

## AchieveNJ: Evaluating Educational Services Staff, Counselors, and Other Specialists

While a number of educators in public schools are not classroom teachers, they still play very important roles in the overall educational development of students. These educators provide academic and personal counseling, serve on Child Study Teams, and support athletic programs. Their roles include library/media specialists, school nurses, school psychologists, school social workers, occupational therapists, in addition to many other positions important to our state's schoolchildren. Together, these roles constitute nearly 20% of certificated educators. All New Jersey students deserve to attend schools with high-quality professionals serving in these positions, and all of these professionals deserve meaningful opportunities for growth.

### Impact of TEACHNJ Act

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On August 6, 2012, Governor Christie signed into law the [TEACHNJ Act](#), which requires implementation of new educator evaluation systems beginning in 2013-14. Districts must comply with elements of TEACHNJ – as well as other statutory requirements – that apply to this group, including:

- Four-year timeline to tenure;
- Three observations for non-tenured staff members in these roles;
- Four rating categories: Highly Effective, Effective, Partially Effective, Ineffective;
- Individualized professional development planning;
- Corrective Action Plans for teaching staff members rated Partially Effective or Ineffective; and
- Efficient and fair arbitration process for tenure revocation.

In fulfilling its responsibility to implement the TEACHNJ Act, the New Jersey Department of Education introduced proposed regulations framing the new evaluation system on March 6, 2013. The new state evaluation program – [AchieveNJ](#) – is designed to recognize those who excel, identify those who need additional support, and provide meaningful feedback and professional development to help every educational professional grow in their position.

### Evaluation in 2013-14

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In reviewing evaluation policy options for educational services staff, counselors, and other specialists, the Department considered the following:

- Roles such as these have varied job descriptions in districts across the state, which makes it difficult to create common evaluation practice instruments. Such differences in responsibilities might even require different components in evaluation frameworks.
- While a tremendous amount of research has been devoted to teacher and principal effectiveness, studies concerning educational services staff and other specialists are not as substantial.

After weighing these considerations, the Department has adopted the following positions regarding evaluation of these varied educational roles:

- **2013-14: Districts will be granted considerable latitude in evaluating staff members in these roles.** Districts can choose to continue existing practice, adopt or adapt their selected teaching or principal practice instruments, or create their own instrument – but will need to meet the statutory requirements listed above.
- Moving forward, the Department pledges to:
  - Identify informal pilots in 2013-14, provide support, and share lessons learned;
  - Identify and share best practices from other states and large districts;
  - Partner with stakeholder organizations such as the New Jersey School Counselor Association and the New Jersey Speech-Language-Hearing Association in the development of evaluation recommendations;
  - Make resources available through web site links, broadcast memos, and other communications; and
  - Consider possible additions to regulations for 2014-15 or future years.

## Recommendation: Multiple Measures

Though the Department is providing wide latitude to districts in this area of evaluation, we offer one approach to districts that mirrors the evaluation of classroom teachers in its use of multiple measures of performance. These measures would include components of both professional practice and growth objectives as depicted below:



### Practice Score

A practice score would be determined by utilizing a district-adopted rubric. Links to a variety of rubrics for educational services staff and other positions are posted on the Department's [evaluation web site](#). Below, for example, is a component of the Hillsborough (FL) County rubric for library media specialists:

**Performance Level: Lowest to Highest**

<p>Component: <b><i>Demonstrating Knowledge of Skills and Responsibilities of the Library</i></b></p>	<p>The library media specialist demonstrates limited understanding of best practice elements including a research model, digital literacy, and/or knowledge of population appropriate literature. LMS may not effectively connect patrons with appropriate materials. LMS may not stay current in best practice elements.</p>	<p>The library media specialist demonstrates a basic understanding of some best practice elements including a research model, digital literacy, and/or knowledge of population-appropriate literature. LMS may have a rudimentary understanding of how to connect patrons with appropriate materials. LMS may attend mandatory meetings and trainings to stay current in best practice elements.</p>	<p>The library media specialist demonstrates an understanding of best practice elements including a research model, digital literacy, and knowledge of population appropriate literature. LMS understands how to connect patrons with appropriate materials. LMS actively seeks to stay current in areas of best practice elements.</p>	<p>The library media specialist regularly demonstrates knowledge of multiple best practices, trends in research, digital literacy, and knowledge of population-appropriate literature. LMS applies best practice knowledge when developing programs, ordering materials, and providing stakeholder assistance in the media center. LMS actively seeks to stay current in multiple areas of best practice elements.</p>
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Example approach: Library Media Specialist / Hillsborough County (FL) Schools  
[http://communication.sdhc.k12.fl.us/EETHome/Rubrics/MediaRubricfinal\\_8\\_2012.pdf](http://communication.sdhc.k12.fl.us/EETHome/Rubrics/MediaRubricfinal_8_2012.pdf)

## Growth Objectives

Staff members serving in educational services and other specialist positions might also create growth objectives, such as the example below, for a library/media specialist:

*Sixth grade students will demonstrate proficiency on a district-developed, age-appropriate assessment of knowledge in utilizing the school's media center and other information resources.*

Target Score		Number of students demonstrating significant growth in utilizing media center and other information resources as measured by locally-developed assessments administered at start and end of school year.			
#	%	Highly Effective	Effective	Partially Effective	Ineffective
64 of 80	80	80-71 students	70-60	59-50	<50

## Summative Rating:

This overall evaluation score, under this suggested approach, would combine the multiple measures of educator practice and student growth, earning a summative rating of Highly Effective, Effective, Partially Effective, or Ineffective. Staff members in these roles who are rated Ineffective or Partially Effective work with their principals to create a Corrective Action Plan with targeted professional development for the subsequent year.

## The Opportunity

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After years of research, piloting, and policy development, we are moving as a state from compliance-based, low-impact, and mostly perfunctory evaluations to focus on educators as career professionals who receive meaningful feedback and opportunities for growth. The Department looks forward to learning from districts as you develop innovative ways to evaluate your Educational Services Staff, Counselors, and Other Specialists.

You can learn more about the new system and share your feedback by:

- Contacting your school or district leadership or District Evaluation Advisory Committee,
- Visiting the **AchieveNJ** website at [www.nj.gov/education/AchieveNJ](http://www.nj.gov/education/AchieveNJ),
- E-mailing [educatorevaluation@doe.state.nj.us](mailto:educatorevaluation@doe.state.nj.us),
- Or calling the **AchieveNJ** Help Line at 609-777-3788.