

**MICHIGAN  
EDUCATOR EVALUATIONS  
FREQUENTLY ASKED  
QUESTIONS  
(FAQs)**

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# OBSERVATION TOOLS

## 1 . Q: What are the state-approved observation tools for teachers?

**A:** The state-approved observation tools for teachers are Charlotte Danielson’s Framework for Teaching, the Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model, the Marzano Focused Teacher Evaluation Model, the Thoughtful Classroom, and the 5 Dimensions of Teaching and Learning. Additional tools may be added to the state-approved list if they meet the criteria outlined in the MDE Approval process.

## 2 . Q: What are the state-approved evaluation tools for administrators?

**A:** The state-approved evaluation tools for administrators are MASA’s School ADvance Administrator Evaluation Instrument and Reeves Leadership Performance Rubric. Additional tools may be added to the state-approved list if they meet the criteria outlined in the MDE Approval process.

## 3 . Q: How can an observation or evaluation tool be added to the state-approved list?

**A:** The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) has promulgated rules creating the process by which school districts, intermediate school districts, public school academies, or private organizations may submit candidate tools for inclusion on the state-approved list, provided they meet the required criteria. The [Michigan Educator Evaluation Tool Scoring Guide](#) provides the framework and mechanism through which the applications for educator evaluation tools will be evaluated for potential inclusion on the list of state-approved tools.

## 4 . Q: Can districts use observation or evaluation tools that are not on the state-approved list?

**A:** Yes. Districts may use tools that are not on the state-approved list, provided the district publicly reports the tool’s research base on their districts’ transparency reporting site within their Postings & Assurances section, including the reliability, validity, and efficacy of the tool as required by 380.1249(3) and 380.1249b(2).

**5 . Q: Can districts use an observation or evaluation tool from the state-approved list, but use their own system for documentation or data gathering?**

**A:** Yes. The district must simply ensure that information about their tool, including the process for collecting evidence to be used in the evaluation, is reported publicly on their website as required by 380.1249(3) and/or 380.1249b(2).

**6 . Q: Must a district submit its observation or evaluation tool to the MDE for addition to the state-approved list if the tool is not already on the list?**

**A:** No. A district is not required to submit the tool(s) it uses for evaluations to the MDE for approval and inclusion on the state-approved list.

**7 . Q: Must a district implement an entire observation or evaluation tool with fidelity to meet the statutory threshold of “reliability, validity, and efficacy”?**

**A:** Any tool, or modification thereof, must meet the requirements of state law (380.1249(3) and/or 380.1249b(2)). Local districts determine whether or not any degree of modification to a tool changes the tool and thus requires additional assurances that the modification does not compromise the tool’s research base and/or “reliability, validity, and efficacy.”

# OBSERVATIONS

## 8. Q: What is the difference between an observation and an evaluation?

**A:** An observation is an exercise that is conducted as prescribed by a local district's observation tool, usually for one class period or portion thereof. An observation must minimally consider the teacher's lesson plan, the state content standard being addressed in the lesson, and students' engagement in instruction. An observation is one component that provides data for the annual year-end evaluation of the educator. The evaluation considers observations, student growth measures, and other factors in providing a summary of actionable feedback on a teacher's performance over the course of a full school year.

## 9. Q: How many observations of teachers are required?

**A:** Teachers must be observed at least two times per year. At least one observation must be conducted by the person who is responsible for the teacher's annual year-end evaluation. At least one observation must be unscheduled. There is no required minimum number of observations for a teacher who has received a rating of effective or highly effective on his/her two most recent annual year-end evaluations.

## 10. Q: How long does an observation need to be?

**A:** There is no time-based requirement for an observation. The law specifically states that "A classroom observation does not have to be for an entire class period" (380.1249(2) (e)(ii)). Administrators conducting observations should follow the recommendations and/or requirements of the district-adopted observation tool(s) related to the duration of observations.

## 11. Q: Who may conduct observations of teachers?

**A:** At least one observation annually must be conducted by the building administrator responsible for the teacher's year-end evaluation. Other observations may be conducted by individuals trained in the use of the district's adopted observation tool(s). This could include, but is not limited to, teacher leaders, master teachers, instructional specialists, and/or other district administrators.



