STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

ESEA Waiver Request from New Jersey

November 14, 2011
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New Jersey Department of Education
Trenton, NJ 08625

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COVER SHEET FOR ESEA FLEXIBILITY REQUEST

Legal Name of Requester: Christopher D. Cerf Acting Commissioner New Jersey Department of Education	Requester's Mailing Address: 100 River View Plaza PO Box 500 Trenton, NJ 08625-0500
State Contact for the ESEA Flexibility Request Name: Christopher D. Cerf Position and Office: Acting Commissioner of Education Contact's Mailing Address: N.J. Department of Education 100 River View Plaza P.O. Box 500 Trenton, NJ 08625 Telephone: (609) 292-1722 Fax: (609) 777-4099 Email address: Chris.Cerf@doe.state.nj.us	
Chief State School Officer (Printed Name): Christopher D. Cerf	Telephone: (609) 292-1722
Signature of the Chief State School Officer: X_____	Date: November 14, 2011
The State, through its authorized representative, agrees to meet all principles of the ESEA Flexibility.	

LABEL	LIST OF ATTACHMENTS	PAGE
1	Notice to LEAs	219
2	Comments on request received from LEAs (if applicable)	222
3	Notice and information provided to the public regarding the request	338
4	Evidence that the State has formally adopted college- and career-ready content standards consistent with the State's standards adoption process	354
5	Memorandum of understanding or letter from a State network of institutions of higher education (IHEs) certifying that meeting the State's standards corresponds to being college- and career-ready without the need for remedial coursework at the postsecondary level (if applicable)	n/a
6	State's Race to the Top Assessment Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (if applicable)	356
7	Evidence that the SEA has submitted high-quality assessments and academic achievement standards to the Department for peer review, or a timeline of when the SEA will submit the assessments and academic achievement standards to the Department for peer review (if applicable)	n/a
8	A copy of the average Statewide proficiency based on assessments administered in the 2010□2011 school year in reading/language arts and mathematics for the "all students" group and all subgroups (if applicable).	n/a
9	Table 2: Reward, Priority, and Focus Schools	383
10	A copy of any guidelines that the SEA has already developed and adopted for local teacher and principal evaluation and support systems (if applicable).	n/a
11	Evidence that the SEA has adopted one or more guidelines of local teacher and principal evaluation and support systems	n/a

WAIVERS

By submitting this flexibility request, the SEA requests flexibility through waivers of the ten ESEA requirements listed below and their associated regulatory, administrative, and reporting requirements by checking each of the boxes below. The provisions below represent the general areas of flexibility requested; a chart appended to the document titled *ESEA Flexibility Frequently Asked Questions* enumerates each specific provision of which the SEA requests a waiver, which the SEA incorporates into its request by reference.

☒ 1. The requirements in ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(E)-(H) that prescribe how an SEA must establish annual measurable objectives (AMOs) for determining adequate yearly progress (AYP) to ensure that all students meet or exceed the State's proficient level of academic achievement on the State's assessments in reading/language arts and mathematics no later than the end of the 2013–2014 school year. The SEA requests this waiver to develop new ambitious but achievable AMOs in reading/language arts and mathematics in order to provide meaningful goals that are used to guide support and improvement efforts for the State, LEAs, schools, and student subgroups.

☒ 2. The requirements in ESEA section 1116(b) for an LEA to identify for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring, as appropriate, a Title I school that fails, for two consecutive years or more, to make AYP, and for a school so identified and its LEA to take certain improvement actions. The SEA requests this waiver so that an LEA and its Title I schools need not comply with these requirements.

☒ 3. The requirements in ESEA section 1116(c) for an SEA to identify for improvement or corrective action, as appropriate, an LEA that, for two consecutive years or more, fails to make AYP, and for an LEA so identified and its SEA to take certain improvement actions. The SEA requests this waiver so that it need not comply with these requirements with respect to its LEAs.

☒ 4. The requirements in ESEA sections 6213(b) and 6224(e) that limit participation in, and use of funds under the Small, Rural School Achievement (SRSA) and Rural and Low-Income School (RLIS) programs based on whether an LEA has made AYP and is complying with the requirements in ESEA section 1116. The SEA requests this waiver so that an LEA that receives SRSA or RLIS funds may use those funds for any authorized purpose regardless of whether the LEA makes AYP.

☒ 5. The requirement in ESEA section 1114(a)(1) that a school have a poverty percentage of 40 percent or more in order to operate a school-wide program. The SEA requests this waiver so that an LEA may implement interventions consistent with the turnaround principles or interventions that are based on the needs of the students in the school and designed to enhance the entire educational program in a school in any of its Priority and Focus Schools, as appropriate, even if those schools do not have a poverty percentage of 40

percent or more.

☒ 6. The requirement in ESEA section 1003(a) for an SEA to distribute funds reserved under that section only to LEAs with schools identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring. The SEA requests this waiver so that it may allocate section 1003(a) funds to its LEAs in order to serve any of the State's Priority and Focus Schools.

☒ 7. The provision in ESEA section 1117(c)(2)(A) that authorizes an SEA to reserve Title I, Part A funds to reward a Title I school that (1) significantly closed the achievement gap between subgroups in the school; or (2) has exceeded AYP for two or more consecutive years. The SEA requests this waiver so that it may use funds reserved under ESEA section 1117(c)(2)(A) for any of the State's Reward Schools.

☒ 8. The requirements in ESEA section 2141(a), (b), and (c) for an LEA and SEA to comply with certain requirements for improvement plans regarding highly qualified teachers. The SEA requests this waiver to allow the SEA and its LEAs to focus on developing and implementing more meaningful evaluation and support systems.

☒ 9. The limitations in ESEA section 6123 that limit the amount of funds an SEA or LEA may transfer from certain ESEA programs to other ESEA programs. The SEA requests this waiver so that it and its LEAs may transfer up to 100 percent of the funds it receives under the authorized programs among those programs and into Title I, Part A.

☒ 10. The requirements in ESEA section 1003(g)(4) and the definition of a Tier I school in Section I.A.3 of the School Improvement Grants (SIG) final requirements. The SEA requests this waiver so that it may award SIG funds to an LEA to implement one of the four SIG models in any of the State's Priority Schools.

Optional Flexibility:

An SEA should check the box below only if it chooses to request a waiver of the following requirements:

☒ The requirements in ESEA sections 4201(b)(1)(A) and 4204(b)(2)(A) that restrict the activities provided by a community learning center under the Twenty-First Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program to activities provided only during non-school hours or periods when school is not in session (*i.e.*, before and after school or during summer recess). The SEA requests this waiver so that 21st CCLC funds may be used to support expanded learning time during the school day in addition to activities during non-school hours or periods when school is not in session.

ASSURANCES

By submitting this application, the SEA assures that:

☒ 1. It requests waivers of the above-referenced requirements based on its agreement to meet Principles 1 through 4 of the flexibility, as described throughout the remainder of this request.

☒ 2. It will adopt English language proficiency (ELP) standards that correspond to the State's college- and career-ready standards, consistent with the requirement in ESEA section 3113(b)(2), and that reflect the academic language skills necessary to access and meet the new college- and career-ready standards, no later than the 2013–2014 school year. (Principle 1)

☒ 3. It will develop and administer no later than the 2014–2015 school year alternate assessments based on grade-level academic achievement standards or alternate assessments based on alternate academic achievement standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities that are consistent with 34 C.F.R. § 200.6(a)(2) and are aligned with the State's college- and career-ready standards. (Principle 1)

☒ 4. It will develop and administer ELP assessments aligned with the State's ELP standards, consistent with the requirements in ESEA sections 1111(b)(7), 3113(b)(2), and 3122(a)(3)(A)(ii). (Principle 1)

☒ 5. It will report annually to the public on college-going and college credit-accumulation rates for all students and subgroups of students in each LEA and each public high school in the State. (Principle 1)

☒ 6. If the SEA includes student achievement on assessments in addition to reading/language arts and mathematics in its differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system and uses achievement on those assessments to identify Priority and Focus Schools, it has technical documentation, which can be made available to the Department upon request, demonstrating that the assessments are administered Statewide; include all students, including by providing appropriate accommodations for English Learners and students with disabilities, as well as alternate assessments based on grade-level academic achievement standards or alternate assessments based on alternate academic achievement standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, consistent with 34 C.F.R. § 200.6(a)(2); and are valid and reliable for use in the SEA's differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system. (Principle 2)

☒ 7. It will report to the public its lists of Reward Schools, Priority Schools, and Focus Schools at the time the SEA is approved to implement the flexibility, and annually thereafter, it will publicly recognize its Reward Schools. (Principle 2)

☒ 8. It will report annually to the public and each LEA will annually report to its SEA and to the public, beginning no later than the 2014–2015 school year, on the aggregate distribution of teachers and principals by performance level, including the percentage of teachers and principals by performance level at the State, LEA, and school level, and by school poverty quartile within the State and LEA. (Principle 3)

☒ 9. Prior to submitting this request, it provided student growth data on their current students and the students they taught in the previous year to, at a minimum, teachers of reading/language arts and mathematics in grades in which the State administers assessments in those subjects in a manner that is timely and informs instructional programs, or it will do so no later the deadline required under the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund. (Principle 3)

☒ 10. It will evaluate and, based on that evaluation, revise its own administrative requirements to reduce duplication and unnecessary burden on LEAs and schools. (Principle 4)

☒ 11. It has consulted with its Committee of Practitioners regarding the information set forth in its request.

☒ 12. Prior to submitting this request, it provided all LEAs with notice and a reasonable opportunity to comment on the request and has attached a copy of that notice (Attachment 1) as well as copies of any comments it received from LEAs (Attachment 2).

☒ 13. Prior to submitting this request, it provided notice and information regarding the request to the public in the manner in which the State customarily provides such notice and information to the public (*e.g.*, by publishing a notice in the newspaper; by posting information on its website) and has attached a copy of, or link to, that notice (Attachment 3).

☒ 14. It will provide to the Department, in a timely manner, all required reports, data, and evidence regarding its progress in implementing the plans contained throughout this request.

If the SEA selects Option A or B in section 3.A of its request, indicating that it has not yet developed and adopted all guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation and support systems, it must also assure that:

☒ 15. It will submit to the Department for peer review and approval a copy of the guidelines that it will adopt by the end of the 2011–2012 school year. (Principle 3)

CONSULTATION

An SEA must meaningfully engage and solicit input from diverse stakeholders and communities in the development of its request. To demonstrate that an SEA has done so, the SEA must provide an assurance that it has consulted with the State's Committee of Practitioners regarding the information set forth in the request and provide the following:

1. A description of how the SEA meaningfully engaged and solicited input on its request from teachers and their representatives.

Although the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) has had only a matter of weeks to solicit input from the public and other stakeholders on this specific waiver application, for more than two years, the Department has sought wide-ranging feedback on a variety of issues that are central to this request.

In June 2010, the New Jersey State Board of Education (NJSBOE) adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). As part of the adoption process, the NJDOE and the NJSBOE held two public comment opportunities. In addition, the NJDOE solicited comment from educators across the State by email. After adoption, the NJDOE held over 300 meetings with educators and other district/school staff to discuss the new standards and provide support for their implementation.

In order to develop a new teacher evaluation system, the New Jersey Educator Effectiveness Task Force (EETF), a nine-member task force charged with studying and developing recommendations to guide the creation of a fair and transparent system of educator evaluations, met 12 times between November 2010 and March 2011 and solicited input from educators and experts from across the State. Once the Task Force issued its report in March 2011, Acting Commissioner Chris Cerf and the NJDOE staff met with educators across the State to discuss the findings.

Using the recommendations of this Task Force, this year, the NJDOE is conducting a voluntary pilot in 11 districts and School Improvement Grant (SIG) schools to help develop the teacher evaluation system before statewide rollout. Numerous feedback mechanisms have been put in place, including a statewide evaluation pilot advisory committee (EPAC) made up of a broad array of stakeholders, and local advisory committees in each of the districts and SIG schools. This input from educators will be crucial as we learn about the successes and challenges of implementing a new teacher evaluation system.

The NJDOE took an aggressive approach to engage and obtain input from teachers and their representatives to inform the development of this waiver application itself. Between October 11 and October 24, the NJDOE posted the guidance documents from the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) on the NJDOE website and solicited feedback from teachers and the general public in each area of the application before developing the initial plan. In order to reach as many teachers as possible, we sent out links through the following channels:

1. Both the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) affiliates in New Jersey, asking for their assistance to pass the link to their members;

2. Media;
3. Education partner lists including a number of teachers, parents, and administrators;
4. Broad stakeholder lists including educators, partners, advocacy organizations, and miscellaneous contacts; and
5. Associations for superintendents, school board members, principals, and parent associations.

This outreach netted 41 comments from stakeholders across the State, including teachers. These comments helped to inform the initial draft.

In addition, the NJDOE leadership held face-to-face meetings with representatives from both the New Jersey Education Association (NJEA), the statewide organization that represents NEA teachers in New Jersey, as well as the New Jersey AFT affiliate. In each of these meetings, the NJDOE discussed the federal guidance and the opportunities presented in the waiver. The NJEA submitted written suggestions around the three principles, and after the meeting followed up with additional written suggestions.

To foster a continuous dialogue between stakeholders and the NJDOE, we repeated this outreach process after the development of the initial request. On November 3, the NJDOE released an 11-page draft outline to share initial details of its waiver application. From November 3 through November 9, the NJDOE repeated the outreach to solicit feedback from educators and other community members through its website. During that time, the NJDOE received 192 comments on its draft outline.

The NJDOE again solicited input from the NJEA and AFT groups on the outline, and the NJEA again submitted written suggestions.

Through this process, recommendations from the NJEA, AFT leadership, and from teachers across the State complemented initial thinking by the Department and helped to prioritize certain aspects of the plan. This includes, but is not limited to, the components listed below.

- Focus on curricular and instructional supports for all schools, and as a main intervention in Focus and Priority Schools. Specific feedback complemented NJDOE planning in the application, including:
    - The development of optional model curriculum for K-12 ELA and Math tied to the CCSS;
    - Better articulation of K-16 alignment with specific input of higher education leaders;
    - Improved data for teachers on specific proficiencies through the development of model assessments;
    - Additional on-the-ground support to teachers in turning the CCSS from a plan in Trenton to one that will have an impact in every classroom; and
    - Ensuring high-quality instructional support for teachers and capacity building within LEAs, through our Regional Achievement Centers (RACs).

- Awards and recognitions. The direction of our plan for Reward Schools was informed from these groups, including:
    - Using an Annual Effective Practices Conference to share best practices and allow struggling schools to connect with Reward Schools that are achieving in areas where they

are currently struggling;

- o Providing financial incentives that will be spent through the collaboration of the school principal, teachers, and parent representative;
- o Providing scholarships for teachers to obtain National Board Certification; and
- o Developing a larger focus on celebrating successes through planned events and statewide press releases.

After developing a draft outline of this waiver application, the NJDOE solicited additional feedback from teachers and met again with representatives from the NJEA. Through this additional round of feedback, the NJDOE made substantive changes to its proposal including, but not limited to, the following:

- Non-categorized schools. Though the original draft plan did not include such a requirement, input from these groups encouraged the NJDOE to include a requirement that non-categorized schools discuss the new performance reports publicly and develop written annual improvement targets to address areas of deficiency that will be reviewed by their Boards of Education.
- Teacher evaluation pilot. This September, the NJDOE initiated a teacher evaluation pilot in 11 districts across the State, in order to collaboratively develop a new statewide teacher evaluation system with educators and to learn from the successes and challenges in implementing the system. As part of this pilot, the NJDOE is on track to develop Student Growth Percentiles (SGP) by next September for each student and teacher in 4th through 8th grade ELA and math across the State through our longitudinal data system, NJSMART (NJ Standards Measurement and Resource for Teaching). While this year only 11 districts are participating in the pilot, next year all districts will roll out the new evaluation system. Based on input from teachers and others, however, we will only require districts to implement the new evaluation system in a subset of their schools in the 2012-13 school year. We will continue to view next year as a year of refinement, collaboration, and learning, and in that sense are treating this expansion as a second year of the pilot, in order to prepare for statewide rollout to all schools in the 2013-14 school year. The ultimate contours of the pilot's second year will be finalized in the months to come as more information is collected from the pilot's first year and the NJDOE receives additional recommendations from its advisory committees and other stakeholders.

2. A description of how the SEA meaningfully engaged and solicited input on its request from other diverse communities, such as students, parents, community-based organizations, civil rights organizations, organizations representing students with disabilities and English Learners, business organizations, and Indian tribes.

In addition to feedback requested from the general public outlined above both before and after developing an initial draft request, the NJDOE met with a number of stakeholders in person to discuss the waiver. This list includes, but is not limited to:

1. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) advisory group, consisting of statewide associations; NJSBOE, NEA and AFT union representatives, charter school lead persons, superintendents, assistant/associate superintendents, directors/supervisors, Federal Program Administrators, principal, non public representatives, substance abuse coordinators, parent representatives, and

higher education representatives. This group includes 17 representatives of Title III/English Language Learners (ELL) programs from districts across New Jersey, in addition to Special Education representatives;

2. Special education advisory group, consisting of 22 statewide special education representatives. This group gave targeted feedback on the impacts on Special Education students;
3. Governor's Education Transformation Task Force (ETTF), consisting of eight members including school administrators and other education stakeholders across the State;
4. Professional associations including the AFT, NJEA, New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA), New Jersey Association of School Administrators (NJASA), New Jersey Association of School Business Officials (NJASBO), New Jersey Congress of Parents and Teachers (NJCPT), New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association (NJPSA); and
5. County curriculum coordinators across the State.

In addition, we solicited feedback from the following organizations by email. This outreach is in addition to the representatives of teachers and groups listed above, which already include representatives of the Special Education and ELL communities.

1. Educator Effectiveness Task Force, consisting of nine members;
2. New Jersey county teachers of the year;
3. Garden State Coalition of Schools (an umbrella organization for a wide array of education stakeholders);
4. Higher education representatives;
5. Civil rights groups and community leaders from high-need communities, including a specific outreach to over 50 leaders from urban cities and civil rights groups across New Jersey;
6. Business organizations; and
7. Parent email lists containing over 18,000 e-mail addresses.

The NJDOE has developed an extensive outreach plan to communities to discuss the implementation of this waiver plan. This outreach plan will focus both on educators and community members, especially in our highest-need communities where the majority of Focus and Priority Schools exist. The outreach plan will include educators of Special Education and ELL students as specific stakeholders. Among others, the plan will include:

- Extensive outreach over the next 9 months about the new RACs – their roles, delivery plans, and supports and interventions for struggling schools;
- Continued support and training on the implementation of the CCSS. Beyond the rollout of model curriculum and assessments for educators, the NJDOE will conduct training and supports across the State that will include a unique focus on implementation for special education and ELL teachers;
- Outreach and training for districts and educators on the implementation of the new teacher evaluation system, including targeted supports for special education and ELL teachers; and
- Public forums with educators and community members, especially from high-need communities, to discuss the development of our new school performance reports to ensure that they provide

parents and other stakeholders with meaningful information about student performance.

In general, the same basic components developed above with teachers were also supported by representatives of LEAs and other stakeholders, including parents. Additional components from these groups built into the original plan include:

· On-the-ground support.

o District staff noted that in previous interventions, the NJDOE would often not provide enough support during implementation. Our focus of RACs as on-the-ground, sustained support to develop and implement turnaround plans in Priority and Focus Schools was developed in part to address this concern;

· Increasing the amount of data available to schools and districts.

o Local staff and educators asked for the development of new, unitary school performance reports that include additional data on school performance, and supported the requirement that school boards discuss these findings publicly; and

· Differentiation.

o Overall, the NJDOE received significant support for the general direction of the waiver application, including the move away from the one-size-fits-all approach to labeling schools as failing and the associated interventions under NCLB. Stakeholders consistently supported and helped to develop the method of focusing on the lowest-performing schools in the State, creating additional flexibility for higher-performing schools, and the range of interventions available to Focus and Priority Schools.

