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To: District Superintendents, Superintendents of Focus Districts, and Principals of Priority/Focus Charter Schools

From: Ira Schwartz, Assistant Commissioner *Ira Schwartz*

Subject: Accountability Status of Schools for 2015-16 and 2016-17: No Longer Identified as a Focus District

Date: January 2016

Congratulations. This memo is to inform you that the New York State Education Department (NYSED or “the Department”) has not re-identified your district as a Focus District. The district does not meet the requirements for identification as a Focus District, based on 2014-15 school performance and consequently the District and each of its schools has been given a designation of in Good Standing. The criterion for the identification of Focus Districts and Focus Charter Schools is included for your reference in Attachment A. This notification is for informational purposes only and is embargoed until the Department publicly releases this information. The data used to make this accountability determination can be found within the following files in the Information and Reporting Services (IRS) portal at: <http://portal.nysed.gov/portal/page/pref/PortalApp>.

File Name	Posted
FocusDistrictIdentification.xls	Yes
FocusSchoolIdentification.xls	Yes
PrioritySchoolIdentification.xls	Yes
AccountabilityStatusFeb2016.xls	Yes
District&SchoolMGP.xls	Yes
DataDictionary.xls	Yes

Districts removed from Focus status are not required to participate in Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness (DTSDE) training or reviews or complete a District Comprehensive Improvement Plan (DCIP).

If the district has had schools removed from Priority status, those schools must complete implementation of their previously approved 1003(g) School Improvement Grant (SIG), School Innovation Fund model (SIF), or Whole School Reform model, as described in the school’s approved SCEP plan. If the district has schools that have been removed from Focus status, those schools are required to maintain any efforts or improvements put in place as a result of their former Focus status through the end of the 2016-17 school year.

If the district has schools that were removed from Priority status and are also identified as Persistently Struggling or Struggling, those schools remain subject to the requirements of Receivership under Commissioner's Regulations §100.19 until the end of the 2015-16 school year. These schools must continue to implement their Department-approved intervention plan for the full three-year period required under the regulation. Under separate cover, the Office Innovation and School Reform will provide further information regarding the implications of a Struggling or Persistently Struggling School that has been removed from Priority School status.

Please note: Although a district may no longer meet the criteria for identification as a Focus District based on 2014-15 school performance, the district may have schools that may meet the criteria for identification as Local Assistance Plan (LAP) schools based on 2014-15 school performance. The Department will inform districts regarding schools that are identified as LAP Schools or Reward Schools in the spring of 2016. For more information on the identification criteria for LAP Schools, please visit the Office of Accountability's website at: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/accountability/ESEAMaterials.html>.

We applaud your efforts and look forward to assisting your district in having all of its students achieve college- and career-ready standards.

Should you have any questions and/or need additional information, please contact the Office of Accountability via e-mail at accountinfo@nysed.gov.

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ATTACHMENT A
Criteria for Identification of Focus Districts & Focus Charter Schools

The Department identified Focus Schools based on the following factors, as defined in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) waiver guidance:

- Schools with the lowest achievement of subgroups in terms of proficiency on the statewide assessments that are part of the state’s differentiated recognition, accountability and support system and are not making progress as defined by New York’s progress filters.
- High schools with the lowest Graduation Rate for subgroups that are not making progress as defined by New York’s progress filters.

The Department identified Focus Schools using a two-stage process. NYSED first identified Focus Districts and Focus Charter Schools with the lowest achieving subgroups for Performance Index (PI) and Graduation Rate that were not demonstrating progress. NYSED then identified the lowest performing Title I schools statewide within the identified Focus Districts. Non-Title I schools within the Focus Districts and Charter Schools that met the Focus District cut points were also identified as Focus Schools.

The methodology used to identify the Focus Districts, Focus Charter Schools and Focus Schools is described below:

A. District Identification Based on PI

1. For each district, the average 2014-15 Performance Index (PI) of ELA and mathematics for each accountable subgroup is determined for the elementary-middle grade level and for the secondary grade level separately.

Example:

- District A had an elementary-middle Hispanic subgroup ELA PI of 80 and mathematics PI of 90. The average elementary-middle level Hispanic subgroup PI for District A will be $(80+90)/2$ is 85.
 - District A had a secondary level White subgroup ELA PI of 120 and mathematics PI of 100. The average secondary level White subgroup PI for District A will be $(120+100)/2$ is 110.
2. The subgroup’s combined 2013-14 and 2014-15 ELA and mathematics Mean Student Growth Percentile (MGP) is determined. If the MGP is above the state average then for the elementary-middle level the subgroup is removed from those for which the district can be identified as a Focus District.

