

## EE4NJ Pilot Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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### Reasons for Pilot Program

#### **Q: Why do we need to change teacher evaluation practices in New Jersey?**

A: Effective educators are the most important in-school factor for student success, but we currently lack a robust statewide evaluation system that adequately measures effectiveness. Teachers need timely, meaningful feedback to improve their practice, and students deserve teachers who are highly effective and continuously improve. A high-quality evaluation system will enable districts to identify each educator's professional development needs and support his/her growth. Differentiating teachers based on their performance rather than treating them as interchangeable widgets is fair to educators and shows respect for their profession. A high-quality evaluation system will also help districts and schools improve their personnel decisions. By linking tenure decisions, RIFs, and compensation levels to educator effectiveness, rather than to seniority and advanced degrees, schools systems will be able to attract and retain more effective teachers and drive significant improvements in student learning. The [New Jersey Educator Effectiveness Task Force Report](#), released in March 2011, outlines several steps for implementing an improved evaluation system.

#### **Q: Are other states and districts changing teacher evaluation practices?**

A: Yes; many. The federal government's educational reform agenda has focused on supporting teachers as professionals in the classroom while also holding them accountable for student learning. Through a number of grant programs, the federal government has invested in states' development of innovative strategies that help teachers improve student outcomes. Across the country, states are changing laws to support student performance-focused evaluation systems. At both the state and district level, pilot programs are testing new systems and implementing lessons learned. The NJDOE is tracking this work closely and examining best practices to help inform our system as well.

#### **Q: Why is the NJDOE conducting a pilot program rather than implementing new evaluations in all districts?**

A: The purpose of the EE4NJ pilot program is to identify districts willing to implement the Task Force recommendations and provide feedback to NJDOE so adjustments can be made. We are doing this to learn about successes and challenges on a small scale first in order to later implement an improved system framework statewide. We want to actively engage district educators and stakeholders in shaping the development and implementation of the evaluation system so we can learn from those who will be directly affected by it. We recognize that changing the state's long-held educator evaluation practices will require a great deal of work and include growing pains. But doing so is in the best interest of students and families, and we

are committed to learning lessons from districts, schools, and educators along the way so we can design the best system possible.

**Q: How will this pilot benefit students?**

A: More than two decades of research findings show that student achievement is strongly linked to teacher effectiveness; highly skilled teachers produce better student results. In order to improve student performance, we must recruit the best and brightest to the profession, prepare and reward outstanding educators, support them in honing their practice, and incent them to teach in schools with struggling populations. By implementing rigorous, transparent, and trustworthy teacher evaluations in pilot districts, we aim to improve teacher effectiveness and thus student outcomes.

**Q: How will this pilot benefit educators?**

A: New Jersey, like the vast majority of other states, does not have an evaluation system that adequately measures teacher effectiveness, and the state only gives districts vague guidance. It's time we treat teachers like the professionals they are and take special care to identify and recognize greatness in the classroom and spend more energy developing and supporting those needing help. To accomplish this we need fair, credible, and rigorous evaluations to differentiate teacher performance. Educators in pilot districts will help shape this new system, providing vital feedback during development and implementation.

**Q: Why does this pilot include teacher but not principal evaluations when the task force report calls for both?**

A: The report calls for both, and we are working on both. However, we have much to learn from the pilot process and believe we are best served by taking it one step at a time. Principals in teacher evaluation pilot districts will play an active role in providing feedback for the new system. This will help them better understand and inform teacher evaluations, the results of which will form a large part of principal evaluations in the future. Concurrently with this pilot year, the state DOE will develop the new principal evaluation system and will call upon pilot districts to advise us on those plans as well. This will allow the state to focus on each major aspect of the system in turn while ensuring that one process informs the other.

**Q: Why is the pilot only one year long, when some other states and districts have taken several years to develop and implement evaluation systems?**

A: We have a sense of urgency about this matter. Our current evaluation systems, unfortunately, do not adequately meet the needs of students or educators. They must be changed. Moreover, a robust and meaningful evaluation system is the core of all other educator policies and practices. Without this critical element in place, we will not be able to inform and influence any other link in the chain, including teacher preparation, certification, professional development, compensation, and tenure. We want to launch pilots quickly, learn from our successes and challenges, and then develop a strong statewide system. We believe this is good for teachers, principals, and families.

**Pilot Funding, Application, and Selection**

**Q: How will the pilot be funded?**

A: To help pilot districts implement a strong evaluation system, the New Jersey Department of Education will award up to \$1,160,000 in EE4NJ grants to as many as nine pilots. This is a major investment in this critical work and demonstrates NJDOE's commitment to working with districts and schools as partners. LEAs will secure the services of an outside vendor to provide training on a teacher practice framework that meets the requirements set forth in the [Notice of Grant Opportunity](#).

