



2014-15 Educator Evaluation Implementation Report

December 2016



STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Introduction

In 2012, the educator tenure reform act, *TEACHNJ*, became law. Unanimously supported by the Legislature and signed by Governor Christie, the new tenure law defines certain requirements and structures for the evaluation system in New Jersey and requires that tenure decisions be linked to evaluation outcomes. In 2013, New Jersey school districts began using AchieveNJ – the name given to the regulations, guidelines and support structures necessary for districts to implement *TEACHNJ* effectively. As a result, teachers [reported](#) receiving more observations and better feedback through the use of high-quality practice instruments, and school leaders said they could focus more of their time and effort on helping teachers improve their practice.

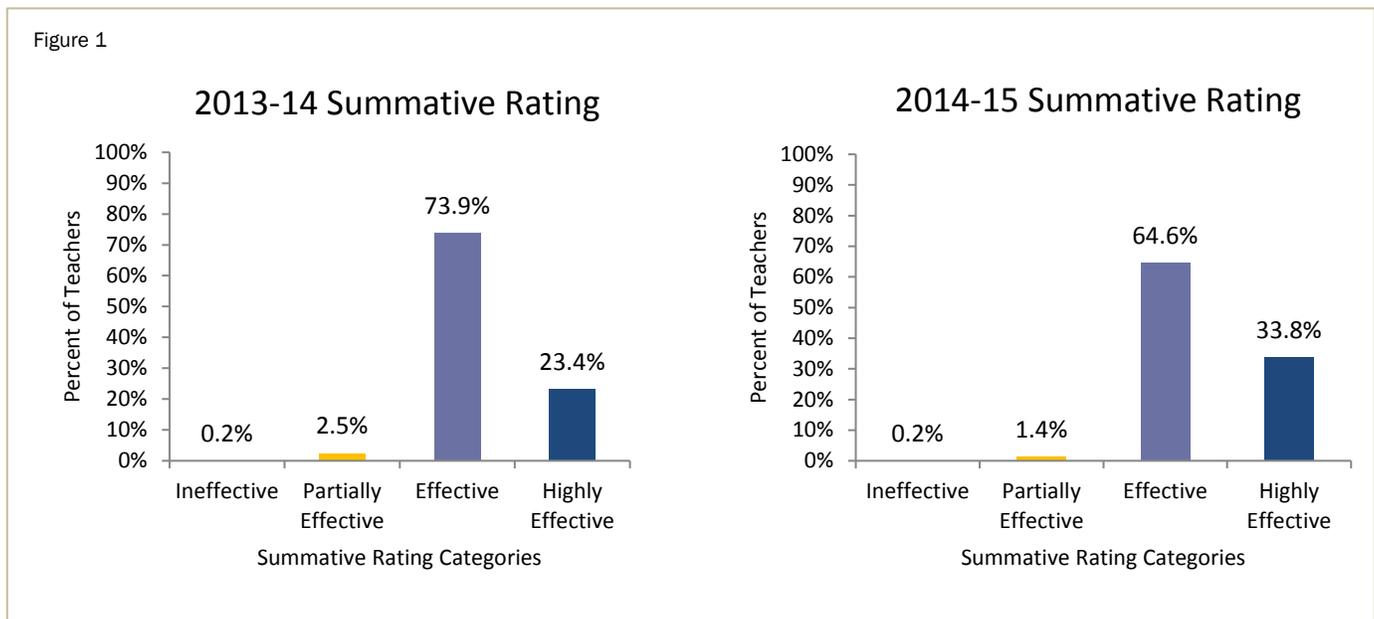
TEACHNJ and AchieveNJ require that the effectiveness of both teachers and principals be determined, in part, by the academic growth of the students for whom they are responsible. This multiple measure system, consisting of educator activities and student outcomes, provides information that better differentiates educators' strengths and weaknesses, allowing for more targeted professional development. For all teaching staff members, there are four rating categories: Highly Effective, Effective, Partially Effective, and Ineffective.

In the 2014-15 school year, the second year of AchieveNJ, educators continued to grow more comfortable with the new system. Although sweeping conclusions cannot be drawn after just two years of implementation, evaluation data from the 2014-15 school year indicates that the quality of educators in New Jersey's schools is improving.

