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TO: Chief School Administrators
Charter School Lead Persons

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

SUBJECT: Educator Evaluation System Implementation Update

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The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) continues to prepare for statewide implementation of reformed educator evaluation systems. Please share the information in this update broadly with your school and local community.

I. REQUIREMENTS AND RESOURCES FOR ALL NON-PILOT DISTRICTS

Deadlines

As all districts prepare to implement new teacher and principal evaluations in 2013-14, please be aware of the following deadlines required by the *TEACHNJ Act* and proposed regulations. *Please note that districts impacted by Hurricane Sandy may request extensions by contacting educatorevaluation@doe.state.nj.us or calling 609-777-3788 – we will gladly work with you to accommodate your needs.*

- **By October 31, 2012**, all districts should have formed a District Evaluation Advisory Committee (DEAC) to ensure stakeholder engagement in evaluation reform.
 - DEACs should now be meeting regularly to plan and discuss progress toward evaluation goals and activities. Additional guidance on this work has been provided in [previous memos and other resources posted on the evaluation website](#).
- **By December 31, 2012**, all districts must adopt educator evaluation rubrics that include state-approved teaching and principal practice evaluation instruments.
 - More information about this process is detailed below, and [posted on the evaluation website](#).
 - Before the December 31 deadline, we will send information about the reporting process for districts to share selected instruments. This will include a list of questions reflecting required criteria from the *TEACHNJ Act* (pp. 8-9).
- **By January 31, 2013**, all districts must begin to “test and refine evaluation rubrics” according to the *TEACHNJ Act* (p. 9). Some sample activities might include:
 - Piloting the new evaluation instruments in selected schools;
 - Testing out new observation protocols in a subset of schools or classrooms;
 - Thinking about connections between observation results and professional development opportunities; and/or
 - Troubleshooting the language and vocabulary of evaluation instruments and building a common language among educators.
- **By February 1, 2013**, all districts must form a School Improvement Panel to oversee evaluation activities.
 - Guidance about this process is detailed on page 4.
- **In February 2013**, all districts must report to the NJDOE on their progress toward the requirements listed above in a specified format to be provided.

Educator Practice Evaluation Instruments: State Approval/District Selection

All districts must select teaching and principal practice evaluation instruments by December 31, 2012. As specified in previous memos, the NJDOE has been conducting a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process to develop and release a list of state-approved instruments. The

[Approved Teaching Practice Evaluation Instrument List](#) and [Approved Principal Practice Evaluation Instrument List](#) have been posted and updated in the preceding weeks.

The entire RFQ process for teacher and principal evaluation instruments is detailed on our website at: <http://www.nj.gov/education/EE4NJ/providers/>. The [teaching practice evaluation instrument RFQ](#) and [principal practice evaluation instrument RFQ](#) are both posted on that page.

The final RFQ submission deadline for inclusion on the approved list in 2012 is November 30th.

Please note that districts planning to adopt their own “home-grown” instruments must submit the RFQ by the November 30th deadline. The NJDOE will post the final update to the Approved Instrument Lists for this round of RFQs no later than December 21, 2012.

We anticipate adding instruments to the approved lists through future RFQ processes in the spring or summer of 2013.

TEACHNJ Act (Tenure Law) Items

The Office of Evaluation continues to receive many contacts about the evaluation implications of the tenure law passed on August 6th; the following information addresses several common questions.

New Timelines: Who is Covered

The timelines for earning and maintaining tenure according to the [TEACHNJ Act](#) (p. 4) apply to “All teaching staff members employed on or after the effective date of August 6, 2012 in the position of:

- teacher
- principal, other than administrative principal, assistant principal, vice-principal
- assistant superintendent
- all school nurses, including school nurse supervisors, head school nurses, chief school nurses, school nurse coordinators, and any other nurse performing school nursing services
- school athletic trainer, and
- any other employees in positions which require them to hold appropriate certificates issued by the board of examiners, serving in any school district or under any board of education, excepting those who are not the holders of proper certificates in full force and effect, and school business administrators shared by two or more school districts.”

The NJDOE intends to provide guidance on the evaluation of supervisors in regulations that will be proposed before the end of the 2012-13 school year.

