



**NJPSA Testimony**  
**On**  
**Educator Effectiveness, N.J.A.C. 6A:10 & Professional Development, N.J.A.C. 6A:9C**  
**June 1, 2016**

Thank you for the opportunity to again share the thoughts of the NJ Principals and Supervisors Association (NJPSA) and its statewide membership, on changes to current code, *N.J.A.C. 6A:9C* and *10*, as it relates to evaluation.

NJPSA appreciates the collaborative discussions the Department of Education has had since the inception of the new evaluation system with stakeholders, including school leaders. We believe that the code amendments before you today are reflective of input from the field, and incorporate 'lessons learned' from the operation of the new teacher and principal evaluation system over the last year. We are happy to see direct change result from data associated with the waivers district sought. We applaud the Department for its commitment to improving this maturing system and look forward to working together in future years as the system evolves.

**Streamlining Observation**

We are deeply pleased to see changes that streamline and differentiate the critical process of observation of teaching staff members. More precisely, strategically defining the number of observations not only lightens the burden on school leaders as it relates to the number of observations, but, more importantly, allows school leaders the opportunity to more exclusively focus on providing critical feedback to teachers – possibly the most important component of the new evaluation system. Ensuring there is adequate time for collaborative discussions between teachers and school leaders is essential. Moreover, this change allows school leaders the time to address areas with staff that may require review and improvement. This is simply an example of allowing districts to work 'smarter.'

Similarly, allowing districts and school professionals to jointly consider allowing highly effective teachers to pursue more relevant alternatives to an additional observation not only addresses staffing challenges as it relates to the number of observations required, but, empowers these highly effective educators to grow via the 'portfolio of practice' process. Further, this process assists districts and school leaders in supporting novice educators and other school colleagues. It helps support the continuum of educators in our buildings and provides an additional motivational item for high performing educators. As a State, we are in the process of developing a new 'Teacher Leader' endorsement – this process neatly dovetails around this goal. As educators, we are encouraged to differentiate learning for students based upon their individual needs. Establishing this new process acknowledges the individual strength of our educators and allows for appropriate flexibility. Moreover, requiring a collaborative process between labor and management around this goal encourages collaboration and helps foster collegiality.

**Allowing Flexibility In Principal Evaluation**

In addition, we are pleased to see districts gain some local control as it relates to principal evaluation. Permitting districts the flexibility to decide whether to include the currently mandated leadership evaluation rubric that is fully focused on evaluation implementation and compliance may be appropriate for some districts while it may not be necessary in others. This rubric was developed when the evaluation system was

just launching in districts – compelling districts to initially focus on ensuring compliance with the system. However, since that time districts have grown and improved on work within buildings around evaluation. Districts have very different school cultures and often possess staff with different backgrounds and experience. Permitting flexibility allows districts to more appropriately focus their staff based on district facts, needs and circumstances. It also recognizes an important point; namely, that the Department-approved evaluation models selected by districts fully focus on the necessary range of leadership knowledge and skills as set forth in New Jersey’s professional leadership standards.

### **Consolidating Deadlines**

Moreover, we are happy to see the Department take a hard look at the myriad of different deadlines within the current evaluation system to consolidate them into one specific date. This simply allows districts some internal flexibility to develop their processes as based upon the circumstances in their local community. It empowers local districts to establish timelines that permit them to reach internal goals more appropriately. It also allows for professional discretion between teachers and school leaders to develop an internal process that works for them. This allows school leaders and teachers not only additional time, but also allows them to more appropriately focus allied tasks.

### **Improving Training**

Further, NJPSA is pleased to see a continued focus of the ongoing training of school leaders on evaluation. Ensuring that districts focus on ALL aspects of the evaluation system, including the formulation of Student Growth Objectives, is critical to system growth and improvement.

### **Recognition of Local District Factors**

In addition, as an Association we are pleased to see the code recognize the sometimes unique and challenging situations that districts work under – such as where only one administrator serves a small district. Acknowledging this special circumstance and how it affects the evaluation process is much appreciated.

### **Waiver Safety Valve**

Finally, NJPSA would urge the Department to continue to permit a waiver process for districts as it allows for additional system reflection and helps foster system improvement. As witnessed within this code modification, it is informed by the waivers sought by districts based upon local facts and circumstances. We believe the waiver process not only serves as a ‘safety valve’ for sometimes challenging circumstances in districts, but also serves as a mini-laboratory for future regulatory modification and improvement.

Thank you for the opportunity to weigh in on this critical code proposal. We look forward to working with the State Board, the Department of Education and our fellow stakeholders as we seek to improve on our State’s evaluation system.