**12 . Q: Can an observer be a contractor who is hired by the district?**

**A:** Yes. Observers are required to be trained in the observation tool(s) used by the district but are not required by the legislation to be employees of the district.

**13 . Q: Must the same observer or observers conduct all of the observations of one teacher within a school year?**

**A:** No. A teacher may be observed by any number of different observers. However, each observer must have received adequate training in the observation tool(s) in use and should work with other trained observers to maximize the reliability of observation feedback and its use in improving instruction.

**14 . Q: When does a teacher's first observation need to occur during the school year?**

**A:** There is no required deadline by which the first of two required observations for a teacher must be conducted in any given school year; however, all observations must be completed prior to the finalization of the teacher's annual year-end evaluation. Evaluators should follow the recommendations and/or requirements of the district-adopted observation tool(s) related to the timing and frequency of observations.

**15 . Q: What are the requirements for providing observation feedback to teachers? Must it be provided in writing and/or with the opportunity for discussion?**

**A:** State law requires that a teacher receive feedback within 30 days following an observation. Although not specifically required by law, the MDE recommends that the feedback be provided in writing with an opportunity for discussion. Administrators conducting observations should follow the recommendations and/or requirements of the district-adopted observation tool(s) related to observation feedback.

**16 . Q: Can observers use a video and/or live video chat to observe an instructional lesson?**

**A:** Yes. Observations are not required to be done in-person. Observers should follow the recommendations and/or requirements of the district-adopted observation tool(s) related to the use of technology to conduct observations. Additionally, administrators conducting observations should review their district's collective bargaining agreement for stipulations and process clarification.

# TRAINING

## 17 . Q: What training in a district’s adopted observation tool(s) is required by law?

**A:** Starting in the 2016-17 school year, the school district, intermediate school district (ISD), or public school academy (PSA) must provide training to all of its teachers, administrators, evaluators, and observers on the adopted observation tool(s) pertinent to individuals in each of these roles as well as how each tool is used.

Teachers and others being evaluated must receive training on the tool and how it is used. Evaluators and observers must receive training from experts in the observation tool(s) on how the observation tool should be implemented with fidelity.

## 18 . Q: How should the required training be provided?

**A:** The training shall be provided by an individual who has expertise in the evaluation tool or tools used by the school district, intermediate school district, or public school academy, which may include either a consultant on that evaluation tool or framework or an individual who has been trained to train others in the use of the evaluation tool or tools. A school district, intermediate school district, public school academy, or consortium consisting of 2 or more of these, may provide the training in the use of the evaluation tool or tools if the trainer has expertise in the evaluation tool or tools.

## 19 . Q: Who determines whether a trainer has expertise in the evaluation tools?

**A:** The school district, intermediate school district, or public school academy has the authority to determine who has expertise in the evaluation tool or tools. Accordingly, it is in the district’s best interest to ensure training is being implemented by an individual with a significant level of experience and knowledge in order to meet the legislative expectation for “expertise” in the evaluation tool or tools.

## 20 . Q: How often must teachers, administrators, observers, and evaluators go through a “refresher” training on the observation tool(s) in use within their district?

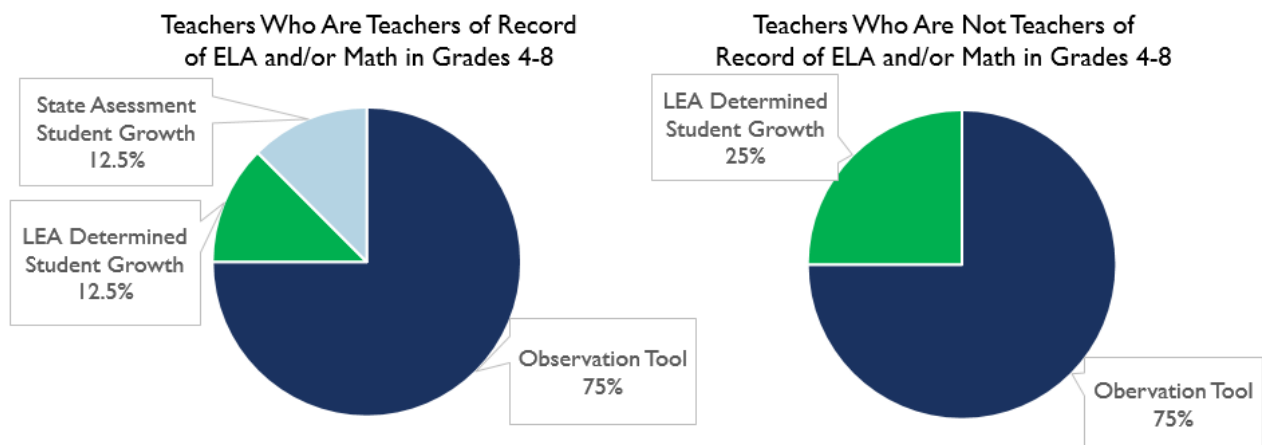
**A:** There is no statutory requirement for a prescribed recurrence of training. The MDE recommends that all participants in the evaluation process receive ongoing training as needed to continuously improve the local evaluation system.

