R 2414 Programs and Services for Students in High Poverty and in High Need School Districts

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[[See POLICY ALERT Nos. 143, 153, 192 and 209]

[For High Poverty and High Need School Districts]

A. Definitions

1. "At-risk-students" means those resident students from households with a household income at or below the most recent Federal poverty guidelines available on October 15 of the prebudget year multiplied by 1.85.

2. "High poverty school district" means a district in which forty percent or more of the students are at-risk students.

3. "High need school district" means a school district in which forty percent or more of the students are at-risk-students and is at one or more of the following proficiency levels on State assessments:

   a. Less than eighty-five percent of total students have achieved proficiency in language arts literacy on the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK) 3;

   b. Less than eighty percent of total students have achieved proficiency in language arts literacy on the NJ ASK 8;

   c. Less than eighty percent of total students have achieved proficiency in language arts literacy on the HSPA;

   d. Less than eighty-five percent of total students have achieved proficiency in mathematics on the NJ ASK 4;

e. Less than eighty percent of total students have achieved proficiency in mathematics on the NJ ASK 8; and/or

f. Less than eighty percent of total students have achieved proficiency in mathematics on the high school State assessment.

B. High Need School Districts

1. Implementation Timelines

a. The New Jersey Department of Education shall identify the list of high need school districts based on the State assessments results and shall promptly notify the districts that are classified as high need.

b. In the first school year immediately following such identification as a high need school district, the district shall begin planning for implementation of, and shall implement where possible, the designated program(s) (language arts and/or mathematics literacy) as required below.

c. In the subsequent year following identification as a high need school district, the district shall fully implement the designated program(s).

d. High need school districts, once identified, shall remain in that status and shall continue to implement the designated program(s) for a minimum of three years.

2. Language Arts Literacy – Intensive Early Literacy for Grades Preschool through Three

High need school districts where less than eighty-five percent of total students have achieved proficiency in language arts literacy on the NJ ASK 3 shall provide an intensive early literacy program for preschool to grade three to ensure that all students achieve proficiency on State standards. The intensive early literacy program shall include the following components:

a. An emphasis on small group instruction in at least reading, writing, and technology;

b. A comprehensive early literacy assessment program that includes:

(1) Assessment of English language learners (ELLs) in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:15-1.3;

(2) A reading measure used minimally at the beginning of grades Kindergarten through three to determine the reading skills and strategies students have mastered;

(3) On-going performance-based assessments;

(4) A comprehensive diagnostic assessment of individual students who are exhibiting persistent difficulty in reading following a sustained period of targeted instruction; and

(5) An annual end-of-year achievement assessment of reading with a norm-referenced and/or criterion referenced test in grades one and two.

c. At least a daily ninety-minute, uninterrupted language arts literacy block in grades Kindergarten through three with guidance in the use of that time that may include the following instructional strategies:

(1) Use of a reading measure to differentiate student needs;

(2) Small group instruction;

(3) Direct instruction;

(4) Guided reading; and

(5) Shared reading.

d. Instructional materials that include concepts and themes from other content areas;

e. Professional development opportunities for teachers that focus on the elements of intensive early literacy, ways to assist students who exhibit persistent difficulty in reading, or other related topics that have been identified by these teachers as professional development needs and are reflected in the school and school district professional development plans pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:9C-4 et seq.;

f. Consistent and adequate opportunities for teachers to discuss and analyze student work, interim progress measures and assessment results, and to plan any modifications in grouping and/or instruction that may be indicated, consistent with this section;

g. A classroom library that reflects the diversity and needs of all students and includes assistive technology;

h. Use of a highly skilled literacy coach or certified teacher to coordinate professional development and collaboration based on the school and school district professional development plan, if documented as necessary to increase achievement of early literacy; and

i. Methods to involve parents and family members in student learning.

