

Frequently Asked Questions about South Dakota's School Improvement System

1. How did the state decide to use this system of accountability? Were stakeholders involved in designing the system?

South Dakota engaged a wide variety of stakeholders, including parents, administrators, educators and other community members, to develop its accountability system under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

2. What do the accountability designations mean about my school?

Accountability designations are one way that the Department of Education provides information about how each district and school is supporting its students. They help stakeholders know where schools are excelling and where they have room to grow.

3. What are these designations based on? Only test scores?

Designations are not only based on test scores. They are based on multiple measures of student success, including graduation rates, progress for English learners in learning English, and other measures of school quality.

4. Do the designations mean some schools are "good" and others are "bad?"

Schools that are designated for support and improvement are not "bad schools," but they are schools that need help in supporting students. These schools and districts have the opportunity to engage parents and the community in developing a plan to improve the school's performance.

5. What happened to priority and focus schools?

Before ESSA was passed, South Dakota identified the lowest performing schools as priority schools and schools with low performing subgroups as focus schools. Under ESSA, states identify schools for comprehensive support and improvement (CSI), targeted support and improvement (TSI), and additional targeted support and improvement (ATSI). CSI schools are similar to priority schools and TSI are similar to focus schools.

6. How are CSI schools identified?

In general, CSI schools are schools with overall low performance or very low graduation rates. More specifically, schools are designated as CSI if they in the lowest performing 5% of Title I schools or are a public high school with a graduation rate below 67%. The state considers performance on a wide variety of indicators, including those beyond test scores, to identify these schools.

7. How are TSI schools identified?

TSI schools may not have an overall low performance, but they have subgroup of students are falling behind. More specifically, there is a significant gap between the performance of a certain subgroup of students and the performance of all the students at the school. The state considers performance on a wide variety of indicators, including those beyond test scores, to identify these schools.

8. How are ATSI schools identified?

ATSI schools have a subgroup of students who are falling behind the lowest performing schools in the state. Specifically, there is a gap between the performance of a certain subgroup of students at the school and the group of students who make up the lowest 5% of Title I schools (CSI).

9. What is the difference between TSI and ATSI schools?

The main difference between TSI and ATSI is that TSI compares subgroups of students to the students at the same school, while ATSI compares subgroups of students at a school to the lowest performing students in the state.

10. Which groups of students are considered subgroups for TSI and ATSI identification?

South Dakota uses the following federally recognized subgroups for school improvement designations:

American Indian/Alaska Native	Students with Disabilities
Asian	English Learners
Black/African American	Economically Disadvantaged
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	
Hispanic/Latino	
Two or More Races	
White/Caucasian	

11. If my school is identified as CSI or TSI what will happen to it? What kind of support will it receive?

All schools identified for support and improvement are required to 1) identify the needs of the students and school, 2) develop and put into action a plan for improvement. Families and the community will have the opportunity to help their schools in developing the plan. CSI schools will have 4 years to improve the performance or graduation rate of its students. TSI schools will have 2 years to improve the performance of its low performing subgroup.

12. When will schools be identified?

Schools will be identified for support and improvement when the final report card is released. We anticipate a release date of December 17, 2018.