

AchieveNJ in 2016-17 and Beyond

Background

AchieveNJ, New Jersey’s educator evaluation and support system, has been used throughout the state for the past three years. In that time, districts have been better able to identify their best educators and those who need more support. The quality of discourse around teaching and learning has improved and the use of classroom data to improve instruction has increased significantly in this time. As with any new initiative however, there is a learning process for everyone concerned and the Department has gathered large amounts of information from educators across the state about some of the challenges and concerns surrounding AchieveNJ and the quality of its implementation.

The changes to AchieveNJ for 2016-17 outlined below are a result of listening to and learning from hundreds of educators and educational groups. These changes seek to clarify, align and simplify some of the state’s evaluation rules with the aim of increasing district flexibility and promoting innovation in order to enhance educator effectiveness and increase student achievement. A PowerPoint providing an overview of these changes as well as reminders and resources for 2016-17, can be found [here](#).

Change 1

Streamlined Minimum Teacher Observation Requirements

Educators across the state have noted that there is often too much time spent on scheduling, logistics, and paperwork associated with observations rather than on the high-value activities associated with evaluation and support such as providing feedback during conferences, supporting PLCs and other collaborative teams, and working more intensively with new and struggling teachers.

Teacher Status	Minimum Observations (at least 20 minutes each)
Non-tenured	3
Tenured	2
Corrective Action Plan	Plus One

By simplifying minimum observation requirements as shown in the box to the right, school districts will have increased flexibility to focus more on these high-value activities. These activities include face-to-face post-observation conferences with all teachers. Previously, if agreed to by the tenured teacher, an administrator could choose to hold post-observation conferences in writing. However, as the value of meaningful post-observation conferences has been well-established, all tenured teachers must now receive at least one in-person conference; this continues as a requirement for all observations for all non-tenured teachers and those on Corrective Action Plans.

Change 2

Flexible Option for Evaluating Highly Effective Teachers

Educators have consistently requested that the Department provide flexibility for districts wishing to differentiate evaluation for teachers who have demonstrated excellent practice. In response to these requests, over the past year, the Department explored options for Highly Effective teachers through a 16-district pilot. The feedback from administrators and teachers participating in this pilot has been overwhelmingly positive. Participating teachers agree that the Reflective Practice Protocol they piloted provides excellent information and support for helping them improve their practice even further. The Department is excited to offer guidance and support to any New Jersey district wishing to adopt one of the optional approaches on a Commissioner-approved list. With mutual agreement

This process [for evaluating highly effective teachers] has allowed me to make the transition [to a student-centered classroom] even more effective because I am soliciting feedback from my students and connecting it to my observations and what I witness to change instruction.

Susan Panasuk, Teacher, Wall

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- Reflective Practice Protocol
- Coaching a clinical intern
- Participating in the National Board Certification process

For the 2016-17 school year, only tenured teachers rated Highly Effective on their most recent summative evaluation may use this option as a replacement for one of their required standard observations. However, the option is available for any teacher if applied *in addition* to the minimum required observations for those teachers.

Change 3

Aligned Corrective Action Plan (CAP), Professional Development Plan (PDP) and Student Growth Objective (SGO) Deadlines – October 31

Educators have reported that the current deadlines for developing or finalizing PDPs and CAPs are too tight. For SGO development, the Department specifically set an October 31 deadline recognizing that teachers need to gather baseline information about their students prior to setting meaningful goals for them. The same is also true for teachers and their own professional growth. Therefore, beginning in 2016-17, PDPs that may be modified throughout the year as needed and must be annually updated by October 31. Districts may complete this process before the new deadline, but the additional time provides the opportunity to collect the best and most appropriate information prior to setting goals. **For CAPs, while the Department’s proposed date for completion going forward is October 31, we recommend districts adhere to the current September 15 deadline for implementing a CAP for staff rated less than effective in the 2015-16 school year.**¹

Change 4

Aligned Administrator SGO Training and District SGO Policy

Since 2013, AchieveNJ regulations have specified training and policy requirements in most but not all important areas of evaluation. Therefore, beginning in 2016-17, all administrators conducting evaluations must receive annual training on each component of the evaluation rubric including SGOs. Training on SGOs is currently only required for teachers. Closing this gap in districts that may not already be conducting this important training for administrators will increase shared expectations and collaboration to improve the quality of the SGO process. The Department has provided [guidance and recommendations](#) to assist districts in completing this training requirement, if they do not have a program in place currently.

