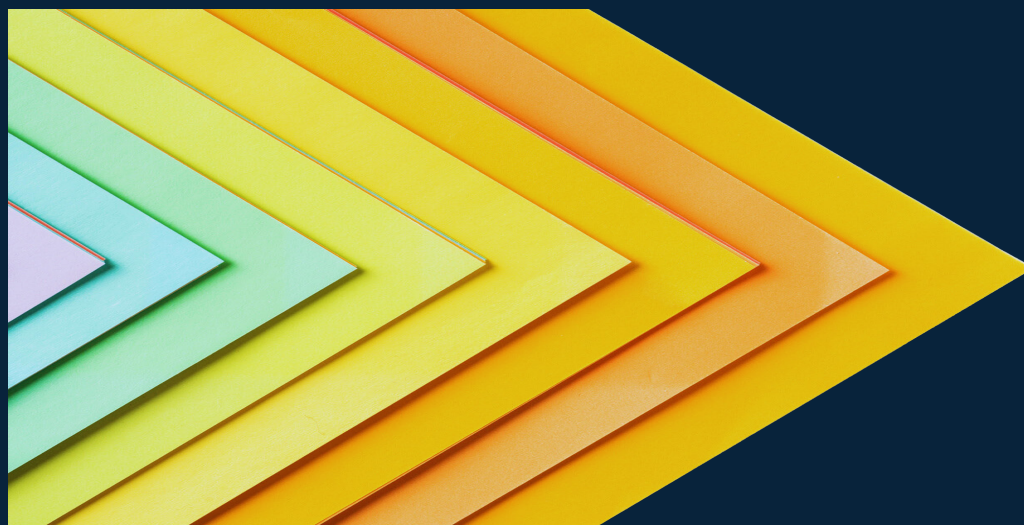




Designing a New York State Standards-Based Educator Evaluation and Professional Support (STEPS) Plan

REQUIREMENTS AND GUIDANCE



Office of Educator Quality and Professional Development

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WWW.NYSED.GOV/EDUCATOR-QUALITY/NYS-STEPS

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A. INTRODUCTION

Background

On Friday, June 28, 2024, Governor Kathy Hochul signed Chapter 143 of the Laws of 2024, which establishes Education Law (“EL”) §3012-e. Accordingly, school districts and boards of cooperative educational services (“BOCES”) will begin the transition to new teacher and principal evaluation systems beginning in the 2024-25 school year.

NYSED’S VISION FOR EDUCATOR EVALUATION SYSTEMS UNDER EDUCATION LAW §3012-E

The New York State Education Department (the “Department” or “NYSED”) believes that well-designed and implemented evaluation systems can support teachers and school leaders by encouraging reflection and goal-setting; creating opportunities for collaboration among educators; providing timely, actionable feedback that supports growth and development; identifying personalized professional learning opportunities; and recognizing excellent educators and creating opportunities for great teachers to remain in the classroom, while advancing their careers through teacher leadership roles such as school-based teacher educators, mentor teachers, instructional coaches, and other differentiated roles.

The enactment of Education Law §3012-e provides an opportunity for school districts and BOCES to reflect on their current educator evaluation practices to develop new locally designed systems consistent with NYSED’s vision and our shared goal of supporting teacher and leader development across the career continuum. These new Standards-based Educator Evaluation and Professional Support plans (“NYS STEPS” or “STEPS”) should support all educators’ professional growth as a part of a comprehensive, systematic approach to advancing excellence in teaching and learning aligned to our [New York State \(“NYS”\) Teaching Standards and Educational Leadership Standards](#), including the [Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework](#). Through multiple measures, including observation, educators will receive meaningful feedback on their practice and intentional professional learning and growth opportunities.

The purpose of this guidance is to answer questions that educators, administrators, and community stakeholders may have about the requirements for a STEPS plan - Education Law §3012-e as enacted by Chapter 143 of the Laws of 2024, and Subpart 30-4 of the Department’s regulations.

Additional information, tools and resources related to educator evaluation plans, can be found on the NYSED [Office of Educator Quality and Professional Development website](#).

B. QUICK REFERENCE LAWS AND REGULATIONS

Education Law section §3012-e as enacted by Chapter 143 of the Laws of 2024

Subpart 30-4 of the Department's Regulations adopted by the Board of Regents on March 11, 2025

Summary of Education Law §3012-e and Section 30-4 of the Department's Regulations

