Excellent Educators for All Initiative

New Jersey's State Plan to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators (2015)

Revised draft pending U.S. Department of Education Review

Fall 2015

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Executive Summary

Background and Context

At the New Jersey Department of Education ("the Department"), we are deeply committed to attracting, developing, and retaining a world-class corps of educators. This involves creating policies and programs to support teachers and leaders throughout the entire professional lifecycle. This process starts with fully preparing strong candidates, recruiting those candidates into New Jersey school districts, supporting them as they grow and develop, and working to retain them within the profession and the state. Initiatives supporting these work streams also support the end goal of ensuring excellent educators are driving positive student outcomes in all New Jersey classrooms.

Although we are proud of New Jersey's consistent high performance on state and national metrics, we are keenly aware of achievement and opportunity gaps in the state and committed to addressing those gaps through initiatives such as the United States Department of Education (ED)'s Excellent Educators for All. To create this updated educator equity plan, we have examined the most current data available to inform the theory of action, key findings, likely root-causes, and strategies for addressing equity gaps. By embedding this work within the state education priorities already in place, we are confident that we can continue a cohesive and coordinated effort to support all educators as we promote college and career readiness for all students.

Theory of Action

Our theory of action for addressing educator equity recognizes identified gaps that exist and, in recognition of various data limitations described in this report, focuses on improving outcomes for all students in the near term. Concurrently, the Department will continue working to collect better data to inform a more differentiated future approach. We believe that a comprehensive, actionable plan will strengthen all districts and schools as opposed to strictly focusing on the redistribution of high-quality educators from low-need to high-need districts, schools, and/or classrooms. However, we recognize that specialized support must be allocated in areas with the highest need to close the pockets of inequity identified. Given this context, our three-prong theory of action emphasizes those state levers available for broad support:

1. The Department will continuously improve the quality of data that informs our understanding of equity gaps and aids New Jersey stakeholders (e.g. districts, schools, universities, etc.) in making strategic decisions to ensure equitable access to high-quality educators.
2. The Department will provide targeted support to districts with particular disparities to help them implement data-driven strategies with fidelity.
3. The Department will better support all novice teachers to enhance the overall quality of those teachers engaging with a large percentage of New Jersey students each day.

Stakeholder Engagement

Engagement with external stakeholders is essential to ensure that New Jersey's plan is comprehensive, sustainable, and likely to lead to significant progress in eliminating equity gaps. The Department has sought and will continue to ensure representative stakeholder groups are part of the process of ensuring all students have access to excellent educators. We have established the following approach for this engagement:

Step 1: Solicit Feedback on Federal Guidance

In an effort to gain a better understanding of how external stakeholders envisioned a plan for the Excellent Educators for All Initiative, the Department met with stakeholder groups to discuss ED's federal guidance, explain how state policies increase access to excellent educators for all students, and hear feedback about plan elements.

Step 2: Solicit Specific Strategy Support

Recognizing the value of various stakeholders' particular areas of expertise, we asked some groups to review specific section(s) of the Department's plan or policies. Some of this engagement started prior to the release of the Excellent Educators for All Initiative. Additional engagement began in December 2014 and will continue for the duration of implementation of select strategies and initiatives, as needed.

Step 3: Conduct Ongoing and Additional Outreach

The Department strongly believes in ensuring policy is aligned to the local context of a given district. Given the importance of ongoing engagement with stakeholders for the successful implementation of the Excellent Educators for All initiative, we intend to gain ongoing and additional input from national and state partners, including advocacy and civil rights groups.

Data Analysis

The data used in the development of this plan is derived from two primary sources: the Teacher Certification Information System (TCIS), which houses all certification related data for the state, and New Jersey Standards Measurement and Resource for Teaching (NJ SMART), which is the Department's system for collecting and managing district-reported student and staffing data. The Department reviewed the New Jersey Educator Equity Profile provided by ED, which informed the path of inquiry. However, the data reported here reflects the richer and more recent information that is available to the Department through NJ SMART.

As a first step in the development of this plan, the Department identified a series of measures in an effort to identify equity gaps related to inexperienced, unqualified, and out-of-field teachers. These metrics were chosen to document successes and challenges identified in the 2006 and 2009 equity plans. The Department calculated statewide equity gaps for each of the following student subgroups:

- Economic disadvantage
- Students with Disabilities
- English Language Learners (ELLs)
- All racial and ethnic subgroups

Gaps were measured using data from all public elementary and secondary schools in the state. As detailed throughout this plan, we used this data to create a theory of action; establish a root-cause analysis; identify aligned strategies for achieving objectives; and create plans for ongoing stakeholder engagement, ongoing monitoring, and support. In addition, we calculated district- and school-level equity gaps to ensure that resources were appropriately targeted to support districts. This plan details equity gaps in three key areas:

1. Qualification: Student assignment to teachers who are not Highly Qualified
2. Field: Student assignment to teachers who do not have appropriate endorsements
3. Experience: Student assignment to first-year and novice teachers (defined as having fewer than four years of experience with a given Local Education Agency)

Key Findings, Root-Cause Analysis, and Related Strategies

After conducting the data analysis and speaking with a variety of stakeholders, we hypothesize that a number of factors influence a district's supply of effective teachers and the extent to which certain students have access to these teachers. While we cannot pinpoint exact or exhaustive root-causes based upon a single data analysis on a subset of incomplete metrics, both the analysis conducted and stakeholder input further inform our strategic support and intervention efforts across the state.

The variance in likely root-causes contributing to equity gaps is great. Likely causes may include systemic issues outside of the current education system and many may be best addressed at the local level. Therefore, **in this analysis we identify and focus specifically on those likely root-causes where the Department can use state levers with fidelity to drive the greatest impact** for all New Jersey students.

Key Finding 1: Existing data supports that New Jersey has largely addressed the High Qualified Teacher (HQT) equity gap and the Department continues to improve teacher effectiveness data

- **Data Informing the Finding**
  In previous equity plans, the Department detailed clear strategies designed to address the gap in access to HQTs. Among the more prominent reforms was the creation, implementation, and monitoring of a system allowing teachers to demonstrate subject matter competency in order to meet HQT requirements. Concurrently, the Department made significant changes to certification requirements to ensure that all novice teachers would be highly qualified. As a result, our existing data indicates that HQT gaps have been nearly eliminated and the overall qualification level of New Jersey's teachers is definitively higher than it was prior to the implementation of previous equity plans.
- **Likely Root-Cause: Success in using data to address an equity gap**
  The Department has made significant progress in addressing the HQT equity gap by focusing district and Department efforts critically around HQT data. **However, while we are proud that the strategies put in place over the past nine years have positively impacted teacher quality as measured by HQT, we acknowledge that the HQT metric alone may not be sufficient for assessing teacher quality and associated gaps in the long term**. By pairing HQT data with teacher effectiveness data, we will have a much stronger picture of whether students have access to high quality instruction.
- **Likely Root-Cause: Small potential data quality issues**
  By definition, we would expect all teachers who are defined as HQT, an LEA self-reported measure, to be teaching in-field as well. However, as we note in Key Finding 2, there is a small but noteworthy equity gap in out-of-field placement, a Department-calculated metric. The discrepancy between the two numbers is very small but worth analyzing (approximately 3% of teachers across the state). Initial investigation has led the Department to pursue actions described below related to the reporting of out-of-field data. More investigation of HQT data is needed, but we believe that the discrepancies arise either from a handful of LEAs where developing high-quality data about staffing has been challenging; from small, nuanced data quality issues with the Department-calculated results in the matrix report (e.g. inaccurate social security matches,); or both.
- **Actions: Focus efforts to improve data quality and use in understanding teacher effectiveness**
  The Department continues to improve our data sources to ensure that all stakeholders have sufficient information to make critical human capital decisions, particularly as it relates to equitable access to effective educators.

- **Action 1A: Use improved evaluation structures to provide better data, feedback, and support**
- **Action 1B: Increase access to high-quality data on educator preparation providers**
- **Action 1C: Investigate potential data discrepancies with impacted districts**

Key Finding 2: Some inequity persists with placement of out-of-field teachers

- **Data Informing the Finding**
  For the 2013-14 school year, the Department identified 3,706 of New Jersey's 114,265 teachers (3.2%) as potentially working out of their field. A significant number of New Jersey students—more than one-fifth—are taught by at least one teacher who does not hold certification in the appropriate area. The student level data reveals a small but significant equity gap between racial and ethnic subgroups and along the lines of economic disadvantage. Deeper investigation into state out-of-field placement data has revealed that the entire Hispanic-white and economic disadvantage gap and three quarters of the black-white equity gap are driven by only 10 school districts.
- **Likely Root-Cause: Lack of awareness about, focus on, and/or ability to impact out-of-field placement in some districts**
  While some districts may not have full awareness of or the ability to focus on this issue, we believe some may also have trouble recruiting teachers with the correct credentials.
- **Likely Root-Cause: Lack of clarity around link between endorsement area and job duties and/or potential data quality issues**
  To better monitor and support the implementation of requirements that teachers achieve HQT status, the Department created a list of 144 job codes, each of which must be matched with one of five subcategories. This in itself has proven confusing for some districts, as in some cases job codes are not mutually exclusive. We have heard feedback in some cases that it is unclear which subjects or courses a teacher is eligible to provide instruction in relative to a given job code. In addition, we know from prior data investigation that some of the errors result from minor data quality issues, such as mismatched social security numbers or specialists inappropriately coded into teaching positions.
- **Actions: Ensure districts receive appropriate support, improve understanding of certification eligibility**
  Given the specific distribution of this equity gap in a small number of districts, the Department will use a differentiated approach to provide the right level of support locally. Addressing this issue in the districts with the most out-of-field teachers will help to eliminate the equity gaps. In fact, solving the out-of-field problem in these districts would result in the complete elimination of the statewide gap for Hispanic and economically disadvantaged students and a 75% reduction of the black-white equity gap. In addition, we will clarify the assignment of job titles as it relates to certification and teacher eligibility to instruct classes.
  - **Action 2A: Provide targeted support to 10 districts with most out-of-field teachers**
  - **Action 2B: Provide improved guidance for eligible job duties for each area of certification**
  - **Action 2C: Investigate potential data discrepancies with impacted districts**

Key Finding 3: High percentages of all students are frequently exposed to novice teachers

- **Data Informing the Finding**
  In the 2013-2014 school year, roughly one-third of New Jersey students had at least one teacher with no previous teaching experience, and nearly two-thirds (65.5%) were taught by novice

teachers (those teaching less than four years in a given district). In addition, qualitative findings from stakeholders indicate that some teachers are not adequately prepared to enter certain educational settings (including urban and special education settings). Given New Jersey's firm commitment to improving equitable access to educators for all students, and the correlation of experience to effectiveness, this analysis identified novice teacher preparation and support as an area in need of improvement.

