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May 14, 2013

TO: Chief School Administrators  
Charter School Lead Persons  
Educator Preparation Provider Leaders

FROM: Peter Shulman, Assistant Commissioner/Chief Talent Officer  
Division of Teacher and Leader Effectiveness

**SUBJECT: Office of Recruitment, Preparation, and Recognition Update**

Over the past several months, the Department of Education has provided frequent communications about AchieveNJ, the new evaluation and support system rolling out across the state this fall. Supporting implementation of this initiative is a top priority for the Department – but it is not our only priority. We continue to focus on several other initiatives with the ultimate goal of addressing every aspect of educator effectiveness – from recruiting great teachers and leaders through preparing them for success, evaluating and supporting them in a meaningful way, recognizing their accomplishments, and using lessons learned to inform policy decisions.

I write to you today with an update on another critical element of this work. Recognizing the need to better coordinate all elements of educator effectiveness, we created the Office of Recruitment, Preparation, and Recognition (RPR) in August 2012 to lead policy development and State support in these areas. The goal of this work is to ensure that every student, school, and district will have access to well-trained, effective educators that meet the particular needs of their local context. To do this, we must attract and retain excellent educators in New Jersey, ensure they are prepared to be effective on their first day on the job, and recognize their contributions to our students and to the profession.

Specifically, we aim to:

- Increase the bar for entry into the education profession while preserving flexibility for candidates/programs;
- Eliminate overly restrictive policies that detract effective educators from coming to or staying in New Jersey;
- Support Regional Achievement Centers (RACs) and districts state-wide in developing strong recruitment and selection systems to attract and retain highly effective teachers and leaders;

- Develop data collection, analysis, and reporting systems to track and demonstrate connections between preparation programs and educator effectiveness, ultimately ensuring that preparation programs are meeting the needs of schools and districts across the state; and
- Utilize recognition programs and policies to honor and retain highly effective educators.

Our focus on **recruitment** includes analyzing current employment and retention policies and opportunities for improvement across the state. We will develop recommendations for pursuing additional principal pipelines or expanding existing ones, as well as policies that allow and encourage a robust, diverse pool of educators to come to and stay in New Jersey and to continuously improve their practice. We also aim to provide more effective and efficient resources for those hiring educators.

To improve **preparation** policies, we intend to propose regulations to increase the bar for entry to the teaching profession in New Jersey. In addition, we are developing a report card to provide Educator Preparation Providers (EPPs) with a snapshot of performance data, including information on teacher certification area and employment, placement, retention, and evaluation outcomes for EPP graduates. We also seek to enhance our current approval processes for preparation programs and to determine how the state can better support these programs.

Our work on educator **recognition** will continue to focus on aligning educator evaluation and support systems with opportunities for acknowledgment and appreciation. As educators are recognized through a variety of national and state programs each year, **we will continue to keep clear lines of communication open with these educators in order to inform them of and seek their participation in statewide and national initiatives.** We also intend to implement a statewide effort to highlight all of the many contributions effective educators make to their students, schools, and communities.

### **National Momentum for Examining Recruitment and Preparation**

Similar to the national momentum for improving educator evaluation systems, several initiatives and research reports have influenced our work around educator recruitment and preparation. Over the last several years, the federal government, states, and national organizations have all taken steps to increase entry and certification standards for education professions. For example:

- In September 2011, the United States Department of Education published the report [\*Our Future, Our Teachers\*](#), calling for states to improve teacher recruitment and preparation, with specific emphasis on collecting data on preparation program effectiveness and holding programs accountable for results.
- In late 2012, the Council of Chief State School Officers published [\*Our Responsibility, Our Promise: Transforming Educator Preparation and Entry into the Profession\*](#), calling for states to increase licensure requirements and utilize stronger program approval and accountability measures for educator preparation providers.

- In early 2013, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) proposed [new accreditation standards](#) for teacher preparation providers, which include the use of student achievement data for accreditation and call for higher entry requirements.
- Across the country, states, organizations, and higher education institutions have begun developing and piloting innovative performance assessments that measure teacher competency prior to entering the classroom, providing additional data on candidate-readiness.

In New Jersey, we strive to provide the best possible preparation to our educators so they can provide the best possible education to our students. The context and examples found in these national findings and activities continue to drive us to improve our work as a state.

### **Collaboration with New Jersey Educators, Stakeholders, and National Partners**

Our goal in developing and improving policies to drive teacher and leader effectiveness is always to work directly with educators throughout the process. While we recognize the importance of national research and examples, we also know that New Jersey has unique challenges and opportunities. Therefore, we have been working closely with several partners – both local and national – to address our recruitment, preparation, and recognition initiatives:

- In January 2013, we first convened the Educator Preparation Working Group to help guide our proposed policies around this important topic. This group includes a variety of stakeholders representing traditional and alternate route preparation programs, representatives of the New Jersey Education Association and New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association, and other stakeholders. Monthly meetings allow the group to provide input and feedback on our initiatives and developing regulatory proposals.
- In April, we conducted sessions to share information about our recruitment, preparation, and retention work with the New Jersey Teacher Advisory Panels. We engaged with these groups of teachers about specific needs and opportunities for ensuring all educators are positioned to succeed.
- We are in regular contact with the New Jersey Association of Colleges for Teacher Education to ensure we communicate and work in partnership toward our common goals.
- We have also been collaborating with other states to understand their policy choices and inform us of different ways to accomplish similar objectives. Earlier this month, we convened representatives from several neighboring states to discuss common goals and different policy approaches. We will continue to follow their work to understand the challenges, opportunities, and lessons learned.

As we continue to work to ensure all of our students have an effective teacher in front of their classroom, we look forward to ongoing collaboration with educators and other community members across New Jersey.

In the coming weeks, we will launch an updated Office of Recruitment, Preparation, and Recognition website with more information about this work. We welcome your feedback and questions, and invite you to contact us at [rpr@doe.state.nj.us](mailto:rpr@doe.state.nj.us).

**PS/MD 51413 ORPR Update Memo.doc**

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