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***Commissioner's Program and Guidance for Determining Grades
under the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act (P.L.2010, c.122)***

The Commissioner of Education is required to develop a program to grade each public school and school district's efforts to implement the *Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act* (ABR) (N.J.S.A. 18A:17-46). This guidance document has been developed to help school district staff fulfill their responsibilities under the Commissioner's program. The guidance explains the program for grading both schools and school districts for the time periods indicated below:

- Year 1 applies to the time period of January 5, 2011 through June 30, 2013.
- Year 2 and beyond applies to the time period of July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014 and to a comparable time period for each subsequent year.

The program has been developed in consultation with two separate advisory groups and various offices in the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE). One advisory group comprised experts in anti-bullying strategies and school climate improvement representing institutions of higher education, school districts, child advocacy and human service organizations, professional associations and State agencies. The other advisory group included school district representatives from each of the 21 counties. The program has been designed to address the following primary recommendations that emerged from these consultations:

- A rubric should be used as the guide for assessing schools' efforts and for determining the required ABR grades; and
- The rubric should serve not only as a compliance tool, but as a means of educating school staff on best practices for implementing the ABR and as a mechanism to aide them in assessing and improving their ABR programs.

The ABR grade for each school will be determined primarily through a self-assessment of the school's implementation of the ABR using the attached tool titled *School Self-Assessment for Determining Grades under the ABR* (Self-Assessment) (Appendix A). The Self-Assessment must be made available for public comment and approved by the district board of education (BOE). The chief school administrator (CSA) will be required to certify the electronic submission of each school's Self-Assessment and *Statement of Assurances* (Appendix B). The school district's grade will be the average of the grades of each school in the district.

Conducting the School Self-Assessment

The School Safety Team (SST) should begin the process by reviewing the *School Self-Assessment for Determining School Grades under the ABR* (Appendix A). The Self-Assessment

tool includes eight core elements (identified immediately below) which address all of the ABR requirements for schools.

| <i>Core Element</i> | <i>Statutory Citation</i> |
|--|--|
| #1: HIB Programs, Approaches or Other Initiatives | <i>N.J.S.A. 18A:37-17a</i> |
| #2: Training on the BOE-approved HIB Policy | <i>N.J.S.A. 18A:37-17b and c</i> |
| #3: Other Staff Instruction and Training Programs | <i>N.J.S.A. 18A:6-112, N.J.S.A. 18A:37-22d, N.J.S.A. 18A:37-26a</i> |
| #4: Curriculum and Instruction on HIB and Related Information and Skills | <i>N.J.S.A. 18A:37-29</i> |
| #5: HIB Personnel | <i>N.J.S.A. 18A:37-20a, N.J.S.A. 18A:37-20c, N.J.S.A. 18A:37-21a</i> |
| #6: School-Level HIB Incident Reporting Procedure | <i>N.J.S.A. 18A:37-15b(5), N.J.S.A. 18A: 37-15b(6)(a)</i> |
| #7: HIB Investigation Procedure | <i>N.J.S.A. 18A:37-15b(5) and (6)(a) and (b)</i> |
| #8: HIB Reporting | <i>N.J.S.A. 18A:17-46</i> |

Indicators are listed under the core elements. Four discrete and progressive rating categories are provided for each indicator. Criteria are provided for each of the rating categories to be used to determine the appropriate rating for each indicator. SSTs must assign ratings based on the criteria and available documentation. Samples of documentation that could be used to substantiate the ratings are provided for each indicator. It is essential for school staff to maintain sufficient documentation that will substantiate its ratings on each indicator.