- **Likely Root-Cause: Teacher turnover**
  Teacher turnover is one of the most likely reasons that a significant portion of New Jersey students are being taught by novice teachers. More investigation is necessary to understand which teachers are turning over and why. However, regardless of the type of teacher turnover we currently experience, we know that a significant portion of students will continue to be taught by novice teachers – and novice teachers need better support to effectively serve students from day one.
- **Actions: Support novice teachers through more robust and meaningful preparation, certification, and induction practices**
  Given that the majority of New Jersey students are taught by at least one novice teacher, one way to ensure all students have access to effective educators, particularly for historically disadvantaged subgroups, is to focus on improving all novice teachers and ensuring that they are prepared to enter a variety of educational settings. The Department is now undertaking a significant effort to do that.
  - **Action 3A. Raise the bar for novice teachers through preparation and certification**
  - **Action 3B. Improve induction support for novice teachers**

In addition to the actions described above for each of the three key findings, New Jersey has several structures in place to support targeted strategies at the district level. Every district currently has direct support provided by the state through three central mechanisms: County Offices of Education, Regional Achievement Centers (RACs), and the Office of School Intervention. While all districts have access to the supports of the County Offices of Education, the level of academic performance and fiscal solvency determines which mechanism is currently prescribed. The Division of Teacher and Leader Effectiveness will coordinate with other Department resources in considering strategies to address educator equity gaps at the local level.

Ongoing Monitoring, Public Reporting, and Continuous Improvement

The New Jersey Department of Education is committed to monitoring progress with the strategies being implemented to close identified equity gaps. We will continue to collect and analyze relevant data to access metrics with the goal of eliminating 50% of identified areas of inequity within three years and 90% within six years, with a focus on closing identified within-school gaps. We will assess the relevance of equity metrics to add or remove metrics, as needed, to ensure the analysis is reflective of New Jersey's needs. We will also follow federal requirements related to future updates of the Excellent Educators for All Initiative. For more information, see Section 6.2.

Fulfilling the Department's vision of ensuring that every child in New Jersey, regardless of birth circumstance, will graduate from high school college-and-career-ready will require ongoing support from internal and external stakeholders. This includes those serving our students in various roles inside and outside of the classroom. Thus, we will continue to assess the needs of our student communities on an ongoing basis and change this plan, as needed, to meet the overarching commitment within it – to ensure equitable access to effective educators for all students.

Section 1: Background

1.1 Vision and Context

The vision of the New Jersey Department of Education ("the Department") is that every child in New Jersey, regardless of birth circumstance, graduates from high school ready for college and career. The state continues to make great progress toward this goal, consistently ranking among the top three to four states on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the nation's report card. We have among the highest graduation rates in the country and are home to many extraordinary educators who diligently serve our students and families by working towards high academic standards.

At the same time, while many students are achieving at high levels across the state, more can be done to ensure all students receive the best possible education and that those who graduate with a New Jersey diploma are truly prepared for a successful future. The same NAEP assessment referenced above shows that New Jersey faces a significant achievement gap both between low and higher income students and between minority and white students. According to the College Board, less than half of New Jersey students who take the SAT meet the college readiness benchmark, the number mathematically shown to equate with likely success in college courses.[1] Many students who matriculate to community colleges in New Jersey need to take remedial courses. Additionally, too many of our schools in urban centers and economically disadvantaged communities have low graduation rates.[2]

Some may accept these failures as foregone conclusions, arguing that poverty prevents the achievement and/or opportunity gap from closing or that it should not be as great of a concern because New Jersey students of color are often outperforming students from similar racial and ethnic demographics in other states. We reject this argument. Instead, we believe that all students deserve an excellent education – and given that research points to educator quality as the most important in-school factor for student success, this effort starts with ensuring equitable access to an excellent educator.

We submit this plan in response to U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan's July 7, 2014, letter to State Education Agencies (SEAs), as augmented with additional guidance published by the United States Department of Education (ED) on November 10, 2014. The initial state plan for educator equity was outlined in the 2006 New Jersey Plan for Meeting the Highly Qualified Teacher Goal, which was updated in the 2009 New Jersey Teacher Equity Plan. We also outlined strategies to effect broader change in our Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Waiver Extension in 2014. The following report reflects the next phase in this important work, outlining the steps we will continue to take to ensure that all students in New Jersey have equitable access to excellent educators in an effort to close achievement and opportunity gaps moving forward.

1.2 State Role in Ensuring Access to Excellent Educators

As a state, we are deeply committed to attracting, developing, and retaining a world-class corps of educators. This involves creating policies and programs to support teachers and leaders throughout their entire lifecycle as educators, as shown in Figure 1. This process starts with fully preparing strong candidates, recruiting those candidates into New Jersey districts, supporting them as they grow and

[1] https://www.collegeboard.org/program-results/2014/new-jersey
[2] http://www.state.nj.us/education/data/grate/2014/

develop, and working to retain them within the profession and the state. Initiatives supporting these work streams support the end goal of ensuring excellent educators are driving positive student outcomes in all New Jersey classrooms.

Further, New Jersey has a proud tradition of local control and the Department strives to support district autonomy in executing the day-to-day work of educating students. As a part of this effort, the Department supports district leaders (such as central office administration) and higher education partners to ensure goals are met using appropriate interventions at the state and local levels. When guided by data, these collaborative efforts can drive greater student success.

Figure 1: The Educator Lifecycle

1.3 Theory of Action

As described in more detail in Section 5, our theory of action for addressing educator equity not only recognizes identified gaps that exist but also focuses on **improving outcomes for all students in the near term, while promoting the use of better data to inform a more differentiated future approach**. We believe that a **comprehensive, actionable plan will strengthen all districts and schools as opposed to strictly focusing on the redistribution of high-quality educators from low-need to high-need districts, schools, and/or classrooms**. However, as part of our broad approach, we recognize that **specialized support must be allocated in areas with the highest need to close the pockets of inequity identified**.

Given this context, our three-prong theory of action emphasizes those state levers available for broad support:

1. The Department will **continuously improve the quality of data** that informs our understanding of equity gaps and aids New Jersey stakeholders (e.g. districts, schools, universities, etc.) in making strategic decisions to ensure equitable access to high-quality educators.
2. The Department will **provide targeted support to districts with particular disparities** to help them implement data-driven strategies with fidelity.
3. The Department will **better support novice teachers** to enhance the overall quality of those teachers engaging with a large percentage of New Jersey students each day.

Section 2: Stakeholder Engagement

Across all of our initiatives to improve educator effectiveness, the Department aims to work closely with those most impacted to develop policies, promote best practices, and make adjustments based on direct feedback from implementation. Thus, we are committed to engaging internal and external stakeholders in an effort to create a cohesive, sustainable equity plan that meets the needs of New Jersey students. Understanding that addressing issues of inequity requires a Department-wide commitment, we generated awareness of this initiative across Department staff in the early stages of this work. In order to solidify our approach and vision, we reviewed data provided from ED as well as the 2006 and 2009 New Jersey equity plans as part of a broader analysis of state priorities and initiatives. The key findings, root-causes, and strategies described in this plan reflect a collaborative effort to use state levers to address inequities and ensure all New Jersey students have access to excellent educators.

Engagement with external stakeholders is essential to ensure that New Jersey's plan is comprehensive, sustainable, and likely to lead to significant progress in eliminating equity gaps. The Department has sought and will continue to ensure representative stakeholder groups are part of the process of ensuring all students have access to excellent educators. We have outlined the following multi-step approach for this engagement below. Through this approach, the Department has reached out to all required stakeholders as outlined in federal guidance.

Step 1: Solicit Feedback on Federal Guidance

In an effort to gain a better understanding of how external stakeholders envisioned a plan for the Excellent Educators for All Initiative, the Department met with stakeholder groups to discuss ED's federal guidance, explain how Department policies increase access to excellent educators for all students, and receive written feedback about plan elements. Following the recommendation to integrate stakeholder engagement for the Excellent Educators for All initiative with stakeholder engagement for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) waiver renewal process, the Department engaged several organizations participating on the Department's ESEA Advisory Council. See Figure 2 below for details.

The Department worked to provide information to these stakeholder groups as early in the process of plan development as possible, and received stakeholder feedback between February 2015 and May 2015. We also made a concerted effort to ensure information was made available in an understandable format and provided the option for auxiliary aids and services, upon request, in compliance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

Step 2: Solicit Specific Strategy Support

Recognizing the value of various stakeholders' particular areas of expertise, we asked some groups to review specific section(s) of the Department's plan or policies. Some of this engagement started prior to the release of the Excellent Educators for All Initiative. In particular, the Department had already conducted substantial stakeholder engagement related to AchieveNJ, New Jersey's educator evaluation system, and the re-adoption of regulations related to teacher preparation, certification, and professional development, including mentoring and induction. Additional engagement specific to the broader Excellent Educator for All Initiative began in December 2014 and will continue for the duration of implementation of select strategies and initiatives, as needed. See Figure 2 below for details.

Figure 2: Invited Stakeholders

Stakeholder Category	Stakeholders Invited to Participate	
	Step 1	Step 2
LEAs Represented	Woodbury School District Freehold Borough Public Schools Millville Public Schools Trenton Public Schools Passaic City Public Schools Jersey City Public Schools Berkeley Heights Public Schools North Brunswick Township School District Elysian Charter School Edison Township Public School District Logan Township School District Bernards Township School District Englewood Township Public School District Washington Township Public School District Vernon Township School District Tenafly School District Paul Robeson Charter	Delsea Regional School District Clearview Regional School District Phillipsburg School District Elizabeth Public Schools Monmouth County Vocational and Technical Schools Pemberton Township Schools Montgomery Township School District Jersey City Public Schools Logan Township School District North Hunterdon Regional High School Franklin Township Public Schools South Brunswick School District Hopatcong Borough Schools Woodstown-Pilesgrove Regional School District Gloucester Township Public Schools East Windsor Regional Schools Black Horse Pike Regional School Haddonfield Public Schools Berkeley Heights Public Schools North Brunswick Township School District Elysian Charter School Edison Township Public School District Logan Township School District Bernards Township School District Englewood Township Public School District Washington Township Public School District Vernon Township School District Tenafly School District Paul Robeson Charter
Teachers	American Federation of Teachers (AFT)-New Jersey Chapter New Jersey Education Association (NJEA) Representative Members of ESEA Committee Representative Members of State Professional Learning Committee (SPLC)	Representative Members of AchieveNJ Advisory Committee (ANJAC) Representative Members of Evaluation Pilot Advisory Committee (EPAC) Representative Members of ESEA Committee Representative Members of SPLC
Principals	New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association (NJPSA) Representative Members of ESEA Committee Representative Members SPLC	NJPSA Representative Members of ANJAC Representative Members of EPAC Representative Members of ESEA Committee Representative Members of SPLC
Pupil Services Personnel	NJEA AFT-New Jersey Chapter	New Jersey School Counselor Association (NJSCA) N.J. Joint Council of County Special Services School Districts State Special Education Advisory Council
Administrators	New Jersey Association of School Administrators (NJASA) Representative Members of ESEA Committee Representative Members of SPLC Great Schools of NJ, the Association of High Need District Superintendents	NJASA Representative Members of ANJAC Representative Members of EPAC Representative Members of ESEA Committee Representative Members of SPLC

Figure 2: Invited Stakeholders, Cont.

