
State Identified Reward, Priority and Focus Schools

The Background:

In February 2012, Tennessee obtained a waiver from certain provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Although Tennessee's accountability system is focused on the district level, we also identify three types of schools as required by the U.S. Department of Education under our waiver.

Reward Schools

Reward Schools are made up of the top 5 percent of schools in the state for performance—as measured by overall student achievement levels—and the top 5 percent for year-over-year progress—as measured by growth in student achievement. These 10 percent of schools receive recognition for their success, and we aim to learn from their successes.

To identify Reward schools for performance, the most recent year of data will be used for the following indicators: 3-8 Math, 3-8 Reading/Language Arts, 3-8 Science, Algebra I, Algebra II, English I, English II, English III, Biology I, Graduation Rate, and the one-year school level composite for TVAAS. A reward success rate is calculated for each school:

Proficient/Advanced Students in Math + Reading/Language Arts + Science + Algebra I + Algebra II + English I + English II + English III + Biology + # HS Graduates

Tested Scores in Math + Reading/Language Arts + Science + Algebra I + Algebra II + English I + English II + English III + Biology + # Students in the HS Graduation Cohort

To identify Reward schools for progress the top five percent of schools are selected based on their one-year school level composite for TVAAS. There are some reward exemptions: Schools cannot be identified as reward schools and must be excluded if:

- 1) Achievement gaps are larger than the median gap for all schools in the state for any subgroup and
- 2) Achievement gaps have widened from the prior year for any subgroup.

Priority Schools

Priority Schools are schools in the bottom 5 percent of the state in overall performance. These schools will receive one of four types of supports:

- Placement in the state-run Achievement School District
- Turnaround through a district-led Innovation Zone

- Turnaround through an approved School Improvement Grant model and plan
- District-led school improvement planning processes, subject to direct ASD intervention in the absence of improved results

To identify Priority schools, a three year success rate is calculated for each school using the same formula as previously noted for Reward Schools:

Proficient/Advanced Students in Math + Reading/Language Arts + Science + Algebra I + Algebra II + English I + English II + English III + Biology + # HS Graduates

Tested Scores in Math + Reading/Language Arts + Science + Algebra I + Algebra II + English I + English II + English III + Biology + # Students in the HS Graduation Cohort

Focus Schools

Focus schools are the 10 percent of schools across the state with the largest achievement gaps between groups of students. This designation does not indicate low overall achievement levels. In fact, focus schools may be high-performing schools that are working to close gaps between groups of students.

Focus schools can be identified for one of the following reasons:

1. Graduation rate under sixty percent
2. Any subgroup with a success rate below ten percent
3. Largest within school gaps between comparison groups

There are some exemptions that prevent a school from being identified as Focus. Schools that are exempt through the following pathways cannot be identified as Focus.

- Performance: One year Success Rate of every eligible subgroup in a school is at, or above the one year State Success Rate for that subgroup of students.
- Growth: School's Success Rate for a particular subgroup has increased more between the current year and the previous year than the State Success Rate and the increase is greater than 0 for the corresponding subgroup.
- Gap: All eligible subgroups have reduced their one year gap by 6.25 percent or more from the previous year to the current year.

Timeline

Reward, Priority, and Focus lists were first identified in summer 2012, as part of Tennessee's approved ESEA Flexibility waiver. Reward schools are named each year, based on the results from the immediate prior school year. Priority and Focus designations last for three years, so the 2012 Priority and Focus schools will remain in that status through the 2014-15 school year. The new set of 2015 Priority and Focus schools are being identified in summer 2014 to allow for a one-year planning period before beginning their interventions in 2015-16.

This item therefore includes the lists of the 2014 Reward Schools and 2015 Priority and Focus Schools.

The Recommendation:

The Department of Education recommends adoption of this item on final reading. The SBE staff concurs with this recommendation.