

# Frequently Asked Questions

## Educator Evaluation

*Toward preparing  
students to be  
college, career, and  
culturally ready  
graduates*

### **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.

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 for teachers and administrators 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 10, 2016, the districts will report this information for the 2015-2016 school year for the first time.



Alaska Department of  
Education & Early  
Development  
801 West 10th Street,  
Suite 200  
P. O. Box 110500  
Juneau, AK 99811-0500

### **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 teachers and administrators 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 all subjects and grade levels across the state. As needed, the department will explore whether additional resources will help to move this work forward.

### **Will teachers and administrators 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.

### **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 teachers and administrators 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 being used in districts across Alaska that could satisfy the definition; for example, NWEA Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), 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 also could be used as a tool to assess student growth demonstrated through portfolios, projects, products, and performances.

**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 of education can identify them as one of the tools to be used in grades and subjects for which they are designed.

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

Districts, administrators, and teachers will identify existing assessments or develop appropriate measures for “non-tested” or “non-assessed” subjects. All courses being offered should have goals of achievement for students to attain. Districts must work with educators to set growth targets for students in all subjects, including “non-tested” or “non-assessed” areas.

**What student learning data will be used in special education teachers’ evaluation?**

Students with disabilities have goals for academic achievement just as their peers do. Districts are required to work with special education teachers and administrators to identify appropriate measures and goals for student academic growth. Working with all teachers and administrators, districts will have the ability to recognize unique situations and to determine appropriate measures and goals for all students, including students with disabilities.

**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 reflect 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.

**Can an educator be placed on a plan of improvement based only on student learning data?**

Yes. If an educator is rated as unsatisfactory in the area of student learning data, the district must provide the educator with structured support designed to assist the educator to improve his performance in this area. This is true of each of the content standards established in regulations for teachers and administrators.

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

No. Current tenure law and procedures for providing teachers and administrators an opportunity to improve their performance prior to termination have not changed.

**What percentage of a teacher’s and administrator’s overall rating 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 percent. In 2018-2019 school year, it will top out at 50 percent.

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

Districts, with direct input from the teachers and administrators 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 percent to 50 percent of that calculation. A protocol or formula also will 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.

