

March 23, 2020

Observation and Evaluation Concerns in Remote Learning Environments

In the midst of a global pandemic that has closed New Jersey's schools for an undetermined period, members need support regarding the extent to which traditional classroom observation practices can be applied in a remote learning environment.

As remote learning has become the norm, many members have contacted their field representatives with urgent questions about how school closures will impact the components of their annual evaluations: classroom observations, SGOs, and mSGP. Indeed, many administrators are attempting to conduct "remote observations" or retrofit their district's existing evaluation model to an online learning environment. Many of the practices suggested by administrators are in direct contradiction to the letter and spirit of our current state regulations on evaluation.

NJEA's Professional Development and Instructional Issues Division has been working in collaboration with the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) throughout the transition to remote learning. We have established a mutual commitment that members will not be negatively impacted by any unintended consequences of school closures.

To this end, NJEA is advocating that the NJDOE "stop the clock" on teacher evaluation for the remainder of the school year—no matter how long schools in New Jersey remain closed. Temporarily suspending the provisions of AchieveNJ will help teachers keep the focus on maintaining positive—though socially distant—relationships with their students and establish, to whatever extent possible, meaningful and fun learning opportunities for all children. In any event, we have been assured by the NJDOE that guidance will be communicated in the coming days that will clarify how districts should proceed regarding the application of AchieveNJ, including the likelihood of the adoption of emergency regulations that will modify current requirements.

To assist those in the field with questions around evaluation, we have prepared an Evaluation FAQ that will equip staff and members throughout the state with valuable information on how to respond and adapt to these unforeseen circumstances. This document can be found on our website: <https://www.njea.org/covid-19-resources-for-members/>

Should you have any further questions that are not addressed in this document, please reach out to your UniServ field representative. Field representatives should, then, reach out to the PD associate director assigned to their zone.