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April 8, 2014

TO: Chief School Administrators
Charter School Lead Persons
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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Seven months into the first year of statewide implementation of AchieveNJ, my Department colleagues and I have heard a lot of positive feedback about the work being done across the State, as well as ongoing areas of challenge. In response to the field and to TEACHNJ Act requirements, this memo provides an overview of evaluation policies for 2014-15 and the minor changes we are proposing to address particular areas of concern we have heard from educators. In addition, we have provided several new resources in response to educator requests to support the last few months of the 2013-14 school year. As always, we invite you to visit the newly updated AchieveNJ website and share questions and feedback via educatorevaluation@doe.state.nj.us.

I. 2013-14: Lessons from Educators

In an ongoing effort to understand implementation from the educator perspective and provide related support, the Department has been working with educators from a variety of districts, including pilot and non-pilot participants. These educators have shared insights about their planning, training, and communications as well as approaches to data management and Student Growth Objectives (SGOs). We have compiled this information and are pleased to now share this initial 2013-14: Lessons From Educators guide. We hope district and school leaders will consider if and how some of the approaches shared might benefit your own work. In the coming months, we will continue to study the first year of implementation and will release a report in the fall including preliminary data analysis.

II. New Resources

A. Preparing for the End of the School Year

1. Course Roster Verification Guidance

As explained in several previous communications, **the integrity of the mSGP measure of the evaluation system relies on course roster accuracy, which can only be verified at the local level.** Districts that do not take steps to ensure roster accuracy may provide incorrect summative evaluation data and may even face potential litigation from teachers who receive incorrect scores. Please see this Course Roster Verification Guidance to ensure your district has quality control procedures in place prior to your submission this summer.

2. Student Growth Objective (SGO) Materials

In order to offer additional support as districts prepare to score SGOs, we have posted the following resources as part of our library of SGO examplars, forms, and guidance:

- SGO Scoring Checkpoints and Considerations: Annotated guide with examples and resources for developing SGO scoring policies and completing the SGO process with teachers.
- SGO Scoring Checklist: Simple list that administrators may use prior to or during annual conference to ensure important aspects of SGO scoring are completed.
- Administering and Scoring SGO Assessments: Table including a series of optional steps districts and schools can take to increase the quality of SGO assessing and scoring.

B. District Evaluation Advisory Committee (DEAC) Resources

After consulting with a number of administrators, the Department has developed a number of potential agenda items that DEACs might use in upcoming meetings. These items include planning for distribution of non-evaluative 2012-13 mSGP reports to teachers, ensuring processes are in place to successfully complete the first year of AchieveNJ, and analyzing aggregated observation and SGO data to identify district-wide professional development needs. These are posted under "Top Resources" on the DEAC Corner web page, located in the "Documents & Resources" page of the AchieveNJ website.

III. 2014-15 Policy Updates and Evaluation Rubric Requirement

A. Proposed Regulations for AchieveNJ in 2014-15 (Minor Changes)

Since September, we have continued to collaborate with and hear feedback from educators across the state about AchieveNJ. In particular, we have learned of certain procedural burdens that might be eased to help administrators focus on the most important aspects of the system. We also know from the Final Evaluation Pilot Advisory Committee (EPAC) Report and Final Rutgers University Graduate School of Education (RUGSE) Report that districts found implementation improved significantly as they adapted to the system in their second year. **Therefore, for 2014-15, the Department is focusing on making the rules clearer and less burdensome in practice and is not changing components or weights.** The amendments proposed on April 2, 2014 include various clarification amendments (definitions, grammatical adjustments, etc.) as well as the following requirement changes:

- Remove the December 1 deadline for completion of at least one co-observation to give districts more flexibility with implementation (note: two co-observations are still required at some point in the school year).
- Amend written requirements of the observation report so districts can use electronic versions to save time.
- Create an appeals process for procedural violations so that all districts will follow the same fair and impartial method to address educators' concerns in the evaluation process.
- Slightly delay the deadline for setting Student Growth Objectives (SGOs), changing it from October 15 to October 31.
- Amend the SGO personnel file procedure so SGOs are filed at the end of the year, not at multiple intervals to ease burden (note: SGOs remain part of the personal evaluation record that is confidential by law).

For more information, please see the Overview of Proposed AchieveNJ Amendments Presentation from the April 2 meeting of the State Board of Education. We look forward to engaging with educators and the public through the comment and response period as we seek to build on the hard work underway in 2013-14.

B. 2014-15 Evaluation Components and Weights (Same as 2013-14)

The TEACHNJ Act requires the Department to release the components and weightings for the evaluation system by April 15 for the following school year. In order to provide continuity and clarity in implementation across the 2013-14 and 2014-15 school years as noted above, we will use the same components and weights next year. Each required section is listed below.

Percentage Weight of Teacher Evaluation Components (N.J.A.C. 6A:10-4.1)

Component	Teachers with mSGP	Teachers without mSGP
Teacher Practice	55%	85%
Student Growth Objective (SGO)	15%	15%
Median Student Growth Percentile (mSGP)	30%	NA

Required Number of Student Growth Objectives (N.J.A.C. 6A:10-4.1)
- Teachers without mSGP: 2 SGOs
- Teachers with mSGP: 1 or 2 SGOs – the Department strongly encourages all teachers to set 2 SGOs. For detailed guidance and support, please refer to the SGO Guidebook as well as training modules, presentations and supporting documents found on the SGO web page.

Teacher Observations (N.J.A.C. 6A:10-4.4)
- Non-Tenured Teachers (1-2 yrs): 2 long observations, 1 short, multiple observers required
- Non-Tenured Teachers (3-4 yrs): 1 long observations, 2 short, multiple observers required
- Tenured Teachers: 3 short observations; multiple observers recommended

Percentage Weight of Principal Evaluation Components (N.J.A.C. 6A:10-5.1)

Components	Multi-Grade SGP Schools	Non-SGP Schools	Single-Grade SGP Schools
Principal Practice	30%	30%	30%
Evaluation Leadership	20%	20%	20%
SGO Average	10%	10%	10%
School SGP	30%	0%	20%
Administrator Goals	10%	40%	20%

C. 2014-15 Evaluation Rubric Reporting Survey

According to the TEACHNJ Act (N.J.S.A. 18A:6-122), all districts must submit their educator evaluation rubrics to the Commissioner for approval by June 1st each year. Evaluation rubrics consist of a set of criteria, measures, and processes used for evaluative purposes. In May, the Department will send out a link to a mandatory survey to fulfill this reporting requirement and will notify all districts about rubric approval by August 1, 2014.

In addition to collecting information regarding LEA Board-approved evaluation rubrics, the questionnaire will focus on the following topics:
- Formation and use of District Evaluation Advisory Committee (DEAC)
- Formation and use of School Improvement Panels (ScIPs)
- Adoption of educator practice instruments
- Professional development for teachers and administrators on relevant evaluation processes and instruments
- Student Growth Objectives (SGOs)
- Median Student Growth Percentiles (mSGPs)

Thank you for all that you do for the educators and students of New Jersey.

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c: Members, State Board of Education
    David Hespe, Acting Commissioner
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Executive County Superintendents
Executive Directors of Regional
    Achievement Centers
Executive County School Business
    Administrators
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