



New Jersey  
Educator Evaluation Review  
Task Force

**Respectfully Submitted**

**September 30, 2024**

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## Acknowledgements

The Educator Evaluation Review Task Force would like to thank Governor Murphy and members of the NJ Senate and NJ Assembly for the passage and enactment of S2082/A3413, which charged this Task Force with analyzing and recommending amendments to our current educator evaluation practices. We would like to thank members of the New Jersey Department of Education, including Diana Pasculli, Cayla Sekuler, and Brittany Benedetti who provided technical assistance throughout this process. During our review we had the opportunity to hear from several guest speakers who offered their insight and guidance to the committee. These guest speakers included Dr. Peter Mazzagatti, NJDOE Director of the Office of Educator Effectiveness; Kim Marshall, Education Researcher and Author; Joel Moore, Assistant Director of State Relationships, Education Commission of the States (ECS); and Ben Erwin, Senior Policy Analyst, Education Commission of the States (ECS). We would like to acknowledge and thank Debra Bradley, NJPSA; Francine Pfeffer, NJEA; Betsy Ginsburg, GSCS; Melanie Schulz, NJASA; and Erika Nava, NJ Senate Majority Leader's Senior Policy Advisor, who, in addition to Task Force members, attended meetings and represented their respective associations in support of the Task Force work. Furthermore, we would like to thank the educators throughout the state who serve our students each day and who offered their insights and guidance to the Task Force through spoken testimony during the public hearing held on August 28, 2024, or written testimony submitted by the August 30, 2024, deadline. We also acknowledge that many educators contributed through their participation and feedback within their respective associations. It is our fervent hope that the Task Force report is reviewed and acted upon by the New Jersey Department of Education and New Jersey State Board of Education. The recommendations contained within will yield a meaningful difference in bringing relevance and relief back to our educator evaluation process and focus our attention on the implementation of integrated best practices in alignment with ensuring we are meeting the learning needs of all of New Jersey's learners.



## **New Jersey Educator Evaluation Review Task Force Report**

### **Letter of Transmittal**

September 30, 2024  
The Honorable Philip J. Murphy  
Governor of the State of New Jersey  
Office of the Governor  
P.O. Box 001  
Trenton, NJ 08625

Dear Governor Murphy,

As Chairperson of the New Jersey Educator Evaluation Review Task Force (EERTF), I am pleased to submit the enclosed report as required under P.L. 2024, Chapter 14 (a.k.a. Senate Bill 2082) regarding the educator evaluation process. Our charge required the comprehensive review of the “Teacher Effectiveness and Accountability for the Children of New Jersey (TEACHNJ) Act,” P.L.2012, c.26 (C.18A:6-117 et al.), enacted in 2012, and the subsequent regulatory code, Chapter 10 (AchieveNJ).

The Task Force has outlined specific recommendations in our report which can be addressed through targeted regulatory changes to AchieveNJ, the establishment of an NJDOE educator-led working group, and the issuance of NJDOE Guidance. The EERTF believes that, by recalibrating the requirements of the TEACHNJ Act through regulatory changes and NJDOE guidance, we can enhance student achievement by ensuring instructional quality through a comprehensive educator evaluation system.

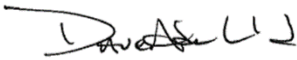
We believe that improvements to the educator evaluation system will make a meaningful impact to the interconnectedness of increasing student learning while supporting educators’ professional growth. Furthermore, the recommendations serve the dual purpose of placing a targeted focus on coaching and mentoring new teachers while simultaneously lessening the administrative burden on effective and highly effective educators.

The proposed changes work to ensure that the evaluation system is aligned with its original purpose, to enhance student achievement by improving instructional quality for the benefit of New Jersey’s students. The recommendations alone will not address all challenges and concerns for educators, but, if implemented with fidelity and partnership, they will serve as a blueprint to increase student learning, enhance best practices, support professional growth, and align organizational goals.

Essential to these recommendations is the continued partnership with representatives of the educational community and the New Jersey Department of Education. While noted in the report, the Task Force would like to highlight the support, technical assistance, and partnership with representatives of the New Jersey Department of Education under the leadership of Acting Commissioner Kevin Dehmer.

Thank you for your continued support of the Education Evaluation Review Task Force. Members of the Task Force are committed to continuing to partner to elevate these recommendations. We look forward to your review of our recommendations and the corresponding feedback.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Aderhold". The signature is stylized with a large initial "D" and a long horizontal stroke.

David Aderhold, Ed.D.  
Chairperson of the Educator Evaluation Review Task Force  
Superintendent of the West Windsor — Plainsboro Regional School District

<b>Task Force Charge</b>
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**Senate Bill 2082**

- a. It shall be the duty of the New Jersey Educator Evaluation Review Task Force to study and evaluate the educator evaluation system established pursuant to the “TEACHNJ Act,” P.L.2012, c.26 (C.18A:6-117 et al.), and implemented in New Jersey public schools. The task force shall consider the law in the current context of the State’s schools, identify areas for improvement, and make any recommendations regarding any appropriate changes or updates to the law or regulations implementing the law. The task force shall:
- (1) examine the educational value, administrative burden, and impacts on teachers, principals, and vice principals of the use of student growth objectives in annual summative evaluations, and identify potential alternative approaches to the use of student growth objectives in annual summative evaluations;
  - (2) examine any unintended consequences of the implementation of the TEACHNJ Act;
  - (3) review current educational research on best practices in educator evaluation in order to promote student achievement and success; and
  - (4) present any recommendations deemed necessary and appropriate to modify or update the TEACHNJ Act and its implementing regulations to the Governor, the Legislature, the Department of Education, and the public.
- b. The task force shall hold at least one public hearing during the course of its work in order to receive public input on the issues being studied by the task force.
- c. The task force shall issue a final report of its findings and recommendations to the Governor, and to the Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), no later than September 30, 2024. The department shall make the final report available to the public on its Internet website.

## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements .....	2
Letter of Transmittal.....	3
Task Force Charge.....	5
Table of Contents .....	6
Executive Summary.....	7
Introduction.....	8
Recommendations.....	12
Theme #1 - Re-Examine the Statutory Requirement for Multiple Objective Measures of Student Learning.....	12
Theme #2 - Highlight and Expand Existing Flexibilities via Comprehensive Guidance and Regulatory Equivalencies/Waivers.....	14
Theme #3 - Continue to Engage Practitioners in Implementation in Anticipation of Upcoming Regulatory Timelines .....	18
Examination of Educational Value, Administrative Burden, and Impacts on Teachers, Principals, and Vice Principals from the Use of SGOs in Annual Summative Evaluations .....	22
Educational Value .....	22
Administrative Burden .....	22
Impact on Annual Summative Evaluations.....	23
Alternative Approaches .....	24
Examination of Any Unintended Consequences of the Implementation of the TEACHNJ Act.	25
Strengths of TEACHNJ.....	27
Ineffective Practices Resulting from the Implementation of Regulations and NJDOE Guidance resulting from AchieveNJ.....	29
Justification for Innovative Approaches in Teacher Evaluation.....	31
Summary of Current Educational Research on Best Practices in Educator Evaluation.....	32
Design and Implementation of Evaluation Systems.....	32
Implications of the Literature Review .....	34
Comparisons to Other States: Legislative Changes around the Nation.....	35
References .....	38

