

Educator Evaluation Guidance

Flexibilities and Best Practices

July 2025

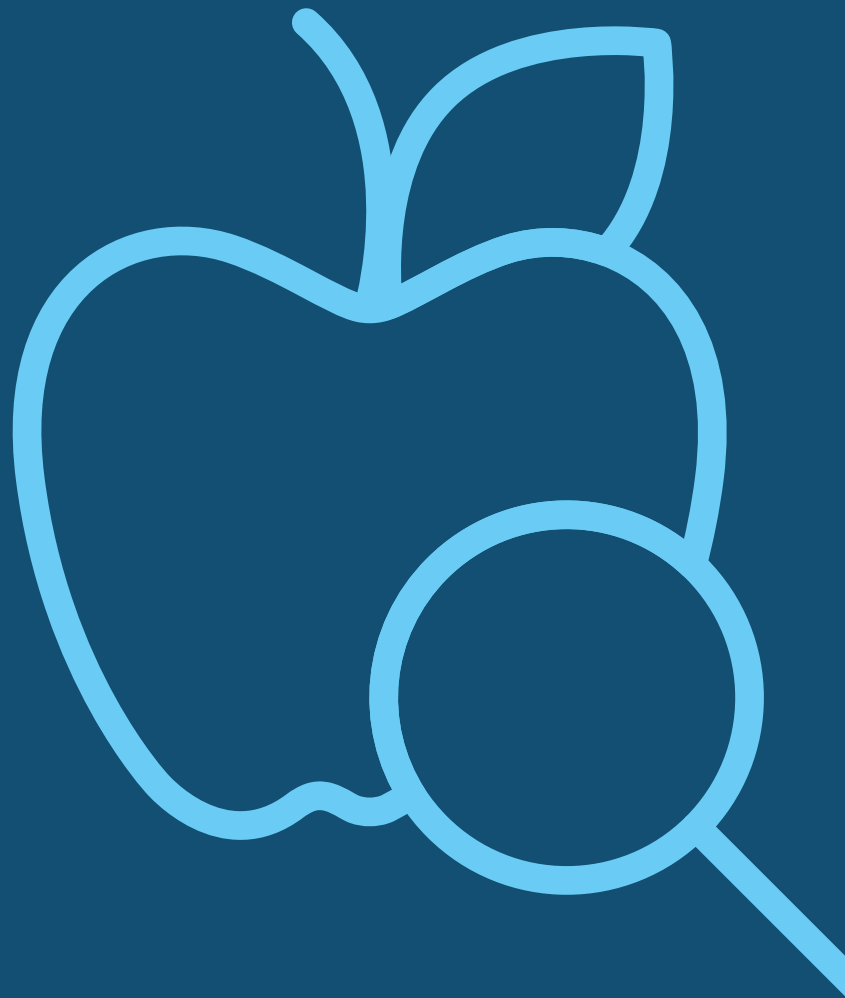


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Finally, we recognize the dedicated efforts of each working group member, who brought professional expertise, thoughtful analysis, and a shared dedication to strengthening New Jersey's educator workforce. This report represents our collective commitment to building an evaluation system that supports effective teaching, promotes continuous improvement, and helps ensure high-quality learning experiences for all students.

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Background

Enacted in 2012, the Teacher Effectiveness and Accountability for the Children of New Jersey (TEACHNJ) Act was designed to boost student achievement by enhancing instructional quality through a statewide educator evaluation system. This system aims to deliver meaningful feedback to educators, guide targeted professional development, and support personnel decisions. Since its implementation, the TEACHNJ Act has provided educators with personalized feedback, access to focused professional development, annual analysis of student performance data, opportunities for collaboration with certified supervisors, and administrative support, which all have contributed to improved teaching practices.

On November 10, 2022, Governor Philip D. Murphy signed Executive Order No. 309 to create the Task Force on Public School Staff Shortages in New Jersey, aimed at developing strategies to address shortages of teachers and support staff across the state. By February 2023, the 25-member task force released 31 initial recommendations focused on resolving statewide staffing challenges. These recommendations included both immediate and long-term actions to strengthen recruitment, expand the educator pipeline, and support the retention of school personnel. With respect to the issue of teacher retention, the Task Force advised a review and possible reduction of administrative tasks. This focused primarily on a review of the administrative tasks that take teachers away from instruction, such as re-evaluating the role of student growth objectives (SGOs) in the educator evaluation process outlined in the TEACHNJ Act.

On May 17, 2024, Governor Murphy signed P.L.2024, c.14 which halted the collection of new SGO data for the 2024-2025 school year for tenured teachers. The pause has since been extended and will remain in place for the 2025-2026 school year through the next expiration and subsequent readoption of N.J.A.C. 6A:10. Beyond the SGO pause, P.L.2024, c.14 also established the New Jersey Educator Evaluation Review Task Force, charged specifically with reviewing and assessing the current educator evaluation system established under the TEACHNJ Act (P.L.2012, c.26). The Task Force's responsibilities included analyzing data and making recommendations to improve the annual evaluation



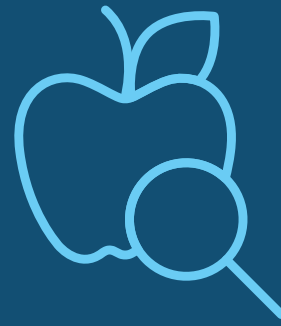
process for teachers, principals, assistant principals, and vice principals. All 13 Task Force members held expertise and specialized knowledge in the legal, policy, and/or administrative aspects of educator evaluation in New Jersey.

The Task Force was charged with studying and evaluating the TEACHNJ Act's educator evaluation system in the context of today's schools. Its work included, but was not limited to: reviewing the role of SGOs in teacher and administrator evaluations, specifically their educational impact, administrative demands, and potential alternatives; identifying unintended consequences that may have resulted from the law's implementation; reviewing current research on best practices in educator evaluation to support student success; and developing recommendations for updates or improvements to the TEACHNJ Act and its implementing regulations, to be shared with the Governor, Legislature, Department of Education, and the public.

