



PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION | Mark Johnson, *Superintendent of Public Instruction*

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Recommendation for Educator Evaluation

The current COVID-19 pandemic and the closure of school facilities as instructional settings has limited LEAs' ability to complete the required annual evaluation process operationalized in the North Carolina Educator Evaluation System (NCEES), which is outlined in State Board of Education policy EVAL—005. The State Board of Education and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) have issued guidance that public schools should not attempt online or virtual observations in order to complete the NCEES evaluation process. There are two reasons for this guidance: 1) the NCEES evaluation instrument has not been validated for online observation, and 2) teachers are currently engaged in training related to online instruction and there is variability in teachers' access to those trainings. Given that public schools rely on evaluation as a critical data element in making employment decisions, schools need a process by which they can make appropriate recommendations to their local boards of education, or board of directors.

Given these factors, the State Board of Education adopted the following actions in relation to educator evaluation.

- The evaluation process in NCEES, as prescribed in SBE policy, shall be followed for those teachers for whom all required observations have been conducted on or before March 13, 2020. Other required steps (e.g., post-observation conference) may be conducted in a virtual setting without jeopardizing the validity of the evaluation process.
- The NCEES evaluation process for teachers who have not received all required observations shall be abandoned; summative ratings shall be entered into the NCEES system if all required observations have been completed.
- The SBE and NCDPI will use the most recent, valid summative rating for any teacher who did not receive a summative evaluation in the 2019-2020 school year. Where a complete, valid NCEES is available for the 2019-2020 school year, it will be used. Where circumstances did not allow for the NCEES process to be followed, NCDPI and SBE will use the most recent, valid summative evaluation for reporting (federal and state), research, licensure renewals or conversions, and any other reporting obligations of the State Board or NCDPI.

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- The governing bodies of public-school units should consult with their attorneys and staff to develop a process by which a recommendation for the renewal/non-renewal of employee contracts may occur. Such processes can include the creation of year-end evaluation documents that exist in personnel files outside of the NCEES platform. The State Board of Education recognizes the local governing body's authority to make informed and deliberate contract-related decisions for its employees and considers that process to be separate from the NCEES evaluation process.
- The State Board of Education encourages public schools to work with their local boards of education and boards of directors in developing or refining local processes related to contract renewal decisions that take account of the school year's unique circumstance.

FAQ for COVID-19 Evaluation Policy

- 1. Is the COVID-19 NCEES evaluation policy applicable to teachers only? What about administrators and other school-level or district employees?**

The SBE's evaluation policy applies to all certified staff for whom an annual evaluation is required. This includes, but is not limited to, all licensed instructional support personnel. Given that principals and assistant principals do not require observations for completing summative evaluations, LEAs may use their discretion as to whether an administrator's evaluation can be completed given the closure of schools. Local school units should consult with their local attorneys on any impact school closures might have on administrators' evaluations.

- 2. If a teacher's evaluation is not completed for the 2019-2020 school year, does the most recent, valid evaluation become the teacher's official evaluation for the 2019-2020 school year?**

No. The teacher's official evaluation in NCEES would be missing. For State Board of Education (SBE) and NCDPI reporting requirements, the most recent, valid evaluation will be used where the 2019-2020 evaluation is missing. These federal and state reporting requirements are done in the aggregate and have no impact on state or federal funding (e.g., Title I or Title II).

In the NCEES platform, teachers will not show a summative evaluation rating for the 2019-2020 school year, except where all observational requirements have been met. The teacher evaluation page in EVAAS will show the 2019-2020 school year evaluation where it exists but will report the 2019-2020 evaluation as missing where there is no completed evaluation.

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3. **How can schools show a teacher's progress in the 2019-2020 school year if there is no summative evaluation in the NCEES platform? What if the teacher's most recent, valid summative evaluation was not reflective of his/her 2019-2020 performance?**

The recently approved SBE policy on COVID-19 evaluation encourages local school systems to consult with their local boards/boards of directors to develop appropriate processes to review employees' performance in the 2019-2020 school year. These local performance reviews can be shared with employees and included in employees' personnel files. Alternatively, these local performance reviews can be uploaded to the NCEES platform as an attachment to the employee's Professional Development Plan (PDP). This local performance review may be a useful document in helping teachers and administrators develop their PDPs for the 2020-2021 school year.

