



National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

Guidance for the 2021 Nomination Process

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Nomination Process for 2021 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 highlight educational practices that have been especially successful and promising for replication in other schools.

The purposes of this document are to

- describe the requirements for the participation of states, territories, and other nominating entities in the 2020-2021 NBRS program;
- 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
- set timelines for the activities for the 2021 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 submit a list of schools nominated to apply for recognition as National Blue Ribbon Schools.² 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.

General 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 and ranges from a minimum of three schools to a maximum of 35.

At least one-third of the public schools nominated by each state must be schools with a high percentage of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. What constitutes "disadvantaged backgrounds" is defined by the CSSO of each state. The definition may include economically disadvantaged students, that is, students

¹ Not-for-profit 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.

² In this document, CSSOs will refer to the chief school officers for the states and for these public education entities.

who are eligible for free and reduced-price school meals; students with disabilities; students who are English language learners; migrant students; and/or students receiving services under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015. “High percentage” means at least 40 percent unless a state has found that this threshold precludes identifying a sufficient number of such schools. Such a state may propose to use a percentage lower than 40 percent as long as the proposed percentage is no lower than the state’s overall (average) percentage of students from disadvantaged backgrounds as defined by the state.

Each state’s nomination criteria must pertain equally to all public schools nominated by the state. The nomination criteria for high schools include additional performance criteria based on graduation rates and measures of college and career readiness, but these criteria must pertain equally to all nominated high schools. The Department also recommends that nominated schools reasonably reflect the demographic and geographic diversity of the state’s public schools.

School Eligibility Requirements Based on Student Performance

In order to be eligible for nomination, a school must meet several criteria based on the performance of its students on state assessments in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics or a composite of performance on these assessments with other measures of student performance (e.g., student growth on state assessments, performance on state assessments in other subjects, graduation rates, or other indicators in the state’s accountability system).

Note: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, virtually no states administered assessments in the past 2019-2020 school year. Based on input from state NBRS liaisons, it appears feasible for most states to nominate additional schools based on assessment results for the 2018-2019 school year. In the performance criteria for nominating schools described below, all references to most recent state assessment results, graduation rates, measures of college and career readiness, and other measures refer to results for the 2018-2019 school year.

The performance criteria for high schools have been expanded to include a measure of college and career readiness (CCR). This measure should reflect the CCR indicator(s) for high schools in the state’s accountability system (e.g., attendance, participation/performance in advanced coursework or CTE classes or workplace learning, performance on college entry exams, postsecondary enrollment, trade school or workforce enrollment, etc.).

A school may be nominated in either of two performance award categories: *Exemplary High Performing* and *Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing*. The student performance criteria that a school must meet in order to be nominated in each of these two categories are described below.

1. **Exemplary High Performing Schools**. “High performing” is defined by the CSSO of each state, but at a minimum means that the school meets the performance criteria summarized in the following table:

Criterion	Threshold	Measure for Ranking Schools		
		Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
1a. Whole School Performance	Top 15% in the State	Reading\ELA and Math Performance Separately	Reading\ELA and Math Performance Combined	Composite Score Combining Reading\ELA, Math, and Other Measures
1b. School Subgroup Performance	Top 40% in the State for Each Subgroup	Reading\ELA and Math Performance Separately	Reading\ELA and Math Performance Combined	Composite Score Combining Reading\ELA, Math, and Other Measures
1c. High School Graduation Rate and CCR Measure	Top 15% in the State	Graduation Rate and CCR Measure Separately	Graduation Rate and CCR Measure Combined	Composite Score Combining Graduation Rate and CCR Measure with Reading/ELA, Math and Other Measures

1a. Whole School Performance. All schools are ranked³ based on the performance of all students in the school on the most recently administered state assessments in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics.⁴ The state may rank schools on these two subjects separately or rank schools on the two subjects combined (e.g., sum or average). The state may also combine performance on these assessments with other measures of student performance (e.g., student growth on state assessments, performance on state assessments in other subjects, graduation rates, or other indicators in the state’s accountability system) and rank the schools on the resulting composite score/index. Schools in the top 15 percent of each ranking for reading/ELA and mathematics (separately, combined, or as part of a composite score/index) meet the threshold for this criterion.

1b. School Subgroup Performance. For each of the state’s subgroups,⁵ all schools are ranked based on the performance of the students in that subgroup on the most recently administered state assessments in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics (separately, combined, or as part of a composite score/index). Schools in the top 40 percent of each ranking for each of their sufficiently large subgroups⁶ meet the threshold for this criterion.

