



National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

Guidance for the 2018 Nomination Process

OMB Control Number: 1860-0506
Expiration Date: March 31, 2018

Table of Contents

Introduction 1

Requirements for the State Nomination Process 2

Eligibility Requirements Based on School Performance 2

Other National Blue Ribbon Schools Eligibility Requirements 4

State Nomination Process and Data Required for Nominating National Blue Ribbon Schools 4

Steps for Nominating National Blue Ribbon Schools 5

Questions and Concerns 7

Timeline for 2018 National Blue Ribbon Schools 8

Appendix A. 2018 National Blue Ribbon Schools State Nomination Process Template

Appendix B. Data Requirements for State Cut Scores and Performance Results for
Schools Being Considered for Nomination for NBRS Award

Nomination Process for 2018 Cohort of National Blue Ribbon Schools

Introduction

Since 1982, the U.S. Department of Education's National Blue Ribbon Schools Program (NBRS) has annually honored America's most successful public and non-public¹ elementary, middle, and high schools. The National Blue Ribbon Schools Program recognizes 1) schools whose students achieve at very high levels and 2) schools making significant progress in closing academic achievement gaps among different groups of students. The Program sets a standard of excellence for all schools striving for the highest level of academic achievement. A National Blue Ribbon Schools flag waving overhead has become a trademark of excellence, a symbol of quality recognized by everyone from parents to policy-makers in thousands of communities across the nation.

Each year, National Blue Ribbon Schools are honored at a recognition ceremony in Washington, DC. The applications from the award-winning schools are posted on the NBRS website. A small group of National Blue Ribbon Schools are also visited each year to identify educational practices that have been especially successful and promising for replication in other schools.

The purpose of this document is to:

1. Describe the requirements for the participation of states, territories, and other nominating entities in the 2017-2018 NBRS program;
2. Provide guidance to states, territories, and other nominating entities interested in submitting nomination procedures and eligible schools for consideration and nomination for national recognition; and
3. Set timelines for the activities for the 2018 cohort of schools.

The U.S. Department of Education (ED) annually invites Chief State School Officers (CSSOs) for all states and the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), and the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) to apply for recognition as National Blue Ribbon Schools. In this document, CSSOs will refer to the chief school officers for the states and for the public education entities named above. In submitting the list of nominated schools, the CSSO certifies that the schools meet the minimum requirements established by the Department for nomination. As described below, states must rely on their educational accountability and student academic assessment systems to identify schools for submission to the United States Secretary of Education. In addition to the procedures used to identify schools eligible for nomination, associated individual school data are reviewed and approved by ED prior to inviting nominated schools to apply for recognition. Awardee announcements are made after submitted school applications are reviewed and final state certification is established.

¹ Non-public schools are nominated by the Council for American Private Education (CAPE). The nomination process set forth in this document pertains solely to the nomination of public schools.

Requirements for the State Nomination Process

The number of public schools each state may nominate is based on the number of public K-12 students and schools in each state, ranging from a minimum of three schools to a maximum of 35.

At least one-third of the public schools nominated by each state must include schools with enrollments of at least 40 percent of traditionally underserved students (i.e. students from disadvantaged backgrounds). A student from a “*disadvantaged background*” is defined by the CSSO of each state. The definition must include economically disadvantaged students, that is, students who are eligible for free and reduced-price school meals, and may include students with disabilities and students who are limited English proficient, migrant, or receiving services under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015. The Department also recommends that nominated schools reflect the demographic and geographic diversity of the state’s public school-age population.

Each state’s nomination criteria must pertain equally to all public schools nominated by the state.

Eligibility Requirements Based on School Performance

In order to be eligible for nomination, a school must meet several criteria based on the performance of its students on at least the state assessments in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and possibly other measures of student performance. A school may be nominated in either of two performance award categories:

1. *Exemplary High Performing Schools*: “High performing” is defined by the CSSO of each state, but at a minimum means:
 - a. The school must be in the top 15 percent of all public schools in the state when schools are ranked on
 - i. the performance of all students who participated in the most recently administered state assessments in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics (including students tested with accommodations), or
 - ii. a composite score that includes these assessment results and may also include assessment results in other subject areas and/or other student performance measures, such as graduation rates or other indicators in the State accountability system.
 - b. For each of the school’s traditionally underserved populations (i.e. subgroups), the school must be in the top 40 percent of all public schools in the state when schools are ranked on
 - i. the performance of all students in the subgroup who participated in the most recently administered state assessments in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, or
 - ii. a composite score that includes these assessment results and may also include assessment results in other subject areas and/or other student performance measures, such as graduation rates or other indicators in the State accountability system.
 - c. For high schools, the school must be in the top 15 percent of all public high schools in the state when high schools are ranked on the most recently available graduation rate.
2. *Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools*: “Achievement gap closing” is defined by the CSSO of each state, but at a minimum means:

- a. For each of the school's subgroups, the school must be in the top 15 percent of all public schools in the state when schools are (1) ranked on the school's progress in closing the gap between the performance of the school's subgroup and the state's all-students group, (2) comparing the most recent school year in which the state assessments were administered and the school year four years prior to that, on
 - i. the state assessments in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, or
 - ii. a composite score that includes these assessment results and may also include assessment results in other subject areas and/or other student performance measures, such as graduation rates or other indicators in the State accountability system.
- b. For each of the school's subgroups, the school must be in the top 40 percent of all public schools in the state when schools are ranked on
 - i. the performance of all students in the subgroup who participated in the most recently administered state assessments in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, or
 - ii. a composite score that includes these assessment results and may also include assessment results in other subject areas and/or other student performance measures, such as graduation rates or other indicators in the State accountability system.
- c. For high schools, the school must be in the top 40 percent of all public high schools in the state when high schools are ranked on the most recently available graduation rate for each subgroup.
- d. The increase in the performance of all students in the school between the most recent school year in which the state assessments were administered and the school year four years prior to that, must not be less than the increase over the same period in the performance of all public school students in the state on
 - i. the state assessments in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, or
 - ii. a composite score that includes these assessment results and may also include assessment results in other subject areas or other student performance measures, such as graduation rates or other indicators in the State accountability system.

