



State of New Jersey
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
PO Box 500
TRENTON, NJ 08625-0500

CHRIS CHRISTIE
Governor

KIM GUADAGNO
Lt. Governor

CHRISTOPHER D. CERF
Commissioner

April 16, 2013

TO: Chief School Administrators
Charter School Lead Persons
Educator Preparation Provider Leaders

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

SUBJECT: Continued Benefits for Student Teaching Under AchieveNJ

As districts prepare to implement AchieveNJ, our new evaluation and support system proposed to the State Board last month, the Department of Education continues to receive questions and feedback about a variety of topics. I write to you today to address the potential impact of AchieveNJ on the teacher candidate practicum (student teaching) experience in schools and classrooms across the state. I encourage superintendents to share this memo with educators and other staff members to help promote the ongoing placement of student teachers.

District, school, and educator willingness to host student teachers is vital to guaranteeing a pipeline of effective educators. As in the past, hosting student teachers remains a substantial opportunity to add capacity and provide further support to educators and students. If implemented effectively, student teaching experiences in the advent of AchieveNJ should not negatively impact any element of a teacher's evaluation. Additionally, components of AchieveNJ offer cooperating teachers opportunities to improve evaluation outcomes as a result of working with student teachers. Some of the significant benefits to this collaboration, which remain unchanged under AchieveNJ, are highlighted below, followed by unique opportunities presented by the new evaluation system.

1. Hosting student teachers continues to offer the following opportunities for school improvement:

- *Positive impact on classroom instruction and student growth:* A student teacher becomes an additional team member who can offer added classroom capacity, thus raising the effectiveness of a cooperating-teacher. Specifically, the cooperating teacher may strategically employ the student teacher to:

- Employ a team-teaching approach;
 - Help enhance small group instruction; and
 - Provide more intensive one-on-one work with struggling students.
- Interaction with the next generation of teachers trained in cutting-edge strategies and evaluation practices: Housing student teachers within a school offers educators exposure to innovative ideas from a cadre of individuals trained in the most up-to-date educational strategies. Many aspiring educators are well-versed in the structure of the evaluation instruments districts employ and can offer additional insight in that area.
 - Development of a pipeline for future teacher recruitment: Observing student teachers allows school leadership to hone continued recruitment efforts from particular Educator Preparation Providers (EPPs).
 - Assessment of potential new hires: Exposure to a student teacher prior to hiring provides school leadership the opportunity to determine if that candidate fits within a particular school.
 - Establishment of a robust relationship with Educator Preparation Providers: Hosting student teachers offers districts the chance to collaborate with EPPs, and extends to opportunities such as developing continuing education programs and creating Professional Learning Communities.

2. Strong clinical practice, fostered in the student teaching experience, helps to create a pipeline of strong educators in the following ways:

- Allowing aspiring educators to hone their craft prior to full-time teaching: Lessons learned from student teaching and the ability to learn from more seasoned educators puts new teachers in a stronger position on day one in their own classrooms.
- Conducting pedagogical practice: Developing lessons and units, managing instruction, creating and conducting assessments, and reflecting on experiences allow student teachers to put their classroom training into practice.
- Developing the necessary disposition for professional teaching: Establishing a learning climate, managing a classroom, and understanding that all students can learn allows student teachers to develop their teaching style and orient themselves to the profession.
- Collaborating with the education community: Understanding how to best team with colleagues, parents, administrators, and others is vital to a student teacher's success as they transition to a full-time role.
- Understanding school procedures: Observing and participating in such procedures as arrival, dismissal, assemblies, and standardized testing prepares a student teacher for the myriad additional responsibilities of a full-time teacher.

3. Collaboration with student teachers offers the following opportunities for cooperating teachers to improve their evaluation outcomes:

- *Increased scoring on teacher practice evaluation instruments including ‘professional responsibility’ components:* An educator’s collaboration with a student teacher may increase his/her score on a ‘professional responsibility’ or ‘contributions to the profession’ domain of a practice instrument.
- *Additional support in promoting student achievement:* The extra support and collaboration a student teacher can provide may positively influence student achievement results, which factor into the summative evaluation for each teacher. As always, the final responsibility for a classroom rests with the cooperating teacher, and strong cooperating teachers have always ensured that student teachers enhance learning in their classrooms.
 - For teachers of 4th through 8th-grade Language Arts Literacy and Mathematics (the “tested grades and subjects”), growth scores on the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK), also known as Student Growth Percentiles or SGPs, will account for a percentage of the evaluation score.
 - For all teachers – tested and non-tested grades and subjects – teacher and principal-developed Student Growth Objectives (SGOs) will account for a percentage of the evaluation score. The initial SGO-setting and mid-year review conferences between a teacher and his/her supervisor offer the flexibility to consider the impact of a student teacher on a cooperating teacher’s SGO(s) and make any necessary adjustments.

Cooperating teachers can benefit from having a student teacher assist with small group instruction, one-on-one assistance, and other team teaching strategies. This extra support may help students better understand the content being taught and better demonstrate that knowledge on a variety of assessments.

For all of these reasons – and given the vital role clinical practice plays in training the next generation of educators – I encourage you to continue to open your doors to student teachers in the coming school year. If you have additional questions about the impact of AchieveNJ on student teaching, please email educatorevaluation@doe.state.nj.us.

Thank you for your commitment to the educators and students of New Jersey – past, present, and future.

- c: Members, State Board of Education
Senior Staff
Executive County Superintendents
Executive Directors for Regional Achievement Centers
Executive County School Business Administrators
NJ LEE Group
Garden State Coalition of Schools