

# Newly Adopted Educator Evaluation Regulations FAQ

## Why were the changes to the teacher and administrator evaluation regulations made?

The state law governing teacher and administrator evaluation was passed in 1996. Since that time, there have been significant changes to the education profession's understanding of how to use evaluation as a means to differentiate between struggling, novice and exceptional teachers, and to encourage and support appropriate professional growth. New instruments and tools have been developed that help focus the efforts of teachers and administrators on improving the effectiveness of instruction. With this in mind, the State Board of Education & Early Development recognized that it was time for districts to review and revise their evaluation systems. They also recognized that a quantitative measure of student learning needed to be added to the districts' systems to provide a more complete picture of the level of effectiveness of the teachers and administrators in Alaska.

## How will the new requirements change existing district evaluation systems?

The newly adopted evaluation regulations require that districts modify their existing systems to:

- Focus the evaluations on specific standards.
- Consider selected cultural standards.
- Assign one of four performance levels: exemplary, proficient, basic, and unsatisfactory.
- Assign an overall rating that uses the same four performance levels.
- Provide training for evaluators to ensure inter-rater reliability.
- Use student learning data in the evaluation of teachers and administrators.

Districts were provided the following options:

- Provide a plan for professional growth for an educator receiving a rating of basic on two or more standards.
- Use a department-approved, nationally-recognized evaluation framework.

## When are the changes to the districts' evaluation systems required?

The following changes need to be made as soon as possible:

- Focus evaluation on the specific standards.
- Consider the cultural standards in the district's evaluation system.
- Adopt a four-performance-level system.
- Provide evaluation training to administrators to ensure inter-rater reliability.
- Determine whether and how the district might implement a plan for professional growth.
- Determine whether the district will use one of the department-approved, nationally recognized evaluation frameworks.

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By July 1, 2015, in addition to the changes above, the following must be completed:

- Standards for performance based on student learning data must be adopted.
- Two to four measurements of student growth must be identified for each subject and grade level.
- Procedures to incorporate student data into the evaluation process must be established.

## **What are the districts required to report to the state? When will the reporting begin?**

A district is required to report the number and percentage of teachers, administrators and special service providers at each of the overall performance levels. On July 1, 2016, the districts will report this information for the 2015-2016 school year for the first time.

## **Will my evaluation or documents that are a part of my evaluation be made public?**

No. State law requires that evaluations be confidential. Teachers', administrators', and special service providers' evaluations are not and will not be a public record, per Alaska Statute 14.20.149 (h). The reporting requirement described above will not include individually identifiable information.

## **Who will be responsible for making the changes in the district's evaluation system?**

According to state law, each district's school board is responsible for the district's evaluation system. During the redesign of its evaluation system, the district must consider information from students, parents, community members, classroom teachers, affected collective bargaining units, and administrators. The new regulations also require that the district confer directly with the educators who are subject to the evaluation system when identifying the appropriate student learning data for the evaluation and adopting standards for performance based on student learning data.

## **What will the state do to help?**

The Department of Education & Early Development will work with district, state, and national experts to provide additional guidance and technical assistance to districts as they begin modifying their existing evaluation systems to satisfy the new requirements. The department will assist Alaska's educational leaders in the identification and/or development of effective and valid tools to evaluate educators in the all subjects and grade levels across the state. As needed, the department will explore whether additional resources will help to move this work forward.

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## STUDENT LEARNING DATA

### Will teachers be evaluated on one standardized test that is only a snapshot in time?

No. The new regulation requires that two to four measures of student growth be used when determining a teacher's or administrator's performance level in student learning.

For areas in which an appropriate statewide standardized assessment is available, the assessment will be used only as one of at least two sources of evidence. The weight of the statewide assessment data will be at least as high a proportion as any other measure of student growth used by the district.

### Will Alaska's current statewide assessment, the SBAs, be used?

No. Our current statewide assessment is not vertically aligned from grade to grade and is not able to adequately measure growth from year to year. New assessments that are being considered for our new college- and career-ready English/Language Arts & Mathematics standards will be vertically aligned and will have intermediate tools to use during the school year. If, at the completion of their design, the new assessments are determined to be valid measures, the commissioner can identify them as one of the tools to be used in grades and subjects for which they are designed.

### What is student learning data?

Student learning data is defined as an objective, empirical, valid measurement of a student's growth in knowledge, understanding, or skill in a subject area. The growth must have occurred during the time the student was taught the subject by a teacher. The measurement or assessment must be:

- Based on verifiable data or information that has been recorded or preserved;
- Able to be repeated with the same expected results, and;
- Independent of the point of view or interpretation of the person giving the assessment

### What can be used for measuring student learning? What are some examples of student learning data?

Districts, with direct input from educators who are being evaluated, will identify tools to determine the performance level of teachers and administrators in the area of student learning. The tools identified must satisfy the definition of student learning data provided in the regulation. There are a number of tools that are currently being used in districts across Alaska that could satisfy the definition; for example, NWEA Measures of Academic Progress (MAPS), Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), pre- and post- curriculum-based tests, and teacher-created school/district common assessments. Teacher-created school/district common rubrics designed to measure specific skills that describe varying acquisition levels could

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also be used as a tool to assess student growth demonstrated through portfolios, projects, products and performances.

### **What student learning data will be used in Special Education teachers' evaluation?**

Generally speaking, for students with disabilities, Individualized Education Programs are designed to recognize current levels of achievement and goals for growth. Measurements used to establish those goals would be appropriate to use. Intensive-needs students may have life skills goals rather than academic ones. Again, measurements of progress toward those goals could be used. Districts will have the ability to recognize unique situations and work with teachers to set and measure proper goals.

