



## **SECTION E**

# **Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools (50 total points)**

## STATE REFORM CONDITIONS CRITERIA

### **(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs (10 points)**

The extent to which the State has the legal, statutory, or regulatory authority to intervene directly in the State's persistently lowest-achieving schools (as defined in this notice) and in LEAs that are in improvement or corrective action status.

*In the text box below, the State shall describe its current status in meeting the criterion. The narrative or attachments shall also include, at a minimum, the evidence listed below, and how each piece of evidence demonstrates the State's success in meeting the criterion. The narrative and attachments may also include any additional information the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.*

Evidence for (E)(1):

- A description of the State's applicable laws, statutes, regulations, or other relevant legal documents.

*Recommended maximum response length: One page*

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## **INTERVENING IN THE LOWEST-ACHIEVING SCHOOLS AND LEAS**

New Jersey has the legal, statutory and regulatory authority to intervene directly in our state’s persistently-low-achieving schools and LEAs.

New Jersey has the authority to charter new schools, providing new, high-quality schools for students who are currently assigned to failing schools

In New Jersey, the Department of Education can partially or fully take over a failing school district and its schools. The New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum (NJQSAC) system, N.J.S.A. 18A:7A-3 et seq., establishes rules for evaluating and monitoring all public-school districts in the State. NJQSAC is designed to be a single, comprehensive accountability system that consolidates and incorporates the monitoring requirements of applicable State programs and triggers federal monitoring programs. Under NJQSAC, public-school districts are evaluated on five key component areas of school-district effectiveness—instruction and program; personnel; fiscal management; operations; and governance—to determine the extent to which the districts are providing a thorough, efficient education to students. In the past, New Jersey has taken over three districts, two of which (Newark and Paterson) remain under state takeover.

## REFORM PLAN CRITERIA

### **(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools (40 points)**

The extent to which the State has a high-quality plan and ambitious yet achievable annual targets to—

(i) Identify the persistently lowest-achieving schools (as defined in this notice) and, at its discretion, any non-Title I eligible secondary schools that would be considered persistently lowest-achieving schools (as defined in this notice) if they were eligible to receive Title I funds; and (5 points)

(ii) Support its LEAs in turning around these schools by implementing one of the four school intervention models (as described in Appendix C): turnaround model, restart model, school closure, or transformation model (provided that an LEA with more than nine persistently lowest-achieving schools may not use the transformation model for more than 50 percent of its schools). (35 points)

*The State shall provide its detailed plan for this criterion in the text box below. The plan should include, at a minimum, the goals, activities, timelines, and responsible parties (see Reform Plan Criteria elements in Application Instructions or Section XII, Application Requirements (e), for further detail). In the text box below, the State shall describe its current status in meeting the criterion. The narrative or attachments shall also include, at a minimum, the evidence listed below, and how each piece of evidence demonstrates the State's success in meeting the criterion. The narrative and attachments may also include any additional information the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.*

Evidence for (E)(2) (please fill in table below):

- The State's historic performance on school turnaround, as evidenced by the total number of persistently lowest-achieving schools (as defined in this notice) that States or LEAs attempted to turn around in the last five years, the approach used, and the results and lessons learned to date.

*Recommended maximum response length: Eight pages*

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## Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

- Implement comprehensive and substantive interventions that address root causes of low performance at the school level in Tiers I and II.
- Build LEA capacity to support direct interventions in Tier I, II, and III persistently-low-achieving schools.
- Build LEA capacity to turn around persistently-low-achieving schools.
- Create a School Renewal Zone for cross-district collaboration, cross-service programs alignment modeled on the Harlem Children’s Zone, and new policy flexibility and authority.
- Recruit our best principals and teachers to our lowest-performing schools.
- Closely monitor reform-plan-implementation fidelity against measurable benchmarks, and close schools that do not improve.
- Launch a bold “new schools” strategy using the state’s strong chartering authority and the expertise of high-performing-school operators.

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### (i) Identification of Persistently-Lowest-Achieving Schools

New Jersey has identified its persistently-lowest-achieving schools using the U.S. Department of Education’s School Improvement Grant’s guidelines. The list of schools, as well as a description of the methodology used to identify these schools, is found at the end of this section. Twenty Title I schools are on the TIER I list and 12 schools are on the TIER II list, for a total of 32 schools. Nearly one-third of these schools are located in Newark, a district that is under state control and that is exploring innovative school models to provide options for students. Additionally, New Jersey has identified 174 Tier III schools in 62 LEAs. Our Turnaround Plan will provide direct services to schools on the Tier I and II list and capacity building services to the 62 LEAs with schools on the Tier III list.

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### (ii) New Jersey’s Turnaround Plan

The 32 persistently-low-achieving schools on our list have been failing to meet the needs of their students for far too long. The fundamental question driving our approach is,

“How do we ensure that the students assigned to persistently-underperforming schools gain access to better education options as soon as possible?” As a result, we are pursuing a two-pronged strategy.

First, we will undertake a wide array of activities, including the strongest interventions possible, to improve our existing set of failing schools. New Jersey will take immediate actions to improve services to students and sustain long-term school transformation. This includes bold steps to dramatically accelerate student achievement in our 32 persistently-low-achieving schools, and to build capacity in our 62 LEAs with Tier III schools. Our state’s unique and successful partnership with the highly-successful Harlem Children’s Zone has laid the foundation for cross-agency collaboration and a resolute commitment to do whatever it takes to improve the life chances of these students. These activities will primarily adhere to the “turnaround” and “transformation” models.

Second, we will pursue a vigorous “new schools” strategy. While we will do everything in our power to improve our struggling schools, we are mindful of the significant challenges to fix failing schools.<sup>1</sup> We also know that the lagging schools of yesterday need not be the schools of tomorrow; that is, no school has the right to exist in perpetuity if it is failing its children. Finally, we are aware that many of the nation’s highest-performing high-poverty schools are newly-started charters. We have firsthand knowledge of this phenomenon: The highest-performing schools in Newark today were started fresh as charters by the widely-recognized organizations KIPP and Uncommon Schools.

Accordingly, we will utilize the state’s authority to provide a variety of school options, including achievement academies, charter schools, magnet schools—that will replace a number of those that are in a persistent state of failure. We will make full use of our state’s expert nonprofits partners, its store of facilities, its human capital, and its current charter-operators—as well as operators from outside our state borders—to make New

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<sup>1</sup> Loveless, Tom. (2010). *The 2009 Brown Center Report on American Education: How Well Are Students Learning? The Brookings Institution. Washington, D.C.*

Jersey’s performance on this second prong of our strategy a success. These activities will primarily adhere to the “closure” and “restart” options.

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## **Building on New Jersey’s Lessons Learned**

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New Jersey has a rich history of experience and achievement in turning around the lowest-achieving schools. Our state monitoring system (NJ QSAC) and our Comprehensive State System of School Support, together with a variety of local and statewide initiatives, have contributed to turning around schools and have improved outcomes for thousands of students who might not otherwise have had the opportunities to succeed in work, college, and life. A chart of the State’s historic performance is included later in this section.

For the past several years, the schools on New Jersey’s persistently-low-achieving-schools list have implemented a number of specific strategies. These have been attempted with varying degrees of effort and with inconsistent levels of success. Lack of fidelity in implementation and the failure to remove ineffective programs that drain resources have resulted in less-than-favorable results for students. Bold human-capital

plans have been proven to be less effective when underperforming teachers and school leaders are re-circulated to other low-performing schools. Methods of coaching that focused on the uses of data, and on literacy intervention and supports, were also implemented, but such methods have not accelerated student learning to acceptable levels. We have learned that, in order to positively affect student achievement, we must strengthen the State’s role, provide immediate services to students, and implement a comprehensive, school-wide approach to reform that addresses the root causes of low performance. Interventions must also be paired with data-based accountability that

### **LESSONS LEARNED**

- Programs must be coupled with **implementation fidelity and specific accountability.**
- Technical assistance through workshops and **modeling is key to creating change.**
- Schools and districts **continue to include ineffective programs**, rather than expanding effective ones.
- **Focusing on school climate** in a systematic manner **stimulates positive change.**
- District decision-makers **should not be permitted to re-circulate principals** among schools.
- Interventions must be developed in **collaboration with district staff.**
- LEAs need information and **assistance on the process to**

creates a sense of urgency, and that calls for action when schools do not improve. New Jersey’s Turnaround Plan outlines our aggressive approach to support schools and describes the bold actions we will take when schools fail to show improvement.