Transition to a STEPS Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Local Educational Agencies ("LEAs") may transition to a STEPS Plan starting in the 2024-25 school year.LEAs must adopt a STEPS plan by June 30, 2032 of the 2031-32 school year.
Role of the NYS Teaching and Educational Leadership Standards	The New York State Teaching Standards and the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders ("PSELs") NYS Version are the foundation of the STEPS plan. Teachers and principals will be assessed on each standard and will receive an overall rating based on the ratings received on each individual standard.
Multiple Measures of Assessing Standards	<p>LEAs are required to use multiple measures to assess teacher and principal practice across the NYS Teaching Standards and PSELs. Measures will be selected at the local level provided that one of the measures be observations/school visits.</p> <p><i>Examples of other measures may include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Professional PortfoliosSurveys and FeedbackGoal Setting and AttainmentStudent Outcome DataTeacher or Principal ProjectsOther LEA-developed Measures
Evaluation Cycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The evaluation cycle for probationary teachers/principals is annual.The evaluation cycle for tenured teachers/principal may be annual or multi-year; provided that evaluators are able to collect evidence and provide teachers and principals with timely, actionable feedback on their practice aligned to each NYS Teaching and Leadership Standard.
Required Observations/School Visits	<p>Observations/School Visits will be designed locally, provided that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">The observations/school visits occur with a sufficient number and duration such that the evaluator is able to collect meaningful evidence of teaching and leadership practice.Probationary teachers/principals must receive more than one observation/school visit annually.Tenured teachers/principals must receive more than one observation/school visit which may be conducted across an annual or multi-year evaluation cycle.
Rating the Standards	<p>LEAs create their own scoring systems that result in ratings of Levels 1-4, based on LEA-defined expectations for teaching and learning, and school leadership.</p> <p><i>The rating levels are:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Level 1 (significantly below expectations)Level 2 (partially meets expectations)Level 3 (meets expectations), andLevel 4 (exceeds expectations).

Rating the Standards (cont.)	<p><i>Probationary teachers and principals are required to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive a Level 1-4 rating on each of the NYS Teaching Standards and PSELs on an annual basis, and • Receive a Level 1-4 overall rating, on an annual basis. <p><i>Tenured teachers and principals are required to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive a Level 1-4 rating on all standards across the evaluation cycle, and • Receive a Level 1-4 overall rating at the end of the evaluation cycle.
Obtaining an Overall Rating	<p>LEAs will determine how to combine ratings for each standard, in order to reach an overall rating of Level 1, Level 2, Level 3 or Level 4.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEAs may use a system of scoring that results in a whole number rating of 1-4, design a conversion chart, develop a matrix, or use another locally determined method. • LEAs determine the expectations for the 1-4 overall rating, based on locally determined expectations for teaching and learning, and school leadership. • Overall ratings must be based on the rating received for each standard, and not on a subset of standards.
Instruments to Score Measures	<p>For each measure selected, LEAs may select a rubric from a list of commonly used rubrics, or they must design and provide their own rubric/instrument to assess the applicable standard based on the measure type and evidence collected.</p>
Professional Growth System	<p>LEAs must implement a comprehensive system of professional growth for all educators that is supported, in part, by evaluation data. To meet this requirement, an LEA may wish to use their existing professional learning plan ("PLP"). If so, the LEA should convene their professional learning team to review and, where necessary, update the PLP to ensure that it is fully aligned with the STEPS plan and able to support targeted areas of educator development for the purpose of meeting LEA goals.</p>
Teacher/Principal Support Plan	<p>Teachers and principals who receive an overall rating of Level 1 or Level 2 are required to receive a personalized support plan known as a Teacher Support Plan ("TSP") or Principal Support Plan ("PSP").</p>
Deadline to Make Material Changes	<p>Material changes must be submitted by March 1 of the school year in which the plan will be implemented.</p>
Department Review Process	<p>The Commissioner determines if the STEPS plan is compliant with EL §3012-e before an LEA implements such plan.</p>
Tenure	<p>Overall ratings on STEPS plans are not required for granting of tenure.</p>
Data	<p>LEAs will provide ratings on each standard for all teachers and principals, and overall ratings at the end of the teacher and principal evaluation cycle. More information about data submission will be available here.</p>
State Aid	<p>The apportionment requirement has been eliminated for plans approved under EL §3012-e.</p>
Applicable Educators	<p>STEPS plans apply to K-12 classroom teachers (teachers of record) and building principals employed by a school district or BOCES.</p>

C. TRANSITION TO A STEPS PLAN

Can we still use our current Educator Evaluation/APPR Plan under EL §3012-d in the 2024-25 school year?

Yes. The new law provides that LEAs may continue to implement their current plan, including submitting modifications, through the 2031-32 school year; provided that every LEA must have a STEPS plan in place by June 30, 2032.

Can my currently approved Educator Evaluation/APPR plan under EL §3012-d be used as part of my new STEPS plan?

Possibly. In a STEPS plan, LEAs will select multiple measures to assess the NYS Teaching Standards and PSELs, with one of the measures required to be teacher observations/principal school visits. As such, the measures included in an LEA's currently approved evaluation plan may also be used as part of their STEPS plan, if the LEA can demonstrate that those measures can appropriately assess each applicable NYS Teaching Standard and/or PSEL. In the STEPS plans, LEAs will also need to develop a new scoring system and a professional learning component, which will differ from their EL §3012-d plans.