These groups also helped to influence a number of changes in the final draft. Among others, these include:

· Principal evaluation pilot. Through recommendations from the NJ Principals and Supervisors Association (NJPSA), as well as on-the-ground school leaders, the NJDOE outlined plans for a principal evaluation pilot, similar to that currently being conducted for teachers.

· Extended learning time. The Department received many comments from parents and LEA staff on the elimination of the 20 percent set aside for supplemental education services (SES) and choice related transportation. Though it was not addressed in the draft outline, the NJDOE provided additional guidance in the waiver application on the use of Title I funds to make clear that under the new accountability system, RACs would work with LEAs to spend funds in a number of possible ways to extend learning time, as deemed necessary. These options could include, among others, tutoring, Saturday school, or extending the length of the school day.

EVALUATION

The Department encourages an SEA that receives approval to implement the flexibility to collaborate with the Department to evaluate at least one program, practice, or strategy the SEA or its LEAs implement under principle 1, 2, or 3. Upon receipt of approval of the flexibility, an interested SEA will need to nominate for evaluation a program, practice, or strategy the SEA or its LEAs will implement under principles 1, 2, or 3. The Department will work with the SEA to determine the feasibility and design of the evaluation and, if it is determined to be feasible and appropriate, will fund and conduct the evaluation in partnership with the SEA, ensuring that the implementation of the chosen program, practice, or strategy is consistent with the evaluation design.

☒ Check here if you are interested in collaborating with the Department in this evaluation, if your request for the flexibility is approved.

OVERVIEW OF SEA'S REQUEST FOR THE ESEA FLEXIBILITY

Provide an overview (about 500 words) of the SEA's request for the flexibility that:

1. explains the SEA's comprehensive approach to implement the waivers and principles and describes the SEA's strategy to ensure this approach is coherent within and across the principles; and

2. describes how the implementation of the waivers and principles will enhance the SEA's and its LEAs' ability to increase the quality of instruction for students and improve student achievement.

The central goal of the NJDOE is to ensure that all children, regardless of life circumstances, graduate from high school ready for college and career. Currently, New Jersey is far from accomplishing this mission.

While in the aggregate New Jersey's students perform at nation-leading levels, the State has a number of troubling deficiencies. On the 2011 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) exam, New Jersey ranked 50 out of 51 States (including DC) in the size of the achievement gap between low and high-income students in 8th grade reading. Tens of thousands of children attend schools where only a minority of students meets basic levels of proficiency in reading and math. Across the State, over 40 percent of third graders are not reading on grade level. And perhaps most alarmingly, a distressingly high percentage of those who do graduate from high school are unprepared for success: nearly 90 percent of students entering some of New Jersey's community colleges require remediation.

The State of New Jersey has a comprehensive strategy for solving these challenges. It begins with an unwavering commitment to the highest expectations for all students and a single-minded, measureable goal of ensuring all students leave high school with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed throughout life which for us means truly prepared for college and career. While the NJDOE celebrates its successes, the Department also must honestly acknowledge the massive improvements that must be achieved to meet its ambitious goals. The NJDOE intends to close the achievement gap so student performance is no longer a function of demographics while simultaneously pushing New Jersey's highest performing students to compete with and exceed the accomplishments of their excelling peers in other States and across the globe.

To execute these goals, the NJDOE has undertaken a series of drastic organizational and philosophical changes designed to increase its capacity to implement its new vision for accountability and bring about fundamental change in the most troubled schools. Organizationally, the NJDOE has restructured around four building blocks of reform—levers that the Department believes are key to substantial and lasting improvement. They include Academics (standards, assessments, curriculum, and instruction), Talent (educator effectiveness), Performance (targets, measurement, and accountability), and Innovation (high-quality, nontraditional methods of delivering K-12 schooling). Each building block has its own division, and each division is led by an experienced executive with expert staff (See Appendix 1 for new

organizational charts).

Among other things, these divisions will lead critical statewide reform initiatives, such as implementing CCSS and Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessments to ensure the State transitions to more rigorous standards and assessments and, installing a statewide framework for teacher and principal evaluations that supports educators and improves policies related to recruitment, training, development, tenure, and compensation are improved.

The NJDOE is also completely reorganizing how we engage with and intervene in schools and districts. Most significantly, the prior NJDOE organization was oriented around disparate programs. The NJDOE's new system of seven field-based Regional Achievement Centers (RACs) will be charged with driving improvement in New Jersey's lowest-performing schools. These offices will be led by master educators who bear specific accountability for student achievement gains in their regions and for executing coherent plans that will marshal NJDOE resources to accomplish those goals (See Appendix 2 for a job description of Regional Achievement Directors, the staff members that will lead these teams). The RAC teams will be deeply knowledgeable in the eight "turnaround principles" that are defined in this waiver application and widely known to be central to school improvement, including, for example, implementing high-quality curriculum, improving leadership and instruction, and expanding the analysis and use of data. The RACs will be instrumental in the NJDOE's execution of its interventions; they will leverage their own expertise and State and local resources to reach explicit performance targets in specific schools and districts, and they will be held accountable for achieving results.

The NJDOE is also changing what it means to be a State department of education. The NJDOE is de-emphasizing its traditional role as a compliance monitor and transitioning into a performance-based organization and high-quality service provider. Through a survey conducted of the State's district superintendents, the NJDOE learned that those on the ground saw little value coming from the Department's central office when it comes to what matters most: improving student learning. The State was adept at sending directives and requiring reports but did little to actually help educators advance academic achievement.

The NJDOE is making this transition in a number of ways. A gubernatorial task force (Governor's Education Transformation Task Force) is reviewing all State education regulations and laws to identify provisions that place unnecessary burdens on educators. The Task Force's final recommendations will be made to the Governor by the end of 2011 and result in a streamlined set of regulations focused not on inputs but, rather, on the most important output: student learning.

The NJDOE has also chosen a new way to engage with schools and districts. Rather than a scattershot approach of limited, piecemeal programs aimed across the entire State, the Department will focus its scarce resources on those schools in a perpetual State of underperformance and those with the most troubling achievement gaps. Undergirding this reprioritization is a critically important shift in the State's philosophy. For a nearly 20 years, New Jersey has sought to improve low-performing schools by primarily working through LEAs. The State has taken over several districts, embedded State monitors in others, and created complex systems for assessing LEA capacity. These tactics alone have not transformed our most persistently under-achieving schools.

The State has made a conscious decision to alter its tack. We believe that though district-level interventions have value, the unit of change must be the school. As such, most of our new activities associated with our most troubled schools will be directed at the level of the school. That is, instead of investing more resources toward school boards and central bureaucracies, we will focus on teachers and principals and the students they serve. Along these lines, the NJDOE will also spend more time recognizing and learning from our highest performing schools, including finding ways to give them greater autonomy as they continue to excel.

In total, then, the guiding philosophy is simple: create statewide conditions for success; reduce the burdens on successful educators and schools; and provide high-impact support where needs are the greatest.

It is within this context that the NJDOE submits its application for a waiver from many of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act's (ESEA) current provisions. It is the Department's firm belief that a new accountability system is an essential component of the State of New Jersey's larger efforts to prepare all students for college and career. A streamlined, coherent, unified system for assessing school and district performance and triggering differentiated supports and interventions aligned to the eight turnaround principles, will serve as the foundation for the NJDOE's work. With more and better information and the flexibility to carefully tailor programs and activities to school needs, the Department will be able to make the most of its new organizational structure and resources and new approach to engaging schools and districts.

This begins by overhauling the two overlapping and often contradictory accountability systems for New Jersey schools. At the federal level, the ESEA - in the current form of the NCLB - focuses on schools and districts, as evaluated by absolute student performance on State exams. At the State level, New Jersey's Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC) evaluates districts in five areas, with student performance comprising only one of them. Though both systems have virtues, both are also deeply flawed. Each has its own independent weaknesses, and the interaction between the two causes a whole host of problems.

Unfortunately, QSAC does not advance our efforts to drive college- and career-readiness. It prioritizes inputs instead of outputs, placing a premium on districts' submission of reports and faithful compliance to rules instead of the improvement of student learning. QSAC also forces a district to consider many of its activities in isolation, requiring separate reviews for personnel, finance, and governance, when all of this work should be viewed as part of a seamless fabric intended to help students learn. Finally, QSAC generates limited and often unreliable information. In most cases the data gleaned from QSAC does little to help the State facilitate gains in academic achievement, and in entirely too many cases, high-performing districts are found to be deficient while low-performing districts receive high scores.

The NCLB's limitations are also numerous and widely known. It fails to give schools credit for making progress with students. It over-identifies schools and districts as underperforming. It treats a school struggling with a single subgroup the same as a school that is comprehensively failing its student body. It requires an inflexible set of interventions that are inappropriate for many targeted schools. Finally, its

supports and sanctions have not led to the improvements our students need.

New Jersey is building a new unified accountability system that will streamline QSAC and modify NCLB.[1] It will enable the NJDOE to measure and report on metrics that truly reflect schools' and districts' success in preparing students for college and career; it will allow us to categorize schools more fairly and develop supports and interventions carefully aligned to their needs; and it will enable the State to focus its scarce resources on those schools in a persistent State of underperformance and those where at-risk subgroups are lagging far behind. (see Appendix 5 for copy of prototype Performance Report)

New Jersey is well positioned and prepared to take full advantage of the opportunity presented by this waiver request. The State's new set of performance reports will be the heart of the NJDOE's new accountability system. The NJDOE is producing a thorough collection of data across a wide range of areas for each district and each school. The information provided will not only give parents and the public a full accounting of each school's current performance, it will also indicate how each school is contributing to the State's ultimate goal: preparing all students for success in college and career. Key metrics, such as early childhood literacy, chronic absenteeism, 8th grade reading and math proficiency, growth scores on State assessments, AP passing rates, ACT and SAT scores, and high school graduation rates will paint a full and accurate picture of school and district performance with a display of statewide ranking and comparison to peer schools. And State technology will enable educators to analyze data at the student level so they can develop meaningful interventions.

These reports will also enable the NJDOE to fairly and transparently categorize schools so schools receive the support and/or recognition they deserve and need. Consistent with this application's guidance, New Jersey will focus its attention on its most persistently underperforming schools (Priority), those with troubling achievement gaps (Focus), and those achieving remarkable results (reward).

Following directly from these categorizations (and school performance reports more broadly) will be the most important element of the State's new approach: powerful interventions. The NJDOE, finally armed with clear, robust information on each school's strengths and weaknesses, will be able to offer interventions designed to remediate problem areas, whether they relate to poor curriculum, inadequate instructional leadership, insufficient data use, or something else. These supports are completely aligned with this application's "turnaround principles."

As described in the "Differentiated Recognitions, Interventions and Supports" section of 2.A.i, the NJDOE has extensive authority under federal and State law to bring about major change in school and district behavior. The NJDOE can, among other things, reassign teaching staff, redirect spending to ensure funds are spent effectively and efficiently, alter curriculum and programs, charter new schools, and, where all else fails, close chronically failing schools. Though the NJDOE expects to work collaboratively with schools and districts and expects that such collaboration will lead to substantial

[1] Since QSAC was enacted by statute, only legislative action can replace it. However, as described more fully in Section A.1 of the Appendix, NJDOE has taken steps to streamline QSAC through regulatory changes and Focus it on student achievement. So, when NJDOE refers to creation of a "unified accountability system" throughout this waiver application, it means the creation of a system with a single goal: improving student achievement so that all of New Jersey's students graduate prepared for college and career.

improvement, where a school or district refuses to collaborate with the NJDOE, the Commissioner of Education has more than ample authority to compel action to ensure that all students have access to a high-quality education.

The major structural and philosophical changes already taking place at the NJDOE will enable this new accountability system to succeed. The Department is well aware that no matter how informative are the State's new performance reports or compelling the State's plans for intervention, little of value would ultimately be accomplished if the NJDOE maintained both its old approach to working with schools and districts and its old organization and staffing. The NJDOE's new commitment to the highest student expectations and school autonomy will empower educators. Its embrace of four key reform strategies will focus attention on the activities that matter most. Its focus on a targeted list of struggling schools will enable the State to best use its limited resources and bring about true change. Its new RACs will ensure expert educators are applying effective interventions to schools in need of improvement.

In total, then, this waiver application is an essential component of a set of integrated strategies for drastically improving student performance and closing the achievement gap. New Jersey is committing to setting college- and career-ready standards; developing an accountability system that accurately assesses performance and triggers supports and interventions; pursuing key reforms in policy and practice that support improvement efforts; and altering what it means to be a State department of education by creating high-impact supports and developing the internal capacity to drive change.

PRINCIPLE 1: COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY EXPECTATIONS FOR ALL STUDENTS

1.A ADOPT COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY STANDARDS

Select the option that pertains to the SEA and provide evidence corresponding to the option selected.

Option A	Option B
☒ The State has adopted college- and career-ready standards in at least reading/language arts and mathematics that are common to a significant number of States, consistent with part (1) of the definition of college- and career-ready standards. i. Attach evidence that the State has adopted the standards, consistent with the State's standards adoption process. (Attachment 4)	☐ The State has adopted college- and career-ready standards in at least reading/language arts and mathematics that have been approved and certified by a State network of institutions of higher education (IHEs), consistent with part (2) of the definition of college- and career-ready standards. i. Attach evidence that the State has adopted the standards, consistent with the State's standards adoption process. (Attachment 4) ii. Attach a copy of the memorandum of understanding or letter from a State network of IHEs certifying that students who meet these standards will not need remedial coursework at the postsecondary level. (Attachment 5)

1.B TRANSITION TO COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY STANDARDS

Provide the SEA's plan to transition to and implement no later than the 2013–2014 school year college- and career-ready standards Statewide in at least reading/language arts and mathematics for all students and schools and include an explanation of how this transition plan is likely to lead to all students, including English Learners, students with disabilities, and low-achieving students, gaining access to and learning content aligned with such standards. The Department encourages an SEA to include in its plan activities related to each of the italicized questions in the corresponding section of the document titled *ESEA Flexibility Review Guidance*, or to explain why one or more of those activities is not necessary to its plan.

Introduction

By adopting the CCSS, the NJSBOE took a crucial step toward the ambitious goal of preparing all students for college and career regardless of their life circumstances. The transition to full implementation of the standards across districts and schools, allowing all New Jersey students full access to CCSS-aligned learning content, requires the NJDOE to take a stronger leadership role in helping districts and schools understand the instructional changes necessary to implement these more rigorous standards. To that end, the NJDOE is prepared to engage State and national experts in the development or adoption of a model curriculum, aligned with CCSS and Universal Design for Learning ("UDL:" precisely-defined constructs, accessible non-biased items, simple clear instructions, maximum readability and legibility), that all New Jersey districts can use to guide their implementation of the standards in order to prepare all students for college and career.

The development or adoption of the model curriculum will be led by the Chief Academic Officer working closely with the Directors of Special Education, ELLs, Mathematics and Reading/Language Arts. Curriculum development teams comprised of statewide curriculum experts as well as experts in special education and ELLs will be brought together by DOE leads and, working in content area and grade-band teams (K-2, 3-5, 6-8, HS), they will review national-level work being done on instructional materials to inform the development of the model curriculum version 1.0. This first version of the model curriculum aligned to both CCSS and UDL developed for implementation during the 2012-2013 school year will include five six-week units including CCSS- and UDL-aligned student learning objectives (SLOs), recommendations for scaffolding SLOs to meet the needs of Students With Disabilities (SWDs), ELLs and/or low-achieving students, as well as end-of-unit assessments aligned to UDL principles and designed to separately assess each unit SLO in order to better inform the improvement and differentiation of instruction.

Model curriculum 2.0 will be improved using feedback collected during the implementation of version 1.0 and will include: model lessons, model formative assessments, web- based professional development, recommended instructional resources and other supports to be implemented in 2013-2014. The platform housing this work will be continually improved so that all aspects of this work can be continually "added to, improved, and grow increasingly responsive to the teachers, administrators, parents and students of New Jersey.

Priority and Focus Schools will be fully supported by the NJDOE's new RACs in virtually all aspects of CCSS implementation. These field-based offices will be staffed with experts in instruction, literacy, mathematics, special education, ELLs, data use, school leadership, assessment development, and much more. These teams will work regularly and closely with all Priority and Focus Schools and the LEAs with identified Priority and Focus Schools, ensuring that, on a daily basis, schools are teaching to these new, more challenging standards; that instruction is sufficiently rigorous; and that educators have access to aligned curriculum, instructional supports and the professional development they need.

State Standards vs. CCSS

An initial analysis of the alignment between the State's current content standards and the CCSS revealed that all content areas and grade levels require revision. In order for districts and schools to begin to understand the major shifts in teaching and learning required to fully implement the CCSS, the NJDOE held information sessions with over 300 groups including teachers, administrators, superintendents, parents and board members. Feedback from these sessions revealed broad support for the NJDOE taking a leadership role in engaging both State and national experts to develop and/or adopt a "model" CCSS-aligned curriculum, assessment, and intervention system that would be made

available to all districts as they transition to implementing CCSS.

Model Curriculum

The NJDOE will seek out national experts and possible partnerships across States to assist in the adoption or development of a CCSS- and UDL-aligned model curriculum while forming a state-wide coalition of curriculum, special education, and ELL experts, including members of the State's institutions of higher education, to guide and inform the work. The NJDOE intends to develop or adopt a comprehensive model curriculum that includes defined, and UDL-aligned, student learning objectives divided into units of study, recommendations for scaffolding unit SLOs to meet the needs of students with disabilities (SWD)s, ELLs and low-achieving students, and quality UDL-aligned end-of-unit assessments. The scaffolded SLOs will be published within each unit allowing general and special education teachers to view the same document while planning to fully support students with disabilities and ELs. End-of-unit assessments will allow teacher teams the opportunity to review common data to inform and differentiate instruction to better meet the needs of all students. Implementation feedback from the 2012-2013 school year will inform improvements to the model curriculum. Other additions planned for 2013-2014 will include model lessons, formative assessments, a bank of CCSS-aligned assessment items, and a list of quality instructional resources.

Model lessons will be continually added to the curriculum system through a quality review process allowing teachers throughout the State to submit videos for review. Videos judged to be of high quality through the review process will be posted within the appropriate unit, and the teacher, school and district names will be included in order to recognize their contribution to the State model curriculum.

The NJDOE expects to publish model reading/language arts K-12 and mathematics K-12 curriculum for implementation in schools and districts in the Fall of 2012. This curriculum system will form a quality foundation for achievement, including the effective differentiation of learning through the use of model and teacher-developed formative assessments and thereby meet the needs of all students including SWDs and ELLs.

ELLs will also be supported through the adoption of WIDA (World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment) ELP (English Language Programs) standards, which will be aligned to CCSS for ELA and Math in 2012. This alignment will ensure the connections between content and language standards fully support ELLs in accessing the CCSS on the same schedule as all students.

Professional Development (see attached timeline)

The development of model curriculum, assessments, and interventions cannot drive the instructional changes necessary to improve student achievement without quality on-going professional development. Therefore, the NJDOE, working with national- and state-level experts, will provide professional development sessions designed to prepare and continually support teachers and principals in fully implementing the CCSS.

Professional development designed to support the implementation of CCSS- and UDL-aligned model

curriculum for 2012-2013 will be delivered by NJDOE curriculum experts and by the RACs (trained by NJDOE staff). RACs will center their support on Priority and Focus Schools as well as the LEAs with identified Priority and Focus Schools. These trainings will include all staff in Priority and Focus Schools as well as 2-4 leads from the districts. Other districts will be asked to send 2-4 leads in each content area to be trained by NJDOE curriculum/special education/ELL experts and prepared for training teachers in their district. These trainings will also be open to the LEAs with identified Priority and Focus Schools. In order to best meet teacher needs sessions will focus on five key areas:

1) The development of the year-long plan aligned to CCSS (1 session in June);
2) An in depth review of CCSS- and UDL-aligned unit SLOs, scaffolded SLOs and the unit assessment (6 sessions held throughout the year);
3) Effective lesson design and instructional strategies for scaffolding learning, particularly for struggling students (e.g. ELLs and special education) as they progress towards the mastery of CCSS (6 sessions held throughout the year);
4) The design and use of effective formative assessments, in order to prepare and empower teachers to use data to better meet the individual needs of the students in their classroom (2 sessions); and,
5) Finally, in order to support teacher collaboration for implementing the CCSS and continuously improving instruction through the sharing of best practices, professional development on effective protocols for analyzing and using multiple data sources will be offered to teacher teams (2 sessions).