AchieveNJ 2014-15: Key Findings

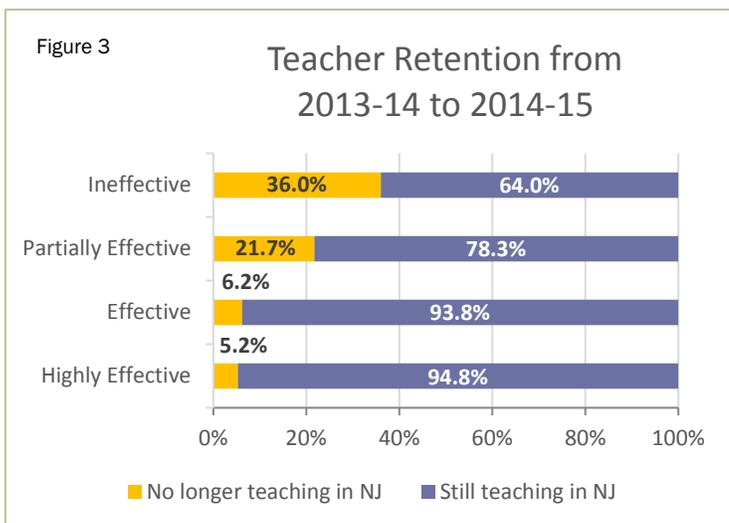
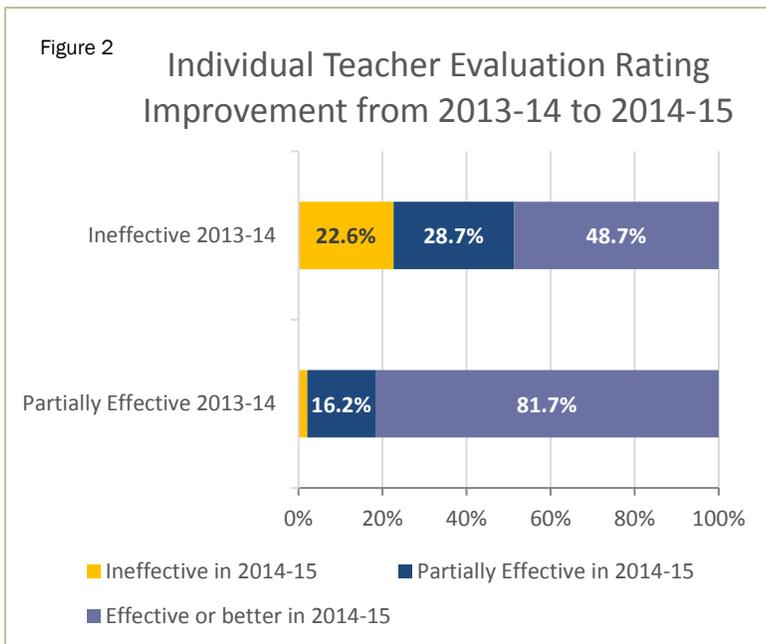
Key Finding 1: Overall, the evaluation results indicate that New Jersey has effective teachers

The overwhelming majority of teachers are doing a good job educating New Jersey students (Figure 1). In fact, 98.6 percent of teachers received ratings of Effective or Highly Effective. **In the 2013-14 school year, 2,700 (2.9 percent) teachers were rated Ineffective or Partially Effective. This number decreased to 1,600 (1.6 percent) in the 2014-15 school year.** An improvement in ratings at the upper end of the evaluation scale also occurred with about 10 percent more teachers in New Jersey receiving a rating of Highly Effective.



Key Finding 2: Teachers are improving their evaluation ratings, particularly those who scored below Effective in the 2013-14 school year

When considering the individual performance of teachers, there are patterns of significant overall improvement, particularly for those who had poor evaluation ratings in Year 1 (Figure 2). **Nearly 50 percent of teachers rated Ineffective in 2013-14, who continued to teach in New Jersey, were rated Effective or Highly Effective in 2014-15.** More than 80 percent of Partially Effective teachers in 2013-14 improved their ratings to Effective or Highly Effective in their second year of evaluation. This could be, in part, the result of more targeted professional development, extra support and more observations for struggling teachers, as required by AchieveNJ. In addition, about 20 percent of teachers rated Effective in 2013-14 improved their ratings to Highly Effective in 2014-15. This indicates that AchieveNJ is having a positive effect, not only on those who are struggling, but also on those who are taking their practice to the next level of excellence.