1c. High School Graduation Rate and CCR Measure. All high schools are ranked based on the state’s 2018-2019 graduation rate and on the most recent measure of CCR (separately,

³ The state may rank schools based on all grades served or rank schools separately for different grade spans or grades.

⁴ This includes students tested with accommodations.

⁵ States are encouraged to nominate schools based on the performance of the subgroups included in their accountability system.

⁶ A “sufficiently large subgroup” is one that meets the minimum “n-size” for subgroups in the state’s accountability system.

combined, or as part of a composite score/index).⁷ High schools in the top 15 percent of each ranking meet the threshold for this criterion.

2. ***Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools:*** “Achievement gap closing” is defined by the CSSO of each state, but at a minimum means that the school meets the performance criteria summarized in the following table:

Criteria	Threshold	Measure for Ranking Schools		
		Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
2a. School Subgroup Improvement	Top 15% in the State for One or More Subgroups	Improvement in Reading\ELA and Math Separately	Improvement in Reading\ELA and Math Combined	Improvement in Composite Score Combining Reading\ELA, Math, and Other Measures
2b. School Subgroup Performance	Top 40% in the State for Each Subgroup	Reading\ELA and Math Performance Separately	Reading\ELA and Math Performance Combined	Composite Score Combining Reading\ELA, Math, and Other Measures
2c. High School Subgroup Graduation Rate and CCR Measure	Top 40% in the State for Each Subgroup	Graduation Rate and CCR Measure Separately	Graduation Rate and CCR Measure Combined	Composite Score Combining Graduation Rate and CCR Measure with Reading\ELA, Math and Other Measures
2d. Whole School Improvement	Equals or Exceeds Whole State Improvement	Improvement in Reading\ELA and Math Separately	Improvement in Reading\ELA and Math Combined	Improvement in Composite Score Combining Reading\ELA, Math, and Other Measures

- 2a. **School Subgroup Improvement.** For each of the state’s subgroups,⁸ all schools are ranked based on the increase in the performance⁹ of that subgroup on the most recently administered state assessments in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics (separately, combined, or as part of a composite score/index), comparing the results for the most recent school year in which the state assessments were administered to the results for the school year 2-4 years before. Schools in the top 15 percent of each ranking **for at least one of their sufficiently large subgroups**¹⁰ meet the threshold for this criterion.

⁷ If a state uses a composite in 1a that includes graduation rate and CCR measure(s) for ranking high schools, their composite scores may be identical to their composite scores used in 1c.

⁸ States are encouraged to nominate schools based on the performance of the subgroups included in their accountability system.

⁹ Three different ways for calculating the increase in performance of subgroups are described in Appendix B.

¹⁰ A “sufficiently large subgroup” is one that meets the minimum “n-size” for subgroups in the state’s accountability system.

- 2b. **School Subgroup Performance.** For each of the state’s subgroups, all schools are ranked based on the performance of the students in that subgroup on the most recently administered state assessments in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics (separately, combined, or as part of a composite score/index). Schools in the top 40 percent of each ranking **for each of their sufficiently large subgroups** meet the threshold for this criterion.
- 2c. **High School Subgroup Graduation Rate and CCR Measure.** For each of the state’s subgroups, all high schools are ranked based on the state’s graduation rate for the 2018-2019 school year and on the most recent measure of CCR (separately, combined, or as part of a composite score/index). High schools in the top 40 percent of this ranking **for each of their sufficiently large subgroups** meet the threshold for this criterion.
- 2d. **Whole School Improvement.** In order for a school to meet the threshold for this criterion, the increase in the performance of all students in the school on state assessments in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics (separately, combined, or as part of a composite score/index), comparing the results for the most recent school year in which the state assessments were administered to the results for the school year 2-4 years before, must equal or exceed the increase in the performance of all public school students in the state over the same period.

In addition to meeting the above student 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, these schools 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 goals for interim progress in the state accountability system or other performance targets that are set by the state for the school year in question in at least reading (or English language arts), mathematics, graduation rates, and possibly other academic indicators, for the all students group. 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. Finally, in order to meet all school performance eligibility requirements, all nominated public schools must be certified by the state prior to the September 2021 announcement of National Blue Ribbon Schools by the U. S. Secretary of Education.

Other Eligibility Requirements for National Blue Ribbon Schools

1. The school configuration must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
2. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2015 and grades participating in statewide assessments must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2019.
3. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, or 2020.

4. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award.
5. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
6. 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.
7. 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.
8. 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.
9. 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

States are required to submit the following nomination information for approval:

1. a description of the state's nomination process using a standard template (see Appendix A);
2. the state "cut scores"¹¹ on each measure used to rank schools in order to identify schools meeting the student performance criteria described on pages 2-5 of this guidance;
3. the names, grades served, and enrollment of the schools meeting those performance criteria—as well as other NBRS and state eligibility criteria—which the state wishes to consider for nomination; and
4. for each school under consideration, student performance data that demonstrate the school meets or exceeds the cut scores on the measures used to rank schools.