## STUDENT GROWTH AND ASSESSMENT DATA

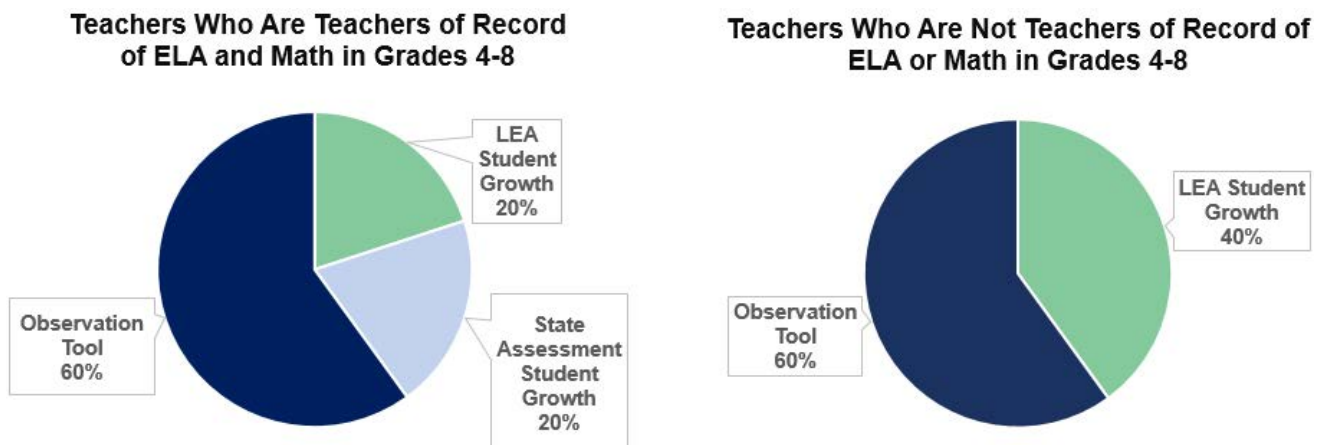
### 21. Q: What are the required weightings of student growth measures for teachers?

**A:** Student growth and assessment data must account for 25% of the annual year-end teacher evaluation for the 2018-2019 school year. For teachers of grades and content areas measured by state assessment with student growth data available for use, half of the student growth portion (12.5% of the total evaluation) of evaluations must be determined by state assessment student growth data. Beginning with the 2019-2020 school year, student growth and assessment data must account for 40% of the annual year-end teacher evaluation. For teachers of grades and content areas measured by state assessment with student growth data available for use, half of the student growth portion (20% of the total evaluation) of evaluations must be determined by state assessment student growth data in 2019-2020.

#### Evaluation Weights for Teachers for 2018-2019



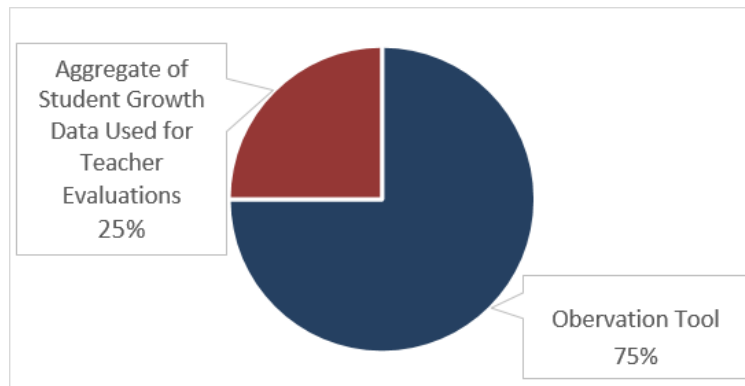
#### Evaluation Weights for Teachers for 2019-2020



