

2013-14 Educator Evaluation Implementation Report Executive Summary

Vision and Context

The vision for student learning at New Jersey Department of Education encompasses a unified set of strategies that:

- align academic expectations in P-12 schools with those of colleges and employers;
- improve instruction through meaningful preparation, induction, and professional development experiences for teachers and leaders;
- include effective and efficient assessments that measure student growth over time and provide meaningful feedback to students, parents, and educators;
- foster positive school cultures of lifelong learning that honor teaching as a critical profession; and
- employ technology to drive innovation and continuous improvement.

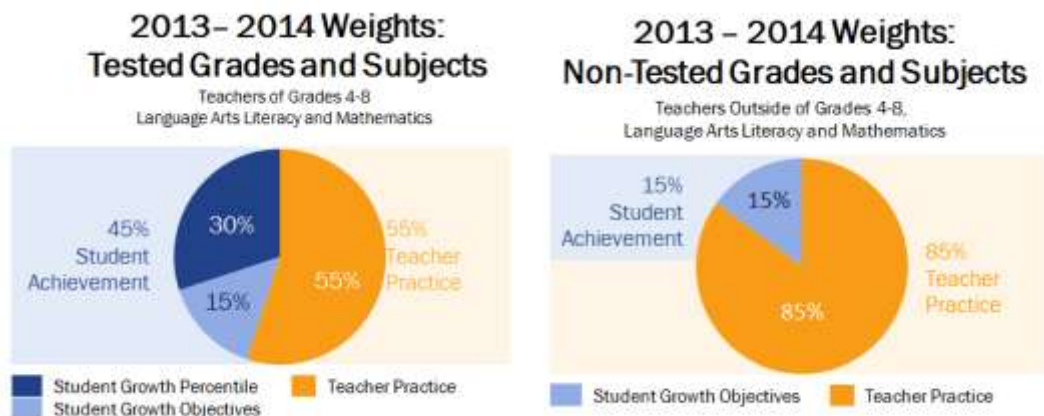
AchieveNJ, the state’s new evaluation and support system, developed over several years with New Jersey educators, plays a critical role in helping teachers and leaders realize this vision in every school. In order to deliver a rigorous curriculum aligned to state college and career readiness standards, educators must be supported and must receive meaningful feedback on their work with students. Similarly, in order to derive all of the potential benefits of AchieveNJ, districts must implement all facets of the system with fidelity and must receive feedback and support on those efforts in order to improve. With this release of results from the first year of statewide implementation of AchieveNJ, the Department hopes that our initial lessons learned will help districts to improve implementation, and in turn student learning, in subsequent years.

Overview of AchieveNJ in 2013-14

AchieveNJ uses multiple measures of both student achievement and educator practice to evaluate and support teachers and school leaders, as defined and displayed below:

