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Michigan Department of Education Fulfilling State Law on Accountability

September 27, 2017

LANSING – The Michigan Department of Education is fulfilling the state law on school accountability this year and is working with the Legislature on updating that law, the department explained today.

Section 1280c of Michigan’s Revised School Code requires several things to hold schools accountable for student achievement and steer efforts for those schools to improve student achievement; as well as designating a School Reform Officer (SRO) to oversee those actions.

“Section 1280c was developed at a time when the federal government played a stronger role in each state’s school accountability system,” State Superintendent Brian Whiston said. “With a new federal law intended to give more authority back to states, it is time to re-write Michigan’s school accountability law to reflect the more locally-driven Partnership Model that is being implemented in our most struggling districts.

“I look forward to working with the Legislature and Governor on improving our state law,” Whiston said. “Until then, we will continue to comply with the current law.”

Governor Rick Snyder returned the SRO to the Michigan Department of Education earlier this year. Prior to that, the SRO resided in the Michigan Department of Technology, Management and Budget, where it had identified in January a list of 136 schools in the lowest achieving five percent of all public schools in Michigan.

The law requires that “not later than September 1 of each year, the superintendent of public instruction shall publish a list identifying the public schools in this state that the department has determined to be among the lowest achieving 5% of all public schools in this state.”

To comply with the law, the Department of Education is using the SRO’s list from January 2017 as the requisite schools identified as among the lowest achieving five percent.

State law also requires the State Superintendent to hire a state school reform/redesign officer (SRO). As the previous state reform/redesign officer, Natasha Baker, resigned to take an administrative position at a Missouri school district, Whiston currently is in the process of hiring the next School Reform Officer. That person will keep the SRO title and be the director of the department’s Office of Partnership Districts.

MDE will be updating its list of Partnership Districts, and adding more districts this fall, based on the Spring 2017 state test results.