



Understanding Designations

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. 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.

Accountability Indicators in PA

- **Indicators required by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA):**
 - Achievement - Percent Proficient
 - Academic Progress - Growth
 - Graduation Rate - Four- and Five- year cohort rates
 - English Learner Proficiency
- **Additional Indicators selected by PA:**
 - Career Standards
 - Regular Attendance

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 the table below:

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

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.

Pennsylvania's exit criteria include:

- Exceed accountability determination standards in the subsequent round of Annual Meaningful Differentiation. In other words, a school designated for CSI in 2018 may not exit this improvement cycle in 2022 if it is reidentified for CSI in 2021.
- Demonstrate measurable improvement on achievement and other indicators that were the basis of the initial accountability determination. These gains must be commensurate with the gap closing methodology established in the State Plan (i.e., on-track to close at least half of the gap between current performance and 2030 goals) and must represent both whole-school progress and gains by historically underserved or underperforming students.
- Partner in agency-provided technical assistance activities through the Statewide System of District and School Improvement.