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## **(ii) Identifying the Root Causes of Low Achievement to Inform Turnaround-Model Selection**

We have learned that not all low-performing schools are the same, and that the reasons for consistently-low performance are just as varied. School performance can be affected by many factors including: the learning climate, instructional rigor, quality of instruction, student and staff mobility, school management, alignment of the LEA curriculum, and LEA policy. As a result, the interventions for the persistently low-achieving schools will be designed to address the school-specific root causes.

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### **Needs-Assessment Team**

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NJDOE will assign a Needs-Assessment Team to identify the root causes of low performance in all 32 persistently low-achieving schools. This state-RTTT-funded team will include outside experts in the areas of academic content, leadership, and school culture, and will be tasked with reviewing past reports and citing specific evidence collected to identify root causes of low performance. Managed by our cross-functional Office of State-District Partnerships within the NJDOE and led by the RTTT officer (see Section A), the Needs-Assessment Team will be assigned within 15 days of the identification of a persistently-low-achieving school.

**SELECTING THE RIGHT TURNAROUND MODEL:**

- Matching school and LEA needs to model strengths.
- Analyzing the capacity to implement change.
- Inventory of facilities

**Responsible Party:**  
Office of State-District Partnerships (reports directly to the Commissioner).

The Needs-Assessment Team will work with the NJDOE to initiate a school-climate study that will evaluate multiple dimensions of school climate, including the instructional staff’s

expectations of students, perceptions of students, teachers, and parents; relevant data (e.g., data on attendance; disciplinary referrals, and suspensions); and the results of observations. The climate-survey and data-analysis guide will be available for use by September 2010, as the result of our refining existing New Jersey tools. To ensure strong alignment between the curriculum and the state content standards, the Needs-Assessment Review Team will also conduct a comprehensive curriculum audit in core content areas<sup>2</sup> and will review the fidelity of the implementation of the curriculum in the classroom.

After completing the needs assessment, the team will generate a research-supported recommendation that is designed to answer a straightforward question: Does a new school, a turnaround attempt, or a transformational change offer greater promise for the students who are currently assigned to this persistently-underperforming school?

This determination will be based on several considerations, including: the LEAs' capacity to implement each of the four turnaround models, the current local educator workforce, the human-capital pipeline, the strength of community-based organizations in the underperforming school's community, the availability of alternative school operators, and more. The state will then work with the LEA to design an implementation-and-monitoring plan that is built around the best option available.

## **Inventory of Available Space**

In advance of a decision on the most promising strategy for an underperforming school, the commissioner will conduct an inventory of space in that LEA, in order to identify opportunities for the consolidation and reallocation of space for more efficient use and to determine if space can be made available for charter schools. With declining enrollment in several of our urban centers, numerous facilities are underutilized, providing the opportunity for the creation of new school options, such as charter schools, magnet schools, or specialty academies.

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<sup>2</sup>New Jersey has established core content standards in the following subject areas: Language Arts Literacy, Mathematics, Science, Visual and Performing Arts, Comprehensive Health and Physical Education, Technology, Twenty-First Century Life and Careers, World Languages, and Social Studies.

In New Jersey and across the nation, inadequate access to suitable facilities remains one of the greatest obstacles to the expansion of charter schooling. We are committing to removing this obstacle to the very best of our ability. It is unfair to taxpayers and to families seeking new school options for a district to maintain half-empty facilities when capable charter-operators urgently need usable space.

The Commissioner’s facilities review will ultimately enable successful school-management organizations to open new schools and/or expand current schools, consistent with the Charter School Program Act, N.J.S.A. 18A:36A-1 et seq., (for more on the program, see section F(2)). Overall, we believe that the proper management of educational facilities is an essential component of the successful administration of a portfolio of schools, and a necessary condition for the closure and restart options.

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## **Designing Turnaround Plans and Holding Schools Accountable**

In persistently-low-achieving schools, high expectations must be established for both the students and the adults in the building, individually and collectively. Immediately following the needs assessment, New Jersey will assign a Network Turnaround Officer to support the school in designing a high-quality and research-supported intervention plan. Intervention plans will be due forty-five days after the Needs Assessment Team identifies root causes of low performance. Specific, incremental measurable and attainable benchmarks will be included in each school’s intervention plan, and the school’s performance, as compared to these benchmarks, will be closely monitored by the LEA and the NJDOE, to ensure the success of these efforts.

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## **Network-Turnaround Officer (NTO)**

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The Network Turnaround Officers (NTOs) will work with schools, LEAs, and the State to design and implement customized intervention plans. Taking into account each school’s root causes of low performance, its relevant geographic factors and its school context, NJDOE will create networks comprised of two to three schools that are facing

similar challenges, and will assign a NTO with proven experience in turning around schools to lead each school cluster.

This research-supported, cluster-based approach to turnaround has shown significant promise.<sup>3</sup> In some cases, all the schools will be located in one district, while in others, the NTO will serve schools in more than one district and will be responsible for coordinating operations across LEAs. The NTO will support the cross-LEA relationships that are necessary to build a collaborative work group among the LEA superintendents and school leaders.

As a facilitator of reform, the NTO will be responsible for initiating improvements in classroom instruction by helping to incorporate research-based practices in response to problems identified by the Needs-Assessment Team. In collaboration with the school principal, the NTO will set a clear path to distributed leadership within the schools, working with a team to build a cohesive, professional teaching culture. The NTO will also help the principal develop his/her turnaround management skills. As an evaluator, the NTO will monitor the schools' adherence to the intervention plan and their tracking of performance metrics, including metrics of academic achievement, against quantifiable plan objectives.

NJDOE has already begun NTO recruitment efforts by conducting a widely-published selection process to find outstanding candidates, supported by School Improvement Grant award from the U.S. Department of Education. Applicants' submissions are due by June 14, 2010. NJDOE's list of qualifications for an NTO and its recruitment postings can be found in Appendix II. The state will fund 100% of the NTO's compensation in the first two years, 65% in the third year, and 30% in the final year before the LEA takes full responsibility through LEA-directed RTTT funds, SIG funds, or other state and local resources.

**CLUSTER-BASED  
TURNAROUND OFFICERS:**

- 3-5 schools per network
- National selection process to recruit highly-skilled and exceptional leaders
- Tiered support to build local capacity
- Clear lines of authority directly to NJDOE

*Aligns with Title I, SIG programs*

**Responsible Parties:**  
Office of State-District Partnerships

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<sup>3</sup> Mass Insight. (2008) The Turnaround Challenge.

NTOs will be evaluated by NJDOE on the basis of each school’s success in meeting its goals, the results of the state audit report, and the implementation fidelity of school-improvement interventions. NTOs will be re-assigned to other low-performing schools as the changes begin to take root in the original schools.

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## **Key Considerations for Each Turnaround Model**

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The NTO will work closely with school and district leaders to design a customized intervention plan that aligns with the U.S. Department of Education turnaround models and that address the following key considerations.

### **Transformation**

In order to facilitate the planning of this critical intervention, schools implementing the turnaround model will identify a new, qualified school leader no later than July for each school year. The school’s leadership, in conjunction with the LEA, will also design a comprehensive reform plan, with measurable benchmarks for accelerating academic achievement, supporting the effectiveness of teachers, and improving school climate. The NTO will ensure the integration of federal programs and funding to support the intervention plan.

### **School Turnaround**

Schools implementing the Turnaround Model will remove 50% of teaching staff in accordance with any applicable tenure laws. Schools and the LEAs will design measurable benchmarks to recruit and select high-quality staff with a demonstrated history of success. The NTO and LEA superintendent will actively recruit teachers and school leaders through the NJ Hire<sup>4</sup> site, and the state will provide an RTTT-funded \$10,000 “Answering the Call” bonus for highly-effective teachers who are willing to teach in persistently-low-performing schools (see D(3)).

### **School Restart**

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<sup>4</sup> NJ Hire is web service supporting an online application process for teachers and LEAs. This is a current contract, it is likely that an RFP will be issued on this work in the next six months.

LEAs may choose to restart the school, choosing one of the following options: (1) creating a charter school managed by a CMO consistent with the Charter School Program Act, N.J.S.A 18A:36-1 et seq.; (2) creating a specialized school such as a magnet school, or a small school-within-a school Achievement Academy led by a highly-effective teacher. The NTO and LEA will include specific action steps as part of their intervention plans for the use of existing facilities by the school operator. Furthermore, the NTO will work with the LEA to set academic-achievement benchmarks for the new school. NJDOE will monitor academic achievement annually to ensure that the needs of the students are being met.

