



State of New Jersey

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December 17, 2013

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

IN THIS MEMO:

I. Information for Administrators and School Leaders

- A. [Assessing and Adjusting Student Growth Objectives \(SGOs\)](#)
- B. [Using the Principal and Assistant/Vice Principal Evaluation Leadership Instruments](#)

II. AchieveNJ Advisory Committee (ANJAC) Activities

- A. [Meeting Report](#)
- B. [New Resources for the District Evaluation Advisory Committee \(DEAC\)](#)

In an ongoing effort to support implementation of AchieveNJ, the Department of Education (“the Department”) continues to develop guidance and resources about educator evaluation. This memo includes resources to support administrators and school leaders in ensuring SGO quality and using the Evaluation Leadership Instruments, as well as a report from the first meeting of the ANJAC and resulting DEAC resources. Please share this information directly with all educators in your district.

As always, we encourage you to visit the AchieveNJ Website and FAQ page and to send any questions and feedback to educatorevaluation@doe.state.nj.us.

I. Information for Administrators and School Leaders

A. Assessing and Adjusting Student Growth Objectives (SGOs)

As you know, all teachers were required to set SGOs with administrator approval by November 15, 2013. Although this deadline has passed, it is not too late for districts to review the quality of their teachers' SGOs and identify any that should be modified to ensure they are appropriate for use in an educator's evaluation this year. According to state regulations, SGOs may be modified with chief school administrator approval by February 15, 2014. Therefore, we encourage members of the District Evaluation Advisory Committee (DEAC), School Improvement Panel (ScIP), and others supporting evaluation within districts and schools to assess and potentially adjust SGOs as necessary and appropriate.

On the [SGO page of the AchieveNJ website](#), we have posted several resources to help district and school leaders assess and adjust SGO quality, including the following:

- [Assessing and Adjusting SGOs](#): This new two-page document outlines a recommended process for assessing SGOs and adjusting any that are found to be insufficient for the purposes of evaluation.
- **SGO Quality Assessment Presentation ([PowerPoint/PDF](#))**: This new presentation provides guidance to SGO teams and administrators to help prepare before assessing SGO quality.
- **SGO Quality Rating Rubric ([Word/PDF](#))**: This two-page rubric, published earlier this fall as part of the second round of State-provided SGO training workshops, provides detailed descriptions of SGO quality on a four-point scale.

B. Using the Principal and Assistant/Vice Principal Evaluation Leadership Instruments

In SY13-14, principals and assistant/vice principals (APs/VPs) are evaluated in part on how well they implement evaluations for their teaching staff members. This measure counts for 20 percent of all principal/AP/VP evaluations and is scored using the State Evaluation Leadership Instruments. In response to questions from the field, we are providing additional **optional** guidance on the use of these instruments. This [Evaluation Leadership Instrument Overview](#) includes a suggested step-by-step approach for identifying data points and sources of evidence and conducting progress reviews throughout the year. In addition, the instruments are posted on the AchieveNJ website, as linked below:

- [Principal Evaluation Leadership Instrument](#)
- [Assistant/Vice Principal Evaluation Leadership Instrument](#)

II. AchieveNJ Advisory Committee (ANJAC) Activities

A. Meeting Report

In November, the Department convened the first meeting of the ANJAC to discuss implementation of the new evaluation system. The Department asked ANJAC members, the large majority of whom currently work as teachers and administrators within New Jersey

districts, to discuss the barriers and facilitators to AchieveNJ implementation in the first few months of school. The key takeaways from the meeting were as follows:

- Clear and consistent communication plays a critical role in district implementation. This supports the common experience of pilot districts as documented on pages 17-21 of the [Final EPAC Report](#).
- A thoughtfully constructed and well-managed DEAC makes implementation easier and more successful.
- Comprehensive initial and follow-up training in the teacher practice instrument – often using a turn-key approach – is important.
- Frustration over the SGO development process was increased for practitioners working in districts that adopted a top-down approach where little or no consultation occurred between teachers and supervisors.

The ANJAC provided solutions to common problems that can be found on the updated [ANJAC page](#) of the AchieveNJ website. Key recommendations from ANJAC to the Department were:

1. Provide guidance and support to districts on DEACs, the role of the ScIP, and how DEACs and ScIPs interact;
2. Streamline the wealth of communications about AchieveNJ;
3. Coordinate messaging with professional groups such as NJPSA and NJSBA;
4. Provide more SGO exemplars for 2014-15; and
5. Provide future training in assessment literacy to improve SGO quality.

In response to these recommendations, the Department:

1. Has developed materials for DEACs on the AchieveNJ website (see section IIB below) and is working with professional groups to encourage districts to fully utilize their DEACs. The Department will also release guidance for the ScIP based on early implementation lessons in the coming months.
2. Is redesigning the AchieveNJ website to facilitate its use; and
3. Has developed a plan to create assessment literacy training materials for districts.

The ANJAC will play an important role in the Department's continuing efforts to improve AchieveNJ. The first concrete action steps based on ANJAC's recommendations are explained below.

B. New Resources for the District Evaluation Advisory Committee (DEAC)

Participants in the November ANJAC meeting indicated the need for additional resources to explain the role and potential meeting agendas for the DEAC. As you know, DEACs are required in all districts by the TEACHNJ Act through at least SY16-17. This committee has great potential to improve the implementation of AchieveNJ, as was clearly recognized by New Jersey's evaluation pilot districts and is widely documented in the [Final Evaluation Pilot Advisory Committee \(EPAC\) Report](#). Recommendations and suggestions for effective DEACs are offered from pilot districts in this [two-page excerpt](#) from the full report.

A key observation of ANJAC members is that districts who engage educators with a collaborative and productive DEAC find AchieveNJ implementation easier and more successful.

Therefore, we strongly encourage district leadership to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of their current DEAC and make adjustments accordingly. We also encourage educators who are not currently involved in their DEAC to ask district leadership how they may contribute to the success of this committee and to educator evaluation in general.

The Department is committed to providing regular updates that may be useful for DEACs. These will be distributed to districts in a variety of ways including updates on the [DEAC Corner](#), a new page within the AchieveNJ website. Here, you will find sample meeting agendas and other useful materials for DEAC use. If any member of a DEAC has questions or feedback for the Department – or would like to share your own sample agendas or resources with other districts – please email educatorevaluation@doe.state.nj.us.

Thank you for your ongoing collaboration and for your dedication to educators and students in New Jersey.

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