The Task Force convened in a series of meetings throughout the summer of 2024, and their discussions and deliberations culminated in a published report ([New Jersey Educator Evaluation Review Task Force](#)). Submitted on September 30, 2024, the comprehensive report contains proposals for updating regulations found in [N.J.A.C. 6A:10 Educator Effectiveness](#) and also provided recommendations on how the evaluation process for teachers, principals, assistant principals, and vice principals can be improved. One of the key recommendations was for the Department to convene a working group charged with developing guidance derived from the Educator Evaluation Review Task Force's report.

Responsive to the recommendation, the Department assembled the Educator Evaluation Working Group, that convened regularly from January through May 2025. The Working Group carefully considered the findings of the Task Force, determining priority areas of focus based on the Task Force's key recommendations. The Working Group focused their deliberations on three high-leverage areas of opportunity, which included: producing guidance on flexibility and lesser-known evaluation components; producing *Highly Effective Educator Option* activities for inclusion on the Commissioner's approved list; and reimagining and streamlining the Student Growth Objective (SGO) process to greater meet its intent while reducing the administrative burden on teachers. This report shares the carefully considered findings and recommendations of the Educator Evaluation Working Group.





Introduction

Educator evaluation regulations ([N.J.A.C. 6A:10](#)) provide districts with significant flexibility, enabling them to tailor their evaluation systems to meet both local and individual needs. When thoughtfully designed, the evaluation cycle, grounded in data-informed planning and intentional alignment of required goals and observations, can meaningfully support educator growth and ultimately enhance student learning.

This guidance is intended to help districts customize their evaluation systems by:

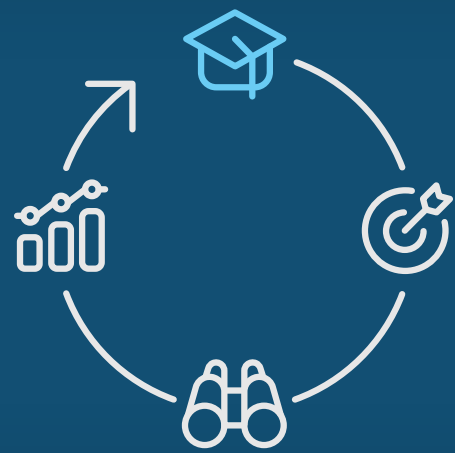
1. Framing evaluation as a collaborative process that fosters ongoing, meaningful dialogue about teaching and learning
2. Leveraging statutory and regulatory requirements and flexibilities in ways that enhance the instructional value of the system
3. Streamlining processes to minimize administrative burden
4. Elevating the professional learning opportunities embedded within the evaluation cycle, thereby promoting transparency and a shared understanding of its benefits

Organized according to the natural progression of the school year, this guidance highlights key points within the evaluation cycle where districts can embed more meaningful, authentic practices. The document focuses on three key areas:

1. Key Flexibilities
 - Identifies where flexibilities exist within the evaluation cycle
 - Explains how districts can leverage various flexibilities to streamline requirements and better align evaluation with professional growth
2. Student Growth Objective (SGO) Development
 - Describes best practices for developing instructionally relevant SGOs
 - Supports compliance with regulatory requirements in a more efficient, less burdensome manner
3. Commissioner-Approved Activities for Highly Effective Educators
 - Outlines the required processes associated with the Highly Effective Option
 - Describes how the six approved activities can be used to support professional growth aligned with educators' individual development goals

For additional implementation considerations, see [Appendix A](#). Throughout this guidance, recommended evaluation practices are anchored in the professional growth areas identified for each educator. The evaluation cycle begins with staff training, followed by goal setting, observations, and leveraging year-end data which in turn drives growth in the subsequent year. The document is structured to reflect this annual evaluation cycle.

The Evaluation Cycle Stage One: Training



The annual required evaluation training is a key opportunity for professional learning. Rather than repeating the same “refresher” training each year, districts have the local flexibility to tailor annual evaluation training to address current and emerging needs. Thoughtfully designing the required training with input from all educators allows districts to situate the evaluation system within broader educational trends and align it with local initiatives and priorities largely based on the previous school year’s evaluation data. When these local adaptations are made intentionally, implementation tends to be more effective and seamless.

Table 1. Annual Training Requirements, Flexibilities, and Best Practice Recommendations Designed to Enhance the Evaluation Experience

Position	Requirements	Flexibilities	Best Practices
Novice or new to the district teachers and administrators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full, detailed training on all components of the evaluation model All administrators must conduct two co-observations annually 	No set training model; Districts can tailor training based on their local context, instrument used, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training may be based upon prior year disaggregated scores for components Consider new and existing district initiatives and their impact on evaluation
Nontenured (years 2–4) or tenured teachers and administrators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refresher training (if no changes) or training covering all new changes. All administrators must conduct two co-observations annually 	No set training model; Districts can tailor training based on their local context, instrument used, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training may be based upon prior year disaggregated scores for components Consider new and existing district initiatives and their impact on evaluation

The Evaluation Cycle Stage Two: Goal Setting



Each fall, the teacher and their supervisor should identify goals and priorities for the year. This conversation should identify which instrument domains will be prioritized during observations, as well as the teacher's Professional Development Plan (PDP) goals and Student Growth Objectives (SGOs).

Professional Development Plan (PDP) Goals

PDP Development

Department regulations at N.J.A.C. 6A:9C-4.4(d)1 require teachers to develop one PDP goal "...derived from the results of observations and evidence accumulated through the teacher's annual performance evaluation."

Observation Domain Prioritization

A key strategy to maintain focus on maximizing opportunities for the teacher's professional growth is to choose one or more "priority domains." These are domains in the observation instrument most closely aligned to the teacher's other professional goals. Prioritizing is accomplished by:

1. Identifying Priorities:
 - a. Identify instrument domains and/or indicators aligned to individual PDP goal(s).
 - b. Identify other priority practice domains aligned to SGOs and/or other school and/or district priorities.
 - c. In addition, for Highly Effective educators taking advantage of the Commissioner's Highly Effective Option, PDP goals should determine which Commissioner-Approved Activity meets their needs. For more information on this process, see the section of guidance titled "Commissioner-Approved Highly Effective Educator Activities."
2. Evidence Collection:
 - a. Identify and agree on potential sources of direct and indirect evidence for each identified priority.
 - i. Direct evidence can be collected when the supervisor directly observes the teacher.
 - ii. Indirect evidence is gathered through artifacts and the actions reflecting the teacher's breadth of assigned duties and responsibilities.