### **School Closure**

In some cases, closing a persistently-failing school is in the best interest of students. But this is only the case when those students are immediately provided with access to higher-performing schools. Therefore, any LEA choosing the closure option must develop an implementation plan with two parallel tracks: The first track will fully describe how the school will be closed by, for example, describing the employment consequences for affected teachers, stating the implications for the facility, and noting whether the school will be shuttered completely in one stage or depopulated over several years.

The second track of the implementation plan will describe how the LEA will make higher-performing seats available. For example, if new schools will be started, the plan will describe their status (e.g. charter, Achievement Academy), by whom they will be operated, their access to suitable facilities, their likelihood of offering an improved education, and more. The LEA will address similar and additional issues if it chooses to replicate or expand existing schools or to move affected students into under-enrolled schools.

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### **Setting Measurable Progress Benchmarks**

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For all turnaround models, the LEAs, in collaboration with the NTO, will be required to develop rigorous, transparent, and measurable benchmarks for school improvement. These targets will be part of the school-intervention plan and therefore will be subject to

review and approval by NJDOE. The school leader, local superintendent, and school board must approve the intervention plan and associated benchmarks prior to the submission. Once approved, the intervention plan will serve as the operating agreement between the school, the LEA, and the state.

To achieve these measurable benchmarks, NTOs will develop short-term action plans in conjunction with the school leader. These short-term action plans will support the school leader and teachers in identifying manageable components of the school-improvement plan to implement with intensity and monitor on a 45-to-60-day basis.

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### **Timeline and Approval Process for Intervention Plans**

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NJDOE’s review of the intervention plans will take into account the evidence base of the intervention programs and the coordination of federal programs. If the plan is approved by NJDOE, it will take effect immediately. If it is not approved, the LEA will be given specific recommendations and feedback, and will continue to work with the NTO for another 15 days to revise the plan. Failure to receive NJDOE approval a second time will result, where appropriate, in the Commissioner of Education’s seeking immediate intervention, ranging from LEA-directed interventions to closure.

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### **Holding Schools Accountable for Implementation and Progress**

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On an annual basis, the NJDOE will conduct an external implementation audit of curriculum, academic growth, school climate, teacher evaluations, and accompanying targeted professional development. The NJDOE audit will also identify issues in the LEA that impact the school’s implementation of the plan. The implementation audit will have a precise focus on the persistently low achieving school’s implementation plan, similar to the QSAC process used for all schools in the state. The report will explicitly report on progress as measured against the quantifiable benchmarks of the intervention plan. These annual audits of each persistently-low-achieving school will include recommendations for program improvements.

In the absence of sufficient progress, or of implementation fidelity, the audit will include a recommendation for school closure. The results of this audit will be reported publicly and will serve as part of the evaluation of the Network-Turnaround Officer. Finally, these audits will be submitted to the local district and reviewed and discussed locally.

Schools implementing the Turnaround and Transformation will have up to three years to demonstrate significant measurable progress in academic achievement. In the absence of such progress, the school will be closed, reconstituted, or restarted by an authorized charter-school provider, consistent with the Charter School Program Act, N.J.S.A. 18A:36A-1 et seq. Schools that are slated for closure based on their failure to demonstrate sufficient progress on incremental measures of school progress will be closed in the following year.

A school that sufficiently improves academic performance and is no longer considered persistently-low-achieving will continue to receive additional support for up to two years and will receive \$100,000 to support ongoing improvement efforts. Services to ensure sustained success will include the NTO’s working with the principal to design and implement personalized professional-development plans for teachers, continued support from content-focused supervisors, and continued access to cross-service integration supports. NJDOE is committed to ensuring that the positive environment that led to the turnaround continues. Too often, a school that begins to show progress is not able to sustain the acceleration of academic achievement without continued support.

**HOLDING SCHOOLS ACCOUNTABLE FOR PROGRESS:**

- Measurable within-year benchmarks
- Closure or restart of schools that do not make progress
- Ongoing support for schools that exit PLA status

**Responsible Party:**  
Office of State-District Partnerships

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## **(ii) Comprehensive Interventions to Tier I and II Schools**

To support the transformation or turnaround of a school, all elements must support student achievement: standards-based curriculum instruction and assessments; leadership and governance; professional development; a culture and climate focused on student success; and community involvement. New Jersey’s plan for RTTT couples immediate

interventions for students with comprehensive and substantive reforms to dramatically improve the school as a whole.

**Immediate Services for Students**

- Extended learning time
- Exemplar lessons designed to engage students in the learning process
- Access to highly-effective teachers in the classroom or through virtual classes
- Increasing new school options for students

**Comprehensive School Interventions**

- Transformation authority for principals: staffing, schedule, budget
- Turnaround officer to lead and support change
- Content-focused instructional coaching coupled with the use of data to inform decision-making
- 5% extended time for teacher collaboration
- Cross-service integration
- Community engagement

**New Jersey will close or restart schools that do not meet measurable benchmarks towards improvement.**

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**Developing Exceptional School Leaders and Teachers**  
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Research suggests that principals and superintendents have a greater impact on student learning than any other factor except the quality of classroom instruction.<sup>5</sup> Principals can profoundly influence student achievement by working with teachers to shape a school environment that is conducive to learning; aligning instruction with a standards-based curriculum; organizing resources to improve classroom instruction and student learning; and making good decisions about hiring, professional learning, and other issues that influence the quality of teaching.

**Recruiting the Best School Leaders and Teachers**

**DEVELOPING & RECRUITING TRANSFORMATIONAL SCHOOL LEADERS:**

- Three-week intensive Leadership Academy
- Partnering with cutting-edge IHEs to create “turnaround” credentialing program
- Supporting collaborative networks for shared vision and team problem-solving

*Aligns with D(3), D(4) D(5)*

**Responsible Party:**

Office of State-District

<sup>5</sup> Leithwood, Kenneth, Karen Seashore Louis, Stephen Anderson, and Kyla Wahlstrom (2004). *How Leadership Influences Student Learning*. New York: The Wallace Foundation.

New Jersey's persistently-low-achieving schools deserve our best school leaders and teachers. As part of the SIG-funded Leadership Academy in July 2010, NJDOE -- in collaboration with the district administration and the NTOs -- will develop a list of criteria and skills that LEAs should consider in the selection of school leaders, including demonstrable leadership skills, innovation in school operations, and content and instructional expertise. Participants will be expected to elicit and take into account feedback from institutions of higher education and local stakeholder groups for discussion at the Leadership Academy.

As New Jersey's evaluation system is being developed, NJDOE will actively recruit teachers with National Board Certification to serve in persistently-low-achieving schools starting in the 2011-12 school year. Also in 2011-12, New Jersey will launch an expanded recruitment site that will pair teaching candidates' strengths with schools' identified needs (see D(3)).

Once the evaluation system is implemented in 2012-13, our state's highly-effective teachers and school leaders will also be eligible for a \$10,000 "Answering the Call" state-RTTT-funded bonus to teach in persistently-low-achieving schools. Highly-effective teachers will receive \$5,000 to begin teaching in a persistently-low-achieving school and an additional \$5,000 for remaining at the school for three years, so long as they continue to be rated highly effective (see D(3)). For highly-effective teachers who are already teaching in persistently-low-achieving schools, the "Answering the Call" program will provide \$5,000 in state-RTTT-funds. Additionally, LEAs with persistently-low-achieving schools will be encouraged to participate in the compensation-systems pilots, thus allowing schools and teachers to receive a financial reward for achieving exceptional student growth among our state's lowest-performing students.

To support highly-effective teachers who are new to persistently-low-achieving schools, New Jersey will build its mentoring and induction pilot with the Equity Assistance Center to provide intensive support for teachers and school leaders in such schools. Currently operating in Paterson, Elizabeth, Camden, and Passaic, the program provides intensive mentoring and training, coupled with rigorous program evaluation to measure changes in leadership practices to support teachers, teacher and administrator professional

conversations, and observable student behaviors. Each LEA will incorporate a mentoring plan for teachers who are new to persistently-low-achieving schools, modeled after the materials found in Appendix II, starting in the 2011-12 school year.

### **Leadership Academy**

Whether the principal is new or retained, substantial on-site, sustained professional development is necessary to develop the new skills that will assist the principal in effecting dramatic change in the school's level of student achievement. Working in conjunction with those cutting-edge institutions of higher education and other educational entities that are breaking the mold to support turnaround, and with transformational school leaders, the NJDOE will expand the SIG-established leadership academy to train new and newly-assigned principals to serve all 32 persistently-low-achieving schools. This academy will deliver training, during a three-week intensive summer program, on such topics as effective use of curriculum and instructional tools, instructional leadership skills, fostering professional-learning communities, motivating staff and students, and using data to inform management decisions. This professional-learning community will also serve as a resource to principals to problem-solve and share successful interventions throughout the school year.

