



State of New Jersey

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June 2, 2015

TO: Chief School Administrators
School Leaders

ROUTE TO: All District Principals, Assistant/Vice Principals, and Teaching Staff Members

FROM: Peter Shulman, Assistant Commissioner/Chief Talent Officer *PS*
Division of Teacher and Leader Effectiveness

SUBJECT: AchieveNJ Update

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As we approach the end of the second year implementing AchieveNJ across the state, those of us at the Department of Education acknowledge and appreciate the hard work you are doing to support your educators and students. Through our presence in schools and districts and regular interactions with stakeholder and advisory groups, we are pleased to see gradual improvements and appreciative of your ongoing feedback about successes and challenges. We continue to work to address common concerns in an effort to make AchieveNJ the best possible system for each district.

This memo announces the 2013-14 Final AchieveNJ Implementation Report and provides a few reminders about the end of this school year as well as new resources for 2015-16 to be released in the coming weeks. Please visit the [AchieveNJ Website](#) for all evaluation resources and send any questions and feedback to educatorevaluation@doe.state.nj.us.

I. Release of 2013-14 Final AchieveNJ Implementation Report

Yesterday, the Department of Education released the [2013-14 Final AchieveNJ Implementation Report](#). I hope you will take time to read the full report and consider the challenges, successes, and lessons learned presented throughout.

The top outcomes identified in the report include the following:

- New Jersey educators are **no longer subject to a single-measure evaluation** with binary results that fail to differentiate strengths and weaknesses. The majority of educators rated Effective or Highly Effective last year earned those ratings through multiple measures that offer more detailed and individualized information. Further, the 2,900 teachers identified for additional support last year touch approximately 13 percent of all New Jersey students – about 180,000 of them. Those educators are now on a path to better serving their students.
- Data from 2013-14 points to **areas for improvement** with evaluation implementation:
 - Observers are often not using the full rubric within a practice instrument; by training them to better understand what each level of practice looks like for each component, districts can provide differentiated feedback even for those earning the highest ratings.
 - Scores on educator-set student growth goals (Student Growth Objectives and Administrator Goals) skewed high, revealing a need to focus on the “ambitious” as much as the “achievable.”
 - Given the emphasis placed on implementing new teacher evaluations with fidelity, districts and the state focused more on supporting principals as instructional leaders and less on the implementation of principal evaluations.
- The state remains committed to improving the evaluation system through **extensive educator input, targeted supports, and increased flexibility**. Since the spring of 2013, Department staff members have participated in hundreds of presentations and workshops. Educator input is helping the Department to identify and respond to challenges with improved guidance, direct district support, changes in requirements as needed, and increased flexibility as appropriate. We continue to engage teachers, school leaders, and superintendents to hear their ideas on how to provide flexibility and showcase innovative work (see [Section IV](#) of this memo for more about this effort).
- The report provides evidence that **teachers evaluated partially on student growth on the state standardized test (about 15 percent of all New Jersey teachers) were not at a relative disadvantage by the inclusion of this measure**. Like teachers not receiving the median Student Growth Percentile (mSGP) score, the vast majority of those earning mSGPs were rated either Effective or Highly Effective.

II. Reminder about Annual Summary Conferences and Corrective Action Plans

As you know, each educator must receive an annual summary conference prior to the end of the school year to review available evaluation data, progress on current professional development

plans (PDPs) and plans for next year's PDPs, and the annual performance report. For most educators, a final evaluation rating will be available because each component of the evaluation rubric will have been completed. However, for those eligible to receive a median Student Growth Percentile (mSGP) score, only a preliminary version of the annual performance report can be discussed as no **summative evaluation rating can be provided at this time**. Once the Department provides mSGP scores in 2015-16, these educators will receive their 2014-15 summative ratings and have their annual performance reports finalized.

Those educators earning a summative evaluation rating of Partially Effective or Ineffective must be placed on a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) to receive additional support. **If the summative rating is finalized by the end of the school year and a CAP is warranted, then the CAP must be developed prior to September 15, 2015.** The educator and supervisor may elect to develop the CAP as part of the annual summary conference.

For educators who were placed on a CAP in 2014-15 after receipt of 2013-14 mSGP scores and summative ratings, this **CAP must remain in place until the educator receives his or her next summative rating**, i.e. when mSGPs and summative ratings are available for 2014-15 early in 2016.

In order to ensure educators with a CAP receive all the necessary supports, please consult the [Summary of Legal Requirements for Teacher Evaluation and Tenure Cases](#) and [Summary of Legal Requirements for Principal/AP/VP Evaluation and Tenure Cases](#). Additional reminders include the following:

- Educators on a CAP must:
 - Remain on the CAP until they receive their next summative rating;
 - Be observed by multiple observers; and
 - Receive at least one observation in addition to the number typically required (i.e., most will receive four, not three). Educators should receive the additional observation for every year they are on a CAP, even if the CAP only applies to part of the year.
- If the CAP is developed after September 15 (e.g., for educators receiving mSGP scores), the mid-year evaluation must occur midway between the development of the CAP and the annual summary conference.

Please see the [Individual Professional Development Planning web page](#) for additional resources to help districts with PDP and CAP procedures.

III. 2015-16 Evaluation Rubric Survey Due June 8

As announced in this [May 12 memo](#), the Department is currently collecting information about each district's 2015-16 educator evaluation rubric via survey in NJ Homeroom. The survey opened on May 12; districts must **respond by 4 p.m. on June 8**. We will notify all districts in the case that a rubric is not approved no later than July 31. Each district Web User Administrator may access the survey through Homeroom at: <http://homeroom.state.nj.us/> by clicking on "Evaluation Survey."

IV. New Resources for 2015-16 Coming Soon

The Office of Evaluation devotes significant time and staff resources to direct work with schools and districts. We know this collaboration is essential for ensuring state requirements, guidance, and support are informed by real-time feedback from educators. Our approach has always been to promote ownership of evaluation systems at the local level while providing support as appropriate to the district context.

With two years of AchieveNJ implementation nearly complete, we are continuing to collect information from a variety of interactions facilitated by state officials, including:

- Regular meetings with the state AchieveNJ Advisory Committee (ANJAC);
- Groups of teachers and administrators participating in focus groups;
- Regional district leader groups sharing best practices; and
- Extensive partnerships with dozens of school districts around the state.

Through these interactions, we are better understanding what is going well and how educators and leaders are solving problems at the local level. As we identify trends from educator feedback, we will improve our guidance and support and will promote flexibility and innovation in future years.

In the coming weeks, we will release two important sets of resources for 2015-16:

1. **Updated Student Growth Objective (SGO) materials:** This set will include the “SGO 2.1 Guidebook,” SGO 2.1 workshop materials, and assessment design and collaborative team resources developed in conjunction with the United States Department of Education. As a reminder, we have announced a new series of SGO workshops taking place from June – September; see our [Events page](#) for details.
2. **Guidance for districts seeking flexibility to address certain issues within the evaluation system and/or to promote innovative best practices.** This will provide districts with specific instructions for ensuring compliance with state requirements while allowing for needed flexibility in certain circumstances.

Please look for this information via broadcast memo by the end of June.

Thank you for all of your dedication and collaboration this year. Have a wonderful summer.

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