



Department of Education Announces \$2.4 Million for Second Year of Teacher Evaluation Pilot Program in Preparation for Statewide Rollout in 2013-14

For Immediate Release

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Trenton, NJ - In order to continue to prepare for full statewide rollout of a new teacher evaluation system in 2013-14, the Department of Education today announced an additional \$2,400,000 to fund up to 20 new districts and to continue to support 10 existing districts in the development of a new teacher evaluation system as part of the Effective Educators for New Jersey (EE4NJ) pilot program. In addition, all districts across the state will be required to complete a number of steps to prepare for statewide rollout in 2013-14. Through both internal and external review of these ongoing pilots, the Department is continuing to build on the successes happening across the state and addressing the challenges in implementing a new evaluation system.

"Because we know that the teacher in front of the classroom is the most important in-school factor affecting student achievement, we are working hard to develop a new teacher evaluation system that will provide meaningful feedback and actionable data to help all of our teachers, regardless of experience, continuously improve their practice," said Acting Commissioner Chris Cerf. "We owe it to our educators to get this right, and we are confident that after monitoring progress in our pilot districts over multiple years, we will have a statewide system in 2013-14 that provides more meaningful support to every New Jersey teacher."

As part of the second year of the pilot, the Department will hold a competitive process to select up to 20 new school districts that will receive a financial award and help to shape the new evaluation system. The application and selection process will be similar to the one conducted last year. District applications will be due on April 26, 2012, and selected districts will be notified in June. In addition, the 10 districts currently participating in the pilot will be eligible for smaller awards to continue their program into a second year.

Currently, 10 pilot districts, 19 School Improvement Grant (SIG) schools, and Newark are implementing the new evaluation system as part of the state's first-year pilot. The pilot was designed to allow flexibility for districts to experiment with a more meaningful and rigorous evaluation system, guided by the following principles:

- Teachers should never be evaluated on the basis of a single consideration such as test scores, much less a single test, but on the basis of multiple measures that include both student learning outcomes and effective practice.
- Where applicable, the component of the evaluation based on "learning outcomes" should include, but not be limited to, progress on objective assessments such as NJ ASK. In non-tested grades and subjects, for example, student progress might include a focus on student work or other locally-determined criteria.
- To avoid penalizing teachers who work with our highest-needs students, learning outcomes should be based on student progress and not absolute performance.
- To give teachers meaningful information to help them develop, the new system will differentiate teacher effectiveness using a four-tiered rating system, including "ineffective," "partially effective," "effective," and "highly effective."
- Districts should provide a direct link between the results of the evaluation and professional development opportunities to help teachers at all levels continuously improve.
- To assure consistency and fairness, plans should address inter-rater reliability of observers.
- Any personnel consequences connected with evaluations remain a matter of local decision and applicable state law, and are not an element of the pilot program.

Based on initial feedback from current pilot districts and emerging national research, the Department has outlined several changes to next year's pilot program in order to continue learning from the field. Among others, these changes include:

- Requiring unannounced observations;
- Providing more flexibility in measures of student outcomes for teachers of non-tested subjects and grades;
- Requiring new observation processes to ensure inter-rater agreement and accuracy, including the use of external observers and double-scoring of some sessions.

"Over the past year, we have heard from educators and administrators in our pilot that nearly without exception they are having more meaningful and constructive conversation about their practice than ever before. With big steps already taken to tie this feedback to professional development, we are seeing evidence that the conditions are in place to support all teachers in the process of continuous improvement," said Acting Commissioner Cerf.

“The purpose of the first-year pilot was not to get everything exactly right on the first try, but to identify successes and challenges. By working closely with each of these pilot districts, we are in a strong position to do exactly that.”

Initial feedback from the current pilot districts has demonstrated significant momentum going into the second year of the pilot. Several lessons learned so far include:

- On the whole, teachers are identifying that they are receiving more meaningful feedback on their practice than ever before, and that they appreciate having a seat at the table to help collaboratively develop the new evaluation system;
- Stakeholder engagement is critical throughout implementation of a new evaluation system;
- District stakeholder committee meetings that are open to additional staff members help build a culture of trust, transparency, and two-way communication;
- Quality and in-depth evaluator and teacher training is critical to teacher understanding, administrator familiarity with technology, accuracy, and reliability of ratings, and quality feedback;
- Capacity challenges exist for administrators in completing the increased number of observations; this requires shifting priorities and responsibilities; and
- Developing assessments or other means of evaluating student learning for non-tested grades and subjects pose a significant challenge and require that teachers work through a process of identifying student learning objectives tied to the curriculum.

The Department of Education is currently working with pilot districts and with the state-level Evaluation Pilot Advisory Committee (EPAC) to address these lessons learned and provide related guidance and support to the field in the future.

To ensure that the Department learns as much as possible during the pilot, the Department announced last month that it has partnered with Rutgers University to conduct an external evaluation of the pilot. A final report will be produced by the end of the year, and interim reports will be developed on a regular basis. Details can be found at <http://www.nj.gov/education/news/2012/0228ee4nj.htm>. The second year of the pilot will also include an external evaluation, with details forthcoming.

In addition to the pilot, every district in the state will need to complete a series of steps defined by the Department of Education next year to prepare for statewide rollout in 2013-14. Among others, this includes the selection and field testing of a teaching practice evaluation instrument, the training of teachers and evaluators on that instrument, and the development of a local district stakeholder advisory group. The Department has identified both state and federal funding that can be used to support this work.

A copy of the Notice of Grant Opportunity (NGO) can be found at:

- <http://www.state.nj.us/cgi-bin/education/grants/gropps2.pl?string=recnum=01581&maxhits=1>: For all districts that are not Title I LEAs with 100% of schools receiving Title I funds and having schoolwide status, and not participating in EE4NJ Cohort 1
- <http://www.state.nj.us/cgi-bin/education/grants/gropps2.pl?string=recnum=01580&maxhits=1>: For districts that are Title I LEAs with 100% of their schools receiving Title I funds and having schoolwide status.

Details on the current pilot program can be found at <http://nj.gov/education/EE4NJ/>.

A list of current pilot districts can be found at <http://nj.gov/education/EE4NJ/faq/>.