

Feb. 11, 2021

NJDOE Issues Guidance on Student Growth Objectives for 2021

On Jan. 11, 2021, Gov. Phil Murphy issued [Executive Order 214](#), which stated that although student growth objectives (SGOs) would not factor into educator summative scores for 2020-21, all regulations concerning the development and implementation of SGOs would remain in effect. On Feb. 10, 2021, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) published [guidance concerning SGO requirements](#).

The guidance states “SGOs are still required to be completed. However, they will not count towards the summative score of any teacher in New Jersey.” The regulations including the Feb. 15 deadline for SGO revisions are still in effect, and the NJDOE reminds districts of existing regulatory flexibilities around SGO development, which were previously detailed in the guidance issued in September. Within the guidance are some recommendations for how to use SGO data: to inform vertically and horizontally articulated conversations, to identify gaps in learning, and to improve the SGO process for next year.

Notably, one aspect of the September guidance that is not underscored in the February guidance is the recommendation to “streamline processes” by “minimiz[ing] paperwork or administrative burdens on staff whenever possible.” It is our position that forcing educators to complete the cumbersome paperwork inherent in the SGO process is in direct contradiction to the NJDOE’s earlier recommendation that districts “make adjustments to leverage the benefits of professional learning facets of the evaluation system, while removing inefficient procedures.”

The [regulations](#) state in N.J.A.C. 6A:10-4.2(e)(6) that SGOs scores shall be discussed “if available” at the annual summary conference. NJEA’s position is that a district can still be in compliance with the regulations, and educators can engage in data-driven reflective conversations that the guidance suggests, without holding teachers to the responsibility of completing the tedious paperwork required of most district SGO processes. Local associations can advocate for the development of streamlined procedures that will allow educators to engage in reflective conversations about the process of setting learning goals during this unprecedented year, without having to require teachers to complete the cumbersome paperwork associated with SGO scoring.

NJEA supports the practice of reflective goal-setting that forms the cornerstone of the SGO system. However, we do not support the paperwork that comes along with SGOs. We will continue to support our members by engaging in advocacy with the NJDOE and working with local association leaders to ensure that members are evaluated fairly this year.

If you have any questions about the information contained in this advisory, please reach out to your UniServ field representative or contact your Zone Team member in the Professional Development and Instructional Issues Division.