



A Parent's Guide to Understanding Focus District, Focus & Priority School Identification

New York State is required by the United States Department of Education to identify low performing schools. For elementary and middle schools, this identification is based on test results from the annual Grades 3-8 English Language Arts and Math Tests. For high schools, the identification is based on graduation rates. The list of identified schools can be found on the New York State Education Department website at <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/accountability/ESEAMaterials.html>.

How are districts and schools identified?

New York State Education Department (SED) identifies low performing districts as “Focus Districts.” Low performing schools within these districts are identified as “Focus Schools.” Schools with the lowest overall academic performance are called “Priority Schools.”

- **Focus Districts** have schools with low academic performance on the Grades 3-8 ELA and Math Tests or low graduation rates for certain groups of students, such as those who are economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities, and English language learners. The performance of these schools is not improving.
- **Focus Schools** are schools within Focus Districts that have low academic performance that is not improving.
- **Priority Schools** are schools with the overall lowest student academic performance on state assessments and persistently low graduation rates.

For more information about how SED identifies districts and schools, please visit <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/accountability/ESEAMaterials.html>.

What do districts and/or schools have to do?

Focus Districts and Focus and Priority Schools will undergo a school improvement process to help address the reasons why some students in the school are not succeeding. Most of these schools will receive additional funds and support for their school improvement efforts.

- **Focus Districts, Focus Schools and Priority Schools** participate in a State review process to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the district or school. This process is called the Diagnostic Tool for School and District Review (DTSDE). Districts and schools use the information from the review to develop improvement plans. The plans have to include input from parents and the school community. If you want to participate in this process and contribute to your school plan, please contact your school principal.
- **Priority Schools** are also required to implement a whole school reform plan by the 2018-19 school year. This plan must be created with family and community input. More information about these plans can be found at: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/oisr/>.

For more information about the plan requirements, please visit: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/accountability/fdip/DCIPCompletionGuide.doc>.

What resources are available to Focus Districts and Focus and Priority Schools?

Each newly identified Title I Focus District and newly identified Title I Focus School and Priority School will receive \$25,000 in the 2015-16 school to develop their improvement plans. Identified Title I Districts and schools will receive additional funds in subsequent years to implement the plans.

What does school identification mean for your child?

Parents of students who attend Priority or Focus Schools have several rights.

- If you choose, you can request that your student transfer to a school within the district that is *not* a Focus or Priority School. Priority and Focus Schools receiving federal funding (called Title I), except for public charter schools, must offer Public School Choice (PSC). This means that districts must provide all students enrolled in Focus and Priority Schools the option of moving to another public school within the district that serves the same grade but is not a Priority or Focus School.
- Parents must be notified of their PSC options no later than 14 days before the start of the 2016-17 school year.
- If the district has no schools that serve your child's grade in Good Standing, the district is required to tell you why choice cannot be offered.

My school is also in Receivership. What does that mean?

Some Priority Schools have also been identified as a “Persistently Struggling School” or a “Struggling School.” These schools are placed into Receivership. Under Receivership, the school superintendent has been given the authority to make drastic changes to the identified schools. These changes can include changing the principal, making changes to school staff, and increasing the length of the school day. More information on Receivership can be found at: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/oisr/Receivership.html>.

Have additional questions or need more information?
Contact SED at 718 722-2796 or accountinfo@nysed.gov



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