3. Language Arts Literacy – Intensive Literacy for Grades Four through Eight

High need school districts where less than eighty percent of total students have achieved proficiency in language arts literacy on the NJ ASK 8 shall implement an intensive literacy program for grades four through eight that includes the following components:

a. A comprehensive literacy assessment for grades four through eight as part of the school district's curriculum to measure individual and group progress indicated below:

(1) Benchmark analysis that gauges students' performance and is used to assist school staff in determining skills that students still need to attain; and

(2) Assessment of English language learners (ELLs) pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:15-1.3.

b. Emphasis on small group instruction with scheduling of double periods, including appropriate classroom materials for small group instruction with evidence-based interventions and additional time for students who are not proficient in language arts literacy;

c. Professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators that are based on effective instructional practices including:

(1) Enhancing knowledge of the language arts literacy content and pedagogy to engage all students; and

(2) Learning how and having opportunities to analyze student work and assessment results in a collaborative setting.

d. Involving parents and family members in student learning.

4. Language Arts Literacy – Literacy for Students in Grades Nine through Twelve

High need school districts where less than eighty percent of total students have achieved proficiency in language arts literacy on the high school State assessment shall implement a language arts literacy program aligned with college preparatory English I, II, III, and IV for grades nine through twelve that incorporates the elements in 3. above with the exception of providing a double period for language arts literacy.

5. Mathematics Literacy – Math Literacy for Students in Grades Three through Four

High need school districts in which less than eighty-five percent of total students have achieved proficiency in mathematics on the NJ ASK 4 shall implement a comprehensive program for mathematics education that prepares students in grades three through four for success in higher order mathematics and that includes the following components:

a. Curriculum that simultaneously develops conceptual understanding, computational fluency, and problem solving skills, with meaningful instruction and a focus on critical mathematics skills as part of a successful learning experience;

b. Mathematical reasoning that occurs in contextual learning;

c. An emphasis on communicating mathematics concepts both verbally and in writing;

d. The use of frequent questions and opportunities for class discussion in addition to the mathematics textbook activities to improve student problem solving ability;

e. Professional development in both mathematics content and in the elements of mathematics pedagogy specified in this section, related to the appropriate grade and based on individual professional needs, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:9C-3 et seq.;

f. Use of appropriate instructional materials, technology, and manipulatives, aligned with the Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS) in mathematics, that lead students through concrete, symbolic, and abstract mathematical thinking;

g. Multiple assessments and benchmarks, including use of formative assessments;

h. Differentiated instruction;

i. Explicit mathematics instruction for struggling students to ensure that these students possess the foundational skills and conceptual knowledge necessary for understanding the mathematics they are learning at their grade level; and

j. Methods to involve parents and family members in student learning.

6. Mathematics Literacy – Math Literacy for Students in Grades Five through Eight

High need school districts where less than eighty percent of total students have not achieved proficiency in mathematics on the NJ ASK 8 shall implement a comprehensive program for mathematics education that prepares all students in grades five through eight for success in Algebra at the high school level and incorporates the elements in 5. above.

7. Mathematics Literacy – Math Literacy for Students in Grades Nine through Twelve

High need school districts where eighty percent or more of total students have not achieved proficiency in mathematics on the high school State assessment shall implement a comprehensive program for mathematics education for grades nine through twelve which incorporates the elements in 5. above and is aligned to course expectations as required to meet graduation requirements.

C. High Poverty School Districts

1. Class Size Requirements

a. Class size in high poverty school districts shall not exceed twenty-one students in grades Kindergarten through three, twenty-three students in grades four and five, and twenty-four students in grades six through twelve; provided that if the district chooses to maintain lower class sizes in grades

Kindergarten through three, class sizes in grades four and five may equal but not exceed twenty-five students.

b. Exceptions to the class size requirements in C.1.a. above are permitted for some physical education and performing arts classes, where appropriate.

2. Full-Day Kindergarten Requirements

a. High poverty school districts shall maintain all existing full-day Kindergarten programs with a teacher's aide for each classroom.

b. Class size for these Kindergarten classrooms shall not exceed twenty-one students.

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