Additionally, school districts are required to have policies regarding a variety of processes related to staff evaluation, such as conducting observations and conferences, preparing performance reports and preparing PDPs. These policies allow district expectations to be shared clearly and consistently with all district staff. To that end, beginning in 2016-17, if they do not currently have one in place, districts must develop a policy for developing and scoring SGOs. Information about SGOs can be found on the Office of Evaluation’s [web page](#).

Change 5

More Flexible Principal Evaluation

In keeping with the Department’s commitment to continuous improvement, we continue to explore the successes and challenges associated with principal evaluation. The Evaluation Leadership Rubric, currently weighted at 20 percent of the evaluation for principals, APs and VPs, was initially designed to highlight the roles and responsibilities of leaders implementing a new evaluation system. However, principals and their supervisors have shared concerns that this rubric may not provide the same value as it did in the initial years of AchieveNJ implementation, when administrators were familiarizing themselves with the requirements of the new system. Conversely, there are leaders who continue to find this rubric extremely valuable for the growth of their principals. Recognizing the breadth of differences among districts in New Jersey, and in order to provide

¹ Teachers hired after October 1 must have a PDP in place within 25 working days of their date of hire. Teachers receiving a summative evaluation score of Ineffective or Partially Effective after October 1 must have a CAP in place within 25 working days of receipt of the score.

flexibility in evaluation procedures, the Department is making the use of the Evaluation Leadership Rubric optional. School districts continuing to use this rubric will combine scores on the Evaluation Leadership Rubric with those on their principal practice instrument to generate a principal practice score. Districts have discretion in determining the appropriate weight of the [Evaluation Leadership Rubric component](#) and will inform the Department if it is using the rubric on the evaluation survey.

Other Changes

Most of the additional and minor changes in the table below reflect the Department’s response to feedback from educators requesting more clarity regarding existing evaluation rules particularly CAPs, observations, and co-observations.

Current	Change	Rationale
If a co-observation is conducted, the observation counts as one of the teacher’s required observations.	A co-observation may count as a teacher’s observation. If used as an observation, the final observation score is determined by the teacher’s designated supervisor .	Clarifies that co-observations are meant to be training activities for administrators and, as such, do not necessarily have to be used for the evaluation of a teacher. Further clarifies who is responsible for determining the score assigned to the teacher.
A co-observation may fulfill the requirement of multiple observers.	A co-observation may not fulfill the requirement of multiple observers.	Clarifies that co-observations are for training administrators and multiple observers are for enhancing the observation process for teachers.
Multiple observers are required for all non-tenured teachers and those on CAPs	Multiple observers are not required in districts that employ only one administrator .	Relieves undue burden on districts that employ only one administrator.
The content of a Corrective Action Plan may not be modified.	CAPs may be updated to reflect changes in progress, position or role.	Clarifies that CAP goals may be adjusted as deemed necessary by supervisor.
Observations may be conducted prior to a post-observation conference occurring for the prior observation.	The post-observation conference must be held prior to further evaluative observations.	Clarifies that an educator should receive feedback on their practice and have a chance to reflect upon and take action on that feedback prior to being observed again.
Observations may occur prior to a CAP being put in place.	Observations may not occur between receipt of summative score and implementation of a CAP .	Clarifies that an evaluative observation may not occur until after the supports associated with a CAP are put into place.
Districts may or may not have student data distribution policies.	Districts must have policies and procedures in place for prompt distribution of state student assessment data to appropriate teaching staff members	Ensure that teachers promptly receive information, so that it can inform instructional practice, student goals, SGOs and PDPs.
DEACs last required year is 2016-17.	DEACs will continue to be required through 2017-18 school year.	Provides extra time for the Department to conduct research to determine whether a DEAC should continue as a requirement.

For more information about any of the changes outlined in this document, or for contact information, please see the [AchieveNJ website](#).