UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES

JUN - 1 2009

Honorable Richard Mills
Commissioner of Education
New York State Education Department
89 Washington Ave.
Albany, New York 12234

Dear Commissioner Mills:

Thank you for the timely submission of New York's Federal fiscal year (FFY) 2007 Annual Performance Report (APR) and revised State Performance Plan (SPP) under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). We also acknowledge the revisions to New York's APR received on April 6, 2009. We appreciate the State's efforts in preparing these documents.

The Department has determined that, under IDEA section 616(d), New York needs assistance in meeting the requirements of Part B of IDEA. The Department's determination is based on the totality of the State's data and information including the State's FFY 2007 APR and revised SPP, other State-reported data, information obtained through verification visits, and other publicly available information. See the enclosure entitled "How the Department Made Determinations under Section 616(d) of the IDEA in 2009" for further details.

The specific factors affecting the Office of Special Education Programs' (OSEP's) determination of needs assistance for New York were that the State: (1) reported 67.4% compliance for Indicator 11 and did not report correction; (2) reported 78.2% compliance for Indicator 12 and did not report correction; (3) reported 58.6% compliance with Indicator 13 and did not report correction; (4) reported 80.91% compliance with Indicator 17; (5) reported 62.25% percent compliance with Indicator 15; and (6) reported 93% compliance with Indicator 20. We also considered that the State had remaining uncorrected noncompliance identified in FFY 2005 in Indicators 4 and 13. For these reasons, we were unable to determine that New York met requirements under section 616(d). OSEP notes that New York did report high levels of compliance in Indicators 9, 10 and 16, and that the State's performance in Indicator 16 improved from 82.82% for FFY 2006 to 96.76% for FFY 2007. We hope the State will be able to demonstrate that it meets requirements in the next APR.

The enclosed table provides OSEP's analysis of the State's FFY 2007 APR and revised SPP and identifies, by indicator, OSEP's review of any revisions made by the State to its targets, improvement activities (timelines and resources) and baseline data in the State's SPP. The table also identifies, by indicator, the State's status in meeting its targets, whether the State's data reflect progress or slippage, and whether the State corrected noncompliance and provided valid and reliable data.

The State's determination for the FFY 2005 and FFY 2006 APRs was also needs assistance. In accordance with section 616(e)(1) of the IDEA and 34 CFR §300.604, if a State is determined to need assistance for two consecutive years, the Secretary must take one or more of the following actions: (1) advise the State of available sources of technical assistance that may help the State address the areas in which the State needs assistance; (2) direct the use of State-level funds on the area or areas in which the State needs assistance; or (3) identify the State as a high-risk grantee and impose special conditions on the State's Part B grant award.

Pursuant to these requirements, the Secretary is advising the State of available sources of technical assistance related to Indicator 11 (timely initial evaluations), Indicator 12 (IEP developed and implemented by third birthday), Indicator 13 (IEP that includes annual goals and transition services), Indicator 15 (timely correction of noncompliance), Indicator 17 (due process hearing timelines), and Indicator 20 (valid and reliable data). A list of sources of technical assistance related to the SPP/APR indicators is available by clicking on the "Technical Assistance Related to Determinations" box on the opening page of the SPP/APR Planning Calendar website at http://spp-apr-calendar.rrfcnetwork.org/techassistance.html. You will be directed to a list of indicators. Click on specific indicators for a list of centers, documents, web seminars and other sources of relevant technical assistance for that indicator. For the indicator(s) listed above, your State must report with its FFY 2008 APR submission, due February 1, 2010, on: (1) the technical assistance sources from which the State received assistance; and (2) the actions the State took as a result of that technical assistance. In addition, the State must report to OSEP by October 1, 2009 how the technical assistance selected by the State is addressing the factors contributing to the ongoing noncompliance. The extent to which your State takes advantage of available technical assistance for these indicators may affect the actions OSEP takes under section 616 should your State not be determined to meet requirements next year. We encourage New York to take advantage of available sources of technical assistance in other areas as well, particularly if the State is reporting low compliance data for an indicator.

As required by section 616(e)(7) of the IDEA and 34 CFR §300.606, the State must notify the public within the State that the Secretary of Education has taken the above enforcement action, including, at a minimum, by posting a public notice on the agency's website and distributing the notice to the media and through public agencies.

As you know, your State must report annually to the public on the performance of each local educational agency (LEA) located in the State on the targets in the SPP as soon as practicable, but no later than June 2, 2009, pursuant to IDEA section 616(b)(2)(C)(ii)(I) and 34 CFR §300.602(b)(1)(i)(A). In addition, your State must review LEA performance against targets in the State's SPP, determine if each LEA 'meets requirements,' 'needs assistance,' 'needs intervention,' or 'needs substantial intervention' in implementing Part B of the IDEA and inform each LEA of its determination. For further information regarding these requirements, see the SPP/APR Calendar at http://spp-apr-calendar.rrfcnetwork.org/explorer/view/id/656. Finally, as you included revisions to baseline, targets or improvement activities in your APR submission, and OSEP accepted those revisions, please ensure that you update your SPP accordingly and that the updated SPP is made available to the public.

In its October 17, 2008 Memorandum 09-02, "Reporting on Correction of Noncompliance in the Annual Performance Report Required under Sections 616 and 642 of the IDEA," OSEP provided Chief State School Officers and Lead Agency Directors with important information regarding: (1) requirements for identifying noncompliance and reporting on the correction of noncompliance in States' APRs; and (2) how OSEP will, beginning with the FFY 2008 APR, due February 1, 2010, consider the correction of noncompliance in making annual determinations for States pursuant to section 616(d) of the IDEA. Most significantly, beginning with our 2010 determinations:

1. OSEP will no longer consider a State to be in substantial compliance relative to a compliance indicator based on evidence of correction of the previous year's noncompliance if the State's current year data for that indicator reflect a very low level of compliance (generally 75% or below); and
2. OSEP will credit a State with correction of noncompliance relative to a child-specific compliance indicator only if the State confirms that it has addressed each instance of noncompliance identified in the data for an indicator that was reported in the previous year's APR, as well as any noncompliance identified by the Department more than one year previously. The State must specifically report, for each compliance indicator, whether it has corrected all of the noncompliance identified in its data for that indicator in the prior year's APR as well as that identified by the Department more than one year previously.

It is important for each State to review the guidance in the memorandum, and to raise any questions with your OSEP State Contact. The memorandum may be found at: http://spp-apr-calendar.rrfcnetwork.org/explorer/view/id/536.

OSEP is committed to supporting New York's efforts to improve results for children and youth with disabilities and looks forward to working with your State over the next year. If you have any questions, would like to discuss this further, or want to request technical assistance, please contact Angela Tanner-Dean, your OSEP State Contact, at 202-245-6320.

Sincerely,

Patricia J. Guard
Acting Director
Office of Special Education Programs

Enclosures

cc: State Director of Special Education