Key Finding 3: New Jersey's schools are retaining their best teachers at high rates

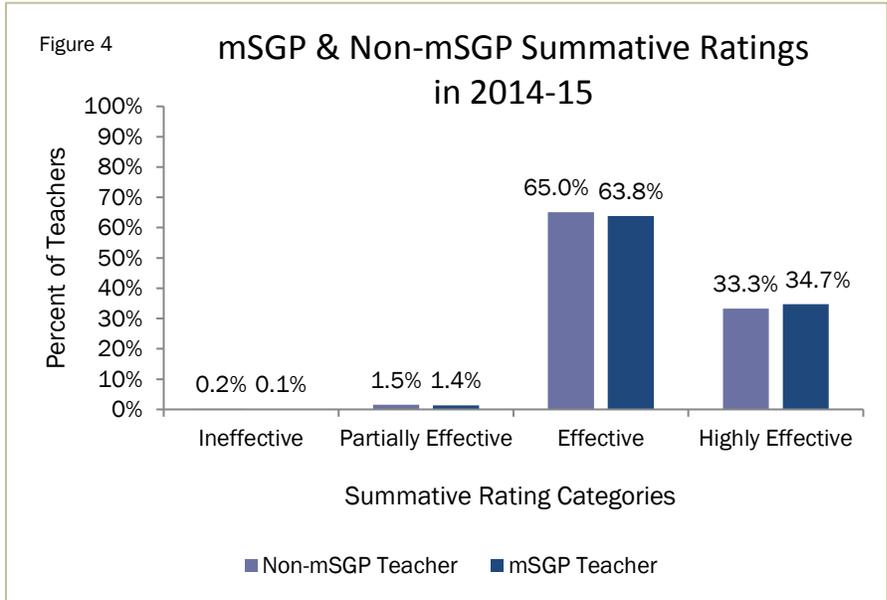
Two years of AchieveNJ data indicate that districts are holding on to their best teachers at very high rates (Figure 3). Nearly 95 percent of Effective and Highly Effective teachers continued to teach New Jersey's students in 2014-15. This contrasts with low retention rates for Ineffective and Partially Effective teachers. Although the previous figure, Figure 2, indicates that teachers rated Ineffective or Partially Effective in 2013-14 are improving, many are no longer teaching. **Thirty-six percent of teachers rated Ineffective and about 22 percent of those rated Partially Effective in 2013-14 were not teaching in New Jersey schools in 2014-15.**

Key Finding 4: Teachers are more comfortable with their evaluation systems, and AchieveNJ does not disadvantage the teachers who have mSGP as part of their evaluations

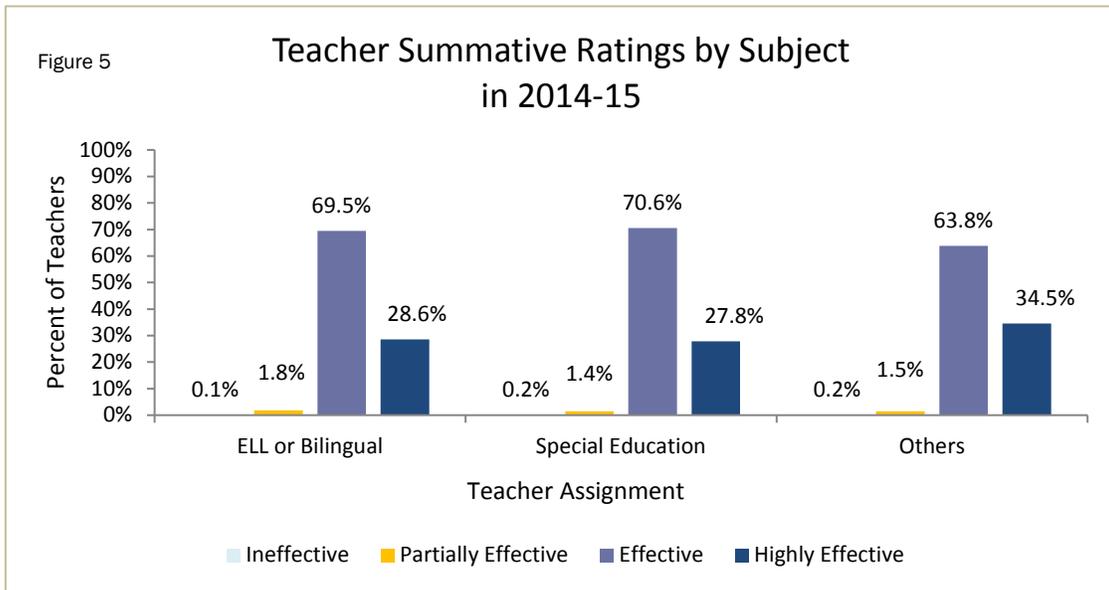
Districts are providing educators with training and support with the newer evaluations, and this is leading to more comfort with the system. **In fact, 75 percent of teachers said that they are satisfied with the educator evaluation and support system in their school districts.**¹ Part of this comfort may also be attributed to a system which by and large produces equitable and comparable summative scores, regardless of teaching assignments. For example, despite widespread concern that the mSGP component of AchieveNJ would unfairly penalize teachers receiving these scores, the vast majority of teachers who received an mSGP rating scored in the top two categories of the evaluation system and at rates comparable to those who did not receive an mSGP score. In fact, more mSGP teachers scored in the Highly Effective category compared to their non-mSGP peers in 2014-15 (Figure 4).

