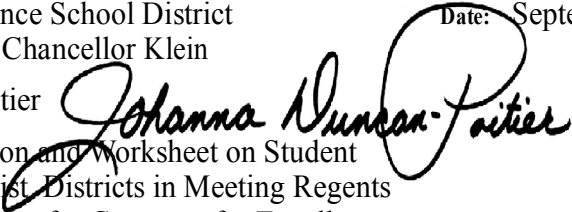


THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

To: Contract For Excellence School District
Superintendents and Chancellor Klein

Date: September 21, 2007

From: Johanna Duncan-Poitier 

Subject: Additional Information and Worksheet on Student
Achievement to Assist Districts in Meeting Regents
Approval Requirements for Contracts for Excellence

The Board of Regents is committed to closing the resource and achievement gap in New York's schools. The recently enacted State Budget (Chapter 57 of the Laws of 2007) reinforces and supports Regents' policies and priorities established over the last several years. It also provides an unprecedented amount of Foundation Aid to help support those priorities and must be used to help students in greatest need academically. In response to recent questions from the field, this memo provides additional information to school districts (required to submit Contracts for Excellence) to assist them in gaining approval of their proposed contracts. This information is specifically focused on how districts must demonstrate how additional Foundation Aid will be used to serve students who are most in need academically.

To assist school districts with this process, Department staff have issued guidance memos that have incorporated important feedback from the field; developed an electronic system for districts to file Contracts; extended Department hours available for technical assistance; sponsored teleconferences; and have conducted in person meetings to discuss with districts their student achievement challenges, their proposed Contract plan, and issues of targeting versus supplementing resources.

Consistent with the Board of Regents recently approved emergency accountability regulations, the Department will review and approve Contracts for Excellence that are focused on producing the intended results for students with the greatest need. All contract districts will also be held accountable for the appropriate expenditures of these funds. Attached is a worksheet that may be helpful to districts as they determine if their proposed contracts will meet the accountability requirements. Contract funds must be:

- **used to increase student achievement;**
- **targeted on students with the greatest educational need; and**
- **used to supplement and not supplant existing district effort.**

Since districts are required to demonstrate the positive impact these funds will have on student achievement the attached worksheet poses a number of questions that districts should ask in developing their Contract for Excellence in three key areas: fiscal accountability, program accountability, and performance accountability. Department staff will continue to work with you in resolving any specific questions you may have. **Consistent with meetings held to date, districts are reminded that they must ensure that Department staff have reviewed and accepted the projected areas of focus for the uses of the Contract for Excellence funds prior to making final commitments for these expenditures.**

Department staff will schedule monitoring visits during the school year to gauge the progress of specific projects. We recognize that the lead time for development of Contract for Excellence planning, following the enactment of the State Budget, is short for the field and the Department. However, adherence to these guidelines will reduce the number of re-submissions and will expedite the Department's approval of proposed Contracts for Excellence. We appreciate your cooperation and welcome your continued feedback in this process.

Attachment

c: Members of the Board of Regents