Mentoring for Novice and Experienced Teachers

2012-13 is a transitional year for mentoring programs, and new regulations under development will define mentoring and related activities reflecting the *TEACHNJ Act*. During this school year, districts should tailor their current mentoring programs to the needs of the individual teacher and should provide comprehensive training on the evaluation rubric and expectations for

highly effective performance. The mentoring program should also include, but not be limited to, orientation to the district's culture, curriculum, technology systems, and assessment program. Mentoring activities at the school level should be developed in consultation with the School Improvement Panel and be aligned with the district mentoring plan. In the case of the novice teacher, i.e., a teacher under the provisional certificate, the mentoring program should also continue to meet all the requirements specified in current regulations (N.J.A.C. 6A:9-8.2 and 3.).

School Improvement Panel Formation, Activities, and Links to Professional Development

According to the *TEACHNJ Act* (pp. 6-9) and proposed regulations, each district is required to establish a School Improvement Panel in each of its schools by February 1, 2013.

- **Composition:** The school principal or designee, an assistant/vice principal, and a teacher selected in consultation with the “majority representative.”
 - For traditional public schools, the “majority representative” usually refers to the local teachers’ association leadership.
- **Mission:** Ensure the effectiveness of the school’s teachers.
- **Duties:** Oversee mentoring and foster a culture of continuous improvement, conduct evaluations (including mid-year evaluations of teachers rated ineffective or partially effective), and identify opportunities to inform professional development.
 - **Note:** The appointed teacher will not participate in evaluation activities except with the approval of the majority representative.

2012-13 is a transitional year for school and district professional development (PD) committees and planning requirements. During this school year, districts are expected to maintain the previous local and school PD committees and establish a School Improvement Panel as explained above. Please see Appendix A for a chart detailing the relevant evaluation and PD committees that are currently required at the school and district levels.

New regulations governing PD planning and the role of the School Improvement Panel have been proposed and are currently in discussion before the New Jersey State Board of Education. A second round of regulations that elaborate on PD requirements will be put forth in first discussion in February, 2013.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

We have updated the FAQ section of the evaluation website with answers to several questions about the tenure law and its impact on evaluations. Please view these FAQ here: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/EE4NJ/faq/#tenure> and send any additional questions not covered to educatorevaluation@doe.state.nj.us. We will continue to update the FAQ.

Update on Additional Policy Guidance

As we have consistently stated, we are committed to working with teachers, principals, superintendents, and school board members in making difficult policy decisions. In honoring this commitment, the Department is taking the necessary time to learn from pilot districts, our state advisory group, and the successes and challenges of other states and districts. When policy

decisions and guidance are in place (by early Spring, 2013), the NJDOE will conduct regional information sessions to share details and answer questions.

In the meantime, we understand that assessing student performance in non-tested grades and subjects (e.g. anything other than 4th-8th-grade language arts and math) is one area where districts are eager to learn more and get started. The NJDOE *will not* be creating new state assessments for every grade and subject, so districts should continue pursuing this work locally and collaboratively. Many who are already working within districts or forming consortia across districts have found the following resources ([posted on our website](#)) helpful:

- [Alternative Student Assessment Options via the MET Project](#)
- *National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality:*
 - [State Approaches to Measuring Student Growth for the Purpose of Teacher Evaluation](#)
 - [Measuring Teachers' Contributions to Student Learning Growth for Nontested Grades and Subjects](#)
- *District/State Examples:*
 - [Austin ISD Student Learning Objectives \(SLO\) Resources](#)
 - [Denver Public Schools Student Growth Objectives Information](#)
 - [New York's EngageNY Site for SLO Resources](#)
 - [Overview of Rhode Island's SLOs](#)

Best Practices from the Field: Hunterdon County

As districts prepare for statewide rollout of improved evaluation systems next year, some innovative approaches can provide lessons learned to other districts. One example is the use of consortium training in Hunterdon County. Under the leadership of Hunterdon Central Superintendent Chris Steffner, 14 districts within the county have formed a consortium to more effectively and efficiently train educators in their common teaching practice evaluation instrument (Danielson). The consortium was proposed at a regular superintendent roundtable meeting during a discussion about the need to cut costs, and the group opened the opportunity to all Hunterdon County districts, with Hunterdon Central taking the lead.

Over the summer, administrators trained with peers in the same classroom at the same time. These new “in-house” trainers will allow the districts to train new hires without incurring additional outside costs. The group is now taping training sessions so they can be replicated virtually, with teachers soon to join the turnkey training. This method provides a systematic way to ensure all future employees and administrators receive training upon entering the district. The team believes that creating a pool of internal experts will help put the focus on best practices rather than merely compliance. In addition, significant cost savings have been realized, with an estimated \$118,800 savings on training and materials at Hunterdon Central High School alone.