## Executive Summary

The “Teacher Effectiveness and Accountability for the Children of New Jersey (TEACHNJ) Act,” P.L.2012, c.26 (C.18A:6-117 et al.), enacted in 2012, aimed to enhance student achievement by improving instructional quality through a comprehensive educator evaluation system. Over the past twelve years, New Jersey educators have adhered to the requirements of TEACHNJ and AchieveNJ (New Jersey’s administrative code adopted by the State Board of Education), yielding both successes and challenges. Among the achievements are: a robust framework for delivering specific feedback to educators; targeted professional development that aligns with evaluation outcomes; districtwide evaluation rubrics and training to ensure consistency in implementation; amendments to tenure, mentoring, and corrective action plans; and guidelines to tenure charges and arbitration. Despite the successes, several challenges have also been revealed, including: no meaningful review of the evaluative process in twelve years, which spanned a time with six Commissioners of Education and the COVID-19 pandemic; a disconnect between the intent of TEACHNJ and current practices; universal discontent with elements of the evaluation process, notably Student Growth Objectives (SGOs); and an administrative burden that redirects time and energy away from supporting students and coaching teachers as a result of a compliance-driven student growth measure with a very narrow scope. The Educator Evaluation Review Task Force, through specific recommendations outlined in the report which can be addressed through statute, administrative code, and Department of Education guidance, seeks to increase student learning while supporting educators effectively, honoring the interconnectedness of those two goals. With an eye not only on best practices but also on teacher retention and staffing shortages, the proposed changes aim to reduce administrative burdens, enhance coaching and mentoring, and ensure the evaluation system’s alignment with its original purpose to the benefit of New Jersey’s students.

## Introduction

Serving as a cornerstone to education is the belief that an effective teacher can have a resounding and lifelong beneficial impact upon the students that teacher encounters. In “The Negative Impact of ESSA on Educational Equity: A Teacher Accountability Perspective,” Naicong Xie states, “A year with an ineffective teacher can cost a student a year and a half of achievement,” whereas “having an effective teacher for five years in a row can almost close the achievement gap” (7, 2023). This begs the question about how one discerns between an ineffective and effective teacher and, more importantly, how one provides the time, individualized support, and interventions to help every teacher move toward more effective practices to support student learning. The only way to kickstart that process is through a meaningful, trusted, and purposeful evaluative process.

The “Teacher Effectiveness and Accountability for the Children of New Jersey (TEACHNJ) Act,” P.L.2012, c.26 (C.18A:6-117 et al.) was signed into law in 2012 with the goal of raising student achievement by improving instruction through adoption of an educator evaluation system that provides specific feedback to educators, gives insight into pathways for aligned professional development, and informs personnel decisions. What the past twelve years of TEACHNJ and the corresponding administrative code requirements, known as AchieveNJ, have revealed is a combination of benefits to be celebrated, as well as areas of concern and consternation that warrant reconsideration.

This report acknowledges the strong statutory framework of TEACHNJ which resulted in educators receiving individualized professional feedback, professional development targeted to the educators’ and/or students’ actual needs, and district selection of an approved evaluative rubric, a new direction in many districts. TEACHNJ further amended language for tenure, mentoring, school improvement panels, corrective action plans for struggling educators, guidelines for tenure charges, and arbitration. These specific provisions have brought clarity and enhancements to which stakeholders have few, if any, objections.

There is, however, a disconnect between the original intent of TEACHNJ and its current operation and implementation of educator evaluations. In the twelve years since its

implementation, the educational landscape has changed drastically, notably through transition between six Commissioners (Dehmer, Allen-McMillan, Repollet, Harrington, Hespe, and Cerf), statewide pushback against standardized PARCC assessments, and, most disruptively, the COVID-19 pandemic. The evaluation system and policies have remained largely unchanged, and the Educator Evaluation Review Task Force has identified discrepancies between the original goals of TEACHNJ and the practices that have evolved, largely by necessity and practicality. Emerging research and anecdotal evidence highlight implementation issues that were not apparent at the outset of the reforms. This context underscores the need for a reset and redefinition of TEACHNJ's intentions and the regulations in N.J.A.C. 6A:10. Therefore, it is time to pause and ground ourselves again in the true intentions of the statute and corresponding regulations, as well as what new knowledge has emerged in the interim.

The Task Force finds that key elements of the current evaluation process, including Student Growth Objectives, are universally disliked by all categories of educators (teachers, supervisors, principals, and chief school administrators) as a chasm has formed between intention and implementation. If the purpose of TEACHNJ was to focus attention on multiple objective measures of student learning, the implementation diluted that goal by focusing teacher attention too narrowly on a compliance-based process of Student Growth Objectives (SGOs). The Task Force believes that the purpose of the TEACHNJ statute was to provide an evaluation measure that ensured an intentional focus not just on student learning in general, but a deliberate focus on identifying and supporting students who were struggling to reach success. While TEACHNJ unquestionably fostered greater conversations about student achievement data and the creation of goals, it has failed in implementation and practice. The daunting task of connecting statute to regulation to guidance, instead of streamlining the process, created a paperchase process that silos educators' efforts to make data-driven decisions and plan accordingly to support student learning. Review and clarification is not only requested but demanded by educators, who, simply but profoundly, only seek to do what is best for their students.

The Task Force for Public School Staffing Shortages ([Executive Order 309](#)), also assembled during Governor Murphy's administration, outlined factors impacting the recruitment and retention of teachers. The result was a resounding call to reduce administrative burdens and

tasks that pull teachers away from their classrooms, their preparations, or the valuable feedback they can give their students through consideration of a “reassessment of student growth objectives.” The Educator Evaluation Review Task Force also believes that, in addition to reducing administrative burdens, recalibrating the requirements of the TEACHNJ Act would enhance a dual focus of coaching and mentoring new and struggling teachers and would lessen the administrative burden on effective and highly effective educators whose time is better spent addressing their students’ needs. In addition, use of student assessment as an evaluative tool does not align with helping teachers improve their practice. Noted educational thought leader Pedro Noguero states, “Assessment is an essential part of education, because you have to know what kids are learning. So you have to assess their growth, their progress. But assessments should be used for that purpose and to diagnose learning needs, not to rank people, which is what we are doing now” (Kaplan, 2020).

Lastly, we have identified redundancies between SGOs and Professional Development Plans (PDPs) which shift time and energy away from student learning. Evaluations have become time-consuming and compliance-oriented, which has undermined their meaningfulness. SGOs, as currently constructed, must be eliminated, and multiple objective measures of learning must be integrated cohesively to stay true to the original intention of TEACHNJ. To accomplish this, we must recalibrate our system to focus on not only student growth but intentional practices focused on identified learners and the strategies and practices leveraged to enhance student learning.