In addition to meeting the above performance requirements, a nominated school must – in most cases -- have at least 100 students enrolled and have assessment data for at least 10 students in each tested grade for both reading (or English language arts) and mathematics. States with a large percentage of schools with fewer than 100 students enrolled may include up to a similar percentage of these schools in their nominations. However, each school must have assessment data for at least 10 students in each tested grade for both reading (or English language arts) and mathematics.

All nominated public schools must meet the state's measures of interim progress in the state accountability system or other performance targets that are set for the school year in question in at least reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and graduation rates and possibly other academic indicators, for the all students group and all subgroups. Additionally, nominated schools must have assessment participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available, for the all students group and all subgroups. Finally, in order to meet all eligibility requirements, all nominated public schools must be certified by the state prior to September 2018 announcement of National Blue Ribbon Schools by the U. S. Secretary of Education.

Other National Blue Ribbon Schools Eligibility Requirements

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.
2. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, it must offer foreign language as a part of its curriculum.
3. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2012 and grades participating in statewide assessments must have been part of the school for at least the past three years.
4. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 or 2017.
5. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
6. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
7. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
8. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
9. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
10. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

State Nomination Process and Data Required for Nominating National Blue Ribbon Schools

The Department recognizes that states are in the process of making changes to their educational accountability systems to be in alignment with the Every Student Succeeds Act and that these changes should be allowed to play a role in how states nominate schools in the future for the National Blue Ribbon Schools award. However, since these changes will not be in place for all states until the fall of 2018, the NBRS program has decided to follow the same process used in the past two years, with some additions, for nominating schools in the fall of 2017 for the September 2018 NBRS award. The NBRS program is no longer requiring each state to submit a nomination plan, obtain approval for the plan, and then identify schools nominated on the basis of the plan. States are now required to submit for approval:

1. a description of the state's nomination process using a standard template (see Appendix A);

2. the state “cut scores”² on each measure used to rank schools in order to identify schools meeting the performance criteria described on pages 2 and 3 of this guidance;
3. names of the schools meeting those performance criteria—plus other NBRS and state eligibility criteria—which the state wishes to consider for nomination; and
4. for each school under consideration, performance data that demonstrate the school meets or exceeds the cut scores on the measures used to rank schools.

Description of State Nomination Process. As in the past two years, states must describe their procedures for determining which schools are eligible for nomination. (This process is no longer being referred to as a plan since states are being asked to describe the process they followed to identify schools they are considering for nomination based on it.) States may choose to nominate only *Exemplary High Performing Schools* or only *Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools* or both types of schools. For the fall of 2017, states are required to use the nomination process template attached to this guidance (see Appendix A). This template asks questions which are designed to assist the state in describing its procedures for ranking schools based on student performance in at least reading (or English language arts) and mathematics. States that submitted plans in the past two years in a different format are asked to transfer this information into the required template. Narrative explanations for procedural choices can be inserted in the template’s text boxes labeled “Explanation Required.”

State Cut Scores. Regardless of the procedure that each state uses to rank order schools to determine which ones meet the performance criteria for *Exemplary High Performing* or *Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools*, the performance of eligible schools must meet or exceed “cut scores” on the measures used to rank the schools. States are required to submit these cut scores with their school nomination process. A recommended template for reporting these cut scores is provided in Appendix B.

Schools Being Considered for Nomination. As explained earlier in this guidance, each state has a maximum number of schools it may nominate for the NBRS award each year. States are required to submit with their nomination process the names of schools meeting the NBRS performance criteria—plus other NBRS and state eligibility criteria—that are being considered for nomination. States may identify a few (1-5) more schools beyond their maximum number in the event that one or more schools is not approved for nomination by NBRS or the state, or if the school decides it does not wish to apply for the award.

Individual School Performance Data. To help assure the U.S. Department of Education that the schools being considered for nomination meet, at a minimum, the NBRS performance criteria, the state must provide the “scores” of each school on the measures the state used to rank schools. A recommended template for reporting these school data is provided in Appendix B.

Steps for Nominating National Blue Ribbon Schools

1. Complete the Nomination Process, State Cut Scores, and School Data Templates

States are required to complete (1) a description of their nomination process using the State Nomination Process template referenced in Appendix A, (2) state cut scores using or adapting the State Cut Scores template referenced in Appendix B, and (3) names of schools being considered for nomination with individual school performance data using or adapting the School Performance Results template. Note: States are allowed to use other formats, such as a spreadsheet, for providing state cut scores and individual school data as long as the required information is included.

There is a zip file within the liaison portal containing the following five Word templates.

² The term “cut score” is used by the NBRS program to mean the value of any school measure (e.g., a proficiency rate, graduation rate, or a composite index) that identifies the schools in the top 15 or 40 percent of schools on that measure.