Stakeholder Category	Stakeholders Invited to Participate	
	Step 1	Step 2
Parents & School Boards	Representative Members of ESEA Committee Representative Members of SPLC New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA) New Jersey State Board of Education Statewide Parent Advocacy Network (SPAN)	Representative Members of ANJAC Representative Members of ESEA Committee Representative Members of SPLC New Jersey State Board of Education NJSBA
Community Based Organizations and Civil Rights Organizations	Partners for Each and Every Child (PEEC) Education Law Center Paterson Education Fund NJ NAACP Statewide Education Committee Abbott Leadership Institute The Latino Institute Urban League of Essex County Latino Action Network New Jersey Catholic Conference (Non-public Schools) Rutgers Community Leadership Center	Southern Regional Education Board Education Trust & Education Trust West Reform Support Network (RSN) Equitable Access Support Network (EASN) Center for Great Teachers and Leaders TNTP (formerly, The New Teacher Project) Advocates for Children NJ (ACNJ) State Bilingual Advisory Committee
Teacher Preparation Organizations	Representative Members of ESEA Committee Representative Members of SPLC	New Jersey Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (NJACTE) Directors across all NJ Certificate of Eligibility (CE) Educator Preparation Programs Field Placement Directors across NJ Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing (CEAS) Educator Preparation Programs State Program Approval Council (SPAC) Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE) Garden State Alliance for Strengthening Education (GSASE)
Business	New Jersey Business & Industry Association (NJBIA)	State Career and Technical Education Advisory Group
Other	Education Testing Center (ETS) Policy Evaluation & Research Center New Jersey Association of Personnel Services Administrators	Source4Teachers

Step 3: Conduct Ongoing and Additional Outreach

Given the importance of ongoing engagement with stakeholders for the successful implementation of the Excellent Educators for All initiative, we intend to gain ongoing and additional input from national and state partners, including advocacy and civil rights groups.

Section 3: Definitions of Key Terms

As required by ED, the Department has defined the series of terms listed in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Definitions of Key Terms

Term	Definition
Poor Students	Students who are eligible for Free and Reduced Price Lunch, identified as "economically disadvantaged" in New Jersey
Minority Students	Students of color, which include the following subgroups: Hispanic/Latino, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian, Black/African-American, Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian, and more than one race
Educators	Teachers[3]
Excellent Educators	Educators who are experienced, in-field, and qualified[4] who are fully able to support students in getting and remaining on track to graduate from high school ready for college or careers
Inexperienced Teachers	Educators who are first-year teachers or novice teachers
Novice Teachers	Teachers with fewer than four years of prior experience within a given LEA[5]
Unqualified Teachers	Educators who do not meet highly qualified (HQT) standards as reported by the LEA[6]
Out-of-Field Teachers	Educators who are teaching outside of their area of certification within the state as calculated by the NJDOE through the Matrix Report
Equity Gap	The difference between the rates at which students from economically disadvantaged (low-income) families, students of color, students with disabilities, or students with limited English proficiency are educated by excellent educators in comparison to students who are not members of those groups
Equitable Access	A situation in which students from low-income families and students of color are educated by excellent educators at rates that are at least equal to the rates at which other students are educated by excellent educators
Students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP)	Students identified as being in need of LEP services and/or a program including students being served in a language assistance program and students whose parents have refused language assistance program services, as reported by the district
Students with Disabilities	Students evaluated for special education eligibility and determined eligible as reported by the district (i.e., students with Individual Education Plans)
Root-Cause	The fundamental reason for the occurrence of a problem or any related factor[7]

[3] The state is currently defining educators as "teachers" as this subgroup of educators is the focus of ESEA section 1111(b)(8)(C) and is documented in research as the most important factor on student achievement, as opposed to other school-based instructional staff. In future years, the state intends to monitor gaps in equitable access to effective and/or highly effective school leadership as the quality of leadership evaluation data improves.

[4] We believe experience and qualifications often provide a foundation for excellence in teaching and, thus, they factor into this analysis. As the evaluation and other data systems in New Jersey mature, the Department may expand the definition to include evaluation ratings of effective or higher or other emerging indicators.

[5] Novice teachers may include those individuals working towards teaching certifications (i.e., teacher candidates).

[6] Complete listing of HQT requirements for New Jersey: http://www.state.nj.us/education/educators/license/nclb/.

Section 4: Data Analysis

4.1 Data Sources

The data used in the development of this plan is derived from two primary sources: the Teacher Certification Information System (TCIS), which houses all certification related data for the state, and New Jersey Standards Measurement and Resource for Teaching (NJ SMART), which is the Department's system for collecting and managing district-reported student and staffing data. The Department reviewed the New Jersey Educator Equity Profile provided by ED, which informed the path of inquiry. However, the data reported here reflects the richer and more recent information that is available to the Department through NJ SMART.

In school year 2011-12, NJ SMART began collecting the Course Roster Submission, which includes the data necessary to create a teacher-student data link. This link has revolutionized the Department's ability to identify equity gaps and provide targeted supports. Previous equity reports have focused exclusively on the students in the schools with high populations of traditionally disadvantaged groups. By using the data generated in the Course Roster Submission, the Department is able to look, for example, at all economically disadvantaged students, rather than focusing on the schools with the largest concentrations of economic disadvantage compared to those with the least. The Equity Profile provided by ED identifies 18 districts as having particularly high concentrations of minority students or students in poverty, and of these 18 districts, 16 already receive significant support from the Department through Regional Achievement Centers or the Office of School Intervention. The innovative use of the teacher-student data link allows the Department to identify student-level gaps in and between schools and districts not currently heavily supported by the state.

Using the Course Roster Submission data means looking at not just every school but every *student* in New Jersey, which in turn allows our equity analysis to remain focused on students. For example, in 2013-14, 7.8% of New Jersey teachers were in their first year in the profession; we now know that these educators reached over 400,000 students. This unit of analysis in turn has implications for the strategies described in this plan. By looking at a teacher-level analysis, the Department might conclude that targeted support is an appropriate strategy to ensure excellence in novice teachers. When examining the data at the student level, it becomes obvious that broad-based improvements in teacher preparation are necessary.

Although the Department has taken this significant step forward in our ability to assess educator equity through the creation of the teacher-student data link, we are continually striving to improve our data sources. In fact, as outlined in Section 5.1, the Department is currently building infrastructure such as the Staff Evaluation Submission, Evaluation Score Certification Tool, and Educator Preparation Provider Annual Report (EPPAR) frameworks that could greatly enhance our understanding of equity as a state. As all of these newer data processes mature, the Department continues to identify and address emerging quality control issues related to local district data submissions. As described in this report, in some cases, district error may lead to small inaccuracies that prevent us from making definitive conclusions for every equity issue. Therefore, our ongoing work to update equity strategies will be informed by ever-improving data going forward. In the meantime, we are careful to acknowledge

[7] For the purposes of this plan the Department identifies likely root-causes, acknowledging that those explored are potentially not exhaustive and could, in some circumstances, be correlation-based.

potential issues, to recognize the time it takes to identify definite trends, and to avoid make sweeping judgments based on a few years of new data.

For these reasons the Department believes it would be inappropriate to utilize evaluation ratings at a district and school level – or to utilize early EPPAR data for accountability with educator preparation programs – now. The state has always emphasized and will continue to stress the importance of taking time to conduct thoughtful, thorough implementation of this new system. Without providing the full context of local dynamics in a given school or district, drawing attention to raw numbers would not benefit educators or students. However, the Department is already using early data, including 2013-14 evaluation data, in collaboration with district leaders to better understand local challenges. Some of these efforts are described in the blue example boxes in Section 5.

4.2 Method of Data Analysis: Identifying Existing Equity Gaps

As a first step in the development of this plan, the Department identified a series of measures in an effort to identify equity gaps related to inexperienced, unqualified, and out-of-field teachers. These metrics were chosen to document successes and challenges identified in the 2006 and 2009 equity plans. This plan improves upon those previous analyses primarily through the incorporation of the teacher-student data link described in Section 4.1.

The Department calculated statewide equity gaps for each of the following student subgroups:

- Economic disadvantage
- Students with Disabilities
- English Language Learners (ELLs)
- All racial and ethnic subgroups

Gaps were measured using data from all public elementary and secondary schools in the state. As detailed throughout this plan, we used this data to create a theory of action; establish a root-cause analysis; identify aligned strategies for achieving objectives; and create plans for ongoing stakeholder engagement, ongoing monitoring, and support. In addition, we calculated district- and school-level equity gaps to ensure that resources were appropriately targeted to support districts. This plan details equity gaps in three key areas:

1. Qualification: Student assignment to teachers who are not Highly Qualified as reported by the LEA
2. Field: Student assignment to teachers who do not have appropriate endorsements as calculated by the Department
3. Experience: Student assignment to first-year and novice teachers (those teaching less than four years in the given district)

4.3 2006 and 2009 Findings Overview

In the 2006 New Jersey equity report and shown in Figure 3, the Department identified a significant number of classes taught by teachers who were not designated as highly qualified (HQT). This number, while significant, was more troubling when broken down by income level, with a 10 percentage point gap between low poverty and high poverty classrooms. From 2006 to 2009, the Department made a concerted effort to ensure that all students are taught by a teacher with HQT status. A detailed look at the strategies used can be found in the 2009 New Jersey equity report.

As shown in Figure 4, the combination of these strategies not only significantly reduced the gap between low and high poverty classrooms by 2009 (from 10 percentage points to less than one), the strategies employed nearly eliminated the issue. The greatest remaining challenge identified in the 2009 report, however, was the need for highly qualified special education teachers in high-poverty middle and high schools. This has since been addressed, as shown in Figure 5, through measures outlined in the 2009 report.

Figure 4: HQT Findings (2004, 2008, & 2013)

Date	Total Classes Not Taught by HQT	Non-HQT Classes in High-Poverty Schools	Non-HQT Classes in Low-Poverty Schools
Fall 2004	6.5%	13.7%	3.7%
Fall 2008	0.3%	0.9%	0.1%
Fall 2013	0.2%	0.4%	0.0%
Note: The Department notes that dramatic progress has been made since 2004 in access to HQT for all students in New Jersey. In fact, by 2013, only 211 non-HQT teachers appear to exist statewide. Therefore, the Department does not consider the small resulting economic equity gap to be systemic and will address the issue directly with each district impacted. This data is further investigated in section 4.4.			

Figure 5: HQT Subgroup Findings (2004, 2008, & 2013)

Poverty Status	Middle School Special Education Classes Not Taught by HQT		High School Special Education Classes Not Taught by HQT	
	2008	2013	2008	2013
All Schools	1.3%	0.0%	3.4%	0.3%
High-Poverty	7.4%	0.3%	9.5%	0.8%
Low-Poverty	0.2%	0.0%	0.05	0.0%
Note: Through HQT data available to the Department it appears that the equity gap for special education students has been effectively eliminated. The entirety of non-HQT middle and high school special education teachers is only 12 teachers. While it is true that these 12 teachers are placed in high poverty schools, it would be inappropriate to draw the conclusion that a systemic equity gap exists on the basis of this data. The Department will directly address this by speaking with each impacted district.				

4.4 2015 Findings Overview

As described in Section 4.1, starting with school year 2011-12, we began collecting the data necessary to create a teacher-student data link through the NJ SMART data system. For the first time, this data has allowed the Department to examine gaps in access to excellent educators in terms of individual students rather than in terms of school-level characteristics. Upon examination, we identified three key findings of note as explained below. See Appendix A for full data sets by student subgroup.