As the Task Force debated the direction of the recommendations, we saw three potential pathways:

1. Pursue changes to statute.
2. Pursue changes to regulation.
3. Pursue clarification to existing legislation and regulation through a series or package of NJDOE guidance.

The Task Force recommends pursuing a combination of targeted regulatory changes, establishing an NJDOE educator-led working group to review and collaborate towards effectuating the Task Force recommendations, and the NJDOE issuing a series or package of

NJDOE guidance to support educators as they make these meaningful and important shifts to their local evaluation systems.

**The Educator Evaluation Review Task Force values:**

1. The potential within all students to grow and succeed with the right support and opportunities.
2. The importance of professional learning as an integral tool to introduce and reinforce best practices in education;
3. The use of timely, ongoing, frequent, and objective data from a variety of sources to inform educators about the individual needs of their students, enabling them to plan, remediate, support, and challenge learners to succeed;
4. The feedback garnered from standardized assessments that reflect a “moment in time” snapshot of student learning for purposes of statewide analysis and, locally, a broad indication of trends in student performance and the efficacy of the curriculum being delivered; and
5. The critical role that the evaluative process plays in establishing professional standards, providing ongoing feedback and coaching to educators to improve their practice, and ensuring that New Jersey’s students have the best educators possible guiding them in their learning journey.

## Recommendations

The recommendations outlined below serve to ensure that New Jersey’s educator evaluation system has educational value, minimizes administrative burden, augments and improves instructional coaching and mentorship, and places an explicit focus on best practices related to ensuring student achievement and success.

The requirements of TEACHNJ and AchieveNJ generally apply to all “teaching staff members,” and the Task Force advises that the implementation of the following recommendations be reviewed in consideration of all certificated roles and differentiated according to position to avoid unintended consequences.

### Theme #1 - Re-Examine the Statutory Requirement for Multiple Objective Measures of Student Learning

TEACHNJ states, “Multiple objective measures of student learning means the results of formal and informal assessments of students. Such measures may include a combination of, but are not limited to: teacher-set goals for student learning; student performance assessments, including portfolio projects, problem-solving protocols, and internships; teacher-developed assessments; standardized assessments; and district-established assessments.” In light of this definition, the Task Force recommends that the NJDOE implement the following:

**Key -** (G) NJDOE Guidance; (R) Regulatory; (S) Statutory

1. **Incorporate the statutory definition of multiple objective measures of student learning into all future NJDOE guidance** and include the definition into the regulatory updates in N.J.A.C. 6A:10, as the current regulation leaves out the definition established in TEACHNJ. **(R)**

- 2. Reduce the burden on teachers and administrators by integrating and streamlining the requirements of Professional Development Plans and Student Growth Objectives.** Charlotte Danielson states, “I’m deeply troubled by the transformation of teaching from a complex profession requiring nuanced judgment to the performance of certain behaviors that can be ticked off on a checklist. In fact, I (and many others in the academic and policy communities) believe it’s time for a major rethinking of how we structure teacher evaluation to ensure that teachers, as professionals, can benefit from numerous opportunities to continually refine their craft” (Danielson, 2016). PDPs are required under N.J.A.C. 6A:9C, and SGOs are mandated under N.J.A.C. 6A:10 as the only way to fulfill the statutory requirement for multiple objective measures of student learning for teachers of non-tested subject areas/grades. However, there is potential redundancy in these goal-setting requirements, and the Task Force finds no reason why a high quality PDP could not also fulfill the multiple measures requirement. These processes are duplicative but not aligned or connected. If we are to truly reduce the burden on educators, we must streamline the processes aligned in 6A:9C and 6A:10. The Task Force sees tremendous opportunity to implement a vision for alignment that exists within the recommendations. We believe that integrating, streamlining, and reducing the requirements from creating four goals annually (previously a combination of SGOs and PDPs) to two integrated goals annually would positively impact every educator in New Jersey. Intentionally doing so can serve as a blueprint to increase student learning, enhance best practices, support professional growth, reduce administrative burden, and align organizational goals. **(G or R)**
- 3. Intentionally align these reimagined PDPs with language in N.J.A.C. 6A:8-3.1. Standards and Assessment,** stating, “District boards of education shall ensure that curriculum and instruction are designed and delivered in such a way that all students are able to demonstrate the knowledge and skills specified by the NJSLS and shall ensure that appropriate instructional adaptations are designed and delivered for students with disabilities, for MLs [multilingual learners], for students enrolled in alternative education programs, and for students who are gifted and talented.” Consolidating and aligning these regulatory requirements would streamline evaluation

processes significantly and would provide an opportunity for educators to do the crucial work of focusing on intentional practices that can impact student growth. **(G)**

4. **Create a new name** for the aforementioned structure, hence redefining a process that would meet all existing regulatory requirements mentioned above. Suggested names include: Best Practice Indicators (BPIs); Student Performance Measures (SPMs); Integrated Growth and Development Plan (IGDP); or Integrated Best Practices (IBPs). **(G or R)**
  
5. **Plan for a future re-examination of the median student growth percentile (mSGP) component of evaluations.** mSGPs and similarly designed metrics nationwide continue to be successfully challenged, strongly indicating that mSGPs lack utility for their intended purpose. While mSGPs are arguably flawed, **the Task Force does not currently recommend addressing mSGP concerns until N.J.A.C. 6A:10 is opened in its entirety.** Under the current evaluation system, approximately 15% of NJ educators are eligible to receive an mSGP, which accounts for 5% of their summative evaluation score. The Task Force’s current position is that, while problematic, the actual impact of mSGPs is insignificant compared to the significant concerns detailed throughout this report with SGOs. **(S)**

**Redefining and rebranding SGOs and PDPs to dually meet the regulatory requirements would support educators in focusing on multiple objective measures of student learning and integrating best practices,** which is central to the purpose of the Task Force.

<p><b>Theme #2 - Highlight and Expand Existing Flexibilities via Comprehensive Guidance and Regulatory Equivalencies/Waivers</b></p>
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As defined in N.J.A.C. 6A:10, an observation means “a method of collecting data on the performance of a teaching staff member's assigned duties and responsibilities.” Tenured teachers must be observed twice annually, and, if a tenured teacher earns a highly effective rating, they become eligible for alternative observation practices as approved by the Commissioner. With this in mind, the Task Force believes the NJDOE should:

6. **Approve and publish an expanded bank of Commissioner-approved practices and broaden eligibility to both Effective and Highly Effective Educators** (based on their most recent summative evaluation), which could fulfill observation requirements for tenured teachers. Outlined in the requirements of 6A:10-4.4(c)3.i is the allowance of “Commissioner-approved activities.” The regulations at N.J.A.C. 6A:10-4.4(c)3.i specifically state, “If a tenured teacher was rated highly effective on his or her most recent summative evaluation and if both the teacher and the teacher’s designated supervisor agree to use this option, one of the two required observations may be an observation of a Commissioner-approved activity other than a classroom lesson. The Department shall post annually to its website a list of Commissioner-approved activities that may be observed in accordance with this section.”

