




STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



TO: Superintendents of Schools  
Superintendents of Unified School Districts  
Directors of Public Charter Schools  
Directors of Approved Private Special Education Programs  
Executive Directors of Regional Educational Service Centers

FROM: Dr. Miguel A. Cardona, Commissioner 

DATE: August 11, 2020

SUBJECT: **Flexibilities for Implementing the *CT Guidelines for Educator Evaluation 2017* for the 2020-2021 School Year**

The disruption to our educational system during the COVID-19 pandemic has been significant and has affected multiple systems within our schools. As each local educational agency (LEA) prepares for the return to school, the CT State Department of Education (CSDE) is providing one-time flexibilities within the *Guidelines for Educator Evaluation 2017* ([Guidelines](#)) and Connecticut General Statute Section 151b. Pursuant to Executive Order 7C, this document reflects my order implementing these flexibilities, which take effect immediately and will be in place for the 2020-2021 school year only.

These flexibilities reflect the critical importance of the social and emotional learning and well-being of students and educators during the upcoming academic year, while maintaining meaningful feedback and substantive evaluation of educators and administrators. Although this is a short-term approach, the CSDE is committed to engaging partners in reimagining educator evaluation and support for future years. This academic year the CSDE will convene educational stakeholders to work hand in hand to reimagine CT's educator evaluation and support system in its entirety. Our goal will be to complete this process in spring 2021 in order for districts to plan for and implement in the 2021-2022 school year.

A summary of the *Guidelines* flexibilities for 2020-2021 is included below. For further detail, please refer to the attachment.

**Student Learning Indicators**

Districts may focus Student Learning components on social and emotional learning, student engagement, and family engagement.

**Teachers:** A minimum of one goal with a minimum of two indicators or measures of accomplishment focused on social and emotional learning for students, student engagement, and/or family engagement.

**Administrators:** A minimum of two indicators or measures of accomplishment focused on the re-opening of schools, supporting well-being of staff and students, supporting distance teaching and learning, and/or health and safety of students, staff, and the school community.

Districts may adjust the requirement for formal in-class observations, as appropriate, if shorter, more frequent observations will take place. Written feedback from observations should be based on current, CSDE-approved rubrics, be formative in nature, and include recommendations for professional learning.

**Teachers:** A minimum of two and three informal observations for teachers based on years of experience and previous summative ratings. All teachers complete a minimum of one review of practice.

**Administrators:** A minimum of two and three site visits for administrators based on years of experience in the profession and/or district and previous summative ratings. All administrators complete a minimum of two artifact reviews.

#### **4-Level Matrix Rating System**

Summative ratings are waived for the 2020-2021 academic year as a direct result of the disruption of the pandemic and executive orders affecting our educational system, including the waiver of student assessments and teacher evaluations last year. These changes impacted some of the fundamental data typically used to contribute to the standard evaluation process. This waiver of summative ratings does not change the expectation that evaluators will provide substantive feedback to educators. Based on data and evidence collected throughout the year, educators will complete a self-assessment, and evaluators will complete a narrative summary of the educator's performance.

#### **Improvement and Remediation Plans**

These flexibilities should not be interpreted to mean improvement and remediation plans are unnecessary. Any evaluator who continues to have concerns about an educator's performance should ensure it is appropriately communicated and documented, and development opportunities are provided, even without summative ratings. Communication between evaluators, educators, and the exclusive bargaining representative should take place regarding the status of existing plans. Primary evaluators should provide formative documentation when developing a plan in consultation with the educator and exclusive bargaining representative.

#### **Amendment Requests**

LEAs that choose to adopt these flexibilities must do so through the mutual-agreement process of the Professional Development and Evaluation Committee (PDEC) and superintendent. Once mutual-agreement has been reached, an LEA may begin implementation of the flexibilities. LEAs that intend to utilize 2020-2021 flexibilities will be asked to notify the Bureau of Educator Effectiveness and Professional Learning by October 1, 2020 consistent with the EESP amendment process. The link to request EESP amendments will be included in a subsequent communication. Districts not using the flexibilities will assume their most recent CSDE-approved plan.

Guidance and resources to support the implementation of effective Student Learning Indicators and informal observation protocols for in-person, hybrid and virtual learning environments will be forthcoming to assist LEAs in adopting available flexibilities.

Contact the CSDE consultant assigned to your region to discuss questions from your PDEC.

- Sharon Fuller- [sharon.fuller@ct.gov](mailto:sharon.fuller@ct.gov) – (CES, EDADVANCE, LEARN)
- Kimberly Audet- [kimberly.audet@ct.gov](mailto:kimberly.audet@ct.gov) – (ACES, CREC, EASTCONN)

Thank you for your continued commitment to the evaluation and support of Connecticut's educators.

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**Flexibilities for Implementing the CT Guidelines for Educator Evaluation 2017  
(Guidelines) for the 2020-2021 School Year  
August 11, 2020**

Given the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic, the impact on the re-opening of schools, and the critical importance of the social and emotional learning and well-being of students and educators during the upcoming academic year, the CT State Department of Education (CSDE) is providing flexibilities to the fundamental requirements of the *CT Guidelines for Educator Evaluation (Guidelines)* and Connecticut General Statute Section 10-151b to support individual and collective educator practices in order to improve student growth.

These flexibilities were developed to facilitate support, feedback, and growth for CT educators in order to best meet the needs of students.