4. **If the evaluation process in NCEES is abandoned due to an insufficient number of observations, should the employee's PDP also be abandoned?**

Professional Development Plans (PDPs) act as a bridge to connect individual school years into a continuous professional learning pathway that links teacher learning and growth to future action.

For some educators, PDP activities may have been impacted by school closures; however, a profound amount of professional learning continued to take place as all educators prepared to transition to online instruction.

For this reason, it is very important for principals, teachers (and mentors where required) to complete the PDP process in NCEES for the 2019-2020 school year.

Adjustments to PDP goals, action steps, and evidences to acknowledge the endeavor of educators to prepare for online learning and/or document accomplishments and improvements for beginning teachers is strongly encouraged.

Necessary conferences and discussions to support the completion of the PDP may be conducted via virtual means.

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5. What about beginning teachers? Can they convert their initial licenses to a continuing professional license (CPL) without completing three years of evaluation?

As noted in TCED-016 (page 3), the components required for conversion of license are: all required coursework successfully completed, all NCSBE approved examinations have been passed, and three years of teaching completed. Teachers are still teaching during remote learning, so the three years of completed teaching should not be an issue.

TCED-016 (page 5) and EVAL-004 both require observations and annual evaluations for BTs. As of March 13, BTs should have already received at least two observations and possibly three. The data provided by those observations can help inform PDPs.

It is the recommendation of NCDPI that efforts be made to complete the PDP process for the 2019-2020 school year. BTs must have formative assessment conferences including the BT, mentor, and principal at the beginning, middle, and end of the year. During the conferences, they should reflect on the progress of the BT in meeting the established professional growth goals (TCED-016, page 5). Prior to March 13, the beginning of the year and midyear PDP formative assessment conferences should have already been held and documented. While no observations should have occurred during the COVID19 closures, BTs were still working on professional growth. Data from the fall semester observations (and possible spring semester observations completed prior to March 13) and progress toward professional development goals should be documented. The principal, mentor and BT could meet in whatever way possible (virtual, phone, email) to discuss progress and conclude the PDP process for 2019-2020. Documentation should occur in NCEES.

For those BT3s who may be on Monitored or Directed Growth Plans, SBE Policy EVAL-004 requires a timeline for achieving proficiency for one school year (Monitored) and one school year or such shorter time determined by the LEA (Directed). Where NC statute allows, NCDPI recommends that school systems allow BT3s on Monitored or Directed Growth Plans to extend the IPL into the 2020-2021 school year if more time is needed to reach proficiency. However, if the principal has determined that the BT3 has already reached proficiency, they could follow the recommendation (above) to complete the PDP process prior to the end of the 2019-2020 school year.

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6. What about teachers in their renewal year? What if their most recent, valid evaluation does not meet the proficiency requirement but have shown substantial improvement over the 2019-2020 school year?

According to G.S. § 115C-270.30(b)(4) and SBE policy LICN-005, teachers in their renewal year of the license must demonstrate “proficiency” on their most recent evaluation in order to renew their license at the Continuing level. If a teacher’s most recent, valid evaluation is from the 2019-2020 school year and does not meet the proficiency standard, then the provisions of LICN-005 shall be implemented as written.

If a teacher in his/her renewal year of the license does not have a valid evaluation in the 2019-2020 school year, then NCDPI will use the most recent valid evaluation to determine the teacher’s proficiency. NCDPI will notify the LEA that its employee did not meet the proficiency standard on the most recent, valid summative evaluation. NCDPI will provide the LEA with options for the affected teacher with respect to his/her license renewal. These options shall include:

- a) the LEA petitions the SBE to waive the IPL reversion by providing documentation that the teacher’s 2019-2020 summative evaluation would have met the proficiency requirement if the evaluation process had been completed;*
- b) the LEA recommends that the teacher be placed on an improvement plan and be reverted to an IPL;*
- c) the LEA has recommended the teacher for non-renewal/dismissal and the teacher may petition the SBE for license renewal (at the IPL level) according to the provision of LICN-005.*

NCDPI currently uses a form that allow LEAs/charter schools to petition the SBE for an IPL when an EPP does not recommend the teacher due to failure to pass the licensure examination. NCDPI will modify this form to allow LEAs/charter schools to petition the SBE to renew a teacher’s license at the Continuing level as outlined in subsection 6(a) above. This process will commence in July after NCEES has been closed out for the current academic year.

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