¹ Based on a survey of 2,908 teachers from 79 districts in Aug-Dec 2015.

Moreover, the inclusion of mSGP data continues to provide a high-quality, objective measure within a multiple measure system. The mSGP score and subsequent standardized test reports provide powerful tools for reflection that allow districts to understand which teachers and strategies are driving the significant growth. Educators continue to use this information to help grow best practices and improve classroom instruction. For instance, through the Department's [Achievement Coach Program](#), educators around the state are coaching their colleagues to use data with increased efficacy in order to improve their practice.



As with mSGP teachers, consistent patterns of evaluation score distributions are seen throughout New Jersey, regardless of teaching assignment. **Teachers of students in the general education population are receiving similar evaluation ratings to their colleagues who teach English Language Learners or students who have special needs (Figure 5).**



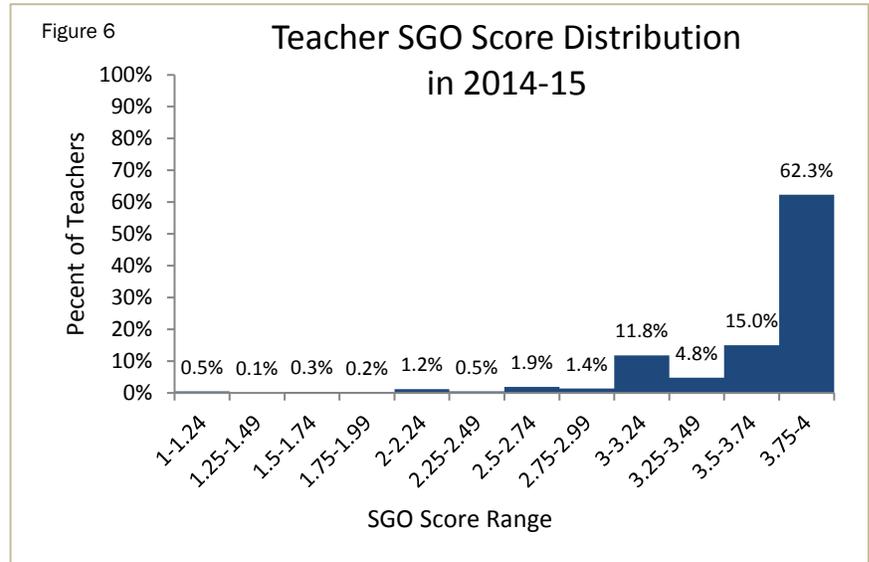
Key Finding 5: AchieveNJ is strengthening the instructional practices of New Jersey’s teachers

The growth in teachers’ evaluation ratings coincides with qualitative feedback that the Department continues to receive from educators. **Teachers and administrators across the state report that AchieveNJ is helping them to develop a common vision of high expectations for all students and a shared understanding of what quality teaching encompasses.** Additionally, teachers have reported increased collaboration with colleagues and a greater focus on student growth and achievement through the use of higher-quality data and standards-aligned assessments.²

