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March 31, 2016

TO: Chief School Administrators
School Leaders

ROUTE TO: All District Principals, Assistant/Vice Principals, and Teaching Staff Members

FROM: Peter Shulman, Deputy Commissioner *PS*

SUBJECT: Release of 2014-15 Evaluation Score Certification Tool

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As explained in the [March 22 memo](#) announcing the release of 2014-15 median Student Growth Percentile (mSGP) scores, the New Jersey Department of Education (“the Department”) is providing the Evaluation Score Certification Tool (ESCT) to allow districts to certify all 2014-15 evaluation scores with the state. **Appropriate district personnel can access the ESCT starting today and must certify the accuracy of all data by May 1, 2016, even if no changes are made.** This memo includes detailed instructions and guidance to help district leaders review, correct (if applicable), and certify scores.

Importantly, today’s release of the ESCT also constitutes notification to districts of the final summative rating for educators whose 2014-15 evaluations include mSGP. Any educator with a Partially Effective or Ineffective summative rating must be placed on a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) within 15 working days (see this updated guidance on [Corrective Action Plan Procedures for 2015-16](#) for more details).

Please see the [AchieveNJ scoring web page](#) for more information and contact educatorevaluation@doe.state.nj.us to share any comments and questions.

I. Background and Purpose

Last year, the Department created the Evaluation Score Certification Tool (ESCT) in response to feedback from educators and district leaders requesting the opportunity to review and, if necessary, to correct component and final evaluation scores. During this several-week process last year, the Office of Evaluation provided direct support to 350 districts to help ensure that educators could have the opportunity to address any issues and that final state evaluation data would be accurate. This year, we are again deploying the ESCT to provide each district with the full list of component and summative (final) evaluation scores submitted during the Summer 2015 Evaluation Data submission. The tool also includes the mSGP scores provided by the state for qualifying educators, thereby offering one comprehensive database of all evaluation score information for all eligible staff members in a district.

Although administrators were asked to certify data accuracy last summer when they initially submitted it, the Department is again providing this final opportunity to view and certify 2014-15 staff evaluation records for several reasons:

- **Incorporating mSGP scores into summative ratings:** On March 22, 2016, the Department [released mSGP scores](#) to all districts to be reviewed and shared with qualifying educators. The ESCT provides a calculated summative rating for mSGP educators and offers an opportunity for administrators to identify any potential data issues (please see [Procedures for Addressing 2014-15 mSGP Data Issues](#) for more information).
- **Supporting district review of local records and calculations:** The certification process provides districts a final opportunity to ensure that all ratings assigned to educators are accurate.
- **Improving overall state data accuracy:** The certification process helps to ensure that all educator evaluation information is provided in a standardized format to comply with state and federal requirements and that future policy decisions at the state level are based on accurate evidence.

We strongly encourage all district leaders to carefully review the information in this tool in order to complete the certification process described below by May 1, 2016.

II. Understanding the Evaluation Score Certification Tool

The 2014-15 ESCT is accessible to certified NJDOE Homeroom users as explained in [Section III](#) below. Given that this interface contains confidential evaluation scores for individual educators, leaders must ensure that any district personnel accessing the information have the proper permission to do so. Specifically, **evaluation data of a particular employee must be confidential** in accordance with the *TEACHNJ Act* and *N.J.S.A. 18A:6-120.d and 121.d*. Educator evaluation data must be handled in the secure manner one would treat, handle, and store any part of a confidential personnel record and it must not be released to the public. Further, such individual data is exempt from the *Open Public Records Act (OPRA)*.