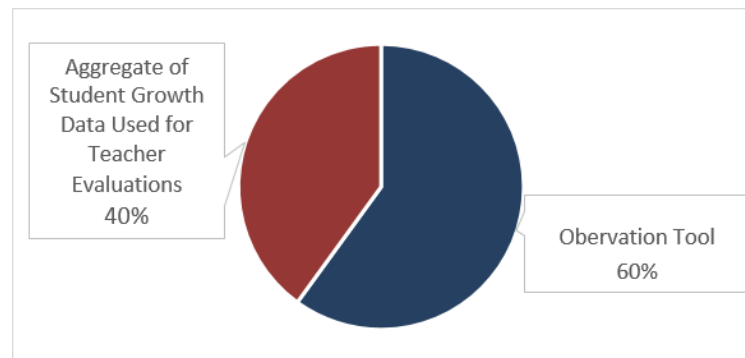
## 22. Q: What are the required weightings of student growth measures for administrators?

**A:** Student growth and assessment data must account for 25% of the annual year-end administrator evaluation for the 2018-2019 school year. Beginning in 2019-2020, student growth and assessment data must account for 40% of the annual year-end administrator evaluation. The student growth component of the evaluation must be an aggregate of all of the student growth and assessment data used in teacher evaluations in the school or district.

### Evaluation Weights for Administrators for 2018-2019



### Evaluation Weights for Administrators for 2019-2020



## 23. Q: What grades and subject areas are recommended by MDE as being required to use state assessment to determine student growth within educator evaluations?

**A:** MDE recommends that districts interpret 380.1249(2)(a)(ii) as requiring state assessments to be used within educator evaluations for teachers of record in subjects ELA or/and math in grades 4 through 8. If a teacher is not a teacher of record for ELA or math in grades 4 through 8, 40% of their summative evaluation rating is based on growth from locally selected assessments using multiple research-based growth measures or alternative assessments that are rigorous and comparable across schools. PSAT 8/9 in 9th Grade, PSAT 10, and SAT assessment student growth data may be used within educator evaluations as one of the multiple measures used to determine summative ratings, but are not interpreted as being required for use in determining ratings.

**24. Q: Must the MDE approve student growth measures and/or tools in order for districts to use them in educator evaluations ?**

**A:** No. Districts must determine if their student growth measures meet statutory requirements. However, the MDE will provide guidance to districts on how to choose these assessments and/or tools and may share information about assessments and tools in accordance with statutory requirements.

**25. Q: What measures of student growth must be used for teachers of grades and subjects not tested by state assessments?**

**A:** State law requires that multiple measures be used in determining student growth for the purposes of educator evaluations. MDE recommends that student growth be defined as the academic performance of a student or group of students over two or more points in time. For teachers of non-tested grades and subjects, and for the portion of the student growth component not measured by state assessments for teachers of tested grades and subjects, student growth must be measured by “multiple research-based growth measures or alternative assessments that are rigorous and comparable across schools within the school district, intermediate school district, or public school academy” (380.1249(2)(a)(ii)).

Districts may also measure student growth using student learning objectives (SLO), “nationally normed or locally adopted assessments that are aligned to state standards,” or the achievement of individualized education program (IEP) goals.

**26. Q: What measures of student growth should be used for an administrator’s evaluation? Must data from all students and subject areas be included?**

**A:** State law requires that the student growth and assessment data used in an administrator’s evaluation be the aggregate student growth data that are used in all of the teachers’ year-end evaluations in each school for a building-level administrator, or in the entire district for district-level administrators. This means that the portion of the administrator’s evaluation based on student growth and assessment data must include all students and measures included in the evaluation of all teachers in the building or district, but does not require that all students and measures be weighted equally.

**27. Q: How can student growth based on state assessments be included in the annual year-end evaluation when that data will likely not be available prior to June 30, which is the deadline for reporting educator evaluation effectiveness ratings to the state?**

**A:** With the shift in the assessment window to spring testing, state data will not be available when schools and districts are finalizing their end-of-year evaluations. The use of state assessment data in educator evaluations will therefore be based on prior years' assessments. Many schools, districts, ISDs, and PSAs will find ways to balance summative state data from prior years with timely local assessment data to derive the student growth component of educator evaluations. This can be accomplished by averaging state assessment results for the prior three test years to represent performance over time.

