

Attachment C
**ALIGNING CALIFORNIA SCHOOL AND STAFF RECOGNITION AWARDS
TO THE STATE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM**

Current state law provides for awards, both monetary and non-monetary, to schools that meet their Academic Performance Index (API) targets. The monetary awards programs include the *Governor's Performance Award Program* and the *Certificated Staff Performance Incentive Act Program*, although neither program is funded in the current year. Non-monetary programs include the state *California School Recognition Program (CSRP)*, the *National Blue Ribbon Schools Program*, and the state/federal *Achieving Schools Program*.

The *Governor's Performance Award Program* provides money to award winning schools on the basis of the number of eligible students at the school (up to a maximum of \$150 per student). Eligibility is determined by the school and all its significant subgroups meeting their API growth target and participation rates. The *Certificated Staff Performance Incentive Act Program* provides money to certificated staff in award winning schools in an amount up to \$25,000 per certificated staff member. Eligibility is determined by the school meeting the requirements of the *Governor's Performance Award* in addition to having to demonstrate two consecutive years of API growth and the school must be in the lower half of the statewide distribution of API scores. These eligibility criteria for these two award programs are being modified to reflect the federal AYP criteria prescribed under the No Child Left Behind Act. The new eligibility criteria will generally include all schools in the upper half of the statewide distribution that have also met their school-wide targets and subgroup targets.

Since California has well-established program of awards, realignment will require extensive legislative and regulatory changes. Necessary changes in state law and regulation should be completed by October 2003.

The *California School Recognition Program* was created in 1985 to identify and honor the state's most exemplary and inspiring public schools, as well as to communicate and reinforce the educational priorities of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and the State Board of Education. It was redesigned in 1990 to become an integral part of the state Accountability System when the Public Schools Accountability Act was implemented. The recognition program includes Distinguished School awards and the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program.

Although participation in the recognition program is voluntary, competition for the California *Distinguished School* award is heavy by schools in all areas of the state. In order to apply for recognition in the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program, schools must first be selected as California Distinguished Schools. Also part of the state accountability system is the *Achieving Schools Program*, which is restricted to those schools that receive Title I funding and whose student populations meet federal poverty requirements. However, Title I schools that also meet statewide eligibility criteria may also apply for CSRP, and many do so successfully. Typically 25% of Distinguished School award winners receive Title I funding.

Eligibility for participation in the CSRP has historically been determined by a school's level of academic achievement as measured by statewide assessment measures. For the past three years

eligibility has been determined by API results, focusing on statewide decile rank, attainment of a state-determined growth target, and comparable performance of numerically significant student population subgroups. These eligibility criteria, as well as those for the *Achieving Schools* Program, are also being modified to reflect the federal AYP criteria prescribed under the No Child Left Behind Act. The new eligibility criteria will generally include all schools in the upper half of the statewide distribution that have also met their school-wide targets and subgroup targets.

Distinguished School Selection Process

In order to be selected to receive a *School Recognition Program* award, eligible schools participate in a rigorously competitive selection process conducted by the California Department of Education in collaborative partnership with the California County Superintendents Educational Services Association. The application process provides research-based criteria that all schools can use to conduct a self-assessment that requires the involvement of the entire school community in a common school improvement project. The qualitative criteria for school selection are designed to reflect the consensus of the education community regarding quality education by incorporating the major themes of state and national policies and research related to school reform. The criteria focus on all areas of the school's educational program so that those selected are strong, well-rounded community schools that strive to serve all students so that they may be academically successful.

Applications are evaluated by teams of local educators from across the state under the direction of the CDE. Evaluators use a four-level rubric that describes progress toward achieving each of the criteria. The highest-scoring schools are selected as statewide nominees. The nominees must receive a site visit to validate the accuracy of the information presented in their application. The site visits are conducted as a collaborative effort between the CDE and the county superintendents of schools. Any statewide nominee may be rejected for recognition if a site visit indicates that the application is not an accurate representation of the school. All nominees may be selected if the site visits are successful.

Schools selected for recognition are honored as *Distinguished Schools* at a statewide awards ceremony where the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and the President of the State Board of Education present each school principal with a plaque and special flag. The event and awards are funded by donations from many of California's most prominent corporations and statewide education organizations.