SGO Development

SGOs are academic goals that teachers and designated supervisors set for groups of students. These goals are supported by the SGO process. The most effective SGO process is:

- Organic, meaningful, and leverages authentic work already being used by educators on a daily basis
- Aligned with school and/or district goals which support student growth
- Streamlined and free of additional administrative burdens

How Much Flexibility Does the SGO Process Allow?

SGO regulations have been established by the Department in N.J.A.C. 6A:10-4.2(a). The regulations allow individual districts and schools the flexibility to adapt SGOs to their unique instructional contexts.

Guiding Principles for Districts in Constructing SGOs Chart

This chart (Table 2) identifies many common misconceptions and rigid practices that have emerged regarding SGO requirements and aims to reframe the SGO process and shift its focus back to its original goal of supporting the effective delivery of high-quality instructional practices to enhance student growth by providing:

1. Best practices for creating instructional relevance in SGOs while meeting regulatory requirements
2. Tips on common pitfalls to avoid which can sometimes create unnecessary burdens

Additionally, exemplars of streamlined SGOs aligned to PDPs are provided in [Appendix B](#).

Please note, due to Governor Murphy signing the law extending the pause of the collection of new SGO data for teachers for the 2025-2026 school year, the guidance below only pertains to nontenured teachers and teachers who elect to develop new SGOs. All other tenured teaching staff are not required to develop SGOs.

In conclusion, wherever possible, PDP and SGO goals as well as what is observed in classroom practice should reinforce each other and be aligned to standards, moving towards the overarching purpose of impacting student learning. For more information about various professional standards to which goals should be aligned, please refer to [Appendix C](#).

Table 2. Guiding Principles for Districts in Constructing SGOs

Category	Best Practices for SGOs	Practices to Avoid
Recordkeeping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streamline recordkeeping (such as housing all SGO data and related artifacts in one area) to make data collection simple and uncomplicated Minimize local reporting requirements and reduce unnecessary paperwork that can make the SGO process overly time-consuming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requiring excessive paperwork or time-consuming spreadsheets for reporting data Using extraneous, unnecessary, or overly detailed forms Repetitive tasks that cause administrative burden for educators and supervisors
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support teacher autonomy when designing SGOs and choosing assessment tools Commit to a truly collaborative process that includes teachers in each step when setting goals and during approval 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perpetuating non-collaborative practices Taking a top-down approach to SGO development Limiting teacher choice in decisions regarding assessment tools Making changes to SGOs without consulting with teachers
Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow formal and/or informal baseline assessment methods Embrace alternate methods of evaluating student growth (e.g., not being limited to a pre-test/post-test model) Encourage teachers to collaborate on SGOs in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandating one size fits all specific percentages or targets for growth objectives Issuing directives that go above and beyond regulatory requirements (e.g., requiring a certain number of preparedness groups or “tiering” for all)
Integrated with Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrate measures of the SGO process authentically into instruction Use existing instructional activities to measure growth Establish a baseline by using existing assessment results Establish final growth utilizing already-existing assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating artificial SGO instruments or disconnected “stand alone” assessments Insisting on the creation of additional or multiple measures to set baseline data Administering students a “pre-test” based on new content/skills that have not yet been taught
Alignment with Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrate SGOs with other growth measure tools, such as PDPs Use existing flexibilities to design PDP goals that synthesize with SGOs Identify themes and professional activities common across different types of goals to add meaning and connection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing different types of goals (SGOs, PDPs, District Goals, Schoolwide Goals) in isolation Creating disparate goals that do not have common themes or associated professional activities

The Evaluation Cycle Stage Three: Observations



Observations are the nexus between educator evaluation and professional learning. The Department's Educator Effectiveness regulations (N.J.A.C. 6A:10) define an "observation" as "a method of collecting data on the performance of a teaching staff member's assigned duties and responsibilities."

A teacher's most fundamental responsibility is the education of students during classroom instructional practice. Required observations should continue to be driven by direct observation of classroom instruction. However, the flexibility embedded within this definition allows for a fuller scope of the educator's work to be acknowledged and celebrated through the evidence collected in the teacher practice component of the evaluation rubric.

The following table (Table 3) highlights requirements, allowable flexibilities within the code governing observations, and best practice recommendations in observing staff. The allowable flexibilities are a key component of taking advantage of the professional development opportunities found in the observation process.

Table 3. Requirements, and Allowable Flexibilities and Best Practice Recommendations in Observations and Conferences

Observation Area	Requirements	Allowable Flexibilities	Best Practice Recommendations
Length of Observations	Observations must be at least 20 minutes in duration.	Observations may be longer than 20 minutes.	Remaining for an entire class period assists in collecting evidence.
Number of Observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tenured educators must be observed at least twice, and nontenured educators must be observed at least three times. Educators on Corrective Action Plans must have one additional observation. Nontenured staff must be observed by multiple administrators over the course of the year and must be observed during both semesters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional observations are allowable. Regulations allow districts to plan and schedule observations at any time during the academic year. Tenured staff may be observed by one or multiple observers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional observations can provide extra support for new/struggling teachers. Providing ample time between observations will help the teacher show their professional growth.
Conferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-observation conferences (required for announced observations only) must occur within 7 teaching staff member working days of the scheduled observation. Post-observation conferences (required for every observation) must occur within 15 teaching staff member working days of the scheduled observation. The individual conducting the observation must conduct the pre-observation (if required) and the post-observation conference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If agreed to by the teacher, one post-conference and any pre-conference may be conducted via written communication for tenured teachers not on a corrective action plan. Face-to-face conferences may be conducted through video conferencing. One post-observation conference may be combined with the annual summary conference. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All conferences are conducted face-to-face. Discuss PDPs during pre-observation conferences. Focus conference discussions on evidence and observational priorities. Schedule pre- and post-conferences as close to the day of the observation as possible to enhance evidence-based discussions.
Evidence Collection	Regulations do not require evidence collection, but most educator practice instruments require artifacts or documentation logs.	Districts can require evidence collection as part of their observation processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on evidence quality vs. quantity. Use existing artifacts and resources instead of requiring extra evidence