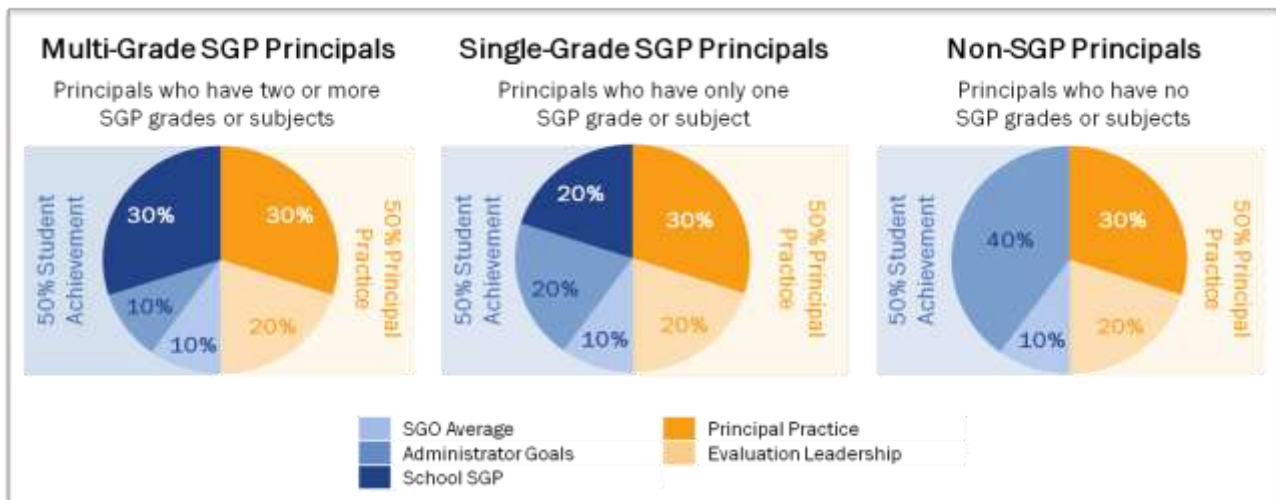
Teacher Evaluation

- **Teacher Practice** is measured by performance on a teacher practice instrument, which is used to gather evidence primarily through classroom observations.
- **Student Growth Objectives (SGOs)** are academic goals for groups of students that each teacher sets with his or her principal or supervisor at the start of the year.
- **Student Growth Percentile (SGP)** represents the growth of an individual student on the state assessment from one year to the next compared to “academic peers” across the state.



Principal and Assistant/Vice Principal Evaluation

- **Principal Practice** is measured by a school leader’s supervisor/superintendent using a state-approved practice instrument selected by the district. Evidence might be gathered in a school walk-through, observations of staff or parent meetings or assemblies, etc.
- **Evaluation Leadership** is measured using a state-developed rubric, which measures how well a principal implements teacher evaluations.
- **Average SGO** ratings are the average of all the teachers’ SGO scores in the leader’s building(s).
- **Administrator Goals** are student growth and achievement goals – such as scores on Advanced Placement tests, college acceptance rates, graduation rates (in schools with rates under 80%) – that the principal sets with his or her superintendent.
- **School SGP** data are state-calculated scores that measure a principal’s ability to help increase student achievement on the state standardized assessment.



Results from Year One

Overall, the first year of AchieveNJ implementation represents a significant step forward in improving our evaluation system, as teachers are receiving more observations and feedback than ever before, and school leaders are focusing more of their time and talent on instructional quality in schools. New Jersey educators no longer receive a single-measure evaluation with binary results that fail to differentiate strengths and weaknesses. Instead, educators are now evaluated through multiple measures that have provided much more detailed and individualized feedback about their performance and its impact on student growth.

The statewide statistics presented in the [2013-14 Final AchieveNJ Implementation Report](#) are drawn from certified data for 113,126 teachers and 4,058 school leaders. Summative data from the first year of AchieveNJ indicates that most educators in the state met or exceeded the expectations of their supervisors. Overall, the vast majority of teachers in New Jersey earned high ratings – nearly three-quarters were rated Effective by their supervisors and almost a quarter were Highly Effective. School leaders earned similar rating percentages (62% Effective and 35% Highly Effective).

Approximately 3% of teachers earned ratings of Partially Effective or Ineffective. Just one year before, districts reported less than 0.8% of teachers as rated “not acceptable” (under the previous acceptable/not acceptable system). Further, the 2,900 teachers identified for additional support last year provided instruction to approximately 13% of all New Jersey students – about 180,000 of them. Those educators are now on a path to improvement with individualized support, or will face charges of inefficiency if unable or unwilling to better serve students over time.

As we reflect on the first full year of AchieveNJ implementation, the summative data alone can mask some of the broader takeaways:

- 1) As a state, we have made **significant progress** relative to the evaluation systems of the past; teachers, school leaders, superintendents, and school board members should be **commended for their commitment** to this endeavor.
- 2) Educators are benefiting from multiple evaluative measures within instructional practice and student performance; these complementary elements are driving more **insightful professional conversations and growth opportunities** for educators.
- 3) Although this year represents a big step in the right direction, there is **much room for improvement**; specifically, districts are still adjusting to using all aspects of their instructional practice instruments and educator-set goals often focused more on the “achievable” than the “ambitious” last year.
- 4) The state remains committed to improving the evaluation system through **extensive educator input, targeted supports, and increased flexibility**.

The following sections cover those elements of evaluation that applied to both teachers and school leaders in 2013-14. For details on all evaluation components, view the [full report](#).

