



December 2015

## Pennsylvania Department of Education Revises Recommendation on Use of School Performance Profiles in 2014-15 Educator Ratings

In September, the Pennsylvania Department of Education announced that the Commonwealth received permission from the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) to pause for one year the publication and use of School Performance Profiles (SPP) that use the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) as the primary measure of student achievement.<sup>1</sup> The pause was necessary because significant changes to the PSSA made 2014-15 results incomparable to prior years. This impacts elementary and middle schools that administer the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) in grades 3 through 8.

PDE initially stated that in lieu of using the 2014-15 SPP in the building level data portion of an educator's summative rating calculation, observation data should be substituted for the SPP in schools where no SPP was issued. The SPP is a significant part of Pennsylvania's annual accountability obligations under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) accountability waiver program.<sup>2</sup>

Upon further review, in October PDE determined that the USDOE ESEA waiver granting a pause on the use of the new PSSA scores in the School Performance Profile (SPP) for 2014-15 does not relieve school districts of the Pennsylvania statutory obligation to include building level data in educator evaluations. As a result, PDE applied for permission from USDOE to use 2013-14 SPP data for the completion of 2014-15 summative ratings for educators working in elementary and middle schools. PDE received permission in early December, and consequently ***the Department now is advising employers to use the 2013-14 SPP to complete 2014-15 ratings for teachers in elementary and middle schools.***

PDE is advising employers to use out-of-date data to complete 2014-15 ratings of elementary and middle school teachers because the evaluation law "requires the use of building level data." The system was designed to use the SPP as the building level measure for most educators. Because there is no SPP for elementary or middle schools in 2014-15, PDE is advising employers to use 2013-14 data in lieu of data from 2014-15. However, the available 2013-14 SPP data is flawed because it is not applicable to the 2014-15 evaluation year. This is one example of why the evaluation system is broken and needs to change: data used in rating educators must be both available and applicable to the rating; data that are either not available (the 2014-15 SPP) or not applicable (the 2013-14 SPP) to the rating period cannot

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<sup>1</sup> For more information about Pennsylvania's School Performance Profiles, please refer to PSEA's Advisory, [Pennsylvania's School Performance Profile](#).

<sup>2</sup> ESEA was reauthorized in December 2015. The new law, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), establishes a uniform expiration date for all ESEA accountability waivers of August 1, 2016. All states, including Pennsylvania, should develop an accountability system that meets ESSA requirements by summer 2017. PSEA will continue to update members on the implementation of the new ESSA.

inform valid personnel decisions or direct real-time changes in instructional practice or professional learning.

PSEA has never supported the use of out-of-date data to complete an annual summative rating because data reflecting the educator's work prior to the current evaluation period are not valid measures of the educator's performance during the evaluation period. ***PSEA's position on this matter has not changed.*** Educators who are working to improve their summative rating score may be at an unfair disadvantage if data from an older rating period are re-used in the issuance of a more current rating. Finally, the PDE 82-1 and 82-3 rating forms require the employer to define an annual rating period with beginning and ending dates; the definition of a rating period as listed on the rating form becomes meaningless if the employer selects data from outside the rating period to complete the form.

As always, PSEA is prepared to defend any member who is harmed by the misuse of data in an evaluation.

PSEA continues to advocate for a three-year moratorium on the use of new PSSA scores. During this time schools and districts will have an opportunity to align their curriculum to the PA Core Standards. Teachers will have an opportunity to design instruction based on the new curriculum, and students will have the opportunity to receive instruction on the content tested. Also during this time, the state will have an opportunity to review its testing and accountability policies and examine their appropriateness for each of the purposes for which they are used. Finally, the legislature will be able to reconsider elements of the educator effectiveness system that render it hard to administer and jeopardize the validity and reliability of the results.

PSEA also continues to advocate for common-sense changes to the ways in which Pennsylvania implements any federal mandates related to testing and to call on legislators and policymakers to resist the temptation to expand the use of tests for high stakes consequences for which they were not designed and have not been shown to be valid.

Both PSEA and NEA continue to monitor and encourage possible changes to ESEA that will make it easier for states to develop school accountability and teacher evaluation systems that support high quality teaching and learning.

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