**Q: What are the rules for districts of different sizes?**

The NJDOE is providing more than \$1.1 million of total funding to as many as nine pilot districts. Each applicant district with 600 or fewer teachers must develop a district-wide program that includes all schools and teachers. Since there is a cap on the per-district award amount, applicant districts with more than 600 teachers may choose to select a subset of their schools to participate or may choose to include more teachers and schools and bear any costs above the funding threshold. Teacher counts must include participating teachers from nonpublic schools. Grant funding amounts were derived based on costs of known teacher evaluation framework providers.

**Q: Can charter and vocational-technical schools apply?**

A: Yes; charter and vocational-technical schools, as distinct LEAs, are eligible to apply if they meet all other pilot criteria.

**Q: Are any LEAs ineligible?**

A: The following types of LEAs are ineligible to apply for a grant under this program:

- County Vocational School districts that have shared-time students; and
- Jointure Commissions, Educational Service Commissions, and Special Services School Districts.

**Q: Are districts with School Improvement Grant (SIG) schools eligible to apply?**

A: Yes. SIG schools will participate in implementation of the new teacher evaluation system but will not be part of pilot funding through the NGO since they have their own federal funding source. In its grant application, a SIG district will need to provide an explanation for how it will coordinate efforts funded under this program with similar work in its SIG schools.

**Q: What are the obligations for pilot applicants?**

A: Pilot districts will be expected to fully participate in all aspects of the project, including:

- Committing to begin the provider bidding process by mid-July, with final contracting contingent on being awarded the grant;
- Using student growth scores from NJASK in evaluations and helping develop new, high-quality assessments in currently untested grades and subjects;
- Using a teacher practice framework that is research-based and shown to be reliable, among other criteria;
- Establishing a district stakeholder advisory committee ; and
- Beginning evaluator training by Sep. 30, 2011, and teacher training by Nov. 1, 2011.

Applicants should consult with their nonpublic schools about their interest in participating prior to developing their proposal, as equitable participation for non-publics is required by statute.

**Q: How will pilot districts be selected, and what are the selection criteria?**

A: Reviewers will use the [selection criteria specified in the NGO](#) to review applications. We are looking for districts committed to implementing a robust evaluation system that includes measures of student achievement. We are also looking for partners who will help us learn lessons along the way and develop plans for a strong statewide system. The selection process will seek to ensure that the state's diversity is represented; this includes different regions of the state and varying District Factor Groups (DFGs). Additional criteria include, but are not limited to:

- Stakeholder support and engagement in implementation and providing feedback; and
- Central Office commitment to supporting principals through implementation.

**Q: What is the timeline for pilot application and selection?**

A: The Notice of Grant Opportunity (NGO) was released on June 15, 2011. The application is located at: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/EE4NJ>. The application deadline is July 28, 2011. We plan to announce selected districts in August, and evaluator training should begin in September.

**Q: When will the technical assistance session for the NGO be held?**

A: The technical assistance session for the EE4NJ Notice of Grant Opportunity will be held on June 20, 2011, from 10:00 AM to 12:00 noon at the NJ Department of Education, Building 200, LRC Room, River View Plaza, Trenton, 08625. Attendance at the technical assistance session is not required, but applicants are encouraged to attend. Pre-registration is required. Online registration must be completed at <http://education.state.nj.us/events/> no later than June 20, 2011. The room holds a maximum of 65 people and registration will automatically close once that number has been reached. Registrants requiring special accommodations for the workshop should identify their needs at the time of registration. E-mail inquiries may be directed to: [EE4NJ@doe.state.nj.us](mailto:EE4NJ@doe.state.nj.us).

**Pilot Program Details**

**Q: How will the pilot work?**

A: Pilot districts will receive grants from the NJDOE to implement the new state requirements for a robust teacher evaluation system during the 2011-2012 school year. In accordance with the [New Jersey Educator Effectiveness Task Force recommendations](#), these requirements include the following:

- Annual teacher evaluations based on standards of effective teacher practices and clear expectations;
- Multiple measures of teacher practice and student performance, with student academic progress or growth as a key measure;
- A summative rating that combines the scores of all the measures of teaching practice and student achievement;
- Four summative rating categories that clearly differentiate levels of performance; and

- A link from the evaluation to providing professional development opportunities that meet the needs of educators at all levels of practice.

