



Illinois State Board of Education

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Guidance Document 13-08

Guidance on Measuring Student Growth for First-Year Principals in Principal Evaluation Systems

document is intended to provide non-regulatory guidance on the subject matter listed above. For specific questions, please contact the person(s) identified in the document.

Dr. Christopher Koch, State Superintendent

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Guidance on Measuring Student Growth for First-Year Principals in Principal Evaluation Systems

Subject

Approaches to measuring student growth for first-year principals in Illinois school districts

Type of Guidance

Sec. 24A-15(c)(3) of the Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA) requires districts to develop an evaluation plan for principals and assistant principals by September 1, 2012, that includes measures of student growth as a significant factor in rating performance. The plan must be based on an evaluation cycle that ends on March 1 each year (Sec. 24A-15[a][1]–[2]) and must identify assessments and measurement models that satisfy the definitions and rules articulated in the Administrative Code (Title 23, Part 50, Subparts A and C).

Specifically, the Administrative Code requires that at least 25 percent of principal and assistant principal evaluations be composed of student growth measures based on academic assessments in 2012–13 and 2013–14, and at least 30 percent in 2014–15 and beyond. Information about assessments, data, growth targets, and weights that will be used in assessing student growth for the principal must be made available to the principal by October 1. The [State Model for Principal Evaluation](#) provides recommended combinations of assessment types, weighting, and measures for principals in elementary or middle schools and principals in high schools (see page 5 in the *State Model for Principal Evaluation*).

Explanation

As noted in the *State Model for Principal Evaluation*, the requirement to report a principal’s summative evaluation score by March 1 poses a particular challenge for developing student growth measures for first-year principals because measurement of student growth must happen within a period of less than a year into the principal’s leadership of the school. In addition, state testing data (from Illinois Standards Achievement Test or the Educational Planning and Assessment System) that cover a principal’s first year of leadership will not be available until after March 1 on any given year. As a result, measuring student growth for first-year principals will require identifying alternative sources of growth data.

Definition: In Illinois, a principal should be considered a “first-year” principal if he or she is:

- New to the profession and leading a school for the first time in his or her career.
- New to the district but served as a principal in another district or state for at least one year.
- New to the school but served as a principal in another school within the district for at least one year.

Recommendation: The Performance Evaluation Advisory Council (PEAC) recommends that districts use benchmark assessments and student growth targets to measure student growth for first-year principals. In September, the first-year principal should identify (in collaboration with the supervisor and school leadership team) two benchmark assessments and develop student growth targets for each that can be achieved by February. Growth targets should be set using the standards or expectations associated with the assessment and current or historical information about school performance. The growth targets should be aligned with district initiatives, as reflected in the school’s improvement plan. To comply with state requirements to complete each principal’s evaluation by March 1, teachers should administer the pretest assessments before September 15; posttest assessments should be administered by February 15.

In setting growth targets, the superintendent, principal, and school leadership team should review district and school priorities in light of previous school performance data and work collaboratively to identify key areas for student learning improvement. The growth targets should be rigorous (e.g., aligned with achieving the school improvement plan and district goals) but attainable (e.g., represent a level of growth that can be achieved between September and February in order to meet the state requirement to complete the principal’s evaluation by March 1. In documenting the growth target, the principal should include the following information:

Growth Targets Should Not Focus on Attainment: Rather, a growth target must reference *both* the students’ starting points (baseline scores) and the students’ ending points (benchmark scores).

- Interim benchmark assessment(s) that will be used, the dates that the assessment will be given, and a rationale for its use indicating the assessment’s relevance to school and district goals.
- Student population (e.g., all Grade 8 students in mathematics).
- Courses that will be included in the growth target.
- Rationale for growth target (e.g., an explanation of why this target is rigorous, how it connects to district and school initiatives and priorities, and why it is attainable in the time frame established). The principal should describe any contextual factors that may impact student growth and indicate how previous school performance data informed the growth target development.