**28. Q: Will the MDE provide districts with growth data based on state assessments? How will schools and districts be expected to utilize this data?**

**A:** Yes. **Student growth percentiles (SGP)** will be provided for individual students with valid scores on consecutive state assessments of the same type in a content area. These SGPs are included in data files available to schools. Districts or PSAs using SGP data for teacher and administrator evaluations will be responsible for tracking which student SGPs should be linked to individual teachers and aggregating those SGPs. The recommended method for aggregating SGPs is to average all SGPs for the educator to calculate a mean SGP.<sup>1</sup> More information about student growth percentiles may be found at [www.michigan.gov/mde-edevals](http://www.michigan.gov/mde-edevals).

EVAAS is another model recommended by MDE for measuring student growth for state assessment. Information about measuring student growth using EVAAS may be found at <https://mi.sas.com/>.

**29. Q: Are districts required to use student growth scores that are individually attributable to teachers, or is the use of group attributable student growth allowable?**

**A:** The MDE recommends the use of individually attributable student growth data as the predominant determinant for state assessment and LEA assessment student growth when that data is available. The use of individually attributable student growth data best facilitates continuous improvement of the educator, and the use of individually attributable student growth data promotes fair and transparent evaluation systems. Group attributable scores (scores aggregated at the grade or subject levels) may be used to facilitate alignment to school and district improvement goals, however, within the educator evaluation context, individually attributable student growth scores should be the predominant determinant of teacher evaluation student growth.

# APPEALS

**30. Q: The law states that a teacher may appeal a rating of "ineffective" to the district superintendent or chief administrator. May a teacher formally appeal a rating of "minimally effective" and/or "effective" if s/he feels that the rating is inappropriate?**

**A:** The law states that the appeals process applies only for a teacher who is not in a probationary period and who is "rated as ineffective on an annual year-end evaluation" (380.1249(2)(l)). However, local district policy may allow a teacher to appeal ratings other than "ineffective."

**31. Q: If a teacher does not agree with the outcome of the local appeals process, can s/he appeal his/her annual year-end evaluation to the MDE?**

**A:** The MDE does not have the authority to grant and/or hear an appeal of the outcome of a local appeals process. There is no statutory process for an appeal beyond that defined in 380.1249(2)(l).

**32. Q: Is there an appeals process for building and/or district administrators?**

**A:** There is no appeals process required by law by which building and/or district administrators may appeal an annual year-end evaluation rating. A district may develop its own appeals process for building and district-level administrators if it so chooses.

# PUBLIC REPORTING

### **33. Q: What should a district post on the district website to meet the public reporting requirements for an observation tool that is not on the State-approved list?**

**A:** A district must post the following information on its website:

- The research base for the observation tool and an assurance that any adaptations or modifications do not compromise the validity of the research;
- The identity and qualifications of the observation tool’s author(s) and/or the identity and qualifications of a person with expertise in educator evaluations who has reviewed adaptations or modifications to the observation tool;
- Evidence of “reliability, validity, and efficacy” of the observation tool, or in the absence of this evidence, a plan for developing that evidence;
- The evaluation frameworks and rubrics with performance level descriptors;
- A description of observation, feedback, performance improvement, and evaluation processes; and
- A description of the plan for training all participants in the use of the observation tool.
- Districts are not currently required to publicly post the methods and procedures they use to measure student growth or to determine summative ratings, although publicly posting this information is recommended by MDE as good practice.

Templates for these reporting requirements will be developed by the MDE and posted to its website at [www.michigan.gov/mde-evals](http://www.michigan.gov/mde-evals).

### **34. Q: Where on a district’s website should the required documentation be posted?**

**A:** Districts should post the required information and documentation as part of the budget and salary compensation transparency reporting (the “transparency mitten”) on their district homepage.

### **35. Q: If a district uses an unmodified observation or evaluation tool that is on the state-approved list, what information do they need to post on the district website?**

**A:** The MDE has developed the required documentation for observation tools on the state-approved list. This documentation is available at [www.michigan.gov/mde-evals](http://www.michigan.gov/mde-evals). A district that has adopted one of these approved tools may post the MDE-developed documentation to its own website to meet the public reporting requirement.