1. Description of State Nomination Process. 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 2020, 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. Narrative explanations for procedural choices can be inserted in the template's text boxes labeled "Explanation." Note: Changes have been made in this template to make it consistent with changes to the student performance criteria for nominated schools.

¹¹ 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.

2. State Cut Scores. Regardless of the procedure that each state uses to rank order schools to determine which ones meet the student 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 that operationalize the thresholds for meeting the performance criteria. States are required to submit these cut scores with the description of their school nomination process.

3. Schools Being Considered for Nomination. States are required to submit with their nomination process the names, grades served, and enrollment of schools meeting the NBRS student performance criteria (the cut scores)—as well as other NBRS and state eligibility criteria—that are 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 should identify at this stage a few (1-5) additional schools beyond their maximum number in the event that one or more schools is not approved for nomination by NBRS or the state or decides it does not wish to apply for the award.

4. Student Performance Data for Schools Being Considered for Nomination. To help assure the U.S. Department of Education that the schools being considered for nomination meet, at a minimum, the NBRS student performance criteria, the state must provide the “scores” of each school on the measures the state used to rank schools.

Recommended templates for reporting state cut scores, the names of schools being considered for nomination, and student performance data for each school are provided in Appendix B. If an alternative format is used, it must contain the information requested in the recommended templates.

Steps for Nominating National Blue Ribbon Schools

1. Complete the templates describing the state nomination process, state cut scores, and school data.

States are required to (1) complete a description of their nomination process using the required State Nomination Process template in Appendix A and (2) provide state cut scores and the names of schools being considered for nomination along with the student performance data for each school, using or adapting one of the recommended templates in Appendix B.¹²

The templates for the nomination process, state cut scores, and performance data for schools being considered for nomination need to be downloaded online through a secure portal located at [Liaison National Blue Ribbon Schools Portal](#). Separate recommended templates for cut scores and school data for *Exemplary High Performing* and *Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools* are provided in both Word and Excel formats. There is a zip file within the liaison portal containing the following five templates:

Template	Filename	Notes
State Nomination Process	nomproc21.docx	Required
Exemplary High Performing Schools (EHP)		
State Cut Scores and School Performance Results	cutserschperehp21.docx or cutserschperehp21.xlsx	Recommended if nominating schools in this category
Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools (EAGC)		
State Cut Scores and School Performance Results	cutserschpereagc21.docx or cutserschpereagc21.xlsx	Recommended if nominating schools in this category

¹² States should download the templates from the Liaison National Blue Ribbon Schools Portal.

2. *Submit state nomination process, state cut scores, and data for schools being considered for nomination to the Department.*

The description of the nomination process (using the required template) and the state cut scores, and performance data for schools being considered for nomination (using or based on the recommended templates) need to be uploaded online through the 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 (see above) with a prefix of your state initials. The table below presents the state initials as XX.

Template	Name the File	Notes
State Nomination Process	xxnomproc21	Required to upload.
Exemplary High Performing Schools (EHP)		
State Cut Scores and School Performance Results	xxcutscrschperehp21	If nominating schools in this category, upload one file.
Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools (EAGC)		
State Cut Scores and School Performance Results	xxcutscrschpereagc21	If nominating schools in this category, upload one file.

3. *Receive 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. *Submit 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 the secure [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 in this step, 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 schools submit the final version of their applications to ensure that they 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.

To assist states in the completion of this nomination process a checklist document can be found on the liaison portal.

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 2021 National Blue Ribbon Schools

Date	Due
September, 2020	The Secretary of Education sends a letter of invitation to the CSSOs and CAPE requesting eligible schools.
October, 2020	Conduct webinar/TA conference calls to review guidance and application with liaisons.
October 30, 2020	Pre-registrations of non-public schools are due.
December 31, 2020	Nomination processes and data for public schools being considered for nomination from CSSOs are due to the Department.
January 6, 2021	Hard copy of non-public school applications and assessment results are due to CAPE.
January 11-15, 2021	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.
February 3, 2021	Approved public school nominations are entered by states into online portal.
February 8, 2021	The Department invites public schools nominated by CSSOs to apply for recognition as National Blue Ribbon Schools.
February 19, 2021	CAPE selects non-public school nominations.
April 9, 2021	Completed public and non-public school applications are due to the Department.
April-June, 2021	Applications are reviewed for completeness, quality, and accuracy.
August, 2021	States certify that nominated public schools have met all eligibility requirements.
September, 2021	The Secretary of Education announces the 2021 National Blue Ribbon Schools (public and non-public).
November, 2021	Two representatives from each school, the principal and a teacher, attend the recognition ceremony in Washington, DC.