All sessions will include significant follow-up using on-line surveys in order to effectively address the questions and challenges teachers will have as they work to implement these new standards and strategies in their classrooms. The success of these sessions will be measured by on-going teacher surveys, unit assessment data, and State summative assessments.

In addition, an RFP will be developed in February 2012 in order to deliver enhanced professional development supports on CCSS implementation that more effectively leverage technology for the 2013-2014 school year. This professional development offering will be part of an entire Instructional Management System that will include the newest version of the model curriculum with model lessons, model formative assessments, recommended instructional supports as well as professional development opportunities focused on both teacher content needs and pedagogy.

Instructional Leadership

Principals must receive quality professional development on the implementation of the CCSS if they are to truly lead the continuous improvement of teaching and learning in their schools. In order to effectively support principals in developing the necessary instructional leadership skills, the NJDOE will work with the NJPSA to deliver this professional development during the 2012-2013 school year.

The professional development sessions, including follow-up sessions will be presented in a variety of formats to meet the needs of principals throughout the State. Sessions will focus on three key areas:

1) Collecting classroom data to verify that educators are teaching the CCSS at the appropriate level of rigor and using strategies that meet the needs of all students;
2) Collecting and analyzing assessment data to drive the work of teacher teams and individual teachers in using data to improve and differentiate instruction; and
3) Forming teacher teams that become responsible for the continuous improvement of instruction and student achievement through the effective use of classroom observation and assessment data.

The NJDOE and NJPSA will make these sessions as productive as possible by offering sessions to groups of principals who supervise similar grade levels; the instructional materials used will also be relevant to those grade levels. All sessions will include follow-up activities using both small groups and web-based tools in order to effectively address the questions and challenges principals have as they work to monitor and improve the implementation of the CCSS in their schools. The success of these sessions will be measured.

In addition, the NJDOE will include principal professional development as part of the RFP seeking to better leverage technology to support continuous learning for principals as well as teachers in connection to implementing the CCSS.

Instructional Supports

The NJDOE will develop a data collection and reporting system for schools and districts to list and rate the resources they are using. The aim of doing so is to fully support districts and schools in the process of selecting the highest quality instructional resources, materials, programs and technology-based supports designed by external vendors to meet the needs of all students, including, ELLs, students with disabilities, and low-achieving students. Ratings will be driven by a quality rating system designed by the NJDOE with input from State experts. This information will be disseminated throughout the State in order to inform all districts as they decide which instructional materials or programs best meet the needs of their students.

High School

The ultimate goal of the CCSS is that all students, regardless of birth circumstances, will graduate college- and career-ready. To that end, the NJDOE is taking a number of actions to better connect secondary and post-secondary institutions and measure whether K-12 students are on track to graduate from high school prepared to do college-level work.

First, all high school core content area courses will include well defined CCSS-aligned model curriculum (including formative and end-of-course assessments), developed in collaboration with State institutions of higher education in order to ensure course designs meet the rigorous expectations of college. Second, high school course and assessment rigor will be evaluated through an NJDOE data system that connects student grades in high school courses and assessments to AP scores, grades in dual enrollment courses, SAT and ACT scores, achievement on college entrance assessments, as well as acceptance into post-secondary institutions, and remedial courses.

This data will be used to continually inform improvements in high school course design and assessment rigor. The development of more rigorous high school courses not only prepares students for post-secondary experiences without remediation but also allows more students greater access to accelerated learning opportunities including AP and dual-enrollment courses. The NJDOE will create a system for tracking the opportunities available for students to take AP, dual enrollment or other career-oriented courses in each school and district. This data will be used to ensure there is an equitable distribution of these opportunities in each district and school.

Transition of State Summative Assessments

The alignment of the current State assessments to CCSS is a strong motivator for teachers and principals to fully implement the CCSS; at the same time teachers and principals need to know that this is a transition process rather than an abrupt change. As a first step in this transition the NJDOE has reviewed all current State assessment items to determine the alignment of each item to New Jersey State Standards and CCSS. This information will be used to increase the number of items aligned to both sets of standards while decreasing items aligned to only New Jersey standards.

In addition, as a governing State in PARCC, the NJDOE will be working with other States and Achieve to inform this transition process between now and 2014-2015 when it is expected that PARCC assessments will be completed and ready for full implementation. The NJDOE will continue working with national-, district- and school-level experts to evaluate and improve the rigor of the State developed model curriculum assessments. The Department believes these model unit assessments, available for district- and school-level review and use, as well as a bank of CCSS-aligned assessment items, will help teachers, principals, parents and students better understand and meet the more rigorous expectations of the CCSS.

The final part of the transition process is a full NJDOE review of the State's current high school assessment regime. Data suggests the State's existing comprehensive exit exam lacks sufficient rigor and may need to be replaced. Too many high school graduates who pass the test require remediation when they enter college. Moreover, the NJDOE is considering adopting a slate of challenging end-of-course and end-of-year exams in advance of 2014. Both these strategies will help prepare the State in the near term for the transition to PARCC's more rigorous assessments in the years to come.

Connections with Higher Education

The NJDOE will fully engage institutions of higher education (IHEs) in the process of CCSS implementation to not only improve the rigor of high school courses and assessments, ensuring that our students are college- and career-ready, but also to impact the quality of teacher and principal preparation programs.

As a result of the recent report issued by the College- and Career-Ready Task Force the NJDOE will work with both 2- and 4-year IHEs to review the rigor of end-of-course (EOC) high school assessments in order to develop a system for determining students are college ready as a result of passing these assessments in lieu of using current college readiness indicators such as the Accuplacer.

In addition, the NJDOE will provide the State's IHEs with data linking the graduates of their teacher and principal preparation programs to student achievement data from the classrooms and schools in which their graduates work. This data system linking student performance and class rosters will be completed and available to all schools in the Fall of 2012. This data will drive the dialogue necessary between IHEs and the NJDOE regarding both current expectations for entry into teacher and principal preparation programs as well as the skills and knowledge students needs to be fully prepared for college and career.

This will be a joint project between the NJDOE's Division of Academics and Division of Talent. The former will lead the State's CCSS and assessment work, while the latter has an office dedicated solely to improving educator preparation programs. This cross-functional collaboration will be a key factor in the long-term success of CCSS implementation and our larger efforts to greatly expand college- and career-readiness.

For a complete implementation plan for NJDOE's transition to the CCSS, see Appendix 3.

1.C Develop and Administer Annual, Statewide, Aligned, High-Quality Assessments that Measure Student Growth

Select the option that pertains to the SEA and provide evidence corresponding to the option selected.

Option A	Option B	Option C
☒ The SEA is participating in one of the two State consortia that received a grant under the Race to the Top Assessment competition. i. Attach the State's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) under that competition. (Attachment 6)	☐ The SEA is not participating in either one of the two State consortia that received a grant under the Race to the Top Assessment competition, and has not yet developed or administered Statewide aligned, high-quality assessments that measure student growth in reading/language arts and in mathematics in at least grades 3-8 and at least once in high school in all LEAs. i. Provide the SEA's plan to develop and administer annually, beginning no later than the 2014□2015 school year, Statewide aligned, high-quality assessments that measure student growth in reading/language arts and in mathematics in at least grades 3-8 and at least once in high school in all LEAs, as well as set academic achievement standards for those assessments.	☐ The SEA has developed and begun annually administering Statewide aligned, high-quality assessments that measure student growth in reading/language arts and in mathematics in at least grades 3-8 and at least once in high school in all LEAs. i. Attach evidence that the SEA has submitted these assessments and academic achievement standards to the Department for peer review or attach a timeline of when the SEA will submit the assessments and academic achievement standards to the Department for peer review. (Attachment 7)

2.A DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A STATE-BASED SYSTEM OF DIFFERENTIATED RECOGNITION, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND SUPPORT

2.A.i Provide a description of the SEA's differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system that includes all the components listed in Principle 2, the SEA's plan for implementation of the differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system no later than the 2012–2013 school year, and an explanation of how the SEA's differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system is designed to improve student achievement and school performance, close achievement gaps, and increase the quality of instruction for students.

I. Introduction

The core goal of the NJDOE is to ensure that all children, regardless of life circumstances, graduate from high school ready for college and career. Currently, the Department is far from accomplishing this mission.

While in the aggregate New Jersey's students perform at nation-leading levels, the State has a number of troubling deficiencies. On the 2011 NAEP exam, New Jersey ranked 50 out of 51 States (including DC) in the size of the achievement gap between low and high-income students in 8th grade reading. Tens of thousands of children attend schools where only a minority of students meets basic levels of proficiency in reading and math. Across the State, over 40 percent of third graders are not reading on grade level. And perhaps most alarmingly, a distressingly high percentage of those who do graduate from high school are unprepared for success: nearly 90 percent of students entering some of New Jersey's community colleges require remediation.

New Jersey has a comprehensive strategy for solving these challenges. It begins with an unwavering commitment to the highest expectations for all students and a single-minded, measureable goal of ensuring all students leave high school with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed throughout life which, for us, means truly prepared for college and career. While the NJDOE celebrates its successes, the Department must also honestly acknowledge the massive improvements that must be achieved to meet our ambitious goals. The NJDOE intends to close the achievement gap so student performance is no longer a function of demographics while simultaneously pushing New Jersey's highest performing students to compete with and exceed the accomplishments of their excelling peers in other States and across the globe.

In this context, New Jersey has undertaken an aggressive reform strategy to ensure the State invests in the activities that have the greatest impact on student performance, districts and schools have the information and tools to constantly improve, and that cut the bureaucratic red tape preventing schools and districts from being able to innovate and drive student achievement.

The NJDOE took its first step toward this end during the spring of 2011, shortly after Acting Commissioner Chris Cerf joined the Department. The NJDOE conducted a survey of the nearly 600 district superintendents across the State to learn how successful the NJDOE had been historically in

supporting district work and, more generally, advancing student achievement. The results were eye-opening and discouraging: the superintendents responded clearly that the NJDOE was not an engine for change and improvement in the State. Moreover, respondents said that many of the Department's district-level activities were uncoordinated, that the NJDOE was overly focused on compliance (inputs) rather than performance (outputs), and that its work to improve instruction was particularly lacking.

As a result, Acting Commissioner Cerf reorganized the NJDOE to ensure it was designed to meet its primary obligation of supporting student achievement. The new NJDOE is built on four building blocks:

> **Academics**: Ensuring all schools adhere to challenging content standards, administer rigorous assessments specifically tied to college and career readiness, and have access to high-quality curricula and instructional supports;
>
> **Performance:** Overseeing a unified academic accountability system that accurately measures school and district performance and triggers high-impact, tailored interventions and supports;
>
> **Talent**: Ensuring that all New Jersey educators are effective by improving policies and practices related to recruitment, preparation, evaluation, compensation, development, retention, and recognition; and
>
> **Innovation**: Identifying, recruiting, incubating, and supporting diverse, high-quality delivery systems for K-12 education, especially in our persistently lowest-performing school communities.

In October, the Department took the second step in its reorganization by creating seven field-based RACs staffed by master educators and designed to provide comprehensive support to our persistently lowest-achieving schools. The RACs will be instrumental in the Department's execution of its interventions, working closely with the Department's senior leaders to ensure that statewide initiatives are implemented, school and district performance targets are established and met, and high-impact supports are developed and delivered. RACs will be fully functional by the Fall of 2012 to help lead the state's work with schools and districts.

While the Department worked to ensure it was structured to better support schools and districts, it was simultaneously pursuing a wide array of activities aligned with its four building blocks and designed to drastically increase college- and career-readiness. This waiver application—and the new accountability system it will enable—is an essential component of the NJDOE's comprehensive strategy for improving student learning and closing the achievement gap across the State.

As outlined in Section 1 of this application, the State adopted the CCSS and joined the PARCC consortium to ensure the NJDOE aligns its understanding of what K-12 students should know and be able to do with the rigorous expectations of higher education and the workplace. Through the development of model curricula, formative assessments, instructional supports, leadership development activities, and much more, the NJDOE is working to ensure all districts and schools are prepared for the transition to CCSS and PARCC and, as a result, that all students are college- and career ready upon graduation from high school.

As a supporting initiative, the NJDOE also convened a College- and Career-Ready Task Force bringing together K-12, higher education, and business leaders to build consensus among all relevant stakeholders about what knowledge and skills students need when they leave secondary education. This task force is informing the state's work on high school assessments, educator preparation programs, and more.

As outlined in Section 3, the NJDOE has also taken major steps to ensure every classroom is led by an outstanding teacher. In late 2010, the Governor signed an executive order convening the New Jersey Educator Effectiveness Task Force, which was charged with building a framework for educator evaluations. Its work led to the launch of an eleven-district teacher evaluation pilot during the 2011-12 school year. All participating districts (and the state's SIG schools), are building evaluation systems that are based equally on student performance and teacher practice and that lead to meaningful professional development for classroom teachers.

With concrete plans in place to ensure the NJDOE has high-quality standards, assessments, and instructional supports, and effective teachers are leading our classrooms, it is time to have a nation-leading accountability system to ensure the NJDOE is accurately measuring our performance, making progress with all students, and delivering meaningful interventions. Below, the NJDOE offers a plan for building and implementing this next-generation accountability system, which the Department thinks is essential to advance our work. This ESEA Waiver will facilitate and enable this critical effort.

II. Current Status of Accountability in New Jersey

There are currently two overlapping and often contradictory accountability systems for New Jersey schools. At the federal level, the ESEA - in the current form of the NCLB Act - focuses on schools and districts, as evaluated by absolute student performance on State exams. At the State level, New Jersey's QSAC triennially evaluates districts in five areas with student performance comprising only one of them. Though both systems have virtues, both are also deeply flawed. Each has its own independent weaknesses, and the interaction between the two causes a host of problems.

Unfortunately, QSAC does not advance efforts to drive college- and career-readiness. It prioritizes inputs instead of outputs, placing a premium on districts' submission of reports and faithful compliance to rules instead of the improvement of student learning. QSAC also forces a district to consider many of its activities in isolation, requiring separate reviews for personnel, finance, and governance, when all of this work should be viewed as part of a seamless fabric intended to help students learn. Finally, QSAC generates limited and often unreliable information. In most cases the data gleaned from QSAC does little to help the State facilitate gains in academic achievement, and in entirely too many cases, high-performing districts are said to have deficiencies and tragically low-performing districts receive high scores.

NCLB's limitations are also numerous and widely known. It fails to give schools credit for making progress with students. It over-identifies schools and districts as underperforming. It treats a school struggling with a single subgroup the same as a school that is comprehensively failing its student body. It requires an inflexible set of interventions that are inappropriate for many targeted schools. Finally, its supports and sanctions haven't led to the improvements our students need.

Earlier this year, the Governor issued an executive order establishing New Jersey's Education Transformation Task Force, which was charged with making recommendations on how best to craft a rigorous, transparent, trustworthy accountability system while also freeing the State's educators to innovate and drive achievement. In September, the task force released an interim report focused on the deficiencies of QSAC and NCLB and the myriad regulations that burden our educators, schools, and districts. (See Appendix 4 for the interim report). The task force recommended excising a wide range of unnecessary regulations from New Jersey's codebook and creating a unified accountability system that focuses on what matters most – student achievement. Those recommendations drive the NJDOE's approach to educational accountability, autonomy, and support, and they provide the foundation for this waiver request.

The NJDOE is now building a unified accountability system to modify many aspects of QSAC and NCLB. To fully implement that system and realize its many benefits, New Jersey needs flexibility from many of ESEA's rules. The new system will enable the NJDOE to measure and report on metrics that truly reflect schools' and districts' success in preparing students for college and career; it will allow the Department to categorize schools more fairly and develop supports and interventions carefully tailored to their needs; and it will enable the NJDOE to focus its scarce resources on those schools in a persistent State of underperformance and those where at-risk subgroups are lagging far behind. Finally, it will also allow the Department to better hold districts and schools accountable for results.

As part of this waiver, the NJDOE is able to set rigorous and achievable targets for each school and subgroup. The process to set these targets takes into account individual school and subgroup starting points, and focuses on constant, yearly growth. Those subgroups that are farthest behind require the largest gains each year. This is a significant change from NCLB, where all students were held to the unrealistic expectation of 100% proficiency by 2014.

Despite this difference, the NJDOE maintains its belief that every child in New Jersey, regardless of birth circumstance, can achieve at high levels. By focusing on customized growth at the subgroup level, New Jersey has set an ambitious goal that will help all schools constantly improve. The NJDOE believes that the plan in this application will ensure that every student entering Kindergarten in the 2012-13 school year, regardless of circumstance, will graduate from high school ready for college and career

III. Performance Reports

The heart of New Jersey's new accountability system is the data-rich school- and district-level performance report that provides clear, meaningful information on student performance and college- and career-readiness. It will provide numerous measures, targets, attainment and growth metrics, composite rankings, and peer-to-peer comparisons to assist schools and stakeholders to fully understand performance and customize supports and interventions.

New Jersey chose its draft metrics by studying the work of leading states, such as, Florida and Massachusetts, and top school systems, such as Montgomery County, Maryland. A draft performance report is attached to this application (See Appendix 5). It includes not only traditional information, such

as grades 3 – 8 reading and math scores and high school graduation rates, but also includes measures that give a clear indication of college- and career-readiness, such as AP and SAT scores. The draft performance report also allows observers to compare each school's or district's performance to a group of peers with similar demographics. Finally, the report enables educators and parents to see, at a glance, whether and to what degree each school is meeting its performance targets, including narrowing achievement gaps.

The "School Score Card" will serve as a summary report of the many metrics in the Performance Report. For a high school, four performance areas will be presented, each with a subsection in the performance report: Academic Achievement, College and Career Readiness, Graduation Rate and Post-Secondary Outcomes, and Progress toward Closing Achievement Gaps. As shown in the score card, each area will summarize the percentage of the performance targets met, how the school's performance compares to schools that are educating a similar student population, and how the school compares to the State as a whole. For example, in this school score card, the school met 50% of its Academic Achievement Targets. Meeting 50% of the targets places this school in the 82nd percentile statewide, but only in the 17th percentile when compared to its peer school group.

School Score Card

Performance Indicators	Statewide Ranking	Peer School Ranking	% Performance Targets Met
Academic Achievement	82%	17%	50%
College/Career Readiness	82%	78%	25%
Graduation/Post Secondary	95%	10%	25%
Closing Achievement Gaps	65%	5%	33%
Improvement Status:	***Focus***		
Rationale:	***Achievement Gaps***		
Change since last year:	*Improvement*	*No change*	*Decline*

As noted in the score card above, as part of the School Performance Report, each school's designation (Priority, Focus, etc.) under this waiver application will be published. In this example, this school has been labeled as a Focus School because it has among the largest, within-school achievement gaps across the state.

Additionally, as shown in the next table demonstrating results for Language Arts Literacy, the school's overall and subgroup performance targets will be displayed as part of the Academic Achievement subsection of the performance report. As described below in this application, New Jersey has selected Option A in the determination of Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs). Thus, for each subgroup in each school the following metrics will be displayed for both Language Arts Literacy and Math: the current pass rate, the target that the school was required to meet, and whether the target was met or exceeded, was not met, or was within the range of the standard error of the measurements.

Performance Targets - Language Arts Literacy**			
This table presents the annual proficiency targets, as measured by the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA), established for this school under New Jersey's Elementary and Secondary Act Waiver.			
Subgroup	***2010-2011 Pass Rate***	***2010-2011 Target***	***Met Target***
Schoolwide	64.6%	65.0%	YES
White	78.0%	73.0%	YES
Black	81.0%	76.0%	YES
Hispanic	65.0%	74.2%	NO
American Indian	72.0%	78.0%	NO
Asian	93.0%	92.0%	YES
Native Hawaiian	N/A	N/A	**N/A**
Two or More Races	58.0%	74.0%	NO
With Disabilities	60.0%	68.0%	NO
Limited English Proficiency	70.0%	67.0%	YES
Economically Disadvantaged	69.0%	73.4%	NO

For non-Priority and non-Focus Schools, each school will develop a local school board approved school improvement plan that addresses the school and/or subgroup missed performance targets, as described above, in addition to the other metrics presented in the performance report. Guidelines for such plans will be provided by the NJDOE at the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year. This work will be a joint product of the Divisions of Academics and Performance and the Department's RACs (described more fully in Section 2.F below).

