



OSSE Teacher Evaluation Policy

Issuance Date: XXXX

I. BACKGROUND

Overview

On December 20, 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) became law, enacting significant changes from its predecessor, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as well as the ESEA Flexibility Waiver. Among the most substantial changes presented by ESSA is the way it addresses teacher effectiveness policies. Since 2012, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) has operated under Principle 3 of the ESEA Flexibility Waiver, which established minimum federal requirements for LEA evaluation of teachers and school leaders. ESSA does not include federal requirements related to teacher evaluation, instead leaving decisions on evaluation standards to the states. However, ESSA emphasizes the need for states to ensure equitable access to effective teachers, and requires states to measure, evaluate, and publicly report on progress related to efforts to ensure that low-income and minority children are not disproportionately served by ineffective, out of field, or inexperienced teachers¹.

II. RATIONALE FOR POLICY DEVELOPMENT

In developing this policy, OSSE prioritized several considerations:

- **LEA Flexibility and Autonomy:** In developing this policy, OSSE considered the importance of ensuring LEA autonomy in setting expectations for teachers and deciding how to evaluate staff. The creation of evaluation standards allows for a significant amount of flexibility and leaves key decision making to LEAs.
- **Equity:** A large body of research indicates that teacher effectiveness is the most important in-school factor to accelerating student achievement.² Therefore, in writing this policy, OSSE considered its responsibility to ensure that all LEAs demonstrate progress on ensuring that minority and low-income students have access to effective teachers. As teacher effectiveness is an essential component for school and LEA growth, this policy supports LEAs in meeting a common minimum standard. The policy ensures that effectiveness is measured and allows for some degree of comparability, so that the District can meet its collective commitment to serving all students well.

¹ ESSA 2015, s1005 (g)(1)(B)

² For example: Hanushek, Eric A. "Boosting teacher effectiveness." *What lies ahead for America's children and their schools* (2014): 23-35.

- Building on Progress: during the past several years, DC has utilized the unique set of LEA teacher evaluation models that were created with the existing standards, to advance several programs that benefit LEAs, schools, teachers, and students:

1) DC Plan for Equitable Access to Excellent Educators

As required by USED, the [DC plan](#) to ensure that every student has access to excellent educators was submitted last year. The plan measured gaps in access to high-quality teachers, offered strategies for closing them, and was anchored in gaps in the access to effective teachers, as measured by each LEA's approved teacher evaluation system. The plan is public and available on the USED website.

ESSA maintains the requirement to have a state plan for equitable access, and builds on the initiative that DC and additional states have taken to use teacher evaluation systems to identify gaps. It now specifically requires that gaps in the access to effective teachers be reported and addressed by the state.

The currently approved DC plan, which will remain in effect and is being monitored by USED, emphasizes gaps between poverty levels across LEAs, rather than gaps within LEAs, as those are more common in DC and relevant to its local circumstances. Thus, the existence of cross-LEA rigorous teacher evaluation standards anchors the District's ability to address ESSA requirements, as SEAs and LEAs must measure and report on gaps in effectiveness, and implement strategies to eliminate these gaps. It is essential that rigorous teacher evaluation standards are maintained.

2) DC Model Teacher Evaluation System

In partnership with 14 DC LEAs, OSSE has been engaged in the design and development of a state model teacher evaluation system since the fall of 2014. This work has led to the design of an effective teaching framework and repository of supporting materials. Designed by DC LEAs for DC LEAs, the framework and accompanying classroom observation rubric integrate local expertise and national research and establish 26 domains, divided among four major categories as indicators of effective teaching. This policy creates practice standards aligned with the state model, allowing the hard work of the model's development to be leveraged.

3) OSSE Licensure Reform

Through the recent licensure regulation reform, DC became a leader in state efforts to use teacher effectiveness as measured by LEA evaluation models to create a new pathway toward licensure. This policy builds upon, and aligns with, the important efforts already underway related to teacher effectiveness. In order to ensure that the progress towards effectiveness-based licensure decisions outlined in the updated regulations have meaning, OSSE must ensure that a strong standard for LEA teacher evaluation is maintained.

III. DC TEACHER EVALUATION STANDARDS

To maintain the progress DC has made regarding teacher effectiveness in several domains, to build upon the important work done in collaboration with a significant number of charter LEAs to develop a model

evaluation system, and to ensure the District is positioned to address the requirements of ESSA, the following minimum standards, which are aligned with existing practice, are required for all LEAs:

Standard	Description
All LEAs will have a teacher evaluation system	
LEAs shall develop teacher evaluation systems in consultation with educators	This standard, which exists in the current requirements, emphasizes the significant impact that consultation with teachers in the development of the evaluation framework can have on buy-in, educator learning, and development.
LEAs shall have evaluation systems that are based on multiple measures	Research shows that basing teacher evaluation systems on multiple measures increases both the validity and comprehensiveness of the evaluation. This standard also exists in the current requirements.
Student learning metrics, including student growth on the state assessment, shall be included as a significant factor	We believe that evaluation systems should emphasize the importance of student learning as a key factor but also wish to allow LEAs the flexibility to determine how to measure that learning and how to weight it within their system. This standard also exists in the current requirements.
Evaluation systems shall allow for a range of performance, with at least three levels to allow for differentiation, and provide clear information for state/federal reporting purposes (by clearly designating one of the levels as “effective” for reporting purposes)	We believe that having a range of possible performance and therefore being able to look at the distribution of effective teachers are important tools for LEAs. In addition, because ESSA will require states to report on the equitable distribution of effective teachers, evaluation systems should be structured so that LEAs can designate which level of performance they deem to be effective. This standard also exists in the current requirements.

IV. ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE

This memorandum supersedes all previous policy, memoranda, and guidance issued by the state educational agency (SEA) on this topic. Please direct any questions regarding the content of this document to Orman Feres, Manager of Educator Quality and Effectiveness, at (202) 741-5218 or through email at orman.feres@dc.gov.