



Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Jeffrey C. Riley
Commissioner

November 16, 2018

Dear District Leader,

Massachusetts's new accountability system includes several planning requirements and improvement opportunities for schools identified as requiring Broad/Comprehensive or Focused/Targeted support. **Schools above the lowest decile for overall student performance, but with low student subgroup performance (1st-5th percentile), are among those designated for [Focused/Targeted support](#) in our new state accountability system.** You are receiving this letter because one or more schools in your district have been identified as requiring assistance or intervention according to these criteria.

Schools with low performance for one or more subgroups are **required to complete a school improvement planning process for these subgroups** under the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). We ask that you use the DESE Turnaround Template and Guidance, as it is aligned to all federal and state requirements. The focus of your plan should be on how your school will improve outcomes for the specific subgroups identified as having low performance. The new Turnaround Plan Template, as well as additional resources to support the creation, implementation, and monitoring of Turnaround Plans, are available at this link: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/turnaround/level4/guidance.html>.

To support your school in the creation of their improvement plan for low performing subgroups, you will have access to \$10,000 of funding per eligible school through our **Turnaround Assistance Grant (TAG)**. This grant will supply funding for your district's eligible school(s) to plan how to support their lowest performing subgroup(s), using the DESE Turnaround Plan Template. TAG will fund activities aligned with conducting a needs assessment and probing for root causes of low performance in identified subgroups and developing strategies to improve outcomes for students in these subgroups. ***The final plan should be approved and monitored by the district, per federal ESSA requirements. The final plan should also be submitted to DESE.*** The TAG Request for Proposal is posted at the following link: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/grants/2019/222-325/>.

To familiarize you with the TAG, and help you prepare for your grant proposal, we want to invite you to a **Turnaround Assistance Grant Webinar** next **Monday, November 19 at 4:00 p.m.** You should have already received a separate email asking you to register for the webinar. We look forward to assisting you with this new funding opportunity.

Regional Assistance Teams

All schools required to engage in a subgroup turnaround planning process will have support offered by the SSoS Regional Assistance Teams. The assistance is aimed at supporting each district's unique capacity to lead and facilitate the creation, implementation, and monitoring of strong subgroup turnaround plans at their schools. The regional teams will tailor their support to your specific school(s) and district needs and may include:

- **Strategic planning** with district and school leaders on the design and implementation of the process the district will use for subgroup(s) turnaround plan creation, implementation, and progress monitoring in their school(s)
- **Partnering and modeling** of the turnaround plan creation process by the Regional Assistance Team with district leaders at a specific school as a way of helping to increase district capacity
- **Networks** and other approaches to provide focused/targeted support for each district to support schools creating, implementing, and monitoring subgroup turnaround plans

An overview of the assistance services the SSOS can offer your district and schools is attached.

Your SSoS Regional Assistance team is prepared to discuss your district's TAG options, assist toward the development of your grant proposal, and support the planning process. They will be in contact in the coming weeks to discuss your needs and to create a support plan. The Directors for the Coastal Region are Mary Ann Jackman (maryann.jackman@ssosma.org) and Susan Berglund (sberglund@doe.mass.edu). The Directors for the West/Central Region are Donna Harlan (donna.harlan@ssosma.org) and Joan Tuttle (jtuttle@doe.mass.edu).

Turnaround Plan Creation Resources

We also have new resources available on our website to assist you with your school improvement and turnaround planning! DESE has created an updated [Turnaround Plan Template and Guidance](#), [Turnaround Schools Frequently Asked Questions](#), as well as a variety of additional resources to support the creation, implementation, and monitoring of turnaround plans. These resources are aligned to all federal and state requirements. This newest guidance is especially important because it provides clear direction on the federal requirements for developing evidence-based turnaround plans. Although your district only will be required to create a turnaround plan for the identified subgroups, this guidance can be very helpful.

Two recently completed guidance documents that have not yet been posted on our website are: 1) a **summary of the Turnaround Plan Template** and 2) a **sample timeline for Turnaround Plan development**. **These documents are attached** to assist as you undertake the cycle of inquiry in preparing your plan(s) for subgroup turnaround.

DESE recognizes that this is a lot of information and welcomes your questions, comments, or concerns. We look forward to continuing to assist and collaborate with you in your school improvement and turnaround efforts. Please feel free to contact me directly (Email: vrodriguez@doe.mass.edu; Cellphone: 617-680-9370) or your Regional Assistance Team Co-Directors for more information and assistance.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V. Rodriguez, Jr.', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ventura Rodriguez, Jr. Ed.L.D.
Senior Associate Commissioner
Statewide System of Support and Strategic Initiatives