



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

EDUCATION

October 22, 2018

Dear Colleague,

This winter OSSE is excited to launch the new DC School Report Card, which includes the School Transparency and Reporting (STAR) Framework scores and rating, and the *Investment in Schools* grant – an \$11 million investment to dramatically support the city’s lowest performing schools. The purpose of this letter is to explain school improvement designations that will be made this winter, the upcoming funding opportunity, and what tools OSSE is making available soon for local education agencies (LEAs) and communities to begin planning.

Executive Summary

- As part of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), in December 2018, OSSE must identify low performing schools, and must designate the schools performing at the bottom 5 percent of the state accountability system (STAR Framework) and those with a graduation rate under 67 percent as Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CS) schools.
- For each CS school identified, LEAs must complete a Needs Assessment and a School Improvement Plan. LEAs with at least one CS school and more than one school overall in the LEA must also complete a Resource Equity Analysis. All three of these requirements must be met using required templates provided by OSSE.
- All CS schools identified based on performing at the bottom 5 percent on the STAR Framework (known as CS1) are eligible to apply for \$1 million grants, which can be spent over the next three years to support their improvement efforts. The application is completed by the LEA and will be released in December 2018.

New School Designations under ESSA

OSSE worked with hundreds of stakeholders to design and refine [DC’s State Plan for the Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\)](#). In line with federal requirements, in our plan DC committed to designate schools into improvement status categories based on their performance.

In December 2018, OSSE will identify schools in the following categories:

Designation	Definition	Timeline
Comprehensive Support and Improvement Schools, type 1 (CS1)	Title I schools that score in the bottom 5 percent of the total number of points on the STAR Framework as compared to their peers. ¹	Schools first identified in December 2018 and once every three school years thereafter.
Comprehensive Support and Improvement Schools, type 2 (CS2)	High schools in which both four-year and five-year adjusted cohort graduation rates (ACGR) fall below 67 percent.	Schools first identified in December 2018 and once every three school years thereafter.
Targeted Support and Improvement Schools, type 1 (TS1) ²	Any school with a group of students that is performing at or below the level of schools identified as CS1 will be considered “consistently underperforming.” This means, once the STAR Framework score for the schools in the bottom five percent has been identified and used to designate CS1 schools, any school with a subgroup framework score that is at or below that CS1 framework score will be identified for TS1.	Schools first identified by December 2018 and annually thereafter.

¹ Under ESSA, CS1 is the only designation that specifies Title I schools (as opposed to all schools). At minimum, the lowest performing 5 percent of Title I schools will be identified but OSSE may also identify non-Title I schools with comparable low performance.

² In the future, OSSE will also identify Targeted Support and Improvement Schools, type 2 (TS2) and Comprehensive Support and Improvement, type 3 (CS3). TS2 is any school with a subgroup of students identified as “consistently underperforming” (i.e., with framework score at or below the fifth percentile used to designate CS1 schools) for two out of three years. CS3 is any school identified as TS2 that does not improve sufficiently to meet exit criteria after three years.

Requirements for Designated Schools

Per federal law, LEAs with schools designated in any of the categories above are responsible for a number of requirements. Three of these requirements must be met using required templates provided by OSSE.³

Designation	Activity
Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CS) schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conduct a school-level Needs Assessment with input from stakeholders (OSSE Template)• Complete a Resource Equity Analysis at the LEA level to analyze resource distribution at all schools, if applicable (OSSE Template)• Develop a School Improvement Plan with input from stakeholders⁴ (OSSE Template)• Have the plan approved by the LEA and OSSE (and PCSB if a charter)• Participate in periodic monitoring of the plan by OSSE (and PCSB if a charter)• Participate in state-level intervention if plan is not successful after three years, or with an extension, after four years (see below)
Targeted Support and Improvement (TS) schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a school-level targeted support and improvement plan with principals, other school leaders, teachers, parents• Have the plan approved by the LEA• Participate in monitoring of the plan by the LEA• Participate in LEA-level intervention or escalate to designation of CS if plan is not successful

In alignment with DC's approved [ESSA state plan](#), a CS school has three years after its identification (the 2018-19, 2019-20, and 2020-21 school years) to meet exit criteria.⁵ During that time, a CS school will drive toward its vision for school improvement through the approaches identified in its School Improvement Plan. Also during that timeframe, both OSSE, LEAs, and PCSB, as appropriate, will monitor the progress of the school. In 2021, OSSE will review each school's implementation progress and determine whether the LEA should be provided an additional year to continue its implementation approach for each school (school year 2021-22).

³ To reduce burden and avoid duplicative efforts, the required templates for CS schools provided by OSSE will also meet a school's requirements for a schoolwide plan under Title I, Part A.