The ESCT contains the following elements:

1. **District-submitted Evaluation Data:** All data submitted through the NJ SMART Staff Evaluation Submission in the summer of 2015 (see [NJ SMART Staff Evaluation Submission Data Handbook](#)) – this includes evaluation data for teachers, principals and assistant/vice principals (APs/VPs), and other certificated staff (supervisors, non-supervisory coordinators, directors, and educational services providers).
2. **mSGP Scores and All Summative Ratings:** The mSGP scores released to districts on March 22, 2016, for all qualifying teachers and principals and APs/VPs, their summative ratings, and the summative ratings of all staff members.
3. **Notification of Exceptions:** The requirement to correct certain instances where district submissions did not clarify whether a staff member was a teacher, principal/AP/VP, or other certificated staff member.
4. **Certification Requirement:** Final certification of all 2014-15 evaluation data after the district has reviewed scores and, if relevant, made necessary modifications.

Please note that, as with similar processes such as the web-based Application for State School Aid (ASSA), the Evaluation Score Certification Tool will not update NJ SMART data and districts cannot upload the information from the tool to NJ SMART. Rather, districts should ensure that the data in this interface matches evaluation score information in local personnel files, which are the official permanent records of an individual educator's scores and final rating in a given school year.

III. Using the Tool to Certify 2014-15 Evaluation Scores

Districts should follow these steps to complete the certification process (**required for all districts**):

1. **Access the district's information.**

If the CSA (or his/her designee) already has a district-level Homeroom account, then he/she will be authorized to view the ESCT. Additional user accounts can also be added to view the reports through Homeroom Administration, but leaders must **ensure that such individuals are in appropriate roles to ensure the confidentiality of educator evaluation data** as explained in [Section II](#). Authorized Homeroom users can access the report by following these steps:

- Click on the following link: <http://homeroom3.state.nj.us/eewa/>;
- Log into the Homeroom portal using assigned credentials; and
- Enter the ESCT.

2. **Compare local evaluation records to data in the ESCT and make modifications as appropriate.**

Review local evaluation records containing the component and summative scores for each qualifying educator in each school and compare them to the scores listed. The following examples describe when and how districts may need to adjust scores to accurately reflect data found in local personnel files. Detailed instructions for each of these processes are included in the [Evaluation Score Certification Tool Technical Manual](#):

- A district submitted inaccurate data through the initial Summer **2015 NJ SMART Course Roster Submission**. If the district can identify the error and has the correct

roster information in hand, the designated NJ SMART user should consult the state's correction guidance. The mSGP score for qualifying educators may be recalculated in these instances and adjusted in the ESCT. If the district is unable to provide the correct roster information, incorrect mSGP scores cannot be used in an educator's evaluation rating. Please consult the [Procedures for Addressing 2014-15 mSGP Data Issues](#) for full details on handling these situations.

- A district submitted inaccurate data through the initial Summer **2015 NJ SMART Staff Evaluation Data Submission**, due to typographical errors, mistakes in score calculations, or other issues identified after the submission. The district should adjust all component and summative evaluation scores that are incorrect in the ESCT, and/or in local personnel records where calculation errors have been found, to ensure they match and reflect any modifications made since the Summer 2015 submissions.

3. Certify and submit the district's information.

After reviewing the data and making any necessary modifications, certify that all data is correct. **All districts must certify 2014-15 evaluation scores by May 1, 2016, regardless of whether any changes have been made through this process.** In the event that a district needs to modify more than five percent of the records originally submitted through the Summer 2015 Staff Evaluation Data submission, the CSA will need to provide a brief explanation for the modifications. If a district has adjusted mSGP data, a similar explanation is required to detail why alterations were necessary and share any steps that were taken to ensure that there is evidence documenting that the new scores are final, correct, and have been shared with the staff member. The purpose of these explanations is for the Department to consider future guidance and supports to districts in implementing AchieveNJ and collecting data through NJ SMART.

During this process, districts may find that they expected to receive mSGP scores for educators who ended up not qualifying and vice versa. Guidance for these situations can be found in the [Procedures for Addressing 2014-15 mSGP Data Issues](#).

The Department is appreciative of these continued efforts to ensure that staff evaluation data is accurate and encourages district personnel to contact educatorevaluation@doe.state.nj.us or (609) 777-3788 with any questions.

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