FAQs
TEACHER EVALUATIONS
August 2014, ISBE Division of Public Information

1. Q. How are teacher and principal evaluations changing?
   
   A. The Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA), signed into law by Gov. Pat Quinn in 2010, changed how teacher and principal performance is measured by requiring new evaluation models that for the first time consider student growth in addition to professional skills and practices.

2. Q. Why change how evaluations are performed?
   
   A. The new evaluation systems are part of the state’s commitment to prepare all students for college and careers through well-equipped, highly prepared educators and clear expectations for achievement. They provide statewide consistency for outstanding teaching and leadership and give local districts the opportunity to design their own systems that meet state rules.

3. Q. What changes have occurred to date?
   
   A. To meet the professional practice component, qualified evaluators in all school districts conduct evaluations aligned to the Illinois Professional Teaching Standards. Evaluators must successfully complete a State Board-approved prequalification program. The program involves rigorous training and an independent observer’s determination that the evaluator’s ratings properly align to the State Board’s requirements. These evaluators then must observe, collect evidence and provide timely feedback as part of the evaluation process. Since Sept. 1, 2012, teachers and principals have been evaluated using a system of four ratings: Excellent, Proficient, Needs Improvement and Unsatisfactory. Districts are also working to strengthen teacher professional development opportunities to support student improvement.

4. Q. When will student growth be incorporated into teacher evaluations?
   
   A. PERA requires that principal and teacher evaluations be tied to data and indicators of student growth as a “significant factor.” The Chicago Public School District (CPS) is among some of the early implementing districts. The statute requires staggered implementation of student growth as part of teacher evaluations, with all districts implementing no later than the 2016-17 school year.

5. Q. Do our children’s teachers’ jobs now depend on standardized test results?
A. No. Rather, student growth is one portion of a teacher’s performance evaluation rating, specifically at least 25 percent in the first and second years of implementation. From the third year on, student growth must be at least 30 percent of the rating.

6. Q. Do school districts have a say in what these new evaluation systems will look like?

A. Yes. Local control is an important part of the new evaluations as districts have options to create an evaluation system that best meets their unique needs. For teacher evaluations, a Joint Committee composed of equal representation selected by the district and its teachers or, where applicable, the teachers’ exclusive bargaining representatives, has the ability to design its own evaluation system that meets minimum state rules. A Joint Committee’s first meeting must occur by Nov. 1 of the school year immediately before the school district’s implementation date (for example, Nov. 1, 2014, for districts with a 2015-16 implementation date). The committee has 180 days to agree on how to incorporate data and indicators of student growth into its own evaluation system.

If the committee cannot agree on its own plan, the district must then implement those parts of the state model regarding the use of data and indicators of student growth about which the Joint Committee is unable to agree. The administrative rules require that student growth comprises 50 percent of the performance evaluation. The state model for incorporating student growth was published in the Illinois Register and on the ISBE website with a 45-day window for public feedback (ending Aug. 25). The State Board will then consider the model for approval in September.

7. Q. Where can I find more information about evaluation requirements?

A. Illinois Administrative Code Part 50 outlines how student growth should be incorporated into evaluations, including a definition of “significant factor” and the type of assessments to be used. Read more at www.isbe.net/rules/archive/pdfs/50ARK.pdf. Additional information is available on ISBE’s website at www.isbe.net/PERA.