### **How will teachers be evaluated in “non-tested” or “non-assessed” subjects?**

Districts and teachers will develop tools for currently “non-tested” or “non-assessed” subjects. All courses being offered should have the ability to recognize a goal of achievement for students to attain. Districts must work with teachers to recognize and/or develop tools to measure growth.

### **Is evaluation of a teacher based on a student’s learning equivalent to a dentist being evaluated on how many cavities a patient gets, or a doctor on how many people die of cancer?**

No. The intent of this regulation is to expand the evaluation beyond characteristics of the teacher to include conversation about the students. It is reasonable to evaluate teachers based on student *growth*. It would also be reasonable to evaluate a dentist based on the measurable effect the dentist has on the patient, including the improvement in the patient as a result of the work done by the dentist -- for example, fillings, root canals, and crowns. With regard to the comparison of students to cancer patients, the comparison is not apt because a cancer patient may never improve but all students can improve. Furthermore, the impact of the doctor’s work will be reflected in the doctor’s patients. If a doctor had great bedside manner, a beautiful office, great magazines, but no patients improved, and terminally ill patients were not made more comfortable, the doctor typically wouldn’t be considered proficient.

### **Will teachers and administrators be held accountable for students who are frequently absent or enroll halfway through the school year?**

The new regulations require districts to develop procedures to ensure that the student data used to measure teacher and administrator performance in the area of student learning accurately reflects student growth based on the educator’s performance. This provision requires districts to establish objective and measurable criteria to determine what student learning data will be included in or excluded from a teacher’s or administrator’s evaluation. Rules surrounding factors that are considered outside of the teacher’s and administrator’s control, like attendance, can be established through this provision.

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## **Does the new evaluation process set up a teacher or administrator to be more easily fired?**

No. Current tenure law as well as procedures for providing teachers and administrators an opportunity to improve their performance prior to termination is the same as it currently is.

## **Will the student learning data be another subjective measure of a teacher's performance?**

No. The requirement to add the measurement of student learning data is designed to be a quantitative, objective measure. The new regulation requires that district's evaluator training includes specific provisions to assure inter-rater reliability. This additional requirement will also provide more consistency in the gathering and reporting of the qualitative information gained through observation.

Observation remains a requirement for evaluation and is primarily qualitative.

## **What percentage of a teacher's and administrator's evaluation will be based on student learning data?**

In the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school years, 20% percent of a teacher and administrator's evaluation will be tied to student learning. During the 2017-2018 school year, it will be 35%. In 2018-2019 school year, it will top out at 50%.

## **How will student learning data impact the overall rating a teacher or administrator receives?**

Districts, with direct input from educators who are being evaluated, will establish standards for student learning data. The district will determine the performance level that will result in a rating of exemplary, proficient, basic, and unsatisfactory on the student learning standard. In order to gain an overall rating of proficient, a teacher or administrator would need to be rated as proficient or exemplary on all of the standards (including the area of student learning) on which they are being evaluated.

For teachers or administrators who receive a mix of proficient and exemplary ratings on the individual standards, the districts will need to establish a protocol or formula to determine their overall rating. Depending on the schedule described above, the student learning data will need to account for 20 to 50% of that calculation. A protocol or formula will also need to be established to determine the overall rating of teachers and administrators who receive a mix of ratings on the individual standards that include an unsatisfactory or a basic rating.

## **What is a plan of professional growth? How does it differ from a plan of improvement?**

If an educator receives a rating of basic on two or more standards, a district must provide support and assistance, as determined by the district, to the educator for improvement on the standards in question. The district may optionally develop a plan of professional growth in consultation with the educator. A plan of professional growth would include clear and specific

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performance expectations and a description of ways that the educator's performance can be improved. The duration of the plan for professional growth would be determined by the district. If at the conclusion of a plan for professional growth, the educator's performance on the standards or criterion in question is not proficient or exemplary; the district may opt to place the educator on a plan of improvement under Alaska Statute 14.20.149.

If an educator receives a rating of unsatisfactory on any one standard or criteria on his or her evaluation, the district is required by current state law to place the educator on a plan of improvement. If the educator has gained tenure under Alaska Statute 14.20.150, in addition to clear, specific performance expectations and specific ways in which the tenured educator's performance can be improved, the tenured educator's plan of improvement must be between 90 and 180 workdays, unless shortened by agreement between the evaluation administrator and the educator. If the educator is an administrator, the plan may be between 90 and 210 workdays. During the plan of improvement, the individual must be observed at least twice by the school district. If, at the conclusion of the plan of improvement, the tenured teacher's performance again does not meet the district's performance standards, the district may non-retain the teacher. For an administrator who continues to not meet the district's performance standards, the district may terminate the administrator's contract.

### **What nationally recognized teacher and administrator evaluation frameworks are approved by the department?**

The following evaluation frameworks are approved by the department:

- Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching.
- Marzano's Teacher Evaluation Model.
- University of Washington's Center for Education Leadership Five Dimensions of Teaching & Learning.

If a district is interested in using a framework not currently approved, it can contact Sondra Meredith at [sondra.meredith@alaska.gov](mailto:sondra.meredith@alaska.gov) for information concerning the approval process.

### **How will the state monitor the districts' compliance with the new regulations?**

Districts are required to post their revised evaluation system to their website. In the information posted to their websites, the districts are required to document how the district conferred with students, parents, community members, classroom teachers, affected collective bargaining units and administrators as they redesigned their evaluation system. The department will review the new systems to determine compliance. If a district is not in compliance, the department will specify the corrections the district must make to bring their system into compliance. The department will provide further technical assistance, as needed.