⁴ Conducting the Needs Assessment and developing the School Improvement Plan should include engagement with the LEA, principals, other school leaders including Title I administrator, teachers, paraprofessionals, parents, and members of the community. As appropriate, this should also include specialized instructional support personnel, technical assistance providers, school staff, and other individuals determined by the school; for secondary schools this should also include students.

⁵ To exit CS1 status, a school must (1) receive a STAR rating higher than the initial cut score that determined designation in the bottom 5 percent in 2018 AND (2) receive a STAR rating that is higher than the new cut score for the bottom 5 percent when CS1 schools are next identified. To exit CS2 status, a school must achieve an ACGR of 67% or higher in either their four-year or five-year ACGR. TS status is reviewed annually and a school exits TS1 status when the student groups receives a STAR score higher than the initial cut-point used for CS1.

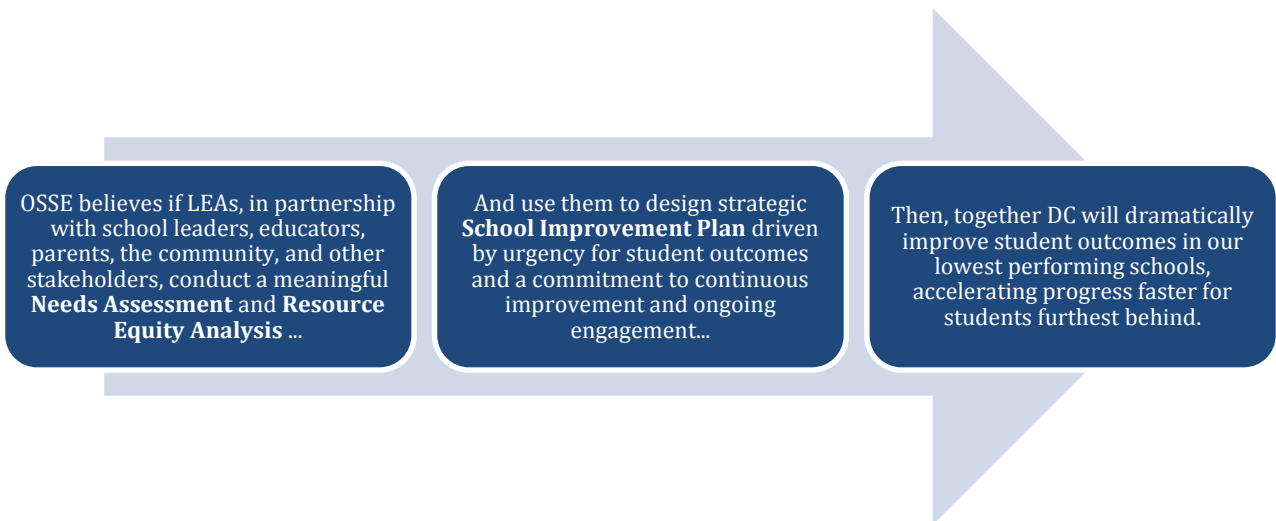
At the time of that review schools may:

- Meet exit criteria and leave CS designation status;
- Receive a fourth year to continue implementation of a School Improvement Plan based on progress made to date⁶; or
- Participate in state intervention.⁷

Alignment of School Improvement Funding with School Improvement Activities

OSSE will invest \$11 million over the next three years to support the lowest performing schools in DC in their improvement efforts. Contingent on federal funding from Title I, Part A and LEAs submitting applications aligned to requirements, OSSE will support all CS1 schools and their LEAs to work with their communities to urgently improve educational outcomes for students.

Unlike previous school improvement grants, OSSE's *Investment in Schools* strategy is to focus larger amounts of funding (\$1 million per school) in a fewer number of schools (maximum of 11). By focusing resources and providing LEAs and schools time and flexibility, OSSE is supporting implementation of meaningful multi-year strategies that maximize the impact of the school improvement funds.



OSSE understands that schools do many things to improve and that the process of school turnaround and improvement must be designed with consideration of each school's unique context. The process of completing a Needs Assessment, including a review of the equitable distribution of resources, the development of goals aligned to those identified needs, and the creation of a plan to address those needs, provides an opportunity for CS schools to organize with stakeholders toward a vision to ensure all students have an opportunity to succeed.

LEAs with schools identified in the CS category will be eligible to apply for the first year of *Investment in Schools* funds in December 2018 when designations are announced, with applications due by Feb. 28, 2019. As part of the application for funds, LEAs will outline their plans to complete the three components described above: the Needs Assessment, Resource Equity Analysis, if applicable, and the School Improvement Plan, by May 2019. To provide guidance while also leaving room for flexibility, OSSE is naming three critical levers – **People, Instruction, and Structures** – that each School

⁶ Schools showing sufficient progress to continue implementation would be able to spend funds over four years.

