

State Board of Education Adopts Changes to Streamline QSAC Monitoring and to Put Increased Focus on Student Achievement, Health and Safety, and Fiscal Accountability

For Immediate Release

Contact: Justin Barra
Allison Kobus
609-292-1126

Date: March 7, 2012

Trenton, NJ - The State Board of Education voted today to streamline the state process for monitoring school districts through amendments to the New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC). The changes begin to reduce burdensome compliance and paperwork requirements for districts while focusing on factors that are central to student achievement, health and safety, and fiscal accountability. The changes are part of a larger initiative to remove bureaucratic red tape and focus both state and district resources on what matters most - improving student achievement. The Department has committed to continuing to review QSAC to make it a more meaningful improvement tool and to align it with the state's new school-level accountability system outlined in its [No Child Left Behind flexibility application](#), which was approved by the US Department of Education last month.

"By adopting these recommendations, we can begin to replace a burdensome system with one that measures what's important. We can eliminate redundancies and free up resources to focus on the needs of all students to provide the highest quality educational experience," State Board President Arcelio Aponte said.

The recommended changes were developed by a QSAC task force comprised of educators, administrators and district board members from across the state, along with staff from the New Jersey Department of Education. This group reviewed all components of the QSAC regulation and proposed amendments to create a process that focuses on the critical components of school district effectiveness. The proposed amendments to the QSAC process will allow districts to focus attention and resources on factors that directly impact student achievement, fiscal accountability, and local district governance.

"We must continue to hold our schools and districts accountable for what matters most - whether their students are learning at high levels," said Acting DOE Commissioner Chris Cerf. "This action by the State Board today is just one more step to ensure that we are focusing state and districts resources on improving student achievement."

Under QSAC, public school districts are evaluated in five component areas—instruction and program, fiscal management, governance, personnel, and operations—to determine the extent to which a thorough and efficient education is being provided. The review has three components: a self-evaluation by the district, a review by the Executive County Superintendent, and then a final determination by the Commissioner. The district's placement on the performance continuum determines whether improvement is required and the extent of any technical assistance, support, or oversight the district may receive from the Department. QSAC also includes a process for both initiating and withdrawing from partial or full state intervention in a school district.

Among others, the changes today include:

- A reduction in the number of indicators that are self-evaluated by the district and monitored by the New Jersey Department of Education from 334 to 48, which decreases both the time districts spend on compliance and focuses attention on what matter most.
- The creation of a Statement of Assurance (SOA) that consists of 50 performance quality indicators in the five key component areas of school district effectiveness. The SOA is a self-evaluation tool that districts must complete annually and it will be incorporated as an indicator in each of the five key component areas of the QSAC review that occurs every 3 years. The NJDOE will use the SOA in the intervening years of the QSAC cycle to provide technical assistance to the district on areas where they have identified a deficiency in the SOA.
- The elimination of duplicative monitoring performed by the department and within the DPRs. For example, the DPRs no longer include monitoring of financial reports that are submitted to the NJDOE annually and no longer include financial management information already monitored through the budget review process.
- A focus on student growth in the evaluation of student achievement measures, rather than simply a review of whether a district met a certain proficiency level.

In its [interim report](#) in September, the Education Transformation Task Force identified a number of deficiencies in the current QSAC process. Among others, the report outlined how QSAC focuses on district "capacity" rather than student performance; that the information provided **under current QSAC regulations** is inconsistent, unreliable, and fails to distinguish between very different districts; that it has failed to drive district improvement;

and that it overlaps and at times contradicts the state's school-level accountability system.

The changes approved today will take effect immediately for districts undergoing a QSAC review this year.