In addition to Academic Achievement, the performance report will contain indicators of how well a school is doing to prepare its students for college and career. Five College- and Career-Readiness Indicators are shown in this mock-up: SAT participation rates, SAT scores, AP Participation rates, AP score outcomes, and the percentage of Career and Technical Students who pass an industry exam. For each indicator, the school's performance is present, next to the performance of its peer schools, and the overall performance of the state. The final column indicates whether the school met each particular performance target. In this example, the school met only one target – the Percent of Students Taking the SAT – and thus in the total line of the table below is shown to have met only 25% of the performance targets in College and Career Readiness. This percentage – 25% - is also reported in the School Score Card above.

College and Career Readiness*				
College and Career Readiness Indicators	School	Peer Schools	Statewide Target	Met Target
Percent of Students Taking SAT	71%	78%	70%	YES
Percent of Students Scoring Above SAT Composite Benchmark of 1550	45%	60%	65%	NO
Percent of Students Taking at Least One AP Test	7%	9%	22%	NO
Percent of AP Tests with scores greater than 3	29%	35%	40%	NO
% of Career and Technical Students Passing an Industry Exam or Certification	65%	56%	N/A	N/A
Total	152			25%

In the "Graduation and Post-Secondary Enrollment" subsection of the performance report, four indicators will be displayed: the school's graduation rate, the graduation rate via passing the state's standard high school exam, the rate of remediation required by the graduates of the school in institutions of higher education in New Jersey, and the percent of students who are enrolled in post-secondary institutions within 6 or 18 months of high school graduation.

Graduation and Post-Secondary Enrollment*				
Graduation and Post-Secondary Performance Indicators	School	Peer Schools	Statewide Targets	Met Target
Total Graduation Rate	82.0%	88.0%	90.0%	NO
Graduation via HSPA	74.3%	72.0%	85.0%	NO
Remediation Rate in NJ Post-Secondary	10.0%	15.0%	N/A	N/A
Enrolled in Post-Secondary within 6 months	35.0%	47.0%	48.0%	NO
Enrolled in Post-Secondary within 18 months	53.0%	50.0%	55.0%	YES
Total	244.3			25%

Within each subsection, additional tables of data – beyond the summary report for the subsection – will be displayed. This table for example presents the graduation rate for each subgroup in the school, the comparison to the school's peers and also the statewide average. Additionally, New Jersey will describe its graduates' pathways to graduation including passing the statewide assessment, graduating by demonstrating mastery in our alternative assessments and being exempt from passing our statewide assessments. And this data will be further disaggregated into the traditional ESEA subgroups.

Graduation Rate by Subgroup			
This table presents the percentage of students who graduated within four years of entering ninth grade, according to the 4-year, adjusted cohort graduation rate.			
Subgroup	***School***	***Peer Schools***	***State Average***
White	92.0	89.0	92.0
Black	87.0	84.0	86.0
Hispanic	78.0	80.0	82.0
American Indian	87.0	67.0	88.0
Asian	93.0	92.0	94.0
Native Hawaiian	N/A	N/A	92.0
Two or More Races	89.0	88.0	92.0
Male	89.0	90.0	92.0
Female	91.0	88.0	93.0
Students With Disabilities	38.4	25.1	2.7
Limited English Proficiency	7.1	4.5	2.7
Economically Disadvantaged	16.5	15.9	1.7

Finally, of particular concern to New Jersey, as well as other states, is the closing of the achievement gap both statewide and at individual schools. Thus, New Jersey will include a subsection in the performance report with "Closing Within School Gaps" indicators. For high schools, the gap will be measured between the scale score points earned by the student at the 25th percentile and the student's score at the 75th percentile.

Closing Within School Gaps*				
Closing Within School Gaps Indicators	School	Peer Schools	Statewide Targets	Met Target
Bottom 25th Percentile v. 75th Percentile HSPA LAL Scale Score	55	60	35	**NO**
Bottom 25th Percentile v. 75th Percentile HSPA Math Scale Score	60	55	40	**NO**
Total	210			33%

*The table above displays the difference in scale score points between the student at the 25th percentile and the student at the 75th percentile (the interquartile range) in each content area of the New Jersey High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA).

Beginning in January 2012, a workgroup of educators, parents, stakeholders, and school board members will be convened to finalize the set of metrics, their various weights in a composite scoring system, and the formulation of appropriate peer school criteria. A series of public meetings and focus groups will be

convened to pilot the reports to ensure they are robust, clear, fair, and useful to the broadest set of stakeholders. Led by the NJDOE's Chief Performance Officer, this work will conclude by the end of the 2011-2012 school year; the finalized performance report will be introduced for the 2012-13 school year. The performance reports will be published on the same timeframe that the School Report Cards and will be ready for public release in the early winter of 2013. However, schools and districts will have assessment data available to them, as they have in years past, directly from the Assessment vendor and the Office of Title I that will enable them to begin their school-level analyses prior to the beginning of the school year. All schools will receive state-level academic proficiency data, including AMO data, during the summer of any school year in order to inform the development of their School Improvement Plan. The complete School Performance Report including AP, SAT, Graduation rates and Growth data, with School-to-School comparisons, is available to all schools in February. Schools are expected to use this information to inform the mid-year review and adjustment of the SIP. In addition, these performance reports will inform the development of the SIP for the following school year.

Unlike many other school and district report card systems, New Jersey's will go beyond assessing school and district performance. The NJDOE will help educators and parents understand and enhance the achievement of every student by developing additional student-level metrics and analytical tools within New Jersey's statewide, student-level longitudinal data system. These tools will include an Early Warning Report, College and Career Report, and a Successful Post-Secondary Student Profile. As each of these reports becomes available, NJDOE will follow its established procedures of providing WebEx training to assist districts and schools in utilizing and interpreting the results of the reports.

Early Warning Report

A series of performance metrics will be designed to function as an Early Warning System (EWS) that will identify students who are at-risk of failing to achieve college- and/or career-readiness. These metrics will begin in first grade and continue through twelfth grade. An example of one measure to be reported annually throughout a student's school career will be his or her attendance rate; special attention will be directed toward those who are chronically absent, a powerful indicator of future challenges.

In third grade, when State testing begins, student-level proficiency will be added as a metric, and carried forward into fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth and eleventh grades. In fourth grade, student-level growth scores ("SGPs," which measure how much growth a student made relative to his or her academic peers) will be added as a metric, and carried forward into fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth grade.

In high school, a record of course credits earned will be added. Additionally, suspensions and expulsions will also be noted. Each metric in the EWS will be "drill down-ready," meaning that with one click, an educator will be able to obtain a roster of students in a particular category, such as students in fourth grade demonstrating partial proficiency, low growth, and chronic absenteeism. This powerful report will be ready for Statewide deployment at the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year.

College and Career Report

The College and Career Report will also be available at a student level to provide educators with performance metrics that demonstrate college-readiness such as PSAT, SAT, ACT and AP test scores. Additionally, a student's transcript data –including courses taken and grades earned – will be provided by the NJDOE and can be cross-referenced with end-of-course assessments such as Algebra I, in addition to third-party assessments, such as AP tests. Furthermore, a student's participation and success in Industry or Credential Exams, as part of his/her Career and Technical Education (CTE) program, will also be included. This report will also be ready for statewide deployment by the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year and will be enhanced as additional metrics become available, such as new end-of-course exams.

Successful Post-Secondary Student Profile

The NJDOE will construct a Successful Post-Secondary Student Profile for each high school using real outcome data, similar to the work done by Montgomery County, Maryland in the formation of their "Seven Keys." Beginning in the fall of 2011, data from the National Student Clearinghouse will be joined with the longitudinal data in New Jersey's statewide, student-level data system to build a profile of a typical 2011 high school graduate enrolled in post-secondary education within four months of graduating high school.

The profile will include State assessment scores, SAT scores, AP scores, and twelfth grade attendance data. As the 2011 high school graduate cohort ages through college, the profile will be updated to reflect those students who remain continuously enrolled in college. In 2015, it will then be possible to construct a profile at a high school level of those students who successfully completed post-secondary education. These profiles can be used by high schools to set their own specific goals for proficiency levels in all tested grade levels, SAT scores, and attendance trends.

Taken together, through the Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) reports, the performance reports, and accountability outcomes, educators and stakeholders will have a wealth of information available to them regarding the performance of their schools. This information will be provided in a way where comparisons to other schools and the State can be drawn. Thus, specific areas of strength and weakness can be identified and targeted for improvement. While the NJDOE will establish statewide performance targets, schools and districts can also establish their own, such as being in the top quartile of their peer school comparison group on any particular indicator. Thus, this type of reporting invites continuous engagement of educators and stakeholders in the reflection and feedback processes so critical to school improvement.

The district's student level reports will be available to educators to use in a school level continuous improvement discussion with parents. The Performance reports will be available to parents and the community. These student level reports will rely on data available in a student's personal data file at their student's school. This Performance Report will include information advising parents how to access the information for their students by requesting this information from their school.

IV. Differentiated Recognitions, Interventions and Supports

Categories

New Jersey's new unified accountability system will identify schools using the criteria in the four categories defined below. These categories are triggers for the NJDOE's differentiated recognition, intervention, and support system:

Priority Schools
Priority schools are the lowest performing schools across the State with regard to absolute achievement or graduation outcomes and those that are persistently low achieving. The NJDOE will structure intense, mandatory interventions and supports (in alignment with the application's "turnaround principles") that match each school's particular needs.

Focus Schools
Focus schools are those in which particular subgroups have extremely low achievement levels or lag far behind their peers. The NJDOE will identify targeted interventions and supports that are specific to the school's needs (e.g. instructional leadership) and the subgroups in question, such as ELLs or students with disabilities.

Reward Schools
The NJDOE will recognize, celebrate, and reward schools with high overall and subgroup achievement levels and those that are demonstrating great progress.

All Other Schools
The NJDOE will provide detailed, specific data to illustrate the strengths and areas in need of improvement for all schools so that progress in each area and in every subgroup can be tracked and used to inform school improvement activities and to illustrate the performance targets met or not met.

The methodologies for identifying each category of school, for determining appropriate interventions and supports, and the criteria for monitoring progress can be found below in the subsections of Principle 2.

Interventions

The structural and philosophical changes made to the NJDOE over the last year (described above) will enable the State to assist schools and districts to an extent far exceeding the Department's previous capacity. The NJDOE will make available to all schools a wide array of support, but the most troubled schools—those falling into Priority and Focus status—will receive extensive attention.

The Department's new RACs will play a critical role. Teams from these offices will visit and assess every Priority and Focus school and, in conjunction with the NJDOE's central office, district and school leaders, educators, and families, develop a comprehensive individualized school improvement plan for each school keyed to the interventions described below.

In years past, the State has exercised less authority than it might have when it comes to requiring districts to take bold action in their persistently underperforming schools. Today's NJDOE, however, will use the

full leverage granted it under Title I and various provisions of State law to ensure districts faithfully implement improvement plans for Priority and Focus Schools.

For all districts receiving Title I money with one or more Priority or Focus Schools, the individualized school improvement plan for each Priority and Focus School must be incorporated into the district's Local Educational Agency Plan ("LEAP") submitted to the NJDOE every August pursuant to the ESEA. *See* 20 U.S.C. § 6312. Before Title I monies can flow to a district, the NJDOE must approve the district's LEAP.

If a district's LEAP fails to incorporate, either in whole or in part, the individualized school improvement plan for each of the district's Priority and Focus Schools, the NJDOE will reject the LEAP and withhold all Title I funds from the district until it comes into compliance with this waiver application. A district will be considered in compliance only when:

1) The District's LEAP fully incorporates each individualized school improvement plan for each of the district's Priority and Focus Schools; and
2) District leadership has executed a Statement of Assurances committing the district to implementing its LEAP. A sample Statement of Assurances is attached to this waiver application as Appendix 6.

For districts not receiving Title I money with one or more Priority or Focus Schools, the NJDOE will work collaboratively with district leaders to implement each individualized school improvement plan. However, if any such district refuses to implement a plan, either in whole or in part, the NJDOE will make use of its far-reaching statutory and regulatory powers under State law to compel action. The NJDOE is empowered, among other things, to:

1) Ensure that "all educational expenditures in the district will be spent effectively and efficiently in order to enable students to achieve the core curriculum content standards" (N.J.S.A. § 18A:7F-60);
2) "Take any affirmative action as is necessary to ensure the effective and efficient expenditure of funds by school districts" (N.J.S.A. § 18A:7F-60);
3) "Direct [] the restructuring of curriculum or programs" (N.J.S.A. § 18A:7F-6(b));
4) "Direct [] staff retraining or reassignment" (N.J.S.A. § 18A:7F-6(b)); and
5) "Redirect [] expenditures" (N.J.S.A. § 18A:7F-6(b)); and "Review[] the terms of future collective bargaining agreements" (N.J.S.A. § 18A:7F-6(b)). The NJDOE also has unique authority to authorize charter schools, set requirements for educator certification and licensure, and, where all else fails, close persistently failing schools.

<u>Interventions and Supports for Priority Schools</u>

The NJDOE is now poised to support and intervene in meaningful, lasting ways in both Priority and Focus Schools. The Department will identify at least 5 percent of Title I schools as Priority Schools. With guidance and support from the Department's senior leadership, the NJDOE's RACs will take the lead on developing and implementing customized interventions based on the needs of each school. Each intervention category aligns with the "turnaround principles" outlined in this waiver's guidance

documents.

Quality School Reviews (QSRs) will be used to differentiate interventions in order to meet the needs of each school. Intensive interventions have been developed to address:

School Climate and Culture: Establishing school environments that support the social, emotional and health needs of all students

School Leadership: Ensuring that the principal has the ability to lead the turnaround effort

Standards Aligned 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

Instruction: Ensuring teachers utilize research-based effective instruction to meet the needs of all students

Use of Time: Redesigning time to better meet student needs and increase teacher collaboration focused on improving teaching and learning

Use of Data: Ensuring school-wide use of data focused on improving teaching and learning

Staffing Practices: Developing the skills to better recruit, retain and develop effective teachers

Family and Community Engagement: Increasing academically focused family and community engagement

Priority School interventions will be closely monitored and continued for a three-year period providing schools the time needed to implement required changes and demonstrate improvement in student achievement. Priority Schools that fail to implement the required interventions or fail to demonstrate required improvement in student academic achievement may become subject to state-ordered closure or other action.

Interventions and Supports for Focus Schools.

The NJDOE will identify at least 10 percent of Title I schools as Focus Schools. These schools will be selected from Title I schools that are not categorized as Priority Schools and will be identified based upon within-school achievement gaps and low performance among particular subgroups. Any non-Title I school that would otherwise meet the same criteria will also be designated as a Focus School. The Department's RACs will work with LEAs to develop and implement customized improvement plans for Focus Schools, targeted specifically at the identified achievement gaps, and aligned to the federal turnaround principles listed above. These improvement plans will likely include specific interventions and supports for students with disabilities and ELLs as their subgroup performance has been traditionally lower than others.

Recognitions and Rewards for Reward Schools.

The NJDOE will identify Reward Schools based on high proficiency levels or high levels of growth, including progress toward closing achievement gaps. This will allow for a range of schools from across

the State to attain Reward status, regardless of their absolute starting point. The Department will provide financial incentives to Reward schools to be used with input from the school community, and will work with partner organizations to help these schools share best practices with educators across the state.

Non-categorized Schools.

The NJDOE will develop school performance reports and school and subgroup performance targets for all schools in the state, regardless of whether they fall into one of the three categories above. For all non-categorized schools, LEAs will be required to hold public meetings to review their performance reports and other data, share their plans for addressing identified need areas, and align Title I resources to support the plan.. Non-categorized schools will have flexibility in the interventions they use to address achievement gaps and other performance challenges and will be invited to attend regional trainings and professional development sessions offered for Focus and Priority schools by the RACs. Through these optional capacity-building opportunities and through supports provided to all schools through the Department's website, non-categorized schools will be able to benefit from the supports offered to Focus and Priority schools.

Additional assistance and monitoring will be implemented for a subset of particularly at-risk non-categorized schools (namely those with large, persistent achievement gaps). Regional Achievement Directors will be required to review and approve future school improvement plans and offer technical assistance based on successful strategies implemented in similar schools.

The accountability system described above is a critical component to NJDOE's efforts to identify, differentiate, and support all schools, enabling all students, regardless of background, the opportunity to graduate college- and career-ready.

2.A.ii Select the option that pertains to the SEA and provide the corresponding information, if any.

Option A	**Option B**
☒ The SEA only includes student achievement on reading/language arts and mathematics assessments in its differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system and to identify reward, Priority, and Focus Schools.	☐ If the SEA includes student achievement on assessments in addition to reading/language arts and mathematics in its differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system and to identify reward, Priority, and Focus Schools, it must: a. provide the percentage of students in the "all students" group that performed at the proficient level on the State's most recent administration of each assessment for all grades assessed; and b. include an explanation of how the

	included assessments will be weighted in a manner that will result in holding schools accountable for ensuring all students achieve college- and career-ready standards.

Insert text for Option B here.

2.B SET AMBITIOUS BUT ACHIEVABLE ANNUAL MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES

Select the method the SEA will use to set new ambitious but achievable annual measurable objectives (AMOs) in at least reading/language arts and mathematics for the State and all LEAs, schools, and subgroups that provide meaningful goals and are used to guide support and improvement efforts. If the SEA sets AMOs that differ by LEA, school, or subgroup, the AMOs for LEAs, schools, or subgroups that are further behind must require greater rates of annual progress.

Option A	**Option B**	**Option C**
☒ Set AMOs in annual equal increments toward a goal of reducing by half the percentage of students in the "all students" group and in each subgroup who are not proficient within six years. The SEA must use current proficiency rates based on assessments administered in the 2010–2011 school year as the starting point for setting its AMOs. i. Provide the new AMOs and an explanation of the method used to set these AMOs.	☐ Set AMOs that increase in annual equal increments and result in 100 percent of students achieving proficiency no later than the end of the 2019–2020 school year. The SEA must use the average Statewide proficiency based on assessments administered in the 2010–2011 school year as the starting point for setting its AMOs. i. Provide the new AMOs and an explanation of the method used to set these AMOs.	☐ Use another method that is educationally sound and results in ambitious but achievable AMOs for all LEAs, schools, and subgroups. i. Provide the new AMOs and an explanation of the method used to set these AMOs. ii. Provide an educationally sound rationale for the pattern of academic progress reflected in the new AMOs in the text box below. iii. Provide a link to the State's report card or attach a copy of the average Statewide proficiency based on assessments

		administered in the 2010□2011 school year in reading/language arts and mathematics for the "all students" group and all subgroups. (Attachment 8)

Performance Targets (formerly Annual Measurable Objectives)

The NJDOE is more fully integrating its expectations for specific school-level and sub-group improvement in student achievement outcomes into a coherent performance and accountability framework. Instead of terming these metrics "AMOs", the NJDOE has re-titled them Performance Targets.

The NJDOE will calculate state-, district-, school- and subgroup-level performance targets, determine whether schools achieved each target, and report the results each year in the New Jersey School Performance Report. Schools, districts, and staff from the NJDOE's RACs will use this data to inform their school-specific strategies for improvement.

The waiver application requires states to select a method for establishing these performance targets. Option A is defined as setting the targets in annual equal increments so that within six years the percentage of non-proficient students in the 'all students' group and in each subgroup is reduced by half.

For example, if the 'all students' group is currently demonstrating a proficiency rate of 40 percent, the methodology would take the 60 percent point gap between 100 percent proficiency and the current rate (100 – 40 = 60) and then divide the gap in half to determine the target for the sixth year – a gain of 30 percentage points (60 / 2 = 30).

Then, the 30-percentage point gain is divided into six equal increments (30/6 = 5) so that annual targets can be set. Thus, the school in this example begins this process with a rate of 40 percent and is then expected to move to proficiency rates of 45 percent, 50 percent, 55 percent, 60 percent, 65 percent, and finally 70 percent in each of the following years of the six-year period.

