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The Honorable H. Carl McCall
Comptroller
NYS Department of Audit and Control
Alfred E. Smith Office Building
Albany, NY 12236

Dear Comptroller McCall:

This is the Department's response to the State Comptroller's final audit report (98-S-34) – Monitoring Improvement Efforts of Schools With Low Standardized Test Scores.

Recommendation 1: Develop the capability to adequately determine which resource allocations and which program initiatives work most effectively and which work less effectively at improving academic performance in given school settings.

Department Follow-up: Using our current collaboration with our NYC Regional Network at the Teacher Center, we are partnering with the Center for Resource Management (CRM) at the Northeast Laboratory at Brown University. CRM has been assigned the task of developing an instrument for analyzing SED activities. This instrument will address:

- allocation of resources; and
- their impact on the improvement of academic performance in given school settings.

Recommendation 2: Ensure that all school improvement programs are evaluated independently to determine the extent to which they are effective at improving student scores on State standardized tests.

Department Follow-up: NYSED collaborated with the Teacher Centers Consortium to commission the LAB at Brown University to conduct a CSR model alignment study. The purpose of this study is to determine the degree of match between each of several CSR models being implemented in New York State and the New York State Learning Standards. A multi-chapter volume with related staff development materials would be ready for dissemination shortly.

Recommendation 3: Determine why some school improvement programs are more effective than others, and determine whether certain types of programs are likely to be more effective in certain circumstances.

Department Follow-up: In the case of districts and schools involved in Title I supported Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSR) programs, an evaluation is in process. The data derived should provide information concerning how implementation of an externally developed model may impact a comprehensive school improvement program. In addition, given the close relationship of this item to Recommendation 1, CRM will address this issue as well.

In addition, CRM will determine why some school improvement programs are more effective than others and whether certain types of programs are likely to be more effective in certain circumstances. The data derived will provide information for districts and schools concerning how certain school improvement programs may improve student achievement.

Recommendation 4: Monitor performance trends at below-standards schools, determine which schools are improving, identify the reasons for the improvement, and recommend that the effective practices be adopted at the below-standards schools where performance is not improving.

Department Follow-up: In May 2000 the Board of Regents adopted amendments to Commissioner's Regulations that require the Commissioner to identify schools that are performing below a school accountability criterion, establish adequate yearly progress targets for such schools and require schools to develop improvement plans when adequate progress is not made. The Regulations authorize the Commissioner to recognize schools that make rapid improvement. School report cards to be issued for the 2000-2001 school year will include information on performance trends in schools that are below State standards.

The Department is continuing to review its resources and partnerships to determine how best to identify the reasons for improvement and how to adopt these effective practices at the below-standards schools where it has been identified that performance is not improving.

Recommendation 5: Ensure that any revised performance data submitted by a school is either verified or appropriately documented.

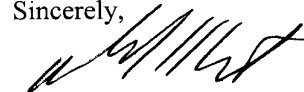
Department Follow-up: The Department continues to revise its process for verification of submitted data. The Department has submitted a request for a grant from the Governor's Technology Fund to support planned implementation of a statewide student record system. Implementation of this system will contribute to the Department's ability to verify data.

Recommendation 6: Develop a method for evaluating the performance of schools with small test populations.

Department Follow-up: In October 1998, the Regents adopted amended regulations that put in place a method using data from multiple years to evaluate schools with small test populations. Schools with small test populations will receive performance evaluations this Fall based upon their performance during the 1998-99 and 1999-2000 school years.

If you have any questions, please contact Shelia Evans-Tranumn or Ira Schwartz at (718) 722-2796.

Sincerely,



Richard H. Cate

cc: Shelia Evans-Tranumn
Ira Schwartz