What if I have an approved variance under EL §3012-d?

All variances approved under EL §3012-d have been extended through the 2024-2025 school year to give LEAs time to transition their variance to a STEPS plan. After the 2024-2025 school year, please call your contact at the Office of Educator Quality and Professional Development ("OEQPD") or email: educatoreval@nysed.gov, to determine whether your LEA still needs a variance.

What if my LEA has determined that one or more changes are needed to our currently approved Educator Evaluation/APPR plan under EL §3012-d?

LEAs are permitted to make material changes to their plans approved under EL §3012-d through the 2031-32 school year. For making material changes to a plan approved under EL §3012-d plan, please see [Educator Evaluation Law §3012-d Guidance](#).

What is the timeline of the review process for STEPS plans under EL §3012-e?

The Department anticipates that the STEPS plan form will be available in the [NYS Business Portal](#) in the winter of the 2024-25 school year. The Department recommends LEAs work with OEQPD staff to complete the form. Before final submission, the form must be certified by all parties (superintendent; Board of Education president; and union presidents, as applicable), to demonstrate that it represents a complete and fully negotiated plan.

Is there a deadline to submit a STEPS plan for the 2024-25 school year?

Yes, a new STEPS plan must be submitted by March 1, 2025, to be implemented for the 2024-25 school year, absent a finding by the Commissioner of extraordinary circumstances. To ensure that there is time to implement the plan, new STEPS plans should, ideally, be submitted prior to the beginning of the school year in which they will take effect.

D. EDUCATORS AND LEAS COVERED BY NYS STEPS PLAN

Who must be evaluated?

All classroom teachers and building principals employed by a school district or BOCES must be evaluated in a STEPS plan.

Which teachers and other school personnel are considered "classroom teachers" under the regulations?

The regulations require that all classroom teachers be evaluated. A classroom teacher is a teacher in the classroom teaching service who is a teacher of record. Teachers of record are those teachers who are primarily and directly responsible for students' learning activities that are aligned to the performance measures of a course.

Any teacher will receive a NYS STEPS evaluation if they are deemed a teacher of record by their LEA, including:

- School librarians, library media specialists, and school media specialists who are teachers in the classroom teaching service
- Career and Technical Education teachers
- Substitute Teachers
- Itinerant teachers at the BOCES for students in multiple schools
- Part-time teachers, who are teachers in the classroom teaching service for 40% or more of a full-time position (4/10 position)

- A teacher performing instructional support services for more than 40% of their time
- “Push-in” and “pull-out” teachers who are not the sole teacher primarily responsible for the learning of a group of students, including Academic Intervention Services (AIS) specialists
- Speech teachers certified under §80-3.9 of the Department's regulations or as a teacher of the speech and hearing handicapped, or a teacher of speech and language disabilities and who provide instructional services

The following educators are not required to be evaluated under EL §3012-e:

- Pre-kindergarten Teachers
- Pupil Personnel Services (e.g., school psychologists and school social workers)
- Supplemental School Personnel (e.g., teacher aides and teaching assistants)
- Teachers of adult, community, and continuing education, regardless of the age of the students taking the course (e.g., GED courses)
- A licensed speech language pathologist under Title VIII of the Education Law who is not a certified teacher under the Department’s regulations and who does not provide instructional services
- A certified speech and language therapist providing related services only, as defined in EL §4401 and section 200.1(qq) of the Department's regulations

Will special education teachers who co-teach receive an evaluation?

Yes. Special education teachers in team-teaching classrooms are included in the evaluation requirements and receive individual scores and ratings across the components of their STEPS Plan.

What types of administrators are included in the definition of a “principal”?

The regulations define a principal as a building principal or an administrator in charge of an instructional program of a BOCES. This includes co-principals, as well.

A co-principal means a certified administrator under Part 80 of the Department’s regulations, designated by the school’s controlling authority to have executive authority, management, and instructional leadership responsibility for all or a portion of an LEA-operated program, in a situation where more than one such administrator is so designated. The term co-principal implies equal line authority, with each administrator so designated, and who reports to a district-level or comparable BOCES-level supervisor.

Teachers who also perform administrative functions for less than 50% of their time are not included in the definition of a principal.

Do classroom teachers or building principals who plan to retire during the school year need to be evaluated pursuant to a NYS STEPS Plan?

Yes, teachers of record and principals who plan on retiring during the school year need to be evaluated under a STEPS plan. An educator is considered a teacher of record or principal subject to evaluation until the actual date of retirement.

Are Article 81 schools, Special Act districts, State-supported or State-operated schools included in EL §3012-e?

