



**Department of Education announces 11 districts to participate in a teacher evaluation pilot program**

***10 districts would share \$1.1 million to develop new systems; Newark would receive funding through a separate grant***

**For Immediate Release**

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Trenton, NJ – The Department of Education today announced that 10 districts have qualified to participate in the Excellent Educators for New Jersey (EE4NJ) teacher evaluation pilot program over the course of the 2011-12 school year. The districts were selected from among 31 applicants, and, pending final review procedures, will split \$1.1 million in grant funds made available by the state. An eleventh district, Newark, will also participate in the pilot through a separate grant.

During the pilot year, districts will implement a new framework for evaluating teachers based on multiple measures of teacher practice and student performance. Pilot districts will help to shape the new system, providing critical input and feedback prior to statewide roll-out in 2012.

"New Jersey's teachers have a unique role in shaping students' lives by equipping them with the skills and knowledge they need to be successful in college and the workforce, and every New Jerseyan is cognizant of the great work being done in classrooms across our state," said Governor Chris Christie. "The pilot district program we are moving forward with today will help to develop fair and meaningful evaluation systems that finally recognize and celebrate great teachers, and provides teachers at all levels with the support they need to constantly improve."

Last year, Governor Christie convened the New Jersey Educator Effectiveness Task Force, which released a report in March 2011 outlining several steps for implementing an improved evaluation system. Over the past 5 months, the Department developed a competitive grant process to award \$1.1 million in federal and state money to districts that will begin to implement a new evaluation system based on the Task Force's findings. The Department outlined a framework for the new evaluation system, but encouraged districts to innovate within that framework.

Pilot districts will implement a system containing the following core principles:

- Teachers should never be evaluated on the basis of a single consideration, such as test scores much less a single test, but on the basis of multiple measures that include both learning outcomes and effective practices, with approximately 50% associated with each.
- Where applicable, the component of the evaluation based on "learning outcomes" should include, but is not limited to, progress on objective assessments such as NJ ASK. In untested grades and subjects, for example, student achievement might include a focus on student work or locally determined criteria.
- To avoid penalizing teachers who work with our highest need students, evaluation criteria should favor student progress and not absolute performance.
- To give teachers meaningful information to help them develop, the prior system of binary ratings (either "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory") will be replaced by a four tiered system, including "ineffective," "partially effective," "effective" and "highly effective."
- Districts should provide a direct link between the results of the evaluation and professional development opportunities to help teachers at all levels continuously improve.
- To assure consistency and fairness, plans should address inter-rater reliability – solving for the problem of differences in how individual evaluators review teachers across schools and districts.
- Any personnel consequences connected with evaluations remain a matter of local decision and applicable state law and are not an element of the pilot program.

"On the whole, current teacher evaluation systems across the state are not as meaningful as they should be. Many teachers do not receive yearly evaluations, and most systems fail to measure the most important outcome of teacher practice – student performance," said Acting Commissioner Christopher D. Cerf. "We believe this new framework addresses those issues, while still giving districts flexibility to develop evaluation systems that will best meet the needs of their teachers."

For teachers whose students take the NJASK in Language Arts and Math in grades 4-8, the Department will develop a Student Growth Percentile (SGP) rating for each teacher, based on how their students progress in a given year compared to a group of students that have a similar history of achievement in previous years.

Through the new statewide data system, NJSMART, the Department will be able to link teachers to their individual students to develop these rankings for pilot districts this year, and for all teachers in the state in Fall 2012.

“Rethinking how we evaluate teachers is a monumental undertaking, and we are confident that we have the right building blocks in place,” said Acting Commissioner Cerf. “Rather than simply mandating a new system from Trenton, through this pilot we are asking our teachers to educate us about the successes and challenges of implementing a new evaluation system as we look to roll out an improved system framework statewide in 2012. We are grateful that so many districts applied, and though we could only select a limited number of applicants, we applaud their efforts to develop a more meaningful evaluation system and hope that they continue to pursue this initiative in the coming school year.”

A list of the participating districts is below. For more information on the pilot program, please visit <http://www.state.nj.us/education/EE4NJ/faq/>.

The selected districts include:

<b>District</b>	<b>County</b>
Alexandria Township	Hunterdon
Bergenfield	Bergen
Elizabeth	Union
Monroe Township	Middlesex
Ocean City	Cape May
Pemberton Township	Burlington
Red Bank	Monmouth
Secaucus	Hudson
West Deptford Township	Gloucester
Woodstown-Pilesgrove Regional	Salem
Newark (to be funded through a separate grant)	Essex