According to Superintendent Steffner, “The goal was to share our resources, improve articulation among the districts, and reduce costs...it has done all of those things, and we now can share our training experiences and develop shared best practices.”

If your district's experience with evaluation activities represents a best practice that other New Jersey districts can learn from, we want to hear about it. Please email

educatorevaluation@doe.state.nj.us with a brief description of your work and the appropriate contact information so that someone from the Office of Evaluation can follow up.

II. 2012-13 EVALUATION PILOTS

Teacher Evaluation Pilot

Pilot participants have completed training and are now conducting observations according to their selected teaching practice evaluation instruments. They are utilizing a toolkit of information and resources provided by the NJDOE to execute the various components of the pilot program. We plan to use this toolkit as the foundation for a more detailed version that we will distribute to all districts in preparation for statewide rollout next year. Pilot districts will continue to provide feedback and input to help strengthen and refine this guidance.

We are pleased to announce that two districts successfully applied to the rebid of the Title I Notice of Grant Opportunity and are now participating in the 2012-13 teacher evaluation pilot. Freehold Borough (Monmouth) and Gloucester City (Camden) have joined the 10 other districts and consortia piloting new teacher evaluations this year.

Principal Evaluation Pilot

Participants in the principal evaluation pilot are now completing training on the evaluation instrument. As part of the training, each principal and evaluator must meet to review the instrument, identify potential sources of evidence for the competencies to be assessed, and agree on professional growth goals. The principal and evaluator must also review the previous year's student assessment data and determine student achievement goals for the current school year.

III. SPOTLIGHT FROM THE FIELD: COLLINGSWOOD, WOODBURY, AND LAWRENCE

Teacher Evaluation Pilot Spotlight: Collingswood and Woodbury

Quality training for teachers and evaluators is a key component of effective implementation efforts in pilot districts. The **Collingswood School District**, under the leadership of Dr. Scott Oswald, has utilized the following turnkey training model:

- A cadre of teachers was invited to participate in evaluator training to learn to lead turnkey training opportunities for remaining members of the staff.
- Turnkey teacher trainers were supported by the District Evaluation Pilot Advisory Committee (DEAC) with collaborative planning and training materials.
- Trainers were mobilized as specialists on particular areas of the teacher practice rubric. Staff members rotated from trainer to trainer in a jigsaw model.
- Issues that required follow up and clarification were captured during turnkey training sessions and returned to the DEAC, where targeted communication was planned.
- Forward-going, turnkey trainers continue to engage with staff members to ensure that all teachers are developing a clear picture of the criteria by which they will be evaluated.

According to Dr. Oswald, “I am pleased with the open minds with which our staff is entering this new endeavor. As with most school districts, there is a lot going on right now for teachers...over and above putting their energy into doing great things with the students in their classrooms. Our DEAC members, trainers, and teachers in general have faced this new challenge with positive attitudes and open minds. Our teachers have been the key to our success thus far.”

The **Woodbury School District** has also made significant progress in some of the more sophisticated requirements of the pilot:

- Superintendent Joseph Jones and teacher leaders have already determined the weights and measures by which the summative evaluation will be calculated, and teacher leaders are collaborating with staff members to set learning goals for students as part of the observational protocol.
- The district has finalized a scheduling matrix for the school year to ensure that all of the various types of required observations are completed.
- The DEAC is pleased that many of the current district curricular and instructional initiatives now fall under a single framework, which has provided a common language to discuss matters related to classroom activity.

Superintendent Jones commented positively on some of the current year's observational procedures. He remarked that “another benefit of the pilot process has been the requirement for dual observations and inter-rater reliability training. As practitioners, we have always recognized a need to do better when it comes to these matters of consistency and reliability. Through the expectations of the pilot, we have been driven to attend to these measures, and the system is more sound as a result.”