Special Act districts are covered under EL §3012-e. However, the following types of schools are not:

- An approved private school for students with disabilities that provides services under Article 81 of the Education Law
- State-supported schools for instruction of the deaf and the blind (“4201 schools”)
- State-operated schools (e.g., schools for the blind or deaf in Batavia and Rome)
- Charter schools
- Non-public schools

Can we evaluate educators not subject to the EL §3012-e with our STEPS plan, such as Assistant Principals?

This is determined locally. Nothing in the state law prevents LEAs from evaluating such educators pursuant to the LEA’s STEPS plan; however, the Department only collects data for classroom teachers of record and building principals.

E. ROLE OF THE TEACHING AND EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP STANDARDS

The New York State Teaching Standards and the NYS Version of the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (“PSELs”) are the bedrock of NYSED’s [Educator Effectiveness Framework](#), and are a central component of the STEPS evaluation plan.

What are the NYS Teaching Standards?

The [NYS Teaching Standards](#) establish the foundational knowledge and skills that teachers need to be effective in the classroom. By evaluating a teacher based on the standards, LEAs can identify each educator’s growth areas and develop related professional growth opportunities. Research shows that feedback and support aligned to standards can improve a teacher’s practice in a way that contributes to greater learning for all students.

1. Knowledge of Students and Student Learning
2. Knowledge of Content and Instructional Planning
3. Instructional Practice
4. Learning Environment
5. Assessment for Student Learning
6. Professional Responsibilities and Collaboration
7. Professional Growth

Each standard is defined by elements and performance indicators that describe the desired knowledge, skills, actions, and behaviors of teachers within that standard. The elements define “what” teachers do and the performance indicators describe “how” teachers accomplish the actions or behaviors.

What are the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders?

The Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (“PSELs”) are a guide to professional practice and the foundation of the STEPS plan for school leaders.

The PSELs communicate expectations to practitioners, supporting institutions, professional associations, policy makers and the public about the work, qualities, and values of effective educational leaders. These standards are organized around the domains, qualities, and values of leadership work that research and practice indicate contribute to students’ academic success and well-being.

[Professional Standards for Educational Leaders \(NYS Version\)](#)

1. Mission, Vision, and Core Values
2. Ethics and Professional Norms
3. Equity and Cultural Responsiveness
4. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
5. Community of Care and Support for Students
6. Professional Capacity of School Personnel
7. Professional Community for Teachers and Staff
8. Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community
9. Operations and Management
10. School Improvement

How is the NYS Version of the PSELs different from the National PSELs?

In 2017, the Board of Regents adopted the PSELs with small but significant changes from the National PSEL standards, focusing on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. The adoption of the [PSELs \(NYS Version\)](#) represents a shift in focus to leadership skills and practices that recognize the diversity of New York's students and the need for equitable and inclusive treatment of all students across the state.

While the original PSELs included a single standard addressing equity and culturally responsive practices, the Board of Regents recognized that this was insufficient to reflect the rich diversity of New York State. To strengthen the commitment to equity, they expanded the framework by incorporating two critical concepts: cultural relevance and cultural competence. By broadening culturally responsive practices, the Board of Regents reinforced their expectations that principals not only acknowledge diversity but also lead with a deep understanding and proactive commitment to fostering culturally responsive-sustaining education in the communities they serve.

In 2018, the [Culturally Responsive Sustaining Education Framework](#) was developed as part of a broader effort to promote equity and inclusivity across diverse school communities. Central to the framework is the expectation that educators and leaders engage in continuous reflection on their own cultural assumptions and strive to create inclusive spaces that foster academic success and well-being for all students. The PSELs alignment with the Culturally Responsive Sustaining Education Framework underscores New York's commitment to ensuring that schools prepare students to thrive in a diverse and interconnected world.

Do we have to evaluate all the NYS PSELs?

Yes. A STEPS plan must evaluate each standard in the NYS version of the PSELs ([PSELs - NYS](#)). To assist LEAs in making the transition from the School Leaders Licensure Consortium ("ISLLC") 2008 standards, the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders (GTL) produced a [crosswalk between ISLLC standards and the PSELs](#).

Do we have to evaluate every indicator within each standard?

No. LEAs should conduct a needs analysis to determine their key priorities and learning needs. To identify your district's most critical learning need, first review recent academic performance data, attendance rates, and behavioral trends. Next, determine if the issue(s) identified primarily affects student achievement, engagement, or another key area.

Once key priorities are identified, LEAs should carefully review the standards and determine which indicators will provide the LEA with valuable information to use to support educators in their practice and reach district, school, and student goals. For example, if the LEA wishes to improve student achievement, assess the parts of the standards that focus on core academic skills, equity, and engagement.

In what ways can we differentiate the assessment of the standards between different types of educators?