The academy will prepare the school-turnaround principal to leverage this unprecedented operational flexibility (including flexibility regarding staffing, calendars/time, and budgeting) in ways that have been proven to build a school culture that is focused on improving the academic achievement of its students, and, as the culture changes, to fill open positions in the school based on candidates' qualifications. NJDOE will work with our partner institutions of higher education to develop a full practice-based course sequence, offered throughout the year, in which candidates may be credentialed as "turnaround principals."

The training sessions will be integrated with NTOs and LEA superintendents to assure a shared vision and coherent implementation. New Jersey has learned the importance of building and supporting Turnaround Leadership Networks that create a shared vision of reform among school leaders and superintendents. The existing Turnaround Leadership

Network for schools that are identified for Corrective Action under ESEA has drawn over 62 superintendents, 411 principals, and 389 supervisors together to support and foster effective practices in low-performing schools. New Jersey will build on the lessons it has learned from the Turnaround Leadership Network to establish a professional learning community for Tier I and II schools. This formal collaborative network for both principals and superintendents will be reconvened quarterly, to ensure that the network is supported throughout the school year.

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### **Transformational Operating Authority Program**

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Effective leadership at the school level is essential to accelerating student progress. All principals managing a persistently-low-achieving school will be given Transformational Operating Authority. The principal shall also have the authority to set the schedule and allocate the budget for his/her own school in collaboration with the superintendent and NTO, as long as all federal, state and LEA requirements are met, along with other requirements that are specified in the school-intervention model. Transformational operating authority represents a sea-change in operating procedures for schools and districts.

Human capital has been proven to be key in many communities' turnaround efforts.<sup>6</sup> New Jersey aims to effectively end the practice of assigning our least-effective teachers to our lowest-performing schools. Research has shown that a student who is taught by a succession of less-effective teachers may experience lasting academic challenges.<sup>7</sup> In persistently-low-achieving schools, if a teacher is rated ineffective for three consecutive evaluations, the LEA will take action pursuant to 18A:6-11 to remove the individual for inefficiency. Under this program, principals will make direct recommendations for

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<sup>6</sup> *Mass Insight, Turnaround Challenge.*

<sup>7</sup> *Sanders, William, and June Rivers (1996). Cumulative and residual effects of teachers on future student academic achievement. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Value-Added Research and Assessment Center.*

hiring to the superintendent,<sup>8</sup> as well as recommending that the superintendent seek the reassignment of any teacher who is not performing satisfactorily per the standardized teacher evaluations. To support the recruitment of highly-effective teachers, principals in persistently-low-achieving schools will have a seven-day exclusive access period to recruit and schedule interviews for highly-effective-teacher candidates through the New Jersey Hires site, and will be eligible to provide the equity recruitment and retaining state-RTTT-funded bonus to highly-effective teachers who are willing to teach in schools with a high proportion of students at risk (see D(3)).

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<sup>8</sup> Note that local Boards of Educations make hiring and firing decisions in New Jersey -- operating within the context of the existing statute and regulations.

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## Supporting High-Quality Classroom Instruction

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If recommended by the Needs-Assessment Team, persistently-low-achieving schools will adopt the Curriculum and Assessment Spine (discussed in (B)(3)), consisting of exemplar units and lessons that embed the content and pedagogical routines that are necessary to change classroom practice and increase student achievement. Closely aligned with state content standards,<sup>9</sup> this expanded set of exemplar lessons and units will cover much of the school year and will be supported by a formative-assessment system that is designed to assist teachers in the customization of instruction to meet their students’ specific academic needs. A team of practicing supervisors and teacher leaders,<sup>10</sup> assigned by the LEA and trained by our partner institutions of higher education, will provide content-focused instructional coaching to assist teachers and school leaders in analyzing formative-assessment data; selecting customized, comprehensive instructional interventions that meet the academic needs of individual students; and continuously monitoring student progress towards proficiency. This team of

content-focused instructional leaders, selected from the LEA and trained by state teams, will support and maintain professional-learning communities, and will target and adapt professional development in response to specific teacher needs and the instructional demands of the content, in exemplar lessons throughout the school year. At its heart, this work will drive a data-based culture within the school and foster professional

**IMPROVING CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION -- SCHOOL SERVICES**

- Curriculum-alignment audit
- Curriculum-embedded formative assessment
- Evidence-based exemplar lessons
- Proven content-focused instructional coaching strategies linking student needs to proven instructional strategies
- Professional Learning Communities

**STUDENT SUPPORTS**

- Lesson plans proven to raise achievement, engage students, demonstrate real-world knowledge applications

*Aligns with B(3), D(5)*

**Responsible Party:**

Office of State-District Partnerships

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<sup>9</sup> Exemplar lessons will be offered in Language Arts Literacy, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies.

<sup>10</sup> Outlined in section (D)(5)

communities of practice. This focus on a coherent, aligned curriculum with regular opportunities for teachers to continuously improve their instruction has been demonstrated to have the most impact on student achievement.<sup>11</sup>

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## **Extended Teaching and Learning Time**

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Additional time for learning is a resource that must be found – just as financial support, instructional materials, and teacher expertise are found – because it is essential for learning. One key difference in the use of school time in high-achieving nations, in contrast to its use in the United States, is the amount of in-school time used for teacher planning and professional development. In European and Asian nations with strong student performance, teachers spend about 15 to 25 hours per week—between 40% and 60% of their total work time—collaborating on curriculum development, lesson study, action research on instructional outcomes, and professional development.<sup>12</sup> By contrast, U.S. teachers typically receive only about 3 to 5 hours weekly in which to plan by themselves, with little opportunity to share knowledge or to improve their practice.

The need for collaborative planning time is particularly acute in the persistently-low-achieving schools identified by the state. To address this need, persistently-low-achieving schools in participating LEAs will provide an additional 5% of non-student-contact time for teachers to collaborate, engage in professional development, and review student work with commensurate compensation, as negotiated by the LEA. Time for high-leverage teacher collaboration around curriculum and instruction will translate into improvements in the quality of students’ instructional time.

Coupled with this time for teachers, will be an additional 15% of extended learning time for instructional support for students in persistently low achieving schools in participating LEAs. This extended learning time is geared specifically for students, to reinforce

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<sup>11</sup> Schmoker, 2006; Marzano, 2003.

<sup>12</sup> Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). (2008). Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators, 2007. Paris: OECD; Wei, R.C., Andree, A., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2009) How nations invest in teachers. Educational Leadership, 66(5), 22-38.

instructional opportunities that lead to greater academic achievement for them and for the school in the aggregate. Research shows that when additional time is part of an overall strategy for improving school performance that includes significantly better instruction, powerful gains can be made in student achievement.<sup>13</sup>

Additionally, this extra time provides an opportunity for students to engage in the types of experiential learning that exemplify successful afterschool programs and provide a direct link to the instruction received during the school day.

School leaders may add 20% of teaching and learning time by extending the school day or working with a community-based program to provide extra instructional time on a daily, weekly, summer and/or annual basis. Teachers will receive additional compensation for the longer school day and school year, as negotiated by the LEA, and funded from LEA-RTTT directed funds. LEAs will also be expected to align RTTT funds with existing funding streams such as 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers.

If a persistently-low-achieving school has an existing program, NJDOE and the LEA will perform a comprehensive onsite review to ensure that extended learning time for students meets a set of research-based criteria<sup>14</sup> including: alignment with the school curriculum, coordination of activities with the school day, clear strategies for student engagement, and parent involvement. Program staff must have high expectations for all students and set expectations that all kids will succeed. Regular student attendance is particularly important to ensure improved student outcomes, and New Jersey will closely evaluate the

**INCREASING INSTRUCTIONAL TIME FOR STUDENTS; PROFESSIONAL-LEARNING TIME FOR TEACHERS**

- Building on New Jersey’s nationally-recognized, successful programs
- Providing additional compensation for teachers through State-RTTT funds
- Linking the school day to afterschool programs

**STUDENT SUPPORTS**

- Research-based criteria for extended learning time
- Safe, engaging programs focused on STEM and career awareness.

*Aligns with D(3), D(5)*

**Responsible Party:**

Office of State-District

<sup>13</sup> Berliner, D. (1990). What’s all the fuss about instructional time? In M. Ben-Peretz & B. Bromme (Eds.), *Time in schools*. New York: Teachers College Press.

