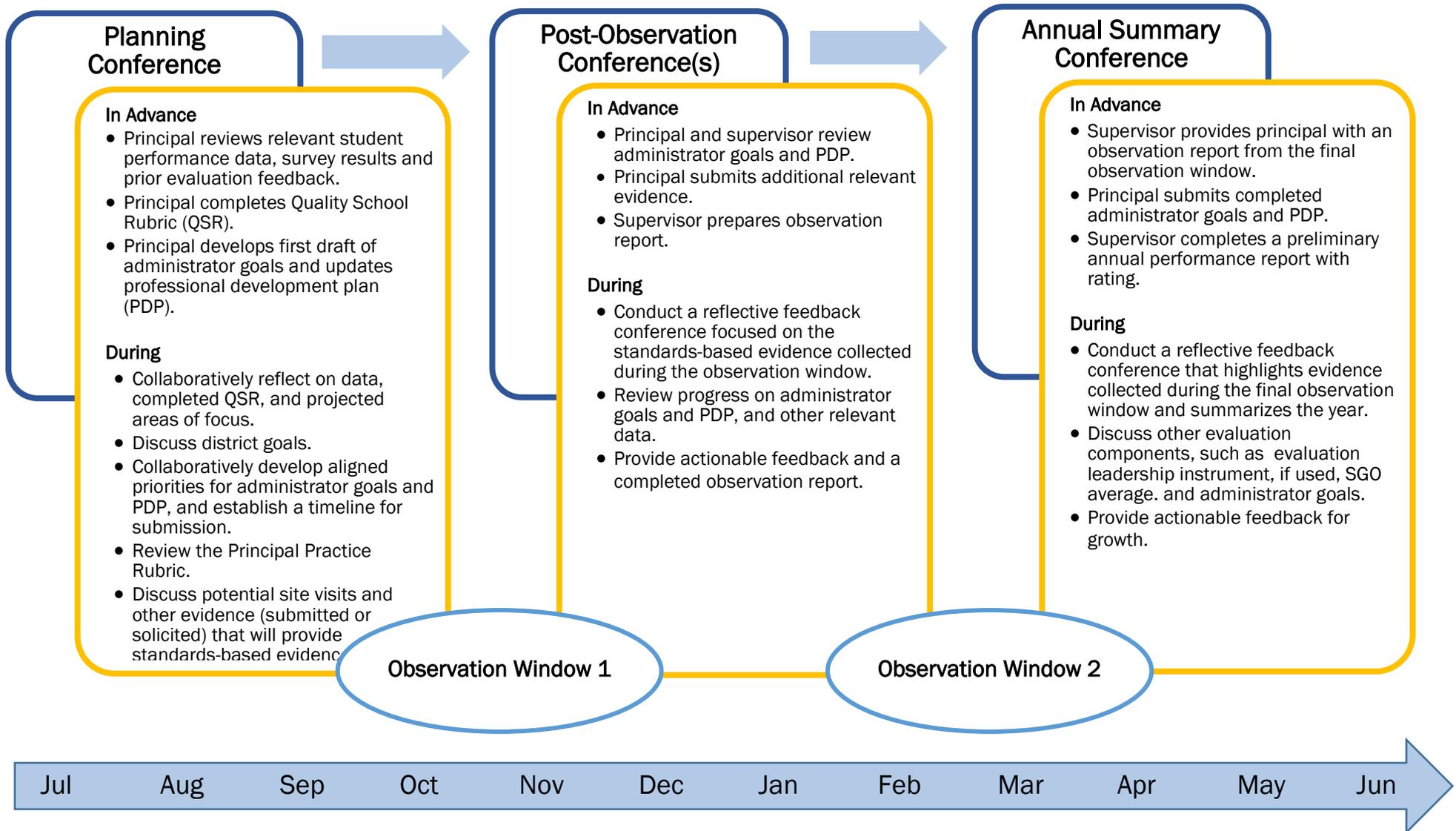# Using Principal Evaluation to Improve School Leader Effectiveness

Principal quality is second only to teacher quality among school-related factors in its impact on student learning[i], and it can be improved through effective principal evaluation[ii]. Below, the New Jersey Department of Education provides a number of suggestions developed in collaboration with New Jersey's principals and district leaders for maximizing principal[iii] evaluation for professional growth. The suggestions are organized by component, followed by a timeline illustrating how these approaches could be incorporated into the evaluation cycle. Components and weights for principal evaluation can be found in [Principal Evaluation Overview](#).