Districts will ensure comprehensive training of all educators involved with the new evaluation system and will provide regular feedback to the NJDOE on pilot progress. Districts will need to follow specific implementation requirements, but they will also be given the flexibility to develop some elements of their own within the parameters provided.

**Q: What benefits will pilot districts receive from participating?**

A: Successful applicants will benefit in a number of ways. They will receive substantial financial support to provide high-quality training to their educators. The pilot offers districts an opportunity to engage educators and other stakeholders in shaping the development and implementation of a new evaluation system. Participation also gives districts the chance to familiarize themselves with the contours of the proposed system and contribute to its improvement in advance of statewide implementation. It is expected that the focus on teaching and student learning will support a culture of collaboration and sharing, continuous improvement, and transparency.

**Q: How will pilot districts interact with the NJDOE throughout the program?**

A: Participating districts will convene a district-level stakeholder advisory committee to oversee and guide the implementation of the evaluation system during the pilot period. Committee membership must include representation from the following groups: teachers from each school level (e.g., elementary, middle, high school), central office administrators overseeing the teacher evaluation process, administrators conducting evaluations, and the local school board. In addition, the committee must include a data coordinator who will be responsible for managing the student data components of the evaluation system. At the discretion of the superintendent, membership may also be extended to representatives of other groups, such as counselors, child study team members, instructional coaches, and new teacher mentors. One member of the advisory committee must be identified as the pilot program liaison with the NJDOE. In addition to ongoing communication and support from the department, NJDOE will convene all pilot district liaisons a minimum of four times throughout the course of the pilot period to discuss implementation, share successes, obstacles, and resources and problem-solve.

**Q: What role will educators have in the process?**

A: Educators from pilot districts will be fully engaged in the program. Teachers and administrators will be trained on the new framework. They will have the opportunity to join or provide feedback to the district advisory committee, which will regularly inform the NJDOE on pilot progress, challenges, and opportunities for improvement. They will be able to help shape the new evaluation system and will gain a year of experience with the framework before it is implemented state-wide.

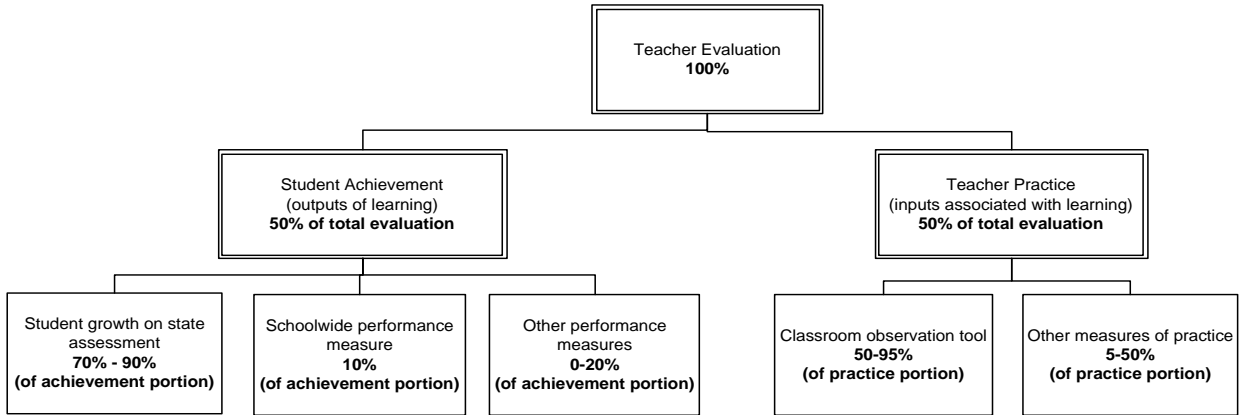
**Q: Who will be evaluated in the pilots?**

A: Schools that will be participating in the pilot must include all teachers of all subjects and grades who are providing instruction to students in the evaluations.

**Q: What components will comprise teacher evaluations?**

A: Teacher evaluations will be comprised of equal parts teacher practice (inputs) and direct measures of student achievement (outputs). Within each of those components, multiple measures will be used.

Task Force Recommended Framework for the New Teacher Evaluation System



**Q: What measures of teacher practice will be required?**

A: The Educator Effectiveness Task Force recommended that all districts use a high-quality state-approved teacher practice evaluation framework and at least one additional state-approved tool. The teacher practice evaluation framework should account for 50%-95% of this component, and the additional measure, such as student surveys and teacher portfolios, should comprise at least 5% of the teacher practice component, but not more than 50%.

