

Family and Community Circle



ISSUE 01/APRIL 2013

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION NEWSLETTER

The AchieveNJ Teacher and Principal Evaluation System

To help keep you informed, here is an update on the implementation of our statewide educator evaluation system – **AchieveNJ**.

The statewide evaluation system is provided for in the Christie Administration's historic tenure reform law – the Teacher Effectiveness and Accountability for the Children of New Jersey (TEACHNJ) Act – which was passed unanimously by the Legislature and signed into law by Governor Christie on August 6, 2012. Our regulations, proposed on March 6, 2013 to the State Board of Education, outline the specific components of the multiple measures that must be included in the evaluation system all districts across the state are to implement beginning in the 2013-2014 school year. The new statewide system, known as **AchieveNJ**, will include four annual rating categories for teachers – Highly Effective, Effective, Partially Effective and Ineffective – based on multiple measures of evidence of improved student learning and observations of instructional practice.

The **AchieveNJ** evaluation and support

system is structured around several guiding principles:

1. Educator effectiveness can and should be measured to ensure our students have the best teachers in the classroom.
2. Evaluations should always be based on multiple measures that include both learning outcomes and effective practice.
3. Timely feedback and high-quality professional development, tied to evaluations, are essential to help educators improve.
4. Evaluation and support systems should be developed with significant input from educators.
5. Tenure and other forms of recognition should be based on effectiveness.

Below you will find a number of resources available to help facilitate understanding of the evaluation system. As department staff travel around the state to discuss this proposal, we welcome any questions or comments that you have. We encourage you to reach out to us at educatorevaluation@doe.state.nj.us.

RESOURCES

- **AchieveNJ** website: <http://www.nj.gov/education/AchieveNJ/>
- **AchieveNJ** resources: <http://www.nj.gov/education/AchieveNJ/resources/OutreachMaterials.pdf>
- **AchieveNJ** Overview PPT: <http://www.nj.gov/education/AchieveNJ/intro/overview.pdf>
- **AchieveNJ** Guide: <http://www.nj.gov/education/AchieveNJ/intro/guide.pdf>
- **AchieveNJ** for Teachers: <http://www.nj.gov/education/AchieveNJ/intro/1PagerTeachers.pdf>
- **AchieveNJ** for Principals: <http://www.nj.gov/education/AchieveNJ/intro/1PagerPrincipals.pdf>
- FAQs: http://www.nj.gov/education/genfo/faq/faq_eval.shtml



Keeping New Jersey's Schools Safe

After the tragedy at Newtown, schools across the country are looking at their safety and security procedures and making adjustments. While New Jersey has security requirements as strict as any other state in the nation, we still see that there is room to strengthen what we already do. Schools in the state are required by NJ STATUTE 18A:41-1 to conduct drills for each of the following situations a minimum of two times per year: active shooter, evacuation, bomb threat and lockdown. This is in addition to a fire alarm drill that must be conducted every month.

Schools have been performing security drills for several years now, but what is new is the fact that now state officials will start conducting unannounced drill spot checks in selected districts in order to ensure that proper steps are being followed. While visiting schools and evaluating drills, security teams will run through a checklist that addresses a series of questions. Do people know what they are doing? Are they moving with a sense of urgency? Are the doors locked? Was it all done in a timely fashion? Besides the spot checks, refresher courses will be held across the state this spring for school administrators. Guidance for schools around varying the time of day for the drills and conducting drills with neighboring schools will also be provided. You can find more information about security drills and the state regulations at: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/schools/security/drill/>

FAMILY and COMMUNITY CIRCLE

Common Core Interview with Dr. Tracey Severns, Chief Academic Officer



What is the difference between the new Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and what we have now? Why do we need to change?

For years, many people complained that NJ Core Curriculum Content Standards were an “inch deep and a mile wide.” They were very broad in their application and did not provide the opportunity to focus on critical outcomes like the ability to read, write and solve problems at a high level of complexity. The internationally benchmarked CCSS provide a series of challenging learning outcomes for K – 12th grade, intended to graduate all students college and career ready. In addition to mathematics and English language arts (ELA), the Common Core State Standards include literacy standards in science, social studies and technical subjects.

What is the timeline for transition to the CCSS?

The CCSS were adopted by NJ in June of 2010. Following adoption, districts were expected to align their standards, instruction and assessment to the new standards. A total of forty-six states, and DC, have now adopted the standards.

How will testing work with the CCSS?

In the spring, the NJASK assessments will be aligned to the CCSS in grades 3 – 8 in ELA, and 3 – 5 Math. The following spring (2014), NJASK will fully be aligned to the CCSS. In school year 2014 – 15, NJ will see a full shift to the new Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) assessments. See www.parcconline.org for more information.