Educator Practice

Statewide, the majority of educators earned high scores on the teacher and principal practice measures; approximately 87% of teachers and 85% of principals were rated 3.0 and greater on a four-point scale. The average teacher practice score across the state in 2013-14 was 3.23 and the average principal practice score was 3.28. This indicates that across the state, the vast majority of New Jersey educators are demonstrating effective practice, a long-held belief that is now supported by at least one year of data derived from observation rubrics.

Prior to AchieveNJ, only one observation was performed for the large majority of teachers. With the launch of AchieveNJ, high quality rubrics, a four-point scale, and more frequent observations, a more detailed picture of teacher practice has emerged. By the Department’s estimates, over 180,000 additional observations took place last year for tenured teachers.

However, while aggregate statewide data indicate shifts in evaluation results in general, it is up to districts to thoughtfully use evaluation data in district-wide and individualized professional development strategies that provide extra support, encourage growth in targeted areas, and recognize and promote exceptional teaching. Data from 2013-14 shows that observers are often not using the full rubric within a practice instrument; by promoting better understanding of each component, districts can further emphasize differentiated feedback even for those earning the highest ratings. The Department will continue to explore best practices regarding observations and the information they generate and will continue to develop tools, guidance, and policy as necessary.

Student Growth Objectives (SGOs)

Through the SGO process, all teachers set specific learning targets for their students while considering the content standards that students should be taught, some type(s) of available student knowledge data, and assessment methods to measure learning. Statewide, 76.5% of teachers earned a 3.5 or better on the SGO score last year, meaning their students performed exceptionally on the learning goals their teachers had developed for them. In turn, school leaders also earned high ratings on the SGO averages of their teachers (the average principal average SGO score was 3.58). Understanding that this element was the biggest change for many teachers in year one of AchieveNJ, the Department emphasized setting “ambitious but achievable” growth targets.

Many educators and administrators shared that the SGO process helped improve teacher practice and student learning by promoting:

- Data-driven instruction based on a deeper understanding of individual student needs;
- More effective differentiation of instruction to ensure student mastery;
- Alignment of standards, instruction, curricula, and assessments;
- Higher quality assessments that more accurately measure student mastery;
- Closer tracking of student progress;
- Reflective and collaborative teaching practices; and
- Increased communication and learning among educators.

The Department is currently working to produce updated SGO resources for the 2015-16 school year based on feedback from the previous two years, including emphasis on the importance of assessment quality, using the SGO process to enhance teacher practice and student achievement, and the collaborative nature of the process locally.

Median Student Growth Percentiles (mSGPs)

In 2013-14, the median Student Growth Percentile (mSGP) score counted for 30% of the evaluation for about 15% of New Jersey teachers; specifically, 4th - 8th-grade Language Arts and Math teachers who were:

- Assigned to a 4th - 8th-grade Language Arts or Math course for 60% or more of the year prior to the date on which the state test was administered, and
- Assigned 20 unique students by the district through the Course Roster Submission.
 - These students must have been enrolled for 70% or more of the course duration prior to the administration of the test.

To determine the mSGP for an individual teacher, district course roster data was used to create an ascending list of SGPs of the qualifying students who were assigned to the teacher by the district. Principals and assistant/vice principals were assigned the mSGP of all students if they were assigned to buildings including one or more tested grades (4 - 8) by October 15, 2013; this included about 55% of New Jersey school leaders. The mSGP scores provided by the Department were then translated from a 1 - 99 growth percentile assigned to the student into a 1 - 4 score for the educator, according to the state [conversion chart](#).

Statewide, the vast majority of 2013-14 teacher mSGP and principal school SGP ratings were in the effective scoring range. The average teacher and principal mSGP score was 2.99. Additionally, 68% of teachers and 74% of school leaders earned a score of 3.0 or better on this measure. The report also demonstrates that educators evaluated partially on student growth on the state standardized test performed very similarly on the final evaluation rating to those not receiving those scores.

Many district administrators have reported that the objective, data-driven mSGP measure is a very useful element of AchieveNJ. Inspection of potential gaps between practice ratings and mSGP scores helps increase the accuracy and value of observations. Districts that participated in the evaluation pilot and have several years of mSGP data report even greater value in the ability to examine trends that develop over time.