As illustrated in the table below, the process for defining the six-year goal for the percentage of proficient students in each content area across the State was conducted in the following manner:

1. Determine the percentage of students who were not proficient in the 2010–2011 school year (Column 1 below);
2. Divide that percentage by 2 (Column 2);
3. Subtract the number in Column 2 from 100 percent. This resulting percentage is the SEA's goal for the 2016–2017 school year (Column 3; and
4. Establish annual incremental performance targets by dividing the number in Column 2 by six (Column 4).

PROCESS: DETERMINING SIX-YEAR GOALS

Process Steps			1	2	3	4
Level	Subject	2010-11 Percent Proficient	2010-11 Percent Partially Proficient	Partially Proficient divided by 2	2017 Percent Proficient Goal	Annual Equal increments
State	L	71.7	28.3	14.2	85.9	2.4
State	M	78.1	21.9	11.0	89.1	1.8

The NJDOE repeated the process described above for each subgroup of students in the State to identify the SEA's goal for the 2016–2017 school year for each subgroup, ensuring that the State's six-year goals reduce by half the percentage of students in each subgroup who are not proficient. Also, subgroups of students who are further behind are expected to make greater rates of annual progress (as demonstrated by the differences in the expected annual increments). The NJDOE established performance targets for the content areas of language arts literacy and math; as such, the assessment results for grades 3-8 and 11 are aggregated.

The table below, "State Level Performance Targets" details these performance targets for each content area and subgroup.

STATE LEVEL PERFORMANCE TARGETS

KEY	T	Total	B	African American	O	Two or more races
`	SE	Students with Disabilities	H	Hispanic		
	EC	Economically Disadvantaged	A	Asian/Pacific Islander	LEP	Limited English Prof.
	W	White	N	Native American		

Level	Subject	subpop	2011 Partially Proficient	2011 Partially Proficient divided by 2	Current 2010-2011 Percent Proficient	Equal Annual Increments	2012 P% TARGET	2013 P% TARGET	2014 P% TARGET	2015 P% TARGET	2016 P% TARGET	2017 P% TARGET
State	L	T	28.3	14.2	71.7	2.4	74.1	76.4	78.8	81.1	83.5	85.9
State	L	SE	59.3	29.7	40.7	4.9	45.6	50.6	55.5	60.5	65.4	70.4
State	L	EC	48.3	24.2	51.7	4.0	55.7	59.8	63.8	67.8	71.8	75.9
State	L	LEP	71.3	35.7	28.7	5.9	34.6	40.6	46.5	52.5	58.4	64.4
State	L	A	13.9	7.0	86.1	1.2	87.3	88.4	89.6	90.7	91.9	93.1
State	L	B	48.6	24.3	51.4	4.1	55.5	59.5	63.6	67.6	71.7	75.7
State	L	H	44.1	22.1	55.9	3.7	59.6	63.3	66.9	70.6	74.3	78.0
State	L	N	32.4	16.2	67.6	2.7	70.3	73.0	75.7	78.4	81.1	83.8
State	L	W	19.6	9.8	80.4	1.6	82.0	83.7	85.3	86.9	88.6	90.2
State	L	O	31.1	15.6	68.9	2.6	71.5	74.1	76.7	79.3	81.9	84.5

State	M	T	21.9	11.0	78.1	1.8	79.9	81.8	83.6	85.4	87.2	89.1
State	M	SE	50.9	25.5	49.1	4.2	53.3	57.6	61.8	66.1	70.3	74.6
State	M	EC	37.6	18.8	62.4	3.1	65.5	68.7	71.8	74.9	78.1	81.2
State	M	LEP	54.2	27.1	45.8	4.5	50.3	54.8	59.4	63.9	68.4	72.9
State	M	A	6.9	3.5	93.1	0.6	93.7	94.3	94.8	95.4	96.0	96.6
State	M	B	43.6	21.8	56.4	3.6	60.0	63.7	67.3	70.9	74.6	78.2
State	M	H	33.2	16.6	66.8	2.8	69.6	72.3	75.1	77.9	80.6	83.4
State	M	N	26.4	13.2	73.6	2.2	75.8	78.0	80.2	82.4	84.6	86.8
State	M	W	14.4	7.2	85.6	1.2	86.8	88.0	89.2	90.4	91.6	92.8
State	M	O	25.8	12.9	74.2	2.2	76.4	78.5	80.7	82.8	85.0	87.1

New Jersey will apply the performance targets to the State, each LEA, school and subgroup annually, utilizing a minimum "N" size of 30 for all students and for each subgroup.

District-Level

The NJDOE will repeat the process described above for each subgroup of students in the district to identify the district's performance targets for the 2016–2017 school year for each subgroup, ensuring that the six-year goals reduce by half the percentage of students in each subgroup who are not proficient and that subgroups of students who are further behind are expected to make greater rates of annual progress.

School-Level

The NJDOE will repeat the process described above for each subgroup of students in the school to identify the school's performance targets for the 2016–2017 school year for each subgroup, ensuring that the six-year goals reduce by half the percentage of students in each subgroup who are not proficient and that subgroups of students who are further behind are expected to make greater rates of annual progress.

Interpreting Performance Targets

As mentioned above, the NJDOE will publish each school's and district's performance targets and whether they were met on an annual basis as part of the School Performance Report. As part of a system of accountability and performance metrics, these performance targets will help schools, districts, and community stakeholders more fully understand the performance of their school by identifying both strengths and areas for improvement.

However, New Jersey's diversity of schools in terms of size, the number of subgroups present in any given school building, and ultimately the relatively small number of students in any particular subgroup

present a unique challenge in interpreting performance targets. The NJDOE also determined that for the highest performing schools and subgroups, this will likely present unreasonable increments as the performance targets approach 100 percent proficiency with the result of identifying schools at the absolute top of the performance level as failing to meet their performance targets. The NJDOE therefore established that schools and subgroups could meet expectations by either reaching their individually determined performance targets or a proficiency rate of 90 percent. This rate will be increased to 95 percent in 2015. In this way, the absolute proficiency will always be higher than any target established (no target is higher than 90 percent next year, and no target is higher than 95percent in 2015). The Performance Targets calculated will require schools that are currently further behind in student achievement to make greater rates of progress in order to reach their goals.

2.C REWARD SCHOOLS

2.C.i Describe the SEA's methodology for identifying highest-performing and high-progress schools as Reward Schools.

The NJDOE has long recognized Title I Schools of Excellence and National Blue Ribbon Schools across the state. This waiver application offers an opportunity to further recognize excellent schools by formally designating a set of schools as Reward Schools. As found in the key attached to Table 2 below, the waiver application specifies that NJDOE designate two sub-categories within the Reward category. They are schools that are "Reward-High Performing", denoted as required in Table 2 as Category A, and "Reward-High Progress", denoted as required in Table 2 as Category B.

These two sub-categories of Reward schools allow the NJDOE to recognize two separate but very important types of success. The first type of school demonstrates remarkable success for all of its students and for each subgroup. These schools are deemed to be Reward-High Performing (Table 2: Category A) because they have met measures of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for all of their students and subgroups during the 2010-2011 school year, have a school-wide proficiency rate above 90 percent (that is, 90 percent of the school's students met or exceeded State standards as measured by our statewide assessments), and, at the high school level, have a graduation rate above 90 percent.

To ensure that a high school-wide proficiency rate for such schools does not mask low subgroup performance, we also require Reward-High Performing schools to have high performance in each subgroup. Specifically, we require that each subgroup in a Reward-High Performing school rank in the top 10 percent of performance, relative to that subgroup's performance across the state. To ensure that any subgroup deficiencies are pervasive enough to warrant a school being ineligible for reward status, The NJDOE has included only subgroups with more than 30 students, that represent at least 5 percent of its school's student enrollment, and whose student growth percentile (described more fully below) is below 65 (failing to reach the NJDOE's marker for "high growth").

The second type of Reward School is called Reward-High Progress (Table 2: Category B). These schools – while perhaps not meeting AYP benchmarks – are set apart from other schools because they are demonstrating a remarkable rate of progress. The NJDOE will measure the "trajectory" of a school by utilizing the SGP methodology. SGP calculates a school's growth by using the median growth score of a school's student population. This number, which ranges from 1 to 99, is centered on a statewide median of 50. The NJDOE has determined that schools with an SGP score of 65 or higher is demonstrating high growth and will designate these schools as Reward-High Progress.

In creating the list of Reward Schools (Categories A and B), the NJDOE employed the following specific methodology:

Step 1: The NJDOE categorized all Title I schools that met the following criteria as Reward-High Performing (Table 2: Category A):

1) A school that met AYP benchmarks for all students and subgroups during the 2010-2011 year;

2) Achieved an "all students" proficiency rate above 90 percent;
3) At the high school level, achieved a graduation rate of above 90 percent, and
4) Achieved a proficiency rate in the top 10 percent of performance with respect to each eligible subgroup. This is a relative measure that determines whether each subgroup in a Reward-High Performing school ranks in the top 10 percent of performance, relative to that subgroup's performance across the state. As mentioned above, the NJDOE has included only subgroups with more than 30 students, that represent at least 5 percent of its school's student enrollment, and whose student growth percentile is below 65 (failing to reach the NJDOE's marker for "high growth").

Step 2: The NJDOE categorized all remaining Title I schools that obtained a median student growth percentile (SGP) of 65 or higher as Reward-High Progress (Table 2: Category B).

Step 3: To continue the commitment toward the establishment of a single, unified system of accountability, recognitions, and interventions, the NJDOE also classified all non-Title I schools that otherwise met the conditions in steps #1 or #2 as Reward Schools of the respective type.

The Reward School list in Table 2 is based on the last three years (2008-2009, 2009-2010, and 2010-2011) of State assessments data, median student growth percentiles derived from the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 assessments, and 2010-2011 graduation rates based on New Jersey's four-year adjusted cohort model required by 34 C.F.R. §200.19.

New Jersey aims to avoid one-year aberrations from unduly influencing the results when we formally categorize schools as Reward in the future. Therefore the NJDOE plans to incorporate additional years of State assessments, SGP and graduation rate data as it becomes available (i.e., calculating SGP from the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 assessments). This will allow the Department to more accurately determine which schools are consistently most effective in advancing student learning. SGP scores based on the 2010 and 2011 test administrations are expected to be available no later than December 2011, at which point they will be incorporated into an updated list of Reward Schools.

New Jersey will ensure *all* schools are recognized for their high achievement and progress. Per ESEA Flexibility Guidelines, New Jersey is committed to recognizing Reward Schools that are not only high-performing in the aggregate but those that are also closing the achievement gap between subgroups. To that end, schools that are already classified as a Focus School are not included in the universe of schools eligible to be identified as Reward Schools.

2.C.ii Provide the SEA's list of Reward Schools in Table 2.

2.C.iii Describe how the SEA will publicly recognize and, if possible, reward highest-performing and high-progress schools.

The NJDOE will implement several rewards and recognitions for its highest-performing and high-progress schools. The decision on how to use any monetary rewards the school receives from the State will be made by the district and school based on feedback from stakeholders, including teachers and district leaders. To acknowledge the State's Reward Schools, the Department will use Title I, Part A funds under the provision of *ESEA* §1117(c)(2)(A) and other Title I, Part A funds that may be available for reallocation such as excess carryover funds up to a maximum of $1 million.

The State will define a new category of schools as "New Jersey Schools of Excellence." This designation will be noted on the school performance report, as well as on the NJDOE website. Additional recognitions may include:

1. Plaque identifying the school as a "New Jersey School of Excellence" presented to each school and district at a State Board of Education meeting;
2. Statewide press releases;
3. Selected schools/districts/students asked to present at a workshop at the NJDOE's Annual Effective Practices Conference;
4. Governor and/or Commissioner visit;
5. Students and staff attend a special rally/celebration held in Trenton for all "New Jersey Schools of Excellence" at the War Memorial; and/or
6. Scholarships for teachers to obtain National Board Certification.

In addition to these non-monetary recognitions, Title I-funded schools that have sustained achievement and have demonstrated high progress will receive monetary awards, using Title I funds. School principals, in consultation with school representatives, including at least two teachers and two parents, will have discretion over how to use these funds within their schools.

Up to ten Title I Schools that are designated "Reward-High Performing" will receive a monetary reward of up to $100,000 each based on school enrollment size and poverty factors. The recognized schools that receives a monetary reward for sustained achievement must:

1. Have a poverty rate of at least 35 percent over the three-year period;
2. Have received a Title I allocation and operate a Title I program;
3. Meet the criteria of a Reward School as articulated in 2.C.i, Category A; and
4. Enroll students without a selective admissions process.

Up to ten Title I Schools that are designated "Reward-High Progress" will also receive a monetary reward of up to $100,000 each based on school enrollment size and poverty factors. The recognized schools that receives a monetary reward for high progress must have:

1. A poverty rate of at least 35 percent over the three-year period;
2. Received a Title I allocation and operate a Title I program;

3. Meet the criteria of a Reward School as articulated in 2.C.i, Category B; and
4. Enroll students without a selective admissions process.

2.D PRIORITY SCHOOLS

2.D.i Describe the SEA's methodology for identifying a number of lowest-performing schools equal to at least five percent of the State's Title I schools as Priority Schools.

In addition to identifying Reward schools as specified above in Section 2.C.i., this waiver application calls upon the NJDOE to categorize at least 5 percent of the Title I schools across the State as Priority Schools. Priority Schools are schools that demonstrate very low levels of success, either in their school-wide student proficiency rates or in their overall graduation rates. This category of schools will require sustained, systemic interventions, and supports as described below.

The key to Table 2 below describes three sub-categories of Priority Schools. The first sub-category includes Title I schools across the State with the lowest absolute levels of proficiency as measured on the State assessments (Table 2: Category C). In other words, when ranked by the percent of the students who passed the test school-wide, these schools' percentage of students passing the test was among the lowest across the state. In creating this category, however, the NJDOE also took into account whether, despite the low levels of school-wide student achievement, the school was demonstrating progress. Thus, schools that would have otherwise been categorized as Priority Schools were removed if they were demonstrating high growth, as measured by the SGP methodology, described above in 2.C.i. Because the calculation of SGP is not possible at the high school level, a high school was removed from this category if its average yearly increase in their proficiency rate was greater than 5 percentage points as measured on New Jersey's High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA).

A second sub-category of Priority Schools is high schools among the lowest performing schools in the State (as described in the preceding paragraph) that *also* have a low, school-wide graduation rate (Table 2: Category D). The waiver application specifies that all such high schools with a graduation rate below 60 percent be included in this category. The graduation rate is calculated based on New Jersey's four-year adjusted cohort model required by 34 C.F.R. §200.19. After examining New Jersey's graduation rate across all Title I High Schools in the state, the Department determined that a graduation rate of 60 percent was too low a threshold. Adhering to the 60 percent graduation rate threshold would have under-identified struggling high schools with persistently high dropout rates and low retention rates. Thus, based on an analysis of the data, the NJDOE has included any high school with a graduation rate below 75 percent in this sub-category.

A third sub-category of Priority Schools includes those previously identified as a Tier 1 or Tier 2 school under the federal School Improvement Grant program (Table 2: Category E).

Taken together, the total number of schools in Priority status must be equal to at least 5 percent of Title I schools statewide. As there are 1,444 such Title I schools statewide, the NJDOE has identified **72** Title I schools (and 2 non-Title I schools) as Priority utilizing the following methodology:

Step 1: The NJDOE began by classifying the 19 schools previously identified as Tier 1 and Tier 2 SIG schools as Priority Schools (Table 2: Category E).

Step 2: The NJDOE removed from further consideration any school with a median SGP of 65 or higher, or any high school with average *yearly* increases in proficiency rates greater than 5 percentage points on New Jersey's High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA).

Step 3: Next, the NJDOE rank-ordered all remaining Title I schools by their school-wide proficiency rates on the appropriate State assessments and selected the lowest-performing 53 schools as Priority schools. This group of schools formed the basis for the second and third sub-categories of Priority Schools (Table 2: Categories C and D).

Step 4: From this set of 53 schools, the NJDOE classified high schools with graduation rates below 75 percent as Category D schools, and all remaining schools as Category C schools.

Step 5: In order to create a unified system of accountability, recognitions, and interventions, the NJDOE added any non-Title I school ranking below the highest ranked Title I school that meets the above criteria to their appropriate Priority School category.

The Priority School list in Table 2 is based on the past three years (2008-2009, 2009-2010, 2010-2011) of State assessments data, graduation rates, median SGPs based on the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 assessments, and, for high schools, increases in proficiency rates over time. As New Jersey has heretofore relied on the National Center of Education Statistics' "leaver" graduation rate, our metric relies only on the 2011 gradation cohort. Similarly, SGPs based on the most recent test administrations (2009-2010 and 2010-2011) are currently being computed and not yet available.

New Jersey aims to avoid one-year aberrations from unduly influencing our results, and therefore plan to incorporate additional years of this data as it becomes available. An additional year of cohort graduation rate data, for instance, will allow the State to track improvements in college-readiness over time, while additional years of SGP data will allow us to determine which schools are consistently most effective in advancing student learning. SGPs based on the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 test administrations are expected to be available no later than December 2011, at which point they will be incorporated into an updated list of Priority schools.

2.D.ii Provide the SEA's list of Priority Schools in Table 2.

2.D.iii Describe the meaningful interventions aligned with the turnaround principles that an LEA with Priority Schools will implement.

Introduction

A staff of qualified school turn-around experts located in seven RACs throughout the State will identify and ensure effective implementation of a system of intense interventions targeted to address the eight turnaround principles. The identified needs, specific intervention plans and progress monitoring goals will be included in individualized school improvement plans developed for each Priority school and approved by the school's LEA. The RAC staff will be fully supported by NJDOE senior staff. Resources developed by the NJDOE and used in Priority school interventions will include: model CCSS- and UDL-aligned curriculum and assessments, professional development supporting improved instruction, data systems for improving teaching and learning, guidelines for identifying quality enhanced and extended learning opportunities, as well as innovative strategies to support SWDs, ELLs and low-achieving students.

The NJDOE senior staff will prioritize the resource needs of the RACs and continually improve the NJDOE resources based on RAC feedback from school-level implementation. This process will efficiently leverage the NJDOE staff to develop, adopt or identify resources that can be used across all RACs, while requiring RACs, located closer to schools, to help implement interventions and provide feedback on implementation issues to the NJDOE. This dynamic system is supported by a strong communication system and accountability for all parties to improve student achievement in these lowest performing schools. RACs will also have the freedom and flexibility to look outside of the NJDOE to adopt resources, materials or programs they believe will best meet the needs of the students in the specific Priority schools under their direction. These RACs will be staffed with qualified school-turnaround experts by spring 2012. Training on QSR's, CCSS, UDL and any other required training in their specific area of expertise will be completed during the spring and summer of 2012. The seven fully staffed RACs will be prepared to start work in the identified Priority schools at the start of the 2012/2013 school year. The full set of interventions to be implemented in Priority schools address all of the eight turnaround principles including: school climate and culture, strong principal leadership, effective instruction, curriculum, assessments and interventions, use of time, use of data, effective staffing practices, and family and community engagement. In order to develop specific intervention strategies aligned with the eight turnaround principles RACs will conduct QSRs focused on the eight turnaround principles as well as student data disaggregated by sub-groups (e.g. SWDs and ELs).

If the Priority school is in a Title I district, the district will have to incorporate the school's individualized improvement plan in its annual Local Educational Agency Plan and sign assurances that the district will faithfully implement its LEAP. If the district refuses to do so, the NJDOE will withhold the district's Title I monies until the district comes into compliance. If the Priority School is in a non-Title I district, then the NJDOE will compel implementation of the school's individualized improvement plan by using the statutory and regulatory powers discussed, in part, in section 2.A.i.

Turnaround Interventions[2]

See Appendix 7 for a chart of Turnaround Interventions

In order to ensure the effective implementation of strategies addressing all eight turnaround principals, the RACs will assign one team member to work closely with the school principal in creating a first year plan that includes the concurrent implementation of all eight interventions. In addition the school principal and RAC staff will work to develop a communication plan that helps school staff and parents understand how the eight interventions are related and required in order to increase and sustain improved student achievement. This approach will not only allow staff and parents to better understand the plan but will drive increased staff and family support for the plan.