Currently, Commissioner-approved activities are a scarcely-utilized opportunity. The NJDOE currently has three approved and published activities listed on their website which include the Reflective Practice Protocol, National Board Certification, and serving as a Cooperating Teacher (supporting a student teacher). The Reflective Practice Protocol is modeled after the National Board Certification process as its framework. However, the Task Force asserts the Reflective Practice Protocol is just one path that could support experienced, effective educators to deepen their practice through the evaluation system, and this option is especially burdensome, much more so than a standard observation.

Alternative practices must be considered and to the greatest extent possible should be aligned with student support systems such as the New Jersey Tiered Systems of Support (NJTSS) and/or other similar frameworks (Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), Intervention & Referral Services (I&RS), Response to Intervention (RTI), etc. These widely-used, research-based, and impactful systems utilize universal screening, tiered interventions, progress monitoring, data-based decision making, and collaboration, the outcomes of which also inform professional development and support culturally-informed practices. The ultimate goal of teacher evaluation should be to provide educators with actionable feedback that fosters professional development and student achievement. The Task Force believes alignment between professional development and evaluation

processes, utilizing known best practices as a bridge, will benefit student learning greatly. Examples of data protocols can be found in Appendix F. This recommendation would bring further alignment between educator evaluation and professional development. **(G and R)**

**7. Align “Commissioner-approved activities” with the Standards for Professional Learning to further integrate professional learning and educator evaluation.**

The regulations at N.J.A.C. 6A:9C-3.3 aim to enhance educator effectiveness and improve student outcomes via professional development implementation; they provide a framework for professional learning that is rooted in equity, driven by evidence, and focused on continuous improvement. These standards (found in Appendix I) emphasize the importance of creating a supportive learning environment, fostering collaboration, and leveraging effective leadership to empower educators and ultimately improve student outcomes.

An effective educator evaluation system should be closely tied to the professional learning opportunities offered to educators. While the current system supports utilizing evaluation data to guide professional development planning in schools and districts, further alignment would be even more beneficial towards creating cohesive local systems. The NJDOE can improve upon this system by more intentionally ensuring that teachers are engaging in standards-aligned professional development.

In essence, N.J.A.C. 6A:9C-3.3 provides a framework for professional learning that is rooted in equity, driven by evidence, and focused on continuous improvement, and 6A:10-4.4(c)3.i provides the means for innovative practices that differentiate evaluation for tenured teachers and emphasizes the importance of best practices and highly effective structures that improve student outcomes. Together, these regulatory frameworks provide an opportunity to explore standards-aligned, teacher-led alternative observation activities for New Jersey’s experienced, effective educators. This recommendation directly supports the Task Force’s mission to reduce administrative burden and retain our most experienced educators. **(G)**

- 8. Develop a process for districts to submit alternative practices for approval as outlined under N.J.A.C. 6A:5-1.3 which outlines a procedure for submission of an equivalency or waiver.** Districts would need to illustrate the way(s) in which the alternative practice is standards-aligned. Once approved, these submissions would be added to the existing bank of alternative practices on the NJDOE's website. To serve this goal, the Task Force recommends expansion of the existing regulatory equivalency and waiver processes as set forth at N.J.A.C. 6A:5, Regulatory Equivalency and Waiver, by publishing all previously approved submissions to make them available to all districts. This should include the creation of guidance to districts that outline the submission process and requirements for equivalencies and waivers by providing exemplars, clarifying criteria, providing targeted assistance and training, and releasing the submission forms in both guidance and on the NJDOE website. **(G)**
- 9. Issue guidance on local flexibility within existing evaluation rubrics.** The NJDOE has outlined requirements for districts when selecting an evaluation rubric, but additional clarification is needed in N.J.A.C. 6A:10.1.2, particularly regarding the term "educator practice instrument." Currently, it defines this as "a tool that assesses professional competencies based on scales that reflect practice or research. These scores contribute to the summative evaluation for various staff members." However, more guidance is necessary on the flexibility districts have, including how they assign numerical values, instrument weight, scoring, choice, and utilization. The NJDOE guidance should outline all flexibility including the percentages to evaluation domains, standards, components, and/or indicators. Once equipped with this guidance, educators can collaborate to establish practices that work best for their communities. **(G)**

**Theme #3 - Continue to Engage Practitioners in Implementation in Anticipation of Upcoming Regulatory Timelines**

The members of the Task Force sincerely believe that the work of improving educator evaluation in New Jersey is only beginning. Therefore, the Task Force asks the NJDOE to:

10. **Convene an implementation working group** during the 2024-2025 school year to immediately begin exploring, developing, and supporting the implementation of the recommendations of the Educator Evaluation Review Task Force. With the support of the NJDOE, this working group should be educator-led in collaboration with the NJDOE, and inclusive of the educational associations and organizations that served on the Task Force. The initial goal of the working group will be to establish a feedback loop between the NJDOE and educators in developing, informing, and issuing relevant guidance, including implementing guidance laid out in the Educational Evaluation Review Task Force and additional recommendations that arise from the working group itself. As the regulations are opened during the course of the scheduled review cycle, the working group may also be called upon to provide suggestions for additional regulatory changes based upon feedback from implementation of the Task Force and working group's recommendations and subsequent NJDOE guidance. **(G)**
  
11. **Collaborate with stakeholders towards providing enhanced guidance**, technical assistance, clarification, banks of strategies, drafts of waivers, and examples of best practices and methods identifying innovative approaches to already established statutes and regulations, with the Task Force recommending the rollout of initial guidance commencing by the end of March 2025 to allow districts to plan professional development incorporating changes with adequate notice to prepare for the 25-26 academic year. **(G)**
  
12. **Reimagine Educator Evaluation in New Jersey utilizing some of the lesser known components of existing regulations which support and build upon emerging and existing best practices.** Design and utilize iterative processes that foster continuous improvement as stakeholders collaborate to undertake the crucial work of reimagining educator evaluation in New Jersey. As the Task Force has spent an arduous amount of time dedicated to reviewing both TEACHNJ (Chapter 26) and the regulations set forth at

N.J.A.C. 6A:10, it is important to ensure that any future guidance highlights some of the lesser known components of existing regulations and builds upon emerging and existing best practices. **(G)**

- a. Formative evaluations (such as classroom observations) are not required to be rated or have numerical scores; only summative evaluations have such a requirement.
- b. Established goals identified within an SGO that reflect student learning objectives do not have to be constructed for a full class or full caseload but can be targeted to ensure that educators are meeting the learning needs of every student in our charge.
- c. For tenured staff, alternative evaluation options (Commissioner- approved) and equivalencies or waivers already exist in current regulations. However, the process is not widely known and could be made more transparent with a menu of options (outlined in [Recommendation #6](#) and [Recommendation #8](#)).
- d. The statutory intention of TEACHNJ was to place an explicit focus on student learning. The goal was to ensure a process that focused on individual student growth. The statute reflected this focus by defining multiple objective measures of student learning as outlined in [Recommendation #1](#).
  - i. The terminology of SGOs and SGPs does not exist in TEACHNJ (Chapter 26, 2012). SGOs and SGPs were developed by a former NJDOE administration and a State Board of Education composition of bygone days, and the Task Force sees opportunities to meet the intentions of TEACHNJ through alternative processes that will require the issuance of either NJDOE Guidance or Regulatory changes.
- e. Redundancies exist between PDPs and SGOs. The working group should recommend an evaluation protocol that eliminates current SGOs as implemented by discarding redundancies in favor of an integrated approach within the PDP framework. This framework would provide a more targeted process that reinforces best practices while leveraging existing structures.