How can parents and families best prepare for the transition? How can they know what their child is expected to learn at each grade level?

Parents/guardians can best support their children by familiarizing themselves with resources available through organizations like NJPTA, Council for Great City Schools and others [see resources provided at end of interview]. These parent resources provide common core “look fors.” If I’m a parent, I can see what my child is being asked to do and determine whether it is in line with their respective grade level target.

The common core places a great deal of emphasis on students’ ability to produce certain outcomes independently and on-demand. One of the things parents can do to support this is provide students opportunities to read and complete challenging tasks on their own. Rather than becoming directly involved in “doing the work” parents are encouraged to give less direction and use more questions – What did the directions ask you to do? What have you tried so far? What do you think you should do next?

How can parents partner with their child’s teacher to ensure they are mastering the standards?

Parents/guardians can start by reviewing the work their child brings home and determining whether it is aligned to the grade level expectations for their child. If it isn’t, at a parent conference or back-to-school night, talk with the teacher to find out where they’re

going next. Ask how the work being done in the classroom and for homework supports the expectations for their child’s grade level. In addition, ask how they can support the child at home. For example, should their child be reading more? The end goal is to be able to structure home study time for students to practice and apply what they’re doing in school.

What if parents don’t feel that their teacher is teaching to the CCSS?

The best course of action is to have an open dialogue with the teacher. Ask the teacher about how the work being done in class and at home is being aligned to the standards. If parents aren’t getting enough information, they may wish to speak to the principal or a district supervisor of curriculum.

It’s very important to remember that the transition to CCSS is challenging. We all have to be patient and persistent in moving toward the place where we are fully implementing CCSS in classrooms. Across the state, teachers are working diligently to understand CCSS and what they should look like in the classroom. In addition, district and building leaders are working to select and provide resources to get us there. Everyone is working hard to move toward these standards and prepare students to achieve the outcomes of the standards.

What are some good resources out there for parents to understand more?

- National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) – a grade-by-grade Parent Guide to students’ success on the CCSS (Available in English and Spanish)
<http://pta.org/parents/content.cfm?ItemNumber=2583>
- Council of Chief State School Officers’ (CCSSO) Assessing the Common Core and Students with Disabilities – a PowerPoint on steps to take to ensure that students with disabilities benefit from the Common Core Standards
<http://ccsso.confex.com/ccsso/2010/webprogram/Presentation/Session1959/Assessing%20the%20Common%20Core%20and%20Students%20with%20Disabilities.pdf>
- Council of the Great City Schools – Parent Roadmaps to the Common Core Standards (ELA and Math). Provides guidance to parents about what their children will be learning and how they can support that learning in grades K-8.
<http://cgcs.schoolwires.net/domain/36>
- Special Educators Look to Tie IEPs to Common Core – an article that discusses aligning students’ individualized education programs (IEPs) to the Common Core State Standards
http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2010/12/27/15iep_ep.h30.html?tkn=WNSFLAt7ZNSAnysIPdod17CvF4VQAL38BCK&intc=es
- Supporting Struggling Readers with Evidence-Based Practices – a website that provides resources that focus on providing explicit reading & language arts instruction for all students
<http://www.calstat.org/readingmessages.html>

FAMILY and COMMUNITY CIRCLE

Career & Technical Education in New Jersey – Addressing Current and Future Needs

Over the past decade, Career and Technical Education (CTE), formerly known as Vocational Education, has adapted to address our changing economy and the educational needs of students. This is more than just a change in name; it signifies CTE's evolution to provide opportunities for all students in college and a wide variety of career choices. The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 require states to provide rigorous opportunities for students that include academic and technical skills to prepare students for success in high-wage, high-skill or high-demand careers.

This chart reflects the shift in philosophy from a purely vocational approach to one that prepares students for both college and career:

Vocational Education	Career Technical Education
For a FEW Students	For ALL Students
For a Few "Jobs"	For All "Careers"
6 to 7 Program Areas	16 Career Clusters with 79 Career Pathways
"In lieu of" Academics	Integrates Academics
Secondary vs. Post-Secondary	Secondary w/Post-Secondary (i.e. dual credit)

Today's CTE programs prepare students to be college AND career ready, and these programs are offered at comprehensive high schools and county vocational schools. There are multiple options for students who elect to participate in CTE programs.

CTE students in current programs, such as pre-engineering, law and public safety, business management, visual arts, and health occupations, are engaged in academic and technical coursework and may earn credentials and/or college credit while in high school, preparing them for career success. Students also have opportunities to engage directly with business and industry in structured learning experiences which may result in employment and apprenticeship opportunities.

