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To: Superintendents of Focus Districts

From: Ira Schwartz, Assistant Commissioner *Ira Schwartz*

Date: November 2013

Subject: Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness Professional Learning Community and Certification Programs

The purpose of this memo is to inform you about the Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness (DTSDE) Professional Learning Community and the DTSDE Certification Program, two new initiatives designed to build the capacity of staff within Focus Districts in the DTSDE review process. The deadline for applying for the DTSDE Professional Learning Community program is December 9, 2013 and the deadline for applying for the DTSDE Certification program is November 27, 2013.

DTSDE Professional Learning Community

The DTSDE Professional Learning Community (PLC) is an opportunity for interested districts with Priority, Focus, or Reward Schools to participate in a learning environment where specific concepts aligned to the DTSDE rubric will be explored in a collaborative forum. Districts interested in participating in the PLC must identify a specific DTSDE tenet(s) or a statement(s) of practice for which the district is seeking to build greater capacity or expertise to help fulfill the goals and expectations of the district's existing DCIP. The district is expected to select a school that will jointly participate in the PLC experience and serve as the focus of the implementation efforts outlined in the district's DCIP. The PLC will help districts develop strategies for how to successfully adopt organizational systems, structures, and best practices that will create a culture of success for the district and school community by focusing on two concepts that undergird turnaround concepts, adult development and systems thinking. The PLC will provide participating districts with the opportunity to engage in a rich learning experience and exchange with other districts, national and state experts, as well as organizations dedicated to education reform and innovation that will support the district's implementation of key district-wide turnaround goals and initiatives.

The PLC will convene for both face-to-face sessions and web-based interactive sessions from January to May. Each PLC will have a topic or theme of focus for each month and may be facilitated by national education reform experts, NYSED senior staff, and/or Regents Research Fund fellows. A PLC discussion forum may also be facilitated by a participating district. The PLC will have weekly activities for each month that it is taking place. There will also be face-to-face sessions in January, February, May and July.

We anticipate being able to accommodate up to ten districts and ten school leaders. To participate in the PLC, interested districts must complete the enclosed District Readiness Assessment and submit it by **Monday, December 9, 2013** via e-mail to DTSDereviews@mail.nysed.gov.

DTSDE Certification Program

The DTSDE Certification Program is designed to build the expertise and capacity of staff within Focus Districts to conduct the DTSDE review process. Selected candidates will participate in monthly professional development during the 2013-2014 school year that will engage the participants in school visits to closely examine a discreet DTSDE protocol, sub-statement of practice, or Tenet.

Upon completion of the DTSDE Certification Program in July, candidates will be certified and have gained the knowledge, expertise and skill sets to successfully lead a DTSDE review, write a high-quality DTSDE report, deliver quality professional development aligned to the DTSDE, and implement their District's DTSDE capacity plan.

Prospective candidates for this program must complete a DTSDE Certification Application and create a District Capacity plan. This two-pronged application process is designed to assess both individual reviewer capacity for certification as well as district-level commitment to the DTSDE process. The DTSDE certification application will measure the candidate's ability to perform tasks aligned to the DTSDE process.

All Focus Districts are eligible to have representatives participate in the DTSDE Certification Program. To be eligible to apply for the DTSDE Certification Program, candidates must have participated in at least three DTSDE training sessions during the 2012-2013 school year. Candidates must be employees of a Focus District, except that districts with three or fewer Priority and Focus schools may request that their contracted Outside Educational Expert participate in the DTSDE Certification Program. Districts with fewer than 20 Priority and Focus schools may nominate one person to participate in the DTSDE Certification Program. Districts with 20 or more Priority and Focus Schools may nominate up to three persons. Program participation is limited to 30 participants.

Participating Title I eligible districts may apply for a 1003(a) School Improvement Grant of \$5,000 per participant up to a maximum of \$20,000 for multiple participants to support rollout of lessons learned during Certification, including implementation of the District Capacity Plan. Applications for this grant will be posted shortly.

Interested candidates should complete the enclosed DTSDE Certification Application, including District Capacity Plan and submit via email to: DTSDereviews@mail.nysed.gov by Wednesday, **November 27, 2013**. More information regarding the program is available in the Certification Application.

Should you have any questions about the Certification Program or the Professional Learning Community, please contact the Office of School and District Review through

our electronic mailbox at DTSDereviews@mail.nysed.gov and designated staff will respond to the query as expeditiously as possible.

We look forward to supporting your improvement efforts in the new school year.

Enclosures

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