- f. Clarify the existing misnomer in the field that evaluations must only occur within the classroom setting. N.J.A.C. 6A:10-1.2 (regulation) states, “‘Evaluation’ means an appraisal of an individual's professional performance in relation to his or her job description and professional standards and based on, when applicable, the individual’s evaluation rubric.” It is important to reinforce that educators may be evaluated in a multitude of settings that may be outside of a classroom environment as long as the individual is evaluated in alignment with their professional performance, job description, and professional standards.

**13. Amend N.J.A.C. 6A:10, Educator Effectiveness, in a targeted manner to address specific areas of clarification** which the committee has identified in the attached redlined review of the regulation (Appendix L). **(R)**

a. Key Recommendations

- i. Eliminate Student Growth Objectives and integrate multiple objective measures of student learning into Professional Development Plans.
- ii. Under 6A:10-4.4.c.3.1 add “rated either effective or highly effective.”
- iii. Incorporate the statutory definition of multiple objective measures of student learning from Chapter 26 directly into Chapter 6A:10.

**14. Revisit the requirement of four rating categories and consider using three instead (Effective, Partially Effective, Ineffective).** Should 18A:6-123 (Review, approval of evaluation rubrics) be opened for future revision, the Task Force recommends that members of the legislature reconsider the mandate for “four defined annual rating categories for teachers, principals, assistant principals, and vice-principals: ineffective, partially effective, effective, and highly effective.” In theory, the presence of a “highly effective” rating should serve as a motivator for excellence, but, in reality, the debates that ensue over ratings and tenth-of-a-point differences misdirect valuable post-observation conference discussions, summative conferences, and other professional growth opportunities toward scoring and away from professional growth, undermining the real purpose of the evaluative process. Another approach is to numerically value effective and

highly effective ratings the same, allowing the highly effective designation to serve as acknowledgement of work that is above and beyond but without sustaining a point value that impedes growth discussions. **(S and R)**

15. The Educator Evaluation Review Task Force strongly believes that **addressing the recommendations outlined herein should occur expeditiously**, resulting in the rollout of initial guidance from the NJDOE commencing no later than the end of March 2025, not only to keep at bay the unnecessarily burdensome work of SGOs but also to move from a compliance-centered goal-setting system to one that integrates the best practices of teaching and supporting student learning.

However, **should the targeted regulatory changes that arise from this process not be feasible prior to the start of the 25-26 school year, the Task Force recommends a statutory pause be placed upon SGOs until a new regulatory framework premised on the recommendations of the Task Force can be implemented.** Such a pause should also take into consideration the unintended consequences of the current pause for tenured educators, such as saddling a teacher with a low score with no legally permissible way to improve upon a previously earned SGO score.

During such a regulatory pause, the Task Force recommends that no fewer than a dozen school districts pilot the new protocol that emerges from the recommendations of this Task Force and the subsequent outcomes of the working group, under the guidance and support of the NJDOE who will collect and share feedback with the working group for further consideration in finalizing statutory and guidance language. **(S)**

## Examination of Educational Value, Administrative Burden, and Impacts on Teachers, Principals, and Vice Principals from the Use of SGOs in Annual Summative Evaluations

The Task Force was statutorily charged with examining the educational value, administrative burden, and impacts on teachers, principals, and vice/assistant principals from the use of student growth objectives in annual summative evaluations, as well as identifying potential alternative approaches to the use of student growth objectives in annual summative evaluations. Regarding these charges, the members of the Task Force conclude:

### **Educational Value**

As currently constructed and used in practice, **SGOs have limited to no educational value.** In the years that SGOs have been implemented, taking into account the various ways districts have managed them, there has been no demonstrable benefit to student achievement or teaching practices. As SGOs are an artificial construct to ensure that non-tested teachers have a student achievement metric, they have, by and large, been an instrument of compliance and created a false sense of “accountability.” SGOs were not designed on the basis of research or best practices. Indeed, research shows that “an increased focus on summative judgment undermine[s] the intrinsic value of teaching” (Mayger, 2022).

### **Administrative Burden**

SGOs as currently implemented are a **time-intensive process**, and that time could and should be better invested elsewhere. The amount of clerical time spent engaging with the design and organization of SGOs on a yearly basis amounts to many hours and consequently is a huge burden on teachers and administrators. An inordinate amount of time is spent on the administration of SGO assessments and takes away from time that could be spent more meaningfully otherwise, in ways that research has shown to have a positive impact on student learning: preparing engaging lessons, collaborating with colleagues in ways that foster collective efficacy, designing quality learning activities, providing timely and high quality feedback to students, and involving parents in the school community. Indeed, many teachers report spending upwards of 8-10 hours developing their initial SGO and administering a baseline assessment, then several more hours gathering and analyzing data to determine their final SGO score. Nationwide research illustrates that evaluation systems consume as much as

19 total days of work per year (Bleiberg, 2023). In addition, the time spent on the “paperwork” of SGOs seriously detracts from the time needed to prioritize proven and important efforts to increase student outcomes. Although the administrative burden of the SGO process varies from district to district, even in the best of circumstances SGOs require a heavy investment in time that does not yield any educational benefit. As currently constructed and implemented, SGOs do not produce the intended benefit of impacting instructional practices by utilizing multiple objective measures of student learning to drive educational outcomes for students since the focal point of each SGO is often a narrow target by necessity to streamline this onerous process, not a broader scope that enables an educator to consider all aspects of students’ growth.

### **Impact on Annual Summative Evaluations**

Teachers organically monitor student growth throughout the year through a variety of formal and informal measures. However, seamlessly integrating formative assessment into the flow of lessons and units at several key points in order to drive student learning outcomes is both an art and a science. As such, creating structures that honor professional growth and increase pedagogical skills are essential. While educators are constantly assessing and adjusting as they monitor student growth toward achieving mastery of learning goals, learning how to do so requires dedicated focus and training. **SGOs impose an artificial structure and create an unproductive burden upon them that often distracts from the very intent of the intended process.** The evaluation system causes educators to focus on what their score will be, detracting from practices and structures that are actually helping students. In “How Teachers Perceive the Impact of Teacher Feedback: A Latent Class Analysis,” Choi and Bowers gleaned from their own research that “feedback is the main source of intrinsic motivation and direction, and evaluations are most likely to impact teachers’ instructional practices when high-quality, meaningful feedback teachers can use to improve their practices is provided (Ford et al., 2018; Kraft & Christian 2022; Ridge & Lavigne, 2020)” (2, 2024). Unfortunately, post-observation discussions have devolved into disagreements over scores on an evaluation rubric versus an opportunity for coaching and professional growth. Essentially the evaluation process has become a distraction in many districts, and we must reground ourselves in the true intention of educator evaluation.