Appendix A

2021 NBRBS State Nomination Process Template

General Instructions

This template¹³ is provided for state education agencies to submit a description of their process for nominating public schools¹⁴ for the 2021 National Blue Ribbon Schools award. To ensure that nominated schools meet the student performance requirements for *Exemplary High Performing* and/or *Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools*, as described on pages 2-5 of the Nomination Process Guidance, a state must complete and submit this template to the U.S. Department of Education (Department). Because this template contains some changes from last year, states that made no changes in their nomination process should still complete the revised template for this year.

The performance criteria require ranking schools based on student performance in at least reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, or a composite of performance on these assessments with other measures of student performance, 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 (as described on page 6 of the guidance) and address each question by checking the appropriate boxes and providing explanatory details in the expandable space provided for each question. **As indicated, states are required to provide explanatory details for certain response choices for each question in a text box labeled “Explanation (required for ...).”** Explanatory details for the other response choices are optional. Any lengthy 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.

¹³ This template is provided here for illustration only. States should download this template from the Liaison National Blue Ribbon Schools Portal.

¹⁴ 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 2021 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 measure(s) of student performance on state assessments will be used in the process of ranking schools? *[Check all that apply.]*

- a. Percentage of students proficient or better
- b. Scale scores
- c. Student growth scores
- d. Other

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Explanation (required for "d") *[Box will expand to accommodate text.]*

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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 student performance in each subject.
- b. Student performance in both subjects will be combined and schools will be ranked on the total/average score.
- c. Student performance in both subjects will be combined with other measures of student performance (e.g., student growth on state assessments, performance on state assessments in other subjects, graduation rates, or other indicators in the state accountability system) and schools will be ranked on the total/average composite score. Describe these other measures below.
- d. Other

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Explanation (required for "c" and "d") *[Box will expand to accommodate text.]*

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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" 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" box below how the overall rank of each school will be calculated based on ranks within grades.]* ☐
- d. Other ☐

Explanation (required for "b", "c", and "d") *[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 2018-2019 or the most recent available data, and meet the nine other eligibility requirements listed beginning 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" and "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 nine 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" and "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

The student performance criteria for nominated schools include the performance of sufficiently large subgroups (meeting the state's minimum size requirement for accountability). Describe the 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? (These are the subgroups for which state cut scores and school data are to be provided as requested in Appendix B of the guidance.) *[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 requiring the performance of a school's subgroup to meet student performance criteria for subgroups? *[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 nomination process.
- c. Other

Explanation (required for "b" and "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 and CCR Measure for High Schools

Describe how graduation rates and CCR measures 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

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Explanation (required for "c") *[Box will expand to accommodate text.]*

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

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13. Is this the most recent year high school graduation rates are available?

- a. Yes
- b. No

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Explanation (required for "b") *[Box will expand to accommodate text.]*

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14. Identify or describe the indicators that make up the measure of college and career readiness (CCR).

[Box will expand to accommodate text.]

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15. How will graduation rate and the measure of CCR be combined in order to rank each high school?
[Check one.]

- a. High schools will be ranked separately on graduation rate and CCR.
- b. Graduation rate and CCR will be combined and high schools will be ranked on the total/average score.
- c. Graduation rate and CCR will be combined with reading/ELA, math and other measures of student performance in the state accountability system and high schools will be ranked on the total/average composite score. Describe these other measures below.
- d. Other

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Explanation (required for "c" and "d") *[Box will expand to accommodate text.]*

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For Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools

[Check one.]

The state plans to nominate *Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools*. [If checked, complete questions 16-20.] ☐

The state does not plan to nominate any *Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools*. [If checked, do not complete questions 16-20.] ☐

Ranking Schools on Subgroup Improvement

States that wish to identify *Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools* must rank schools on the basis of the improvement in the performance of each subgroup, comparing the results for the most recent school year in which the state assessments were administered and the school year 2-4 years before. Describe how schools will be ranked on improvement in the performance of each subgroup by answering the following questions.

16. From which two school years will state assessment results (and other measures if using a composite score) be used to calculate improvements in subgroup performance?

The most recent school year
The school year 2-4 years before

Explanation (Required if most recent year is not 2018-2019) [Box will expand.]