**Q: How will student growth be measured?**

A: Growth models measure student progress. Such systems assess student performance at two points in time and generally control for factors such as previous performance or demographic characteristics. Growth scores can be tied to teachers. In simple terms, if the students in a teacher’s class make greater gains than similar students elsewhere, that teacher is credited with effectively raising student achievement. Growth measures are preferable to attainment measures because they account for a student’s academic starting point and give credit for progress made during the school year. The NJDOE will be able to generate statewide student growth scores in fall 2011. By fall 2012, the state will be able to tie growth scores to teachers. Pilot LEAs will use student growth scores from state assessments, when available, to measure teachers of tested subjects and grades. These include math and language arts in grades 4-8, where both pre- and post- scores on the state assessments are available. Pilot districts must agree to provide roster data (lists of teachers and their students by course) for these tested subjects and grades to the NJDOE from SY 09/10, SY 10/11, and SY 11/12 so it can generate growth scores for the districts and conduct analyses. Depending on when SY 11/12 student achievement results are available, it may be necessary for this work to extend into the first few months of the 2012-13 school year.

**Q: How will the NJDOE measure growth in the untested subjects and grades?**

A: Pilot districts, in partnership with the NJDOE, must identify existing or develop new measures of student performance in non-tested subjects and grades. These measures may include:

- a. Performance tasks (for subjects such as art, music, theater, gym, vocational-technical);
- b. Off-the-shelf or curriculum-based assessments that are standards-based;
- c. Nationally-normed tests (e.g., AP, IB, SAT);
- d. Student Learning Objectives (A standards-based statement in specific and measurable terms that describes what learners will know or be able to do as a result of mastering the skills and knowledge in the curriculum); and
- e. “Progress monitoring” evaluations for special education teachers.

Pilot LEAs must also agree to develop at least one school-wide measure of student achievement, with the NJDOE’s guidance.

**Q: What kind of training support will pilot district educators receive on the new system?**

A: The following training activities will be mandated for all evaluators and observers: A minimum of three days of training for evaluators (e.g., principals, vice-principals, supervisors, administrative department heads, as specified in code) and others who will use the teacher practice framework to evaluate teachers on either a formal or informal basis. The training must incorporate:

- a. The teaching practice evaluation domains/components of effective teacher practice that tie to the InTASC standards;
- b. The use of effective evaluation strategies and requirements;
- c. Sufficient practice for fidelity of implementation; and
- d. An authorization or certification that indicates the evaluator has met the training requirements.

In addition, a process must be in place to monitor and remediate evaluator accuracy, inter-rater reliability, and score inflation during the pilot year. Participating LEAs must provide ongoing support, including online or face-to-face coaching for all evaluators, across the school year to assist them in implementing the teacher practice evaluation framework with fidelity. During the pilot year, all LEAs will be expected to use the district’s selected teacher practice evaluation framework to review every teacher, using the following procedures:

- a. For non-tenured teachers, conduct a minimum of three formal observations (i.e., with pre-and post-conference input and feedback) for one instructional period or a minimum of 40 minutes;
- b. For tenured teachers, conduct a minimum of two formal observations (i.e, with pre-and post-conference input and feedback) for one instructional period or a minimum of 40 minutes;
- c. Conduct a minimum of two informal observations (i.e, without pre- and post-conferences) with feedback;
- d. Prepare one summative evaluation that results in a mutually-developed teacher professional development plan;
  - a. At least once per year, conduct teacher self-assessments of their own practice and compare with the evaluators’ assessments to calibrate teachers’ personal vision of effective practice;
  - b. Promote an environment for supportive and accurate feedback on teacher practice; and
  - c. Provide teachers with professional learning experiences to support improvement in teacher practice.

Evaluators will be expected to provide follow-up support as teachers develop their understanding of the teacher practice evaluation framework and its expectations. They must

provide a supportive, positive culture in which evaluation serves to improve teacher practices and student achievement.

**Q: How will the results of the pilot evaluation system be used?**

A: The state is not yet requiring districts to link evaluation results to personnel decisions. It is left to participating districts to determine how they will use pilot evaluation results. It is the goal of the NJDOE to ultimately have strong educator evaluations inform a wide array of decisions, from preparation and certification to tenure and compensation. These priorities can be seen in the reform [legislation proposed by the administration](#). The pilot year presents the state and districts an excellent opportunity to collaborate on a rigorous, trustworthy, transparent system before evaluations are tied to consequences through law or regulation.

**Q: What is the status of legislation to change teacher tenure rules and other teacher practice?**

A: The administration has proposed a [comprehensive reform package](#) that is being considered by the New Jersey legislature. A number of related bills have also been introduced. In many respects, these proposals reflect the recommendations of the task force report. The NJDOE is also considering regulations that would codify the recommendations.