



July 20, 2017

Dear LEA Leader:

As you know, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) required the District of Columbia (DC) to develop a state plan that outlines how it will comply with key provisions in the law. Beginning in December 2015, OSSE worked to develop the plan in consultation with a diverse group of education stakeholders from across the District. The resulting plan was developed with the feedback of more than 110 local education agencies (LEAs), government agencies, consortia, and other organizations within the District of Columbia. We thank all of our stakeholders for their deep and meaningful engagement over the course of this process.

The purpose of this letter is to provide you an update about DC's implementation timeline for key accountability provisions under ESSA.

School Accountability under ESSA

DC's proposed State Education Plan outlines a new accountability system, called the School Transparency and Reporting (STAR) accountability system. Like DC's current accountability system, the STAR system will provide an **annual overall, summative rating** for all public schools in the District that will be shared with families and the community through a school report card.

While DC's previous system ranked schools solely based on the state test, the new STAR system incorporates multiple measures and differentiated scores for each subgroup of students. An annual overall, summative rating will be calculated for each school, ranging from one star (lowest) to five stars (highest), based on multiple measures. This rating will be calculated primarily by looking at the overall performance of all students in the school, but also by placing substantial weight on the performance of specific groups of students. In this way, the new system provides a more holistic understanding of school performance.

ESSA also requires that states identify schools for comprehensive support and improvement and targeted support and improvement. These **school improvement designations** will be calculated **every three years** for schools that fall below a particular threshold. These new designations are summarized below (see more detailed definitions and descriptions on pages 30-33 of the [OSSE State Plan](#)):

Descriptions of School Improvement Designations

School Designation	Description
Comprehensive Support and Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lowest-performing five percent of schools overall

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any high school with a four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate at or below 67 percent.
Targeted Support and Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any school in which one or more subgroups of students is performing at or below the performance of all students in the lowest-performing schools (Comprehensive Support and Improvement schools).

Timeline for Implementation of DC’s New Accountability System

On May 3, 2017, DC’s proposed State Education Plan was submitted to the Department of Education (ED), where it will undergo a peer review process. The ED has up to 120 days to review and approve state plans. In anticipation that states may not have an approved plan by the start of the 2017-18 school year, the ED granted states more time to transition to ESSA via a correspondence dated April 10, 2017. Based on this guidance, ED is permitting states to delay identification of schools for Comprehensive Support and Improvement, as well as schools with low-performing subgroups for Targeted Support and Improvement, until the beginning of the 2018-19 school year.

Plan for 2017-18 Transition Year

For the 2017-18 year, OSSE intends to “freeze” school classifications. As such, all schools will maintain their current classifications.

We acknowledge that many schools have made progress over the years, and we recognize the challenge of maintaining classifications and interventions based on outdated data. However, we are taking this approach because we believe that it is important to ensure that the new accountability framework is robust before it is used to make new designations. We have also heard from many principals that the support provided through the Learning Support Network for Priority and Focus schools was meaningful, and we believe this approach will help minimize disruption during this transition period.

A full list of current school classifications can be found here:

<https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/List%20of%20Priority%20and%20Focus%20Schools%20for%20the%202017-18%20School%20Year.pdf>

Please note that schools that were classified as Rising Priority and Rising Focus schools during the 2016-17 year will maintain their classifications for the 2017-18 school year.

Ongoing Requirements for Priority and Focus Schools

For the 2017-18 year, following requirements will apply to schools that meet Priority and Focus school criteria as outlined above:

- Monitoring: DCPS and PCSB will continue to monitor the implementation of Priority and Focus school interventions.

- State Intervention: Priority and Focus schools will continue to be required to participate in the Learning Support Network and related SSIP* activities.
- School Improvement Planning: Schools will be required to develop and implement school improvement plans. All strategies and interventions must be aligned to either the seven turnaround principles or be “evidence-based” as defined by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Focus schools must develop and implement a school improvement plan focused on closing the gap for identified subgroup(s) within specified subject area(s).
- Funding: All schools that were eligible for the 1003(a) grant in the 2016-17 year will continue to be eligible for the 1003 grant in the 2017-18 school year. **Please note that LEAs will not be required to set aside 20% of their Title I, Part A allocation to support identified schools in the 2017-18 school year.**

Thank you for your continued partnership on behalf of DC’s schools and students. Please feel free to contact me or my deputy chief of staff, Naomi Watson, who may be reached at 202-286-2153 or Naomi.Watson@dc.gov with any questions.

Sincerely,



Hanseul Kang
State Superintendent

Cc: Amy Maisterra, Assistant Superintendent, Elementary, Secondary, and Specialized Education
Sharon Gaskins, Deputy Assistant Superintendent of Accountability, Performance and Support, Division of Elementary, Secondary, and Specialized Education

* DC’s State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) remains in effect under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) during the 2017-18 transition year. For this reason, SSIP activities will continue to be required in high schools that carried out SSIP activities in the 2016-17 school year.