Tips on Including Non-Classroom Responsibilities in the Observation Process

All evaluation instruments encompass aspects of teaching and learning beyond lesson facilitation. In planning and implementing how to leverage artifacts representing non-classroom activities and responsibilities as part of observations, districts should unpack the educator practice instrument being utilized locally to determine which instrument indicators are not visible in the traditional classroom lesson (such as leading Professional Learning Community work). Please refer to [Appendix D](#) for a non-exhaustive list of example activities and potential pieces of evidence which could be used for this purpose.

Impermissible Flexibilities

Extra-curricular or co-curricular activities that are separately contracted or compensated through a stipend may be referenced in the evaluation as evidence of additional professional contributions. However, such activities shall not form the entire basis of the evaluation, which must be grounded in the educator's primary responsibilities as outlined in their job description and in alignment with the implementation of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards.

The Evaluation Cycle Stage Four: Leveraging Data



The [TeachNJ Act](#) states “The goal of this legislation is to raise student achievement by improving instruction through the adoption of evaluations that provide specific feedback to educators, inform the provision of aligned professional development, and inform personnel decisions.”

In essence, the collection of evaluation data is not meant to be treated as an end unto itself, rather one part of a process in which any evaluation data collected is leveraged to inform the professional development of each individual staff member as well as all staff members collectively.

- During a post observation conference, actionable, timely feedback targeted to the observation instrument can be a powerful professional development tool.
- Scoring methods used for observations can assist in identifying strengths and growth areas for the teacher.

Finally, prioritizing domains and customizing category weights to fit local context are useful strategies which can assist in directly targeting areas of growth for individual teachers, as well as for whole staff development.

Table 4. Observation Feedback and Scoring Observations

Type of Data	Requirements	Key Flexibility	Best Practice Recommendations
Observation Feedback	<p>The post-observation conference shall be for the purposes of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing the data collected at the observation • Connecting the data to the practice instrument and individual professional development plan • Collecting additional information needed for the evaluation • Offering areas to improve effectiveness. <p>For teacher observations, within a school year, the post-observation conference shall be held prior to the occurrence of further observations for the purpose of evaluation</p>	<p>Districts locally have the flexibility to determine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount and type of feedback provided to educators • Which priority areas of the evaluation instrument feedback will be addressed as long as it meets the intent of the rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ample time is provided between observations to allow teachers the opportunity to implement supervisor feedback. • Administrators review previous observation feedback as they prepare to observe a teacher.
Evaluation Scores	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The annual summative conference must be conducted by the educator's designated supervisor • A score between 1 and 4 must be provided if all data points are available. or given an NE if data points are not available 	<p>The calculation of a teacher's final rating must be done in accordance with the specific evaluation procedures in place locally</p>	<p>Focus summative conference conversations on lessons learned from scoring data</p>

Keeping the above in mind, the table below is a non-exhaustive list of strategies designed to leverage data to inform professional learning.

Table 5. Strategies For Leveraging Evaluation Data to Inform Professional Learning

Type of Data	Requirements	Key Flexibility
Observation Feedback	Teacher and their Supervisor	Feedback from observations can be used to improve future lessons
Summative Conference Data	Teacher and their Supervisor	Results from performance data must be used to inform at least one PD goal
SGO Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLCs • Teachers and Co-teachers • Teachers and Supervisors 	Identifying gaps between standards and the related curriculum and making appropriate adjustments
Evaluation Scores	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Improvement Panels (ScIPs) • Administrators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forming school and/or district PD plans or related trainings • Determining annual evaluation training priorities

Category Weights Domain Prioritization and Power Components

Leveraging the professional learning side of the observation process involves determining priorities. Districts have local flexibility to determine priorities on an individual teacher basis. This can be accomplished through prioritizing category weights in the local use of the observation instrument, as well as focusing on which power components within the instrument should be prioritized. The tables below utilize the Danielson framework to display an example that may be used in practice.

Category Weights

Within any of the evaluation instruments, domains can be weighted equally (as shown in Example 1) or not (as shown in Example 2). Example 2 illustrates a district’s decision to weight Danielson Domains 2 and 3 in recognition that these are observed during all traditional observations, while Domain 1 is typically only observed during the announced observation and Domain 4 is mostly evaluated at the annual summative conference.

Example 1

Domain 1	Domain 2	Domain 3	Domain 4
25%	25%	25%	25%

Example 2

Domain 1	Domain 2	Domain 3	Domain 4
20%	30%	30%	20%

Domain Prioritization and Power Components

Districts may promote professional growth by prioritizing a small number of components of the evaluation tool. It is not typically possible or efficient to give a rating on every component of the rubric for every observation. Below is an example of the “power components” from the Danielson Framework that a district might prioritize for an individual teacher observation.