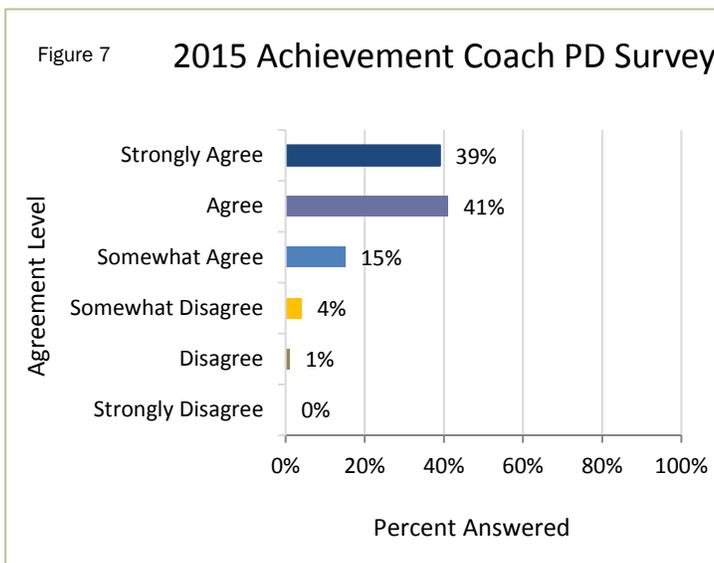
² Taken from sources including teacher/administrator focus groups & AchieveNJ Advisory Committee (ANJAC) feedback in 2015.

This focus on growth and data can be attributed in part to the fact that teachers have set Student Growth Objectives (SGO) for two years. After an initial learning phase during 2013-14, teachers continued to solidify their understanding of the SGO process as a measure of effectiveness and an important professional development tool in 2014-15. The 2014-15 SGO score distribution (Figure 6) suggests that many teachers are setting goals that are skewed towards “achievable” rather than “ambitious.” However, early indications in 2015-16 show that increased comfort with the SGO process and structural improvements in SGOs are leading to the development of goals that are more aligned to the higher expectations that teachers generally have for their students.

For example, teachers have widely adopted a differentiated approach to SGOs following the Department’s guidance to take into account the varied starting points of groups of students within a classroom. Teachers are also moving away from the limited pre-test/post-test model and diversifying the data sources by which they determine their students’ starting points. Many districts are also paying closer attention to developing high-quality assessments, which are necessary if SGOs are to accurately reflect the growth of students.



Key Finding 6: Highly Effective educators are leading professional development efforts and exploring methods to differentiate evaluations



