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STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING

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SUPERINTENDENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

July 20, 2012

MEMORANDUM

TO: Local and Intermediate School District Superintendents and
Public School Academy Directors

FROM: Sally Vaughn, Ph.D. *Sally*
Deputy Superintendent/Chief Academic Officer

SUBJECT: Approval of Michigan's Request for Elementary and Secondary Education
Act (ESEA) Flexibility

Earlier this week, the U.S. Department of Education (USED) approved a request from the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) for flexibility from certain requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. This approval is the culmination of several months of work on behalf of Michigan schools and students to remove the barriers of some NCLB mandates, while maintaining a system of high standards focused on all students attaining career- and college-readiness. Michigan was well positioned to request this flexibility due to the resolution of our State Board of Education to implement career- and college-ready achievement standards in 2011. Approval of Michigan's Flexibility Request is the next step in developing innovative solutions tailored to the specific needs of Michigan students.

A high-level summary of the ESEA/NCLB provisions waived by this Flexibility Request approval is available at: http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-37818_60094---_00.html. Each of the affected provisions falls within three principle areas: 1) Career- and College-Ready Expectations for All Students; 2) State-Developed Differentiated Recognition, Accountability, and Support; and 3) Supporting Effective Instruction and Leadership. The primary benefits for Michigan's schools and students are: the elimination of the NCLB timeline to attain 100 percent student proficiency by 2014 (in exchange for ambitious but achievable annual targets), a departure from the NCLB "one size fits all" interventions for identified schools, and more flexibility in the use of federal funds.

Immediate Impacts

There are a few immediate impacts for schools and districts that will occur in the area of Principle 2: State-Developed Differentiated Recognition, Accountability, and Support and we want you to be aware of those impacts now. In early August (specific date to be

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announced), MDE will be releasing the 2011-2012 Michigan School Report Cards that include Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) calculations and EdYes! accreditation letter grades. At the same time, MDE will be releasing the following statewide lists:

- Reward Schools **NEW!**
- Focus Schools **NEW!**
- Priority Schools (formerly Persistently Lowest Achieving)
- Top-to-Bottom

The ESEA Flexibility approval did not change the calculation of AYP or the production of the statewide Top-to-Bottom list. However, it did change the methodology for identifying Priority Schools (formerly Persistently Lowest Achieving), and added two additional metrics, Reward Schools and Focus Schools.

AYP results and Top-to-Bottom, Priority (formerly Persistently Lowest Achieving), Focus, and Reward lists and lookup tools are embargoed until the public release of this information in early August (specific date to be announced).

Reward Schools

Reward Schools consist of schools that made AYP and were identified in one of three ways: 1) top five percent of schools on the Top-to-Bottom list, 2) top five percent of schools making the greatest gains in achievement (improvement metric), or 3) "Beating the Odds." Beating the Odds schools are those that are overcoming traditional barriers to student achievement and are outperforming schools with similar risk factors and demographic makeup.

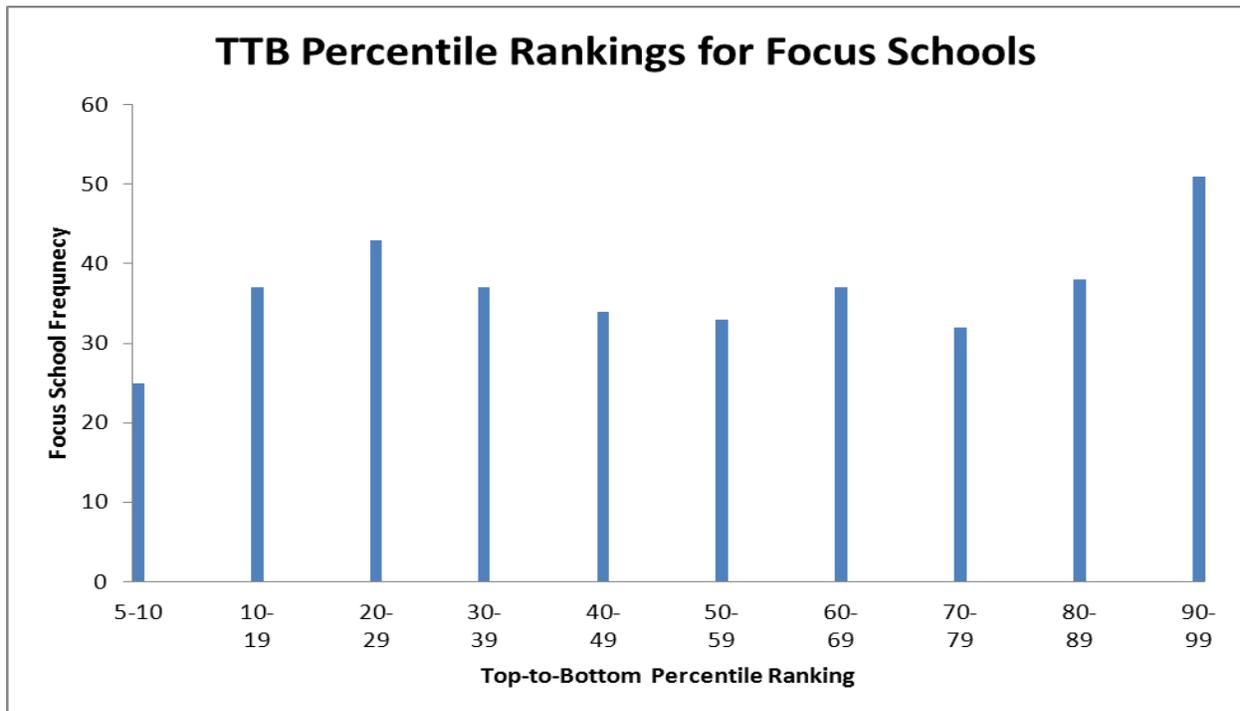
Additional information on Reward Schools and some of the innovative ways the MDE plans to recognize their achievements will be included in an upcoming ESEA Flexibility webinar (date/time to be announced).