Template	Filename	Notes
State Nomination Process	NomProc18.docx	Required to use.
Exemplary High Performing Schools (EHP)		
State Cut Scores	CutScrEHP18.docx	Recommended if nominating in this category.
Individual School Performance Results	SchPerfEHP18.docx	Recommended if nominating in this category, will need X number of copies depending on X number of schools considered for nomination; one form per school.
Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools (EAGC)		
State Cut Scores	CutScrEAGC18.docx	Recommended if nominating in this category.
Individual School Performance Results	SchPerfEAGC18.docx	Recommended if nominating in this category, will need X number of copies depending on X number of schools considered for nomination; one form per school.

2. *Submit State Nomination Process, Cut Scores and Schools Being Considered for Nomination to the Department*

The nomination process, state cut scores, and performance data for schools being considered for nomination need to be uploaded online through a secure portal located at [Liaison National Blue Ribbon Schools Portal](#).

The completed templates or alternate formats to be uploaded must be in PDF (preferred), Word, or Excel formats. Please name your files the same as the template with a prefix of your state initials. The table below presents the state initials as XX.

Template	Name the File	Notes
State Nomination Process	XXNomProc18	Required to upload.
Exemplary High Performing Schools (EHP)		
State Cut Scores	XXCutScrEHP18	If nominating in this category, upload one file.
Individual School Performance Results	XXSchPerfEHP18	If nominating in this category, combine all school templates into one file.
Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools (EAGC)		
State Cut Scores	XXCutScrEAGC18	If nominating in this category, upload one file.
Individual School Performance Results	XXSchPerfEAGC18	If nominating in this category, combine all school templates into one file.

3. *Approval of State Nomination Process and Considered Schools*

Nomination processes, state cut scores, and individual school performance data will be reviewed by a panel of experts. Reviewers will follow up with questions, suggestions, or comments when necessary.

4. Submitting Approved State Nominated Schools through the Online Portal

Once a state's nomination process and list of considered schools is reviewed and accepted by the Department, formal submissions of nominated schools will be made online through a secure portal located at [Liaison National Blue Ribbon Schools Portal](#). The formal submissions must include accurate contact and descriptive information and demographic data for each nominated school.

Before entering approved nominations (step 4), the Department recommends that state liaisons contact the principal of each school under consideration to confirm interest in applying for the National Blue Ribbon School award. In addition, the Department strongly recommends that state liaisons offer to review completed school applications before final submission to ensure that applications reflect the high quality expected by the CSSO and meet requirements of the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program.

Finally, the Department encourages schools and states to delay publicizing their nominations until after the Secretary's announcement of the awards.

Questions and Concerns

For any additional information regarding the National Blue Ribbon Schools program, or any questions or concerns about how states describe their nomination process or nominate schools, contact Aba Kumi, Director, National Blue Ribbon Schools Program at Aba.Kumi@ed.gov or by phone at (202) 401-1767.

Timeline for 2018 National Blue Ribbon Schools

Date	Due
September, 2017	The Secretary of Education sends a letter of invitation to the CSSOs and CAPE requesting nominations of eligible schools. Revised guidance will be attached.
September, 2017	Conduct webinar/TA conference calls to review revised guidance with liaisons.
November 30, 2017	Nomination processes and data for public schools being considered for nomination from CSSOs and interested non-public schools from CAPE are due to the Department.
December 12, 2017	Nomination processes and data for public schools being considered for nomination are reviewed by ED and a NBRS Assessment Panel for alignment with the general eligibility criteria of the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program.
December 19, 2017	Non-public school applications are due to CAPE.
January 15, 2018	Approved public school nominations are entered by states into online portal.
January 22, 2018	The Department invites public schools nominated by CSSOs to apply for recognition as National Blue Ribbon Schools.
January 29, 2018	CAPE selects non-public school nominations.
March 30, 2018	Completed public and non-public school applications are due to the Department.
April-June, 2018	Applications are reviewed for completeness, quality and accuracy.
August, 2018	States certify that nominated public schools have met all eligibility requirements.
September, 2018	The Secretary of Education announces the 2018 National Blue Ribbon Schools (public and non-public).
November, 2018	Two representatives from each school, the principal and a teacher, attend the recognition ceremony in Washington, DC.

Appendix A. 2018 National Blue Ribbon Schools State Nomination Process Template

General Instructions

This template is provided for state education agencies to submit their process for nominating public schools³ for the 2018 National Blue Ribbon Schools award. To ensure that nominated schools meet the performance requirements for *Exemplary High Performing* and/or *Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools*, as described on pages 2 and 3 of the Nomination Process Guidance a state must complete and submit this template to the U.S. Department of Education (Department).

The performance criteria require ranking schools based on student performance in at least reading (or English language arts) and mathematics so that the highest performing schools can be identified. This template presents questions designed to allow states to describe their procedures for ranking schools. All states must address the first 12 questions in this template. States that are nominating *Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools* must also address seven additional questions.

States should DOWNLOAD the template and address each question by checking the appropriate shaded boxes and providing explanatory details in the expandable shaded space provided for each question. **As indicated, states are required to provide explanatory details for each question in a text box labeled “Explanation Required.”** Any additional supporting/explanatory information beyond what is requested in the template may be submitted as an attachment to the template.

All nomination process descriptions will be reviewed by the Department and an Assessment Panel to make sure that the procedures described support the nomination of eligible public schools. Additional details describing these procedures, whether in the provided text boxes or in an attachment, will help reviewers understand the state’s nomination process.

³ Non-public schools are also eligible for the National Blue Ribbon Schools program but are nominated through a separate process by the Council for American Private Education (CAPE).