<sup>14</sup> Beckett, Megan, Geoffery Boman, Jeffery Capizzano, Danette Parsley, Steven Ross, Allen Schim, and Jessica Taylor (2009). *Structuring Out-of-School Time to Improve Academic Achievement: A Practice Guide* (NCEE 2009-012). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Science, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance.

percentage of students who are served by the program and attendance rates. For schools with existing programs that meet these requirements, NJDOE will consider the LEAs' request to maintain these programs or expand them based on the evidence of their demonstrable impact on student achievement.

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## School Innovation and Renewal Zones

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School Innovation and Renewal Zones will be created in order to allow more focused community attention where there are clusters of persistently-low-achieving schools. When such schools are within the School Innovation Renewal Zone, they will receive priority for various federal and state funding sources that are targeted to schools identified for improvement, and they will be given the maximum flexibility in the use of federal, state, and district funds and regulations to implement the turnaround initiative (consistent with the transferability provisions of Title VI of ESEA). With the maximum amount of flexibility allowable, these schools will be able to share and disseminate promising practices across LEA boundaries. Schools will be a central agent for innovation and change in these zones.

Under the New Jersey Administrative Code, school districts may petition for waiver or for an equivalency of Education Code mandates or administrative rules. The NJDOE will work with participating districts with persistently-low-achieving schools to use the waiver or equivalency, as necessary and as appropriate, to remove identified barriers to interventions plans. Participating LEAs and their local school boards and teachers' unions will engage in focused efforts to address any limitations on intervention-plan implementation to the maximum extent possible. In every LEA with a persistently-low-achieving school, the NTO will develop or coordinate a process to identify any limitations on invention-plan implementation and take action to address those limitations. Specifically, the LEA and its teachers' union may address the collective-bargaining framework to apply the people, programs, time,

**INNOVATION AND RENEWAL ZONES**

- Builds on NJ's one-of-a-kind partnership with Harlem Children's Zone
- Maximizes flexibility
- Shares promising practices across LEA boundaries
- Unprecedented collaboration with communities and stakeholders

**Responsible Party:**

Office of State-District Partnerships

resources, and compensation to support the school’s intervention plan. Any LEA barriers to the implementation of intervention plans that are not resolved in year one will be publicly shared as part of the implementation audit that is discussed later in this section.

### **Building Strong Community-Organization Partnerships**

Supporting the engagement of stakeholders from the community is a critical aspect of the School Innovation Renewal Zone, since a school is often the anchor of a community. The School Renewal Zones will build on the work of the High School Graduation Campaign Forging New Jersey’s Cradle to College & Workforce Pipeline for All Children<sup>15</sup> and will work to: (1) ensure strong student/adult relationships within the school and community; (2) maximize parent and family engagement; and (3) make schools and classrooms places where children want to be, where they feel safe, and where their minds are fully engaged. As a result of New Jersey’s Graduation Campaign efforts, Dr. Pedro Noguera and the Ford Foundation have selected Newark as the first city in which to launch the “Broader Bold Approach” to school reform. The Newark school district has embraced this opportunity and taken the lead to convene key Newark stakeholders, including elected officials, foundations, higher-education institutions, and business and industry representatives. A citywide oversight board, co-chaired by the Mayor and Superintendent, coupled with school-level implementation committees involving principals, educators, parents, community stakeholders, and social-service providers has already begun to make meaningful changes to designs for the 9<sup>th</sup>-grade academies at Central High School (a Tier II persistently-low-achieving school). LEAs with Tier I and II schools will learn from and build upon the engagement strategies and implementation planning that is currently occurring in Newark. By the 2011-12 school year, NJDOE and NTOs will work with superintendents and school leaders to incorporate lessons learned from Newark into intervention plans for persistently-low-achieving schools.

Each LEA -- in partnership with the NTO, school leader and NJDOE -- will translate these practices into a comprehensive program to create a cadre of organizations,

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<sup>15</sup> The New Jersey High School Graduation Campaign, Forging New Jersey’s Cradle to College & Workforce Pipeline for All Children – Year One, Preliminary Findings and Proposed Plan for Action.

individuals, and other interested parties to support the school in its efforts to transform education for its students. Local businesses, higher-education institutions, municipal leaders, community-based organizational resources, and interested stakeholders are vital to changing outcomes for students, as evidenced by the work of the Harlem Children’s Zone (HCZ) and similar programs around the country. New Jersey is the only state with which HCZ has forged an official partnership – launching comparable programs in Newark and in Camden. An interagency team selected two community-based agencies, one in Newark and one in Camden, to engage in a business-planning process with intensive technical assistance from HCZ. This expansive community-school partnership symbolizes New Jersey’s commitment to innovative solutions to urban education and community challenges. Similar programs are under consideration in other New Jersey high-need communities to create “Promise Neighborhoods,” modeled on the new federal initiative of the same name. By focusing on the children, we hope to facilitate the development of healthier, more stable neighborhoods and communities, ones that support and nurture children’s success.

New Jersey has learned that inter-agency and local partnerships are the key to creating lasting change. NJDOE will coordinate and foster state-level interagency coordination by assigning at least one FTE as part of the cross-functional Office of State-District Partnerships to facilitate the integration of services and help promote local partnerships that maximize local assets to help transform the school and the community. New Jersey State partners also have worked together on several new initiatives, such as the statewide truancy-prevention pilot initiative in Asbury Park, Camden, Newark, Paterson, Trenton and Vineland. New Jersey’s Department of Justice, Department of Child and Family Services, and four other statewide agencies have already committed to this collaborative effort. Participating LEAs will be expected to mirror this practice by setting policy and leadership practices to coordinate community involvement, working with school leaders to identify school needs, and matching community and business organizations that are able to fulfill these needs. LEAs will include community engagement and specific goals regarding the number and scope of partnerships in their intervention plans.

## Integration Across Services

New Jersey recognizes that struggling schools are part of struggling communities, and that the pathway to a successful intervention in persistently-low-achieving schools often entails cooperation with organizations and agencies outside of the school building. School leaders and NTOs will have access to cross-service data on students in their schools in a manner that maintains student privacy. New Jersey will also roll out cross-service support to school leaders and NTOs. Participating LEAs will be expected to collaborate closely with their municipalities on issues of housing, health services, and job-creation programs. Such collaboration creates its own set of incentives by identifying efficiencies that enable schools to better utilize staff and leverage cross-service resources. New Jersey will pilot this cross-service integration with selected participating LEAs. New Jersey will engage the support of institutions of higher education and national experts in selecting, implementing, and evaluating these reform efforts. New Jersey will also encourage LEAs to engage in broad community participation and support, to ensure a complete integration across services.

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## THE NEW-SCHOOL STRATEGY

While we are working to improve our struggling schools, we will also undertake a vigorous effort to create new, high-quality schools that meet the needs of their communities. We believe that our ultimate goal is to ensure that students have access to high-performing schools and that often, this goal is best facilitated by starting schools from scratch. Our “New Schools Strategy” will primarily follow two tracks: in-district Achievement Academies, and out-of-district charter schools. We will couple our “New Schools Strategy” with broad outreach through parent-information centers to ensure that parents across the community are aware of all of their school options.

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## Creating Achievement Academies

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NJDOE will work closely with participating LEAs to pilot innovative school models to better serve students at risk. Over four hundred LEAs have agreed to participate in designing and implementing Achievement Academies (316 agreed to participate and 99 agreed to participate conditional on collective bargaining). Created and led by highly-effective or Master Teachers or Principals, each of these schools will operate essentially as a within-district charter.

Achievement Academies will give the very best teachers the ability to create their own school models designed to improve student learning. As attractive professional environments, these schools will help draw other successful educators into disadvantaged areas. As academically-rigorous schools of choice using a wide variety of educational approaches, Achievement Academies will attract families seeking learning environments that best fit their children's needs.

Achievement Academies will be allowed more freedom from LEA control than regular public schools enjoy, but they will remain part of the LEA, and will remain accountable to local school boards. An Achievement Academy will operate within an existing LEA, with the same local board of education. Similar to the transformational operating authority granted to persistently-low-achieving schools, the head of school will have authority over staffing, budgets, curriculum and instructional material, as long as all federal, state and LEA requirements are met. Research supports this approach, which provides greater autonomy, and its associated impact on the school's commitment to local priorities, enhanced teacher influence and engagement, and improved relationships between schools, parents, and their communities.<sup>16</sup>

**TEACHER-LED  
ACHIEVEMENT ACADEMIES:**

- Within-school-district innovative school options
- Led by teachers or principals with operational flexibility
- Clear pathways to creation coupled with continuous evaluation of school models

Responsible Party:  
Office of State-District  
Partnerships

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<sup>16</sup> Plank, David and Bets Ann Smith (2008). *Autonomous Schools: Theory, evidence and policy*. In Helen Ladd and Edward Fiske (eds.), *Handbook of Research in Education Finance and Policy*. New York: Routledge.

