Evaluating Teachers of English Language Learners

Achieve NJ, New Jersey's educator evaluation and support system, is designed to promote effective practice for all teachers. Although teachers of English Language Learners (ELLs) employ specific instructional strategies and assessments based on the individual needs of their students, the majority of indicators of effective instruction apply to all teachers. For a general overview of AchieveNJ, please visit the Teacher Evaluation section of our website. As a supplement in response to the requests of English as a Second Language (ESL), bilingual, and general education teachers, this document provides suggestions and examples for improving the evaluation process for these educators.

Evaluating Teacher Practice

The majority of each teacher's evaluation is based on a teacher practice score. This score results from at least three observations for non-tenured teachers and two for tenured, conducted throughout the school year using a state-approved instrument selected by the district. Most approved teacher practice instruments include categories such as planning and preparation, instructional strategies, classroom environment/student behavior, and professional responsibilities General education, bilingual, and ESL teachers should be familiar with the evaluation instrument in use in their school.

The Department encourages district leaders, principals, bilingual and ESL administrators, and teachers to continue to collaborate in preparing for and conducting observations and conferences. Prior to conducting observations, evaluators should meet with teachers to discuss:

- The specialized practices, modifications, and adaptations used to instruct ELL students, including how student English Language Proficiency (ELP)[1] levels impact instruction and how this may be effectively captured by the district instrument;
- The present levels of academic achievement and ELP level of the ELLs in each class observed;
- The types of evidence/artifacts of practice that the teacher can provide;
- The roles of both teachers within the general education classroom when an ESL teacher is providing in-class support; and
- The assessments used to measure achievement and progress and any related accommodations.

Educators of ELLs should provide evidence throughout the observation process that demonstrates the strategies they use to differentiate instruction in their classroom.

Evaluating Student Growth

Student Growth Objectives (SGOs)

Setting SGOs: 15% of the final evaluation score of all teachers, including those with ELL populations, is based on SGOs. SGOs are specific and measurable long-term academic goals aligned to New Jersey's curriculum standards. They are set in the first few weeks of the school year using available student learning data, and measured using a high quality assessment. SGOs should be developed to reflect a significant portion of an educator's work with his or her students and must be set in consultation with the principal or supervisor. Best practices in SGO setting for ELL teachers include the following:

- Ensure the SGO assessment is high quality and provides an accurate and reliable measure of student learning;

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[1] More information about ELPs and their relevance to ELL instruction may be obtained from WIDA (www.wida.us)

- When setting targets for the SGO assessment, consider students' starting points and predicted learning rate using a range of information such as such as prior growth rates on the ACCESS test, current grades, and class performance;
- Review World-class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) findings regarding growth trends; higher rates of growth in ELP occur in students with lower ELPs and for those in lower grades;[2]
- Take into account the length and frequency of the instruction teachers are able to provide their students; and,
- Ensure SGOs are aligned to the WIDA English Language Development (ELD) standards and based on ELD growth within targeted domains.

SGO Assessments: Teachers may use a variety of possible assessments that measure student performance according to the WIDA standards; portfolios of student work; performance assessments; more traditional tests developed by vendors, the state, or the district; etc. No matter the approach, assessments should be high quality and provide an accurate and reliable measure of student performance in one or more developmental domains. In addition, these assessments should be administered and scored in a consistent manner and in accordance with the state's policy on modifications and accommodations for special populations when appropriate.

Other Considerations:
- **Types of Programs**: In middle school and high school settings, ESL is often the replacement class for English Language Arts. Therefore, districts might consider setting one SGO for English Language Arts and one for English language development.
- **Differentiated Goals**: Every educator of ELLs should be familiar with the general education curriculum for the grades and courses they teach. In addition, they should be familiar with the WIDA ELD standards and the performance definitions of the six ELP levels. When general or bilingual education teachers set content-based SGOs, the student's ELP level should be taken into consideration. By creating tiered SGOs, teachers can ensure that ambitious and achievable goals are set for ELLs at different ELP levels.
- **Collaboration**: The Department requires collaboration between teachers and principals to set SGOs and strongly recommends that other staff members involved in supporting ELLs (bilingual/ESL supervisors, lead teachers) be included, where appropriate, to ensure SGOs accurately capture student starting points and necessary accommodations.

SGO Exemplars: In collaboration with educators around the state, the Department has created a SGO sample that can be used for ideas and guidance for teachers creating their own SGOs. Included in this list is an ELL-specific SGO that uses multiple measures to determine targets and a district-developed writing assessment scored using the three performance criteria of the WIDA writing rubric. Below is the SGO scoring plan excerpted from the complete example linked above.

Student Growth Objective			
75% of students will increase 1 English Language Proficiency (ELP) level in a number of writing performance criteria at rates appropriate for their current ELP level (1 & 2 or 3 & 4) as shown below.			
ELP Level	Students in Each Group	Target Score	Number of Students Required for "Full Attainment"
1 & 2	4	Increase 1 ELP level in 3 performance criteria	3
3 & 4	12	Increase 1 ELP level in 2 performance criteria	8-9

[2] Cook, et. al, 2011

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ): The Department updates FAQ as questions come in from educators. The most current FAQs for ELL teachers can be found on the AchieveNJ website under "Educator Specific Questions."

Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs)

For teachers of Language Arts in grades 4-8 and Math in grades 4-7, 30% of the evaluation is based on student growth on the state standardized assessments. The methodology for this measure has been developed to assess growth rather than proficiency. For a more detailed description of SGPs, see the AchieveNJ SGP web page.

Course Roster Assignment and Student Attribution: Districts control how course roster data is submitted and verified; therefore, a district's superintendent or designee is responsible for ensuring roster accuracy. Some best practices in roster attribution and verification include the following:

- Bilingual and ESL teachers speak with the appropriate administrator to ensure that ELL attribution and course roster identification is correct for the instruction and services they provide.
- School Improvement Panels (ScIPs) and/or District Evaluation Advisory Committees (DEACs) ensure there is a district policy, where appropriate, for roster submission and student attribution that accurately reflects the instructional models of ESL instruction and support. Considering these variations will allow districts to differentiate between push-in or pull-out teachers who may only be with students for part of a class period or school week and co-teachers or replacement class teachers who may be with a student population full-time for the entire year. For example, in a co-teaching situation, the more involved the ESL teacher is in planning instruction (whole group or small group) and developing assessments, the more likely the district might be to attribute the growth of all students to both teachers.
- Districts develop policies that clearly identify how students will be attributed across the spectrum of support that is provided by educators of ELLs.

The key to student attribution and course roster verification is for the evaluation system to reflect the reality of the instruction and support in a classroom. The goal of Achieve NJ is to determine the effectiveness of teachers in their current placement and to identify how educators might more effectively help all students learn, regardless of their ability and ELP level. The Department will continue to work with educators and seek feedback on attribution issues.

For More Information

You can learn more about AchieveNJ and share your feedback by:
- Contacting your district leadership, DEAC, or ScIP.
- Visiting the AchieveNJ website
- E-mailing educatorevaluation@doe.state.nj.us; or calling 609-376-3974.

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