Focus Schools

Focus Schools consist of the ten percent of schools on the Top-to-Bottom list with the largest achievement gaps between its top 30 percent of students and its bottom 30 percent, based on average scale score¹. In addition to being required by USED for ESEA Flexibility, identifying Focus Schools is a critical step toward Michigan achieving its overriding goal of closing the achievement gap within schools and reducing the achievement gap statewide.

To help illustrate which schools may be identified as Focus Schools, a graphic has been included below. Even very high achieving schools can be identified as Focus Schools if the school has a large enough achievement gap. In fact, Focus Schools are found across the range of overall Top-to-Bottom percentile rank, from the very low percentile ranks through the very high percentile ranks.

¹ The Focus Schools list consists of the ten percent of Title I schools with the largest achievement gaps plus any non-Title I schools with equal or greater achievement gaps than those present in the identified Title I schools.



Districts with one or more Focus Schools will be notified in writing by MDE, and the district superintendent/public school academy (PSA) director will receive a courtesy call from an MDE staff member on **July 31**. The MDE staff member placing this courtesy call will email the individual school lookup tool and links to additional resource documents just after the phone call.

In addition to the courtesy call and written notification, Focus Schools will be invited to attend a webinar on Wednesday, **August 1 at 10:30 a.m.** The webinar will provide information on the metric, explanations on how specific schools were identified, and details about the individualized supports that will be provided to Focus Schools. Instructions on how to sign-in to the webinar will be provided in the written notification.

Priority Schools (formerly Persistently Lowest Achieving)

Priority Schools consist of the lowest five percent of schools on the Top-to-Bottom list. Districts with one or more Priority Schools will be notified in writing by MDE, and the district superintendent/public school academy (PSA) director will receive a courtesy call from an MDE staff member on **July 31**. The MDE staff member placing this courtesy call will email the individual school lookup tool and links to additional resource documents just after the phone call.

In addition to the courtesy call and written notification, Priority Schools will be invited to attend a webinar on Wednesday, **August 1 at 8:30 a.m.** The webinar will provide information on the metric, explanations on how specific schools were identified, and details about the individualized supports that will be provided to Priority Schools. Instructions on how to sign-in to the webinar will be provided in the written notification.

Next Steps

As we approach the 2012-2013 school year, the MDE will be providing additional resources related to ESEA Flexibility, including a comprehensive webinar. We are excited about the opportunities presented by ESEA Flexibility, especially the opportunity to focus on student achievement gaps and the ability to customize and strengthen the system of supports for schools and districts. We look forward to working with you as we continue to improve and innovate.

Questions?

For questions about the new accountability metrics, please contact the Bureau of Assessment & Accountability, Evaluation Research and Accountability Unit at 877-560-8378, option 6.

For questions about Priority Schools, please contact Connie McCall in the State Reform Office at mccallc@michigan.gov or 517-335-5310.

For questions about Focus Schools, please contact Fran Lake in the Office of Education Improvement and Innovation at lakef@michigan.gov or 517-335-2957.

For questions about Reward Schools, please contact Mike Radke in the Office of Field Services at radkem@michigan.gov or 517-373-3921.

cc: Michigan Education Alliance