Key Finding 1: Existing data supports that New Jersey has largely addressed the High Qualified Teacher (HQT) equity gap and the Department continues to improve teacher effectiveness data.

In previous equity plans, the Department detailed clear strategies designed to address the gap in HQT access. Among the more prominent reforms was the creation, implementation, and monitoring of the New Jersey High Objective Uniform State Standard Evaluation (HOUSSE) Matrix, which is the system used by states to allow teachers to demonstrate subject matter competency in order to meet HQT requirements. Concurrently, the Department made significant changes to certification requirements to

ensure that all novice teachers would be highly qualified. The data shown in Figures 6 and 7 demonstrates that these efforts appear to have been successful, with more than 99.5% of students having all teachers designated HQT. LEAs report that identified gaps have essentially been eliminated for HQT and that the overall qualification level of New Jersey's teachers is definitively higher than it was prior to the implementation of previous equity plans. However, as detailed in Section 5.1, we acknowledge that the HQT metric alone may not be sufficient for assessing teacher quality and associated gaps in the long term. By monitoring HQT, the Department ensures that each student has a teacher with sufficient content knowledge. However, HQT lacks a measure of skills to adequately *deliver* content. In the future, the Department will be able to study multiple years of data gathered from the new AchieveNJ evaluation system to identify trends that can better inform student access to excellent educators across the state.

Figure 6: 2013-14 Breakdown of Students with at Least One Teacher who Does Not Meet HQT Standards by Race/Ethnicity

Related Metric(s)	Student Subgroup: Race/Ethnicity						
	American Indian	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Multiple Races	Pacific Islander	White
% with at Least 1 teacher Not Meeting HQT Standards	0.2%	0.3%	0.9%	0.8%	0.3%	0.4%	0.3%
# of Students	1,541	119,728	180,037	285,289	14,572	2,702	614,647
Note: The Department believes that the Black-White and Black-Hispanic gaps are small. Only 211 teachers (of more than 113,000 statewide) do not have HQT status and the Department will follow up directly with the districts impacted.							

Figure 7: SY 2013-14 Breakdown of Students with at Least One Teacher who Does Not Meet HQT Standards by Student Subgroup

Related Metric(s)	Student Subgroup: Other					
	Students with Disabilities	Students without Disabilities	Limited English Proficient	Not Limited English Proficient	Students at Economic Disadvantage	Students not at Economic Disadvantage
% with at Least 1 Teacher Not Meeting HQT Standards	0.7%	0.7%	0.5%	0.7%	0.8%	0.7%
# of Students	208,016	1,142,107	60,915	1,289,208	444,603	905,520
Note: The Department does not consider equity gaps to exist between students in the subgroups shown in this table.						

Key Finding 2: Some inequity persists with placement of out-of-field teachers.

In detailing the Department's strategy to eliminate out-of-field teaching, previous equity plans emphasized the importance of using the Matrix Report, a statewide audit of teachers' certifications, to identify potential issues with teachers working outside of their area of certification. For this plan, the Department connected the Matrix Report data to the teacher student data link, which allowed for better understanding of the impact of out-of-field teachers.

The Matrix Report for the 2013-14 school year identified 3,706 of New Jersey's 114,265 teachers (3.2%) as potentially working out of their field. A significant number of New Jersey students—more than one-fifth—are taught by at least one teacher who does not hold certification in the appropriate area. This again demonstrates the large impact that a small number of teachers can have. Student level results are reported in Figures 8 and 9. The student level data reveals a small but significant equity gap between racial and ethnic subgroups and along the lines of economic disadvantage.

Figure 8: SY 2013-14 Breakdown of Students with Out-of-Field Teacher by Race/Ethnicity

Related Metric(s)	Student Subgroup: Race/Ethnicity						
	American Indian	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Multiple Races	Pacific Islander	White
% Taught by at Least 1 Out-of-Field Teacher	21.5%	19.2%	30.4%	24.9%	16.9%	23.0%	21.5%
# of Students	1,541	119,728	180,037	285,289	14,572	2,702	614,647
Note: The Department recognizes significant Black-White and Hispanic-White equity gaps in access to in-field teachers. Strategies for addressing these gaps can be found below.							

Figure 9: SY 2013-14 Breakdown of Students with Out-of-Field Teacher by Student Subgroup

Related Metric(s)	Student Subgroup: Other					
	Students with Disabilities	Students without Disabilities	Limited English Proficient	Not Limited English Proficient	Students at Economic Disadvantage	Students not at Economic Disadvantage
% Taught by at Least 1 Out-of-Field Teacher	23.9%	23.2%	22.1%	23.3%	26.4%	21.7%
# of Students	208,016	1,142,107	60,915	1,289,208	444,603	905,520
Note: The Department notes that Limited English Proficiency students do not face an equity gap in access to in-field teachers; in fact the reverse is true. Though there is a very small gap for Students with Disabilities, the Department does not believe this gap to be systemic nor to have significant student impact. The Department does recognize an equity gap between Students at Economic Disadvantage and those not, and strategies for addressing this gap are described in this plan.						

Upon further examination, we determined that much of this inequity is focused in a small number of districts. Figure 10 shows the comparison of out-of-field placement in all New Jersey districts in comparison to such placement in the 10 districts with the highest out-of-field teachers. These 10 districts include 26.6% of all black students, 22.2% of all Hispanic students, and 21.2% of all economically disadvantaged students in the state, while they contain 11.9% of New Jersey students overall. Therefore, solving the out-of-field problem in these districts would result in the complete elimination of the statewide gap for Hispanic and economically disadvantaged students and a 75% reduction of the black-white equity gap. Section 5.2 describes our targeted approach to this problem.

Figure 10: SY 2013-14 Breakdown of Student Distribution in 10 NJ Districts with Most Out-of-Field Teachers

Related Metric(s)	Student Subgroups									
	Amer. Indian	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Mult. Race	Pacific Isl.	White	All	Econ. Disadv.	Not Econ. Disadv.
% w/ at Least 1 Out-of-Field Teacher: All Districts	17.1%	16.6%	21.4%	19.0%	15.1%	19.1%	19.4%	19.4%	19.4%	19.4%
% w/ by at Least 1 Out-of-Field Teacher: Top 10 Districts	37.4%	36.6%	44.5%	42.1%	24.7%	52.3%	34.5%	38.6%	42.7%	33.1%
% w/ by at Least 1 Out-of-Field Teacher: All Other Districts	18.5%	17.5%	22.8%	19.9%	16.7%	19.8%	21.1%	20.5%	20.7%	20.5%

Note: The Department recognizes Black-White and Hispanic-White equity gaps in access to in-field teachers. These gaps appear to be driven almost entirely by a handful of districts. As shown above, in the 10 districts with the most out-of-field teachers, large gaps exist, and these districts tend to have larger populations in disadvantaged subgroups. In looking at the data for "All Other Districts", the out-of-field gaps are either dramatically smaller or nonexistent. Therefore, if the Department solves the equity gap in the top 10 districts, the gaps will be nearly eliminated.

Key Finding 3: High percentages of all students are frequently exposed to novice teachers.

Research consistently demonstrates that experience plays a significant role in teacher effectiveness, with the largest positive change in impact on student achievement coming in the first one to two years of a teacher's career.[8] Fortunately, New Jersey's traditionally disadvantaged students are not taught by novice teachers at rates disproportionate to their peers. In fact, students in the historically disadvantaged group are slightly more likely to be taught by teachers with four or more years of experience than those in the historically advantaged groups.

At the same time, Figures 11 and 12 show that in the 2013-2014 school year, roughly one-third of students had at least one teacher with no previous teaching experience, and nearly two-thirds were taught by novice teachers (those teaching less than four years in the given district). Given New Jersey's firm commitment to improving equitable access to educators for all students, and the clear correlation of experience to effectiveness, this analysis identified novice teacher preparation and support as an area in need of improvement, despite the lack of a definite equity gap identified in our existing data. In fact, evidence presented anecdotally by multiple New Jersey stakeholder groups and supported by national research indicates that novice teachers are often unprepared to handle a variety of educational settings.

[8] Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, Rockoff, & Wyckoff, 2008 http://www.nber.org/papers/w14314.pdf; Harris and Sass, 2007 . http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED509656.pdf

For example, the Center for Teaching Quality has called for all teacher candidates to complete a performance assessment, a cohort-based residency, and a competency-driven preparation program to better prepare all candidates to become effective teachers.[9] The Alliance for Excellent Education and National Opportunity to Learn Campaign call for state policies to improve clinical experiences and partnerships between preparation programs and local schools, and for a performance assessment prior to certification.[10] The Council of Chief State School Officers has stated that "Diverse clinical settings are also important to help candidates prepare to teach no matter where they accept a teaching job. Working with students with disabilities and in schools facing high-needs and low-performance are challenging, but teachers should not face these challenges the first time in their first teaching job.[11]"

What's more, key education leaders in New Jersey have also called for improvements to our supports to novice teachers. In late September 2014, the Garden State Alliance for Strengthening Education (GSASE) released a report with recommendations to "support effective teaching in New Jersey."[12] Many of the novice teacher supports the Department has proposed echo these recommendations and demonstrate our collaborative support for educators in this important work.

Further, while the Department cannot identify long-term trends or make sweeping judgments from one year of evaluation data under the new system, early results from AchieveNJ implementation do point toward novices needing more support. Our multi-faceted effort to better prepare and support novice teachers is explained in Section 5.3.

Figure 11: SY 2013-14 Breakdown of Students with First Year/Novice Teachers by Race/Ethnicity

Related Metric(s)	Student Subgroup: Race/Ethnicity						
	American Indian	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Multiple Races	Pacific Islander	White
% with at least 1 First-Year Teacher	27.4%	27.8%	32.8%	29.1%	26.3%	32.1%	28.4%
% with at least 1 Novice Teacher	63.1%	62.0%	64.7%	63.7%	60.5%	64.7%	65.4%
# of Students	1,541	119,728	180,037	285,289	14,572	2,702	614,647
Note: Including multiple measures of experience in this plan allows the Department to develop a nuanced view of these potential equity gaps. Although there are Black-White and Hispanic-White equity gaps with respect to first-year teachers, these gaps actually reverse themselves with respect to all novice teachers. Therefore, the Department believes these metrics require further study.							