NBRS 2018 State Nomination Process

State: _____
Chief State School Officer: _____
NBRS Liaison: _____
Liaison Email: _____

For Exemplary High Performing AND Achievement Gap Closing Schools

Ranking Schools on Student Performance

Describe the general process that will be used to rank schools based on student performance in at least reading (or English language arts) and mathematics by answering the following questions.

1. What type(s) of student performance measure(s) on state assessments in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics will be used to rank schools? *[Check at least one.]*
- a. Percentage of students proficient or better
 - b. Average composite score
 - c. Other

Explanation Required *[Box will expand to accommodate text.]*

2. How will the measures of student performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics be combined in order to rank each school? *[Check one.]*
- a. Schools will be ranked separately on each subject.
 - b. Student achievement in both subjects will be combined and schools will be ranked on the total/average composite score.
 - c. Student achievement in both subjects will be combined with performance on state assessments in other subjects and/or other measures of student/school performance (e.g., graduation rates) and schools will be ranked on the total/average composite score. If additional measures are combined with state assessment data, that information must be described below.
 - d. Other

Explanation Required *[Box will expand to accommodate text.]*

3. How will schools with different grade configurations be ranked? *[Check one.]*

- a. All schools will be ranked together regardless of grade configuration
- b. Schools will be ranked within grade spans (e.g., elementary, middle, high)
[Describe in "Explanation Required" box below how schools serving multiple spans will be assigned to a single grade span or how their overall rank will be calculated based on their ranks within grade spans.]
- c. Schools will be ranked within individual grades. *[Describe in "Explanation Required" box below how the overall rank of each school will be calculated based on ranks within grades.]*
- d. Other

Explanation Required *[Box will expand to accommodate text.]*

Excluding Schools

Nominated schools must meet additional requirements (enroll at least 100 students, have state assessment results in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics for at least 10 students in each tested grade, meet the state's performance target requirements for 2016-2017 or the most recent available data, and meet the ten other eligibility requirements listed on page 4 of the Guidance. Describe when schools that do not meet these requirements will be excluded from eligibility for nomination by answering the following questions.

4. When will schools that enroll less than 100 students be excluded? *[Check one.]*

- a. Before schools are ranked
- b. After schools are ranked
- c. Not excluded – state has large percentage of schools with fewer than 100 students enrolled
- d. Other

Explanation Required for c. or d. *[Box will expand to accommodate text.]*

5. When will schools that have state assessment results in reading (or English language arts) or mathematics for less than 10 students in one or more tested grades be excluded? *[Check one.]*

- a. Before schools are ranked
- b. After schools are ranked
- c. Other

Explanation Required for c. *[Box will expand to accommodate text.]*

6. When will schools that have not met the state’s accountability performance targets in the previous year be excluded? *[Check one.]*

- a. Before schools are ranked
- b. After schools are ranked
- c. Other

Explanation Required for c. *[Box will expand to accommodate text.]*

7. When will schools that have not met the ten other eligibility requirements listed on page 4 of the Guidance be excluded? *[Check one.]*

- a. Before schools are ranked
- b. After schools are ranked
- c. Before for some requirements and after for the others
- d. Other

Explanation Required for c. or d. *[Box will expand to accommodate text.]*

If schools are excluded from eligibility for other reasons, please describe them in the box below. Please include a description of when these exclusions take place—before or after schools are ranked.

Subgroups

Nominated schools must be in the top 40 percent of schools ranked by the performance of each subgroup. Describe the subgroups, including special low-performing groups or combined subgroups, whose performance will be used to rank schools by answering the following questions.

8. What are the names of the subgroups whose performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics (or on a composite score that includes these two subject areas) will be considered in nominating schools? *[List each subgroup in the box below and describe how membership is determined for any combined or special subgroups.]*

[Box will expand to accommodate text.]

9. What is the minimum size of school subgroups for including the performance of a school's subgroup in the ranking process for that subgroup? *[Provide minimum size or check one of the two boxes.]*

- a. Minimum number of students
- b. There is no minimum number for a school's subgroup to be included in the ranking process.
- c. Other

Explanation Required for b. or c. *[Box will expand to accommodate text.]*

10. When will a school's subgroup that does not meet the minimum size requirement be excluded from the ranking process for that subgroup?

- a. Before schools are ranked
- b. After schools are ranked
- c. Other

Explanation Required for c. *[Box will expand to accommodate text.]*

Graduation Rate

High schools must also be in the top 15 percent based on graduation rate. Describe how graduation rates used to rank high schools are calculated by answering the following questions.

11. What type of graduation rate will be used? *[Check one.]*

- a. 4-year adjusted cohort rate
- b. 5-year adjusted cohort rate
- c. Other

Explanation Required for c. *[Box will expand to accommodate text.]*

12. What school year will the graduation rate data represent?

Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools

[Check one.]

The state plans to nominate *Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools*. [If checked, complete questions 13-19.]

The state does not plan to nominate any *Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools*. [If checked, do not complete questions 13-19.]

Ranking Schools on Gap Reduction

In addition to responding to Questions 1-12 above, states that plan to identify *Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools* must also calculate the gaps between the performance of each school's subgroups and the statewide performance of all students. These gaps should be calculated for the most recent school year in which the state assessments were administered and the school year four years prior to that so all schools can be ranked on the amount of gap reduction between those two school years for each subgroup. Schools nominated as *Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing* must be in the top 15 percent of gap reduction for all subgroups that meet the minimum number of students requirement described in Question 9 above.