Domain 1: Planning and Preparation

- 1e: Designing Coherent Instruction

Domain 2: The Classroom Environment

- 2a: Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport
- 2b: Establishing a Culture for Learning

Domain 3: Instruction

- 3b: Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques
- 3c: Engaging Students in Learning

Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities

- 4a: Reflecting on Teaching

Commissioner- Approved Highly Effective Educator Activities



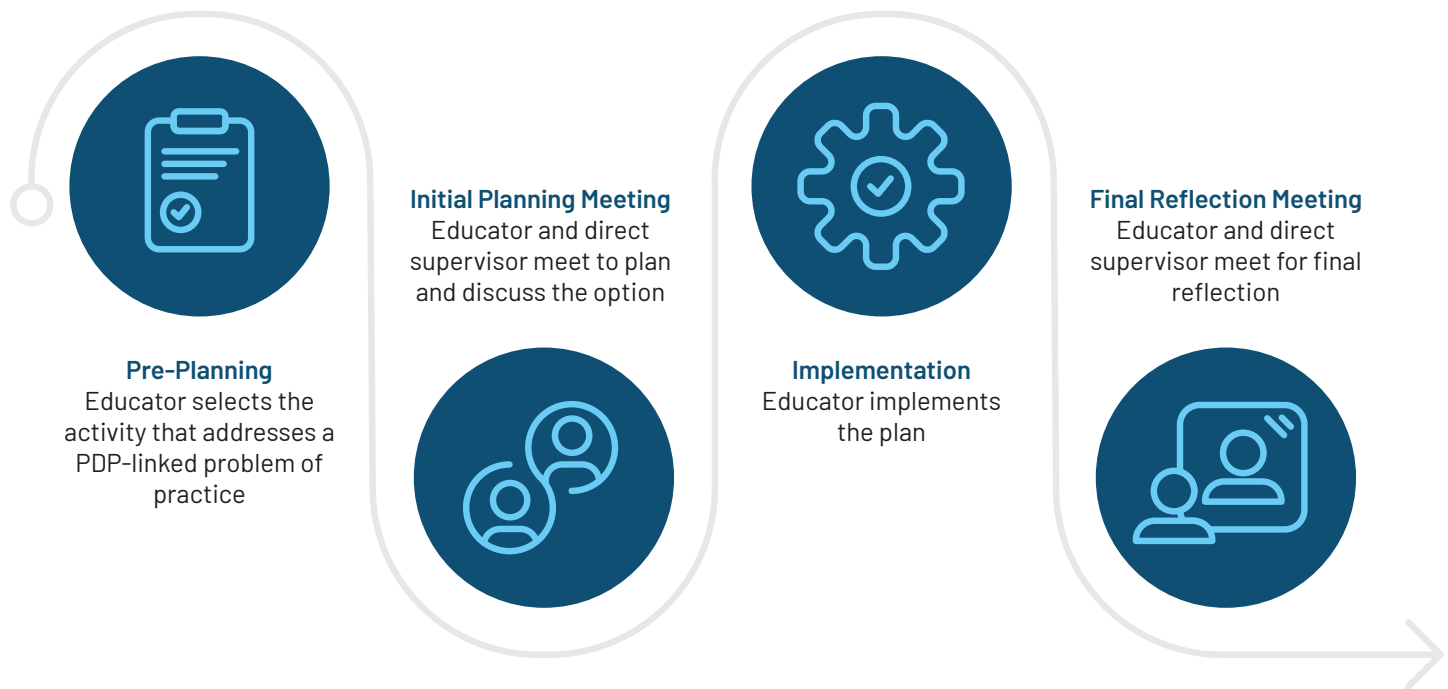
Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:10-4.4(c)3i, the following Commissioner-Approved Activities offer tenured teachers rated highly effective on their most recent summative evaluation an alternative to one of the two required traditional classroom observations. In response to feedback from the field, the Department has added six new activities that allow educators to engage in a single, structured, meaningful educational opportunity which promotes self-assessment and professional growth and may reflect activities the educator is already engaged in as part of their current practice. If the teacher and their designated supervisor agree on the use of a Commissioner-Approved Activity, it is recommended the selected activity is directly aligned with the educator's Professional Development Plan (PDP).

The following steps must be taken for Highly Effective teachers to take part in the Highly Effective Option:

1. The local Board of Education must approve the use of Highly Effective Options. This approval may be on a district-wide basis, and for all Highly Effective Options; approval need not occur on an individual teacher or case-by-case basis or for individual Highly Effective Options.
2. Once the Board of Education locally approves the Highly Effective Option's use:
 - a. Any of six of the Commissioner-Approved Activities are allowed to be used locally by the district.
 - b. All Highly Effective teachers in the district are eligible to replace their announced observation with one of the following six activities.
 - c. It cannot be mandated that Highly Effective teachers participate. Both the teacher and the teacher's designated supervisor must agree to use one of the Commissioner-Approved Activities.

Each Commissioner-Approved Activity requires an initial planning meeting (held prior to the activity) and a final reflection meeting. The six structured, research-based activities are designed to support professional growth in a way that aligns with each educator's career stage and professional development goal(s), empowering them to drive their professional growth. See the [Commissioner-Approved Activities Scoring Guidance](#) section for more information on general processes regarding scoring the chosen activity.

The Process:



Educators may select one from the following six activities:

1. [Leading In-District Professional Development](#) – Educators develop and facilitate professional learning experiences for colleagues, sharing expertise and contributing to a culture of continuous improvement within the district.
2. [Data Protocol](#) – Educators engage in structured data analysis to reflect on student data and make data-driven decisions to improve student outcomes.
3. [Peer-to-Peer Protocol](#) – Educators participate in structured peer observations, learning walks, or instructional rounds to foster reflection, exchange best practices, and enhance existing strategies.
4. [Action Research](#) – Educators conduct targeted action research aligned with their professional development goals, implementing and assessing strategies for professional improvement.
5. [Digital Capture](#) – Educators use video, audio, or digital transcription tools to record and analyze their professional practice, fostering self-assessment and professional growth.
6. [Reflective Practice Through Student Perspectives](#) – Educators collect, analyze, and reflect on student feedback to refine professional practices.

Activity 1: Leading In-District Professional Development / Professional Learning

Description

Educators will design and lead a professional development (PD) session, workshop, or series aligned with school or district goals. This option empowers Highly Effective Educators to share expertise, foster collaboration, and contribute to the professional growth of their colleagues while reflecting on their own practices and leadership skills, with the ultimate goal of improving student outcomes.

Process

1. Identify a professional development need or opportunity aligned with school, district, or educator growth goals.
2. Develop a structured PD plan, including objectives, activities, and methods for participant engagement.
3. Facilitate the PD session(s), incorporating interactive elements and best practices in adult learning.
4. Collect participant feedback through surveys, reflection forms, or informal discussions. Reflect on the planning, facilitation, and outcomes of the session(s) using guided questions.
5. The educator and their supervisor will engage in a collaborative dialogue to review the planning, delivery, and impact of Leading In-District Professional Development / Professional Learning.