Example:

- District B is accountable for Black, Hispanic and Economically Disadvantaged (ED) subgroups. The combined 2013-14 and 2014-15 ELA and mathematics MGP for Black students is 48.50, for Hispanic students it is 49.34, and for ED students it is 50.91. The state average MGP is 49.22, 51.10, and 50.89 respectively.
- The ED subgroup’s MGP is above the state average; therefore at the elementary-middle level the subgroup’s PI will be removed for those for which the District can be

identified. District B can now be identified only for the Black and Hispanic subgroups for PI at the elementary-middle level.

3. If the subgroup's 2010 4-year or 2009 5-year cohort Graduation Rate is above the state average, then for the elementary-middle and secondary levels the subgroup's PI is removed from those for which the district can be identified as a Focus District.

Example:

- District C's 2010 4-year Graduation Rate for Black students is 69, for Asian students is 72 and for White students is 67. The state average is 67, 85, and 89, respectively. The Black subgroup's Graduation Rate is above the state average and therefore at the elementary-middle and secondary levels the subgroup's PI will be removed for the subgroups for which the district can be identified. District C can now be identified only for the White and Asian subgroups, if the PI's for these subgroups are below the cut points for preliminary identification.
4. If the subgroup made a 10 percent gap reduction in average ELA and mathematics PI from 2013-14, then the subgroup was removed from consideration for identification for that grade level.
 5. If the subgroup made a 10 point gain in average ELA and mathematics PI from 2013-14, then the subgroup was removed from consideration for identification for that grade level.
 6. If the subgroup made the 2013-14 and 2014-15 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) both for ELA and mathematics, then the subgroup was removed from consideration for identification for that grade level.

Example:

- District D had been preliminarily identified for the performance of the ED subgroup for the secondary level. The district made AYP (both ELA and mathematics) for the ED subgroup at the secondary level for 2013-14 and 2014-15; therefore the district was not identified for the ED subgroup for the secondary level.
7. For the elementary-middle and for the secondary levels the lowest performing racial/ethnic subgroup (American Indian, Asian, Black, Hispanic, White, and multi-racial) will be used in the computation of the PI cut point for the preliminary identification of racial/ethnic subgroups.

Example:

- District E had elementary-middle 2014-15 combined ELA and mathematics Asian PI of 50, Black PI of 70, Hispanic PI of 80, and White PI of 60. The elementary-middle level race/ethnicity PI for District A will be 50 (minimum PI amongst all the racial/ethnic subgroups) for the purposes of establishing the PI cut point for preliminary identification of racial/ethnic subgroups.
8. For the elementary-middle and secondary levels separately, the number of districts that have accountability subgroups with PI for the Students with Disabilities (SWD), limited English proficient (LEP), ED, and a race/ethnicity subgroup were determined. The counts are based

on the total number of accountable subgroups statewide – without removing any subgroup for reasons stated in steps 2 to 6. Then six percent of the counts for elementary-middle and secondary level accountable subgroups, and five percent of the counts for Graduation Rate accountability subgroups were determined.

Example:

- There are a total of 604 districts with an accountable SWD subgroup for the elementary-middle level in the state. Six percent of 604 is 36.2. The count of low-achieving districts that will be identified for elementary-middle level PI for the SWD subgroup is 36.
9. For the SWD subgroup the elementary-middle PI is sorted in descending order. Districts that have met one of the progress filters outlined in steps 2 to 6 are removed. From the bottom the required 36 districts are counted. The PI associated with the 36th district from the bottom is the cut point for the SWD subgroup.

Example:

- The Department selects the bottom 36 districts for the SWD subgroup (based on 604 districts that are accountable for students with disabilities at this grade level) after removing those that have met one or more of the “progress filters” in steps 2 to 6. These 36 districts are identified for their SWD subgroup. If more than one district has the same PI (rounded to the nearest decimal point) that has been established as the cut point, then all districts at the cut point are identified such that the number of identified districts shall be 36 or more.
10. Step 9 is repeated for the LEP, ED and race/ethnicity subgroups for the elementary-middle and secondary levels separately. The districts with PI in this list will not include any district that has met one of the progress filters for the respective subgroups in the respective grade levels outlined in steps 2 to 6.
11. If any of the subgroups American Indian, Asian, Black, Hispanic, White, or multi-racial has a PI equal to or less than the cut point for race/ethnicity subgroup (see Step 7), then that subgroup is identified. This is done separately for the elementary-middle and secondary levels.

Example:

- Statewide there are 703 districts with an accountable race/ethnicity subgroup for the elementary-middle level. Six percent of 703 is 42.2. The race/ethnicity PI is sorted in descending order and the bottom 42 districts are selected. The race/ethnicity minimum PI for the district with the highest PI in the selection is the cut point for the racial/ethnic subgroups.
- Any district that has a race or ethnicity subgroup at the elementary-middle level with a PI at or below that cut point will be identified for that subgroup.

B. District identification based on Graduation Rate

1. All the districts with their 2010 4-year Graduation Rate for each accountable subgroup are listed. The subgroup(s) where the Graduation Rate is above the state average is removed for identification as a Focus District for Graduation Rate.

