



State of New Jersey
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June 17, 2014

TO: Chief School Administrators
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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

IN THIS MEMO:

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Thank you for all of your hard work in implementing AchieveNJ in your districts and schools this year. As Department officials have traveled across the state, we have seen your commitment to equipping educators with the best tools and supports for helping all students succeed. We know this work isn't quick or easy, but we are encouraged by the significant progress we have seen. Further, we are deeply appreciative of the collaborative feedback you've shared. As explained in our AchieveNJ Updates this year, your comments, questions, and suggestions have made a direct impact on our policy decisions and guidance materials. We will continue to work with you to make AchieveNJ better each year, and look forward to our next steps forward in 2014-15. As always, we invite you to visit the [AchieveNJ Website](#) and to contact educatorevaluation@doe.state.nj.us to share your feedback.

I. Summer Data Collections

This summer, districts will submit evaluation-related data through two important submissions. Please be sure you are working with the appropriate individuals in your district to complete these processes.

1. The **Course Roster Submission** – which districts have engaged in since 2011 – will take place between July 7 and August 4, 2014. NJ SMART is now conducting a practice submission window for districts, which ends on June 30. As indicated in several previous communications, the quality of the median Student Growth Percentile (mSGP) measure of evaluation for some educators relies entirely on the accuracy of district roster information. We strongly encourage all districts to verify rosters with educators and to participate in the practice window to ensure your submission meets the appropriate technical quality when the official window opens in July. Please see this previously-released [Course Roster Verification and Submission](#) guidance for more information.

2. A new **Evaluation Data Submission** will also occur in July. As explained in detail in this [January 7, 2014 Memo](#), NJ SMART is preparing for a modified data collection to capture the multiple measures of educator practice and student growth that are aligned to AchieveNJ. The practice window and submission will occur as follows:
 - **June 2, 2014:** Practice Staff Evaluation Submission Opened at 8 AM EST.
As always, districts are strongly encouraged to participate in the practice submission window to properly cleanse the final file.
 - **June 30, 2014:** Practice Staff Evaluation Submission Closes at 5 PM EST.
 - **July 7, 2014:** Official Staff Evaluation Submission Opens at 8 AM EST.
Districts may submit the final file on the first day of the official period – a best practice to avoid any last-minute rush or risk of missing the firm deadline.
 - **August 4, 2014:** Official Staff Evaluation Submission Closes at 5 PM EST.
No extensions will be granted by the Department.

For more information about these and all other NJ SMART submissions, please visit <http://www.state.nj.us/education/njsmart/>.

II. Resources for 2014-15

For the coming school year, the Department will continue to support districts with guidance materials and other resources to aid implementation of AchieveNJ. This year, we have solicited feedback on our materials from educators across the state. For next year, our goal is to refine and improve the resources identified as most useful and create new materials only in response to frequent district requests. As we transition to summer, we are providing the following updates which districts should find useful in planning for 2014-15:

A. Updated Student Growth Objective (SGO) Materials

Although the SGO process will remain almost entirely the same for 2014-15¹, we encourage educators to continue to focus on how SGOs can most positively impact on teacher practice and student achievement. Working closely with educators over the past year, we have developed a set of recommendations to improve the development process and value of SGOs in 2014-15. The

¹ The one change proposed by the Department to the State Board is to extend the initial deadline for setting SGOs from October 15 to October 31. We expect action on this proposal by early fall.

guidance in the table below has already been distributed widely by the Department through published SGO materials and workshops.

Understand	Take Action
1. SGOs are learning goals for key concepts and skills that students can be expected to master in a course based on an approximate sense of where they start.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Base learning goals on what you want students to know and do by the end of the SGO period. • Get a rough sense of where students begin by using multiple measures of student prior learning (see example). • Use pre-assessments only when appropriate.
2. SGO quality is critically dependent on summative assessment* quality .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the quality of the SGO summative assessments and develop common assessments where possible. (SGO 2.0 Presentation)
3. SGOs should be a true reflection of the daily practice of effective teachers and of the curriculum and students an educator teaches. (2013-14: Lessons from Educators, section 6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Align critical standards, effective instruction, and high quality assessment in SGOs. • Incorporate a significant number of students and portion of curriculum within the SGO(s) (see SGO Quality Rating Rubric). • Set differentiated learning goals for students based on their starting points.
4. SGOs should be collaborative – teacher-driven, administrator-supported, and student-centered (as stated in code 6A:10-4.2 (e)3).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even though administrators are responsible for approving and scoring SGOs, they should encourage teachers to take ownership of the SGO process as a powerful way to improve teacher practice and student achievement.

*Such assessments include portfolios, performance assessments, benchmark assessments, finals (modified as needed), program-based assessments, standardized tests (e.g. AP), and others.

SGO training workshops are occurring around the state and will continue throughout the summer and early fall. Please visit the [event registration page](#) for more information. In addition, SGO training webinars, expanded SGO examples, and other resources will be posted on our website in the coming months.

B. New Guidance for Teachers of English Language Learners

In response to several requests for guidance from educators, and in close partnership with New Jersey Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages/New Jersey Bilingual Educators, we have developed this [Overview for Teachers of English Language Learners](#). The guide includes best practices for implementing AchieveNJ for English as a Second Language, bilingual, and general education teachers from 2013-14.

C. New Teacher Practice Workshops

This summer, the Office of Evaluation will provide workshops that focus on key elements of teacher practice. Attendees will investigate strategies to enhance discussion and questioning

techniques as well as student engagement. The content is not specific to one particular observation instrument or to any particular disciplines but can apply broadly to effective instruction. The 42 sessions around the state will each be 3 hours in duration. While all teachers might benefit from this presentation, districts should especially encourage the following individuals to register:

- Teachers who would benefit from additional support in these areas;
- Teachers who can serve as leaders/coaches and provide additional support in the district; and
- Mentor teachers interested in providing additional support to new teachers next year.

For full registration details, please visit our [Upcoming Events web page](#).

Thank you again for your commitment to supporting the teachers and students of New Jersey. Have a wonderful summer.

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c: Members, State Board of Education
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