Principal Evaluation Pilot Spotlight: Lawrence

The **Lawrence Township School District** has conducted training in the principal practice evaluation instrument in a thoughtful and comprehensive way. According to Superintendent Crystal Edwards, “this training has enhanced our understanding of effective leadership practices that are correlated with increased student achievement.” Specifically:

- The principals, assistant principals, supervisors, and central office administrators participated in a three-day onsite training on balanced leadership. During this training, they learned about 21 Leadership Responsibilities and how they influence student achievement.
- In October, a training consultant joined the central office administrators in meeting with various leadership groups.
 - Discussions were focused on assisting the administrators with developing their school/department goals for the year. Goals were chosen from one of the data points in connection to each principal’s area of responsibility.
 - Each administrator presented with members of their “critical friends” group. This group is designed to provide professional support and consists of other administrators who work at the same or similar levels.
 - Administrators discussed goals, action plans, timelines, and artifacts that could be utilized to link student learning to principal evaluation.
 - Principals received feedback to help them refine their focus and growth goals.

Principal Judith Bronston of Lawrenceville Elementary School commented, “This process has helped me become more focused on my goals and be more intentional in my leadership.” Superintendent Edwards believes that “participation in the pilot has seen the increase in both quantity and quality of focused and purposeful conversations on leadership and student achievement that administrators have throughout the district. It is important to understand that the superintendents must invest large amounts of time training, conferencing, and supporting administrators as they implement the new protocol.”

IV. OFFICE OF EVALUATION INFORMATION

The Office of Evaluation has hired to fill several staff positions, and our new employees represent a range of experience in classrooms, leadership positions, and evaluation reform efforts. Appendix B includes a feature article highlighting the extensive school and classroom expertise of the evaluation team.

We are continuing to update the educator evaluation website, and we invite you to visit <http://www.state.nj.us/education/evaluation> and view new [FAQ](#) for additional information. If you have questions that are not addressed in our communications or the FAQ, please call our Evaluation Help Line at 609-777-3788, or send them directly to our email inbox at educatorevaluation@doe.state.nj.us.

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Attachment

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Senior Staff
Diane Shoener
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Nancy Besant
William Firestone
Todd Kent
CCCS Staff
Executive County Superintendents
Executive Directors of Regional Achievement Centers
Executive County School Business Administrators
Garden State Coalition of Schools
NJ LEE Group

APPENDIX A: Snapshot of School and District Committees

| | District Advisory Committee (DEAC) | Evaluation Committee | School Improvement Panel | Local Professional Development Committee (LPDC) | (District) School Professional Development Committee (SPDC) |
|-------------------------|---|---|--|--|--|
| Level | District | | School | District | School |
| Timeline/ Status | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be established in all NJ districts • Will sunset after full statewide implementation of evaluation reform is complete with some duties transferring to School Improvement Panel • Additional details in proposed regulations to be released in spring 2013 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be established in every school by February 1, 2013 • Will work each school year on ongoing basis | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminated by proposed regulations effective as of SY 2013-14 • Some duties to transfer to School Improvement Panel | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminated by proposed regulations effective as of SY 2013-14 • Some duties to transfer to School Improvement Panel | |
| Com- position | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers • School administrators • Central office administrators • Supervisor • Superintendent • Parent • Member of district BOE • Member terms up to discretion of local districts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School principal or designee • Assistant/vice principal • Teacher selected in consultation with majority representative • Member terms TBD in future regulations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 teachers elected through majority representative • 2 administrative staff appointed by Superintendent/CSA • Member terms are 2 years; members can be reappointed up to 3 times | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal or designee • At least 3 teachers elected through majority representative | |
| Duties | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guide and inform evaluation activities • Engage stakeholders in evaluation work • Share information • Collaborate with NJDOE to inform statewide evaluation policy • Generate buy-in | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversee mentoring and foster culture of continuous improvement • Conduct evaluations¹ • Identify PD opportunities • Conduct mid-year evaluation of teachers rated ineffective/partially effective | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with CSA and consider input from parents, community, local business leaders • Assess PD needs • Engage with PD providers • Review and incorporate school-level PD plans into district-level plan in alignment with PD Standards • Develop district mentoring plan | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess PD needs • Develop yearly school level plan to submit to LPDC | |

APPENDIX B: Feature Article on New Office of Evaluation Staff

¹ Note that “evaluation” is not the same as “observation” – observations can be performed by those outside of the School Improvement Panel.

Educator Evaluation Team Led by Practitioners

Who is better to guide and lead evaluation reform than those who have experienced life inside New Jersey schools and classrooms? No one, according to Tim Matheney, director of the Office of Evaluation. He recently announced that the Department of Education has added considerable expertise to its educator evaluation team by filling three positions with outstanding practitioners.

