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To: District Superintendents and Superintendents of Public Schools

From: Ira Schwartz, Assistant Commissioner of Accountability

Date: October 2014

RE: Checklist for Determining Priority School Leader Qualifications

This memo is to inform districts with Priority Schools of the requirements for determining whether persons are qualified to serve as principals of Priority Schools implementing or planning to implement a Whole School Reform Model (WSRM) aligned with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Flexibility Turnaround Principles, as required by New York State's approved ESEA Flexibility Waiver and Commissioner's Regulation 100.18.

### **Background Information**

As a condition of approval of New York State's ESEA Flexibility Waiver, the United States Department of Education (USDE) has required that New York provide districts with guidance to use when selecting school leaders to implement a WSRM in a Priority School. Unlike districts with Priority Schools implementing the Transformation or Turnaround Model pursuant to a 1003(g) School Improvement Grant (SIG), districts with Priority Schools implementing a WSRM *do not* have to replace the current principal at the school, if such principal has been the leader of the school for more than two years. However, the district must do the following: (1) review the performance of the current principal, and (2) determine whether the principal should be replaced in order to ensure strong and effective leadership, OR demonstrate to the New York State Education Department (NYSED or "the Department") that the current principal has "a track record in improving achievement and has the ability to lead the turnaround effort." In addition, districts are required to ensure that any newly hired principal also has the track record and skills to effectively turn around the school. For more information on the ESEA Flexibility Waiver Turnaround Principles, please review the following guidance posted on the USDE website at: <https://www.ed.gov/sites/default/files/esea-flexibility-acc.doc>.

In order to assist districts with documenting the rigor of the selection process and determining whether the current or a prospective principal has the requisite competencies to implement the turnaround model, NYSED has developed the Checklist for Determining Priority School Leader Qualifications.

## **Checklist for Determining Priority School Leader Qualifications**

During the 2014-15 school year, the Checklist for Determining Priority School Leader Qualifications should be used by districts for professional development purposes. During this time, districts should also review the checklist and revise as necessary district assignment and hiring processes for future school years to ensure that candidates for the position of principal are assessed for the listed competencies as part of these processes.

Beginning with the 2015-16 school year, districts will be required to complete the checklist for each Priority School implementing a WSRM when:

1. The district hires a new leader for the school; OR
2. The district makes the decision to retain the current leader of the school.

In addition, the district must use the checklist to provide information to NYSED on the process used to fill any principal vacancy for the 2014-15 school year that occurs after November 1, 2014.

The checklist is comprised of a list of core school leadership competencies that have been shown to positively impact a school leader's ability to lead a successful school. The district must identify on the checklist the competencies possessed by the current or newly hired principal. The district is also required to indicate how it assessed the school leader's competencies through observation or gathered evidence. Finally, the district must assert (through the signature of the Superintendent, or the Chancellor in New York City) that the assigned principal (current or newly hired) has been selected through a process that ensures the assigned principal has the skills and competencies necessary to promote dramatic improvement of academic achievement results at the school.

Please Note: It is understood that not every principal may have achieved each of these competencies at the time of his or her selection to implement the WSRM. It is also understood that each of these competencies is not necessarily of equal importance in making the determination regarding the candidate who is best able to lead the implementation of a particular model at a particular school. NYSED is interested in ensuring that districts have a way to assess progress toward these competencies. However, it is expected that districts, through their leadership assessment and hiring processes, will have made every effort to ensure that the leaders selected have most of the competencies listed. In addition, it is expected that the district will develop a plan to provide support and assistance to any principal who lacks one or more of these competencies so that they can acquire these skills.

**Districts must submit the checklist by June 30, 2015 for the 2015-16 school year.** The checklist should be submitted in pdf format with the required signatures, via e-mail to [accountinfo@mail.nysed.gov](mailto:accountinfo@mail.nysed.gov). For vacancies that occur after November 1, 2015, the

checklist should be submitted within 30 days after the assignment of the replacement principal.

Questions concerning the information contained in this memo or regarding the attached Checklist for Determining Priority School Leader Qualifications may be directed to: [accountinfo@mail.nysed.gov](mailto:accountinfo@mail.nysed.gov).

We look forward to supporting your work with the lowest performing schools.

Attachment

cc: John King, Jr.  
Cosimo Tangorra, Jr.  
Bill Clarke  
Stephen Earley