In order to develop improvement plans for implementing the appropriate level of intervention required for a given school RACs have the freedom to determine the intervention strategies they will use from a list of possibilities (bullets below); at the same time each RAC is held accountable to monitor the effectiveness of their work using a common set of expectations.

Although all interventions will be concurrently implemented in Priority schools, the interventions themselves are listed separately along with a set of strategies as well as expected outcomes in order to clearly outline how each intervention will be implemented and regularly measured for effectiveness:

School Climate & Culture

RACs will ensure the effective implementation of intervention strategies (listed below) in order to support the development of a safe and healthy learning environment capable of meeting the social, emotional and health needs of students:

- Embed a climate and culture specialist in the school funded with school-level Title I funds to work with the leadership, staff and families to develop or adopt a plan for creating a climate conducive to learning and a culture of high expectations;
- Require professional development for all staff and leadership to implement a comprehensive plan for creating a climate conducive to learning and a culture of high expectations; and
- Require professional development to build the capacity of the leadership team to collect and analyze appropriate data and take appropriate actions for continually improving the climate and culture of the school.

The effectiveness of these interventions will be monitored in part using attendance and discipline disaggregated data as well as climate survey responses from students, parents and staff. Effectiveness will ultimately be measured by improved student achievement on school and State level assessments.

School Leadership

In order to be sure the school leader is able to lead the turnaround effort RACs, in coordination with

[2] All interventions will be implemented consistent with State statutes and regulations, as well as any district collective bargaining agreement.

LEAs, will ensure the effective implementation of intervention strategies listed below:

- Remove and reassign the school principal and approve any replacement;
- Require professional development for the school leader focused on instructional leadership including the collection of data and feedback mechanisms for continually improving instruction; and
- Provide flexibility in the areas of scheduling, budget, staffing and curriculum.

The effectiveness of these interventions will be measured by improved instructional leadership behaviors of the principal including the collection and analysis of school and classroom level achievement and instructional data as well as the development and implementation of a plan for improvement using the data. Effectiveness will ultimately be measured by improved student achievement on state-level assessments.

Curriculum, Assessment & Intervention System

The RACs will ensure effective implementation of the intervention strategies listed below in order to prepare all students, including SWDs, ELLs and low performing students, to be college- and career-ready:

- Implement the NJDOE CCSS- and UDL- (precise learning goals, non-biased assessment items, clear & intuitive instructions, maximum readability and legibility) aligned model curriculum and unit assessments; and
- Implement research-based interventions for all students two or more grade levels behind in reading or mathematics.

The effectiveness of this intervention will be measured by improved instructional data (walkthroughs, formal/informal observations), curriculum implementation data (walkthroughs, formal/informal observations), classroom level assessment data and intervention implementation and achievement data as well as improved student achievement measured by state-level assessments.

Effective Instruction

The RACs will ensure effective implementation of the intervention strategies listed below in order to continually improve the quality of instruction:

- Require mutual consent for up to 100 percent of staff;
- Require professional development for all teachers focused on effective instruction;
- Prohibit Tier 1 (ineffective) or Tier 2 (partially effective) teachers from being assigned to the school following the full implementation of the new teacher evaluation system (2013-2014); and
- Require professional development for the principal focused on the skills necessary for improving instruction.

The effectiveness of these interventions will be measured by improved instructional data (walkthroughs, formal/informal evaluations), an increase in the number of teachers identified as Tier 3 (effective) or Tier 4 (highly effective) on the new teacher evaluation system (2013-2014), and improved student

achievement as measured by state-level assessments.

Effective Use of Time

The RACs will identify one or more of the following strategies in any Priority School that fails to effectively utilize time for improving instruction and achievement for all students (e. g. SWDs, ELLs):

- Require a schedule change to increase instructional time for students who need more time to meet the rigorous goals of the CCSS;
- Require additional time for professional development focused on all teachers learning strategies for effectively working with SWDs or ELLs;
- Require additional time for professional development focus on understanding the rigorous requirements of CCSS for all teachers including special education teachers and teachers supporting ELLs;
- Require additional time for professional development focused on teachers developing and using common assessment data to inform and differentiate instruction;
- Require professional development for all teachers on effective use of instructional time including effective transitions; and
- Require professional development for school leaders on effective scheduling to support learning for students and teachers.

While the form of this intervention may include extended learning time during the school day, it may also include extended learning opportunities in the form of either before school or afterschool programs consistent with CCSS. The NJDOE may partner with organizations, either for-profit or not-for-profit, and school-based entities to identify best practices and strategies for effective extended learning opportunities. Where the RACs, in consultation with the leaders, teachers, and parents of the Priority School, determine that implementation of extended learning opportunities are necessary to help in improving student achievement, they will work with the school to identify appropriate programs. To the extent the RACs identify before school or afterschool tutoring or related supports as appropriate, the school may provide these services themselves or contract with an appropriate provider organization (either for-profit or not-for-profit) or school-based entity.

The effectiveness of this intervention will be measured by improved instruction for all students (walkthrough data, formal/informal observations), classroom level assessment data for all students, and student achievement as measured by state-level assessments.

Effective Use of Data

The RACs will ensure effective implementation of the strategies listed below in order to increase the effective use of data to improve instruction:

- Embed a full time data specialist in the school focused on implementing a system for teachers to develop and use common assessment data for improving and differentiating instruction funded by school-level Title I funds;

- Require professional development for all teachers in formative assessment design and data analysis to improve and differentiate instruction; and
- Require professional development to build the capacity of the principal to collect and analyze data for improving instruction and the skills necessary to develop a schedule and system for increasing teacher ownership of data analysis for improving instruction (PLC).

The effectiveness of this intervention will be measured by an increase in the numbers of teachers using data to inform and differentiate instruction as well as improved student achievement as measured by state-level assessments.

Effective Staffing Practices

The RACs will ensure effective implementation of the strategies listed below in order to increase the recruitment, retention and development of effective teachers:

- Require professional development to certify that all administrators in the school can effectively evaluate instruction and give quality feedback to teachers;
- Require professional development for the principal and leadership team on effective recruiting and retention practices; and
- Require outside master educators to conduct observations as part of a comprehensive evaluation process that supports reliable observations.

The effectiveness of these interventions are measured by improved instruction (walkthrough data, formal/informal observations) and an increased number of teachers identified as Tier 3 or 4 on the new teacher evaluation system (2013-2014) as well as improved student achievement as measured by state-level assessments.

Effective Family and Community Engagement

The RACs will ensure effective implementation of the strategies listed below in order to increase the engagement of families and the community.

- Revise the job description of the family and community engagement staff in order to focus engagement on academics;
- Require professional development for family and community engagement staff designed to increase their skill level in developing academically focused engagement opportunities for families and the community;
- Require professional development for all staff on the effective support of SWDs and ELs and their families; and
- Require professional development for all staff on the development and implementation of effective academically focused family and community engagement.

The effectiveness of these interventions will be measured by an increase in the number of family and community engagement opportunities, including academically focused activities, as well as improvement

on key indicators on the school climate survey. In addition, effectiveness will be measured by student achievement state-level assessments.

Focus schools that are identified as not meeting the needs of SWDs will be required to implement:

- Curriculum aligned to UDL;
- Collaborative teaching model;
- Improved use of data for differentiating instruction;
- Professional development for special education teachers to better understand the rigor of the CCSS; and
- Professional development for all teachers to better meet the needs of SWDs.

The specific interventions will be determined by the RAC, school leaders, and the LEA. Effectiveness measures will be determined based on the interventions and will be required to include student achievement measures.

Focus Schools identified as not meeting the needs of ELLs will be required to implement:

- Research-based strategies for teaching academic English;
- Strategies to improve the use of native language support;
- Strategies to scaffold learning to meet the rigorous requirements of CCSS;
- Professional development for all teachers to learn strategies for meeting the content learning needs of ELLs; and
- Professional development for teachers supporting ELLs to better understand the rigorous requirements of the CCSS.

The specific interventions will be determined by the RAC, school leaders and the LEA. Effectiveness measures will be determined based on the interventions and will be required to include student achievement measures..

For all schools, the impact of the interventions will be regularly monitored by the RAC staff in order to ensure that all schools are implementing interventions effectively and making progress towards increasing student achievement. The RACs will be in constant communication with the NJDOE leadership in the central office in order to ensure that the central office is designing and providing the resources and guidance most effective to drive school improvement.

Additional Legislative Strategies

Though we believe strongly that the interventions described above will lead to substantial improvements in our Priority and Focus schools, the NJDOE believes that a number of changes to State law will both strengthen our proposed interventions and will significantly facilitate our work with struggling schools. Accordingly, the Christie administration and the NJDOE are strongly supporting four pieces of legislation presently before the Legislature that will enable the NJDOE to provide greater support to districts, schools, and, most importantly, students.

The first is comprehensive educator effectiveness legislation. The bill would create a statewide educator

evaluation system (consistent with the provisions outlined in this waiver invitation), tie tenure to effectiveness, end forced placements and Last-In-First-Out (LIFO), and improve compensation systems. These changes to current law will drastically improve the State's human capital strategies, helping districts and schools recruit and retain highly effective educators. (the NJDOE already has the authority under current law and regulation to develop the statewide educator evaluation system described in Principle 3.)

Three of the bills would increase the educational options available to students in low-performing schools and districts. A bill to improve the State's charter school law would expand the number of charter authorizers, permit charter school conversions, and increase charter autonomy and accountability. The Opportunity Scholarship Act would provide tax credits to corporations that contribute to scholarship programs for low-income students. And the Urban Hope Act, which was signed into law by Governor Christie on January 12, 2012, will encourage the development of new, high-performing schools in the State's five lowest performing districts. In combination, these bills would do a great deal to provide disadvantaged families with an immediate exit strategy while the State and districts work to improve performance in Priority schools.

In advance of the passage of the above-enumerated bills, and alongside the interventions described in this waiver application, the State will use its current set of authorities to vigorously recruit high-performing turnaround organizations to partner with struggling schools and charter operators to start new schools in districts with Priority Schools. During the state's annual charter application review process, the NJDOE will give preference to proposals that seek to locate in these districts and serve students in the grade spans found in the district's Priority Schools.

2.D.iv Provide the timeline the SEA will use to ensure that its LEAs that have one or more Priority Schools implement meaningful interventions aligned with the turnaround principles in each Priority School no later than the 2014–2015 school year and provide a justification for the SEA's choice of timeline.

Timeline for Interventions

New Jersey's newly created RACs will be fully staffed by fall 2012 in order to deliver the interventions within Priority and Focus schools as schools open in September 2012. Therefore, the work to deliver support and ensure that schools implement interventions within Priority and Focus schools will begin before the start of the 2012 – 2013 academic year.

Priority Schools

The Collaborative Assessment and Planning for Achievement (CAPA) review process was designed by the NJDOE to assess the need areas of schools in Year 3 of improvement status under NCLB. A work group reviewed the data collected and determined that this data could be used to inform the work of the RACs rather than repeating the data collection process. In addition the work group is completing a process to align the data collection of CAPA to the eight intervention principles used by RACs in order to both present the data in a workable structure for the RACs and to inform the development of the

Quality School Review process that will be used moving forward.

By the end of the 2011-2012 school year all schools currently listed as Priority Schools will have a completed a CAPA review within the last 24 months, which will allow the RACs to begin developing school improvement plans and implementing interventions at the start of the 2012-2013 school year.

All Priority Schools will receive the targeted interventions as determined by the RACs and agreed to by the LEA for a three-year period, providing schools the time needed to implement required changes and demonstrate improvement in student achievement. Priority Schools that fail to implement the required interventions or fail to demonstrate required improvement in student academic achievement may become subject to state-ordered closure or other action.

Focus Schools

In order to start quality interventions in all Focus Schools at the start of the 2012-2013 school year RACs will require identified schools to present the following reports and data sets:

- Report progress on interventions currently in place to improve sub-group performance;
- Present sub-group attendance, discipline and all school-level academic data;
- Present sub-group curricular materials;
- Present randomly selected student schedules); and
- Present the work done, if any, to increase family involvement targeted to meet the identified sub-group needs;

The presentation of this information can take place during the month of August allowing the RACs to plan interventions designed to address the needs of the identified sub-group(s) that start at the beginning of the school year and take into account the plans already in place in each focus school.

RACs will complete the full QSR process and adjust interventions as needed during the 2012-2013 school year. All interventions within each school turnaround principle area will continue for one full year, or until sustained improvement has been observed by the regional achievement teams.

For all schools, the impact of the interventions will also be regularly monitored by the RACs in order to ensure that all schools are making progress towards increasing student achievement. The RAC staff will be in constant communication with the NJDOE leadership in the central office in order to ensure that the central office is designing and providing the resources and guidance most effective in driving school improvement.

2.D.v Provide the criteria the SEA will use to determine when a school that is making significant progress in improving student achievement exits Priority status and a justification for the criteria selected.

In addition to monitoring whether a school continues to meet the definition of the Priority classification (within the bottom 5% of all Title I schools in overall student achievement outcomes or maintaining a

low graduation rate), the NJDOE will also monitor improvements in student learning and the extent to which required interventions are being faithfully implemented .

A school can become eligible for exiting Priority status if it meets all three of these requirements:

1) no longer meets the definition of a Priority school for two consecutive years;
2) has, as determined by its RAC, successfully implemented all interventions required through its QSR;
3) reduced the count of students not demonstrating proficiency on statewide assessments by 25% over a three-year period or, if a high school, reduced the count of students not graduating by 25% over a three-year period; and/or demonstrated high growth for two consecutive years, as measured by an SGP score of 65 or higher (as defined in 2.C.i).

2.E Focus Schools

2.E.i Describe the SEA's methodology for identifying a number of low-performing schools equal to at least 10 percent of the State's Title I schools as "Focus Schools."

In addition to identifying schools as Reward, as outlined above in 2.C.i., and Priority, as outlined above in 2.D.i., the waiver application requires the NJDOE to identify at least 10 percent of its Title I schools, 144 schools, as Focus schools. As the name implies, the category of Focus schools includes schools with 'focused' deficiencies. With Focus schools, the NJDOE sees the opportunity to develop interventions and supports that may be targeted to a subset of a school's population to address its low achievement or a large within-school achievement gap.

As specified in the key to Table 2, the waiver application identifies three sub-categories within Focus Schools. The first requires the NJDOE to identify schools that have the largest within-school gaps between the highest-achieving subgroups and the lowest-achieving subgroups. Because these differences are measured in proficiency rate gaps, the within-school gap is a relative measure. In order to determine which schools have the largest within-school gaps, these gaps are determined for all schools and then ranked against each other across the state. The schools with the largest such gaps are identified for inclusion (Table 2: Category F).

A second sub-category requires the identification of schools that simply have subgroups whose performance, as compared to the rest of the state, is particularly low (Table 2: Category G). This subcategory consists of schools whose lowest-performing subgroups are demonstrating low levels of proficiency on statewide assessments when ranked against the rest of the State.

When determining the membership of Categories F and G described above, the NJDOE will combine the performance of a school's two lowest-performing subgroups and then rank the schools based on the combined performance of those two subgroups. For example, if the proficiency rate of a school's two lowest subgroups is 15 percent and 30 percent, respectively, the NJDOE will average these rates together (weighted by their respective shares of tested enrollment) to form a weighted average of proficiency Category F schools will be those that have the lowest performance using this combined proficiency rate. Category G schools will be those that have the largest within-school gap between the proficiency of the highest-performing subgroup and this combined proficiency rate.

When including subgroups in this analysis, the NJDOE has included only subgroups with more than 30 students, that represent at least 5 percent of its school's tested student enrollment, and whose student growth percentile (described more fully in 2.C.i.) is below 65 (failing to reach the NJDOE's marker for "high growth"); this was done to ensure that the 'focused' deficiencies in a particular building are pervasive enough to warrant the investment of the NJDOE interventions and supports.

The third sub-category of schools within Focus requires the identification of a high school whose graduation rate is less than 60 percent (Table 2: Category H). As detailed above in the identification of

Priority Schools, in section 2.D.i., the NJDOE chose to raise this graduation threshold to 75 percent to prevent the under-identification of high schools with significant dropout or retention rates.

The universe of schools from which Focus Schools are selected is all Title I schools that are not already identified as Priority Schools. As mentioned above, the waiver requires the identification of 10 percent of Title I schools as Focus, 144 schools. The NJDOE's methodology, described below, identifies 19 schools in Category H, 35 Title I schools in Category F, and 90 Title I schools in Category G. Our inclusion of non-Title I schools (described below) added 27 schools to Category F, 1 to Category G and 7 schools to Category H. To create the particular subcategories, the NJDOE utilized the following methodology:

Step 1: The NJDOE began by identifying all Title I-eligible and Title I-participating high schools that are not previously identified as a Priority School with a graduation rate less than 75 percent (Table 2: Category H). This resulted in the identification of 19 high schools across the state.

Step 2: Next, the NJDOE computed the within-school gap, as measured by the difference in percentage points of proficiency, between the highest-performing subgroup and the average proficiency of the two lowest-performing subgroups in each Title I school. As mentioned above, to be included in the analysis, a subgroup must have at least 30 students, represent at least 5 percent of the total student population, and have an SGP score below 65 (if an elementary or middle school). The Department then ranked the schools according to their gaps and selected the 35 schools with the largest gaps across the State – representing about 30 percent of the remaining schools in the Focus category after the identification of the 19 high schools in Step 1 above. (Table 2: Category F).

Step 3: The NJDOE then ranked the remaining Title I schools that are not already classified as Focus Schools according to the combined and weighted proficiency rates of their two lowest-performing subgroups. Again, to be included each subgroup must have at least 30 students, represent at least 5 percent of the total student population, and have an SGP score below 65 (if an elementary or middle school). From this ranking, the Department selected the 90 schools with the lowest combined proficiency rates across the State (Table 2: Category G). This netted to a total of 144 schools within the Focus School category.

Step 4: In order to create a unified system of accountability, recognitions, and interventions, the Department added any non-Title I school ranking below the highest ranked Title I school that meets the above criteria to their appropriate Focus School category.

The Focus School list in Table 2 is based on the past three years (2008-2009, 2009-2010, and 2010-2011) of State assessments data, graduation rates, median student growth percentiles (SGPs), based on the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 assessments, and, for high schools, increases in proficiency rates over time.

New Jersey aims to avoid one-year aberrations from unduly influencing our results, and the Department will incorporate additional years of this data as it becomes available. An additional year of

cohort graduation rate data, for instance, will allow the NJDOE to track improvements in college readiness over time, while additional years of SGP data will allow the Department to determine which schools are consistently most effective in advancing student learning. SGPs based on the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 test administrations are expected to be available no later than December 2011, at which point they will be incorporated into an updated list of Focus Schools.

2.E.ii Provide the SEA's list of Focus Schools in Table 2.

2.E.iii Describe the process and timeline the SEA will use to ensure that its LEAs that have one or more Focus Schools will identify the specific needs of the SEA's Focus Schools and their students and provide examples of and justifications for the interventions Focus Schools will be required to implement to improve the performance of students who are the furthest behind.

In order to start quality interventions in all Focus Schools at the start of the 2012-2013 school year RACs will require identified schools to present the following reports and data sets:

- Report progress on interventions currently in place to improve sub-group performance;
- Present sub-group attendance, discipline and all school-level academic data;
- Present sub-group curricular materials;
- Present randomly selected student schedules); and
- Present the work done, if any, to increase family involvement targeted to meet the identified sub-group needs.

The presentation of this information can take place prior to the month of August allowing the RACs to plan interventions designed to address the needs of the identified sub-group(s). These interventions will start at the beginning of the 2012-13 school year and take into account the plans already in place in each focus school.

RACs will complete the full QSR process on each Focus school and adjust interventions as needed during the 2012-2013 school year.

Focus schools that are identified as not meeting the needs of SWDs will be required to implement:

- Curriculum aligned to UDL;
- Collaborative teaching model;
- Improved use of data for differentiating instruction;
- Professional development for special education teachers to better understand the rigor of the CCSS; and
- Professional development for all teachers to better meet the needs of SWDs.