Currently, there are over 91,000 secondary students enrolled in CTE programs at 124 comprehensive high schools and 21 county vocational school districts in New Jersey. CTE programs are organized by 16 career clusters encompassing 79 career pathways. The career clusters of Business Management and Administration, and Arts, A/V Technology and Communications currently have the largest enrollment. In the 2011-2012 school year, 5,104 CTE students earned college credit while in high school with the majority of credits earned in Health Science, Business Management and Administration, and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

To learn more about CTE programs in New Jersey, please visit <http://www.nj.gov/education/cte/>. Parents and students should also visit their school guidance and counseling office to explore opportunities that exist in their district and county.

Keeping Your Child Focused as the School Year Draws to a Close

By Dr. Felecia Nace, Education Specialist,
Office of Strategic Communications and Partnerships

With springtime fast approaching, how do parents keep children interested in their studies and on task? After winter gives way to spring, and the standardized tests have been completed, many students will begin to feel that school is unofficially "finished" for the year. However, many valuable hours of learning lie ahead as students continue to prepare themselves for the next grade level. In fact, this is a great time for parents to begin taking a second look at the adopted Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and Model Curriculum which can

be found here: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/sca/>

The CCSS act as a valuable guide to parents by providing an overview of what will be expected of their child as they enter a new grade. Families will also be keenly aware of what their child should be learning in the present grade. If your child has weaknesses or strengths in specific subject areas, the next few months present the perfect time to plan how to move your child forward. Work with your child's teachers to come up with a plan for how your child will address weaknesses, and develop strengths, now and over the summer months. You want to make sure your child enters the next grade on solid ground.

Here are some tips to guide your child through the next few months:

- Request to review your child's work folders for each class. Be sure to read teacher comments in chronological order, starting with those assignments dated in September. This will give you an idea of your child's progress, strengths, and challenges in each subject area.

It's that Time Again: End of Year Testing

Created by Dr. Felecia Nace, Education Specialist,
Office of Strategic Communications and Partnerships

Whether your child will be participating in the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK) or the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA), testing can either be a stressful experience or a pleasant one for children. Much of how your child copes with testing will depend on his/her comfort level going into the exam. Parents can play a major role in relieving your child's stress by making sure they are prepared to meet the challenges of the test. You should talk to your child's teachers to find out what you can do at home to best prepare for specific types of questions and problems your child might encounter on a particular test. Ask teachers to share some sample test questions with you. It would also be helpful if parents conducted timed tests at home with the teacher's guidance.

Many of us can remember being tested in elementary, middle and high school, and we can recall how much pressure we felt when the clock started at the beginning of each testing section. Although students have been preparing for the end of the year tests for weeks now, a little assistance from parents will go a long way. When parents help their children prepare for tests, children are reminded that family members are their biggest fans and support system. Here are some additional tips that can help make testing a more comfortable experience for your child:

- Find out from your child's school which subjects will be tested. Then, review vocabulary and topics for those subjects with your child. Try to make the time you spend reviewing topics and vocabulary relaxed and fun. For example, when reviewing vocabulary, you may include other siblings and create a family game. When possible, let your children decide/create the game.

- Timed testing is also an extremely important part of preparation. Again, work closely with the school and ask for sample test preparation questions, and timed practice materials, that you can review with your child.

- Make sure your child gets to bed early the night before the test. We all know that a good night's sleep is a great way to start any day.

- On the day of the test, make sure your child wears comfortable clothing, and has a nutritious breakfast. Before your child leaves for school, tell him/her that you have confidence that he/she will do well on the test. No matter what age they are, saying this with a smile will help put children at ease as they head out the door.

For more information about the NJASK 2013 test, please visit:

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/assessment/es/njask/NJASK13.pdf>

For additional details about HSPA and other tests, including more about NJASK, please visit: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/assessment/>

Keeping Your Child Focused (continued from p. 3)

- As mentioned in the previous bullet, create a plan of action with the teacher and your child to move your child toward excellence in his/her present grade.
 - As you and the teacher work to shore up your child's skills before he/she exits the present grade, keep a journal of your child's progress. This creates an opportunity for you to compare notes with the teacher as your child moves closer to his/her academic goals.
 - A good pep talk can do wonders. Have a talk with your child about remaining focused over the next few months. As the weather changes and children begin to look forward to the summer months, you want to make sure that your child's primary focus remains on academic goals.
- Occasionally, children need gentle reminders to stay the course. Families not only provide the needed reminders to help children stay focused, but they also provide priceless support. School districts appreciate when families work together with teachers and principals to ensure that quality teaching and learning continues throughout the year. Parents have a great deal of influence regarding the success of children. How well a child completes the school year can determine a child's success the following year. The school year is far from over, and there is still much to be gained during the next few months. Along with your child's teachers, make every effort to make the most of the months

UPDATES and ANNOUNCEMENTS

Public Hearings on Anti-Bullying

Families are encouraged to attend! The New Jersey Anti-Bullying Task Force held two public hearings in March. The next one will be held in April from 7:00-8:30 p.m. at the location listed below. All members of the public are welcome to attend. Speakers will be allotted three minutes to share their remarks, and are asked to bring printed copies of their remarks to the hearing.