⁷ See pages 35-36 of [DC's ESSA State Plan](#) for more information.

Improvement Plan must address.⁸ CS improvement plans must include evidence-based strategies and interventions for each area. Each plan must also describe the overall vision and goals for the school, how the LEA will determine whether the school is making progress, and how stakeholders will be involved in an ongoing manner. *(See appendices 1 & 2 for more detail.)*

Next Steps

In the coming weeks, OSSE will release the expected fiscal year 2019 (FY19) *Investment in Schools* LEA application questions as well as the required templates for Needs Assessment, Resource Equity Analysis, and School Improvement Plans that all CS1 schools must complete. OSSE will announce school improvement designations in December 2018. We expect LEAs to begin their planning efforts using the available templates as soon as possible in the 2018-19 school year, including initiating engagement with schools and communities. Applications for the *Investment in Schools* grant are due Feb. 28, 2019.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Sharon Gaskins, Interim Assistant Superintendent, Division of Systems and Supports, K-12, at Sharon.Gaskins@dc.gov or (202) 654-6112.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hanseul Kang', followed by a large, stylized flourish or initial 'S'.

Hanseul Kang
State Superintendent

⁸ All CS schools must complete a School Improvement Plan. All CS1 schools must address these three levers in the OSSE template. CS2 schools may use the OSSE template, or may request approval from OSSE prior to submission to use an alternative format.

Appendix 1: Summary of Components for Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CS) Schools

Component	Description	Timeline
Needs Assessment	For each school, engage and gather perspectives from key stakeholders; review data and other qualitative evidence over time; and analyze root causes and areas for change.	LEA leads process for each CS school and submits completed Needs Assessment using the required template to OSSE by May 31, 2019 (required even if opting not to apply for funding).
Resource Equity Analysis	Document expenditures for every school in the LEA as well as centralized LEA spending. Includes breakout of federal and local funding sources and grant funding.	LEAs with at least one CS school and more than one school overall in the LEA must submit a completed Resource Equity Analysis using the required template to OSSE by May 31, 2019 (required even if opting not to apply for funding).
School Improvement Plan	Based on the findings of the school-based Needs Assessment and Resource Equity Analysis, LEAs will identify goals and specific evidence-based strategies in three critical areas: People, Instruction, and Structures. School plans must also specify routines for ongoing stakeholder engagement and improvement.	Each CS school must complete and submit its School Improvement Plan for approval by the LEA. Once approved by the LEA, LEAs must submit a School Improvement Plan for each CS school using the required template to OSSE by May 31, 2019 for review and approval (required even if opting not to apply for funding).
<i>Investment in Schools Grant</i>	LEAs with CS1 schools may apply for funding to support the development and implementation of School Improvement Plans for CS1 schools. Contingent on funding availability from Title I Part A, we estimate this will be a total of \$1 million per school over three years.	<p>The FY19 Investment in Schools application to support LEA planning and initial implementation will be available Dec. 2018 in the Enterprise Grants Management System (EGMS). LEAs must submit applications by no later than Feb. 28, 2019 (earlier is encouraged).</p> <p>The FY20 LEA application will be available by summer 2019 in EGMS. In order to be eligible for FY20 funds, LEAs must submit Needs Assessments, Resource Equity Analysis, if applicable, and School Improvement Plans for each CS school by the May 2019 deadline. Up to 11 CS1 schools, if all meet the standards established in the Needs Assessment, Resource Equity Analysis, and School Improvement Plan templates, will receive funding.</p>

Appendix 2: School Plan Template Overview

Section	Summary of Section
People	<p>When schools are experiencing low student outcomes, adults in the building also need supports and interventions to institute change. Schools will identify the talent strategies that will be utilized to address gaps and meet identified goals.</p> <p>This category may include strategies such as recruiting and developing school leaders, identifying and creating key positions to support school improvement and academic achievement, or retaining and training existing staff to strengthen teaching and learning.</p>
Instruction	<p>We must ensure all of our students are prepared for success in college and careers. By investing in resources aligned to school needs, building educator capacity, and using evidence-based instructional strategies, we believe schools can meet this imperative.</p> <p>This category may include strategies such as increasing the rigor of curricular materials, the institution of specific academic programs, supports and interventions, or the implementation of instructional methods or other activities to improve the performance of all students or specific groups of students.</p>
Structures	<p>Improving our lowest performing schools requires dramatic change across the school building. By investing in bold commitments to empower decision-making, structural configuration, and management, we believe schools can accelerate improvement.</p> <p>This category may include strategies such as multi-year design partners, dividing schools into grade-based academies, other internal restructuring and autonomies, reorganizing school time, or other structural changes designed to improve outcomes for students.</p>