The STEPS plan gives LEAs the flexibility to tailor the evaluation process for different groups of educators, provided that probationary teachers and principals are evaluated on each standard on an annual basis and receive an overall rating on an annual basis. Tenured teachers and principals may be evaluated on a subset of standards annually provided all standards are evaluated across an evaluation cycle and an overall rating is received at the end of the evaluation cycle.

Educators may be evaluated using different measures based on their characteristics, including:

- Tenure status
- Grade level
- Subject/content area
- Program area

Are we required to differentiate between different groups of educators?

No. Depending on local needs, an LEA may decide to evaluate all teachers or all principals in the same manner.

When making this decision, here are some guiding questions to consider:

- To support a school's goals, are specific groups of teachers or leaders (e.g., elementary vs. secondary, general education vs. special education) engaging in similar or different practices or strategies to support student success?
- What factors (such as grade level, subject area, or demographic group) might influence whether different groups of educators should be evaluated using the same or different evaluation measures?
- How can we ensure equity if groups are evaluated differently? What evidence supports this approach?
- What are the potential benefits and challenges of using the same measures for all types of educators?

F. MULTIPLE MEASURES OF EDUCATOR PRACTICE

Education Law §3012-e requires that multiple measures will be used to assess teacher and principal practice across the standards.

Measures

What does “multiple measures” mean?

LEAs must select a minimum of two measures to evaluate teachers and principals across the assessment of the NYS Teaching Standards and PSELs.

- LEAs may use one or more measures to assess each standard.
- One of the measures must be teacher observations/principal school visits.

What measures can an LEA select to meet the multiple measures requirement?

In addition to required observations/school visits, LEAs may select from the following list of additional measures:

1. Professional Portfolios
2. Surveys and Feedback
3. Goal-setting and Attainment
4. Student Outcome Data
 - a. Student Growth Goals
 - b. IEP Goals to Evaluate Contribution to Student Growth
 - c. Student Achievement Goals
 - d. Performance Index
 - e. Statistical Growth Measure(s) (e.g., growth percentiles, value-added model, etc.)
 - f. Student Portfolios
5. Teacher/Principal Project
6. Other LEA-developed Measure

How should we select measures to assess the standards?

Each measure selected by an LEA must be appropriate to assess the applicable standard and provide meaningful evidence of an individual teacher or principal’s practice in this area. For this reason, the Department recommends that LEAs begin this process by reviewing each of the NYS Teaching Standards and PSELs and determine how they might collect evidence of an educator’s practice aligned to each standard. LEAs should consider inviting stakeholders to review LEA needs/goals, the standards, and to discuss the pros/cons of different measures.

What are some of the benefits of using other measures in conjunction with observations/school visits?

Multiple measures provide a more comprehensive picture of an educator’s practice – both their strengths and areas for growth – than using a single measure on its own. For example, combining traditional classroom observations with a professional portfolio allows teachers to compile artifacts such as lesson plans, student work, professional development reflections, and assessments that span longer periods of time. This allows for a richer perspective on a teacher’s practice across the entire school year. As opposed to a single episode of teaching that an observation captures, other measures can promote self-assessment and encourage teachers to document and reflect on their own progress. LEAs can select and design measures that specifically target their goals and allow for nuanced, constructive feedback.

What are some other considerations when selecting measures?

Measures may be selected for their ability to better assess the NYS Teaching Standards and PSELs, for enhanced alignment to district goals or needs, for their ability to provide different types of evidence, or to encourage practices that are known to aid in teacher retention and professional growth. For example, educators may gain a sense of agency by selecting evidence of exemplary work from their teaching/leadership practice. This type of evidence, which could be demonstrated in many different ways, drives authentic reflection, and fosters a collaborative relationship between superintendents, administration, and teachers.

Evaluation Cycle

What is an evaluation cycle?

In a STEPS plan, an evaluation cycle refers to how frequently a teacher or principal will receive an overall rating.

Probationary teachers and principals are required to receive an overall rating each school year and thus have an annual evaluation cycle.

Tenured teachers and principals are permitted to be evaluated on a subset of standards in a school year and therefore their evaluation cycle may be annual or multi-year.

What are the requirements for multi-year evaluation cycles for tenured teachers or principals?

- A multi-year evaluation cycle is only permitted provided it is designed in such a manner that evaluators are able to collect evidence and provide teachers and principals with timely, actionable feedback on their practice aligned to each NYS Teaching and Leadership Standard.
- Tenured teachers and principals must be evaluated on at least one standard any given year of the evaluation cycle.
- The overall rating must be based on the ratings received across all standards evaluated across the evaluation cycle.

Is there a cap on the length of a multi-year evaluation cycle?

No, so long as evaluation activities occur in each year of the cycle and provide feedback on an annual basis. LEAs may design an evaluation cycle which reflects their priorities in teaching and leadership and will help them to meet school goals. A multi-year evaluation cycle can be used to support educator development provided that sufficient evidence is collected, and timely feedback is provided in each year of the evaluation cycle.