The public hearing scheduled in April is as follows:

- Thursday, April 11, 2013
Highland Regional High School, 450 Erial Road, Blackwood, NJ 08012
<http://www.bhprsd.org/highland>

The Anti-Bullying Task Force was established by the Legislature in March 2012 in order to provide guidance and support to New Jersey school districts on the implementation of the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights. For more information, please visit: <http://nj.gov/governor/news/news/552012/approved/20120424a.html>



Call for Nominations

The Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST) are the nation's highest honors for teachers of mathematics and science (including computer science). Awardees serve as models for their colleagues, inspiration to their communities, and leaders in the improvement of mathematics and science education. Since 1983, more than 4,200 teachers have been recognized for their contributions in the classroom and to their profession.

Presidential awardees receive a citation signed by the President of the United States, a trip for two to Washington D.C., professional development opportunities, and a \$10,000 award from the National Science Foundation.

If you know any great secondary (grades 7-12) mathematics and/or science teachers, please nominate them to join this prestigious network of professionals. The nomination form and additional info about the award can be found at www.paemst.org.

WHO CAN APPLY?

Secondary school teachers (grades 7-12) who have been nominated are eligible to apply

APPLICATION DEADLINE: May 1, 2013

Rutgers Day - Experience New Jersey's State University!

- Saturday, April 27, 2013
10 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Free Admission
Rain or Shine
Rutgers— Campuses in New Brunswick and Piscataway

Rutgers Day offers nearly 500 performances, tours, exhibits and hands-on activities on the university's flagship campus in New Brunswick and Piscataway. Last year, 75,000 visitors of all ages attended Rutgers Day to learn firsthand about the university's range of research and service and to enjoy perennial favorites, including **Ag Field Day, the Engineering Open House, the New Jersey Folk Festival and Zimmerli Family Day.**

For more information, visit <http://rutgersday.rutgers.edu>.

FAQ Frequently Asked Questions

Compiled by Cynthia Bucchi, Senior Management Assistant
Office of Strategic Communications & Partnerships

The Office of Strategic Communications & Partnerships is responsible for responding to questions from families and community members who write to "Ask DOE" and choose the topic "Other." Our Office routes questions to the appropriate program offices in order to provide families and community members the best possible customer service. We have compiled some of the recent frequently asked questions received from across the state. If you are interested in writing to "Ask DOE" please visit our web page at the following address:

<https://www.state.nj.us/education/parents/contact.htm>

Question: Are New Jersey schools required to hold school security drills?

Answer: As of November 1, 2010, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:41-1, every school in New Jersey is required to hold at least one fire drill and one school security drill each month within the school hours, including any summer months during which the school is open for instructional programs. During the academic year, schools are required to hold a minimum of two of each of the following security drills: Active shooter; Evacuation (non-fire); Bomb threat; and Lockdown.

Question: I am interested in enrolling my child in a different district than our resident district through the Interdistrict Public School Choice Program. To which districts can my child apply?

Answer: There are currently 110 operating choice districts that have been approved by the Commissioner to participate in the choice program. To find a choice district in your area, and to see a complete list of all choice districts in New Jersey, please visit our website: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/choice/districts/>.

Question: How does my child apply to a district's choice program?

Answer: The application cycle for the 2014-2015 school year will begin in Fall 2013. In September, contact the choice district to which you are interested in applying to obtain an application. Applications may be specific to the individual choice districts and must be obtained directly from them. Please visit the choice website for more detailed information on the application process: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/choice/>

Question: The route that the district provided for my child to get to school contains dangerous intersections, no sidewalks or crossing guards. How do you expect the children to walk this dangerous route?

Answer: Boards of education are not required by law to provide busing for students who live less than a remote distance from school, even for safety reasons. However, boards are permitted, at their own discretion and expense, to provide transportation for students who reside less than remote from school and may charge the student's parents or legal guardians for this service. Municipalities may also contract with boards of education for this service and charge the parents. This transportation service is called Subscription Busing.

Case law has long held that safety along public roadways and walkways is a municipal responsibility. It is for this reason that municipalities install sidewalks, traffic signals and signs, and paint crosswalks. Pursuant to section 40A:9-154.1 of New Jersey statute, school crossing guards are appointed by the municipality and are under the supervision of the chief of police or other chief law enforcement officer.

PARENT LEADERSHIP & ADVOCACY CONFERENCE - Saturday, April 20, 2013

Atlantic City Convention Center

For Information & Registration: <http://createchange2012.eventbrite.com/>