

# Priority, Focus, and Model Schools Frequently Asked Questions

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## 1. What are Priority, Focus, and Model schools?

Priority, Focus, and Model schools are all Title I (high poverty) schools identified under Oregon's Next Generation of Accountability model, also known as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) waiver plan, as either needing additional support or recognized as being highly successful.

Priority schools are high poverty schools that were ranked in the bottom 5% (approx.) of Title I schools in the state based on Oregon's new rating formula. These schools generally have very low achievement and growth and need additional supports and interventions to turn things around. Schools receiving ESEA School Improvement Grants (SIG Schools) are also designated as Priority Schools.

Focus schools are high poverty schools which were ranked in the bottom 15% (approx.) of Title I schools and need additional support in closing the achievement gap and addressing achievement for historically underserved subgroups.

Model schools are high poverty schools which are rated in the top 5% (approx.) of Title I schools in the state based on the new rating formula. They are showcased as models of successful student outcomes and will help support other schools through Continuous Improvement Networks.

## 2. How are the schools identified?

Oregon's approved waiver includes a new rating formula that rates schools based on a combination of factors including student achievement, growth, subgroup growth and, for high schools, graduation and subgroup graduation rates. All schools in Oregon receive a rating. However, only those schools which meet the specific definitions are included on the Priority, Focus, and Model schools list.

## 3. How is this rating formula different from AYP?

The new rating formula provides a more nuanced assessment of how schools are doing and which schools might need additional supports. The new formula places emphasis on achievement growth among individual students (reported on but not included in AYP calculations), achievement growth among students in historically underserved subgroups, and graduation rates. The rating formula allows for a

comprehensive and diagnostic look at student outcomes for each school and targeted interventions that will provide a structure to address needed improvements in outcomes.

#### **4. What does this mean for schools?**

At the most basic level, identification as a focus or priority school means that schools will get additional supports to better meet the needs of their students. For priority and focus schools, a network of individuals and agencies statewide, the Oregon Department of Education (ODE), and individual districts will jointly undertake a deeper diagnosis to determine the areas in which the school and district need assistance. Based on the results of this diagnosis – and in collaboration with the school and district leadership and staff, parents, and community – the district will develop a Comprehensive Achievement Plan (CAP) specifically addressing plans for improvement and support at each priority and focus school.

Districts with Priority or Focus schools will be provided funds to support diagnosis and initial implementation of supports and interventions identified in the CAP. Beginning with the 2013-14 school year, districts with Priority or Focus schools may be asked to set aside as much as 20 percent of the district’s allocation of Title I funds for the implementation of the planned for supports and interventions.

In addition to the planning effort undertaken by district staff, Priority and Focus schools will be provided leadership coaching, a support team made up of educators with experience in the specific areas the school has included in the CAP, regional coordinators who will facilitate the process, and a system of monitoring.

Model schools will be publically recognized for their outstanding performance. Those Model schools choosing to do so will serve as exemplars to Priority and Focus schools.

#### **5. How often will ODE identify schools for these supports?**

ODE will continue to provide supports and interventions to the Priority and Focus schools identified for the 2012-13 school year for four years. The timeline for identification of future Priority and Focus schools will be determined in the coming years and will be dependent on federal approval.

#### **6. When do supports and interventions for a school end?**

##### Elementary and Middle Schools:

At the end of the four year period, a school must demonstrate progress toward meeting the growth target in overall improvement and subgroup improvement for

each of the four years. Skilled educators working with each school will evaluate the extent to which the school is likely to see continued improvement in student achievement.

#### High Schools:

At the end of the four year period, a school must demonstrate progress toward meeting the growth target for each of the four years in overall improvement and subgroup improvement. Skilled educators working with each school will evaluate the extent to which the school is likely to see continued improvement in both student achievement and graduation rates.

### **7. Why are some lower-achieving schools not identified?**

Only schools funded with federal Title I funds are eligible for inclusion in this program at this time. Schools not receiving these funds will receive ratings but will not be eligible for the additional supports and interventions through ESEA.

### **8. Where can I learn more?**

- ODE's ESEA Flexibility waiver website: <http://www.ode.state.or.us/go/nextgen>
- U.S. Department of Education website: <http://www.ed.gov/esea/flexibility>
- Contact Jan McCoy, School Improvement Team Lead at [jan.mccoy@state.or.us](mailto:jan.mccoy@state.or.us) or Tryna Luton, Director of School Improvement and Accountability at [tryna.luton@state.or.us](mailto:tryna.luton@state.or.us)