Outcomes

- Strengthened leadership and facilitation skills
- Deepened understanding of professional practices through teaching others
- Contribution to a culture of continuous learning and professional excellence within the school community

Parameters

- The “Leading Professional Development” option emphasizes the educator’s growth through the facilitation experience rather than formal evaluation of the PD event itself.
- Sessions may vary in length and format (e.g., workshop, PLC session, after-school training).

Activity 2: Data Protocol

Description

Educators will engage in structured data analysis to reflect on student outcomes and make data-informed decisions. This option encompasses Professional Learning Community (PLC) work, Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) efforts, student work analysis, or any other structured data reflection process used within a school.

Process

1. Select a data set to analyze. This may include student assessment results (formative, summative, benchmark assessments), student work samples across different proficiency levels, and behavior or engagement data tracked over a period of time.
2. Utilize a structured data protocol, such as:
 - a. **MTSS Intervention Review:** Assess the effectiveness of tiered interventions and adjust as needed.
 - b. **Data-Driven Dialogue:** Analyze assessment data collaboratively, identify patterns, and develop action steps.
 - c. **Review of Student Work:** Examine student work samples to identify trends and instructional gaps.
3. Document key takeaways, such as trends and insights drawn from the data, instructional adjustments based on findings, and strategies to support student growth and achievement.
4. The educator and their supervisor will engage in a collaborative dialogue to review the planning, delivery, and impact of the Data Protocol.

Outcomes

- Enhanced ability to interpret and apply data to professional practice
- Development of targeted strategies based on student needs
- Strengthened collaborative decision-making processes within teams

Parameters

The “Data Protocol” will focus on identifying and addressing student needs rather than using data solely as a lens for evaluation or comparison.

Activity 3: Peer-to-Peer Protocol

Description

Educators will engage in a structured peer visit to foster reflection and professional learning. This can include peer classroom visits, instructional coaching classroom visits, learning walks, instructional rounds, and technology mentoring classroom visits. The Peer-to-Peer Protocol is intended to foster self-reflection and inspire professional growth.

Process

1. Choose a peer collaboration model that aligns with your goals (e.g., instructional rounds, technology mentoring, learning walks).
2. Conduct an in-person visit focusing on a specific area of professional practice for a minimum duration of 20 minutes (equivalent to the duration of an announced observation). This can include the educator visiting a colleague's classroom or having a colleague visit their own.
 - a. For visits in which the educator's classroom is the focus, the process is considered complete only when the educator participates in a reflective dialogue with colleagues to discuss insights.
3. Engage in a structured reflection process.
4. The educator and their supervisor will engage in a collaborative dialogue to review the planning, delivery, and impact of the Peer-to-Peer Protocol.

Outcomes

- Increased exposure to diverse techniques and/or professional practices
- Enhanced reflective practice through structured observation and feedback
- Strengthened collaboration and shared strategies

Parameters

- Classroom visits will remain confidential and be used only for the purpose of professional growth. Colleagues will not discuss the visit beyond the agreed-upon context.
- Feedback will only be provided to the observed educator if requested and will not be evaluative in nature.

Activity 4: Action Research

Description

Educators will conduct action research related to their PDP and reflect on the process. This process focuses on identifying a professional challenge, implementing a strategy, and analyzing its impact.

Process

1. Identify a professional challenge or area for improvement that is aligned with the PDP.
2. Develop and implement a research-based strategy or intervention.
3. Collect and analyze data to assess the impact of the strategy.
4. Reflect on the findings and adjust practices accordingly.
5. The educator and their supervisor will engage in a collaborative dialogue to review the planning, delivery, and impact of findings.

Outcomes

- Data-driven decision-making for professional improvement
- Enhanced professional learning through inquiry
- Alignment of professional growth with research-based practices

Parameters

- The intent of the Action Research option is to empower educators to choose their own respective area of focus.
- Data collected during action research is to be used constructively to inform and support professional growth, not as a measure of teacher performance.

Activity 5: Digital Capture

Description

Educators will utilize digital capture methods to record and analyze their professional practice. This can include video recordings, audio recordings, or other digital transcription tools that allow for self-reflection. The captured content will serve as a basis for self-analysis, goal-setting, and professional growth.

Process

1. Identify an area of professional practice you wish to examine.
2. Select a digital capture method (such as video or audio) that best supports the identified area.
3. Record a segment that highlights a specific professional strategy or technique.
4. Review the recorded content and engage in a structured reflection.
5. The educator and their supervisor will engage in a collaborative dialogue to review the planning, delivery, and impact of the Digital Capture.

Outcomes

- Increased self-awareness of professional practice
- Identification of professional strengths and areas for improvement
- Informed professional development based on real professional interactions

Parameters

The “Digital Capture” option does not require educators to submit recordings. The emphasis is on reflection and continuous improvement.

Activity 6: Reflective Practice Through Student Perspectives

Description

Educators will gather and reflect on student feedback to improve student outcomes. This can include student surveys, feedback on specific lessons or units, or other means of capturing student perspectives.

Process

1. Select a method to collect student feedback (e.g., surveys, focus groups, informal reflections).
2. Analyze and reflect on insights from survey responses.
3. Develop and consider adjustments based on feedback.
4. The educator and their supervisor will engage in a collaborative dialogue to review the planning, delivery, and impact of Reflective Practice Through Student Perspectives.

Outcomes

- Enhanced reflective practice through direct input from learners
- More responsive and student-centered practices
- Increased student engagement and agency in learning

Parameters

- The “Reflective Practice Through Student Perspectives” option does not require educators to submit student feedback. The emphasis is on reflection and continuous improvement.
- The focus of any insights gained from the supervisor should be supportive of professional growth, not a measure of teacher effectiveness.

Commissioner-Approved Activities Scoring Guidance

To score the Commissioner-Approved Activities, districts should ensure alignment with their existing educator evaluation model and follow these steps:

1. Identify Relevant Indicators

The district should pinpoint specific indicators within their current observation instrument that directly relate to the focus and goals of the Commissioner-Approved Activity (e.g., indicators involving planning, professional growth, reflection, adjusting practice, etc.).