**36. Q: What happens if a district is unable to avoid assigning students for two or more consecutive years to teachers in the same content area who have received “ineffective” ratings on their two most recent evaluations?**

**A:** Starting in 2018-2019, the district must notify parents in writing with an explanation about why they have been unable to meet the requirement that a student shall not be assigned to teachers in the same content area for two consecutive years who have been rated “ineffective” on their two most recent evaluations. This notification must be delivered to parents or guardians by July 15 preceding the beginning of the school year.

**37. Q: Must a district notify parents/guardians of students the first time their child has been assigned to a teacher who has received two consecutive “ineffective” annual year-end evaluations?**

**A:** No. Starting in 2018-2019, notification of parents/guardians is required when a student has been assigned for two consecutive years to teachers in the same content area who have been rated as “ineffective” on their two most recent evaluations. No notification is required the first time, or in non-consecutive years, that a student has been assigned to an individual teacher who has received two consecutive “ineffective” ratings.

**38. Q: May districts use vendor-provided training materials and postings and assurances documents if they do not participate in vendor-provided training?**

**A:** Districts should consult their evaluation tool vendor(s) and/or their legal counsel as to any stipulations in the evaluation tool terms of use that may address this issue, as some vendor-provided training materials and posting and assurances documentation are copyrighted.

## TEACHER CERTIFICATION

39. **Q: Teacher certification rules state that a person needs five consecutive “effective” or “highly effective” ratings to apply for the Advanced Professional Educator Certificate. State law requires that a teacher needs at least three “highly effective” out of the five most recent annual year-end evaluations to apply for the Advanced Professional Educator Certificate . Which is correct?**

**A:** With the enactment of PA 173 (2015), the requirement that a teacher receive three “highly effective” ratings in the five most recent annual year-end evaluations to be eligible for the Advanced Professional Educator Certificate went into immediate effect. The teacher certification rules have been updated to reflect this new codified requirement.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### 40. Q: How is “teacher” defined for the purposes of required educator evaluations?

**A:** For the purposes of evaluation required by Public Act 170 of 2016, “teacher” is defined as an individual who has a valid Michigan teaching certificate or authorization; who is employed, or contracted for, by a school district, intermediate school district, or public school academy; and who is assigned by the school district, intermediate school district, or public school academy to deliver direct instruction to pupils in any grades K to 12 as a teacher of record.

### 41. Q: How is “administrator” defined for the purposes of required educator evaluations?

**A:** For the purposes of required evaluation, “administrator” is defined as an individual holding a valid Michigan administrator’s certificate (unless exempted by MCL 380.1536) and who is employed (or contracted) and assigned by an ISD, LEA, or PSA to administer instructional programs. PA 173 further clarifies that only those administrators who are “regularly involved in instructional matters” need to receive annual year-end evaluations.

### 42. Q: Who is responsible for the evaluation of teachers who are shared between buildings?

**A:** It is up to the local district to determine who will be responsible for the evaluation of teachers in unique circumstances, such as those who deliver instruction in more than one building and/or under the supervision of more than one building principal.

### 43. Q: How do we evaluate teachers who move into the district part way into the school year?

**A:** The local district or public school academy may develop policy on how to adapt teacher observation schedules to determine the observation portion of educator evaluations. For the measurement of student growth, 380.1249(2)(b) states, “If there are student growth and assessment data available for a teacher...” and “shall be based on all student growth and assessment data that are available for the teacher”. While districts may develop their own policies for teachers starting their instruction part of the way into the school year, the MDE recommends districts determine what growth data may be available to use to determine the impact of instruction given the teacher’s interval of instruction.

- 1 This document was edited in April of 2017 to describe a change in recommended aggregation method from median to mean based on recent research and trending change in best-practice recommendations from around the country.
- 2 This document was edited on October of 2018 to describe guidance for tested grades and subjects (ELA and/or math in grades 4-8), availability of EVAAS for measuring state assessment student growth. Added a recommendation to publicly post methods and procedures to measure student growth and determine summative ratings. Added guidance for individual versus group attributable student growth scores. Added statement that PSAT/SAT data may be used, but the use is not required. Minor edits that did not substantially change the previous content were also made throughout the document.



*Office of Educator Excellence*

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