Paul Nedeau is the new assistant director of evaluation; Carl Blanchard is the policy manager; and Diana Pasculli fills the role of policy analyst. These new members join Paul Palek and Anthony Fitzpatrick, who were recently hired as implementation managers to work directly with the pilot districts.

“I am very pleased to expand our team with such outstanding individuals who represent extensive experience in various aspects of education,” Matheney pointed out. “All of them have had classroom teaching and education policy experience.” Before becoming the director of the Office of Evaluation this past summer, Matheney was principal of South Brunswick High School for eight years. He began his 23-year career in education as a social studies teacher.

“I know firsthand how important and arduous our task is to implement a first-rate evaluation system,” said Matheney. “I look forward to increasing the state’s capacity to help districts through these tough initial phases of the implementation. Our new staff members understand the challenges teachers and administrators face, and are eager to help support reform efforts.”

Paul Nedeau is a certified special education teacher who taught learning support English for two years at Overbrook High School in West Philadelphia. Most recently, he has been a project consultant for Operation Public Education at the University of Pennsylvania. In this role he worked with the Aldine Independent School District in Houston, TX to design and implement a new teacher evaluation, compensation, and support system. His work with teachers and administrators resulted in a successful design of a new evaluation system called INVEST that is being tested as a pilot project this school year.

The members of the Evaluation Pilot Advisory Committee (EPAC) will recognize Carl Blanchard, an active member. A National Board Certified teacher, Blanchard has taught biology at Franklin High School since 2001. In 2011, he was honored with titles of Teacher of the Year for Franklin Township and Somerset County. He has also been active in professional development, mentoring, and curriculum/test writing. He is excited to be at the forefront of teacher evaluation implementation. “At heart, I am a teacher and I want to see teaching recognized as a profession on a par with medicine, law, and engineering,” Blanchard explains. “Getting teacher evaluation right will go a long way to making this happen and I want to be involved in making that happen.”

While Blanchard is working on the policy aspects of the evaluation system, Diana Pasculli will be analyzing the legal aspects and helping the Department to create clear regulations to guide statewide roll-out of reformed evaluation systems. Pasculli recently earned her law degree from Rutgers University School of Law-Newark. She has had practical experience in doing legal research on the tenure legislation when it was in development. Her teaching experience began in the Bronx, New York before her time in Newark, where she taught reading and writing in grades 5-8 and was coordinator of learning specialists. As coordinator, she utilized a pilot evaluation system for observations and collaborative goal-setting. “In my experience as a teacher and a trainer of new

teachers, I developed a deep respect for a cyclical professional development process that was based on actual student learning and accurate feedback for teachers,” Pasculli observed. “I am excited to contribute to creating regulations surrounding this new evaluation system, which I believe is a critical step toward identifying teachers’ strengths and weaknesses and promoting student achievement.”

Already hard at work are Anthony Fitzpatrick and Paul Palek, the new implementation managers who join Bob Fisicaro as they work with pilot districts all over the state.

Fitzpatrick has an extensive background in professional development, having served as curriculum and technology supervisor in Kingsway Regional School District. He started his career as a history teacher for six years at Kingsway Regional, and presented nationally as Vice President for Professional Development with the American Institute for History Education. Fitzpatrick was drawn to the evaluation project because of his prior experience. “I chose to work on the implementation process because this is a critical and exciting time for education in New Jersey. My experience in curriculum and professional development will help me have productive discussions with my colleagues about meaningful classroom practice that is centered around instruction,” he expressed. “There are school districts doing great work in New Jersey and I have no doubt we will collectively raise the bar for all of our students.”

Paul Palek spends a lot of time on the road, too. His education background spans an impressive 37 years from the time he was a social studies teacher at Manchester Regional in 1975 to his most recent post as superintendent at Lenape Valley Regional in Stanhope, part of the current teacher evaluation pilot. His district boasted numerous awards under his tenure, including recognition of a top high school in U.S. News and World Report and an appearance on the list of NJDOE Reward Districts. In his mid-career, Palek was a principal and an assistant superintendent. His experience as an administrator will be especially valuable in helping districts implement the principal pilot project.

Matheney concluded, “The addition of these new members to a committed state evaluation team should ensure New Jersey’s educators that we aim to create the best possible system for lifelong learning and professional growth.”