Administrators also pointed out the potential disincentive to expectations of rigorous goals when a building principal's SGO score is dependent on the average score of the staff in their building. Additionally, the Task Force noted that the dynamics involved in applying numerical scores to teachers has created a toxic environment in many districts.

### **Alternative Approaches**

Members of the Task Force agree that, as currently constructed, SGOs must be eliminated and recognize that although the "multiple objective measures" provision exists in statute, SGOs – which originate in regulation, not statute – are not the only structure that could fulfill the requirement. Our conclusion is that the **best alternative to the use of SGOs is to redesign requirements, allowing for local flexibility when determining how districts will comply with the statutory requirement for "multiple objective measures."** The Task Force sees an opportunity to integrate Professional Development Plans with practices proven to promote student learning. Focusing on best practices and eliminating ineffective assessment practices will allow educators to target interventions to measure student learning, allowing more accurate growth measurement across the various grade levels and subject areas. The Task Force believes that redesigning such requirements create the conditions for both professional growth and student learning. In the words of Dr. Mayger, Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Administration and Secondary Education at The College of New Jersey, "The question at issue is not whether teachers should be held accountable but what they should be held accountable for and by whom... school administrators should establish climates of reciprocal accountability where districts assume responsibility for creating conditions where students and teachers can thrive and teachers, in turn, assume responsibility for their professional growth" (Mayger, 2022).

## Examination of Any Unintended Consequences of the Implementation of the TEACHNJ Act

The Task Force was statutorily charged with examining the unintended consequences of the implementation of the TEACHNJ Act. Although the statute has brought about many benefits to New Jersey's public school system, the unintended consequences of the enacted statute, corresponding regulations, and guidance documentation must be highlighted.

We agree that the system **disincentivizes educator innovation and can cause both teachers and administrators to place explicit focus on an assessment outcome over improving professional practices**. As such, the current system disincentivizes teachers from setting challenging targets for themselves and their students (Mayger, 2022). The byproduct of tying learning targets to student learning targets is that goals are often set low to ensure that an evaluation score is reached. This disconnect in implemented practice often works counter to intended goals.

One of the most serious consequences of the system is the time and energy spent on paperwork, an **administrative burden which hampers administrators' ability to help teachers improve** professionally. Administrators are unable to dedicate adequate time to the critical work of observing, evaluating, coaching, providing feedback, and mentoring teachers, particularly novice teachers who might require more guidance. Lack of administrative support and ineffective mentoring are often cited as reasons for teachers leaving the profession, and so the inability of administrators to have robust coaching and mentoring support is a contributing factor to teacher turnover and staffing shortages. Removing roadblocks in order to allow administrators to spend an appropriate amount of time mentoring new and struggling staff will more effectively prevent newer teachers from "falling through the cracks."

Effective teaching requires teachers to have adequate time for lesson design and planning, data analysis, engaging in professional learning, collaboration with colleagues, and crafting feedback for students. Under the current system, teachers are forced to spend excessive amounts of time working on compliance paperwork related to SGOs at the expense of meaningful pedagogical activities.

As a Task Force, what we know and believe is that “accomplishing the maximum impact on student learning depends on teams of teachers working together, with excellent leaders or coaches, agreeing on worthwhile outcomes, setting high expectations, knowing the students’ starting and desired success in learning, seeking evidence continually about their impact on all students, modifying their teaching in light of this evaluation, and joining in the success of truly making a difference to student outcomes” (John A.C. Hattie, *Visible Learning for Teachers: Maximizing Impact on Learning*).

Another unintended consequence of the implementation of TEACHNJ is the **negative effect on relationships between educators**. The tremendous amount of added stress on teachers, the pressure on administrators, and the overall unintended consequences of perceived high stakes assessments creates tension in the evaluation system. The goal of professional growth should be a commitment to engage in meaningful dialogue about improving teaching and learning. Teachers and administrators must work together in our shared commitment to continuous improvement in service to our students, instead of being forced into a system that prioritizes artificial scores and distrusted accountability measures, causing educators to become defensive and resentful. The education system as currently constructed works directly against the collegial relationship that educators want and need in order to provide the best outcomes for students. When combined with the labor-intensive nature of evaluative elements and administrators’ sense of fairness toward teachers when reflecting upon their own limitations regarding the quantity and quality of support they can provide struggling teachers, it is hardly surprising that “principals felt as if it was unfair to rate teachers as below proficient if they did not have the capacity to provide these teachers with support” (Kraft & Gilmour, 2017). The byproduct of the current evaluation system is often one of professional barriers and animosity versus collegiality and growth. We owe it to our educators to address the concerns with the evaluation system that is currently in place to refocus the work on student learning and educational outcomes for all learners.

Furthermore, in many cases the educator practice instruments being used were not intended to score teachers but rather to provide growth-oriented feedback and coaching. The Task Force members know that, when educators effectively and openly collaborate, student achievement and morale improve.

## Strengths of TEACHNJ

The implementation of TEACHNJ (Chapter 26) and the corresponding regulations promulgated under AchieveNJ (N.J.A.C. 6A:10) were enacted during the 2012-2013 school year. For years, TEACHNJ has been “blamed” for the creation of SGOs and mSGPs. However, it is important to note that the terms and concepts “Student Growth Objectives” or “Student Growth Percentiles” do not exist in the legislation but rather were constructed by the governing regulations under AchieveNJ.

The TEACHNJ legislation created significant benefits for educators:

1. The legislation placed **explicit focus on raising student achievement by improving instruction and leveraging data-driven decision making** in our schools.
2. Prior to TEACHNJ, educator evaluations were not required to be grounded in an approved evaluation instrument (evaluation rubric), such as Danielson, Marzano, Stronge, McREL, Marshall, etc. The **implementation of TEACHNJ increased the overall quality of educator practice instruments.**
3. The legislation created the **definition of “multiple objective measures of student learning”** which means “the results of formal and informal assessments of students. Such measures may include a combination of, but are not limited to: teacher-set goals for student learning; student performance assessments, including portfolio projects, problem-solving protocols, and internships; teacher-developed assessments; standardized assessments; and district-established assessments.” This definition did place a significant focus on student performance data at a time in which many school districts did not pay particular focus on these metrics. As a result, educators in New Jersey have become more data-literate overall.
4. TEACHNJ is credited with **significant changes to several areas of administrative code which govern tenure and employment rights**, including but not limited to:

