



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

SCHOOL YEAR 2016-17

## What is the purpose of LEAP?

LEAP, which stands for Leading Effective Academic Practice, is our teacher growth and performance system to support teachers and improve student achievement. Our ultimate goal is to have a great teacher in every classroom. LEAP was developed by teachers, school leaders and members of the Denver Classroom Teachers Association, applying evidence-based best practices for effective teaching. We believe our teachers deserve clear standards of performance, honest assessments of their strengths and areas for growth, and helpful feedback to support for their growth and development.

## Are all teachers part of LEAP?

Yes, all teachers (including special education, intervention, ELA-resource, career and technical education and librarians) utilize the LEAP growth and performance system. There are some exceptions for teachers based on their role who remain under the Comprehensive Performance Evaluation system. Specialized service providers also have their own growth and performance system.

## What can I expect to happen throughout the year?

Each year, teachers are asked to set professional growth plans (PGP) and determine student learning objective (SLO) baseline data by Sept. 30. Throughout the year, teachers are observed in their classrooms. Best practice is for teachers to receive between four and six observations; at a minimum, teachers must receive two observations throughout the year. To capture student voice, students in grades 3 through 12 take the student perception survey in the fall. Each teacher meets with their school leader at mid-year to discuss areas of growth and strength and again at year-end to receive their final ratings.

## How many student learning objectives (SLOs) do I need to do?

Teachers and specialized service providers must complete two SLOs. Since last year was the first year SLOs counted for LEAP, both the district and DCTA felt it was important that teachers had the opportunity to focus on learning and implementing the SLO process well and therefore granted a one year option for teachers to complete only one SLO. DPS is not alone in requiring two SLOs. Both within Colorado and nationally, districts are requiring the completion of two SLOs. Two SLOs (like multiple scored observations) allow evaluation measures to be more reliable; the more students who are tracked with bodies of evidence, the more likely the student growth score will be an authentic representation of students' progress. State law requires that 50% of final ratings for teachers be based on student growth. This year's student growth is calculated using 30% or 40% SLO performance, depending on whether or not you are a core content teacher with state measures.

## WHAT FACTORS ARE INCLUDED IN A FINAL LEAP RATING?

A teacher's final rating is calculated at the end of the school year based on points assigned for each of the following components:

### 50% Professional Practice

- Observations
- Professionalism
- Student Perception Surveys (SPS)

### 50% Student Growth

- Student learning objectives
- School Performance Framework (SPF)
- Individual state test results

*Possible LEAP ratings are Distinguished, Effective, Approaching or Not Meeting. For teachers without individual state test results or SPS data, the distributions will vary. As required by Colorado state statute, student growth consists of both individual and collective measures as well as state assessments and must be 50% of a teacher's rating.*

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## CONTINUED

Additionally, research shows that teachers who monitor student progress and adjust instruction based on data make more growth with students than those who don't. We believe SLOs are the most accurate way to account for student growth across a broad spectrum of classrooms, as they are the measure of student learning most closely connected to the teacher and his/her classroom. More detailed information is available here.

### **If I am at a “red school,” will that negatively affect my rating?**

A school's overall rating on the School Performance Framework (SPF) is based on student growth, status (current achievement), and parent and student engagement measures. Of these measures, student growth measures are the only part of the SPF used to inform a teacher's evaluation rating. Student growth measures evaluate how much growth students made from one year to the next, and do not evaluate students' current achievement status. SPF growth counts for 10% of your overall evaluation.

### **If my students opt-out of state tests, will that negatively affect my rating?**

No, students who opt-out do not directly impact your teacher evaluation rating. Student opt-outs are only related to teacher evaluations in that students who opt-out of assessments will not have growth scores and therefore cannot be used to evaluate growth on the SPF, which only accounts for 10% of your rating. In order to calculate growth, two-years of data are needed. In the case that a student is missing one or both of these data points due to opting-out, we are unable to determine the achievement gains of the student on those particular assessments. SPF for high schools includes improvements in graduation rates, course passing rates and students' readiness for college and are not subject to a student's opt-out status.

### **How do LEAP ratings affect compensation?**

Teachers who work in a school designated as “highest-priority” may be eligible for additional incentives that are tiered based on an individual's LEAP performance. Additional information can be found here.

### **What should I do if I disagree with an observation score/final rating?**

Always talk first with your school leader and discuss why you disagree. If you are unable to resolve the issue

at the school level, DPS utilizes a process in which a third-party works with both the teacher and school leader to discuss areas of concern. If your rating fell in a decision box and you believe your final assigned rating is not consistent with the evidence, email [leap@dpsk12.org](mailto:leap@dpsk12.org) within 10 days of the final rating conversation to request the opportunity to participate in the redress process. For complete details, please refer to the LEAP Basic Fairness Guide.

### **What if I start late in the school year or take a leave of absence?**

Any teacher hired in/after mid-November (exact date to be determined) and has missed 54 or more instructional days will not receive an official LEAP rating, which simply means if/when a final rating is generated it is not recorded in the teacher's file and is not shared with the State. However, teachers with unofficial ratings are still eligible to benefit from the growth and performance system and participate in all of the LEAP components including mid-year and end-of-year conversations. Teachers who start the school year late or take a leave of absence are expected to complete all components of their student learning objectives (SLO). The teacher and school leader should adjust the SLOs as necessary for the teacher's leave situation. The teacher and school leader should also work together to ensure that the teacher submits, and the evaluator approves, each part of the SLO in the SLO application. It is the teacher's responsibility to maintain documentation of student growth data in relation to each objective.

### **What happens if I go on leave during the school year?**

For teachers who go on leave during the year, the amount of time he or she is gone will determine the impact on their status with LEAP. If a teacher goes on leave for a limited time (< 54 instructional days), he/she is considered to be an official LEAP teacher and will be expected to complete all components of the process. If the leave is extensive (54 or more instructional days), then the teacher's LEAP rating is considered unofficial and the same rules apply as described in the question above.

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

For additional questions or to share your feedback, visit the [thecommons.dpsk12.org/leap](http://thecommons.dpsk12.org/leap), call 720-423-2600 or email [LEAP@dpsk12.org](mailto:LEAP@dpsk12.org).