Observations/School Visits

How many observations/school visits are required?

In a STEPS plan, the nature and duration of observations/school visits (e.g., announced, unannounced, formal, walk-through) is determined locally, provided that all teachers and principals must receive more than one observation/school visit across their evaluation cycle. The Department's regulations also require that the observations/school visits occur with a sufficient number and duration such that the evaluator is able to collect meaningful evidence of teaching/leadership practice that allows the evaluation of the applicable standard.

What are the different observation/school visit requirements for probationary and tenured teachers/principals?

- **Probationary teachers/principals** are required to receive more than one observation/school visit each school year.
- **Tenured teachers /principals** are required to receive more than one observation/school visit which may be conducted across an annual or multi-year evaluation cycle prior to determining their overall rating.

Who can conduct the observations/school visits?

Observations/school visits may be conducted by any trained evaluator, including, but not limited to supervisors, administrators, mentors, expert teachers, peers, PLC groups, and independent evaluators. LEAs are responsible for providing appropriate training for all evaluators conducting any part of an evaluation under the STEPS plan. For more information on training requirements, please see section [H. Training of Evaluators](#).

Can we design an "all observations" STEPS plan?

No. A STEPS plan must use multiple measures to evaluate the NYS Teaching Standards and PSELs, one of which must be observations/school visits.

Is there a requirement to use an independent evaluator?

No. The type of evaluator(s) who will conduct the observations/school visits is determined locally, based on beliefs about the best ways to collect evidence of teacher and principal practice.

What are some recommended ways to conduct observations/school visits that will result in reliable evidence of a teacher or leader's level of proficiency on the standards?

Observations and school visits should occur with enough frequency over the course of the school year to enable educators to receive actionable feedback on both strengths and areas for growth, and to allow educators to modify practice in response to feedback, with future observations/school visits used to reinforce the new strategies and/or focus on other aspects of their practice.

Other recommended processes include:

- Selecting or developing a practice rubric that clearly differentiates between educator practice and is easy for evaluators to use.
- Develop a process of norming (inter-rater reliability) throughout the school year, to ensure that evaluators are evaluating in a fair and appropriate manner.
- Ensure that observation/school visits are collecting high-quality evidence that is detailed, relevant, free of bias or opinion (low-inference) and is aligned to the standard(s) being evaluated.

Rubrics

Which teacher and principal practice rubrics can my LEA use in a STEPS plan?

LEAs may use any rubric or instrument of their choice for observations/school visits, or for any other measure, provided that the rubric appropriately addresses the applicable standards being evaluated. The Department will not approve rubrics for use in STEPS plans and will instead provide a list of commonly used rubrics. If an LEA wishes to use a rubric not on the NYSED-provided list, the LEA will be required to upload the rubric in the NYSED business portal, during the plan review process.

Can an LEA use a rubric that has been developed or modified from an existing rubric? If so, how does that process work?

Yes. An LEA may use a rubric that has developed or modified from an existing rubric. The LEA will upload the rubric in the NYSED Business Portal, during the plan review process.

Can we use the same rubric and observe the same subcomponents as we did in our EL §3012-d evaluation plan?

Possibly. LEAs are required to assess each of the NYS Teaching Standards and PSELs. LEAs should carefully review the standards and ensure that the rubric that they are using appropriately assesses the applicable standard(s). Many commonly used rubrics contain a crosswalk to the standards.

Student Assessments

Are we required to use student assessments?

No. LEAs do not have to select measures that use student outcome data.

If we select a measure that uses student outcome data, do we have to use an approved student assessment?

No. There is no requirement to use NYSED-approved assessments. LEAs may choose any reliable source of student outcome data to evaluate a teacher or principal's performance on the standards. The Department will provide a list of commonly used assessments, in the STEPS form in the [NYSED Business Portal](#).

If we are using student outcome data, can we use a school-wide or district-wide measure in our STEPS plan?

No. LEAs must use measures that provide evidence aligned to the indicators in the standards and provide feedback on an individual teacher or principal's practice.

G. SCORING AND RATING OF EVALUATIONS

Within the framework of the STEPS plan, LEAs will design a scoring system that is based on their own expectations for teaching and learning, and school leadership.

How do we create a scoring system that is based on local expectations of teaching and leadership?

EL §3012-e requires that teachers and principals receive a rating for each standard and an overall rating of Level 1, Level 2, Level 3, or Level 4 consistent with the following requirements:

- **Level 1** shall indicate performance significantly below an LEA's expectations aligned to the NYS Teaching Standards/PSELs;
- **Level 2** shall indicate performance that partially meets an LEA's expectations aligned to the NYS Teaching Standards/PSELs;
- **Level 3** shall indicate performance that meets an LEA's expectations aligned to the NYS Teaching Standards/PSELs;
- **Level 4** shall indicate performance that exceeds an LEA's expectations aligned to the NYS Teaching Standards/PSELs.