- a. N.J.S.18A:6-9 was amended to read as follows: Controversies, disputes arising under school laws; jurisdiction. 18A:6-9. The commissioner shall have jurisdiction to hear and determine, without cost to the parties, all controversies and disputes arising under the school laws, excepting those governing higher education, or under the rules of the State board or of the commissioner. For the purposes of this Title, controversies and disputes concerning the conduct of school elections shall not be deemed to arise under the school laws. Notwithstanding the provisions of this section to the contrary, an arbitrator shall hear and make a final determination on a controversy and dispute arising under subarticle B of article 2 of chapter 6 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes (C.18A:6-10 et seq.).
- b. N.J.S.18A:6-11 is amended to read as follows: Written charges, statement of evidence; filing; statement of position by employee; certification of determination; notice.
- c. N.J.S.18A:6-13 was amended to read as follows: Dismissal of charge for failure of determination by board. 18A:6-13. If the board does not make such a determination within 45 days after receipt of the written charge, the charge shall be deemed to be dismissed and no further proceeding or action shall be taken thereon.
- d. N.J.S.18A:6-14 was amended to read as follows: Suspension upon certification of charge; compensation; reinstatement.
- e. N.J.S.18A:6-16 was amended to read as follows: Proceedings before commissioner; written response; determination.
- f. N.J.S.18A:28-5 is amended to read as follows: Requirements for tenure. 18A:28-5.
  - a. The services of all teaching staff members employed prior to the effective date of P.L.2012, c.26 (C.18A:6-117 et al.).
- g. N.J.S.18A:28-6 was amended to read as follows: Tenure upon transfer or promotion.
- h. 18A:6-120 School Improvement Panel.
- i. 8A:6-127 Researched-based mentoring program.

- j. 18A:6-128 Ongoing professional development. 15. a. A board of education, principal, or superintendent shall provide its teaching staff members with ongoing professional development that supports student achievement and with an individual professional development plan.
- k. 18A:6-122 Annual submission of evaluation rubrics. 16. a. A school district shall annually submit to the Commissioner of Education, for review and approval, the evaluation rubrics that the district will use to assess the effectiveness of its teachers, principals, assistant principals, and vice-principals and all other teaching staff members. The board shall ensure that an approved rubric meets the minimum standards established by the State Board of Education.
  - 1. 18A:6-17.5 Determination of certain tenure charges.
  - 2. 18A:6-125 Evaluation rubric not subject to collective negotiations.
  - 3. 18A:6-17.1 Panel of arbitrators.
  - 4. TEACHNJ created a **consistent definition of a “Corrective Action Plan”** (CAP) which is defined as a “written plan developed by a teaching staff member serving in a supervisory capacity in collaboration with the teaching staff member to address deficiencies as outlined in an evaluation.” The CAP provides clarity and transparency on what the educator and supervisor will do to improve performance.

**Ineffective Practices Resulting from the Implementation of Regulations and NJDOE Guidance resulting from AchieveNJ**

Starting in 2013, as the field scrambled to create and implement SGOs in non-tested areas in order to measure student growth while striving to figure out how SGPs would impact educators, **a system of ineffective practices came into being, primarily to illustrate compliance with AchieveNJ.** Over time, as we created systems by which we measure outcomes of arbitrary measures, we shifted focus away from best practices and processes to a system that values compliance over progress and growth. As such, the rush to implement

TEACHNJ, New Jersey's answer to the data-driven metrics encouraged by the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) and the competitive grants under Race to the Top (RTT) funding, resulted in practices that in many school districts remain in effect today.

Anecdotal examples include:

- Lack of measurable impact on student learning and effective teaching practices.
- Rigidity in implementation and design of growth objectives that focuses on a one-size-fits all approach which fails to account for the nuance of individual classroom factors and student needs.
- Administrative burden and lack of adequate professional development.
- Inconsistent implementation.
- Inconsistent data reliability and/or availability of easily accessible data and analysis.
- Increased pressure on educators.
- Ineffectiveness in accurately measuring student growth or driving meaningful instructional change.
- Standalone assessments provided to students twice per school year solely for the purpose of achieving an SGO to show growth. An example would be providing 8th graders with the final exam in Social Studies 8 in both September (before any learning) and again in June (after ten months of instruction) in order to have an "SGO" that measured academic growth.
- Administrators being bogged down with the process of scoring every component of the evaluation rubric for every observation, despite local flexibility that allows otherwise. This is a huge investment of time that could be spent better.
- An overemphasis on post-observation debates focused on the evaluation score of "3" vs. "4" vs. instructional coaching and growth. Debates between the evaluated and evaluator over scoring of rubric components, fueled by the dichotomy of effective vs. highly effective ratings, led to lost opportunities for professional growth.

## Justification for Innovative Approaches in Teacher Evaluation

The evaluation of teaching effectiveness is a complex and multi-faceted challenge that has evolved significantly over the past few decades. Traditional methods, primarily centered around standardized testing and summative assessment results, have faced criticism for their narrow focus and limited ability to capture the full scope of teaching practices. SGOs serve as a prime example of an overly controlled, compliance-based requirement that serves little purpose in the educational landscape. “Compliance refers to when educators adhere to the technical requirements of the policy but do not embrace its spirit. Teachers are not committed to using this system as a tool for improvement nor do they engage in strategic behaviors to distort their ratings” (Choi & Bowers, 2024). Education researchers and policymakers have advocated for more holistic, data-informed, and reflective approaches. Research supports the adoption of innovative approaches in teacher evaluation, emphasizing the need for a more comprehensive, reflective, and data-driven process.

The existing N.J.A.C. 6A:10 regulations allow for innovative approaches in two specific areas:

- N.J.A.C. 6A:10-4.4(c)3.i specifically states, “Tenured teachers shall be observed at least two times during each school year. Observations for all tenured teachers shall occur prior to the annual summary conference, which shall occur prior to the end of the academic school year... If a tenured teacher was rated highly effective on his or her most recent summative evaluation and if both the teacher and the teacher’s designated supervisor agree to use this option, **one of the two required observations may be an observation of a Commissioner-approved activity other than a classroom lesson.** The Department shall post annually to its website a list of Commissioner-approved activities that may be observed in accordance with this section.”
- N.J.A.C. 6A:5, Regulatory Equivalency and Waiver, allows the Commissioner to provide **regulatory flexibility** regarding the requirements contained in the New Jersey Administrative Code Title 6A. Equivalencies and waivers cannot be granted for provisions of state or federal law, educator certification rules (N.J.A.C. 6A:9B) or special education rules (N.J.A.C. 6A:14).

- Equivalency Application - “Equivalency” means approval to achieve 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.
- Waiver Application - “Waiver” means approval to avoid compliance with either a specific procedure(s) or a specific rule’s substantive requirements for reasons that are judged educationally, organizationally and fiscally sound.

These methods address the limitations of traditional evaluation systems by incorporating multiple perspectives, promoting continuous professional growth, and focusing on student outcomes. As the education landscape continues to evolve, these approaches provide a robust framework for evaluating and improving educator effectiveness in a way that is both fair and impactful. Most importantly, they build upon one of the successes of TEACHNJ, which raised the focus on educators utilizing data to make informed and intentional instructional decisions that involved systematically collecting and analyzing various data sources to assess pedagogical decisions, focus interventions, and guide professional development.

Recommendations can be found in Appendix F.

### Summary of Current Educational Research on Best Practices in Educator Evaluation

This summary of current educational research on best practices in educator evaluation was based upon the research summarized in Appendix H and was created with Gemini Advanced. Published September 4, 2024. [Effective Educator Evaluation Strategies](#).

