

June 15, 2016

TO THE ADMINISTRATOR ADDRESSED

SUBJECT: Information regarding priority and/or focus school identification for school year 2016-2017

At the close of 2015, Congress passed and the President signed into law the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which brings about the first major overhaul to federal education policy in almost 15 years. The ESSA provides our state an opportunity to leverage new flexibilities that bring greater emphasis to Texas' priorities in educating our more than five million schoolchildren.

Due to new transition requirements from the U.S. Department of Education (USDE), Texas will maintain our current list of priority and focus campuses during the transition school year 2016-2017. Given the short time frame and inability to run data using the current school year assessment results, maintaining our current list is the best, and least disruptive, action during this time.

This letter provides updated information regarding identification, requirements, differentiated interventions and supports, and funding for priority and focus schools.

PRIORITY SCHOOLS

Identification

TEA will differentiate its support and intervention requirements for schools on the priority list using data from the 2016 Accountability Reports scheduled to be released in August 2016.

Priority schools having improved in performance and are no longer identified as improvement required for the August 2015 and 2016 ratings will be classified as *priority progress* in ISAM. All remaining schools that do not meet that criteria will be identified as *priority*.

Requirements

Priority schools are required to:

- Engage in the Texas Accountability Intervention System (TAIS) continuous improvement process in alignment with the ESEA turnaround principles and Critical Success Factors (CSFs);
- Prepare and implement a 2016-2017 Targeted Improvement Plan
- Assign a Campus Intervention Team (CIT) by designating a District Coordinator of School Improvement (DCSI) and Professional Service Provider (PSP);
- Utilize the Intervention and Stage Activity Manager (ISAM) system for CIT team member identifications and submissions;
- Identify members of the Campus Leadership Team (CLT);

- Attend required trainings; (DCSI and principal are required participants); and
- Attend the Advancing Improvement in Education (AIE) conference (DCSI and principal are required participants)
- Complete all required 2016-17 Intervention and Stage Activity Manager (ISAM) submissions;
- Utilize the services of a PSP for 110 hours to be covered by TEA and TCDSS, as well as a local contract between the district and PSP for any state-specific requirements. The number of hours to include in the local contract are to be determined at the local level by the district; and
- Any additional state intervention requirements communicated following the release of August ratings.

Priority progress schools are required to:

- Document sustaining improvement strategies in their Texas Education Code (TEC) Chapter 11 campus improvement plan;
- Designate a district and campus contact for focus school support and interventions; and
- Will have the option to retain their state-supported PSP hours. Eligible campuses will have until August 29th to notify TEA and the Texas Center for District and School Support (TCDSS) on their decision to retain their PSP, and will be afforded flexibility with required PSP hours.

FOCUS SCHOOLS

Identification

TEA will differentiate its support and intervention requirements for schools on the focus list using data from the 2016 Accountability Reports scheduled to be released in August 2016.

Focus schools having improved in performance to the point they no longer are identified as improvement required for the August 2015 and 2016 ratings will be classified as *focus progress* in ISAM. All schools that do not meet that criteria will be identified as *focus*.

Requirements

Focus schools are required to:

- Engage in the Texas Accountability Intervention System (TAIS) continuous improvement process in alignment with the ESEA turnaround principles and Critical Success Factors (CSFs);
- Include instructional intervention(s) in their 2016-2017 TEC Chapter 11 campus improvement plan and provide designated Education Service Center (ESC) with access to the improvement plan;
- Designate a district and campus contact for focus school support and interventions;
- Work with the local ESC to:

- select, implement, and include targeted instructional interventions designed to close achievement gaps;
- learn specific focus school project requirements;
- complete and submit all region-specific project activity documentation;
- assess progress on reasons for identification as a focus school; and
- participate in at least one initial consultation with the local ESC contact and one additional services/event hosted by the ESC that are listed as a part of the ESC's contractual Focus School Support activity plan
- Complete all required 2016-17 Intervention and Stage Activity Manager (ISAM) submissions;
- Provide campus and district contact information to the local regional ESC; and
- Any additional state intervention requirements communicated following the release of August ratings.

Focus Progress schools are required to:

- participate in at least one focus school support services/events with their ESC; and
- Include instructional intervention(s) in the school's 2016-2017 TEC Chapter 11 campus improvement plan and provide designated Education Service Center (ESC) with access to the improvement plan.

Funding

Section 1003(a) of the ESEA authorizes state education agencies to issue funds to LEAs in order to address the needs of schools identified for improvement, and thereby improve student performance.

Districts with identified priority and focus schools are eligible to receive supplemental funds through the Title I, 1003(a) Priority and Focus School grant on behalf of their priority and focus schools. Using data from the 2016 Accountability Reports scheduled to be released in August 2016, funding allocations per district will be calculated based on: 1) the number of eligible priority and focus schools within the district; and 2) number of required interventions, at the estimated amounts of \$120,000 per priority and focus school and \$15,000 per priority progress and focus progress school. These funds must only be used to support district and campus-level school improvement efforts that directly benefit priority and focus schools.

The 2016-2017 Texas Title I, 1003(a) priority and focus school grant will be available to eligible districts via the eGrants system in September 2016. The grant period will run from October 1, 2016 to September 30, 2017; with pre-award costs allowable as of July 1, 2016.

To receive 1003(a) funds, the district must have identified priority and focus schools and comply with all intervention requirements. Priority or focus schools awarded or receiving Texas Title I Priority School (TTIPS) funding are not eligible to receive 1003(a) priority and focus school funding.

For questions related to identification, interventions, support, and funding, please contact the Division of School Improvement and Support at (512) 463-7582 or sisdivision@tea.texas.gov.

The Agency thanks you for your commitment and support to the students of Texas.

Sincerely,

Sally Partridge, Associate Commissioner
Accreditation and School Improvement