Example:

- District F had a 2010 4-year SWD Graduation Rate of 55, Hispanic Graduation Rate of 67 and LEP Graduation Rate of 38. The state average is 54, 66, and 45, respectively.
 - The SWD and Hispanic Graduation Rates are above the state average and therefore the subgroups will be removed from those for which the district can be considered for identification. The district can still be considered for identification for the LEP subgroup.
2. If the subgroup's 2010 4-year or 2009 5-year Graduation Rate is above the state average, then the subgroup is removed from those for which the district can be identified for Graduation Rate.

Example:

- District G is accountable for the Black, LEP and ED subgroups.
 - The Black subgroup's 2009 5-year Graduation Rate is above the state average and therefore the subgroup is removed from those for which the district can be considered for identification for Graduation Rate. The district may now be identified only for the LEP and ED subgroups for Graduation Rate.
3. If the subgroup's gain in Graduation Rate from the 2008 4-year graduation rate cohort to 2010 4-year graduation rate cohort is 10 percent or more, then the subgroup will be removed from those for which the district can be identified for Graduation Rate.

Example:

- District H is accountable only for the Black subgroup. The subgroup's 2008 4-year Graduation Rate was 40 percent and the 2010 4-year Graduation Rate is 55 percent.
 - The subgroup made a 15 percent gain and the district is now not identifiable for any subgroups for Graduation Rate.
4. If the subgroup's gain in Graduation Rate from the 2009 4-year graduation rate cohort to 2010 4- year graduation rate cohort is 10 percent or more, then the subgroup will be removed from those for which the district can be identified for Graduation Rate.
 5. If the subgroup's gain in Graduation Rate from the 2008 5-year graduation rate cohort to 2009 5- year graduation rate cohort is 10 percent or more, then the subgroup will be removed from those for which the district can be identified for Graduation Rate.
 6. If the subgroup makes a 10 percent or more gap reduction from the 2009 4-year graduation rate cohort to 2010 4- year graduation rate cohort, then the subgroup will be removed from those for which the district can be identified for Graduation Rate.

7. Districts that have made the 2013-14 and 2014-15 AYP for the preliminarily identified subgroup(s) in Graduation Rate will not be considered for identification as a Focus District for Graduation Rate for those subgroup(s).

Example:

- District I is accountable for the Asian, LEP and ED subgroups for Graduation Rate.
 - The LEP subgroup made AYP in 2013-14 and 2014-15; therefore the district will not be considered for identification for the LEP subgroup. The district can now be identified only for the Asian and ED subgroups for Graduation Rate.
8. For each district, the minimum 2010 4-year Graduation Rate for the race/ethnicity subgroup is determined using the process described in Step 7 under the section “District Identification Based on PI.”
 9. The number of districts that have accountability subgroups with the 2010 4-year Graduation Rate for the Students with Disabilities (SWD), limited English proficient (LEP), ED, and a race/ethnicity subgroup are determined. Then five percent of the counts of districts are determined for each subgroup. The counts are based on the total number of accountable subgroups statewide – without removing any subgroup for reasons stated in steps 2 to 7 above.

Example:

- There are a total of 242 districts with an accountable SWD subgroup for Graduation Rate in the state. Five percent of 242 is 12. This is the count of low achieving districts that are required to be identified for the SWD subgroup for Graduation Rate. If more than one district has the same Graduation Rate that has been established as the cut point, then all districts at the cut point are identified such that the number of identified districts shall be 12 or more.
10. After applying the progress filters listed in steps 2 to 7, the SWD subgroup Graduation Rate is sorted in descending order. From the bottom the required 12 districts are selected.
 11. Repeat step 8 for the LEP, ED and race/ethnicity subgroups.
 12. If any of the subgroups American Indian, Asian, Black, Hispanic, White, or multi-racial has a Graduation Rate equal to or less than the cut point for race/ethnicity subgroup, then that subgroup will be identified.

Example:

- Statewide there are 652 districts with an accountable race/ethnicity subgroup with Graduation Rate. Five percent of 652 is 32.6. The race/ethnicity Graduation Rate is sorted in descending order and the bottom 33 districts are selected. The race/ethnicity minimum Graduation Rate for the district with the highest Graduation Rate in the selection is the cut point for the racial/ethnic subgroups.
- Any district that has a race or ethnicity subgroup with a Graduation Rate at or below the cut point will be identified for that subgroup.

13. Districts are identified as Focus Districts if any subgroup is identified either through the PI or Graduation Rate methodology.
14. Special Act Districts are identified only if they have Priority Schools.
15. Districts with Priority Schools automatically become Focus Districts.

C. Focus Charter Identification

Charter schools that had an accountable subgroup(s) with average 2014-15 PI of ELA and mathematics or 2010 4-year Graduation Rate at or below the cut points established for Focus Districts and were not removed because of the “progress filters” were identified as Focus Schools.