Describe how schools will be ranked on gap reduction for each subgroup by answering the following questions.

13. Will school subgroup gaps between the performance of a school's subgroups and the statewide performance of all students be calculated for the most recent school year in which the state assessments were administered and for the school year four years prior to that?

- a. Yes
b. No

Explanation Required for b. [Box will expand to accommodate text.]

14. Will any method other than a simple difference be used to calculate the gaps between the performance of a school's subgroups and the statewide average of all students for the two years?

- a. Yes
b. No

Explanation Required for a. [Box will expand to accommodate text.]

15. When will schools with a subgroup that does not meet the minimum number of students requirement (see Question 9 above) be excluded from the gap calculations and gap reductions ranking process for that subgroup?

- a. Before school gap reductions are ranked
- b. After school gap reductions are ranked
- c. Other

Explanation Required for c. *[Box will expand to accommodate text.]*

Graduation Rate

Each high school that is in the top 15 percent of gap reduction for all its subgroups must also be in the top 40 percent based on graduation rate for each subgroup. Describe the graduation rate used to rank high schools by answering the following questions.

16. What type of graduation rate will be used? *[Check one.]*

- a. 4-year adjusted cohort rate
- b. 5-year adjusted cohort rate
- c. Other

Explanation Required for c. *[Box will expand to accommodate text.]*

17. What school year will the graduation rate data represent?

Maintaining Performance Level of All Students

The All Students group for *Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools* must also not lose ground relative to the statewide performance of all students. Therefore, for each of the schools in the top 15 percent of gap reduction for all its subgroups, the state must also calculate the difference between the performance of the school's All Students group and the statewide performance of all public school students. This difference should be calculated for the most recent school year in which the state assessments were administered and the school year four years prior to that. Any school that has lost ground relative to the statewide performance between these two years must be excluded.

Describe how schools ranked in the top 15 percent on gap reduction for all subgroups will be checked to confirm that the performance of their All Students group did not lose ground relative to the statewide performance of all students by answering the following questions.

18. Will the difference between the performance of the school's All Students group and the statewide performance for all students be calculated for the most recent school year in which the state assessments were administered and for the school year four years prior to that?

- a. Yes
- b. No

Explanation Required for b. *[Box will expand to accommodate text.]*

19. Will any method other than a simple difference be used to calculate the gap between the performance of a school's All Students group and the statewide performance of all public school students for the two years?

- a. Yes
- b. No

Explanation Required for a. *[Box will expand to accommodate text.]*

Appendix B. Data Requirements for State Cut Scores and Performance Results for Schools Being Considered for Nomination for NBRSA Award

Background

The cut scores and school performance data that states must submit with their school nomination process in the fall of 2017 depend primarily on the procedures that a state follows to identify schools that meet the performance criteria for *Exemplary High Performing Schools* and *Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools*. To assist states in determining the state cut scores and the school performance data they must submit with their school nomination process, the Department conducted an analysis of all state nomination plans submitted in the fall of 2016 for the 2017 NBRSA awards.

In the fall of 2016, most states identified *Exemplary High Performing Schools* by

- ranking public schools on their assessment results for all students in **reading and mathematics separately** and requiring nominated schools to be among the highest performing in both subject areas; or
- ranking public schools on the combination (e.g., average or sum) of their assessment results for all students in reading and mathematics and requiring nominated schools to be among the highest performing based on **reading and mathematics combined**; or
- ranking public schools on a composite (e.g., sum) of their assessment results for all students in reading and mathematics, plus assessment results in other subject areas and/or other student performance measures (e.g., graduation rates) and requiring nominated schools to be among the highest performing based on this **composite score**.

Variations on these three methods used by a few states included (a) ranking public schools on reading and mathematics separately and ranking schools again on the combination (e.g., average or sum) of these ranks, or (b) ranking public schools on reading and mathematics plus other subject areas and/or other student performance measures and requiring nominated schools to be among the highest performing for each of these subjects/measures.

In the fall of 2016, of the states that identified *Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools*, most ranked public schools on the amount of reduction in achievement gaps in reading and mathematics for each subgroup, comparing the gap in the most recent school year in which state assessments were administered to the gap in the school year four years prior to that, by following four steps:

1. calculating each school's gap (assessment results for all students in the state minus assessment results for the school's subgroup) for each subgroup in reading and mathematics for both school years;
2. calculating the reduction in each school's gap between the two school years (subtracting the gap in the most recent school year from the gap in the school years four years prior);
3. for each subgroup, ranking schools on their **gap reduction in reading and mathematics separately**; and
4. requiring nominated schools to be among the highest gap closing for each of its subgroups in both reading and mathematics.

A few states varied this procedure by calculating the improvement in assessment results between the two years for all students in the state and for each of the school's subgroups and ranking schools on the difference between the school's subgroup improvement and the improvement of all students in the state. (If a school's subgroup improves more than all students in the state, the achievement gap for the subgroup has been reduced.)

Appendix B contains instructions for strongly recommended templates for states to use for reporting their cut scores and the performance data for each considered school. This format reflects the three common methods for ranking schools for identifying *Exemplary High Performing Schools* and the most common method for ranking schools for identifying *Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools* described above. **However, the templates allow states to describe other methods for determining eligible schools based on the NBRIS performance criteria, and states may use formats for reporting cut scores or school performance data that differ from these templates as long as all of the information requested in the templates is provided (e.g., Excel spreadsheets).**

General Instructions

Regardless of the procedure that each state uses to rank order schools to determine which ones meet the performance criteria for *Exemplary High Performing* or *Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing* schools (see pages 2 and 3 of the nomination guidance), the performance of eligible schools must meet or exceed "cut scores" on the measures used to rank the schools. These cut scores are used to identify the highest performing schools or gap closing schools. In the nomination process for the 2018 National Blue Ribbon awards, states are required to submit these cut scores with the description of their school nomination process to ED. In addition, states are required to submit school performance data, the school's actual scores on the measures used to rank schools, for each considered school.

