January 28, 2014

TO:    Chief School Administrators
       Charter School Lead Persons

FROM:  Karen L. Campbell, Director
       Office of Title I

SUBJECT:  Title I Schoolwide Programs

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) is pleased to advise you of the process for schools to apply for Title I schoolwide status in the 2014-2015 school year.

Any district with a school that plans to transition to a Title I schoolwide program beginning in the 2014-2015 school year must notify the NJDOE by completing the attached 2014-2015 Intent to Operate a Title I Schoolwide Program form and submitting it to the Office of Title I via email at titleone@doe.state.nj.us by Friday, February 14, 2014.

Eligible schools may choose to operate a Title I schoolwide program as a means to upgrade the educational program of the entire school. The Title I schoolwide process encourages schools to make significant changes in order to improve student achievement. The comprehensive schoolwide process provides schools with the flexibility to address the needs of their lowest performing students, while working with higher achieving students to move them to increased levels of advanced proficiency, ultimately raising the academic achievement of all students. Schoolwide flexibility enables Title I schools to use Title I funds to extend or restructure their school day or school year to increase the amount of instructional time for students, expand their curriculum to include optional online courses, and offer informational sessions for families to better understand the college application process.

To transition to a Title I schoolwide program, Section 1114 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) requires that a school operating a Title I targeted assistance program do the following:

- Conduct one year of planning which may be waived if the school has previously been operating under a strategic plan or improvement plan that addresses the entire school;
- Consult with the school’s stakeholders; and
- Complete a Title I Schoolwide Plan which describes the planned changes in the school and explains how the school will address the following required components:

  1. A comprehensive needs assessment;
  2. Strategies to address the needs of all children in the school, but particularly the needs of low-achieving children;
  3. Instruction by highly qualified teachers;
  4. High-quality and ongoing professional development for teachers, principals, and paraprofessionals and, if appropriate, pupil services personnel, parents, and other staff to enable all children in the school to meet the state’s student academic achievement standards;
5. Strategies to attract high-quality highly qualified teachers to high-need schools;
6. Strategies, such as family literacy programs, to increase parental involvement;
7. Measures to include teachers in the decisions regarding the use of academic assessments to improve student achievement;
8. Effective, timely additional assistance for students experiencing difficulty reaching the proficient and advanced proficient levels of achievement on state assessments;
9. Plans for assisting preschool children in the transition from early childhood programs to elementary school programs; and
10. Coordination and integration of federal, state, and local services and programs.

While previously schools had to have a student poverty rate of 40 percent or higher, New Jersey’s ESEA Waiver Request waives this minimum poverty rate for a school in Priority or Focus status. Thus, any Priority or Focus school with a poverty rate of less than 40 percent may also apply to operate a schoolwide program.

For further information on Title I schoolwide programs, please review the following USDE guidance documents:

- “Designing Schoolwide Programs” specifically addresses the program requirements: [http://www.nj.gov/education/title1/leg/](http://www.nj.gov/education/title1/leg/)
- “Schoolwide Programs” addresses the general schoolwide requirements: [http://www2.ed.gov/legislation/ESEA/Title_I/swpguide.html](http://www2.ed.gov/legislation/ESEA/Title_I/swpguide.html)

Upon receipt of the letter of intent, the NJDOE will work with the school to assist in the planning and facilitate the school’s transition to a schoolwide program. As part of the planning process, the NJDOE highly recommends that representatives from applicant schools attend a technical assistance session to help schools further understand the requisite programmatic and budgeting changes for newly operating schoolwide programs. The session will be held on Wednesday, February 26, 2014, at Mercer Community College. Districts may use the Department’s event registration link at [http://education.state.nj.us/events/](http://education.state.nj.us/events/) to register up to four participants.

If you have any questions about transitioning to a Title I schoolwide program, contact Dr. A. Charles Wright at anthony.wright@doe.state.nj.us or (609) 943-5396.