[9] Center for Teaching Quality, *Teaching 2030: Leveraging Teacher Preparation 2.0:* http://www.teachingquality.org/sites/default/files/TEACHING_2030_Leveraging_Teacher_Preparation.pdf
[10] Alliance for Excellent Education, *Climate Change: Improving School Climate by Supporting Great Teaching*, 2014: http://all4ed.org/reports-factsheets/climatechange4/
[11] http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/2012/Our%20Responsibility%20Our%20Promise_2012.pdf
[12] Garden State Alliance for Strengthening Education, *Designing a Continuum to Support Effective Teaching in New Jersey, 2014:* http://assets.njspotlight.com/assets/14/0928/2133

Figure 12: SY 2013-14 Breakdown of Students with First Year/Novice Teachers by Student Subgroup

Related Metric(s)	Student Subgroup: Other					
	Students with Disabilities	Students without Disabilities	Limited English Proficient	Not Limited English Proficient	Students at Economic Disadvantage	Students not at Economic Disadvantage
% with at least 1 First-Year Teacher	28.6%	30.6%	26.8%	30.5%	30.0%	30.4%
% with at least 1 Novice Teacher	64.3%	65.7%	59.1%	65.8%	63.5%	66.4%
# of Students	208,016	1,142,107	60,915	1,289,208	444,603	905,520
Note: Data in Figure 12 is less ambiguous than data in Figure 11. In all cases, a "reverse" equity gap exists between the traditionally disadvantaged subgroup and its counterpart. The Department does not consider equity gaps to exist in access to experienced teachers for these subgroups.						

Section 5: Root-Cause Analysis and Related Strategies

After conducting the data analysis explained in Section 4 and speaking with a variety of stakeholders, we hypothesize that a number of factors influence a district's supply of effective teachers and the extent to which certain students have access to these teachers. While we cannot pinpoint exact or exhaustive root-causes based upon a single data analysis on a small subset of metrics, both the analysis conducted and stakeholder input support and further inform our strategic support and intervention efforts across the state.

The variance in likely root-causes contributing to equity gaps is great. Likely causes may include systemic issues outside of the current education system and many may be best addressed at the local level. Therefore, in this analysis we identify and focus specifically on those likely root-causes where the Department can use state levers with fidelity to drive the greatest impact for all New Jersey students.

5.1 Addressing Key Finding 1: Existing data supports that New Jersey has largely addressed the High Qualified Teacher (HQT) equity gap and the Department continues to improve teacher effectiveness data

Likely Root-Cause: Success in using data to address an equity gap

Data presented in Section 4.4, in combination with conversations with internal stakeholders responsible for carrying out prior strategies, clearly indicate that the Department's efforts to focus on HQT have been largely successful at eliminating any associated equity gaps. Details of the Department's actions are outlined in Section 4.4 and further explained in the 2006 and 2009 equity plans. However, while we are proud that the strategies put in place over the past nine years have positively impacted teacher quality as measured by HQT, we acknowledge that the HQT metric alone may not be sufficient for assessing teacher quality and associated gaps in the long term.

By monitoring HQT, the Department ensures that each student has a teacher with sufficient content knowledge. However, HQT lacks a measure of skills to adequately *deliver* content. While we have not identified an explicit equity gap from the data in this report, this does not mean that gaps do not exist. In fact, both anecdotal reports from educators and teacher preparation programs, as well as evidence from national research, point toward the need for more rigorous and relevant preparation for new teachers prior to entering a variety of classroom settings. Rather than assume there are no equity gaps, the Department is now developing a robust data set to measure teacher quality through our new evaluation system, AchieveNJ to enable further investigation. By pairing HQT data with teacher effectiveness data, we will have a much stronger picture of whether poor and minority students have equal access to effective instructors. To date, the Department has posted only one year of AchieveNJ results and is thus unable to make broad judgments or identify trends over time. However, the early data[13] supports the potential of our approach to better support all novice teachers.

Likely Root-Cause: Small potential data quality issues

By definition, we would expect all teachers who are defined as HQT, an LEA self-reported measure, to be teaching in-field as well. However, as we note in Key Finding 2, there is a small but noteworthy equity gap in out-of-field placement, a Department-calculated metric. The discrepancy between the two numbers is very small but worth analyzing (approximately 3% of teachers across the state). Initial

[13] Note: Following the due date of this equity plan to ED, the Department presented additional findings from the first year of AchieveNJ implementation to the State Board of Education (found here).

investigation has led the Department to pursue actions described below related to the reporting of out-of-field data. More investigation of HQT data is needed, but we believe that the discrepancies arise either from a handful of LEAs where developing high-quality data about staffing has been challenging; from small, nuanced data quality issues with the Department-calculated results in the matrix report (e.g. inaccurate social security matches,); or both.

Actions: Focus efforts to improve data quality and use in understanding teacher effectiveness
The Department continues to improve our data sources to ensure that all stakeholders have sufficient information to make critical human capital decisions, particularly as it relates to equitable access to effective educators. Evaluation systems with multiple measures guide teacher development and support and drive strategic decisions about teacher placement within schools and districts. We will continue to work with districts to improve our data quality control procedures and to ensure districts have the proper guidance for both submitting and using their data.

- **Action 1A: Use improved evaluation structures to provide better data, feedback, and support**

Evaluation Reform in New Jersey: Background and Early Results

Four years ago, educator evaluation in New Jersey – and across the country – was extremely inconsistent. While some districts promoted better practices than others and many had begun to use more robust observation instruments, the state had weak requirements and guidance to support the work. This reality resulted in the vast majority of educators receiving "acceptable" ratings that lacked meaningful differentiation – regardless of student outcomes. This served both students and educators poorly; without frequent and reliable feedback about their practice, teachers were left in the dark about ways to better help students. Schools and districts lacked specific data to inform decisions about professional development, recognition, and retention strategies at all levels. Moreover, without the ability to differentiate by teacher effectiveness, districts lacked the tools to analyze student access to effective educators.

By 2015, the landscape has improved dramatically. Following the Educator Effectiveness Task Force report of 2011, the state's bipartisan tenure reform law – the Teacher Effectiveness and Accountability for the Children of New Jersey Act (TEACHNJ), – was approved unanimously by the legislature and signed into law by Governor Christie on August 6, 2012. The Department worked with several districts and other stakeholders from 2011-2013 to develop and pilot AchieveNJ, the state educator evaluation and support system mandated by TEACHNJ and implemented statewide in 2013-14. Results from the first full year of implementation, fully detailed in this 2013-14 AchieveNJ Final Implementation Report, show that districts now have more information than ever before about the impact of every teacher and school leader on the students they serve. As the report demonstrates, AchieveNJ is allowing districts to better identify areas of strength and weakness in educator practice and to respond accordingly. Further, more robust evaluation data is providing a much richer picture for districts to consider when making human capital decisions.

Findings about new evaluations in 2013-14 most relevant to educator equity include the following:

- New Jersey teachers are receiving more observations and feedback than ever before, and school leaders are focusing more of their time and talent on instructional quality in schools. This means that individual teachers have more information about their practice and can use this knowledge to better serve all of their students. In turn, school and district leaders can identify trends in

their staffs' strengths and weaknesses across the various evaluation measures and create targeted support strategies to address their unique needs.

- In 2013-14, approximately 23% of all teachers earned the top rating of Highly Effective. Districts now have differentiated data to inform placement decisions for our most effective teachers. Creative scheduling, mentorship opportunities, and other tactics could substantially broaden the reach of our top educators, particularly as it relates to supporting our neediest students.
- Conversely, approximately 3% of teachers earned ratings of Partially Effective or Ineffective last year (compared to 0.8% of teachers rated "not acceptable" in 2012-13, under the previous acceptable/not acceptable system). Further, those 2,900 teachers identified for additional support provided instruction to approximately 13% of all New Jersey students – about 180,000 of them. For the first time, we are putting those educators on a path to better serving those students so that every child in New Jersey has equal access to effective teachers.

Using Evaluation Data to Inform Equity Gaps: Present and Future

Just one year of AchieveNJ has resulted in significant improvements in how districts evaluate and support educators. One major outcome is the refined focus on collecting and using data to provide feedback to educators. In recent years, the Department has supported districts in collecting and submitting accurate evaluation data at the local and state levels. Given that we are still in the early stages of this work and have only collected one year's worth of data, the Department believes it would be inappropriate to draw conclusions from evaluation component-level or summative ratings at a district and school level or to take large-scale corrective action as a result. The state has always emphasized and will continue to stress the importance of taking time to conduct thoughtful, thorough implementation of a new system. Without providing the full context of local dynamics or fidelity of implementation in a given school or district, drawing attention to raw numbers does not benefit educators or students. Instead, the blue example boxes demonstrate efforts to work directly with districts identified from the early data as needing extra support.

Using Data to Inform Interventions: Support for Struggling Districts

In 2014-15, the Department's Office of Evaluation has focused its efforts on providing support to about 85 LEAs that, for various reasons, have struggled to effectively implement evaluation. Analysis of evaluation implementation "challenge indicators" and documentation from field visits were used to identify this group of districts. In addition to providing targeted support to these LEAs based on their area of need, the evaluation field team gathers information about challenges that inhibit quality implementation in general, as well as best practices that support it. Included in this research is a particular emphasis on how AchieveNJ can help build leadership capacity to implement the system with increased fidelity. In late February 2014, one of the 85 districts receiving implementation support met with the Department to review the results of the first two observation cycles. Upon close examination of the rubric components in the aggregate, the team identified two key areas (questioning techniques and engaging students in learning) where a large proportion of teachers needed additional support. Over the course of the next month, the Department's Implementation Manager and district personnel worked together to redesign the district's professional development plan for the remainder of the year to focus on the two areas identified, using the data to closely inform supports at the school level. This kind of work will be used to inform changes in guidance and policy in future years, with the ultimate goal of helping all New Jersey districts to effectively develop their personnel and to make informed human capital decisions.

Expanding the Reach of Effective Educators: Achievement Coaches

As part of the effort to ensure New Jersey's most effective educators are sharing their knowledge with colleagues, the Department is now leading a $1.25 million grant initiative to recognize and empower a cadre of "Achievement Coaches." During a week-long Summer Institute in 2015, 150 teachers and administrators, selected by their districts for their professional capabilities and leadership skills, were prepared to deliver high quality professional development sessions to tens of thousands of their colleagues around the state. These sessions, developed through the grant by educators at three New Jersey districts, focus on the effective use and development of high quality assessments, including alignment with Common Core Standards; evidence-based decision-making in high-functioning collaborative teams; and best pedagogical practices that address challenging aspects of teaching such as engaging students and using questioning techniques in the classroom. Achievement Coaches are leading these sessions at the start of the 2015-16 school year and will share feedback from the educators they reach. Through this effort, the Department seeks to cultivate leaders at the school and district level to spread their expertise to other educators.

Going forward, the Department will continue to actively support districts in analyzing new information to help inform human capital decision-making across all aspects of the educator lifecycle (recruitment, retention, professional development, etc.), as described above. Long term, we believe this will significantly contribute to educator equity in the same way the HQT data infrastructure supported closing New Jersey's identified HQT gap. Further, the Department will monitor trends over multiple years and build district- or state-specific strategies as appropriate.

Timeline for Implementation

The AchieveNJ evaluation system was implemented statewide in 2013-14 and results from the first year were reported in June 2015. Due to the time required for both the NJDOE and our districts to collect and verify evaluation data, statewide results are not available sooner at this time. By late spring/early summer 2016, we will have a second year of evaluation data to analyze and consider relative to identifying early trends in equitable access to effective educators for all students.

- **Action 1B: Increase access to high-quality data on educator preparation providers**

Developing Educator Preparation Provider Annual Reports

Ensuring equitable access to excellent educators starts by ensuring that all teachers are well prepared to enter the profession. Candidates entering undergraduate and graduate educator preparation programs need access to meaningful data to select the program best suited to their needs. Similarly, educator preparation providers (EPPs) need longitudinal data to understand how well their curriculum prepares candidates for various school settings. Unfortunately, such data has been historically hard to find.

