



**E-message – Designating Schools for Targeted Support and Improvement**

Dear Colleagues,

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) is committed to sharing regular updates on the implementation of its approved Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) [Consolidated State Plan](#).

Earlier this year, Pennsylvania—like many states—proposed technical amendments to the 2018 version of its ESSA State Plan. These amendments provide data elements that were not available at the time of initial plan submission; clarify procedures for certain accountability determinations to ensure support for the highest need schools and student groups; and outline Pennsylvania’s approach for reporting equitable access to effective, experienced, and properly credentialed educators. We appreciate the support of stakeholders in developing amendments that build on a successful first year of ESSA implementation, and are pleased to report that USDE approved these State Plan changes as we begin the 2019-20 school year.

**I. Overview of ESSA Requirements for School Improvement Designations**

ESSA requires states to develop a plan to designate schools for support and improvement. In a significant change from the No Child Left Behind era, these designations derive from both academic and non-academic student success indicators, and include both school-wide and student group-level determinations.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, the process of designating schools for support—termed “Annual Meaningful Differentiation” by the federal statute—results in three distinct designations: 1) Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI); 2) Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (A-TSI); and 3) Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) detailed in Table 1, below:

Table 1. Summary of Federal School Improvement Designations

<b>Designation Type</b>	<b>Based on...</b>	<b>Cycle</b>
Comprehensive Support and Improvement	School-wide performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The lowest-performing 5 percent of all schools receiving Title I funds in the State; or</li> <li>• Any high school – Title I or not – with a combined 4- and 5-year adjusted cohort graduation rate of 67 percent or less</li> </ul>	Every three years, beginning Fall 2018
Additional Targeted Support and Improvement <i>(applies to all public schools, Title I or not)</i>	Performance by one or more student groups performing below CSI cut points	Every three years, beginning Fall 2018
<b>Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI)</b> <i>(applies to all public schools, Title I or not)</i>	<b>Performance by one or more student groups performing below established thresholds</b>	<b>Annually, beginning Fall 2019</b>

<sup>1</sup> ESSA requires states to specify a standard for the number of students, or minimum “n-size,” that trigger the reporting of academic and other data at the school and student group levels. **Pennsylvania’s n-size is 20.**

**This message focuses on the process for designating schools for Targeted Support and Improvement, the annual designations that provide for locally managed activities to support student groups.**

**II. Pennsylvania’s Approach to TSI Designations**

TSI designations will function as an early warning system for at-risk student groups and as a signal to schools that may be at future risk for more intensive accountability cycles. Accordingly, the cut points that drive a TSI determination are considerably more rigorous than the cut points associated with CSI determinations that relate to the lowest performing 5 percent of schools, as well as A-TSI designations that result from one or more student groups in a school performing below CSI thresholds. Another important distinction between the cyclical (*i.e.*, every three years) CSI and A-TSI determinations and annual TSI determinations is that TSI procedures necessarily draw on the most recent single year of performance data, while higher-stakes CSI and A-TSI procedures draw on multiple years of data from each three-year cycle.

Specifically, TSI designation will occur for a school in which one or more student groups are identified through the following two-step process:

Step 1: Preliminary identification based on academic achievement and academic growth

A group of 20 or more students:

1. **Exhibits achievement at or below the statewide average achievement rate<sup>2</sup>**; and
2. Based on #1, **falls within a specific achievement-academic growth profile** as depicted in the sample figure, below. Any combination of the eventual achievement-growth profiles means the school will be evaluated on remaining accountability indicators, discussed under Step 2. A proficiency-growth decision table continues Pennsylvania’s commitment to examining both achievement and growth in making accountability determinations and allows greater evidence of student growth to compensate for lower levels of proficiency.

Table 2. Sample Proficiency-Growth Decision Table. Values are for illustration only.

	<b>Student group’s Proficiency rate</b>	<b>For each Proficiency rate band described in left-hand column, any of the following growth values for the same student group move a school to Step 2:</b>			
Profile 1	Less than 50 but greater than or equal to 36.7	Moderate evidence of not meeting growth standard; or	Significant evidence of not meeting growth standard		
Profile 2	Less than 36.7 but greater than or equal to 23.3	Evidence of meeting the growth standard; or	Moderate evidence of not meeting growth standard; or	Significant evidence of not meeting growth standard	
Profile 3	Less than 23.3 but greater than or equal to 10	Moderate evidence of meeting growth standard; or	Evidence of meeting the growth standard; or	Moderate evidence of not meeting growth standard; or	Significant evidence of not meeting growth standard
Profile 4	Less than 10	<b>Any student group, regardless of growth value</b>			

Step 2. Final identification based on additional academic and non-academic indicators

<sup>2</sup> Achievement results are generated from the percentage of students within a student group scoring Proficient or Advanced on the PSSA, Keystone Exams, and/or PASA.

Next, Pennsylvania will examine the performance of schools with one or more student groups meeting Step 1 criteria on remaining accountability indicators; these include:

*ESSA-required indicators—*

- Adjusted cohort graduation rate (both 4- and 5-year rates) for high schools
- Progress in moving English learners (EL) to proficiency (any school with reportable EL student group)

*State-selected indicators—*

- Regular attendance (all schools)
- Career standards benchmark (all schools with a grade 5, 8 or 11)

Schools with one or more student groups performing below state averages for one or both ESSA-required indicators or both state-selected indicators will receive a TSI designation.

A school receives a TSI designation when a student group:

- 1) Meets the achievement and growth profile in Step 1; and
- 2) Falls below statewide average performance on a) one or both ESSA-required indicators (graduation rate and English learner proficiency) or b) both state-selected indicators (regular attendance and career standards benchmark).

### **III. School Improvement Plans and Implementation**

Schools designated as TSI are required to develop building level School Improvement Plans and secure local education agency (LEA) approval from the Board of School Directors or Charter School. Unlike schools designated for CSI or A-TSI, schools designated as TSI can determine the duration of their improvement plan. TSI improvement plans do not require PDE approval.

PDE has maintained a focus on ensuring that the supports for identified schools are grounded in evidence, differentiated based on specific school needs, and deployed in a collaborative and coherent manner alongside local educators. TSI supports and activities will be supported at the LEA level. State-supported, locally-deployed TSI supports may include interdisciplinary teams of general and special education personnel to support Multi-Tiered Systems of Support, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, and other activities—along with technical assistance provided by local intermediate units and PaTTANs.

Over the next few months, additional information on TSI will be made available on PDE’s ESSA webpage.

Thank you for your continued work with Pennsylvania students, and your partnership in implementing the state’s ESSA Plan.

Sincerely,



Matthew S. Stem  
Deputy Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education