



NJPSA Testimony
On
Evaluation of the Performance of School Districts
N.J.A.C. 6A:30
April 5, 2017

Thank you for the opportunity to share the thoughts of the New Jersey Principals & Supervisors Association (NJPSA) and its statewide membership on changes to how we evaluate the performance of schools districts via the New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum (NJQSAC). *See N.J.A.C. 6A:30.*

Our members are the principals, assistant principals and supervisory employees at the school building level who are responsible for: developing the educational vision of a school; ensuring a safe and secure learning environment for students and staff; implementing curriculum and assessment; and leading teachers and other school staff.

As an Association, we support the Department's expressed goal of streamlining and clarifying state accountability for schools. We applaud efforts to:

1. Ensure indicators are clear, objective and measurable
2. Align state and federal accountability systems
3. Streamline the number of indicators

A Welcome Emphasis on Professional Learning

We also appreciate the shifts in assigning weights, highlighting those indicators of greatest impact. One example is the increased attention to the need for quality professional learning. Under the proposal, opportunities must be sustained, job-embedded (versus one off workshop opportunities), standards based, and exceed State-mandated topics. For the first time, NJQSAC affirmatively includes criteria that requires districts to provide consistent time and resources for school personnel to collaborate in addressing student learning needs in structures such as PLCs. This is the right approach and we support the Department's emphasis on this critical need. *See Personnel DPR #2(b-d).*

A Need for Training & Guidance

Although suggestions for revisions of specific indicators follow, our biggest concern is ensuring consistent and fair monitoring occurs across our 21 counties. In our discussions with practitioners, many raised concerns about the quality and consistency of the monitoring process. High quality training for monitors and accompanying guidance for districts must be developed. Training and guidance need to be tightly aligned and must clearly define the evidence or "look fors" monitors will seek, and districts will need to provide. Training for evaluators must be sustained and include opportunities for collaboration with, and feedback from, their colleagues. Input from monitored districts should drive continued revisions to monitoring protocols and subsequent training and guidance. The Department, through their proposed timeline, appears to be committed to this goal.

Providing support for districts who do not meet indicators is also a primary goal of the monitoring process. If support is to be timely, useful and actionable, training for monitors must include building knowledge of current best practices in each key area as well as instruction on how to provide consistent, clear recommendations and on-going support.

To effectuate this goal, we urge the Department to work with educational stakeholders in the development of a comprehensive training program and a detailed set of guidance materials for the field. By sharing the burden of training with educational partners the Department's capacity for providing comprehensive professional support to evaluators tasked with this critical task will be enhanced. NJPSA, and its professional development arm, FEA, stand ready to work with the Department on this critical need.

Textual Clarification & Recommendations

Finally, below please find several recommendations that we believe will improve stakeholder understanding of what is being requested under the proposed DPRs:

Instruction & Programming Indicators

- The proposed DPR document includes a provision incorporating school wide and sub-group performance scores for English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics (Math) and Science. Unfortunately the proposal does not appear to differentiate how the school wide versus sub-group performance will be weighted. See sub-indicators #1-3. A similar issue exists as it relates to growth metric for ELA and math as well as the school quality and success indicator. See sub-indicators #4-5, 7. We would urge the Department to clarify the breakdown.
- The proposed DPR document includes several undefined sub-parts under sub-indicators #9-15. Specifically, sub-part (g) asks districts to show how a district has integrated 21st century skills while sub-part (i) requires districts to show how they have integrated 21st Century Life and Career standards/career counseling. Previous communications from the DOE have asked districts to incorporate the Career Ready Practices in Standard 9 rather than 21st century skills. As such, we would urge the Department to articulate in guidance what the difference is or merge sub-parts (g) and (i).

Operations Indicator

- The meaning of proposed DPR 2(b) and DPR 3(b) is somewhat unclear. We would urge the Department to modify sub-part 2(b) to read: "[For] S[s]chool contacts have been..." and sub-part 3(b) to read, "Submission of [the] data collection applications via [located on] the Department's..."
- Proposed DPR #7 addresses the work of the school safety/school climate team. One of the most important tasks of the school safety/climate team is to develop a continuous cycle of climate improvement by developing school climate plans. To better emphasize the requirement we would urge the Department to Include the word 'plans' in sentence 1 to read, "The school district implements a process to ensure the school safety/school climate team in each school, with support from the CSA: (1) reviews and takes action to strengthen school climate plans and polices..."

Personnel Indicator

- Proposed DPR #1(d) states that the evaluator will audit ‘Other evaluation structures and processes, including school improvement panels (SciPs)...’ Unfortunately this does not accurately capture all the work of the SciPs. We would encourage the Department to either include the complete work of the SciP (i.e. mentoring of teachers, identification of professional development opportunities based upon evaluation data, and support of implementation of the corrective action plan for teachers) or not include the SciPs under this provision. We also question what would be included under ‘Other evaluation structures and processes,’ and seek additional information.
- Finally, while happy to see the proposal reference the professional learning standards for teachers and school leaders, we would recommend that high quality professional learning be aligned to the NJ professional Learning Standards. See DPR#2

We look forward to working with this Board and the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) on this code proposal as it moves forward. Thank you for the opportunity to present the recommendations of the NJ Principals and Supervisors Association. We stand ready to work with the Department, and this Board.