The specific interventions will be determined by the RAC, school leaders, and the LEA. Effectiveness measures will be determined based on the interventions and will be required to include student

achievement measures.

Focus Schools identified as not meeting the needs of English Learners will be required to implement:

- Research-based strategies for teaching academic English;
- Strategies to improve the use of native language support;
- Strategies to scaffold learning to meet the rigorous requirements of CCSS;
- Professional development for all teachers to learn strategies for meeting the content learning needs of ELLs; and
- Professional development for teachers supporting ELLs to better understand the rigorous requirements of the CCSS.

The specific interventions will be determined by the RAC, school leaders and the LEA. Effectiveness measures will be determined based on the interventions and will be required to include student achievement measures..

For all schools, the impact of the interventions will be regularly monitored by the RAC staff in order to ensure that all schools are implementing interventions effectively and making progress towards increasing student achievement. The RACs will be in constant communication with the NJDOE leadership in the central office in order to ensure that the central office is designing and providing the resources and guidance most effective to drive school improvement.

2.E.iv Provide the criteria the SEA will use to determine when a school that is making significant progress in improving student achievement and narrowing achievement gaps exits Focus status and a justification for the criteria selected.

In addition to measuring the degree to which a school meets the quantitative definition of the Focus classification (a school that continues to demonstrate the largest within-school achievement gap based on proficiency outcomes and a lack of growth), the NJDOE will also monitor the extent to which a school is accomplishing the implementation of the interventions aligned to the turnaround principles.

A school can become eligible for exiting Focus status if it:

1) no longer meets the definition of a Focus school for two consecutive years;
2) has, as determined by its RAC, successfully implemented all interventions required through its QSR;
3) if identified as Category F or G, its lowest performing subgroups have met their annual measurable objectives for three years; and/or has demonstrated high growth for two consecutive years as measured by SGP of 65 or higher (as defined in 2.C.i). If identified as Category H reduced the count of students not graduating by 25% over a three year period.

2.F PROVIDE INCENTIVES AND SUPPORTS FOR OTHER TITLE I SCHOOLS

2.F Describe how the SEA's differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system will provide incentives and supports to ensure continuous improvement in other Title I schools that, based on the SEA's new AMOs and other measures, are not making progress in improving student achievement and narrowing achievement gaps, and an explanation of how these incentives and supports are likely to improve student achievement and school performance, close achievement gaps, and increase the quality of instruction for students.

To ensure all schools are engaged in continuous improvement, the NJDOE will develop a school performance report for all schools, as described in 2.A.i. In a clear and accessible manner, the NJDOE will report on the performance of each school by focusing on the most critical measures of student achievement including subgroup measures and key college- and career-readiness metrics (e.g. AP, SAT, scores). (See Appendix 5 for a copy of the prototype Performance Report)

As demonstrated in the table below, a school's meeting each performance target is an integral part of the performance report's summary metric of Academic Achievement. Each subgroup's performance at each school will be measured and identified as meeting or not meeting its specific performance targets.

Performance Targets - Language Arts Literacy**

This table presents the annual proficiency targets, as measured by the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA), established for this school under New Jersey's Elementary and Secondary Act Waiver.

Subgroup	*2010-2011 Pass Rate*	*2010-2011 Target*	*Met Target*
Schoolwide	64.6%	65.0%	YES
White	78.0%	73.0%	YES
Black	81.0%	76.0%	YES
Hispanic	65.0%	74.2%	NO
American Indian	72.0%	78.0%	NO
Asian	93.0%	92.0%	YES
Native Hawaiian	N/A	N/A	N/A
Two or More Races	58.0%	74.0%	NO
With Disabilities	60.0%	68.0%	NO
Limited English Proficiency	70.0%	67.0%	YES
Economically Disadvantaged	69.0%	73.4%	NO

These performance reports will identify schools that are not making progress or not meeting other targets, such as participation rates in SAT test-taking. They will also identify highly successful schools, thereby allowing the NJDOE to recognize and celebrate districts and schools with high achievement and/or high

growth. This recognition will serve as an incentive for schools and districts to continue innovating and improving, and it will enable the NJDOE to learn from these schools and districts and share their best practices widely.

The performance report will identify key areas of need for all New Jersey schools. That is, while some schools will not fit into the Priority or Focus categories, they may nevertheless have weaknesses in need of attention. For non-Priority and non-Focus Schools:

- Each LEA will be required to develop, for each school missing performance targets, a local school board-approved school improvement plan that addresses the school- and/or subgroup-missed performance targets, as described above.
- These plans will be required to describe the alignment of Title I funds to address the deficiencies in performance identified for that school.

Guidelines for such plans will be provided by the NJDOE at the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year. This work will be a joint product of the Divisions of Academics and Performance and the Department's RACs.

Because the NJDOE is committed to ensuring that achievement gaps are addressed in all schools—not just in Priority and Focus Schools—the Department will identify another subset of schools for further attention. The NJDOE will follow the process below to identify the most at-risk non-categorized schools:

Step one:
The NJDOE will use the school Performance Report Card data to identify schools with at least one subgroup failing to meet academic achievement performance targets for two years.

Step two:
The NJDOE will then rank-order subgroups in these schools by their absolute academic achievement, i.e., the percentage of students who are demonstrating proficiency.

Step three:
The NJDOE will then select from this list no fewer than the bottom 5% of Title I schools.

Multiple factors will be taken into consideration when determining whether to expand this additional subset beyond the lowest 5% of Title I schools. The factors will include though may not be limited to:

1) whether identified schools are missing AMOs in multiple subgroups;
2) whether identified schools are within LEAs with a substantial number of Priority and/or Focus schools (indicating the LEAs' limited capacity to address the needs of non-Priority and non-Focus Schools); and
3) the capacity of the RACs to meaningfully support non-Priority, non-Focus Schools.

Beginning at the end of Year One (2012-13 school year), the NJDOE will utilize this analytical method to identify at-risk non-categorized schools and plan for future supports and interventions. At the end of Year Two (2013-14), schools identified for two years using this method will receive additional supports. The Director in each RAC will:

- assess and approve the LEA's School Improvement Plan and case for Title I alignment;
- offer technical assistance targeted to the struggling sub-group(s); and
- monitor school-level progress for future academic cycles and increase technical assistance when needed.

NJDOE is committed to continuously improving both the process for identifying these additional schools and the interventions and supports designed to decrease their achievement gaps. After the first identification and intervention cycle of these at-risk but non-categorized schools, the NJDOE will assess whether the above identification rules captured a sufficient number of at-risk schools (seeking to eliminate false negatives) and whether all identified schools actually required interventions (seeking to eliminate false positives). The NJDOE will also assess whether its interventions were successful and whether extending the RACs to cover these additional schools substantially diminished the RACs' ability to successfully address the needs of Priority and Focus Schools. The results of these analyses will inform both the identification rules and interventions for at-risk, non-categorized schools moving forward.

Other Title I schools will be invited and encouraged to attend regional trainings and professional development sessions designed around the NJDOE interventions and school turnaround principles, and the State's model curriculum will be made available to all schools and districts. In these ways, other Title I schools will have access to many of the same supports being provided to Priority and Focus Schools. Further, many additional resources will be placed on the NJDOE website. These web resources include, but are not limited to, webinars, online professional development courses, toolkits and guidance. All schools will benefit from these resources.

Finally, RACs will also pay particular attention to schools that are close to reaching Priority status. Though RACs will not immediately intervene in such schools, regional teams will monitor progress and offer assistance in order to prevent the school from falling into the Priority category.

2.G Describe the SEA's process for building SEA, LEA, and school capacity to improve student learning in all schools and, in particular, in low-performing schools and schools with the largest achievement gaps, including through:

i. timely and comprehensive monitoring of, and technical assistance for, LEA implementation of interventions in Priority and Focus Schools;

ii. holding LEAs accountable for improving school and student performance, particularly for turning around their Priority Schools; and

iii. ensuring sufficient support for implementation of interventions in Priority Schools, Focus Schools, and other Title I schools identified under the SEA's differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system (including through leveraging funds the LEA was previously required to reserve under ESEA section 1116(b)(10), SIG funds, and other Federal funds, as permitted, along with State and local resources).

Explain how this process is likely to succeed in improving SEA, LEA, and school capacity.

The State has several strategies for ensuring the success of interventions in Priority and Focus Schools. The state's seven new RACs will be committed solely to improving student outcomes; they will focus primarily on Priority and Focus Schools. These offices will conduct reviews of underperforming schools, diagnose the causes of schools' challenges, and provide the support and interventions required for meaningful and lasting improvement. The teams will include specialists in reading, math, data use, and more; they will be in schools regularly. The teams will be able to ensure that reforms are underway and that results follow. This is a departure from prior NJDOE practice, in which school supports and interventions were often delivered in an unfocused, temporary, and undifferentiated manner.

It is also a departure from the NJDOE's historic reliance on districts as conduits for state-level reforms. In years past, the State sought to improve the performance of the most persistently troubled schools by intervening at the LEA level. The State has had, and continues to have, a number of powers and strategies designed to improve district capacity. For example, the State has taken over troubled districts such as Newark, Paterson, and Jersey City. In these locations, the NJDOE has taken numerous bold steps, including removing governance authority from a local board, installing a new state-hired superintendent, and more. The NJDOE has also placed highly empowered State employees in a number of troubled districts in the form of fiscal monitors and "highly skilled professionals" with authority over a wide array of areas, including personnel and budget.

The State also uses QSAC to assess and build district capacity. Executive County Superintendents, State employees, oversee a process that identifies LEAs' areas of weakness in operations; instruction and program; governance; personnel; and fiscal management. The process reveals where districts need to focus greater attention and, in cases where results are particularly troubling and no progress is being made, can lead to severe State interventions.

The State will continue to use these tools and others to build districts' capacity to help struggling schools improve; however, these strategies have not been successful alone. The NJDOE's new approach is to focus its resources on schools, which are the true units of change. Through the RACs and other central office divisions, the NJDOE will provide greatly increased support to principals and teachers in a wide array of areas. It is the state's conviction that these robust and highly targeted interventions will drive improvement in far superior ways to NJDOE's previous approach.

Another strategy for ensuring improvements in student learning is the NJDOE's addition of a Delivery Unit to its new organizational structure (See attachment 1). This division, reporting directly to the Deputy Commissioner, is charged with ensuring that results are achieved across all of the NJDOE's initiatives. It consists of three entities. The Office of Project Management develops departmental priorities, performance metrics, and work plans and serves as the Commissioner's internal accountability mechanism. The Office of School Improvement oversees the seven RACs and works closely with the department's senior executives to ensure that all school improvement initiatives are tightly coordinated and effective. The department's County Offices execute the QSAC process and ensure that districts comply with critical State statutes and regulations.

The State has numerous levers for ensuring that LEAs improve the performance of their lowest-achieving schools. The first way to hold LEAs accountable is through a robust school performance report. Annually, each school will receive a thorough report detailing its performance along a number of measures (see 2.A. i.). These reports will be made public.

Each school will be evaluated based on its achievement on State assessments; the growth of its students as measured by the SGP; and in its College and Career Readiness as measured by a variety of school metrics. (See Appendix 5 for a copy of the Prototype Performance Report).

Each school will be compared to the State overall as well as to schools with similar student bodies. The report will provide demographic information as well as financial data, again in comparison to the State average and peer schools.

The report will provide detailed information on the performance of the school relative to the school's specific school-wide and subgroup targets for accountability purposes. Proficiency and growth will be reported over time for language arts, math and science, and by each subgroup.

This performance report will be used to identify schools that are not making progress or meeting targets. Districts will be required to have public meetings to review the data and identify the areas in which improvement is needed. Districts will be required to address performance gaps among various groups. Districts will develop proposed targets for improvement that will be reviewed annually by the RACs. Targeted technical assistance will be offered through the RACs.

For schools that have not been designated as Focus or Priority, the RACs will review performance reports to identify areas for improvement and identify the combination of services and interventions that could improve student learning. Such interventions and services may include training to improve the quality of school leadership, high-quality curriculum aligned to the Common Core, and assistance in the analysis and use of data. The RACs will devote that vast majority of their time to Priority and Focus Schools; however, by monitoring other schools, they can ensure that non-identified schools don't regress and fall into priority or focus status and that schools' otherwise hidden areas of need are addressed.

Beyond making school information public, and as described more fully in Section 2.A.i., the NJDOE has extensive authority under federal and State law to bring about major change in school and district behavior. The NJDOE can, among other things, reassign teaching staff, redirect spending to ensure funds are spent effectively and efficiently, alter curriculum and programs, charter new schools, and, where all else fails, close chronically failing schools

In total, then, the State is relying on five strategies for growing the capacity of schools, LEAs, and the State to improve student learning and close the achievement gap. The first is increased information. Through detailed, user-friendly school performance reports, the NJDOE's new Division of Performance will provide actionable information on student achievement to schools, districts, and the

public.

Second, the NJDOE has restructured its central organization to enable the State to provide improved supports to schools and LEAs. The new Division of Educator Effectiveness, through initiatives on recruiting, preparation, certification, evaluation, and more, will help grow and improve the State's human capital, that is, collection of effective educators. The new Division of Academics will provide to schools and districts an abundance of support, including model curricula, formative assessments, leadership training, and more. The new Division of Innovation will recruit, develop, incubate, and support new, high-quality education models so students assigned to the lowest-performing schools have improved options.

Third, the NJDOE is building seven RACs as described in 2.D.iii. Each will be responsible for improving student achievement, particularly in Priority Schools, in its region. State Title I funds will be repurposed to provide the aforementioned supports and interventions to Title I Priority and Focus Schools.

Fourth, the NJDOE has undertaken an exhaustive effort to remove unnecessary burdens placed on the State's educators. A Governor's task force on regulatory reform is culling thousands of pages of laws and regulations to identify provisions that inhibit educators from focusing on student learning.

Fifth, the State will use its broad authority to take over troubled districts or place specialists into them and will execute its power over the QSAC process to ensure that LEAs have the capacity to help struggling schools improve.

Combined, these efforts will enable the State, LEAs, and schools to faithfully implement meaningful interventions in struggling schools. They will also help strengthen the internal capacity of the State, LEAs, and schools to continue and develop school improvement efforts over time.

PRINCIPLE 3: SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION AND LEADERSHIP

3.A DEVELOP AND ADOPT GUIDELINES FOR LOCAL TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL EVALUATION AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Select the option that pertains to the SEA and provide the corresponding description and evidence, as appropriate, for the option selected.

Option A	**Option B**	**Option C**
☒ If the SEA has not already developed any guidelines consistent with Principle 3, provide: i. the SEA's plan to develop and adopt guidelines for local teacher and principal evaluation and support systems by the end of the 2011–2012 school year; ii. a description of the process the SEA will use to involve teachers and principals in the development of these guidelines; and iii. an assurance that the SEA will submit to the Department a copy of the guidelines that it will adopt by the end of the 2011–2012 school year (see Assurance 15).	☐ If the SEA has already developed and adopted one or more, but not all, guidelines consistent with Principle 3, provide: i. a copy of any guidelines the SEA has adopted (Attachment 10) and an explanation of how these guidelines are likely to lead to the development of evaluation and support systems that improve student achievement and the quality of instruction for students; ii. evidence of the adoption of the guidelines (Attachment 11); iii. the SEA's plan to develop and adopt the remaining guidelines for local teacher and principal evaluation and support systems by the end of the 2011–2012 school year; iv. a description of the	☐ If the SEA has developed and adopted all of the guidelines consistent with Principle 3, provide: i. a copy of the guidelines the SEA has adopted (Attachment 10) and an explanation of how these guidelines are likely to lead to the development of evaluation and support systems that improve student achievement and the quality of instruction for students; ii. evidence of the adoption of the guidelines (Attachment 11); and iii. a description of the process the SEA used to involve teachers and principals in the development of these guidelines.

	process used to involve teachers and principals in the development of the adopted guidelines and the process to continue their involvement in developing any remaining guidelines; and v. an assurance that the SEA will submit to the Department a copy of the remaining guidelines that it will adopt by the end of the 2011–2012 school year (see Assurance 15).	

Introduction

New Jersey is in the 2nd year of a 4 year, ambitious and comprehensive plan to improve its teacher and leader evaluation system that includes four phases:

1) Educator Effectiveness Task Force (EETF) develops evaluation guidelines (2010-2011);
2) Excellent Educators for New Jersey (EE4NJ) evaluation pilot program is implemented and Commissioner regulations are adopted on key provisions of a statewide framework (2011-2012);
3) State-wide pilot expansion of evaluation system into a subset of schools in every district (2012-2013); and
4) Complete roll-out and implementation of new evaluation system, used to inform personnel decisions (2013-2014).

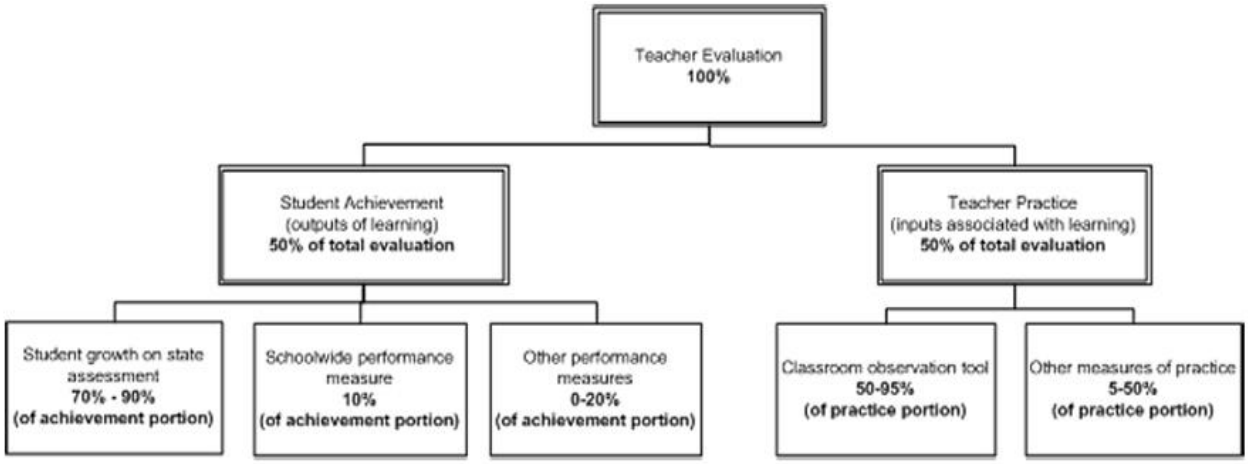
Year 1 (2010-2011): Task Force Recommendations

In October of 2010, Governor Christie launched the EETF, designed to recommend a fair and transparent system of educator evaluations that centered on student learning and achievement. The task force was comprised of nine members, including teachers, a representative from NJ's IHEs, a school board member, and district and school leaders from traditional and charter schools.

Over four months, the task force worked with experts on various elements of educator evaluation systems, researched model evaluation systems in other States and districts, and heard presentations from stakeholder groups and local districts to produce a report that included recommendations for teacher evaluations, leader evaluations, and conditions for success.

The task force recommendations included a clear framework for evaluating teachers based on equal parts teacher practice (inputs), and student learning (outputs). Evidence of student learning was defined to include progress on statewide summative assessments, but was not limited to it in recognition that the majority of teachers teach in untested grades or untested subjects. (See Appendix 8 for a copy of New Jersey's Educator Effectiveness Task Force Report).

Task Force Recommended Framework for the New Teacher Evaluation System

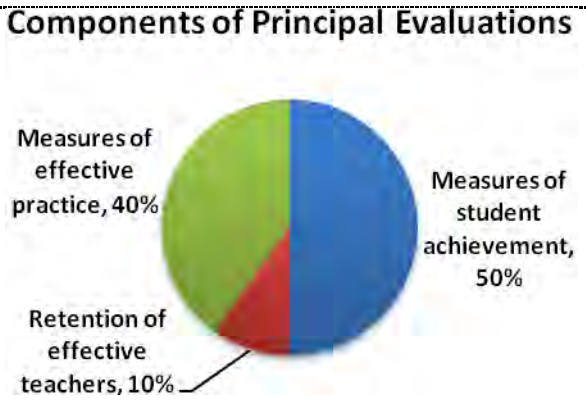


In addition to the framework above, the task force report emphasized how a good evaluation system can support teachers to become more effective, by clarifying expectations, providing actionable feedback, facilitating collaboration among teachers, and targeting professional development that is aligned with teachers' needs.