The nature and number of the cut scores and the elements of the performance data for each considered school that a state must submit depend on

- how the performance of each public school's students on state assessments of reading and mathematics is measured (e.g., proficiency rates or some other system for assigning points to different achievement levels);
- how the measures of student performance in reading and mathematics are combined to rank the schools (e.g., separate rankings in each subject, a single ranking on the total/average of these two subjects, or a single ranking on a composite score that combines student performance in both subjects with performance on state assessments in other subjects and/or other measures such as graduation rates);
- how schools with different grade configurations are ranked (e.g., all schools ranked together, schools serving different grade spans ranked separately, or schools ranked separately in each grade served);
- how many subgroups are employed by the state for meeting the performance criteria described above (see pages 2-3 of the guidance) and which of a school's subgroups meet the minimum size requirement for the state; and
- whether there are any high schools being considered, which would require graduation rate cut scores and high school graduation rates.

To illustrate how these considerations influence the reporting of state cut scores and school performance data, several examples are provided below:

Example 1

If a state required its nominated *Exemplary High Performing* schools to be in the top 15 percent based on the school's **student proficiency rates** on state assessments **separately in both** reading and mathematics, and if the state **ranked all schools together regardless of grade configuration**, there would be two school proficiency rate cut scores representing the top 15% of schools—one in reading and one in mathematics—for all students, and two more cut score representing the top 40% of schools for each subgroup the state used to rank schools. If the state included high schools in the ranking procedure, there would also be a cut score for graduation rate representing the top 15% of high schools.

Thus, if the state used three subgroups and included high schools, it would have to report nine cut scores ($2 \times (1 + 3) + 1$). And for each nominated school, the state would have to report the school's proficiency rates in reading and mathematics for all students and for each of the three subgroups meeting the state's minimum size requirement, plus the graduation rate for high schools. In other words, school results on up to nine measures would be reported. (If the school only had two subgroups, for example, that met the state's minimum size requirement, school results in reading and mathematics for the missing subgroup would not have to be reported.)

Example 2

If a state ranked schools for *Exemplary High Performing* status based on the school's average student proficiency rates in reading and mathematics **combined** (e.g., using a total or average of the performance in the two subjects), and **ranked all elementary and middle schools together and ranked high schools separately**, it would also have two cut scores—one for the reading/mathematics total or average proficiency rate for elementary/middle schools and one for high schools—representing the top 15% of schools for all students, and two more cut score representing the top 40% of schools for each subgroup the state used to rank schools. There would also be a cut score for graduation rate representing the top 15% of high schools.

Thus, if the state used two subgroups, it would have to report seven cut scores ($2 \times (1+2) + 1$). And for each nominated school, the state would have to report the school's combined proficiency rate in reading and mathematics for all students and for each of the two subgroups meeting the state's minimum size requirement, plus the graduation rate for high schools.

Example 3

If a state nominated *Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools* and, for each subgroup, ranked schools **separately for reading and mathematics** on the **reduction in the gap** between the subgroup's performance and the statewide performance of all students, comparing the most recent school year in which the state assessments were administered to the school year four years prior to that, there would be two cut scores for each subgroup—for the gap reduction in reading and mathematics—representing the top 15% of schools. There would also be two cut scores for each subgroup—for student performance in reading and mathematics in the most recent school year in which the state assessments were administered—representing the top 40% of schools. If the state included high schools in the ranking procedure, there would also be a cut score for graduation rate for each subgroup representing the top 40% of high schools. Finally, to make sure that the performance in reading and mathematics of all students in eligible gap closing schools did not lose ground relative to the performance of all students in the state, comparing the most recent school year in which state assessments were administered to the school year four years prior, the state would need to report student performance in reading and mathematics for all students in the state in

the most recent year in which state assessments were administered and in school year four years prior to that.

Thus, if the state used three subgroups and included high schools, it would have to report 15 cut scores ($2 \times (3 + 3) + 3$) plus four scores representing the performance of all students in the state in reading and mathematics for the two years. And for each nominated school, the state would have to report the school's gap reduction in reading and mathematics for each subgroup that met the minimum size requirement. It would also have to report student performance in reading and mathematics, in the most recent year in which state assessments were administered, for each of the three subgroups that met the minimum size requirement, plus student performance in reading and mathematics for all students in the school in the most recent year and four years prior, and, if it is a high school, the graduation rate for each of the three subgroups that met the minimum size requirement. In other words, school results on up to 19 measures would be reported.

To assist states in determining which state cut scores and individual school performance data they must report with their school nomination process for the 2018 NBRS award, data reporting templates are provided below. Separate templates are provided for *Exemplary High Performing Schools* and *Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools*. States are strongly urged to use these templates in providing the required information. However, **states may use reporting formats that differ from these templates as long as all of the information requested in the templates is provided.** States should DOWNLOAD the data templates and copy and customize as needed. For instance, each school being considered for nomination will need a separate school level information template filled out.