17. What method will be used to measure improvement in subgroup performance in reading and mathematics (or a composite score)? (See pages 1-2 in Appendix B of the guidance for a description of these methods.) [Check one.]

a. Gap Reduction ☐
b. Subgroup versus Statewide Improvement ☐
c. Subgroup Improvement ☐
d. Other ☐

Explanation (required for "d") [Box will expand to accommodate text.]

18. When will schools with a subgroup that does not meet the minimum size requirement (see Question 9 above) be excluded from the ranking process for school improvements in the performance of that subgroup?

- a. Before school improvements are ranked
- b. After school improvements are ranked
- c. Other

Explanation (required for "c") [Box will expand to accommodate text.]

--

Maintaining Performance Level of All Students

Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools must also not lose ground relative to the statewide performance of all students over the same period that improvements in subgroup performance are calculated. Therefore, the state must also calculate the improvement in performance of a nominated school's **All Students** group and the improvement in performance of **all public school students statewide** on state assessment results in reading/ELA and math (and other measures if using a composite score). This improvement should be calculated comparing the results for the most recent school year in which the state assessments were administered and the school year 2-4 years before. Any school whose All Students group has improved less than the statewide performance of all public school students between these two years does not qualify for nomination.

Describe how schools being considered for nomination as an *Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing School* will be checked to confirm that the performance of their All Students group did not lose ground relative to the statewide performance of all public school students by answering the following questions.

19. Will the difference between the performance of the school's All Students group and the statewide performance of all public school students statewide be calculated for the most recent school year in which the state assessments were administered and for the school year 2-4 years before (as described in Question 16)?

- a. Yes
- b. No

Explanation (required for "b") [Box will expand to accommodate text.]

--

20. 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 statewide for these two years?

a. Yes

b. No

Explanation (required for "a") *[Box will expand to accommodate text.]*

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Appendix B

Data Requirements for State Cut Scores and Performance Results for Schools Being Considered for Nomination for the 2021 NBRs Award

In addition to the description of their school nomination process (Appendix A), states are required to submit to ED the “cut scores” on the measures used to rank schools that identify the highest performing schools along with the results of these measures for all schools considered for nomination. The cut scores and school results that states must submit with their school nomination process in the fall of 2020 will be used to confirm that the state has identified schools that meet the student performance criteria for *Exemplary High Performing Schools* and/or *Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools* (described on pages 2-5 of the guidance). The following information is provided to assist states in determining the state cut scores and the school results they must submit.

Methods for Identifying Schools Meeting Performance Criteria

Identifying either *Exemplary High Performing Schools* or *Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools* that meet these performance criteria begins with choosing a method for ranking all schools based on student performance on state assessments in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and, possibly, combined with other student performance measures. These methods include ranking schools on

- student performance on state assessments in **reading and mathematics separately** and requiring nominated schools to be among the highest performing in both subject areas;
- the combination (e.g., sum or average) of student performance on state assessments in reading and mathematics and requiring nominated schools to be among the highest performing based on **reading and mathematics combined**; or
- the composite (e.g., sum or average) of student performance on state assessments in reading and mathematics plus other student performance measures (e.g., student growth on state assessments, performance on state assessments in other subjects, graduation rates, or other indicators in the state’s accountability system) and requiring nominated schools to be among the highest performing based on this **composite score/index**.

States are asked in Question 2 of the nomination process template (Appendix A) to identify which method was used for combining measures of student performance in order to rank schools. If a state feels that its method cannot be categorized as one of these three methods, it may indicate “Other” and provide a description in Question 2.

States that identify *Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools* may use one of three methods to measure the improvement in student performance in reading and mathematics (or a composite score/index) for each subgroup identified in Question 8 of the nomination process template (Appendix A):

Gap Reduction. For each school, calculate the gap between the performance of all students in the state and the performance of each subgroup in the school in reading and mathematics (or a composite score/index) for the most recent school year and the school year 2-4 years before. Calculate 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 2-4 years before). For each subgroup, rank schools on their gap reduction in reading and mathematics separately, reading and mathematics combined, or on a composite score/index (as indicated in Question 2 of the nomination process template in Appendix A).

Subgroup versus Statewide Improvement. For each school, calculate the improvement in performance of each of the school’s subgroups in reading and mathematics (or a composite score/index), comparing the most recent school year and the school year 2-4 years before. For each school, calculate the difference between each subgroup’s improvement and the improvement of all students in the state over the same time period. For each subgroup, rank schools on this difference for reading and mathematics separately, reading and mathematics combined, or on a composite score/index (as indicated in Question 2 of the nomination process template in Appendix A).

