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To: District Superintendents, Superintendents of Public Schools, and Principals of Charter Schools

From: Ira Schwartz, Assistant Commissioner *Ira Schwartz*

Subject: Preliminary Identification of Reward Schools for the 2015–16 School Year

Date: August 2015

The purpose of this memo is to inform you that the New York State Education Department (NYSED or “the Department”) has identified Reward Schools for the 2015-16 school year based on 2013-14 school year results.

The list containing the Reward Schools is posted to the Information Reporting Services portal at <http://portal.nysed.gov/portal/page/pref/PortalApp>. The 2013-14 assessment data used to identify the Reward School status is available in the New York State Report Card at: <https://reportcards.nysed.gov/>.

The Department has identified 361 Reward Schools (including 24 Charter Schools) in 117 districts for the 2015-16 school year. Reward Schools are schools that have made the most progress and/or schools that have the highest achievement in the state without significant gaps in student achievement between subgroups. For more details on the Reward School identification methodology, please visit: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/accountability/ESEAMaterials.html>. Each Reward School will receive, under separate cover, a Certificate of Recognition from the Commissioner. Title I Reward Schools that have been identified as Reward Schools based on both 2012-13 and 2013-14 school year results are eligible to apply for a Reward School grant, if the school is not currently receiving this grant. More information on these grants will be sent under separate cover to districts that have eligible Reward Schools.

This preliminary data is currently embargoed. However, this information is being provided now so that districts may review the data and determine whether to appeal for the inclusion of a school as a Reward School. Appeals to have schools identified as Reward Schools in your district must be submitted no later than **Friday, August 14, 2015** via e-mail to accountinfo@nysed.gov using the attached appeal form (see Attachment A or download the form at: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/accountability/ESEAMaterials.html>.)

The Department plans to release the final accountability status of all schools and districts to the public on **Wednesday, August 19, 2015**. Questions concerning the information contained in this memo may be directed to: accountinfo@nysed.gov.

cc: MaryEllen Elia
Beth Berlin
Charles Szuberla
Lisa Long

ATTACHMENT A

Instructions for Completing the 2015-16 Appeal Form for Identification of a Reward School

Districts may appeal to include a school as a Reward School only if the district can demonstrate that a data error resulted in a school not meeting the Reward School criteria. This form must be completed and certified by the Superintendent (for New York City, by the Chancellor). The attached form can also be downloaded at: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/accountability/ESEAMaterials.html>.

To appeal for the inclusion of a school as a Reward School for the 2015-16 school year, districts must submit a completed, signed, and dated 2015-16 Appeal Form for Identification of a Reward School, with all required supporting evidence. Districts must submit the appeal by **Friday, August 14, 2015**, requesting that the school be identified as a Reward School for the 2015-16 school year. Appeals may be granted if the district can prove to the satisfaction of the Department that its identification was based on inaccurate computations applied to data in the Student Information Repository System (SIRS) as of the 2013-14 reporting deadline, September 12, 2014.

Resource Documents on Reward School Identification and Data Verification

More details on the data elements used for the Reward School identification is available in the file “RewardSchoolsfor2015-16.xlsx” posted at the Information and Reporting Services (IRS) Portal at <http://portal.nysed.gov/portal/page/pref/PortalApp>.

Districts seeking an appeal for more than one individual school within the district must submit one form per school being appealed. The district must identify the BEDS codes and the reason for the appeal requests, and provide evidence to support the appeal.

Completing the Reward School Identification Appeal Form:

1. Within the designated fields, provide the School’s Name, School’s BEDS Code, District’s Name and BEDS Code.
2. Check the corresponding box next to the appropriate reason for the appeal.
3. Provide a rationale for why the school is a Reward School. The rationale should be brief and based on facts related to the submitted evidence. **Note:** Excessive details are unnecessary. Please eliminate information that is unrelated to the evidence submitted.
4. Protect personal identification information. Documents submitted to NYSED should not include social security numbers (except the last 4 digits), date of birth, race/ethnicity, disability status, or other non-directory information. Protecting this information from unauthorized access is a legal requirement and is an important priority for NYSED. To ensure the security, if the supporting evidence for your appeal includes any of the sensitive and protected information listed above, please send this evidence to NYSED either (1) via secure ground mail or (2) electronically over the internet via secure file transfer protocol (SFTP). Data sent via e-mail and standard FTP (including FTP sites with password protection) are unencrypted and therefore not secure. Consequently, these methods must not be used to transmit sensitive and protected data.
5. The superintendent (for New York City, the Chancellor) must certify the document and submit it via e-mail to accountinfo@nysed.gov by **Friday, August 14, 2015**.