In response to these critical information gaps as well as feedback from stakeholders across the state calling for transparent data, the Department launched a significant effort to create state Educator Preparation Provider Annual Reports (EPPARs) and released the first public version of these reports in 2014. This initiative followed a national trend promoting transparency and continuous improvement in teacher preparation programs. Specifically, EPPARs provide information on newly certified teachers' certification and hiring rate, placement location, classroom assignment, demographics, and Praxis II testing results. The reports are intended to:

- Empower higher education institutions with information to promote continuous improvement;

- Supply hiring entities, especially K-12 districts, with data about providers and their graduates;
- Equip prospective teachers with empirical information about their choices for preparation;
- Gain access to information at a state-wide level to answer critical supply questions (e.g. Are we preparing enough middle school math teachers to fill current needs?);
- Shed light on programs which are preparing strong educators; and
- Promote ongoing efforts to professionalize teaching and teacher preparation.

These first public EPPARs were developed in a multi-year process working collaboratively with New Jersey's colleges and universities and the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE) through partnership with the New Jersey Association for Colleges of Teacher Education (NJACTE) and the Deans and Directors of our teaching programs. For more information on the development of the reports – and to access the most current version – visit the EPPAR web page.

Future EPPARs will feature improved data, accessibility, and functionality based on continued collaboration with stakeholders, including educator preparation programs, and LEAs. In future versions, we expect to include additional data elements such as survey results about program satisfaction and preparedness from those completing programs as well as evaluation data to provide a richer picture of teaching colleges and universities. Districts will be able to use all of this data to inform their recruitment and selection practices. Similar to the development of better evaluation data, we are in the early stages of building and supporting this new data infrastructure; therefore, we are following a similar path in taking time to work with EPPs and other stakeholders to expand the use of this data over time.

Using EPPAR Data to Inform Equity Gaps: Present and Future

With the rollout of EPPARs, various stakeholders now have the data necessary to assess their own equity strategies and ultimately act upon the results. As a result, the Department can provide targeted support both to districts and program providers.

EPPAR Findings at Work: Informing Educator Preparation

Provider Level:
Historically, EPPs have relied both on anecdotal information and limited alumni data to gain an understanding of the market for teachers in New Jersey. One EPP shared that they have found the new, more comprehensive data available through EPPARs valuable in a variety of ways. First, the reports have helped inform their program advising for prospective and current students about career prospects in New Jersey, particularly in shortage areas. Second, the report reinforced the EPP's desire to undergo a significant curricular redesign after identifying that many of their students serve high-needs districts. And third, the reports, which clearly highlight student demographics, strengthened their resolve to strive more deliberately to recruit and retain more diverse teacher candidates.

District Level: In one urban district, secondary Spanish vacancies are consistently identified. To date, recruitment efforts have focused on the preparation programs with the closest geographic proximity; however, 2014 EPPARs show that those programs produce very few Spanish teacher candidates. The district can work with their current preparation partners to promote more Spanish teacher candidates. In addition, the Department is now working with the district to amend certification requirements to hire teacher candidates from Spanish-speaking countries, thus opening up an entirely new recruitment channel.

Timeline for Implementation

As explained above, the Annual Reports have been developed since 2013 in collaboration with New Jersey's colleges and universities and the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education. The first public version was posted in 2014. On September 1, 2015, the second public version was made available on the EPPAR website. The 2015 reports include data on teacher demographics, educational background, testing results, certification and hiring, placement, and classroom assignment. As we continue to refine and improve the reports going forward, future versions are expected to include additional elements such as candidates hired out of state or in private and parochial schools, survey results from candidates completing programs, and summary teacher evaluation data to provide a richer picture for programs, candidates, and the public.

- **Action 1C: Investigate data discrepancy with impacted districts**

Although there were no equity gaps identified through the existing HQT data, the small data difference between HQT and out-of-field teachers indicates that further analysis, reconciliation, and monitoring should be conducted to identify the source of the discrepancy. Over the next year, the Department will modify the Matrix Report to include fields to enable both districts and the County Offices to easily reconcile the data during the annual Matrix Report Review process and related supports as described in Actions 2A and 2B. In addition, the Department will use the state's monitoring and evaluation system, "Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC),"[14] as an additional accountability mechanism for districts found to be out of compliance in terms of HQT or out-of-field placements. The goal of the QSAC process is to offer a range of interventions with districts, with a focus on support in implementing all applicable state laws and programs in complement with federally required improvements.

Timeline for Implementation

The 2014-15 Matrix Report and related training information was disseminated to County Offices prior to the start of the 2015-16 school year for use in determining which districts were out of compliance and to support the 10 districts mentioned. County Offices are working with schools to ensure that they have appropriate staff working in each role. The Matrix Report will be analyzed and disseminated by August of each year going forward. By 2016-17, the Department will include additional fields to aid in the reconciliation of HQT and out-of-field data. The Department will also use the Matrix Report results to determine if further actions related to the QSAC process are necessary (districts are typically reviewed every three years to ensure compliance; however, the statute allows the state to conduct a QSAC review at any time with cause).

5.2 Addressing Key Finding 2: Some inequity persists with placement of out-of-field teachers

Likely Root-Cause: Lack of awareness about, focus on, and/or ability to impact out-of-field placement in some districts

Deeper investigation into state out-of-field placement data has revealed that the entire Hispanic-white and economic disadvantage gap and three quarters of the black-white equity gap is driven by only 10 school districts (see Figure 10 in Section 4.4). The statewide gap is driven by the fact that the majority of students in this group of districts are black or Hispanic, and collectively these districts contain 25% of all black or Hispanic students in New Jersey. Further investigation with the Department's County Office staff who actively participate in the Matrix Report audit process and interact with districts on a daily

[14] For more information, see http://www.state.nj.us/education/genfo/qsac/.

basis revealed that the challenges in ensuring in-field placement vary widely from district to district. While some districts do not have full awareness of or the ability to focus on this issue, prior history has showed that some may also have trouble recruiting teachers with the correct credentials.

Likely Root-Cause: Lack of clarity around link between endorsement area and job duties

To better monitor and support the implementation of requirements that teachers achieve Highly Qualified status, the Department created a list of 144 job codes, each of which must be matched with one of five subcategories. According to County Office staff, this in itself has proven confusing for some districts, as in some cases job codes are not mutually exclusive, e.g., there are job codes for "Elementary Kindergarten-8 Grade," "Elementary School Teacher K-5," and "Kindergarten." Additionally, in some cases it is unclear what subjects or courses a teacher is eligible to provide instruction in a given job code. For example, different certifications are required to work in the "Technology Education" job code and the "Computer Literacy/Applications/Programming" job code, but this information may not be clear to school districts.

Actions: Ensure districts receive appropriate support, improve understanding of certification eligibility

Given the specific distribution of this equity gap in a small number of districts and the fact that the root cause appears to vary district to district, the Department will use a differentiated approach to provide the right level of support at the local level. In addition, we will clarify the assignment of job titles as it relates to certification and teacher eligibility to instruct classes.

- **Action 2A: Provide targeted support to 10 districts with most out-of-field teachers**

The out-of-field equity gap is driven by the fact that the districts with the most teachers working out of field tend to contain large populations of black, Hispanic, and economically disadvantaged students. These individual districts do not have large within-district equity gaps; indeed, few districts have large subgroup-level gaps. However, because they represent a large share of all black and Hispanic students in the state, there is a significant equity gap in the state along the lines of race and economic disadvantage. To that end, the Department will conduct outreach through the Office of Charter Schools and the County Offices of Education to the districts with the most teachers working out-of-field to ensure that all children in those districts have access to in-field teachers. Additionally, the Department will review its practices to ensure that certification rules do not restrict districts from placing appropriately credentialed teachers into positions that will allow for the best education of all children.

For many years, the Department has disseminated the Matrix Report described in Section 4.4 through the County Offices of Education, and this will continue as a way to both audit and support all districts. To facilitate outreach to the 10 districts identified in this gap analysis, the Department will work to make the Matrix Report provided to districts more user-friendly, and County Office staff will work with the Office of Certification and Induction to support identified districts in resolving issues. Additionally, the Department will provide outreach and support to identified districts in completing the NJ SMART Staff Member ID (SMID) Management and Certificated Staff Submissions to ensure that all staff members are accurately placed in appropriate job titles.

- **Action 2B: Provide improved guidance for eligible job duties for each area of certification**

Though the equity gaps can be eliminated by resolving the out-of-field teaching issue in only 10 districts, a small but significant number of teachers outside of these districts are working outside of their field. By distributing the Matrix Report, the Department allows districts to better understand staff members'

areas of certification. This data, combined with better information about the job titles a given area of certification makes someone eligible to work in, will allow districts to address potential inequities. The NJ SMART Help Desk will provide additional information to districts to help ensure that job titles are properly coded, eliminating spurious identification of out-of-field teaching.

Finally, in keeping with our commitment to focus on the connection between teachers and students, the Department will work to clarify the duties that a teacher with a given area of certification is eligible to perform. Though at the time of creation, a plethora of job codes was the only way for the Department to properly monitor progress toward ensuring all teachers achieved HQT status, with the addition of the teacher-student data link to NJ SMART, the Department can now provide much clearer guidance about the courses and subjects for which each area of certification is eligible to provide instruction. Through the charter school office and County Offices of Education, we will work to ensure that all teachers are working in jobs for which they are eligible given their area of certification, focusing particularly on those districts with large numbers of out-of-field teachers.

Matrix Reports at Work: Helping Districts Ensure Appropriate Placements

Shortly after producing one of the more recent Matrix Reports, the Office of Licensure and Certification (OLC) noticed that 3% of teachers (approximately 20) in a small, urban, economically disadvantaged school district were teaching out of field. Given that the statistic was around 1% statewide, this was of particular concern. To rectify the issue, OLC reached out both to the County Office as well as the district and quickly realized that the real issue was the district's understanding of which certificates were appropriate for each course offering. OLC was able to quickly provide the district with clear guidance on what types of certificates would be appropriate and which teachers in the district held each of these certificates. Over the course of the following year, the district was able to eliminate the issue entirely.

- **Action 2C: Investigate data discrepancy with impacted districts**

As described in action 1C, the small data difference between HQT and out-of-field teachers indicates that further analysis, reconciliation, and monitoring should be conducted to identify the source of the discrepancy. Over the next year, the Department will modify the Matrix Report to include fields to enable both districts and the County Offices to easily reconcile the data during the annual Matrix Report Review process and related supports as described in Actions 2A and 2B. In addition, the Department will use the state's monitoring and evaluation system, "Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC),"[15] as an additional accountability mechanism for districts found to be out of compliance in terms of HQT or out-of-field placements. The goal of the QSAC process is to offer a range of interventions with districts, with a focus on support in implementing all applicable state laws and programs in complement with federally required improvements.

