May 27, 2014

TO: Chief School Administrators
Charter School Lead Persons

FROM: Susan Martz, Assistant Commissioner
Division of Student Services and Career Readiness

SUBJECT: Guidance for Title I Schools Not Meeting 2013 Progress Targets

The 2013-2014 school year is New Jersey’s second year of operation under its Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Waiver Flexibility Request. The waiver provided an opportunity for the State to transition to an accountability system that focused on the lowest performing schools and provided greater flexibility for other schools to identify and target interventions for their low performing students. The waiver also enabled the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) to develop performance measures for English Language Arts and Mathematics, known as Progress Targets, for each school that participated in the State assessment system. Progress Targets measure a school’s annual growth toward reducing the percentage of partially proficient students by half within a six-year period.

In October 2013, the NJDOE released the 2013 School Profiles for all schools with tested grades. The profiles indicated which school(s) did not meet their 2013 Progress Targets (see http://www.state.nj.us/education/title1/accountability/progress/13/pt/). The performance levels of these schools indicated that, while not among the State’s lowest performing or those with significant achievement gaps, they had areas of academic weakness that required intervention. The October 2013 memorandum encouraged districts to analyze the data and develop appropriate instructional strategies and programs to assist struggling students. Additionally, Title I districts were instructed to align their Title I funds to support strategies and activities specifically designed to address the needs of students in subgroups that did not meet their targets.

As part of the implementation of the waiver, the NJDOE must ensure that Title I districts with non-Priority/Focus schools that did not meet their 2013 Progress Targets took actions to address the academic needs of identified student populations. Although the NJDOE did not contact Title I districts with non-Priority/Focus Title I schools to develop action plans, such districts must maintain documentation of their schools’ efforts during the 2013-2014 school year to implement appropriate interventions for specified student groups. This includes any tiered approach to interventions that included progress monitoring to determine which students needed further interventions and which interventions resulted in student progress.
Through our ongoing targeted efforts, we are hopeful that all students will demonstrate academic gains and successfully graduate. The NJDOE appreciates the collaboration of districts and schools in strengthening the state’s accountability system. If you have any questions, please contact your local county office of education or the Office of Supplemental Educational Programs at titleone@doe.state.nj.us or 609-943-4283.

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c: Members, State Board of Education
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