2. Frame Reflective Conversations

These identified indicators will guide the discussion during the final reflection meeting.

3. Align Scoring and Documentation

Scoring and documentation should be based on these selected indicators. The supervisor makes the final determination on the indicators scored.

4. Maintain Consistency in District Scoring Practices

The scoring method should mirror the district's standard approach for scoring observations to ensure fairness and alignment within the evaluation system.

- a. If your district assigns scores to observations (like in frameworks such as Danielson), use that same approach for the activity.
- b. If observations are not typically scored (like in frameworks such as Stronge), then this activity should be treated similarly.

5. Supervisor Action

Supervisors are responsible for applying the identified indicators and the district's scoring procedures to record and score the activity based on the evidence presented.

Appendix A: Implementation Planning

New Jersey’s educator evaluation system is unique in the array of customization options available to districts. Because of the wide variability from district to district, the regulations require all evaluation policies and procedures to be developed locally, approved annually by the local board of education, and communicated in writing to staff by October 1 annually.

Multiple sources of data can inform annual implementation planning by revealing strengths, opportunities, and patterns: prior year evaluation data and student achievement data; data pertaining to subgroups including special education students and multilingual learners; reflections from educators; and more.

Implementation Planning Components and Associated Flexibilities

Component	Flexibilities
Instrument choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Choice of instruments utilized in educator evaluationOption to modify an existing instrument or create a homegrown instrument and submit it for commissioner approval via RFQ <p>(Teacher Practice webpage)</p>
Instrument use, incl. training	<ul style="list-style-type: none">How and when to train staff on the evaluation modelObservations based on local initiatives and common proceduresChoice of whether to offer Highly Effective educators additional commissioner-approved options
Scoring and weighting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Whether or not to score individual observations (some models require a preponderance of evidence over the course of the year)Weighting of domains/areasEmphasis on certain components within the model, known as “Power Components,” also known as Domain Prioritization

*Districts wishing to innovate beyond what is currently allowed in regulations might consider applying for an [equivalency](#). Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:5, approval will be subject to the equivalency achieving the intent of a specific rule through an alternate means that is different from yet judged to be comparable to or as effective as, those prescribed within the rule.

Appendix B: Streamlined SGO Aligned to PDP Exemplars

Exemplar 1: Aligning the SGO with the PDP - High School Social Studies

Students will demonstrate critical thinking skills by making authentic connections between the study of history and contemporary issues.

Connection to NJSL - Core Ideas

1. Historical events and developments were shaped by the unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.
2. To better understand the historical perspective, one must consider historical context.

Activities to Achieve Goal

- PLC chooses appropriate critical thinking activities (tied to NJSL performance expectations) that focus on connecting historical events to contemporary issues.
- Agree on critical thinking activity to establish baseline.
- Teachers agree on scoring, rubric, etc., and on scoring goal for students.
- Student scores on those activities are used as the evidence of student growth and reported according to the agreed upon scoring plan.

SGO

Students will demonstrate growth in critical thinking by making authentic connections between historical events and contemporary issues, as evidenced by performance on a department-developed text analysis task. The task will be administered twice and scored using a common department rubric. Baseline and growth targets will be established collaboratively by the department during PLC meetings.

PDP Goal

I will enhance my instructional practices to foster critical thinking by implementing strategies that guide students in drawing connections between historical content and contemporary issues. I will collaborate with colleagues during PLCs to co-develop and refine critical thinking tasks, scoring rubrics, and analyze student work to inform instruction and improve student outcomes. Progress will be measured through student performance on agreed-upon critical thinking tasks and documented reflections on instructional adjustments.

Exemplar 2: Aligning the SGO with the PDP – 2nd Grade Math

Grade-Level/Content Area Goal

Students will strengthen their problem-solving and reasoning skills by applying mathematical thinking to real-world situations and justifying their solutions.

Connection to NJSLS – Core Ideas

- 2.MD.C.8: Solve word problems involving dollar bills, quarters, dimes, nickels, and pennies, using \$ and ¢ symbols appropriately.
- MP.1: Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.
- MP.3: Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others.
- Activities to Achieve Goal
- The grade-level PLC will identify or create real-world math tasks that require students to solve problems and explain their reasoning.
- Teachers will collaboratively establish a baseline using a shared task focused on applying math to authentic scenarios (e.g., shopping with coins).
- Teachers will agree on a scoring rubric focused on mathematical reasoning, accuracy, and explanation.
- Student performance on the chosen real-world math tasks will be used as evidence of growth and analyzed during PLCs to guide instruction.

SGO

Students will demonstrate growth in mathematical problem-solving and reasoning as evidenced by performance on an already used grade-level, real-world math task administered twice (fall and spring) and scored with a common rubric. Growth targets will be collaboratively established by the grade-level team during PLC meetings.

PDP Goal

I will improve my instructional practice by integrating real-world problem-solving opportunities that strengthen students' mathematical reasoning and ability to explain their thinking. I will collaborate with colleagues during PLCs to develop and refine math tasks, scoring tools, and analyze student work to guide instructional decisions. Evidence of progress will include student growth on common tasks and personal reflection logs on instructional adjustments.

Appendix C: Integrating Standards

Aligning goals to all relevant professional standards has the potential to streamline workflows, enabling educators to work smarter, not harder.

The New Jersey Professional Development Standards are found at [N.J.A.C. 6A:9C](#) and are aligned with the [Learning Forward Standards for Professional Learning](#). These standards are grouped into three buckets:

1. The Rigorous Content for Each Learner standards describe the essential content of adult learning that leads to improved student outcomes.
2. The Transformational Processes standards describe process elements of professional learning, explaining how educators learn in ways that sustain significant changes in their knowledge, skills, practices, and mindsets.
3. The Conditions for Success standards describe aspects of the professional learning context, structures, and cultures that undergird high-quality professional learning.