Timeline for Implementation of Actions 2A, 2B, & 2C

The 2014-15 Matrix Report and related training information was disseminated to County Offices prior to the start of the 2015-16 school year for use in determining which districts were out of compliance and to support the 10 districts mentioned. County Offices are working with schools to ensure that they have appropriate staff working in each role. The Matrix Report will be analyzed and disseminated by August

[15] For more information, see http://www.state.nj.us/education/genfo/qsac/.

of each year going forward. By 2016-17, the Department will include additional fields to aid in the reconciliation of HQT and out-of-field data. The Department will also use the Matrix Report results to determine if further actions related to the QSAC process are necessary (districts are typically reviewed every three years to ensure compliance; however, the statute allows the state to conduct a QSAC review at any time with cause).

5.3 Addressing Key Finding 3: High percentages of all students are frequently exposed to novice teachers

Likely Root-Cause: Teacher turnover

Teacher turnover is one of the most likely reasons that a significant portion of New Jersey students are being taught by novice teachers (those teaching less than four years in a given district). As researchers often point out, turnover can be both positive and negative depending on who is leaving the classroom, where they are going (e.g. to other professions or to leadership roles), and what volume is turning over. The Department acknowledges that more research must be done in order to assess the lessons to be learned from teacher turnover in New Jersey. However, studies show that on average, teachers with some experience are more effective than brand new teachers,[16] that teachers improve their performance the most early in their careers,[17] and that the largest positive change in impact on student achievement occurs in the first one or two years of a teacher's career.[18] Therefore, regardless of the type of teacher turnover we currently experience, we know that a significant portion of students will continue to be taught by novice teachers – and novice teachers need better support to effectively serve students from day one. In addition, although the specific data shared in this plan does not identify clear equity gaps relative to novice teachers, many stakeholders have shared the strong belief that novice candidates often lack in the knowledge and ability to teach in multiple settings, particularly in regards to urban school settings.

Actions: Support novice teachers through more robust and meaningful preparation, certification, and induction practices

Given that the majority of New Jersey students are taught by at least one novice teacher (65.5% in 2013-14), **one way to ensure all students have access to effective educators, particularly for historically disadvantaged subgroups, is to focus on improving all novice teachers.** The Department is now undertaking a significant effort to do that.

- **Action 3A. Raise the bar for novice teachers through preparation and certification**

Vision for Improving Preparation and Certification in New Jersey: Background and Context

As we implement better and more rigorous standards, assessments, and educator evaluations, we must prepare novice teachers to meet these demands and effectively serve students from the first day on the job. In turn, ED and key education leaders in New Jersey have called for improvements to novice teacher supports. In response, the Department began developing a multifaceted strategy to improve the quality of novice teachers based upon national research, local stakeholder recommendations, the higher education community, and feedback from current and prospective New Jersey educators. The goal of this strategy is to leverage preparation and certification requirements to ensure strong candidates enter preparation programs, receive quality instruction, and demonstrate appropriate performance as novice

[16] Kane, Rockoff, & Staiger, 2006.
[17] Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2007.
[18] Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, Rockoff, & Wyckoff, 2008 and Harris and Sass, 2007.

teachers; and to use candidate and programmatic data to provide more insight into our preparation programs and new teacher supports in both pre-professional and professional learning settings.

The first prong of this strategy, which includes both regulatory and non-regulatory measures, was presented to the public in summer 2013, when the Department proposed higher GPA and basic skills assessment requirements for those entering teacher preparation programs. These policies were adopted in June 2014. For the many months following adoption, state leaders continued to develop a broader package of changes to improve teacher preparation and certification across the state. In late September 2014, the Garden State Alliance for Strengthening Education (GSASE) released a report[19] with a series of recommendations "to support effective teaching in New Jersey." Many of the changes the Department proposed in the second regulatory package on February 4, 2015 include GSASE's recommendations and demonstrate our collaborative support for educators in this important work.

Using Improved Preparation and Certification Structures to Address Equity Gaps

All teacher candidates deserve a high-quality preparation that is grounded in classroom experience. The Department's proposed regulations will better prepare all novice teachers to handle the challenges of P-12 work and enable them to be more effective teaching all students in the earlier years of their careers. The following major aspects of the proposed regulations have the potential to address equity gaps by improving novice educator effectiveness:

- Extended Clinical/Student Teaching Experience: Research shows that preparation programs that offer opportunities for candidates to engage in the clinical aspects of teaching produce novice teachers with greater student achievement gains in year one.[20] Studies also recommend that candidates engage with a range of students and placements prior to entering the profession.[21] The American Federation of Teachers (AFT), Association of American Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), and NCATE all agree that a majority of preparation should be clinical in nature.[22] Further, AACTE, NCATE, and Educators4Excellence all believe that to ensure a quality clinical experience, teacher candidates must be overseen by strong experienced teachers.[23] Therefore, in alignment with the GSASE, which calls for teacher candidates to receive "real-world field and clinical experiences," we proposed to:
    - Improve the experiences candidates have in schools and classrooms prior to the full-time clinical experience, ensuring that they are exposed to multiple settings;
    - Improve incentives to encourage highly skilled cooperating teachers to work with teacher candidates;
    - Increase clinical experiences duration and quality for teacher candidates – notably requiring a full year of such clinical practice progressing from part-time to full-time; and
    - Increase flexibility for programs to promote an innovative, standards-based preparation curriculum.

[19] http://www.njea.org/njea-media/pdf/GSASE_Report_on_Teacher_Continuum.pdf?1427899073658
[20] Boyd, et al. (2008), *Teacher Preparation and Student Achievement:* http://cepa.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/Preparation%20and%20Achievement.pdf
[21] AACTE (2010), Clinical Preparation of Teachers: http://aacte.org/pdf/Government_Relations/Clinical%20Prep%20Paper_03-11-2010.pdf and Levine (2006), Educating School Teachers: http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED504144.pdf
[22] NCATE (2010), Transforming Teacher Education through Clinical Practice: http://www.ncate.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=zzeiB1OoqPk%3d&tabid=715
[23] Eucators4Excellence (2013), *Preparing for the classroom:* http://educators4excellence.s3.amazonaws.com/8/74/f/1637/E4E_NY_TPrep_Paper.pdf

Facilitation of Clinical Partnerships

In order to support newly proposed clinical experience requirements for novice teachers, the Department's Office of Recruitment, Preparation, and Recognition recently began to engage with stakeholders in various districts and local EPPs to better understand, facilitate, and improve clinical partnerships between districts and higher education partners. While research and stakeholder engagement around this initiative are in the beginning stages, we are committed to continuing these efforts to enhance communication between districts, schools and preparation programs and to support partnership needs, as identified.

- Demonstrated Individual Performance: In order to promote effective educators obtaining standard certification, we believe candidates must demonstrate mastery of important competencies throughout the initial years of teaching before earning the credential. The changes proposed would mean that all New Jersey teachers, no matter which pathway they take into the classroom, will be required to demonstrate rigorous teaching competencies. All candidates would be required to demonstrate successful performance on the state evaluation system (AchieveNJ) and to pass a performance-based assessment of teaching prior to standard certification. Stronger reciprocity requirements would ensure out-of-state candidates meet a similar high bar as in-state candidates.
- Program Data and Support: As explained in detail in Section 5.1, the importance of transparent and accessible data in understanding educator effectiveness and related equity gaps cannot be overstated. In August 2014, the Department released the first public Educator Preparation Provider Annual Reports (EPPARs) as part of an ongoing effort to provide programs, teacher candidates, and districts with transparent performance data. Our ultimate vision is a comprehensive database that includes information from teacher's preparation experience throughout his or her New Jersey public school teaching career. To complement this effort, proposed regulations would:
  - Clarify expectations and criteria for initial program approval and periodic review for all educator preparation programs;
  - Enhance the initial approval process to ensure all programs are standards-based and appropriately analyzed;
  - Publish comprehensive data to inform teacher candidates, programs, districts, and the Department; and
  - Require comprehensive program reviews.

Timeline for Implementation

While some of the non-regulatory tactics such as the program data and support listed above are either in place or in the beginning stages of implementation, much of what is detailed below reflects regulation presented at proposal level in June, 2015. In order to ensure preparation programs, school districts, and teacher candidates have adequate notice to adjust to these changes, the Department has proposed a multi-year phase-in of the requirements and will work with these groups to support implementation plans and processes. This timeline will be solidified and shared broadly upon adoption of related regulations, prospectively set for late fall 2015.

➢ Action 3B. Improve induction support for novice teachers

Induction and Mentoring Requirements: Background and Context

In addition to improving preparation and certification to enhance overall teacher quality, we recognize the need to support novice teachers throughout the induction processes, as well. Unlike many other professional occupations where newly minted practitioners have opportunities to apprentice or take on increased responsibilities over time, novice in-service teachers are expected to assume the same classroom responsibilities as veteran teachers. They are often assigned to teach the most challenging students. Further, they spend a great deal of time working with their students, but very little time working with their colleagues, remaining largely isolated during a critical period in their own professional development. Recognizing these challenges, the Department emphasizes mentorship as a key part of the road to certification in New Jersey. Current mentorship regulations aim to:

- Assist first-year teachers in the performance of their duties and adjustment to the challenges of their teaching assignment;
- Reduce novice teacher attrition;
- Improve the effectiveness of new teachers; and
- Enhance teacher knowledge of, and strategies related to, the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards (NJCCCS) to facilitate student achievement and growth.

Using Induction and Mentoring to Address Equity Gaps

In May 2014, the rules for new teacher mentoring were amended to better align with the AchieveNJ evaluation system, to reduce district-reporting burdens, to promote flexibility and accountability for district implementation, and to expand the scope of support to include experienced teachers who are new to the district.[24] All of these outcomes will support novice teacher quality and thus impact the majority of New Jersey students served by beginning teachers each year. Specifically, updated regulations include actions to:

- Ensure that all non-tenured first-year teachers receive individualized support developed collaboratively with the supervisor and aligned with state standards and school/district expectations for teacher effectiveness;
- Specify a comprehensive orientation to the district for all new first-year teachers;
- Specify minimum mentoring requirements during the critical first weeks of employment;
- Specify particular mentor support activities for novice teachers;
- Update the qualifications and training requirements for teachers serving as one to one mentors; and
- Align the three required formative and summative evaluations of the novice provisional teacher with required observations through teacher evaluation.

[24] For more details on mentoring in New Jersey, visit http://www.nj.gov/education/profdev/mentor/.

Building Teacher Leadership Capacity: Support for Novice Teachers in High-Needs Districts

In May 2015, the Department released a Notice of Grant Opportunity (NGO) using funds from the Improving Teacher Quality Partnership (ITQP), Title II, Part A Subpart 3 of the *No Child Left Behind Act*. The purpose of the three-year grant program is to leverage school district-university partnerships to improve support for beginning teachers, particularly within high-needs LEAs. The grant will fund university-LEA partnerships to develop a cadre of teacher leaders to serve as effective mentor teachers for beginning teachers in their partner district(s). Grantees will also work with district and school leaders to enhance their understanding of the importance of high quality supports for beginning teachers and to examine and upgrade their current policies and practices. Although the grant will focus on the use of teacher leaders to support beginning teachers, once teacher leaders have been trained in the skills of working with adult learners to support effective instruction, they might be used to support struggling teachers at all stages of their careers. This grant aligns with other key state and federal initiatives seeking to strengthen teacher preparation by raising the quality of teacher candidates; making initial teacher preparation (including the clinical (student teaching) experience) more rigorous and practice-relevant; increasing teacher retention through more effective supports for teachers during their initial years; and improving equity in the distribution of effective teachers across the state. Moreover, this grant will allow the state to pilot new approaches for strengthen beginning teacher support that will inform subsequent policy decisions.