Improvements to Data Infrastructure

The first year of AchieveNJ was also successful in moving toward a more robust statewide data system that can not only be used to measure teacher performance, but can also relate to teacher preparation initiatives and the NJ SMART data system. In 2013-14, all districts reported staff evaluation data to the Department through a new submission in NJ SMART.

The Department also initiated a Score Certification process where each district could securely access all submitted evaluation component scores and the summative rating for all qualifying educators. Districts could use this opportunity to verify scores, make any necessary adjustments to ensure local personnel records match the state records, and then certify scores with the Department. Through this process, the Department received certified scores from over 99% of all districts. This collaborative effort represents a significant step to ensure quality control and provide districts maximum flexibility to verify evaluation information from the first year.

Educators at the Center of Continuous Improvement

Mindful of the need to continuously improve, the Department remains committed to improving AchieveNJ through extensive educator input, targeted supports, and increased flexibility. Throughout the 2013-14 school year, we worked with districts to better understand implementation challenges and to grant flexibility, where appropriate, to ease the burden on districts. In addition to the daily support of three state Implementation Managers visiting schools to answer questions and provide guidance, the Department utilized two key mechanisms for broader support: waivers and regulation updates, which are explained in detail in the report.

One example of a key regulatory change was made in response to educator concerns about the transition from the NJ ASK to the PARCC assessment. The Department provided information about this transition, highlighting that among measures of student growth, SGP is uniquely designed to handle a transition across different types of assessments. This is because it is a norm-referenced methodology, creating a relative ranking of students within an academic performance peer group, not a ranking based on absolute performance. Because the Department worked carefully over the last several years to align the NJ ASK to the Common Core State Standards, SGP in the 2014-15 school year will be comparable to SGP in the 2013-14 school year. However, in response to feedback from educators across the state, the Department made a regulatory change to allow for reducing the weight of mSGP to 10% for all educators in 2014-15.

Educator input is helping the Department identify and respond to challenges with improved guidance, direct district support, changes in requirements as needed, and increased flexibility as appropriate. Since the spring of 2013, Department staff members have participated in hundreds of presentations and workshops, reaching over 350 districts. Over 25,000 educators attended a session offered by the Department last year. Moving forward, we believe that Highly Effective educators should be encouraged to help their colleagues improve through initiatives such as the Achievement Coaches program. This coming summer, we will offer new Achievement Coach and SGO trainings to address educators' greatest concerns.

As the Department has always stressed, local implementation will determine the value of evaluation for a district's educators. Over the coming months, we will engage teachers, school leaders, and superintendents and continue to hear their ideas on how to provide flexibility and showcase innovative work. In turn, each district should examine the distribution of ratings at both the summative and component level to identify trends that can inform improvements in supporting educators. In particular, we will work with districts to better understand how AchieveNJ is helping educators to realize our state vision for student learning by:

- Placing student learning at the center of teacher development and improvement;
- Fostering a climate of continual professional improvement in all teachers;
- Providing administrators access to powerful tools to understand and improve teacher practice;
- Connecting teacher practice with school, district, and state educational improvement strategies;
- Motivating school leaders and teachers to share and support each other in a professional learning community;
- Empowering educators in the classroom in creating and pursuing individualized improvement practices; and
- Using data to support the other elements of our vision for student learning, including teacher preparation and career pathways.

By supporting innovations that hold promise, continuing to listen carefully to educators, and thoughtfully examining data from the evaluation system, the Department is building a foundation on which to make deliberate and effective changes to guidance and policy as needed. By providing direct support through in-person interactions and high quality resources, the Department is helping districts overcome some implementation obstacles and enhance the value for educators. This approach will further the common goals shared by everyone – effective leadership, instruction, and high levels of academic growth for all 1.4 million schoolchildren in New Jersey.

Additional Resources and Contact Information

- View the whole report at <http://www.nj.gov/education/AchieveNJ/resources/201314AchieveNJImplementationReport.pdf>.
- View the AchieveNJ website: www.nj.gov/education/AchieveNJ
- Contact the Office of Evaluation directly at 609-777-3788 or educatorevaluation@doe.state.nj.us to share questions or feedback.