State Cut Scores Exemplary High Performing Schools

State: _____
Chief State School Officer: _____
NBRIS Liaison: _____
Liaison Email: _____

If your state is nominating *Exemplary High Performing Schools*, check the method that best describes how your state will identify schools that meet the performance criteria for this type of school. The first three methods represent those used by many states in the fall of 2016. If your state is using another method, check “Other Method” and describe it in the space provided.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><u>Reading & Mathematics Separately</u></p> <p>Schools are ranked <u>separately</u> on <u>student performance</u> (percent proficient or some other method for assigning points to achievement levels) <u>in reading and mathematics</u> on state assessments. Eligible schools must be in the top 15% for all students, and in the top 40% for each subgroup that meets the state’s minimum size, for <u>both subjects</u>. High schools are also ranked on <u>graduation rate</u> and must be in the top 15% to be eligible.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><u>Reading & Mathematics Combined</u></p> <p>Schools are ranked on <u>combined</u> (sum/average) <u>student performance</u> (percent proficient or some other method for assigning points to achievement levels) <u>in reading and mathematics</u> on state assessments. Eligible schools must be in the top 15% for all students, and in the top 40% for each subgroup that meets the state’s minimum size, for this <u>combined performance</u>. High schools are also ranked on <u>graduation rate</u> and must be in the top 15% to be eligible.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><u>Composite Score</u></p> <p>Schools are ranked on a <u>composite score</u> consisting of student performance (percent proficient or some other method for assigning points to achievement levels) in reading and mathematics on state assessments at a minimum, and may also include assessments in other subjects and/or other school performance indicators. <u>Graduation rate</u> is included in this composite score for high schools. Eligible schools must be in the top 15% for all students, and in the top 40% for each subgroup that meets the state’s minimum size, for this <u>composite score</u>.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><u>Other Method</u></p> <p>(Please replace this text with a description of how student performance is measured, how schools are ranked on the measures, and how the top-performing schools are identified. Space will expand.)</p>

For the *Exemplary High Performing Schools* being considered for nomination, provide the cut scores that identify the highest performing schools based on student performance on your state’s reading and mathematics assessments for the most recent year in which they are available and, possibly, combined with other student performance indicators. If your state is considering nominating any high schools in this category, also provide the all students graduation rate cut score based on the most recent year for which rates are available.

Depending on the method for identifying schools checked above, provide the cut scores in the column labelled “R & M Separately,” “R & M Combined,” “Composite Score,” or “Other.” States checking “Other Method” will have to label and, perhaps, modify the “Other” column to reflect their “Other Method”.

State Cut Scores for <i>Exemplary High Performing Schools</i>						
Eligibility Criteria (see p. 2-3 in the Guidance)	Cut Score	R & M Separately		R & M Combined	Composite Score	Other
		Reading	Math			
1.a	Score corresponding to 85 th percentile of schools ranked on performance of all students (top 15%)					
1.b	Score corresponding to 60 th percentile of schools ranked on performance of subgroups (top 40%)					
	Subgroup 1	Specify by typing over				
	Subgroup 2	Specify by typing over				
	Subgroup 3	Specify by typing over				
	Subgroup 4	Specify by typing over				
	Subgroup 5	Specify by typing over				
	Subgroup 6	Specify by typing over				
	Subgroup 7	Specify by typing over				
1.c	Graduation rate corresponding to 85 th percentile of high schools ranked on rate for all students (top 15%)					

State Cut Scores Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools

State: _____
Chief State School Officer: _____
NBRIS Liaison: _____
Liaison Email: _____

If your state is nominating *Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools*, check the method that best describes how your state will compute the achievement gap and identify schools that meet the performance criteria for that type of school. The first method represents the one used by most states in the fall of 2016. If your state is using another method, check “Other Method” and describe it in the space provided.

	<p><u>Reading & Mathematics Gap Reduction Separately</u></p> <p>For each subgroup, schools are ranked <u>separately for reading and mathematics</u> on the <u>reduction in the gap</u> between the subgroup’s performance and the statewide performance of all students comparing the most recent school year in which the state assessments were administered to the school year four years prior to that. Eligible schools must be in the top 15% for <u>both subjects</u> for each subgroup. In addition, schools are ranked separately on student performance in reading and mathematics for each subgroup and eligible schools must be in the top 40% for each subject and subgroup. Finally, the performance of all students in an eligible school must not lose ground relative to the performance of all students in the state in the most recent school year in which the state assessments were administered compared to the school year four years prior to that for both reading and mathematics. High schools are also ranked on <u>graduation rate</u> for each subgroup and must be in the top 40% for each subgroup to be eligible.</p>
	<p><u>Other Method</u></p> <p>(Please replace this text with a description of how performance is measured, how gaps are calculated, how schools are ranked on the measures, and how the top-performing schools are identified. Space will expand.)</p>

For the *Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools* being considered for nomination, provide the cut scores that identify the highest performing schools based on (a) the reductions in the gaps between the performance of each subgroup and all students in the school on your state’s reading and mathematics assessments, comparing the most recent school year to the school year four years prior; (b) performance of each subgroup on your state’s reading and mathematics assessments in the most recent year; and (c) the statewide performance of all students on your reading and mathematics assessments. If your state is nominating any high schools in this category, also provide the graduation rate cut score for each subgroup based on the most recent year for which rates are available.

Depending on the method for identifying schools checked above, provide the cut scores in the column labelled “R & M Separately” or “Other.” States checking “Other Method” will have to label and, perhaps, modify the “Other” column to reflect their “Other Method.”