Example

In District A, first-year principals are serving in one elementary school, one middle school, and one high school in 2013–14. The district selects AIMSweb, Academy of Reading Auto Skills, SRI, and several district-developed exams that principals should use as benchmark assessments. In August, after reviewing the school’s improvement plan and related district initiatives, each first-year principal meets with his or her supervisor and school leadership team, selects two assessments, and sets a student growth target for each assessment. Following is an illustrative scenario of this process in the high school.

Scenario. As the new principal at Parkview High School, Mrs. Miller knows that improving high school students’ English language arts (ELA) skills is a key priority for her district and critical to the school improvement plan. In August, Mrs. Miller meets with her supervisor and the school leadership team to review schoolwide data from the previous year and to look at trends in the

data from previous years. Their analysis and discussion of the data reveal that students consistently perform below the state average in writing. Analysis of student writing by the school’s ELA teachers suggests that students understand the essentials of grammar; however, they struggle with adapting their writing structure and style for different writing purposes and audiences. In addition, during the past three years, ninth-grade students’ scores on the district’s reading comprehension assessment have demonstrated a stagnant or negative trend, which continues as they move into Grades 10 and 11.

Together, based on their analysis of the data, Mrs. Miller and her team select two assessments: (1) the district’s benchmark writing assessment, which is scored using a common rubric and administered to all ninth- and 11th-grade students; and (2) the district’s benchmark reading comprehension assessment, which is scored using a common rubric and administered to all 10th- and 12th-grade students. They set the following targets for the school improvement plan.

Growth Target for Assessment 1: District’s Winter Writing Assessment

Taking into account each student’s entry level of skill, all high school students in Grades 9 and 11 will meet their target score on the February benchmark assessment:

Pre-Assessment Baseline Score Range	Target Score Range on Post-Assessment
41–60	70 or increase score by 15 points, whichever is greater
61–80	85 or increase score by 15 points, whichever is greater
81–90	95 or increase score by 7 points, whichever is greater, plus 85 or higher on a significant writing project in a relevant English course
91–100	97 plus 90 or higher on a significant writing project in a relevant English course

Growth Target for Assessment 2: District’s Winter Reading Comprehension Assessment

Taking into account each student’s entry level of skill, all high school students will meet their target score on the February benchmark assessment:

Pre-Assessment Baseline Score Range	Target Score Range on Post-Assessment
41–60	70 or increase score by 15 points, whichever is greater
61–80	85 or increase score by 15 points, whichever is greater
81–90	95 or increase score by 7 points, whichever is greater, plus 85 or higher on a significant class project in a relevant English course
91–100	97 plus 90 or higher on a significant class project in a relevant English course

To ensure that Mrs. Miller meets her student growth targets, these targets are integrated into the school improvement benchmarks. Assistant Superintendent Miles, who supervises principals, also includes the growth measures in Mrs. Miller’s professional objectives.

Between September and February, Mrs. Miller monitors and makes adjustments to the plan as she receives feedback and gathers information from the teachers on student progress. After the winter benchmark data are available, Mrs. Miller collaborates with her supervisor and the teacher teams to review the results and begin collaborative planning for the spring semester.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Who sets the principal’s growth target?

The principal’s supervisor should review and approve the principal’s growth target; however, this step should be completed through a collaborative, supportive process. For first-year principals who are new to the profession, additional mentorship and coaching should be provided by the district. For first-year principals who are experienced but may be new to the state or district, the superintendent and school leadership team should participate in setting the growth target to ensure that district, school, and student contexts are given appropriate consideration.

2. Our new principal taught at a similar school last year. Can we use the test scores at her previous school as baseline data in assessing student growth during her first year at our school?

No. The principal’s previous school and students should not be compared with the students in the principal’s new school. Measuring student growth requires comparing the *same group of students* at two points in time. Moreover, the performance of the principal is now being evaluated by the district or school in which she is employed, and all evidence used in her evaluation should be based on her performance in that district or school.

3. We are using a pretest/posttest model. Should pretests be identical to the posttest?

Where appropriate, the pre-assessment should mirror the post-assessment in terms of the content and skill attainment tested, but the two test forms should not be identical.