

ATTENTION!
District in Need of Improvement – Year 1
Preliminary Designation

January 12, 2005

TO: Chief School Administrators

FROM: Isaac Bryant, Assistant Commissioner
Division of Student Services

SUBJECT: Districts in Need of Improvement – Year 1

The federal *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) has mandated extensive education requirements as part of a single accountability system that identifies schools and districts for improvement status. Identified schools and districts that receive Title I funds must comply with a complex set of sanctions defined by the United States Department of Education (USDE). The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) is required to follow the NCLB regulations and identify *districts in need of improvement*. This designation is based on the school improvement data and adequate yearly progress (AYP) calculations previously determined and submitted to schools and districts for 2003 and 2004. A preliminary review of these AYP calculations indicates that your district is designated a district in need of improvement.

A district is identified for improvement if it meets **all** of the following criteria:

1. Does not make AYP in all grade spans within the district—elementary, middle school, and high school—for two consecutive years in either content area. (2002-2003 and 2003-2004)
2. 50 percent or more of the schools within the district did not make AYP. (2004)
3. Less than 90 percent of the AYP indicators are met in any school in the district. (2004)

District Requirements

Districts in need of improvement that receive Title I funds must comply with the following requirements and deadlines. Districts that submit an appeal may extend the deadlines one week, except for submission of the district improvement plan, which is due on **April 12, 2005**.

- Revise the district’s 2005 NCLB Consolidated Application, as appropriate.
 - Develop a district improvement plan. The NCLB Parallel Application’s “Title I District Improvement Plan Report” provides a list of the essential elements that must be included in the plan. This is available at the following Web address: <http://www.nj.gov/njded/grants/entitlement/nclb/nclbparallelpaperappforms.doc>. Submit the revised pages to your NJDOE county office/Abbott office by **April 12, 2005**.
 - Revise the Eligibility Page of the EWEG on-line application. Districts in need of improvement have an additional “reserve” requirement. Not less than 10 percent of the district’s Title I, Part A allocation must be reserved for high-quality professional development for instructional staff specifically designed to improve classroom teaching. **Note:** (1) The district may include in this 10 percent reserve the Title I, Part A funds required to be reserved for eligible Title I schools in need of improvement within the district. (Each served school in need of improvement is required to set aside 10 percent of its Title I school allocation for professional development.) (2) The five percent reserve for LEA professional development for “highly qualified” teachers may *not* be used.

The additional professional development reserve will change the district’s per-pupil expenditure, unless condition 1 in the above note applies. The revised per-pupil amount must be calculated for all served school attendance areas and be applied to both public and private school eligible students.

The revisions to the Title I Eligibility page must be submitted electronically through the EWEG system by **March 4, 2005**. For more information on school and district improvement, please refer to the United States Department of Education’s *LEA and School Improvement, Non-Regulatory Guidance*, January 7, 2004, at: <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/schoolimprovementguid.doc>.

- Revise Program Plan and Budget pages. The designation of a district in need of improvement and the addition of the required district professional development reserve will necessitate changes to the programs and activities submitted with the NCLB application. These pages must be revised and submitted accordingly.
- Notify all parents of students enrolled in the school district that their school district is in need of improvement by **March 4, 2005**. This notification, in the parents’ native language, must explain the reasons for the identification, how parents can participate in improvement, and what corrective actions will be taken. A sample letter is provided on the Title I Web site at www.ed.gov/njded/title1.
- Continue to provide technical assistance to district schools identified as Title I schools in need of improvement and/or Title I corrective action schools.

- Please note that districts identified for improvement may not be providers of Supplemental Educational Services (SES); however, *high-performing schools within the district* that have been approved as SES providers may continue to provide these services.

Status Profile and Appeal Process

Please review the attached profile on which the NJDOE has determined the district’s improvement status. If you believe the district’s improvement designation is in error for statistical or other substantive reasons, the district may appeal the designation by submitting the attached appeal form by **February 11, 2005**. Along with the form, include the following documentation:

- A detailed explanation of why you believe the data is in error.
- Corrected data with the source.

Appeals decisions will be made by the NJDOE by **February 25, 2005**. After the appeals process is complete, the NJDOE will make any adjustments resulting from appeals and finalize the districts in need of improvement list. The NJDOE will issue a press release on **March 4, 2005**, identifying which districts have been designated for improvement.

Additional Information

To provide additional information about the requirements of districts in need of improvement, the Office of Title I Program Planning and Accountability is holding a Technical Assistance Session on **February 10, 2005**, (information attached).

In summary, the following are the timelines:

February 10, 2005	Technical Assistance Session
February 11, 2005	Appeals Due
February 25, 2005	NJDOE Appeal Decisions
March 4, 2005	Release of Districts in Need of Improvement Final List to Public
March 4, 2005	Notification to Parents
March 4, 2005	Revision of NCLB Consolidated Application (Parallel and EWEG)
April 12, 2005	Submission of Improvement Plan

Districts have the opportunity to come out of improvement status by meeting all of the three district criteria for two consecutive years. When a district meets the criteria for one year, it moves into improvement “hold” status. However, if a district does *not* meet district criteria for two consecutive years, it moves into “corrective action” status with additional sanctions.

The provisions of NCLB are intricate and complex. We appreciate your continued dedication to meeting the requirements of this federal legislation. If you need any additional information about NCLB or Title I, or assistance in complying with the provisions in this letter, please contact Suzanne Ochse, director, Office of Title I Program Planning and Accountability at 609-943-4283.

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Attachments

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