The literature review on educator evaluation systems reveals several high-leverage strategies that can be employed to support effective educator evaluation. The strategies can be broadly categorized into the following areas:

#### Design and Implementation of Evaluation Systems

- Multiple Measures: The use of multiple measures, such as classroom observations and student growth, is crucial for a comprehensive assessment of teacher effectiveness. This approach helps to mitigate the limitations of relying solely on any single measure and provides a more nuanced understanding of teacher performance.

- **Equity-Centered Approach:** The evaluation system should be grounded in equity, acknowledging and addressing systemic inequities in the education system. This involves ensuring representation of marginalized groups in the evaluation process and utilizing assessment tools that focus on equity.
- **Focus on Growth and Development:** The evaluation process should prioritize professional growth and development, fostering a continuous learning process for educators. This includes setting clear goals, providing constructive feedback, instructional coaching, and offering opportunities for professional learning that are aligned with individual and collective needs.
- **Fairness and Validity:** The evaluation system must be perceived as fair and valid by educators. This involves ensuring that evaluations are conducted by trained and skilled evaluators, using reliable and unbiased assessment tools. The system should also provide opportunities for educators to offer feedback and engage in dialogue about the evaluation process.
- **Alignment with Goals and Context:** The evaluation system should be aligned with the broader goals of the school or district, as well as the specific context in which educators work. This includes considering factors such as student demographics, school culture, and available resources when designing and implementing the evaluation process.
- **Usefulness and Actionable Feedback:** The evaluation system should provide educators with feedback that is not only specific and timely but also actionable and useful for improvement. This involves offering clear guidance on areas of strength and areas for growth, along with suggestions for professional learning opportunities.

By strategically implementing these high-leverage strategies, educational institutions can develop and sustain effective evaluation systems that support teacher growth, enhance instructional quality, and ultimately contribute to improved student outcomes. It is important to recognize that the process of designing and implementing an effective evaluation system is ongoing and requires continuous collaboration, reflection, and adaptation to meet the evolving needs of educators and students.

### Implications of the Literature Review

The literature review on educator evaluation provides insight into the complexities and challenges associated with assessing educator effectiveness. The research:

- Highlights the multifaceted nature of teaching and learning, emphasizing the limitations of relying solely on any single measure to evaluate teacher performance, including standardized test scores.
- Underscores the importance of incorporating multiple measures, such as classroom observations and student growth, to capture a broader range of teaching skills and provide a more nuanced understanding of teacher effectiveness.
- Emphasizes the critical role of equity in educator evaluation.
- Stresses the importance of viewing educator evaluation as a tool for professional growth and development rather than as a perceived high stakes evaluation instrument.
- Reinforces the importance that educator evaluations should foster a continuous learning process for educators, providing them with constructive feedback and opportunities for professional learning that are aligned with their individual and collective needs.

The studies on educator evaluation reveal that despite good intentions, such reforms often fail to produce the desired improvements in student achievement and attainment due to various factors, including but not limited to “political opposition... capacity constraints... and limited generalizability of early successes (Bleiberg, Brunner, Harbatkin, Kraft, & Springer, 5, 2024).

The literature concludes by offering several consistent recommendations, including:

- Utilizing multiple measures to assess educator effectiveness.
- Focusing on professional growth and development.

- Ensuring fairness and validity in the evaluation system.
- Aligning the evaluation system with the broader goals and context of the school or district.
- Providing educators with actionable and useful feedback for improvement and professional development.

By incorporating these recommendations, the literature suggests that educator evaluation systems can evolve into powerful tools for promoting educator growth, enhancing instructional quality, and ultimately improving student outcomes. The review highlights the need for ongoing collaboration, reflection, and adaptation to ensure that evaluation systems remain responsive to the evolving needs of educators and students.

### **Comparisons to Other States: Legislative Changes around the Nation**

Since 2020, seven states have made significant policy changes to educator evaluations, including Delaware, Colorado, Connecticut, Louisiana, Michigan, New Mexico, and New York. These policy changes reflect a broader trend towards more holistic and growth-oriented teacher evaluation systems, with a focus on continuous improvement and professional development. They also highlight the ongoing debate over the use of student growth measures and the role of evaluation ratings in personnel decisions. Current trends demonstrate a decrease in the utilization and weight of standardized test scores in teacher evaluations. This recognizes that student learning is influenced by multiple factors and encourages a more balanced assessment of teacher effectiveness.

With the reduced emphasis on test scores, states are placing greater importance on teachers' instructional skills, classroom management, and overall professionalism. The new systems also prioritize ongoing professional growth and development, encouraging the use of formative feedback and support to help teachers continuously improve. States, such as Louisiana, New Mexico, and New York, are incorporating multiple measures of teacher performance, such as classroom observations and teacher self-reflection, to provide a more comprehensive picture of teacher effectiveness (Appendix G). Additionally, there is a greater emphasis on teacher

participation and ownership in the evaluation process, allowing them to contribute to their professional growth plans and have a voice in their evaluations.

The revised systems shift the focus from punitive measures to providing support and constructive feedback to educators. Observations and evaluations are seen as opportunities for growth and improvement, fostering a more collaborative and supportive environment. New York recently granted districts more flexibility and local control in designing their evaluation systems. In a guidance document to the field from the New York State Education Department, Acting Commissioner Alexander Trikalinos states, “These new Standards-based Educator Evaluation and Professional Support plans (‘NYS STEPS’) should support all educators’ professional growth as a part of a comprehensive, systemic approach to advancing excellence in teaching and learning aligned to our New York State Teaching and Educational Leadership Standards, including the Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework. Through multiple measures, including observation, educators will receive meaningful feedback on their practice and intentional professional learning and growth opportunities. This allows districts to tailor their evaluations to their specific needs and priorities” (2024).

These changes represent a significant step towards creating more effective and empowering evaluation systems for educators. By focusing on growth, collaboration, and support, these new systems aim to foster a positive and productive teaching and learning environment that benefits both educators and students.

Ultimately, in their analysis, “Making a Difference: Six places where teacher evaluation systems are getting results,” Putnam, Ross, and Walsh outline the goals of teacher evaluation, saying, “Strong teacher evaluation systems, when paired with supports and incentives, are designed to do the following:

1. Provide a more valid measure of teacher quality by distinguishing between teachers at different performance levels;
2. Recognize strong teachers and keep them in the classroom;
3. Encourage consistently less effective teachers to leave the classroom;
4. Help all teachers improve;
5. Recruit more effective new teachers; and

6. Achieve gains in student learning and other positive student outcomes” (2, 2018).

The Education Evaluation Review Task Force considers these factors as core to the purpose of the our charge, providing New Jersey’s educators with an evaluative system that is purposeful, actionable, supportive, developmental, and premised upon ongoing and meaningful feedback, professional learning, and coaching that will ultimately improve their craft. In doing so, we believe that integrating best practices and multiple objective measures of student learning into the evaluative elements in ways that have broader and greater impact than the current Student Growth Objective requirement will serve New Jersey’s students more meaningfully and help to secure our state’s legacy as one of, if not the, strongest educational system in the nation.

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