Subgroup Improvement. For each school, calculate the improvement in performance of each of the school’s subgroups in reading and mathematics (or a composite score/index), comparing the most recent school year and the school year 2-4 years before. For each subgroup, rank schools on the subgroup’s improvement in performance in reading and mathematics separately, reading and mathematics combined, or on a composite score/index (as indicated in Question 2 of the template in Appendix A).

States that identify *Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools* are asked to identify which of these three methods was used for measuring the improvement in student performance in Question 17 of the nomination process template (Appendix A). If a state feels that its method cannot be categorized as one of these three methods, it may indicate “Other” and provide a description in Question 17.

Submitting State Cut Scores and School Performance Data

States identifying schools that meet the student performance criteria for *Exemplary High Performing Schools* must determine the cut scores on the student performance measure used to rank all schools (as described in Questions 1 and 2 of the nomination process template in Appendix A). These states must submit the cut scores that identify

- the top 15 percent of schools based on the performance of all students; and
- the top 40 percent of schools based on the performance of students in each subgroup identified in Question 8 of the nomination process template (Appendix A).

If identifying any high schools, these states must also submit the graduation rate cut score that identifies

- the top 15 percent of high schools based on the school’s graduation rate and CCR measure (separately, combined, or as part of a composite score/index).

For each school that is identified as a potential *Exemplary High Performing School*, the state must submit school results on the student performance measure(s) for which the state has provided cut scores:

- the performance of all students;
- the performance of each subgroup that is sufficiently large¹⁵; and
- for high schools, the school’s graduation rate and CCR measure.

States identifying schools that meet the student performance criteria for *Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools* must determine the cut scores on the subgroup improvement measure used to rank all schools (as described in Questions 1, 2, and 17 of the nomination process template in Appendix A). These states must submit the cut scores that identify

¹⁵ A “sufficiently large subgroup” is one that meets the minimum “n-size” for subgroups in the state’s accountability system.

- the top 15 percent of schools based on the improvement of each subgroup identified in Question 8 of the nomination process template (Appendix A); and
- the top 40 percent of schools based on the performance of each of these subgroups in the most recent school year.

If identifying any high schools, these states must also submit the graduation rate and CCR measure cut scores that identify

- the top 40 percent of high schools for each subgroup based on the subgroup's graduation rate and CCR measure.

States identifying *Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools* must also submit the

- the overall (average) improvement in performance (as described in Questions 18 and 19 of the nomination process template in Appendix A) of all students in the state, comparing the most recent school year and the school year 2-4 years before.

For each school that is identified as a potential *Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing School*, the state must submit school results on the improvement and performance measure(s) for which the state has provided cut scores:

- the improvement of each subgroup that is sufficiently large, comparing the most recent school year and the school year 2-4 years before (**one or more subgroups must meet the cut score threshold**);
- the performance of each of these subgroups in the most recent school year;
- the graduation rate and CCR measure for each of these subgroups; and.
- the improvement in performance of all students in the school, comparing the most recent school year and the school year 2-4 years before.

To assist states in reporting state cut scores and individual school results, sample templates¹⁶ are provided below. States are strongly urged to use these templates in providing the required information. **However, states may use formats for reporting cut scores or school results that differ from these templates as long as all of the information requested in the templates is provided.** States should download these templates, the Word or Excel format as preferred, from the [Liaison National Blue Ribbon Schools Portal](#) and copy and customize as needed.

¹⁶ These templates are provided here for illustration only. States should download these templates from the Liaison National Blue Ribbon Schools Portal.

NBRS State Cut Scores and School Results - High Performing Schools

Page 1

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

Does your state wish to lower below 40 percent the minimum percentage of students from a “disadvantaged background” that must be met by at least one-third of its nominated schools?

☐

Yes

☐

No

If yes, based on your state’s definition of “disadvantaged background,” what was the state’s overall percentage of students from a disadvantaged background during the same year? If no, leave blank.

Which method was used to rank schools as indicated in the response to Question 2 on the State Nomination Process template?

☐

Reading and Math Separately

☐

Reading and Math Combined

☐

Composite Score/Index

☐

Other

Which method was used to rank high schools as indicated in the response to Question 15 on the State Nomination Process template?

☐

Grad Rate and CCR Separately

☐

Grad Rate and CCR Combined

☐

Composite Score/Index

☐

Other

List the subgroups identified in the response to Question 8 on the State Nomination Process template.

Subgroup 1: _____

Subgroup 6: _____

Subgroup 2: _____

Subgroup 7: _____

Subgroup 3: _____

Subgroup 8: _____

Subgroup 4: _____

Subgroup 9: _____

Subgroup 5: _____

Report subgroup cut scores and school results according to the subgroup number in the above list in the table beginning on page 3. If school results for a subgroup are not available because the subgroup is too small, enter "NA."