NJDOE will also create an appeals process for Achievement Academy proposals from highly-effective teachers when those proposals are denied by the LEA. As part of the appeals process, an independent review committee of representatives from institutions of higher education, highly-effective school leaders, highly-effective teachers, and practicing superintendents will review Achievement Academy proposals.

With its research partner, NJDOE will carefully monitor and evaluate the work of these achievement academies as models for innovative alternate schools that can provide immediate services to students who have long been underserved by persistently-low-achieving schools.

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## **Expanding High-Quality Charter Schooling**

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A central and highly-promising part of our New Schools Strategy will be the expansion of charter schooling. This will include the creation of new charter schools and the growth and replication of existing high-performing charter schools.

New Jersey’s policy environment gives the state the ability to make full use of the chartering process. The state charter law places no caps on charter growth, allows a wide array of school types (including conversions, start-ups, and virtual schools), and gives charters the flexibility they need to succeed. In fact, the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, the nation’s leading charter-school organization, gave New Jersey’s charter law four out of four stars in these three areas: caps, diversity of options, and autonomy.

We intend to use this authority to grow new schools in the areas that need them the most, particularly our large urban centers. Fortunately, we have numerous additional assets that will help accomplish our goal.

First, New Jersey already has a number of the nation’s most prominent, high-performing charter-school operators. Both KIPP and Uncommon Schools operate schools in the state and they have begun replicating their successful model. Each now runs multiple

campuses in the state. We will assist their growth by ensuring that they have access to facilities, additional charter contracts, and other supports.

This expansion effort will be greatly aided by one of New Jersey's unique assets: A nonprofit organization called the Newark Charter School Fund was created by national and local funders committed to rapidly expanding the number of high-quality charter seats available in Newark. The Fund provides a wide variety of supports to new and existing charters to ensure their quality and sustainability. The state will work closely with NCSF and other local partners with the same bold vision.

We are also committed to growing the number of organizations interested in running high-performing charters in the state. So NJDOE will work with partners across the state to seed and develop new charter-operators. The 20-year history of chartering nationwide indicates that new charter-operators bring many assets to the table, including knowledge of their communities, classroom experience, and a commitment to excellence. But they often need assistance in a number of key areas, such as accessing facilities, developing charter contracts, and recruiting boards of directors. NJDOE will become an increasingly active charter-authorizer on this score -- not merely passively receiving and evaluating applications, but also identifying and supporting those who are interested in creating new schools.

The state will also recruit high-quality charter-operators from outside of the state. Some of the nation's very best charter-operators have started and replicated highly-successful schools in areas nearby, including Philadelphia, New York City, and Boston. NJDOE will work to bring these organizations into our state to help start new schools for New Jersey's students. Such excellent school operators choose their target cities based in large part on the location's ability to support school success. NJDOE's chartering authority, the state's strong charter law, this Administration's commitment to chartering, and the strength of the state's nonprofit partners will all, together, make New Jersey a highly-attractive destination.

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## **BUILDING CAPACITY FOR ALL TIERED SCHOOLS**

New Jersey will provide support to all LEAs with Tier I, II, or III-identified schools (62 LEAs, including charter LEAs). We recognize that, in order for turnaround efforts to be successful, the unit of analysis cannot be the school in isolation from the LEA. For example, to sustain the turnaround efforts at the identified high school, LEAs must also support improvements at elementary and middle schools that are feeders for the high school.

Superintendents and district staff, along with principals, may participate in an annual two-to-three day Leadership Summit that will be held in conjunction with the Leadership Academy described earlier in this section for Tier I and II schools. The Leadership Summit will focus on problem-solving challenges faced by school leaders and will include topics such as applying leading-edge research, recognizing and developing promising practices, and developing solutions that schools leaders can apply in their districts.

NJDOE will support the organization of LEAs with Tier III schools into small clusters based on geography and similar needs. NJDOE will also support the development of communities of practice among these small groups to maintain connections made during the Leadership Summit. Moreover, NJDOE will support districts with Tier III schools to build a portfolio of approaches to turning around low-achieving schools, including the systemic use of data, the setting of clear performance expectations for schools, and ongoing needs-assessment. A first set of needs-assessment and data-analysis tools will be available immediately following their use and evaluation by the needs-assessment-review team in Fall 2010. This toolkit will be expanded to include promising practices identified through the Tier I and II school implementation audits no later than Summer 2011.

As evidenced by student data, LEAs with tiered schools will need to better coordinate integration of services across agencies, and to foster the engagement of community

organizations, in order to support school reforms. NJDOE will coordinate services within and across state agencies, building linkages across programs to provide a continuum of educational services for students. New Jersey has learned that often, children living in communities of concentrated poverty also experience challenges with mobility that are negatively-associated with academic outcomes<sup>17</sup> and experience limited access to 21<sup>st</sup>-Century learning tools.<sup>18</sup>

NJDOE will work with LEAs with secondary schools to engage in a needs-assessments of their at-risk student populations, and will develop appropriate options to better serve these students. A critical component of this work is the inclusion of alternative programs as part of the continuum of educational services that are provided to students. Another critical component is the improvement of the performance of students with disabilities in all identified schools. At least 32 of the identified LEAs have identification rates for special-education services that are above the state average, and 39 have rates higher than the state average for placement in segregated settings. Therefore, NJDOE will support the training of general-education and special-education teachers to improve instruction to students with disabilities, support professional development on RTI practices, and expand the reach of our IDEA-funded Learning Resource Centers to provide training and technical assistance in areas including: access to the general education curriculum, inclusive education practices, classroom management, and instructional strategies.

By building the capacity of LEAs with Tier III schools, we can support a wider range of schools, improve school climate, enhance professional-learning environments, recruit and retain great teachers and leaders, and serve at-risk students.

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<sup>17</sup> Reynolds, Arthur; Chin-Chih Chen, and Janette Herbers (2009). School mobility and educational success: A research synthesis and evidence on prevention. National Research Council, Washington D.C.

<sup>18</sup> Horrigan, John (2008). Home Broadband Adoption 2008. Washington, D.C: Pew Internet and American Life Project.

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## CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVING INTERVENTIONS: SCHOOL PERFORMANCE INDEX

Evaluations and data used to improve programs and identify needs are crucial elements to achieve success in turning around schools. New Jersey learned through the QSAC process that focusing on specific and measurable indicators for district success creates meaningful change in district leaders' approach to reform. New Jersey will apply the same precise focus by creating a school-performance index with specific and measurable indicators for school success. The student-learning measures of our school-performance index will align with the student-learning metrics, including the absolute and relative student growth measures. Coupled with student-learning measures, the school-performance index will include a rich set of indicators including school climate, parental involvement, student and teacher attendance, and violence and vandalism, as collected through the Electronic Violence and Vandalism Reporting System (EVVRS).

This comprehensive set of evidence and data will support the identification of promising practices, and inform interventions in schools before and after they are identified as persistently-low-achieving. The school-performance index will also be used to inform LEAs' selection of turnaround models and build the capacity of LEAs, and will be closely-evaluated when school closure is considered.

The school-performance index will be developed in concert with our ESEA Advisory Council, the Leaders for Educational Excellence group, and representatives from LEAs and school leaders across the state (see Appendix II for a list of members). A preliminary school-performance index will be complete by November 2010 for public comment and expert feedback, and will be finalized no later than February 2011. The School

### SCHOOL PERFORMANCE INDEX:

- Assesses absolute and relative student growth
- Employs quantitative measures of school climate, community engagement, and parental involvement
- Developed with school leaders and experts in the field
- Identifies successful interventions and informs closure decisions

**Responsible Party:**  
Office of State-District Partnerships

Performance Index will be calculated no later than 2011-12 for all schools in the state. For newly identified persistently low performing schools, the school performance index will serve to inform the needs assessment team.

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**TIMELINE**

New Jersey intends to act expediently to implement the provisions in this section of the proposal. Students have been underserved in these schools for far too long, and it’s time to take immediate action. NJDOE and participating LEAs will make informed decisions regarding the intervention options under RTTT, select and assign NTOs, submit for approval intervention plans, and begin their enactment by Fall 2010.