State Cut Scores for <i>Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools</i>					
Eligibility Criteria (see p. 2-3 in the Guidance)	Cut Score		R & M Separately		Other
			Reading	Math	
2.a	Score corresponding to 85 th percentile of schools ranked on amount of gap reduction for each subgroup (top 15%)				
	Subgroup 1	Specify by typing over			
	Subgroup 2	Specify by typing over			
	Subgroup 3	Specify by typing over			
	Subgroup 4	Specify by typing over			
	Subgroup 5	Specify by typing over			
	Subgroup 6	Specify by typing over			
	Subgroup 7	Specify by typing over			
2.b	Score corresponding to 60 th percentile of schools ranked on performance of subgroups (top 40%)				
	Subgroup 1	Specify by typing over			
	Subgroup 2	Specify by typing over			
	Subgroup 3	Specify by typing over			
	Subgroup 4	Specify by typing over			
	Subgroup 5	Specify by typing over			
	Subgroup 6	Specify by typing over			

State Cut Scores for <i>Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools</i>					
Eligibility Criteria (see p. 2-3 in the Guidance)	Cut Score		R & M Separately		Other
			Reading	Math	
	Subgroup 7	Specify by typing over			
2.c	Graduation rate corresponding to 60 th percentile of high schools ranked on rate for each subgroup (top 40%)				
	Subgroup 1	Specify by typing over			
	Subgroup 2	Specify by typing over			
	Subgroup 3	Specify by typing over			
	Subgroup 4	Specify by typing over			
	Subgroup 5	Specify by typing over			
	Subgroup 6	Specify by typing over			
	Subgroup 7	Specify by typing over			
2.d	Performance of all students statewide on reading and mathematics assessments				
	in the most recent school year				
	in the school year four years prior				

School Performance Results Exemplary High Performing Schools

Name of School: _____
City/Town: _____
State: _____

Grades Served: _____
% Students from Disadvantaged Background: _____

Please provide performance results for the school based on the state’s reading and mathematics assessments from the most recent school year and, possibly, combined with other performance indicators in a composite score. Also provide performance results for the school for each subgroup that meets the state minimum size requirement. Please check the results provided to make sure that they meet or exceed each respective cut score provided in the State Cut Scores template for *Exemplary High Performing Schools*.

Depending on the method for identifying *Exemplary High Performing Schools* selected in the State Cut Scores template, provide the school’s performance results in the column labelled “R & M Separately,” “R & M Combined,” “Composite Score,” or “Other.” If using the “Other” column, label and, possibly, modify it to match the State Cut Scores template.

School Performance Results for an <i>Exemplary High Performing School</i>						
Eligibility Criteria (see p. 2-3 in the Guidance)	Student Performance Results	R & M Separately		R & M Combined	Composite Score	Other
		Reading	Math			
1.a	Performance of the school’s All Students group					
1.b	Performance of each of the school’s subgroups that meets the state minimum size requirement					
	Subgroup 1	Specify by typing over				
	Subgroup 2	Specify by typing over				
	Subgroup 3	Specify by typing over				
	Subgroup 4	Specify by typing over				
	Subgroup 5	Specify by typing over				
	Subgroup 6	Specify by typing over				
	Subgroup 7	Specify by typing over				
1.c	If a high school, graduation rate for all students					

School Performance Results Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools

Name of School: _____
City/Town: _____
State: _____

Grades Served: _____
% Students from Disadvantaged Background: _____

Please provide performance results for the school in the table below that indicate that the school has met or exceeded the gap reduction criteria used to rank and identify schools as *Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools*. Also provide performance results for the school for each subgroup that meets the state minimum size requirement, and provide performance results for the school's all students group from the most recent school year and four years prior to that. Please check the results provided to make sure that they meet or exceed each respective cut score provided in the State Cut Scores template for *Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools*.

If using the "Other" column, label and, possibly, modify it to match the State Cut Score template.

School Performance Results for an <i>Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing School</i>					
Eligibility Criteria (see p. 2-3 in the Guidance)	Student Performance Results		R & M Separately		Other
			Reading	Math	
2.a	Gap reduction for each of the school's subgroups that meets the state minimum size requirement				
	Subgroup 1	Specify by typing over			
	Subgroup 2	Specify by typing over			
	Subgroup 3	Specify by typing over			
	Subgroup 4	Specify by typing over			
	Subgroup 5	Specify by typing over			
	Subgroup 6	Specify by typing over			
	Subgroup 7	Specify by typing over			
2.b	Performance of each of the school's subgroups that meets the state minimum size requirement				
	Subgroup 1	Specify by typing over			
	Subgroup 2	Specify by typing over			

School Performance Results for an <i>Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing School</i>					
Eligibility Criteria (see p. 2-3 in the Guidance)	Student Performance Results		R & M Separately		Other
			Reading	Math	
	Subgroup 3	Specify by typing over			
	Subgroup 4	Specify by typing over			
	Subgroup 5	Specify by typing over			
	Subgroup 6	Specify by typing over			
	Subgroup 7	Specify by typing over			
	2.c	If a high school, graduation rate for each of the school's subgroups that meets the state minimum size requirement			
	Subgroup 1	Specify by typing over			
	Subgroup 2	Specify by typing over			
	Subgroup 3	Specify by typing over			
	Subgroup 4	Specify by typing over			
	Subgroup 5	Specify by typing over			
	Subgroup 6	Specify by typing over			
	Subgroup 7	Specify by typing over			
2.d	Performance of the school's All Students group on reading and mathematics assessments				
	in the most recent school year				
	in the school year four years prior				