NBRS State Cut Scores and School Results - High Performing Schools

Page 2

State: _____

For each school being considered for nomination as an Exemplary High Performing School, provide the name, grades served, enrollment, and the percentage of students from disadvantaged backgrounds (based on your state's definition of "disadvantaged background").

	School Name	Grades Served	Enrollment	% Disadv		School Name	Grades Served	Enrollment	% Disadv
School 1:					School 19:				
School 2:					School 20:				
School 3:					School 21:				
School 4:					School 22:				
School 5:					School 23:				
School 6:					School 24:				
School 7:					School 25:				
School 8:					School 26:				
School 9:					School 27:				
School 10:					School 28:				
School 11:					School 29:				
School 12:					School 30:				
School 13:					School 31:				
School 14:					School 32:				
School 15:					School 33:				
School 16:					School 34:				
School 17:					School 35:				
School 18:									

For all schools being considered for nomination as an Exemplary High Performing School, enter state cut scores and results for performance criteria 1.a and 1.b in the table beginning on page 3. Use two columns if the ranking method is "Reading and Math Separately," reporting reading/ELA scores in the left column and math scores in the right column. If the ranking method is "Reading and Math Combined" or "Composite Score/Index," report scores in the right column only. **For high schools only**, enter state cut scores and results for performance criterion 1.c. Use two columns if the ranking method is "Graduation Rate and CCR Measure Separately," reporting graduation rates in the left column and CCR scores in the right column. If the ranking method is "Graduation Rate and CCR Measure Combined" or "Composite Score/Index," report scores in the right column only.

NBRS State Cut Scores and School Results - High Performing Schools

Page 3

State: _____

	Performance Criteria (see pages 2-3 in Guidance)																					
	FOR ALL SCHOOLS																				HS ONLY	
	1.a Top 15%		1.b Top 40%																		1.c Top 15%	
	All Students		Subgroup 1		Subgroup 2		Subgroup 3		Subgroup 4		Subgroup 5		Subgroup 6		Subgroup 7		Subgroup 8		Subgroup 9		Grad/CCR	
State Cut Scores																						
School 1																						
School 2																						
School 3																						
School 4																						
School 5																						
School 6																						
School 7																						
School 8																						
School 9																						
School 10																						
School 11																						
School 12																						
School 13																						
School 14																						
School 15																						
School 16																						
School 17																						
School 18																						
School 19																						
School 20																						

If there are more than 20 schools, enter their results on page 4. State cut scores can be copied and pasted.

NBRS State Cut Scores and School Results - High Performing Schools

State: _____

	Performance Criteria (see pages 2-3 in Guidance)																					
	FOR ALL SCHOOLS																				HS ONLY	
	1.a Top 15%		1.b Top 40%																		1.c Top 15%	
	All Students		Subgroup 1		Subgroup 2		Subgroup 3		Subgroup 4		Subgroup 5		Subgroup 6		Subgroup 7		Subgroup 8		Subgroup 9		Grad/CCR	
State Cut Scores																						
School 21																						
School 22																						
School 23																						
School 24																						
School 25																						
School 26																						
School 27																						
School 28																						
School 29																						
School 30																						
School 31																						
School 32																						
School 33																						
School 34																						
School 35																						

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NBRS State Cut Scores and School Results – Achievement Gap Closing Schools

Page 1

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

Does your state wish to lower below 40 percent the minimum percentage of students from a “disadvantaged background” that must be met by at least one-third of its nominated schools?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, based on your state’s definition of “disadvantaged background,” what was the state’s overall percentage of students from a disadvantaged background during the same year? If no, leave blank.

Which method was used to rank all schools as indicated in the response to Question 2 on the State Nomination Process template?

- ☐ Reading and Math Separately
- ☐ Reading and Math Combined
- ☐ Composite Score/Index
- ☐ Other

Which method was used to rank high schools as indicated in the response to Question 15 on the State Nomination Process template?

- ☐ Grad Rate and CCR Separately
- ☐ Grad Rate and CCR Combined
- ☐ Composite Score/Index
- ☐ Other

List the subgroups identified in the response to Question 8 on the State Nomination Process template.

Subgroup 1: _____	Subgroup 6: _____
Subgroup 2: _____	Subgroup 7: _____
Subgroup 3: _____	Subgroup 8: _____
Subgroup 4: _____	Subgroup 9: _____
Subgroup 5: _____	

Report subgroup cut scores and school results according to the subgroup number in the above list in the table beginning on page 3a. If school results for a subgroup are not available because the subgroup is too small, enter "NA."