LEAs should consider meeting with stakeholders to define the meaning of each performance level.

Suggested steps for this process are to:

- Discuss what high quality teaching and school leadership looks like in your LEA.
- Provide specific examples that illustrate performance for each rating level and component.
- Establish a clear and specific scoring range for each rating level, ensuring distinctions between categories that reflect the qualitative performance levels described above.

How do we ensure each standard receives a Level 1 - Level 4 rating?

For each measure included in the STEPS plans, LEAs must use a rubric or other instrument to score the standard being evaluated. While certain types of instruments, like rubrics, may already use a 4-point scale, others do not. If you are using an instrument with a four-point scale and the performance expectations for each of the four performance levels align with your LEA's expectations for teaching or school leadership, then you may not need to do anything further to determine a performance level for the standards assessed using that measure. For instruments that are not already on a 4-point scale, or where the existing 4-point scale is not well-aligned with an LEA's expectations, a further process, such as the use of a conversion chart, may be necessary to assign the Level 1-4 rating for a particular standard.

- If using only one measure to evaluate a standard, the score from the measure must result in or be converted to a Level 1-4 rating (as described above).
- If using more than one measure to evaluate a standard, the individual measures do not have to result in a Level 1-4 rating for that standard, but rather the combined scores from each measure must result in a Level 1-4 rating for that standard.

To ensure that the scoring process is transparent, the Department recommends that LEAs use a simple scoring process and select instruments/methods that are clear and easy to use.

How can we combine the ratings from each standard into an overall rating?

LEAs have broad flexibility in determining how they will combine the ratings for the standards, in order to arrive at an overall rating of Level 1, Level 2, Level 3, or Level 4. Some examples of how the standards could be combined to get an overall rating include:

- Each standard could be assigned a negotiated weight that is based on local priorities for teaching and leadership.
- LEAs could combine the standards assessed by each measure and assign each measure a percentage of the overall rating.
- LEAs could design a decision matrix that results in an overall rating.
- The standards may be weighted equally and averaged to get an overall rating.

How frequently must teachers and principals be evaluated on each of the NYS Teaching Standards and/or PSELs?

This is determined at the local level, and is subject to the following requirements:

- Probationary teachers and principals must receive a rating of Level 1-4 on each of the NYS Teaching Standards or PSELs annually.

- Tenured teachers and principals may receive a rating of Level 1-4 on each of the NYS Teaching Standards or PSELs across an annual or multi-year evaluation cycle.
 - Tenured teachers may be evaluated on a subset of the standards annually.
 - Tenured educators must be evaluated on at least one standard, annually, even if their overall rating is given on a multi-year evaluation cycle.

How frequently must teachers and principals receive an overall rating?

This is determined at the local level, and is subject to the following requirements:

- Probationary teachers and principals' evaluation cycle is annual. Therefore, they must receive an overall rating on an annual basis.
- Tenured teachers and principals may have an annual or multi-year evaluation cycle. The overall ratings must be based on the ratings received on all standards across the evaluation cycle.

Can a teacher or principal's overall rating be based on a subset of the standards?

No. Overall ratings must be based on the rating from each of the standards, even if the standards are rated across a multi-year evaluation cycle.

H. TRAINING OF EVALUATORS

Who is considered an evaluator?

An “*evaluator*” is any individual who conducts all or part of an evaluation of a teacher or principal, including any person who conducts an observation/school visit, or evaluates practice using any other measure in the STEPS plan.

What are the training requirements for evaluators?

All evaluators must have appropriate training before conducting a teacher or principal's evaluation.

To qualify as an evaluator, individuals shall successfully complete a training course and be trained on the following seven elements found in section 30-4.6 of the Department's regulations, which include:

1. the NYS Teaching Standards and PSELs and their related elements and performance indicators;
2. evidence-based observation techniques that are grounded in research, including controlling for evaluator bias;
3. the LEA's process for maintaining inter-rater reliability amongst evaluators, if applicable;
4. application and use of any locally selected methodology to evaluate its teachers or principals;
5. application and use of any instrument(s) selected by the LEA for use in evaluations, including training on the effective application of such instrument(s) to evaluate a teacher or principal's practice;
6. the scoring methodology used by the LEA to evaluate a teacher or principal, including how overall ratings are generated within the framework for the four designated rating categories;
7. specific considerations for evaluating teachers and principals, based on their specific context (e.g., student populations served, content areas taught, grade levels).

Are any evaluators required to be certified?

No. Under the STEPS plan, evaluators are not required to be certified; however, all evaluators are required to be trained on the seven elements in section 30-4.6 of the Department's regulations, on a periodic basis.

Who can conduct the evaluator training?

Training may be provided by the LEA, or they may consult with a third-party, such as a BOCES.