Finally, it recommended a teacher evaluation system with four summative categories: highly effective, effective, partially effective, and ineffective to differentiate levels of performance and appropriately identify teachers who are excelling and can share their techniques with others, those who need support and those who should be counseled to leave the profession.

The task force also recommended specific components and weights for a new principal evaluation system:

- Measures of effective practice (40 percent);
- Differential retention of effective teachers (hiring and retaining effective teachers and exiting poor performers (10 percent); and
- Measures of student achievement (50 percent).



Year 2 (2011-2012): Teacher Evaluation Pilot Program

Based on the recommendations offered by the task force in March of 2011, the NJDOE launched EE4NJ, an initiative to pilot a new teacher evaluation system in a wide variety of LEAs in the 2011-2012 school year.

To help pilot districts implement a strong evaluation system, the NJDOE awarded $1,160,000 in EE4NJ grants to districts selected to pilot through a competitive grant process. The funding is being used primarily to train teachers and principals on the new system, particularly on the use of high-quality observation frameworks. This was a major investment in this critical work and demonstrated the NJDOE's commitment to working with districts and schools as partners.

Pilot districts were selected so as to achieve representation across different regions of the State and varying socio-economic demographics. Ten districts were selected as pilots, along with Newark through its own funding source.

In addition, the NJDOE required that all SIG schools (19) participate in the pilot program during the 2011-2012 school year. Pilot districts, including the SIG schools, must implement the NJDOE requirements for a robust teacher evaluation system during the 2011-2012 school year. In accordance with the task force recommendations, these requirements include the following:

- Thorough training of evaluators and teachers in effective teacher practices based on professional standards;
- Annual teacher evaluations that include multiple observations and result in clear, actionable feedback for improvement;
- Multiple measures of teacher practice and student performance, proven to be valid and reliable, with student academic progress or growth as a key measure;
- A summative rating that combines the scores of all the measures of teaching practice and student achievement;
- Four summative rating categories that clearly differentiate levels of performance; and

- A link from the evaluation to providing professional development opportunities that meet the needs of educators at all levels of practice.

By the end of the 2011-2012 school year, the NJDOE will have adopted regulations that will provide guidance to districts on a framework for principal and teacher evaluations. These guidelines will align with those required by this application.

While the year-long pilot is crucial to understanding how to best implement a statewide evaluation system in the coming years, the NJDOE has already established some core principles for the measures and processes used to evaluate educators, based on the recommendations of the task force and learning from leading States, districts, and the NJ pilots.

The NJDOE will seek to have all districts pilot the evaluation system in a subset of their schools in 2012-13 and then fully adopt the new evaluation system in all their schools in 2013-14. Data systems linking student performance and class rosters will be completed and available to all schools in September 2012.

Coordinating Timeline with Proposed Legislation and Collective Bargaining Agreements

The 4-year timeline described above is designed to align with proposed enactment of legislation addressing the State's tenure laws and to provide adequate time for collective bargaining agreements to reflect new Department regulations.

Educator evaluations are currently required in existing NJ statute and supported by regulations. Specific measures and many of the processes are delineated in existing statute and regulations and are not subject to collective bargaining agreements (CBAs). CBAs may, however, specify the procedures and due process attendant to the evaluations. Proposed evaluation regulations will mandate that Districts implement new robust evaluation systems in 2012-13 and 2013-14 as outlined in the year-by-year timeline above; further, these proposed regulations will require that all collective bargaining agreements for teachers and principals entered into after the regulations are in effect be consistent with its provisions.

However, the regulations will not override conflicting provisions of any collective bargaining agreement in effect at the time of passage. Rather, the regulations will apply when the agreement expires and a successor agreement is entered into. Approximately 95% of all CBAs are three years or less in length, thereby providing substantial time for the majority of districts to adopt the new regulations prior to the 2013-14 school year.

PROPOSED EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Measures of Teacher Practice

Measures of teacher practice must account for at least 50 percent of a teacher's evaluation. The measures of teacher practice should be based on clear performance standards that define effective teaching. The NJDOE will adopt updated teaching standards in June 2012 (likely based on the new 2011 InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards) that will be used as the foundation of the teacher practice evaluation framework.

Districts must use a high-quality, State-approved teacher practice evaluation framework that includes observation as a major component and at least one additional State-approved tool to assess teacher practice (see below).

Teaching Practice

Any teacher practice evaluation framework adopted by an LEA must be shown to meet, at minimum, the following criteria:

1. Is research-based and shown to be valid and reliable, or, after one year of implementation, must provide evidence of such;
2. Aligns to and addresses the New Jersey Teaching Standards that identify and describe effective teaching practice;
3. Includes classroom observation as a major component;
4. Requires collection of evidence-based data;
5. Incorporate a teacher's self-reflection on practice;
6. Includes rubrics for assessing teacher practice that have a minimum of 4 levels of performance ratings; and
7. Provides a differentiated evaluation process or criteria for novice and veteran teachers.

Training on the Teacher Practice Evaluation Framework

All teachers and those conducting evaluations must receive comprehensive training on the teacher practice evaluation framework before any evaluations/observations are conducted. Any coaches, mentors, or master teachers responsible for formative or informal observations of teachers must also be appropriately trained.

The training must incorporate:

1. The teaching practice evaluation domains/components of effective teacher practice that tie to the New Jersey teaching standards;
2. The use of effective evaluation strategies and requirements;
3. Sufficient practice for fidelity of implementation;
4. Proof of mastery or certification that indicates the evaluator has met the training requirements; and
5. Time-management to ensure evaluators schedule the necessary instructional time to complete all evaluations in the most efficient manner.

In addition, a process must be in place to monitor and remediate evaluator accuracy, inter-rater reliability, and score inflation.

Teacher Practice Evaluation Procedures

The teacher practice evaluation procedures were developed to provide clear, timely and useful feedback for teachers to inform effective practice. Contingent upon information gleaned from the 2011-12 pilot, LEAs will review every teacher using the following procedures:

1. For non-tenured teachers, conduct a minimum of three formal observations with post-conference input and feedback, for a designated amount of time, to be determined by the NJDOE; at least two of these observations must be unannounced;
2. For tenured teachers, conduct a minimum of two formal observations with post-conference input and feedback, for a designated amount of time; At least one, and preferably both, of these observations must be unannounced;
3. At minimum, one formal teacher evaluation be conducted by an evaluator who does not work in the teacher's school; and
4. Prepare one summative evaluation that results in a mutually-developed teacher professional development plan and aims to inform career growth and recognition opportunities, retention provisions, and, where applicable, separation procedures;

Use of an additional measurement of teacher practice

LEAs may select additional measures of teacher practice that must be approved by the NJDOE. Examples include teacher portfolios and student and parent surveys.

Student Achievement Measures

Fifty percent of a teacher's evaluation must be based on measures of student performance as demonstrated by assessments and other evaluations of student work. There are two required measures and one optional measure. The largest required percentage must be based on one or more measures of a teacher's students' achievement. The other required component would be a State-approved school-wide performance measure.

Teachers in Tested Subjects and Grades

Student growth scores SGPs from State assessments, when available, must be used to measure teachers of tested subjects and grades, and these growth scores must account for the largest percentage of the evaluation based on student achievement. (These include math and language arts in grades 4-8, where both prior and current year scores on the State assessments are available.)

Teachers in Untested Subjects and Grades

SGP scores cannot be computed for all teachers because not all subjects and grades have Statewide assessments. Therefore, LEAs must identify existing measures of performance or develop new measures of performance capable of generating growth or mastery scores for all other teachers. These measures need not be derived from standardized tests but may be come from an array of sources, such as student learning objectives based on alternative methods of assessing student performance. Guidance on the selection or use of these measures will be provided by the NJDOE, as will the processes that will ensure they are comparable, fair, and rigorous. In addition, the NJDOE's

Chief Academic Officer will oversee the development of assessments in these grades and subjects over time.

School-wide Measure of Student Achievement
LEAs must also select a school-wide measure of student achievement, based on guidance provided by the NJDOE. Examples include growth in graduation and proficiency rates, or a narrowing of the school's achievement gap.

Stakeholder Engagement

Pilot districts have the opportunity to help shape the new system from its inception and will provide critical information and feedback to the NJDOE thereby guiding statewide implementation in the future. There are several ways for the pilots to provide feedback: through regular communication with an NJDOE Implementation Manager, whose role is to work with the pilots, helping with implementation; through the external researcher who will collect data and other input from the pilots; and through the Evaluation Pilot Advisory Committee (EPAC).

The EPAC is comprised of education stakeholders, including teachers and school leaders, who will collaborate with and advise the NJDOE throughout implementation of the EE4NJ pilot program. The role of the EPAC is to engage in outreach to their constituencies and to provide feedback and guidance on issues and challenges to inform statewide implementation of an educator effectiveness evaluation system. The NJDOE has ensured that the voices of teachers will be heard by requiring that every pilot district designate a teacher to serve on the EPAC.

In addition to the State-level EPAC, each pilot district must form its own stakeholder committee, called the District Evaluation Pilot Advisory Committee (DEPAC), to discuss challenges and opportunities and participate in decision-making about program development and implementation. The DEPAC will also have a communications role and share information about the pilot to the district community, ensuring transparency of the system.

DEPACs represent key stakeholders in the evaluation system and school community. These include: a school board representative; elementary, middle, and high school teachers (as applicable given pilot participation); a principal; a superintendent; a central office representative; an administrator conducting evaluations; a data coordinator; a parent; and others as determined by the district. Each DEPAC must appoint two of their members, including one teacher, to also serve on the State EPAC and attend monthly meetings. This will ensure that district-level concerns are raised with the State-level EPAC, and that pilot districts will receive information shared at the State-level meetings.

Principal Evaluation System Development

Also during Year 2 of its comprehensive plan to educator evaluations, the NJDOE is working with a small group of stakeholders to draft guidelines for a principal evaluation system, building from the recommended framework set forth in the Educator Effectiveness Task Force report. To inform its knowledge base, this group has reviewed research on critical leadership behaviors, recommendations on best practices for principal evaluation, and details already available about requirements and processes

from various systems currently being implemented in New Jersey districts and in other States.

This group's recommendations were presented to the larger EPAC stakeholder advisory committee and representatives from the pilot district DEPACs for review and feedback. A special subcommittee of EPAC is being created to support the development and implementation of a principal evaluation system statewide.

New Jersey understands that a fair, comprehensive, and robust system for evaluating principal effectiveness is critical to getting the outcomes we expect from our teacher evaluation system. The two systems must align in order to support a continuous cycle of educator development and improved learning results for students. The purposes of principal evaluation include both assessment and professional development. In order for a principal evaluation system to be truly successful, it must accurately assess the current performance of the principal and provide feedback on where and how to improve.

Implementing Principal Evaluation

The goals for Year 2 around principal evaluation are to finalize guidelines and to pilot implementation in SIG schools during the second semester of 2011-12.

As with the teacher evaluation implementation, districts will be allowed the flexibility to select a State-approved model of principal practice evaluation to apply in their particular contexts. It is intended that the requirements for evaluation will pertain to both principals and assistant principals, but only principals will be included in the pilot process.

The SIG schools were chosen as the first cohort to begin pilot testing a revised principal evaluation system because of their grant requirements to implement robust evaluation systems for principals as well as teachers. Because all SIG schools have expressed interest in implementing the same principal practice model, school and district administrators involved in both being evaluators and being evaluated will receive training on this model through December 2011.

Apart from the SIG schools, a few districts that have already made progress in improving their principal evaluation systems have reached out to the NJDOE to express interest in beginning a pilot this year as well. During the statewide pilot expansion of teacher evaluation during Year 3 of our plan in 2012-13, we will solicit applications and select districts in which to pilot a principal evaluation system; thereby allowing us to learn about the systemic relationships between the principal and teacher evaluation systems.

The SIG schools will continue to refine their implementation during this year, and the 10 teacher pilot districts will be invited to participate as well. This complete pilot year will inform our understanding of principal evaluation as it is applied, help us revise our guidance materials, allow us to test frameworks, assessments, and tools, and learn more about what supports are necessary in preparation for a full State implementation in 2013-14.

Assessment of Principal Practice

The Educator Effectiveness Task Force recommended that 40 percent of the principal evaluation be based on measures of effective principal practice.

Districts will be expected to adopt or develop a principal practice framework which measures principal performance on the critical factors associated with effective school leadership. Any principal practice framework used for evaluation must align with the NJ Professional Standards for School Leaders.

In order to update its 2004 professional standards to incorporate the most recent research on effective school leadership and to provide the foundation and vision for a coherent system of leadership development across the continuum of practice, in 2012 New Jersey will adopt new leadership standards, likely aligned to the ISLLC 2008 Educational Leadership Policy Standards. LEAs will be able to determine their own framework for assessing principal practice as long as it meets the requirements specified in the State's guidelines and criteria and aligns with the professional standards.

The State will assist LEAs in making their determinations by creating a list of approved models, rubrics, protocols, and tools. The State will also develop a process through which districts may submit their own locally-developed tools for review and approval. Requiring each district to use State-approved models and tools will enhance clarity and fairness, facilitate monitoring, and ease inter-district comparisons.

Principal Practice Framework

The following minimum criteria are being recommended for any principal practice evaluation framework adopted by an LEA. The framework must:

1. Be research-based and shown to be valid and reliable;
2. Be based on multiple sources of evidence collected throughout the year;
3. Encompass domains of practice aligned to the NJ Professional Standards for School Leaders;
4. Include at least two observation of principal performance;
5. Include a measure of progress on at least one individual, school and/or district performance goal;
6. Incorporate feedback from teachers;
7. Incorporate feedback from any other stakeholder groups (such as parents or students) if deemed appropriate based on designated performance goals;
8. Include an assessment of the quality of the principal's evaluations of teachers;
9. Include evidence of the principal's leadership for implementing a rigorous curriculum and assessments aligned to content standards;
10. Include evidence of the principal's leadership for high-quality instruction; and
11. Include rubrics for assessing practice that have a minimum of 4 levels of performance.

Measures of Retaining Effective Teachers

A further recommendation was that 10 percent of the principal evaluation be focused on the principal's ability to improve organizational effectiveness through the retention of effective teachers and the steps they take to exit ineffective teachers.

Measures of Student Achievement

Two categories of student achievement measures are to be included as 50 percent of the principal's evaluation: aggregated student growth on standardized assessments across all subjects and grades for which data are available (35 percent of this component) and school-specific goals (15 percent of this component). A school-specific goal would reflect an area of need identified by the principal or district administration, such as graduation rate in the case of a high school.

Combination of Practice and Achievement

The ratings of principal practice and student achievement will be combined to form a summative measure designating the principal as highly effective, effective, partially effective, or ineffective.

Professional Development

Evaluation systems alone are not sufficient to produce higher levels of principal effectiveness. Outcomes of principal evaluation must be linked to a system for developing principal practice.

New Jersey already has a standards-based professional development requirement for school leaders conducted on a three-year planning and review cycle, which was initiated in 2005. Currently, each active principal is required to create an individualized professional growth plan that aligns with professional standards; grounds professional development activities in objectives related to improving teaching, learning, and student achievement; requires evidence of plan fulfillment; and identifies professional goals that address specific district or school needs.

The current process for creating and reviewing principals' professional growth plans will dovetail with the proposed evaluation process in that it incorporates self-reflection, a professional conversation between principals and their supervisors to set goals for the plan, and monitoring of plan fulfillment by the supervisor. In addition, the principal creates a peer-review committee to support development and implementation of the plan and to certify completion of the plan to the chief school administrator.

As part of our systemic efforts to improve educator effectiveness, we are currently reviewing these professional development requirements in order to make more explicit the links between the results of principal evaluation, our expectations for principal practice, and the creation of the required leadership development plan.

Submission of Guidelines

Per Assurance 15 the NJDOE will provide a copy of the guidelines for teacher and principal evaluations to the United States Department of Education by June 30, 2012. This will provide the NJDOE the necessary time to strengthen the provisions outlined herein through lessons learned from the pilot program as well as feedback and insight from our teachers, leaders, DEPACs and EPAC.

3.B ENSURE LEAS IMPLEMENT TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL EVALUATION AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

3.B Provide the SEA's process for ensuring that each LEA develops, adopts, pilots, and implements, with the involvement of teachers and principals, including mechanisms to review, revise, and improve, high-quality teacher and principal evaluation and support systems consistent with the SEA's adopted guidelines.

DEVELOPMENT, MONITORING AND SUPPORT TO ENSURE QUALITY

Based upon the lessons learned from our pilot districts, as well as our stakeholder group and the national context, the State is drafting guidelines and regulations so that all districts can develop plans and prepare for pilot implementation by Sept. 2012. This 7 month planning and implementation window will enable districts to build costs into their SY 2012-13 budgets, select and contract with a teacher practice provider, conduct training for all evaluators and teachers, and give stakeholders in each district time to participate in decision-making.

During this same time period, the NJDOE will develop guidance on the development/selection of assessments for non-tested subjects and grades and develop a "student learning objectives" (SLOs) process that can be implemented across the State in a way that is comparable, rigorous and valid.

The support and guidance for districts implementing all of this work will come from multiple sources:

- Regular meetings with the EPAC and DEPAC groups have proven to be fertile environments to bring in national experts, learn from local successes and pain points, and access recommendations on State policy from those who are doing the work. These meetings are shaped to wrestle with decisions that will guide statewide implementation. The meeting participants include teachers, principals, superintendents, NJDOE staff, higher education institutions, the teacher association and union representatives, and parents. The State will look to replicate the teacher evaluation model that has worked successfully for the principal evaluation pilot.

- The NJDOE has completed a significant departmental reorganization that has recast the department as a service delivery organization from one that has traditionally focused on compliance. Key elements of the reorganization include changes to internal offices and divisions and the development of seven RACs. The former includes a new Office of Educator Evaluation, which will be responsible for overall project progress, including guidance on expenditures and procurement issues, leveraging economies of scope and scale in delivery, and monitoring key milestones and deliverables. The latter will provide focused support to some of our lowest-performing schools in the areas of procuring frameworks and providing meaningful training, conducting observations and providing feedback, and identifying student achievement measures for teachers of non-tested grades and subjects.

  As the State shapes and staffs the RACs, the NJDOE is providing service to our pilot districts and SIG schools through dedicated resources. Specifically, the NJDOE has a team in the field

comprised of an Implementation Manager, Education Specialists and Network Turnaround Officers. The Network Turnaround Officers work up to 100 days in each of the schools they serve as both changes agents and conduits for the State to learn directly from the schools.

- The State realizes that to do this work well there is a cost to training, calibration of observers, and implementation. To assist districts with the cost, the State has and will continue to provide grant opportunities for districts to advance this work. Additionally, through our recent Race to the Top award, districts will be able to access and utilize their pro-rata share of the $19M to help support these efforts. Title I SIA funds will also be directed to evaluation system development and implementation activities. Lastly, by providing fiscal guidance and working to bring together districts with similar needs, the DOE is helping them prepare for and leverage their expenditures.

- The State is currently finalizing a contract with an external evaluator to assess the implementation of the 2011-12 pilot. Through both interim and final reports, the State will get an independent analysis of the pilot. This information will help inform our 2012-13 cohort 2 pilots, as well as spotlight areas where districts and schools need more guidance and support. A similar evaluation will be conducted for the 2012-13 principal evaluation pilot.

Through insight and lessons learned both locally and nationally, the State believes it has set forth an aggressive, yet realistic path to build high-quality teacher and principal evaluation systems..

Definitive plans regarding statewide implementation await further lessons from the pilot program. As we learn more about obstacles and opportunities, elements of the proposed system may be modified. The following charts list activities relating to each element of the evaluation system that must be implemented district-wide in 2012-13.

(See Appendix 9 and 10 for teacher evaluation and principal evaluation implementation plans.)