NBR State Cut Scores and School Results – Achievement Gap Closing Schools

Page 2

State: _____

For each school being considered for nomination as an Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing School, provide the name, grades served, enrollment, and the percentage of students from disadvantaged backgrounds (based on your state's definition of "disadvantaged background").

	School Name	Grades Served	Enrollment	% Disadv		School Name	Grades Served	Enrollment	% Disadv
School 1:					School 19:				
School 2:					School 20:				
School 3:					School 21:				
School 4:					School 22:				
School 5:					School 23:				
School 6:					School 24:				
School 7:					School 25:				
School 8:					School 26:				
School 9:					School 27:				
School 10:					School 28:				
School 11:					School 29:				
School 12:					School 30:				
School 13:					School 31:				
School 14:					School 32:				
School 15:					School 33:				
School 16:					School 34:				
School 17:					School 35:				
School 18:									

For all schools being considered for nomination as an Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing School, enter state cut scores and results for performance criteria 2.a, 2.b, and 2.d on pages 3a, 3b, and 3c (last column), respectively. Use two columns if the ranking method is "Reading and Math Separately," reporting reading/ELA scores in the left column and math scores in the right column. If the ranking method is "Reading and Math Combined" or "Composite Score/Index," report scores in the right column only. **For high schools only**, enter state cut scores and results for performance criterion 2.c on page 3c. Use two columns if the ranking method is "Graduation Rate and CCR Measure Separately," reporting graduation rates in the left column and CCR scores in the right column. If the ranking method is "Graduation Rate and CCR Measure Combined" or "Composite Score/Index," report scores in the right column only.

NBR State Cut Scores and School Results – Achievement Gap Closing Schools

Page 3a

State: _____

Performance Criteria (see pages 4-5 in Guidance)																	
FOR ALL SCHOOLS																	
2.a																	
Top 15% (Based on Improvement)																	
Subgroup 1		Subgroup 2		Subgroup 3		Subgroup 4		Subgroup 5		Subgroup 6		Subgroup 7		Subgroup 8		Subgroup 9	
State Cut Scores (Improvement)																	
School 1																	
School 2																	
School 3																	
School 4																	
School 5																	
School 6																	
School 7																	
School 8																	
School 9																	
School 10																	
School 11																	
School 12																	
School 13																	
School 14																	
School 15																	
School 16																	
School 17																	
School 18																	
School 19																	
School 20																	

If there are more than 20 schools, enter their results on page 4a. State cut scores can be copied and pasted.

NBRS State Cut Scores and School Results – Achievement Gap Closing Schools

Page 3b

State: _____

		Performance Criteria (see pages 4-5 in Guidance)																	
		FOR ALL SCHOOLS																	
		2.b																	
		Top 40% (Based on Performance in Most Recent School Year)																	
		Subgroup 1		Subgroup 2		Subgroup 3		Subgroup 4		Subgroup 5		Subgroup 6		Subgroup 7		Subgroup 8		Subgroup 9	
State Cut Scores (Performance)																			
School 1																			
School 2																			
School 3																			
School 4																			
School 5																			
School 6																			
School 7																			
School 8																			
School 9																			
School 10																			
School 11																			
School 12																			
School 13																			
School 14																			
School 15																			
School 16																			
School 17																			
School 18																			
School 19																			
School 20																			

If there are more than 20 schools, enter their results on page 4b. State cut scores can be copied and pasted.

NBR State Cut Scores and School Results – Achievement Gap Closing Schools

Page 3c

State: _____

		Performance Criteria (see pages 4-5 in Guidance)																			
		FOR HIGH SCHOOLS ONLY																	FOR ALL SCHOOLS		
		2.c																	2.d		
		Top 40% (Based on Graduation Rate and CCR Measure)																	Impr. of All Students		
		Subgroup 1		Subgroup 2		Subgroup 3		Subgroup 4		Subgroup 5		Subgroup 6		Subgroup 7		Subgroup 8		Subgroup 9			
State Cut Scores																					
School 1																					
School 2																					
School 3																					
School 4																					
School 5																					
School 6																					
School 7																					
School 8																					
School 9																					
School 10																					
School 11																					
School 12																					
School 13																					
School 14																					
School 15																					
School 16																					
School 17																					
School 18																					
School 19																					
School 20																					

If there are more than 20 schools, enter their results on page 4c. State cut scores can be copied and pasted.

NBRS State Cut Scores and School Results – Achievement Gap Closing Schools

State: _____

[illegible]

NBRS State Cut Scores and School Results – Achievement Gap Closing Schools

State:

[illegible]

NBRS State Cut Scores and School Results – Achievement Gap Closing Schools

Page 4c

State:

[illegible]