I. FORMAL PROFESSIONAL GROWTH SYSTEM

A significant component of a STEPS plan is the requirement that LEAs maintain a comprehensive system of professional learning for all educators that is supported by data, in order to improve their practice and support the success of all students.

What does a formal professional growth system in a STEPS plan look like?

LEAs must design a professional learning system that addresses the needs of teachers and principals as identified from a variety of sources including: a formal needs analysis, data from the STEPS plan evaluation process, and other available student and educator information. The LEA will use data to monitor student progress, sustain professional growth, and inform, plan, and assess the effectiveness of their professional growth system. LEAs should consider leveraging existing systems and processes such as their professional learning plan.

Can we use our existing professional learning plan (“PLP”) required by Subdivision (dd) of Section 100.2 of the Department’s Regulations?

Yes. As a part of the STEPS plan development process, LEAs should consider the extent to which their existing PLP can support the professional growth system in their STEPS plan. To do so, LEAs should work with their professional learning teams to review and, where necessary, update their PLP to ensure that it is fully aligned with the STEPS plan and the LEA’s goals. The professional growth system should build on the ways that LEAs are already successfully supporting teachers and principals but should also ensure the PLP is supporting targeted areas of educator development as identified in the STEPS plan for the purpose of meeting student, teacher, principal, school, or district-wide goals.

Does our professional growth plan have to be differentiated between educators?

LEAs will decide locally whether the formal professional growth system will be personalized or provide learning tailored to identified areas of support and growth across all teachers and principals. Teachers and principals who receive an overall rating of Level 1 or Level 2 must have a personalized Teacher Support Plan or Principal Support Plan, as described below.

Teacher and Principal Support Plans

In what circumstances must an LEA implement a teacher or principal support plan (“TSP”/“PSP”)?

Teachers and principals who receive an overall rating of Level 1 or Level 2 from their STEPS plan evaluation must have a TSP/PSP issued and implemented beginning by October 1 of the following school year or as soon as practicable thereafter. Such TSP/PSP shall be developed by the superintendent or designee in the exercise of their pedagogical judgment.

What are the required elements of a TSP/PSP?

A TSP/PSP defines specific standards-based goals that a teacher or principal must make progress toward attaining within a specific period of time, such as a 12-month period. The required elements are:

- identification of areas in need of growth and support,
- how the LEA will support growth in the identified areas,
- measurable goals, and
- timelines.

J. EDUCATOR ENGAGEMENT WITH THE STEPS PLAN

Research shows that, to create a meaningful and effective evaluation and professional growth system, teachers and building leaders must be well-trained on the purpose of, and the options available to them within, the system.

Who is required to be trained on the LEA's STEPS plan?

The Department's regulations require that all classroom teachers, building principals, and any individual who conducts all or part of an evaluation are required to receive periodic training on the LEA's STEPS plan. The training course shall include, but not be limited to:

- an overview of the purpose of the STEPS plan and evaluation system, consistent with the LEA's goals and beliefs,
- the options for developing the LEA's STEPS plans found within EL §3012-e and the Department's regulations,
- the decisions made by the LEA and its collective bargaining units for evaluating teachers and principals, and
- an overview of how the STEPS plan will be used to support the professional learning of educators within the district.

Does the engagement training have to be in-person?

There is no requirement that the engagement training be in-person. LEAs may design the trainings based on their local needs provided that the training supports authentic engagement of teachers and principals with the evaluation and professional growth system.

How frequently must the engagement training occur?

This training must occur periodically as determined by the LEA. The training should occur with sufficient frequency to authentically engage all teachers, principals, and evaluators in the evaluation process.

K. MAKING CHANGES TO A STEPS PLAN

What is the process for making changes to a STEPS plan that has been accepted by the Department?

If you have a STEPS plan that has been accepted by the Department and would like to make significant changes to it, please email educatoreval@nysed.gov to request that your plan be made available for editing through the [NYSED Business Portal](#). When you submit your edited plan, the Department will review the proposed changes and either accept the revised plan or provide feedback on recommended modifications.

- The deadline to submit a material change to a STEPS plan is March 1 of the school year in which the plan is to be implemented (e.g., March 1, 2026, for plans to be implemented in school year 2025-2026).

What types of changes constitute a material change under a STEPS plan?

STEPS plans are designed to be flexible and do not require material changes for minor adjustments. Examples of material changes in a STEPS plan include:

- Changing observation / school visit processes, including number and method,
- changing measures,
- changing scoring bands, and
- changing instruments to evaluate the measures.

Formal Comment Requirement

Do we have to negotiate an appeals procedure?

No. LEAs are required to create a process for each teacher and principal who is subject to the STEPS plan to have the opportunity to provide written comment on their performance review, in addition to any collectively bargained annual professional performance review grievance or appeal procedures.