Each school’s Self-Assessment must be consistent with associated information and data in the district and data reports submitted to the NJDOE. In selecting a rating category on the Self-Assessment tool, each school must consider, at a minimum, the following information to verify its status regarding the indicators under each of the core elements:

- Data submitted by schools in each of the following data collection systems:
 - *Electronic Violence and Vandalism Reporting System,*
 - *Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying – Investigations, Trainings and Programs System,* and
 - *County District School System;*
- The findings from monitoring under the New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum (NJQSAC);
- The findings from investigations of complaints of noncompliance conducted by the NJDOE’s county offices of education or the Office of Fiscal Accountability and Compliance; and
- Other sources of information (e.g., student conduct referrals and dispositions, student and staff attendance, student suspensions, school climate surveys, at-risk student behavior surveys).

NOTE: Schools are not permitted to assign a rating of “meets all requirements” or “exceeds the requirements” for any indicator that has been identified as non-compliant or that is unresolved as a result of an investigation by the NJDOE. The NJDOE reserves the right to adjust the selected rating for any indicator, if the rating is inconsistent with data or information available to the NJDOE. The NJDOE will notify the district of the discrepancy, providing the district with two weeks’ notice prior to altering the school and district grade.

Submitting the School’s Self-Assessment Data

Once the Self-Assessment is completed, the district will enter each school’s ratings into a web-based form. The NJDOE anticipates opening the web-based system to collect the Self-Assessment on April 2, 2013 and will provide instructions at that time. The district may print a *Summary Report* (Appendix C) after entering the ratings prior to official submission. This will allow districts to verify that the data entry is accurate. Additionally, the *Summary Report* may be used along with the paper copy of the completed Self-Assessment to obtain public comment and BOE approval. Once the BOE approval is granted, the district will formally submit the ratings. The formal submission includes the CSA’s certification of the school’s electronically submitted ratings and the *Statement of Assurances*, including the BOE-approval date. The district will be able to print a receipt of the submission for its records.

NOTE: The ratings may not be changed once submitted. Instructions for completing the web-based form will be available upon logging into the system.

Assigning the School Grade

A point value will be assigned to each indicator based on the selected rating category as follows:

- Does not meet the requirements – 0 points
- Partially meets the requirements – 1 point
- Meets all requirements – 2 points
- Exceeds the requirements – 3 points

Each core element will receive a score based on the sum of the ratings for all indicators within a core element. (For example, School X achieved a score of 13 out of a possible 15 points for Core Element #1.) The overall grade for each school will be reported as the sum of the subtotals of the eight core elements compared to the sum of the maximum score of 75. (For example, school X achieved a total score of 55 of 75 points.)

Assigning the School District Grade

In year one, the grading for the school districts will be calculated by averaging the total scores on the Self-Assessment from all schools in the school district. The year one grading is limited to the fulfillment of only school-level requirements and will not yet reflect the status of ABR requirements that are the sole responsibility of the school district, central office officials or BOEs.

In year two and beyond, grading for school districts will include two scores:

- The overall score for the new district self-assessment tool to be provided at a later date; and
- The average of the total scores on the Self-Assessment from all schools in a school district.

Public Reporting and Review of the Grades

- The NJDOE will create *District and School Grade Reports* (Appendix D) of the district-reported ratings for each core element for each school and for the school and district grades. The grade reports will be posted in district folders on the NJDOE Homeroom page (<http://homeroom.state.nj.us/>) of the NJDOE website in a PDF format that cannot be altered. Districts will be notified when the *grade reports are* available and the procedure for accessing them.

Districts and schools are required to post the grades as follows:

- Each school must post the grade received by the school and the school district on the homepage of the school's website.
 - The school district must post the grade received by the district and each school in the school district on the homepage of the school district's website.
 - Districts and schools must post the grades on the websites within 10 days of the NJDOE notification that the grades are available.
 - Districts and schools must use the *District and School Grade Reports* (described above) for posting on the appropriate websites.
- School district officials are required to review the school and school district grades with the BOE at a public meeting. This will provide the BOE and the public with the opportunity to learn about the district's implementation of the ABR and address any concerns. This information can assist in the annual review of HIB prevention programs, approaches and other initiatives, as required in *N.J.S.A. 18A:37-17a*, and the annual review of the BOE's HIB policy, as required in *N.J.S.A. 18A:37-15c*.