



Christie Administration Approves Streamlined QSAC Process for High-Performing Districts

For Immediate Release

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Trenton, NJ – The Christie Administration continues to cut the red tape of burdensome regulations with the announcement today of the approval of a New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC) equivalency process for districts that have been consistently high-performing. The equivalency process builds upon the amendments to the QSAC process that were adopted by the New Jersey State Board of Education two years ago with the intent to further reduce burdensome compliance and paperwork for districts while focusing on factors that are central to student achievement, health and safety, and fiscal accountability.

This equivalency process addresses three goals of the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE):

- Continues efforts to ease compliance burdens on school districts;
- Allows the NJDOE's county offices to focus their time and effort on helping underperforming schools; and
- Reflects the Department's continued focus on innovation by using data to identify high-performing districts without the need for a full QSAC review.

Utilizing the Equivalency and Waiver process, the Department will allow high-performing school districts – those that have satisfied 80-100 percent of the quality performance indicators in each of the five key components of school district effectiveness – to submit a Statement of Assurance documenting they remain high performing, in lieu of receiving a full QSAC review every three years.

"I am very pleased that we can offer an equivalency process to our high-performing districts without sacrificing state oversight," said Acting Commissioner David C. Hespe. "No one wants to spend valuable education time on paperwork that is not necessary. The state needs to focus its resources on supporting district efforts to help students achieve at greater levels."

Under QSAC, public school districts are evaluated in five component areas – instruction and program, fiscal management, governance, personnel, and operations – to determine the degree to which a thorough and efficient education is being provided. The review has three components: a self-evaluation by the district (District Performance Review), a review by the Executive County Superintendent, and then a final determination by the Commissioner. The district's placement on the performance continuum determines whether improvement is required and the extent to which any technical assistance, support or oversight is needed to support the district in achieving high-performance status.

Through the Equivalency and Waiver process, the Department will encourage districts, deemed as high-performing, to seek an Equivalency to the requirements of conducting a comprehensive review every three years. As a preferred option, these districts will undergo a more streamlined review process, as follows:

- Eligible districts will have to provide evidence that they remain high-performing as an alternative to completing a District Performance Review, based on 24 metrics developed by the Department (such as proficiency rates, graduation rates, timely submission of administrator contracts, and compliance with the annual budget process).
- If a district remains high performing in accordance with these metrics, the district would receive a three-year extension on its full QSAC review. This would result in the district undergoing the traditional in-depth QSAC review, including a District Performance Review, every six years instead of every three years.

Even if eligible for the streamlined review process, each district will still be required to submit a Statement of Assurance to the Department on an annual basis attesting to its performance on the quality performance indicators in each of the five component areas.

The typical District Performance Review takes several months to complete and consumes large amounts of time for district and county staff to complete. The change will affect the cohort of school districts for the upcoming QSAC review, which includes 204 districts (the majority of which have been designated as high performing on their last two QSAC District Performance Reviews). Instead of conducting full reviews on each of the 204 districts, the Department will limit full reviews to only those districts not meeting the designated metrics. In coming weeks, the Department will reach out to districts that qualify in order to explain the criteria they need to meet, and that effort will be followed by additional outreach to all other districts.

Reducing burdensome regulation is an ongoing process based on recommendations by the Governor's Education Transformation Task Force in 2012. Prior to this new process, QSAC had already undergone the following changes that were recommended by the task force:

- A reduction in the number of indicators that were self-evaluated by the district and monitored by the NJDOE, which lessened the time the districts and the department spent on compliance and increased the time for district, school, and student support.
- The creation of a Statement of Assurance process that consists of 50 performance quality indicators in the five key component areas of school district effectiveness.
- The elimination of duplicative monitoring performed by the department and within the District Performance Review. The District Performance Reviews no longer include monitoring of financial reports that are submitted to the NJDOE annually and no longer include financial management information already monitored through the budget review process.
- A focus on student growth in the evaluation of student achievement measures, rather than simply a review of whether a district has met a certain proficiency level.