Timeline for Implementation

As noted, regulatory changes were adopted in May 2014 with full-implementation during the 2014-15 school year. For the Notice of Grant Opportunity, the Department will make grant awards in fall 2015, with implementation of the grant proposals spanning three years and ending in June, 2018.

5.4 Structures and Strategies to Support High-Needs Districts

In addition to the actions described above for each of the three key findings of this report, New Jersey has several structures in place to support targeted strategies at the district level. Every district currently has direct support provided by the state through three central mechanisms: County Offices of Education, Regional Achievement Centers (RACs), and the Office of School Intervention. While all districts have access to the supports of the County Offices of Education, the level of academic performance and fiscal solvency determines which mechanism is currently prescribed. The Division of Teacher and Leader Effectiveness will coordinate with other Department resources in considering strategies to address educator equity gaps at the local level.

Regional Achievement Centers

As outlined in New Jersey's 2014 ESEA Waiver Extension, in 2011 the Department launched seven field-based Regional Achievement Centers (RACs) charged with driving improvement in New Jersey's most struggling schools. In doing so, the Department shifted significant resources to directly support "Priority" and "Focus" schools, those schools that are the lowest performing in the state or have significant achievement gaps. Although the RACs focus on schools as the main unit of change, significant collaboration and communication takes place with school districts to ensure cohesive, sustained improvement.

RAC teams work collaboratively with Priority and Focus Schools and their districts to put the following eight research-based turnaround principles into action:

1. **School Leadership**: Ensuring that the principal has the ability to lead the turnaround effort;
2. **School Climate and Culture**: Establishing school environments with a climate conducive to learning and a culture of high expectations;
3. **Effective Instruction**: Ensuring teachers utilize research-based effective instruction to meet the needs of all students;
4. **Curriculum, Assessment, and Intervention System**: Ensuring teachers have the foundational documents and instructional materials needed to teach to the rigorous college and career ready standards that have been adopted;
5. **Effective Staffing Practices**: Developing the skills to better recruit, retain and develop effective teachers;
6. **Enabling the Effective Use of Data**: Ensuring school-wide use of data focused on improving teaching and learning, as well as climate and culture;
7. **Effective Use of Time**: Redesigning time to better meet student needs and increase teacher collaboration focused on improving teaching and learning; and
8. **Effective Family and Community Engagement**: Increasing academically focused family and community engagement.

While all turnaround principles work towards enhancing equity within education, turnaround principle 5, Effective Staffing Practices, specifically addresses educator equity issues. When challenges around effective staffing are identified at a school level, RAC staff members provide direct support in collaboration with the Division of Teacher and Leader Effectiveness.

County Offices of Education

Part of the Division of Field Services, County Offices of Education are the focal point of general support, oversight, and routine communications between local districts and the Department's central offices. Each County Office is led by an Executive County Superintendent and has a core staff, which includes an Executive County Business Official, a County Education Specialist, and a County Child Study Supervisor. The Division of Field services also provides assistance to school districts and charter schools in development comprehensive equity plans to provide quality and equity in educational programs in alignment with Chapter 7 of the New Jersey Administrative Code: Managing for Equality and Equity in Education.

The Office of Intervention

The Office of Intervention provides support to districts to ensure they are meeting the requirements of statute and administrative code and utilizing resources effectively in pursuit of higher levels of student achievement. The Office of Intervention works closely with the RACs and the County Offices in order to achieve this goal and includes human capital specific supports aligned to effective staffing practices.

Retaining Talent in New Jersey: Targeted Support in Hiring and Placement

Identifying Hiring Needs and Sharing Best Practices**:** While EPPARs have been developed to collect critical supply side information regarding the New Jersey teaching force, the Division of Teacher and Leader Effectiveness (TLE), in collaboration with the RACs, sought to better understand the demand for teachers and leaders in our neediest schools. The Department collected vacancy information as well as background on current hiring practices by conducting a survey of all priority schools across the state. As a result of related conversations with the RAC and districts, the Department provided targeted recruitment support to schools and districts based on their individualized needs.

Direct Support for Recruitment, Selection, and Staffing: In various state-operated and monitored districts, TLE has worked to provide direct support when recruitment and selection needs were identified as areas of growth through the New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC) process or third-party, contracted audits. The resulting supports include revision of recruitment strategy tools and related resources, selection models and supplementary materials, executive sourcing services, assistance in identifying and/or securing teacher and leader pipelines, and central office human resources supports, as needed.

Expediting Certification: During peak season (June-August), there is a wait time of approximately 4-6 weeks to issue a teaching certificate. While the timeframe is sufficient for many schools and districts, those recruiting novice and out-of-state candidates well into the summer (and even into the beginning of the school year) need quicker turnaround times in order to ensure teachers are ready to start on the first day of school. While the Department has made a concerted effort to improve lead times overall (down from 8 weeks in 2011), we have created a process to prioritize high-needs schools and districts leading up to the start of school. In one such economically disadvantaged district, the Department expedited more than 20 teacher and administrator certificates within a 2-week timeframe in mid-August 2013, enabling all educators to begin the school year on-time and fully certified.

Support after a Reduction in Force**:** Just prior to the 2014-15 school year, one district heavily supported by RAC interventions was facing a significant Reduction in Force (RIF) based on seniority (per New Jersey statute). Rather than lose talented teaching staff, the TLE division worked with the district to provide career and transition training to all impacted staff. This included offering on-site resume and cover letter workshops, providing easy access to unemployment resources through collaboration with the Department of Labor, and hosting a job fair.

Section 6: Ongoing Monitoring, Public Reporting, and Continuous Improvement

6.1 Monitoring for Accountability: Method and Timeline

The New Jersey Department of Education is committed to the ongoing monitoring of progress against the success of strategies being implemented to close identified equity gaps in alignment with ESEA sections 9304(a)(3)(B) and 1112(c)(1)(L). As such, the Department is committed to the ongoing release of the Certificated Staff Report and the Matrix Reports explained in Section 4. We will continue to collect and analyze relevant data to access metrics with the goal of eliminating 50% of identified areas of inequity within three years and 90% within six years, with a focus on closing identified within school gaps.

6.2 Evaluation, Revision & Reporting

The Department will assess the relevance of equity metrics at the time of data analysis to add or remove metrics, as needed, to ensure the analysis is reflective of New Jersey's needs. For example, additional metrics related to the effectiveness of those strategies outlined above to address root-causes might also be added. Such metrics might include those that capture the percent of educators with multiple endorsements or certifications, teacher attrition, teacher retention, or other evaluation data. Based on the progress we see, metrics may be adjusted to better serve state goals.

The Department is committed to continued reporting on the equity gaps identified through this report and future gaps made evident by the additional data collection efforts detailed in Action 1A and 1B. We will do so by taking the following steps on an annual basis:

- Produce the matrix report for dissemination to LEAs
- Report on educator evaluation and disseminate publicly through the Department's website, external broadcast communication tool, and press release if applicable. Such data will allow NJDOE to assess the equity of access for poor and minority students and identify gaps within and between subgroups.
- Update the Educator Preparation Provider Reports on an annual basis. Currently evaluation data linked back to preparation provider candidates is available only to the providers themselves, however the Department plans to release this publicly in the next 1-2 years. We believe with the new information gathered through evaluation and candidate surveys, the EPPARs will not only serve as helpful information to guide preparation providers, candidates, and recruiters, but the trend data gathered will also be able to help the Department determine and report on the success or failure of our approaches in regards to novice teachers.

In addition, the Department plans to follow federal requirements related to future updates of the Excellent Educators for All Initiative which will include an update of all data points identified in this plan. This information will be made available publicly through the Department's website.

6.3 Continuous Improvement

New Jersey's response to the Excellent Educators of All Initiative builds on the foundation of current state reform efforts and is informed by the New Jersey context. We believe that the strategies described in this report will drive the greatest impact in districts, schools, and classrooms and that, with our district partners, we can continue to improve student achievement across the state. Through the

strategies we have identified, we hope to make a significant change in access to quality educators and meet our target goals.

The landscape of education, like our students, continues to grow and change. Fulfilling the Department's vision of ensuring that every child in New Jersey, regardless of birth circumstance, will graduate from high school college-and-career-ready will require ongoing support from internal and external stakeholders. This includes those serving our students in various roles inside and outside of the classroom. Thus, we will continue to assess the needs of our student communities on an ongoing basis and change this plan, as needed, to meet the overarching commitment within it – to ensure equitable access to effective educators for all students.

Appendix A

The tables below document the equity gaps for each of the subgroups addressed in this report.

2013-14 Gaps between Racial/Ethnic Groups
(Focus: Students of Color)

Race/ Ethnicity group	Percent with at least one first year teacher	Percent with at least one novice teacher (fewer than four years of experience in the district)	Percent with at least one not Highly Qualified teacher	Percent taught by at least one out-of-field teacher	Number of students in group
American Indian	27.4%	63.1%	0.2%	21.5%	1,541
Asian	27.8%	62.0%	0.3%	19.2%	119,728
Black	32.8%	64.7%	0.9%	30.4%	180,037
Hispanic	29.1%	63.7%	0.8%	24.9%	285,289
Multiple races	26.3%	60.5%	0.3%	16.9%	14,572
Pacific Islander	32.1%	64.7%	0.4%	23.0%	2,702
White	28.4%	65.4%	0.3%	21.5%	614,647

2013-14 Gaps between Ability Groups
(Focus: Students with Disabilities)

Special education status	Percent with at least one first year teacher	Percent with at least one novice teacher (fewer than four years of experience in the district)	Percent with at least one not Highly Qualified teacher	Percent taught by at least one out-of-field teacher	Number of students in group
Students without disabilities	30.6%	65.7%	0.7%	23.2%	1,142,107
Students with disabilities	28.6%	64.3%	0.7%	23.9%	208,016

2013-14 Gaps between Language Proficiency Groups
(Focus: Students with Limited English Proficiency)

Limited English Proficiency	Percent with at least one first year teacher	Percent with at least one novice teacher (fewer than four years of experience in the district)	Percent with at least one not Highly Qualified teacher	Percent taught by at least one out-of-field teacher	Number of students in group
Not Limited English Proficient	30.5%	65.8%	0.7%	23.3%	1,289,208
Limited English Proficient	26.8%	59.1%	0.5%	22.1%	60,915

2013-14 Gaps between Groups of Varied Economic Status
(Focus: Students who are Economically Disadvantaged)

Economic Disadvantage Status	Percent with at least one first year teacher	Percent with at least one novice teacher (fewer than four years of experience in the district)	Percent with at least one not Highly Qualified teacher	Percent taught by at least one out-of-field teacher	Number of students in group
Students not at economic disadvantage	30.4%	66.4%	0.7%	21.7%	905,520
Students at economic disadvantage	30.0%	63.5%	0.8%	26.4%	444,603