

Writing Letters to the State Board of Education

Talking Points - Evaluation

INTRODUCTION POINTS

Evaluation is important since it allows educators the opportunity to improve professional practice.

MAIN POINTS

Educators need to receive thorough, ongoing training in a new system. Training for those being evaluated should be as complete as the training for evaluators.

Any fair evaluation system needs to look at the school and classroom context, to take into account factors beyond an educator's control. How many students are transient? Have IEPs? Are on free and reduced lunch? Are there sufficient district supports for the curriculum? Etc.

Too much emphasis on standardized test scores will weaken good teaching and cause stress for students. Test scores are appropriate when used as one part of multiple measures of student performance, but those multiple measures must include more than a variety of standardized tests.

Scores of all objective measurements must be readily available by the end of May to be utilized in an annual summative evaluation. Test results and detailed data must be provided to teachers within the school year in which the tests are taken.

The proposed formula that emphasizes growth on standardized tests is unproven and inequitable. Districts should have flexibility in determining both the types of multiple measures that are used in student achievement and how they are applied.

The majority of research says Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs) should be based on at least three years of assessments to be fair. Research to date is decidedly mixed and inconsistent. We need a significant track record over several years showing the impact of both SGPs and the newly proposed Student Growth Objectives (SGOs) in New Jersey before they are used for employment decisions.

Formal observations need to be a full period or the length of a complete lesson. Otherwise, they are incomplete and provide an unfair view of what is going on. They should always include both a pre- and post-observation conference.

CONCLUSION

Talk about why the issue of evaluation is important to you.

Thank the State Board of Education for considering your thoughts and remind them that educators are looking forward to working collaboratively with State Board members and the Department of Education on developing a new statewide evaluation system.

Send a letter to each board member.

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| Arcelio Aponte, president | Middlesex |
| Ilan Plawker, vice president | Bergen |
| Mark Biedron | Hunterdon |
| Dr. Ronald Butcher | Gloucester |
| Claire Eckert | Somerset |
| Joseph Fisicaro | Burlington |
| Jack Fornaro | Warren |
| Edithe Fulton | Ocean |
| Robert P. Haney | Monmouth |
| Ernest Lepore | Hudson |
| Andrew Mulvihill | Sussex |
| J. Peter Simon | Morris |
| Dr. Dorothy S. Strickland | Essex |

Letters to State Board members can be sent to:

State Board Office
Riverview Plaza
PO Box 500
Trenton, NJ 08625

BE SURE TO:

- Send a handwritten or individually typed letter.
- Mention your full name and position in your school. Include contact information, in case a board member has further questions for you.
- Identify TEACHNJ/evaluation as the issue you're discussing at the beginning of your letter. State your position in your introductory paragraph. Be factual and support your position with information about how this will affect you as an educator and the students in your school.
- Be concise and straightforward. One page is sufficient.
- Offer to provide any additional information the board member might want or need.
- Remember to THANK the board member for considering your view.
- Proofread carefully!