**Student Learning Indicators (45%)**

**Justification:** In order for students to achieve academically, their primary needs of safety and well-being must first be addressed. Educators share these needs as well, as they strive to meet the needs of their students. Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, leading to the closure of school buildings, the cancellation of state-wide assessments, the rapid transition to remote learning models, and the impacts on social and emotional well-being caused by health and safety precautions, the CSDE is providing flexibility for the Student Learning components of Educator Evaluation and Support in order to prioritize a focus on social and emotional learning and overall well-being of staff and students.

**Teachers will** develop a minimum of one student learning goal with a minimum of two indicators or measures of accomplishment focused on:

- social and emotional learning for students,
- student engagement, and/or
- family engagement.
- An academic goal may be considered, with mutual agreement.

Indicators or measures of accomplishment could be demonstrated by implementation of school-wide or individual strategies mutually agreed upon between the teacher and evaluator during the goal-setting process.

**Administrators will** develop a minimum of two student learning indicators or measures of accomplishment focused on:

- the re-opening of schools,
- supporting the health and safety, and social and emotional well-being, of staff and students,
- supporting remote and distance teaching and learning,
- mastery-based learning, and/or
- ensuring equity for the most vulnerable students and their families.

Indicators or measures of accomplishment could include implementation of district-wide or individual strategies that are mutually agreed upon between the administrator and evaluator during the goal-setting process.

**Observation of Performance and Practice (40%)**

**Justification:** Given the overall goal of fully re-opening schools, while recognizing the reality that the context of leading, teaching and learning via pandemic health and safety precautions and/or

distance learning procedures may look different during this school year, the CSDE is providing flexibility for the Observation of Performance and Practice components of Educator Evaluation and Support.

As the social and emotional well-being of students and staff will be a priority during 2020-2021, it is recommended that observations of performance and practice be formative in nature, and take place more frequently and for shorter amounts of time throughout the school year for the purpose of providing feedback and support. Evaluators are encouraged to focus on educator practice that supports social and emotional learning, and health and well-being of staff and students in in-person, blended, and remote learning environments.

Written feedback from observations should be based on current, CSDE-approved rubrics, be formative in nature, and include recommendations for professional learning.

**Observation Process for Teachers:**

Districts may adjust the requirement for formal in-class observations, as appropriate, if shorter, more frequent observations will take place.

- A minimum of two observations and a minimum of one review of practice for teachers with more than two years of experience and who maintained Proficient or Exemplary practice during 2019-2020.
- A minimum of three informal observations and a minimum of one review of practice for first and second year teachers, and teachers who demonstrated Developing or Below Standard practice during 2019-2020.

**Observation Process for Administrators:**

Districts may consider that given the changes that are taking place for the re-opening of schools for 2020-2021, artifact reviews may replace one of the required site visits required in the *Guidelines*.

- A minimum of two site visits for administrators with two or more years of experience and who maintained Proficient or Exemplary practice during 2019-2020.
- A minimum of three site visits, with additional site visits, as needed, for administrators who are new to the profession or the district, or who demonstrated Developing or Below Standard practice during 2019-2020.

**Stakeholder Feedback (10%)**

**Justification:** Engaging with families continues to be essential in supporting the overall success of students in school. As families have had to adjust to remote learning for students from home, caring for family members while working from home and/or ensuring child care while working outside of the home, and addressing the impacts on health, safety, financial and food security, the CSDE is committed to supporting educators in their support of and engagement with the families of our students.

It is recommended that educators prioritize the focus on implementing strategies for ongoing communication and engagement with families.

**Whole-School Student Learning Indicators/Teacher Effectiveness Outcomes (5%)**

Districts should follow their most recently approved CSDE-EESP.

#### **4-Level Matrix Rating System**

**Justification:** Given that ratings have been waived for the 2020-2021 academic year, it is important for educators and their evaluators to communicate about educators' progress, potential concerns, and relevant professional learning. In order to promote support and growth for educators, feedback from observations of performance and practice should be conveyed in writing, as should feedback about the accomplishment of student learning goals/indicators.

This waiver of summative ratings does not change the expectation that evaluators will provide substantive feedback to educators.

- Educators shall still complete a self-assessment based on evidence and data collected throughout the school year, and submit to their evaluators no later than the date in the district's EESP.
- Evaluators shall provide a narrative summary highlighting commendations, areas for improvement, and recommendations to the educator prior to the end of the school year.
- The reporting of aggregate evaluation ratings to the CSDE by September 15, 2021, is waived.
- Districts shall inform their local or regional board of education the implications of the Governor's Executive Order No. 7C on Educator Evaluation and Support.

#### **Evaluation-based Professional Learning**

It is recommended that professional learning needs be discussed during the goal-setting conference and be reviewed as part of mid-year check-ins. This will ensure ongoing support as educators adapt and adjust to the potential for varied teaching and learning environments due to the monitoring of COVID-19 factors.

#### **Individual Improvement and Remediation Plans**

These flexibilities should not be interpreted to mean improvement and remediation plans are unnecessary. Any evaluator who continues to have concerns about an educator's performance should ensure it is appropriately communicated and documented, and development opportunities are provided, even without summative ratings. Communication between evaluators, educators, and the exclusive bargaining representative should take place regarding the status of existing plans. Primary evaluators should provide formative documentation when developing a plan in consultation with the educator and exclusive bargaining representative.