notified by the end of June and the grant start date is August 1.

## **2. SPOTLIGHT FROM THE FIELD: BERGENFIELD TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS**

Under the leadership of district superintendent Dr. Michael Kuchar, Bergenfield School District has taken significant steps toward **developing principals as instructional leaders** who are responsible for providing teachers with actionable feedback founded on **accurate and reliable ratings** as part of the teacher evaluation process.

Bergenfield continues to demonstrate high levels of commitment and progress in two of the most challenging aspects of teacher evaluation reform: **ensuring accuracy and inter-rater agreement among external observers and principals**. Monitoring the reliability and accuracy of observation data can identify potential problems, such as insufficient understanding of the observation instrument. Once rating scoring quality is assured, the quality of the feedback given to teachers becomes paramount. Bergenfield Superintendent Dr. Michael Kuchar said, "One of the most important challenges in regards to teacher evaluation reform is finding ways for teachers to focus

on the feedback and identified areas of growth generated from the observation process rather than the ratings."

- In recent years, Bergenfield has partnered with the University of Washington to train and calibrate administrators on the use of the 5 Dimensions of Teaching and Learning (5D Assessment). Through the use of video exemplars, **Bergenfield's administrators have trained by rating lessons on the videos and comparing them to experts' ratings.** This helps to ensure they are scoring accurately.
- In the current pilot year, **Bergenfield is ensuring the reliability of their scoring by double-scoring**, a process by which two or more district administrators are observing the same lesson live and generating independently-scored observations. A consultant was employed to conduct double-scoring and analyze the degree of inter-rater agreement among observers.
- **Bergenfield has identified the need for ongoing training for observers** to distinguish among teaching practice at different performance levels so that appropriate feedback can be given to teachers.

The double-scoring and use of multiple observers observing the same lesson demonstrate a significant investment in ensuring the quality of observations, a necessary step to delivering feedback that will help teachers improve their practice, and one that the state is including in the second year of the pilot program. Bergenfield's work demonstrates how classroom observations are being used in the pilot to provide better feedback that can help all teachers grow. More sophisticated observation instruments and protocols allow teachers and observers to identify strengths and opportunities for growth on multiple dimensions of teaching practice.

For more information about Bergenfield's work as an EE4NJ pilot district, visit their website at <http://www.bergenfield.org/Page/62>.

### 3. QUESTIONS AND RESOURCES

We are continuing to update the EE4NJ pilot program website, and we invite you to visit <http://www.state.nj.us/education/EE4NJ/> and view new [FAQs](#) for additional information. If you have questions that are not addressed in our communications or the FAQs, please send them directly to our email inbox at [EE4NJ@doe.state.nj.us](mailto:EE4NJ@doe.state.nj.us).

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