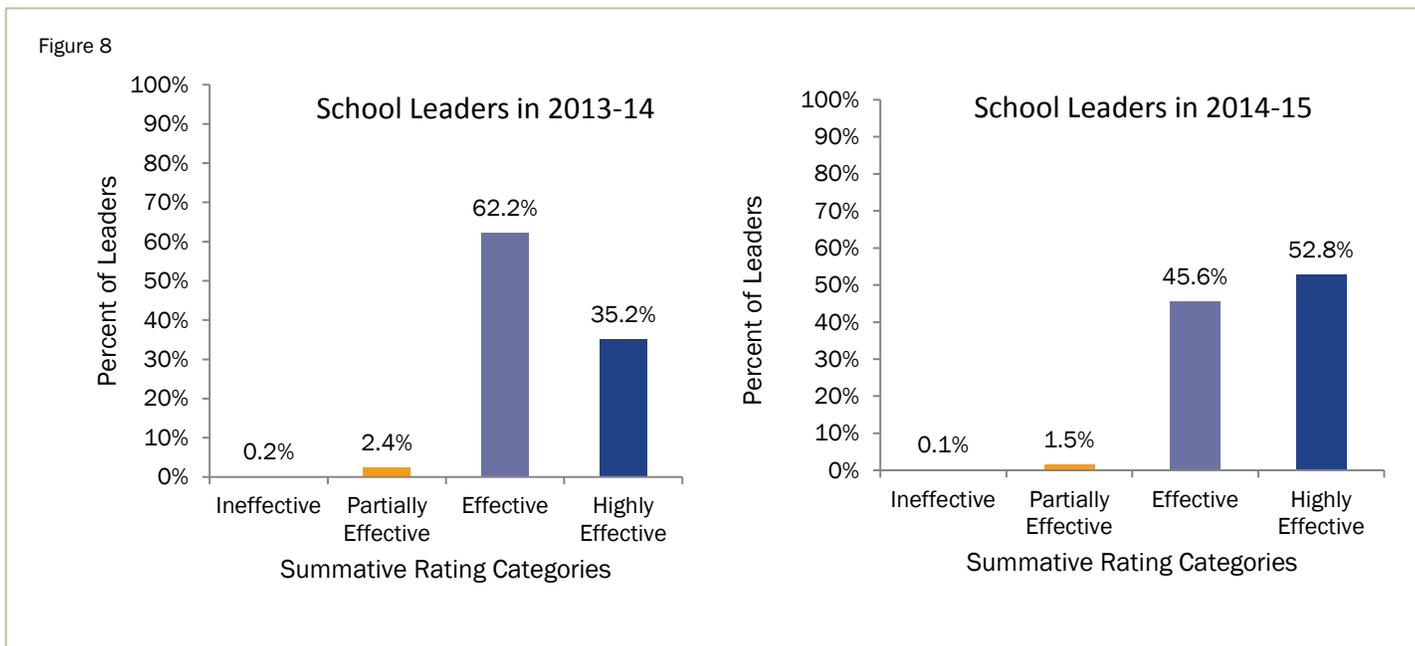
Through the Department’s Achievement Coach Program, Highly Effective educators from 19 school districts developed and provided high-quality professional development aligned to needs identified through evaluation data to 7,000 of their colleagues in 70 school districts. The Achievement Coach Program is indicative of how Highly Effective teachers are elevating the profession by supporting and coaching colleagues. Figure 7 depicts results of a recent survey of teachers who had received professional development through the Achievement Coaches and were asked to provide feedback on the following statement: *Overall, I am satisfied with the professional learning opportunity I participated in.* **Eighty percent of teachers surveyed agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.**

In addition to professional development opportunities that were designed and led by teachers for teachers, beginning in 2015, over 100 educators from 16 school districts piloted a differentiated evaluation approach for Highly Effective teachers. This pilot was launched in response to feedback from educators that such an approach would add value to the AchieveNJ system. The Department remains committed to working with educators to explore ways in which AchieveNJ can be improved and utilized to drive professional growth.

Key Finding 7: School leaders perform well as measured by their evaluations

As in the case of teachers, the vast majority of principals, assistant principals and vice principals are doing a good job. There was a significant shift in leaders receiving a rating of Highly Effective in 2014-15 (Figure 8).

The Department recognizes that school leaders are the linchpin of all work that occurs in schools. School administrators set the tone of the educational environment and implement systems and supports for teaching staff to deliver the highest-quality education possible for their students. The Department is continuing its commitment to working with school districts and educational groups such as the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association (NJPSA) and the New Jersey Association of School Administrators (NJASA) to ensure that principals are receiving the same kind of quality evaluations and subsequent supports as teachers.



Next Steps

The state-level data shows that AchieveNJ appears to be having a positive effect on teacher and school leader performance. AchieveNJ is entering the third year of implementation, and the Department and educators continue to collaboratively explore ways to improve its effectiveness and value. Since the launch of AchieveNJ, the Department has actively sought feedback, input and advice from hundreds of educators, including those on the AchieveNJ Advisory Committee (ANJAC), district-based focus groups, and a wide range of stakeholders. Based on this educator and stakeholder input and the two years of AchieveNJ data presented in this report, the Department will do the following:

- Clarify, align and simplify AchieveNJ rules while increasing flexibility for districts wishing to further differentiate supports for teachers and principals;
- Collaborate with school and district leaders to explore pathways to improve principal evaluation and support;
- Provide better tools and improved guidance on key aspects of evaluation such as administrator goals, SGOs and post-observation feedback quality;
- Continue to support the efforts of Highly Effective educators to grow the profession through initiatives such as the Achievement Coach Program; and,
- Continue to improve, collect and analyze evaluation data that will be used to inform the Department's educator effectiveness policies, including preparation, mentoring, professional development, retention and equitable distribution of teachers and principals.