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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. You are receiving this letter because one or more schools in your district have been identified as requiring assistance or intervention. This letter will provide an overview of the planning requirements and assistance options available to your school(s) and district.

Broad/Comprehensive

Broad/Comprehensive support schools are schools in the lowest 10th percentile that have been designated underperforming or chronically underperforming (previously Level 4 and Level 5). Because these schools already have a Turnaround Plan through existing underperforming or chronically underperforming status, the existing plan may continue to be used. DESE will send additional information about the process to update the existing plans in the coming weeks.

Planning Requirements for Focused/Targeted Support Schools

Schools in the Lowest 10th Percentile of Overall Student Performance

Our new state accountability system designates all schools in the lowest 10th percentile for overall student performance as requiring Focused/Targeted support. All Focused/Targeted support schools are required to work with local stakeholders to develop and implement a school support and improvement plan (Turnaround Plan). DESE has created an updated Turnaround Plan Template and Guidance that is aligned to all federal and state requirements. The new Turnaround Plan Template, as well as additional resources to support the creation, implementation, and monitoring of Turnaround Plans, will be available for schools next week at this link:

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/turnaround/level4/guidance.html>.

Schools with Low Student Subgroup Performance

Schools with low student subgroup performance are also designated for Focused/Targeted support in our new state accountability system. Schools identified because of low student subgroup performance only (and are not otherwise in the lowest 10th percentile for overall student performance) are federally required to complete a

school planning process. DESE will send out more information about the process, including timeline and available support, within the coming weeks.

High Schools with Low Graduation Rates

All high schools with a four-year graduation rate below 67% are designated as Focused/Targeted support schools requiring additional assistance and intervention. High schools with low four-year graduation rates **and** in the lowest 10th percentile because of overall or specific subgroup performance will complete a school Turnaround Plan to satisfy federal and state requirements.

High schools with low four-year graduation rates only (and are not otherwise in the lowest 10th percentile for overall student performance) will satisfy state and federal requirements by participating in the *FY19 MassGrad Promising Practices Grant, Fund Code 320*. This grant program has a planning process that will satisfy state and federal requirements for high schools with low four-year graduation rates.

Please note that any high school with at least 60 students and with a four-year graduation rate below 67% will be eligible to apply for the funding opportunity available through the *FY19 MassGrad Promising Practices Grant, Fund Code 320*.

Schools with Low Participation Rates

Schools with low participation rates only (and are not otherwise in the lowest 10th percentile for overall or subgroup student performance) are required to complete a planning process. DESE will send out more information about the process, including timeline and available support, within the coming weeks.

Focused/Targeted Support Schools with Existing Turnaround Plans

Focused/Targeted Support schools that previously created turnaround plans as part of DESE's "Level 3 Grant Program" or as part of the "Proactive Turnaround Plan Program" are not required to create new plans. The existing plans will meet federal and state requirements.

Support and Assistance

Turnaround Plan Creation Resources

All schools required to create a Turnaround Plan can access resources, including the Turnaround Plan Template and Guidance documents and the Massachusetts' Turnaround Practices research at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/turnaround/level4/guidance.html>. In the coming weeks, we will also schedule webinars to review different components of the Turnaround Plan creation and implementation process.

Root Cause Analysis and Monitoring Site Visits

An important part of the turnaround planning and implementation process is an analysis of the strengths and challenges facing the school designated as requiring assistance or intervention. To support schools in this effort, **all schools in the lowest 10th percentile**

will be eligible for a one or two-day site visit conducted by an external partner approved by DESE. The visit will result in a detailed report on the school's implementation of Massachusetts research-based turnaround practices, providing meaningful formative feedback for the district and school to consider as turnaround strategies chosen to best meet the unique needs of each school. More information about these processes, eligibility and funding will be sent to you in the coming weeks.

Regional Assistance Teams

All schools required to create Turnaround Plans will have support provided by our Regional Assistance Teams. The assistance is aimed at and facilitate the creation, implementation, and monitoring of strong 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 leaders on the design and implementation of the process the district will use for 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(s) as a way of helping to increase district capacity.
- **Other approaches** to provide focused/targeted support for each district, include forming inter and intra-district networks to support schools creating, implementing, and monitoring Turnaround Plans.

Your Regional Assistance Team will be in contact in the coming weeks to discuss your needs and to create a support plan. Below is a list of districts with schools in the lowest 10th percentile served by each Regional Assistance Team:

Coastal Districts: Boston, Brockton, Chelsea, Fall River, Framingham, Haverhill, Lowell, Lynn, New Bedford, Salem, Saugus, and Taunton.

Co-Directors: Mary Ann Jackman (maryann.jackman@ssosma.org) and Susan Berglund (sberglund@doe.mass.edu).

West/Central Districts: Athol-Royalston, Chicopee, Easthampton, Fitchburg, Greenfield, North Adams, North Brookfield, Pittsfield, Springfield, Webster, Winchendon, and Worcester

Co-Directors: Donna Harlan (donna.harlan@ssosma.org) and Joan Tuttle (jtuttle@doe.mass.edu).

Grants

DESE will offer two grants programs to support schools in creating, implementing, and monitoring school Turnaround Plans.

The Turnaround Assistance Grant will provide eligible schools with funding to create, implement, or monitor school Turnaround Plans. The grant will include funding to pay for a one or two-day site visit conducted by an external partner approved by DESE. Information about the grant, including the grant RFP, will be emailed to eligible districts and posted on the DESE website by October 19th, 2018.

The *FY19 MassGrad Promising Practices Grant, Fund Code 320* is available to any high school with at least 60 students and a four-year graduation rate below 67%. Information about the grant, including the list of eligible schools and the RFP, will be emailed to eligible districts and posted on the DESE website by October 16th.

DESE recognizes that this is a lot of information and welcome your questions, comments, or concerns. Please feel free to contact me directly (vrodriguez@doe.mass.edu; 617-680-9370 cel.) or your Regional Assistance Team Co-Directors.

Thank you,

Ventura Rodriguez, Jr. Ed.L.D.
Associate Commissioner
Statewide System of Support