The ten [Professional Standards for Educational Leaders \(PSEL\) Standards](#) define high-impact leadership practices for administrators. These should be integrated and reflected in the work of educational leaders, especially the following:

- Standard 4: Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment: Implement rigorous and coherent systems to support academic achievement.
- Standard 5: Community of Care and Support for Students: Cultivate an inclusive and supportive school community that addresses students' academic and emotional needs.
- Standard 6: Professional Capacity of School Personnel: Develop the professional skills and practices of school staff to enhance student learning.
- Standard 7: Professional Community for Teachers and Staff: Foster a collaborative professional culture focused on continuous improvement.

The [Teacher Leader Model Standards](#), categorized into seven domains, describe the skills and dispositions inherent to a teacher leader. When it comes to alignment with instructional practice and the educator evaluation framework, the following standards are most highly relevant:

- Domain II: Accessing and Using Research to Improve Practice and Student Learning
- Domain IV: Facilitating Improvements in Instruction and Student Learning
- Domain V: Promoting the Use of Assessments and Data for School and District Improvement
- Domain VII: Advocating for Student Learning and the Profession

Appendix D: Non-Classroom Evidence in the Observation Process

General Non-Classroom Responsibilities

The non-exhaustive list below is meant to provide examples of activities that might be fertile ground for non-classroom evidence. This list is not meant to be all-inclusive. Staff should not take on new duties or participate in additional meetings solely for the purpose of their evaluation.

- General education teacher at IEP meeting
- Facilitating professional learning
- Capstone project presentations
- Action Research Projects
- Presentations to Parents/Communities on Topics Related to Professional Role
- Professional Learning Communities
- Collaborative Curriculum Development
- Data mining and analysis
- Cultural celebrations, including but not limited to holiday observance events
- Reflective Practice Protocols: Engaging in structured self-reflection to assess and improve instructional methods.
- Parent Meetings on Student Learning, Attendance, Behavior, Well-Being, Etc.
- Civic engagement, including service learning
- Project-Based Learning events, including but not limited to science fairs and history fairs
- Professional Learning Reflection and Application of Learning (log, reflective protocol)
- Collaboration with and training of non-certificated colleagues (paraprofessionals, instructional assistants, etc.) or other certificated professionals with specialized expertise (OT/PT, speech, etc.) to support student success in the classroom.
- Teacher responsibilities at meetings such as MTSS, data teams, Child Study team meetings, etc.

Role-Specific Non-Classroom Responsibilities

In addition to the examples of general activities above, the list of educator roles and responsibilities listed below is meant to provide examples of activities that might be fertile ground largely for non-classroom evidence. This list is non-exhaustive and has not been outlined specific to administrative certifications because of the individualization of each administrative role and their associated responsibilities.

Instructional

Health and Physical Education

- Designing a new sport or game
- Fitness and health plans
- Special programs (e.g., Jump Rope for Heart)

Literacy

- **Literacy Coaching Sessions:** Receiving or providing peer coaching focused on literacy instruction.
- **Action Research Projects:** Conducting classroom-based research to investigate the effectiveness of specific literacy interventions or instructional approaches.
- Poetry Slams
- Book clubs

Math

- Science and Math course PBL collaborations
- Math in the Science Fair
- Math in the Social Studies Fair
- Math in the Art Fair

Preschool

- Parent night
- Learning centers
- Assessments of students

Science

- Developing internships
- **Citizen Science Projects:** Leading students in citizen science projects that involve real-world data collection and analysis

Social Studies

- Special in-class activities such as competitive debates, mock elections, conventions, other simulations
- Community Forums (Partnering with municipality to solve concerns)
- Civic engagement (coordinating visits to BOE meetings, City Council meetings etc)

Visual and Performing Arts

- Small-group or large-group Concerts/Recitals/Exhibitions/Performances (all disciplines)
- Festival performances or competitions
- Internship programs

World Languages

- Community events
- Poetry Slam

Technology Staff

- Training sessions for staff, students, parents

Special Education

- **Case Study Analysis:** Conducting in-depth case studies on individual students to assess the effectiveness of specific interventions and instructional approaches.
- IEP File Review
- Community-based instruction experiences for SE students

Applied Technology (Industrial arts, shop)

- **Industry Collaboration Projects:** Partnering with local businesses to develop real-world projects
- Competitions

Family and Consumer Sciences

- Projects
- Food for school events
- Preschool programs also serving as courses for high school students

STEAM

- Internship programs
- Rollout of initiatives (e.g., STEAM Cart)

Educational Services

Instructional Coaches

- 1-1 feedback sessions
- Co-Teaching and modeling lessons

Career and Technical Education / Vocational Programs

- Shared Time Considerations
- Portfolio options
- Student Work Programs
- Site visits

Bilingual Education and/or ESL

- Community events for speakers of other languages
- International nights

Information Technology (including Computer Science)

- Coding exercises/programs
- Solving a school problem

Library and Media Services

- Information Literacy efforts (partnering with classroom teachers to implement the information literacy standards)
- Partnering with content teachers on research projects

Child Study Team

- IEP Meeting
- Conducting evaluation
- IEP Review Meeting (file evaluation and student progress)

School Counseling

- College Fairs
- College Visits
- Course selection meetings (1-1 with students)
- Presentations on course selections
- Financial Aid Nights & other FAFSA work

Interventionists (Academic Support or Learning Acceleration Teacher)

- Integrated learning opportunities
- Small-group sessions with students

Support Services (OT/PT/Speech)

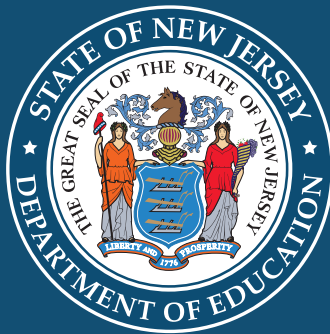
- Individual and/or small-group sessions with students
- Facilitating professional learning for colleagues
- IEP meetings

Student Assistance / Substance Abuse Coordinators

- Red Ribbon Activities
- Assemblies
- Presentations to Parents

School Nurses

- Presentations to Health Classes (or other classes) on relevant health and well-being issues



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