Principal Practice	Suggested Approach

Observations and Conferences	• For each observation, collect evidence of a principal's practice over a window of time (i.e. 2-3 months)
	  ○ Collect evidence from multiple sources including, but not limited to, building walkthroughs, school events, conferences, data review (benchmark assessments, PARCC, results from climate or teacher surveys, etc.), stakeholder feedback, and submitted documents such as agendas, blogs, tweets, newsletters, presentations, communications with parents or other stakeholders.
	  ○ Use an approved practice instrument. Include the optional Evaluation Leadership Instrument as a measure of practice, when it adds value (e.g. for novice principals)
	• Hold conferences that enhance professional learning
	  ○ **Planning Conference**
	    ▪ Conduct early in the year. Review data and district goals, establish priorities/timeline for administrator goals and PDP;
	    ▪ Consider having principals use the Quality School Rubric in advance of the planning conference, to reflect on strengths and weaknesses in the school; and
	    ▪ Discuss high-value activities for site visits and alternative evidence that will highlight difficult-to-observe actions.
	  ○ **Post-observation Conferences***
	    ▪ Discuss evidence collected/submitted during the observation window;
	    ▪ Discuss progress toward administrator goals and PDP;
	    ▪ Provide actionable feedback verbally and through the completed observation report; and
	    ▪ May combine the final post-observation conference with the annual summary conference.
	  ○ **Annual Summary Conference**
	    ▪ Discuss evidence collected/submitted regarding practice and provide a score;
	    ▪ Discuss attainment of administrator goals and available scores of each component of principal evaluation;
	    ▪ Provide a summative score and preliminary annual performance report; and
	    ▪ Discuss progress on PDP and update as needed.
	
	*Non-tenured principals need 3 observations with post-observation conferences.

Student Achievement	Suggested Approach
Administrator Goals	• Align administrator goals with district goals and PDP. • Consider taking a more flexible approach with administrator goals, such as setting goals that maintain a focus over several years. Review guidance on administrator goals for more information and examples.
mSGP	• Ensure that PARCC data (gaps and patterns) inform goal-setting. • Include discussion of student achievement data at every conference.
SGO Average	• Conduct annual training for administrators on SGOs to ensure that the SGO average reflects high expectations for all students. • Use the SGO Quality Rating Rubric to ensure that high-quality SGOs are developed and approved.

Timeline for Suggested Approach to Principal Evaluation

Planning Conference

In Advance
- Principal reviews relevant student performance data, survey results and prior evaluation feedback.
- Principal completes Quality School Rubric (QSR).
- Principal develops first draft of administrator goals and updates professional development plan (PDP).

During
- Collaboratively reflect on data, completed QSR, and projected areas of focus.
- Discuss district goals.
- Collaboratively develop aligned priorities for administrator goals and PDP, and establish a timeline for submission.
- Review the Principal Practice Rubric.
- Discuss potential site visits and other evidence (submitted or solicited) that will provide standards-based evidence.

Post-Observation Conference(s)

In Advance
- Principal and supervisor review administrator goals and PDP.
- Principal submits additional relevant evidence.
- Supervisor prepares observation report.

During
- Conduct a reflective feedback conference focused on the standards-based evidence collected during the observation window.
- Review progress on administrator goals and PDP, and other relevant data.
- Provide actionable feedback and a completed observation report.

Annual Summary Conference

In Advance
- Supervisor provides principal with an observation report from the final observation window.
- Principal submits completed administrator goals and PDP.
- Supervisor completes a preliminary annual performance report with rating.

During
- Conduct a reflective feedback conference that highlights evidence collected during the final observation window and summarizes the year.
- Discuss other evaluation components, such as evaluation leadership instrument, if used, SGO average. and administrator goals.
- Provide actionable feedback for growth.

Observation Window 1

Observation Window 2

Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun

Note: The timeline above would apply to a tenured principal who requires at least two observations. For non-tenured principals who require at least three observations, consider starting the first observation window close to the beginning of the administrative year to capture planning and preparation activities.

[i] Leithwood, Kenneth; Louis, Karen Seashore; Anderson, Stephen; Wahlstrom, Kyla. *How Leadership Influences Student Learning,* 2004. The Wallace Foundation, New York.
[ii] P. Goff; E. Goldring; J. Guthrie; L. Bickman. "Changing principals' leadership through feedback and coaching," 2014. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 52(5), 682-704.
[iii] "Principal" and "school leader" are used in this document to collectively refer to principals, vice-principals and assistant principals.