Because of the recent School Improvement Grant (SIG) award, New Jersey is well-positioned to act swiftly to use RTTT funds to support any schools that are not awarded a SIG due to financial constraints. Services to non-SIG schools will be immediately implemented following the Race to the Top award. Additionally, all schools will receive additional services under Race to the Top, including access to highly-effective teachers, proven instructional tools, state-RTTT-funded compensation for extended teaching and learning time, and support for the integration of services across the continuum of education.

<b>Section E Action Plan: Timeline and Responsible Parties</b>		
<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible Parties</b>
Approval of SIG application for \$66.7 million		NJDOE
Needs-Assessment identifies root causes of low performance	May 2010	LEAs
Schools select intervention option under SIG guidance	May 2010	LEAs
LEAs submit SIG applications to SEA for peer review	May 2010	Persistently-low-achieving Schools
Widely publish recruitment for NTO (funded through SIG)	May 2010	NJDOE
Train 5-6 NTOs (funded through SIG)	July 2010	NJDOE
SIG Grantees: Leadership Academy; Defining the Leadership Qualities of a Turnaround Principal	July 2010	NJDOE

Publish Leadership Academy Turnaround Principals Qualifications	August 2010	NJDOE
<b><i>Race to the Top Award</i></b>	<b><i>September 2010</i></b>	
Deploy Needs-Assessment Team to non-funded SIG schools	September 2010	NJDOE Office of State District Partnership
Train 5-6 Additional NTOs for non-funded SIG schools	September 2010	NJDOE Office of State District Partnership
Develop personalized professional-development plans and monitor progress on incremental benchmark	September 2010	NTO, School Leader, Teacher Leaders
Schedule extended-learning and teacher-collaboration time	August – September 2010	School Leader, Superintendent
Non-funded schools design intervention plans with measureable benchmarks	September 2010	Local board of education, Superintendent, NTO, School Leader
Approve or Improve non-funded SIG intervention plans	September 2010	NJDOE Office of State-District Partnership
Training of supervisors and qualified teachers as content-focused coaches and assignment to Tier I and II schools (D(3))	September 2010	NJDOE Office of Professional Excellence, County Offices
Supervisors/coaches convene PLCs for teachers by grade or by content area for collective lesson study, review of student work, and analysis of formative data	September 2010	Superintendent, NTO, School Leader
Implement exemplar lessons and training, as identified by Needs-Assessment Team	October 2010	School Leader, NTO, Teachers
Conduct efficient use of facilities review	October 2010	LEAs, Commissioner of Education
Select Inter-agency coordination Liaison for PLA schools	October 2010	Commissioner of Education
Refine and improve School Climate survey	October-December 2010	NJDOE Office of State-District Partnership
Monitor progress on measurable benchmarks, refine intervention strategy	At least quarterly	NTO, School Leader, Superintendent, teachers
Launch improved school-climate survey and formative tools	January 2011	NJDOE Office of State-District Partnerships
Launch LEA-wide needs assessment for all Tiered Schools	January 2011	NJDOE Office of State-District Partnerships
Municipal-planning guide to respond to student needs	February 2011	NJDOE Office of State-District Partnerships, Inter-agency Liaison
NJ Hires site launched to attract exemplary teachers into high-needs areas and PLA schools in advance of effectiveness evaluations	Spring 2011	NJDOE Office of State-District Partnerships/Office of Professional Excellence
Recruit exceptional teachers to persistently-low-achieving schools	May 2011	Superintendents, School Leaders
Conduct implementation-fidelity audit, make recommendations, and publish report	June 2011	NJDOE Office of State-District Partnerships
NTO evaluation	June 2011	Commissioner of Education
Refine and Improve intervention plans and measurable benchmarks (including lessons learned from the Newark “Broader Bold Approach” to school reform)	June 2011	School leader, NTO, Superintendent, local board of education, NJDOE Inter-agency liaison
Leadership Academy: Tier I and II schools	July 2011	NJDOE Office of State-District

		Partnerships/Office of Professional Excellence
Launch virtual, practice-based turnaround leadership classes	July 2011 - ongoing	NJDOE Office of State-District Partnerships, Partner institutions of Higher Education, Office of Professional Excellence
Weekend Leadership Summit for Tier III school LEAs	July 2011	Superintendents, District Staff, School Leaders
Implement intervention plan and monitor progress on incremental benchmarks	2011-12	School Leader, NTO, Superintendent
Ongoing, intensive content-focused and team-based professional development on instructional practice and acting on formative data	2011-12	School Leader, NTO, Teacher Leaders
Monitor progress on measurable benchmarks, refine intervention strategy	At least quarterly	School Leader, NTO, Superintendent
First round of NBPTS and Exceptional Teacher Opportunity Expansion Incentive placements	August 2011	School leader, Superintendent, board of education
Select pilot LEAs for cross-service integration	October 2011	NJDOE Office of State-District Partnerships
Recruit exemplary teachers into PLA schools through NJ Hires site	May 2012	School leader, NTO
Conduct implementation-fidelity audit, make recommendations, and publish report	June 2012	NJDOE Office of State-District Partnerships
NTO evaluation	June 2012	Commissioner of Education
Refine and Improve intervention plans and measurable benchmarks	June 2012	School leader, NTO, Superintendent
Leadership Academy	July 2012	NJDOE Office of State-District Partnerships
Expand turnaround leadership course offerings through virtual program	July 2013	NJDOE Office of State-District Partnerships, Partner institutions of Higher Education, Office of Professional Excellence
Weekend Leadership Summit for Tier III school LEAs	July 2012	NJDOE Office of State-District Partnerships
Implement intervention plan and monitor progress on incremental benchmarks	2012-13	School leader, NTO
Ongoing intensive content-focused and team-based professional development on instructional practice and acting on formative data	2012-13	School leader, NTO, Teacher leaders
Monitor progress on measurable benchmarks, refine intervention strategy	At least quarterly	School leader, NTO, superintendent
NBPTS and Exceptional Teacher Opportunity Expansion Incentive placements	August 2012	NJDOE Office of Professional Excellence
Full implementation of cross-service integration	October 2012	NJDOE Office of State-District Partnerships
Recruit exemplary teachers into PLA schools through NJ Hires site	May 2013	School leader, NTO, Superintendent
Conduct implementation-fidelity audit, make recommendations, and publish report	June 2013	NJDOE Office of State-District Partnerships

NTO evaluation	June 2013	Commissioner of Education
Refine and improve intervention plans and measurable benchmarks	June 2013	School Leader, NTO, Superintendent, local board of education
Leadership Academy	July 2013	NJDOE Office of State-District Partnerships
Turnaround-Leader-credentialing course graduates first cohort of leaders	July 2013	NJDOE Office of State-District Partnerships, Partner institutions of Higher Education, Office of Professional Excellence
Weekend Leadership Summit for Tier III school LEAs	July 2013	NJDOE Office of State-District Partnerships
Ongoing interventions; monitor progress on incremental benchmarks		School leader, NTO
Award opportunity-expansion bonuses to highly-effective teachers and school leaders	August 2013	NJDOE Office of Professional Excellence
Training for highly-effective teachers in evaluation pilot LEAs to become content-focused instruction coaches, teacher leaders, and mentors	August 2013	NJDOE Office of Professional Excellence, County Offices
Implement intervention plan and monitor progress on incremental benchmarks	2013-14	School leader, NTO
Ongoing intensive content-focused and team-based professional development on instructional practice and acting on formative data	2013-14	School leader, NTO, Teacher leaders
Conduct implementation-fidelity audit, make recommendations, and publish report	2013-14	NJDOE Office of State-District Partnerships

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## EVIDENCE

This is a report of the 122 schools that have been in restructuring status since 2004-05. Based on the NCLB requirements, these schools were each required to implement one of the federal sanctions, consistent with state law. They implemented one of the following: conversion to charter, replacement of all or most of the staff, or implementation of any major governance restructuring (which could have included replacing the principal). It is worth noting that 83 of the original cohort of identified schools have exited restructuring because of their progress. Another 35 will exit that status this year if they continue to show gains.

