

Division of School Turnaround Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

When are schools designated as CSI/Priority or Focus?

Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) or Priority schools are identified at least every three years and have the opportunity to earn priority exit status in years two and three of the three year cycle according to the criteria outlined in the [District and School Accountability](#) criteria.

Focus school identification includes two categories of federal school designations: Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) and Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI). Both TSI and ATSI are considered focus schools and are designated as such due to the underperformance of one or more student subgroups. The department typically identifies TSI schools each year and ATSI schools every three years, coinciding with the CSI/designation cycle.

Priority/CSI identification in 2021-22 will be a one-year designation that will receive Priority/CSI support in 2022-23. A new three-year Priority/CSI identification will be generated in 2022-23 using data from the two most recent years (i.e., 2021-22, 2022-23). This three-year identification will replace the previous one-year identification in its entirety. For more information on school designations see the [2022 Accountability Protocol](#).

Can schools exit the Priority or Focus list?

Yes, the department has established a criterion for priority and focus school exit status as part of its approved school accountability model. For more information refer to the [2022 Accountability Protocol](#). Schools in "Priority Exit Status" will continue to be eligible for federal school improvement funds and receive support from the department. Schools that receive a federal designation of ATSI and meet exit criteria can exit annually. These schools would no longer be eligible for federal school improvement funds.

How does the Tennessee Department of Education support Priority and Focus schools?

The Division of School Turnaround (DST) provides school turnaround planning support, technical assistance, and grant funding opportunities for the state's highest opportunity schools and districts, specifically Tennessee schools designated as Priority/CSI, TSI, or ATSI. The Focus Director supports districts with schools that have ATSI or TSI designations statewide.



DST Regional Directors support districts and schools with a Priority or CSI designation in their assigned regions.

Directors can be contacted via the following emails:

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What are LEA Plans, District Turnaround Plans, Priority School Turnaround Plans?

[Tennessee State Board Policy 2.101](#) requires the local education agency (LEA) and schools to conduct a systematic, on-going cycle of continuous improvement involving planning, implementation, evaluation, and renewal of district and school plans to meet local and statewide goals and priorities. Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-1-613, LEAs and schools must develop annual plans identifying challenges, progress and prioritized needs of all schools regardless of the school's federal designation. The LEA plan must include specific goals to address the identified needs and include several requirements under Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) as well as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). ESSA and IDEA funding are tied closely to these plans and LEAs are expected to describe the connection between the LEA plan and funding within the Consolidated Funding Application (CFA). LEA Plans are due March 1 each year.

Districts with one or more schools with a priority or Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) designation must develop a District Turnaround plan in addition to the LEA plan that addresses specific needs for these schools. The turnaround plan is based on a comprehensive needs assessment to identify prioritized needs in priority and CSI schools across the district. The plan is built around the key levers in school turnaround outlined in the Tennessee ESSA plan. These key levers are strong leadership, effective instruction, and student supports and services. Evidence-based strategies/interventions aligned to the identified prioritized needs are included in the plan along with a detailed process to monitor implementation and effectiveness of strategies/interventions used to support priority/CSI schools toward increasing student achievement. The turnaround plan aligns to the overall mission and vision of the LEA plan but directly addresses the needs of priority and CSI schools. Turnaround Plans are due April 15 each year.

All schools, regardless of federal designation, are required to develop an annual school improvement plan. Priority and CSI schools are required to develop a school level turnaround plan. All plans must include a comprehensive needs assessments analyzing academic achievement and growth data, teacher data, climate and culture data and college and career readiness data. School turnaround plans must also include evidence-based

strategies prioritized to address identified needs. In addition to school specific needs, school turnaround plans must align with the LEA plan goals and as well as the District Turnaround Plan goals and strategies in order to ensure district priorities are addressed. School plans are due September 1 each year.

How can I view my school and district's turnaround plan?

*Inform*TN is Tennessee's online platform that allows school, district, and community stakeholders the ability to access district and school plans. Please visit <https://edplan.tn.gov> then in the upper left corner click search plans for the current school year and type your district's name or the school's name to view your district's improvement and/or school turnaround plan.

What types of school turnaround grant opportunities are available for districts and schools?

The Division of School Turnaround awards district and school-level grants based on the availability of federal and state funds. Districts are awarded funds of sufficient size to enable the effective implementation of turnaround strategies. Priority is given to districts that serve a high number or high percentage of elementary and secondary schools implementing improvement plans; demonstrate the greatest need; and demonstrate the strongest commitment to using the funds.

Most grant awards are based on a per-pupil allocation.

What types of interventions and supports can be funded with school turnaround grants?

Grants awarded through the Division of School Turnaround provide districts serving priority and comprehensive support and improvement schools (CSI) schools with the resources to invest in the implementation of evidence-based strategies/interventions focused on proven levers of change to facilitate rapid school turnaround. All grant interventions must align with one of the four levers for school improvement: 1) strong leadership, 2) effective instruction, and 3) student support and services, 4) Additional Supports.

What is a resource allocation review?

The Resource Allocation Review (RAR) is a process that helps to ensure that districts with priority/CSI or ATSI school(s) are identifying the needs of the schools, prioritizing those needs, and serving the identified needs equitably across high opportunity schools as cited in the Every Student Succeeds Act (§ 1111(d)(3)(A)(ii) and § 200.23(a).