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August 6, 2013

TO: Chief School Administrators
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School Leaders

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

SUBJECT: Educator Evaluation Update for School Leaders (August 2013)

The New Jersey Department of Education (“the Department”) continues to prepare for statewide implementation of improved evaluations this fall. This update includes information relevant to district and school leaders in preparing for the new school year. **Please share the memo with all educators in your district.**

We encourage you to reach out with questions while we continue to provide resources and training. For more information, please view our [updated evaluation website](#) and our [AchieveNJ Resources Guide](#). As always, we invite you to call our Evaluation Help Line at 609-777-3788 or email us at educatorevaluation@doe.state.nj.us with any questions or feedback.

I. August Reporting Requirement Reminder

As explained in the July 16, 2013 evaluation broadcast memo, the Department is conducting a mandatory survey to collect information about districts’ progress in meeting evaluation requirements. **The deadline for submitting survey responses has been extended to Friday, August 9, 2013 at 4 p.m.** The survey is hosted on the Department’s Homeroom website at <http://homeroom.state.nj.us> and can be accessed by clicking on “Evaluation Survey” (please communicate with your district Web User Administrator as needed).

II. Time Management Strategies

Implementation of AchieveNJ in SY13-14 requires principals and school leaders to focus on instructional leadership. We know from our two-year evaluation pilot that time management is a challenge in the initial stages of implementing improved evaluations. The [Evaluation Research and Policy Development Memo](#) we distributed in February describes some of the specific time

and capacity challenges pilots encountered as well as strategies and resources for overcoming those challenges. As we continue to provide guidance and resources for the new system, we offer the following two resources that address time management:

- [Implementation of the National SAM Project: A Comparison of Project Designs](#) (Policy Studies Associates/Wallace Foundation): This report describes the National School Administration Manager (SAM) Innovation Project (NSIP), which aimed to help principals devote more time to instructional leadership and less to management tasks. The study concludes that by instituting the time management principles incorporated in the NSIP, principals in the first year of implementation found an additional 27 “days” of time to focus on instructional leadership.
- [Effective Instructional Time Use for School Leaders: Longitudinal Evidence from Observations of Principals](#) (Jason A. Grissom, Vanderbilt University; Susanne Loeb/Ben Master, Stanford University): This study uses observations of urban principals over three years to explore associations between leadership behaviors and student learning. Findings indicate that principal time devoted to teacher coaching and evaluation relates to greater student learning gains. The study proposes that when observations and walkthroughs are focused on instructional coaching and professional development, benefits for teachers and students are greater than when used for data collection only.

III. Actions School Leaders Can Take Now

While several elements of the new evaluation system will not be employed until the new school year begins, there are things school leaders can do now to help prepare.

1. **Ensure evaluator training is complete by August 31, 2013:** Please refer to the Department’s [Training and Implementation Overview](#) for an overview of training requirements and lessons learned from pilot districts to inform effective training.
2. **Finalize work plans for evaluation activities throughout the school year.** School leaders should communicate expectations for teachers and staff by setting dates and deadlines for activities such as Student Growth Objective (SGO) training and development, District Evaluation Advisory Committee (DEAC) and School Improvement Panel (ScIP) meetings, observations, and annual conferences. Specific observation schedules for administrators and teachers may also be created.
3. **Plan for Managing SGOs.** School leaders should consider taking the following steps before the beginning of school:
 - Become familiar with the SGO process through the [SGO Guidebook](#), [SGO Workshop Presentation](#), and [SGO Training Modules](#) and [Exemplars](#) provided by the Department.
 - Create an assessment inventory to identify assessments that are already in place in the district that can be used for SGO purposes. The [Assessment Inventory Template](#) posted on our website may be helpful for this process.
 - Identify areas in which assessments need to be developed and/or design a plan to have teams of teachers choose or create common assessments as appropriate.

- Create a calendar that identifies times for district/school and team training and SGO development prior to the state deadline for creating SGOs (November 15, 2013).

4. **Effectively Utilize the DEAC and ScIPs:** New Jersey’s evaluation pilot districts have provided a wealth of information regarding how DEACs can be best used. Listed in the box below are the takeaways that leaders should consider for their own DEACs. Taking these steps will help districts maintain a transparent, two-way communication system about evaluation activities.

- Build a DEAC that represents all stakeholder groups in the district.
- Hold regular DEAC meetings that are open to all stakeholders.
- Train all DEAC members in each element of the evaluation system (observation instruments, growth measures, etc.).
- Use DEAC members to train other district staff.
- Use the DEAC as a clearinghouse for all evaluation-related information to maintain a consistent message.
- Use a variety of communication tools for maximum impact, such as a district newsletter, website, and presentations at board and PTO meetings.
- Divide the DEAC into subgroups that can specialize in various aspects of the evaluation system.

The ScIP oversees and supports the implementation of the district's evaluation, professional development, and mentoring policies at the school level, and is required to:

- Ensure that evaluation and Corrective Action Plan (CAP) procedures are implemented appropriately;
- Identify professional development opportunities for staff members; and
- Oversee the mentorship of new teachers.

In addition, maximizing the role of the ScIP may be an effective way for principals to share some of the work of evaluation implementation with other staff members. For example, the ScIP may be involved in reviewing SGO quality, assuring that all SGOs in a school are characterized by similar standards. Additionally, leaders should plan to coordinate the efforts of the ScIPs and the DEAC to ensure that district communications, training, and professional development efforts are aligned. For more information about these groups, including a suggested schedule of activities, please see the following resources:

- [AchieveNJ ScIP and Strengthening Evaluation Overview](#)
- [AchieveNJ Roles in Planning for and Implementing Evaluation, Professional Development, and Mentoring Overview](#)

Thank you for your ongoing collaboration as we prepare to launch new evaluations across New Jersey this fall. We appreciate the hard work behind building capacity and assure you that the Department is committed to providing continued support for implementation.

AchieveNJ represents a significant improvement in educators' abilities to shape their own evaluations and make any necessary changes to help students learn. In the coming school year and beyond, we will continue to learn from final pilot reports and from all districts to continue to improve our policies and supports. Please do not hesitate to contact us at any time to share your feedback and questions.

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