**Evidence:**

Approach Used	# of Schools Since SY2004-05	Results and Lessons Learned
Closure	1	Closure is less likely to occur than a reconfiguration of the grade-spans within the school.
Charter Conversion	0	Districts need information and assistance regarding the steps and process to convert a school to a district-operated charter school.
Major governance restructuring  Replace all or most of the staff	120  1	Our key lessons learned from the governance-restructuring model include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District decision-makers should not be permitted to re-circulate principals among restructured schools.</li> <li>• Programs must be coupled with implementation fidelity and specific accountability to teachers and leaders, and engagement of stakeholders.</li> <li>• Recommendations must be developed in collaboration with district staff, and implemented with fidelity for positive changes.</li> <li>• Technical assistance through workshops and modeling is key to creating change.</li> <li>• Schools and districts continue to add new programs and include numerous ineffective programs in their plans, rather than focusing on strengthening existing programs with the potential for success and discontinuing programs that are clearly ineffective.</li> <li>• Focusing on school climate in a systematic manner in a school stimulates positive change in conduct policies, staff and student climate, evaluation of existing efforts, and access to partnerships with community agencies for funding opportunities.</li> </ul>

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## PERFORMANCE MEASURES

The 27 schools for which the LEA submitted a SIG application have identified a Turnaround option to be implemented in the 2010-11 school year. However, the NJDOE does not know, as of June, the intervention strategy that will be selected by the remaining five schools. Based on our experience over the past five years, we are predicting the following distribution of turnaround models:

Model	End of SY 2010-2011 <sup>1</sup>	End of SY 2011-2012 <sup>3</sup>	End of SY 2012-2013 <sup>4</sup>	End of SY 2013-2014
Closure	3	2	2	1
Restart	2	2	4	4
Transformation	19	19	14	11
Turnaround	8	8	5	5
Exit in need of improvement status	0 <sup>2</sup>	0 <sup>2</sup>	2	2

<sup>1</sup> Ten LEAs applied on behalf of 27 schools for the New Jersey SIG competition: Two selected closure; one, restart; 16, transformation; and eight, turnaround. The remaining schools will select one of the U.S. Department of Education’s four intervention models. We expect one closure, one restart, and three transformations.

<sup>2</sup>In order to exit “in need of improvement status,” schools must make AYP for two consecutive years. We expect two-to-five schools to make AYP in the 2010-11 school year for the first time, and, of these, we expect at least two to make AYP for a second consecutive year in 2011-12 and thus to exit from improvement status. While this is a small number of schools, we fully expect the remaining 30 to show dramatic increases in student achievement.

<sup>3</sup>The three closed schools will be monitored by NJDOE, but have been removed from the list of interventions.

<sup>4</sup>Teachers rated as highly-effective in pilot LEAs will be able to start Achievement Academies.

Our plan includes the requirements that a school must determine its intervention model, and present the plan to the state, after the visit and findings from the Needs-Assessment Team. We will follow this cohort of schools throughout the four years, but will adjust the projection for intervention strategies as schools exit, show improvement, and require fewer interventions. As new schools are identified, they will be included, and the intervention strategies will be reported in our annual report to the U.S. Department of Education.

### **Alignment with School-Improvement Grants**

The U.S. Department of Education chose New Jersey as one of the first states to be awarded a \$66,672,258 School Improvement Grant under Title I of ESEA to support comprehensive and substantive interventions in persistently-low-achieving schools. Notably, the New Jersey School Improvement Grant application aligns fully with the activities proposed under Race to the Top. Ten LEAs have submitted applications on behalf of 27 schools. One district did not apply, and one district did not apply on behalf of all its schools. Regrettably, New Jersey will not be able to award SIG grants to all 27 schools in LEA applications. Through RTTT funding, New Jersey will build the capacity of LEAs to turn around Tier I, II, and III schools and to take bold actions to intervene in all 32 of the persistently-low-achieving schools.

## **DEFINITIONS OF TIER I, TIER II, AND TIER III SCHOOLS**

### **TIER I Schools**

In Appendix I is the list, by LEA, of each of the 20 Tier I schools that are Title I schools in need of improvement. The Tier I schools include one school that was added due to NJ's "graduation rate."

### **TIER II Schools**

In Appendix I is the list of 12 Tier II secondary schools. (Five are Title-I-eligible and not served, and seven are Title I “newly eligible schools”). For Tier II, the NJDOE used the “newly eligible schools” provision afforded to states in the January 2010 new interim final SIG requirements. No schools were added to the Tier II list as a result of NJ’s “graduation rate.” A secondary school is a school that provides “secondary education, as determined under State law, except that the term does not include any education beyond grade 12.” ESEA section 9101(38). Schools serving grades 9-12 are identified as secondary schools in New Jersey. A Title-I-eligible secondary school that is not served by Title I is included if its poverty percentage is above the district-wide poverty average, above the appropriate grade-span poverty average, or 35 percent or more.

### **TIER III Schools**

The NJDOE selected Tier III schools to be eligible for SIG funds, contingent upon availability of funds for this Tier. The full list of these schools (174) is in Appendix I. Title I schools in need of improvement in the bottom 12<sup>th</sup> percentile were selected. Depending on the available funds, the NJDOE will give priority to the 14 high schools highlighted on this list through a competitive application process.

Title I High School Priority: The NJDOE’s focus is on our struggling high schools. These 12 Title I high schools were selected using the list of ranking performance and growth based on the persistently-lowest-achieving methodology. For Tier II, the NJDOE identified 12 high schools. For Tier III, additional high schools were selected, going down the list. LEAs may apply for the SIG grant for these schools using the same competitive process for Tier I and Tier II schools, except that selection of the four models will be optional. LEA commitment and capacity will be considered in the context of the Tier I and Tier II schools that are being served as a result of this NGO.

<b>TIER III</b>
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The list of Tier III schools, included in Appendix I.
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### **Method to Identify Tier I, II and III Schools**

New Jersey ranked each set of schools -- (a) Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring and (b) secondary schools eligible for, but that do not receive, Title I funds—from highest to lowest, in terms of proficiency of the “all students” group on the State’s reading/language arts and mathematics assessments combined. One school was excluded from the list for Tier I, as it is an adult school. No schools were excluded from the Tier II or the Tier III lists.

### **Adding Ranks Method**

Step 1: Calculated the percent proficient for reading/language arts for every school in the relevant set of schools, using the most recent assessment data available. (Used the same data that the State reports on its report card under section 1111(h)(1)(C)(i) of the ESEA for the “all students” group.)

Step 2: Calculated the percent proficient for mathematics for every school in the relevant set of schools, using the most recent assessment data available. (Used the same data that the State reports on its report card under section 1111(h)(1)(C)(i) of the ESEA for the “all students” group.)

Step 3: Rank-ordered schools based on the percent of students deemed proficient for reading/language arts, from the highest-percent proficient to the lowest-percent proficient. The highest-percent proficient received a rank of one.

Step 4: Rank-ordered schools based on the percent proficient for mathematics from the highest-percent proficient to the lowest-percent proficient. The highest-percent proficient received a rank of one.

Step 5: Added the numerical ranks for reading/language arts and mathematics for each school.

Step 6: Rank-ordered schools in each set of schools based on the **combined** reading/language arts and mathematics ranks for each school. The school with the lowest combined rank (*e.g.*, 2, based on a rank of 1 for both reading/language arts and mathematics) was the highest-achieving school within the set of schools, and the school with the highest combined rate was the lowest-achieving school within the set of schools.

To determine whether a school has demonstrated a “lack of progress” on the State’s assessment, New Jersey applied, as specified in the guidance, **the Lowest-Achieving Over Multiple Years** method to identify the lowest achieving five percent of Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring. (Tier I)

### **Lowest-Achieving Over Multiple Years**

The state repeated the steps in the Adding Ranks Method for two previous years for each school. Then, it selected five percent of schools with the lowest combined percent proficient or highest numerical rank based on three years of data to define the persistently-lowest-achieving schools in the State.

The same process was used to rank the secondary schools that are eligible for, but do not receive, Title I funds from highest to lowest, based on the academic achievement of the “all students “group. (See the description of the Adding Ranks Method above). After applying the **Lowest- Achieving Over Multiple Years** method, the lowest-achieving five secondary schools were selected. Since the initial Tier II list included secondary schools that are significantly higher- achieving than the many Title I-participating secondary schools that are not among the persistently lowest-achieving schools in Tier I, NJDOE used the “newly eligible schools” provision, and added the next lowest 10% of the Title I participating secondary schools to the Tier II list. The secondary schools on the Tier III list were the Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring that are not in Tier I.

### **High-School Graduation Rates**

New Jersey recognizes the need to address high schools that do not adequately prepare students to graduate with the skills that are needed for college and employment. In compliance with 34 C.F.R. Section 200.19(b), New Jersey will be using the graduation rate, which currently is a leaver rate, to identify schools that have a graduation rate of less than 60% over two years. The leaver rate will be used until the four-year cohort is utilized next year. This is consistent with the federal requirement of using such a rate until the 2010-2011 school year. Beginning with the 2010-2011 school year, New Jersey will utilize the four-year cohort model to identify the high schools with graduation rates of less than 60%.