



State of New Jersey
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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CHRIS CHRISTIE
Governor

KIM GUADAGNO
Lt. Governor

CHRISTOPHER D. CERF
Acting Commissioner

May 26, 2011

Dear Superintendent,

We all know that effective educators are the most important in-school factor for student success. In New Jersey, excellent educators help students make gains in learning every year. However, we currently lack a robust statewide evaluation system that assesses the effectiveness of our educators and differentiates between those excelling and those struggling. This makes it difficult for educators to receive timely, applicable feedback to improve their practice and to engage those excelling in supporting their peers.

We aren't the only state to recognize this opportunity for improvement. Across the country, states and districts are developing and implementing new teacher evaluation systems. In New Jersey, we see this as a critical component of the Governor's Education Reform Agenda. In order to ensure that all of our students graduate college and career ready, our educators must meet high professional standards in all aspects of their practice -- and a focus on student learning must be at the center.

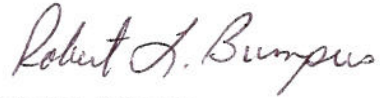
The New Jersey Educator Effectiveness Task Force Report, released back in March, outlines several steps for implementing an improved evaluation system. We will begin by piloting the new system in a few selected districts in the 2011-2012 school year so we can learn about what works and what doesn't work in order to roll out an improved system framework statewide. Educators from pilot districts will have the opportunity to help shape the system prior to statewide roll-out, providing direct feedback and guidance along the way.

Within the next few weeks, you will receive a notice of grant opportunity to participate in this pilot. We plan to announce selected districts in mid-August, and will require that selected pilots begin training evaluators early this fall. Pilot districts will be expected to contribute to all aspects of the project, including some cost sharing, providing data and feedback about implementation issues, and aligning their professional development plans with the needs of the pilot.

Since we want to drive improvements for our students and educators as soon as possible, we are proceeding with an aggressive timetable. Therefore, we recommend that those districts interested in participating as pilots move quickly to engage the support of their educators and other stakeholders. We believe that actively engaging with practitioners in the field will be the best way to develop a fair and meaningful system that incorporates stakeholder feedback at all stages in the process.

As members of the NJDOE team responsible for establishing innovative teacher evaluation systems, we encourage you to carefully consider the opportunity to have your district on the ground floor of this exciting initiative. New Jersey has always been a leader in education. Please help us continue that tradition for your respective school communities.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Robert L. Bumpus in cursive script.

Robert L. Bumpus
Executive County Superintendent Liaison to Commissioner

Handwritten signature of Jessani Gordon in cursive script.

Jessani Gordon
Director of Research, New Jersey Department of Education