



Department of Education Partners with Rutgers University to Conduct External Evaluation of Excellent Educators for New Jersey (EE4NJ) Teacher Evaluation Pilot Program

For Immediate Release

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Trenton, NJ – The New Jersey Department of Education announced today that it has selected Rutgers University Graduate School of Education to conduct an independent evaluation of the Excellent Educators for New Jersey (EE4NJ) teacher evaluation pilot program currently underway in 10 districts across the state. The evaluation will be used to identify successes and challenges in implementing a new educator evaluation system and will inform statewide rollout of a new evaluation framework in the 2013-14 school year.

“Over the past five months, we have begun the effort to develop a more fair, consistent, and learning-centered teacher evaluation system that will help all teachers, regardless of experience, continuously improve their practice. The purpose of the pilot is to empower our educators to drive this new evaluation framework, and we have already made great strides over the last several months in working with pilot districts,” said Acting Commissioner Chris Cerf. “We are excited to partner with Rutgers University to ensure that we have a rich and complete understanding of the experience of these districts to inform expansion of teacher evaluation reform statewide.”

Last August, the Department announced that these districts would implement a new teacher evaluation framework in the current school year. The pilot was designed to allow flexibility to 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 learning outcomes and effective practice, with 50 percent associated with each.
- 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 untested grades and subjects, for example, student progress might include a focus on student work or 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.

In order to ensure the Department learned as much as possible about pilot implementation, the Department decided to use an external organization to conduct a rigorous, independent evaluation of the pilot program. The Department selected Rutgers University, which stood out in part because their review team includes nationally-recognized researchers who bring an understanding of teacher quality issues and strong experience in program evaluation to this project.

“We are pleased to assist the New Jersey Department of Education and educators throughout the state by conducting this evaluation. The pilot of the teacher evaluation is very important for helping the state develop a feasible set of state guidelines and ensuring that the resulting policy improves the quality of teaching in the state,” said Dr. William Firestone, Professor of Education Policy at Rutgers Graduate School of Education and Principal Investigator of the contract. “Our work with the pilot districts will provide an objective view to ensure that the program is well designed and constructive.”

The evaluation will include two components: a review of the “process” and a review of the “outcomes” of the pilot. The Rutgers team will utilize surveys, focus groups, interviews, and an analysis of teacher practice and student growth data from the pilot districts. The “process” evaluation will provide information on the implementation of the pilot and stakeholders’ response to it. Specifically, it will address the extent and quality of implementation, barriers and successes, and comparison with previous evaluation systems. The “outcomes” evaluation will provide information on the ability of the pilot program to achieve its stated goals and will look at the distributions of evaluation ratings and student growth data.

Rutgers is now scheduled to present interim reports throughout the program that will help the New Jersey Department of Education refine the design of its teacher evaluation program. The evaluation team will also present a final report at the end of the contract.

“We committed to learning as much as possible during this pilot year to ensure that the ultimate framework we provide for all districts in 2013-14 is as strong as possible,” said Acting Commissioner Cerf. “This Rutgers team brings the experience and rigor necessary to guide this process and inform the development of our new system. We are grateful for their participation and look forward to working with them in the coming months.”