

**Oregon Department of Education**

**Recommendations for District & School Improvement & Accountability**

July 31, 2014

**District & School Improvement & Accountability Taskforce**

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## Preface

In March 2014, Chief Education Officer Nancy Golden requested the Oregon Department of Education work with stakeholders to “(a) Design and implement an accountability system of progressive interventions for schools and school districts that do not demonstrate improvement; and (b) Provide technical assistance to schools and school districts that do not demonstrate improvement.”

Over a period of three months this spring and early summer, ODE convened a taskforce to draft a set of recommendations to address this request. The taskforce was made up of school, district, and ESD leaders, school board members, legislators, leaders of community-based organizations, school improvement coaches, and staff from partner associations. A full list of taskforce members is described on page 2.

This work could not be more important because we have far too many students, many of whom are students of color, in chronically underperforming schools. In addition to the 93 Focus and Priority schools serving over 37,700 students, we have approximately 32,300 more students attending 112 additional schools rated a level 1 (in the bottom 5% of all schools). Students of color are overwhelmingly attending these schools. Over 36% of the state’s African American elementary school students attend schools in the bottom 15%, and approximately 30% of American Indian/Alaska Native, 29% of Latino students, and 29% of Pacific Islander students are in these schools.

The low level of student outcomes in these schools has reached a crisis. In these schools, barely more than half of all students are reading at benchmark by 3rd grade, and less than 43% of students of color are reading at benchmark by 3rd grade. The data does not improve when we look at graduation rates. The graduation rates in our lowest performing non-title schools (where we start to include high schools because most high schools are not Title 1 funded) is approximately 34% for all students and 28% for students of color.

The good news is that with supports and interventions, our Focus and Priority schools are making progress. Of the 93 Focus and Priority schools, over half would not be re-identified because they have made enough progress to exit Focus or Priority status.

The following memo explains the taskforce’s nine recommendations broken down into the following four categories:

1. District Rating System
2. School Identification System
3. Supports and Interventions for Underperforming Schools
4. Supports and Interventions for Underperforming Districts

## District Rating System

### Recommendation #1: Implement a district rating based on the following five sets of data where every data set is weighted equally (i.e. makes up 20% of the rating system):

* 3rd grade reading achievement
* 3-8th grade growth in math
* 3-8th grade growth in reading
* 9th grade attendance
* Graduation rate 5th year

Rationale: These data sets focus schools and districts on the most important indicators of student success and align to the achievement compacts.

* Additional measures to be discussed for potential inclusion at a later point when the data is reliable include:
* 9th grade on track
* Post-secondary level courses taken
* K-3rd grade data points

### Recommendation #2: Achievement gap measure

* The district rating system must incentivize closing the achievement gap. In order to do that, the taskforce recommends that all students’ growth and achievement levels should make up 60% of the rating and subgroup (students of color, limited English proficient, special education, and economically disadvantaged students) achievement and growth should make up 40%. Although this is slightly different than the current school report card rating where subgroups growth and achievement counts for 33% of the rating, the taskforce believes increasing the percentage to 40% further focuses districts on closing achievement gaps.

### Recommendation #3: Identify bottom 5%, do not rate all districts

* Only the bottom 5% of districts should receive a rating because this model is precise and accurate enough to identify the bottom 5% of districts.
* Intervene in approximately three districts in order to ensure success, while the remaining seven districts should be notified of their status so they can take appropriate action to change student outcomes.

### Recommendation #4: Cycle for district identification and exit criteria

* Districts should receive supports and interventions for four years, as Focus and Priority schools do, but identification (i.e. adding new districts to the list) and support for these newly identified districts occurs every two years.
* The list of the bottom 5% of districts is produced annually so districts know if they are dropping into a warning zone.
* To successfully exit, districts must move out of the bottom 5% of districts (not just bottom three districts)

## School Identification System

### Recommendation #5: Identifying chronically underperforming schools (regardless of Title I status)

* With over 32,000 students attending 112 schools that are in the bottom 5% and not currently receiving systemic supports and interventions, the taskforce recommends that all schools should be identified (elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, alternative high schools, and charter schools) regardless of their Title I status.
* With an additional $15 million per biennium investment from the legislature, ODE has the capacity to intervene in approximately 50 additional underperforming schools. This includes both those that are identified at the school level and those identified through the district process described above. As a result, there should not be more than 50 schools identified because it’s important sufficient resources are available to ensure the supports and interventions are successful. However, it’s critical to note that there are approximately 112 schools in the bottom 5% (in addition to the Focus and Priority schools). An investment of $15 million per biennium is necessary but not sufficient to reach all schools in the bottom 5%.
* The numbers of each school type identified should be proportional to the percentage of that school type statewide. However, if a school scores at the lowest rating possible (i.e. 20 points), then they must be identified, and the rest of the schools are added proportionally. For example, since elementary schools make up 54% of our schools, the number of identified and supported lowest performing elementary schools should make up 54% of the total (including Focus and Priority schools).

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| School Type (excluding YCEP) | School Type Counts | Identified Schools |
| # Schools | % of All Schools | Currently Identified as Focus or Priority (not including SIG) | # of new schools to be added | Total |
| Elementary | 666 | 54% | 68 | 0 | 68 |
| Middle | 183 | 15% | 1 | 15 | 16 |
| High | 225 | 18% | 2 | 18 | 20 |
| Charter | 124 | 10% | 1 | 10 | 11 |
| Alternative | 33 | 3% | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Lowest Performing Districts |   |   | (Included in above counts) | 6 | 6 |
| Total | 1231 | 1 | 74 | 50 | 124 |

## Supports and Interventions for Underperforming Schools

### Recommendation #6: Since supports and interventions are working with Focus and Priority schools, continue with those supports with these six revisions:

1. Narrow the evaluation tool and report so planning and improvement are more focused.
2. ODE has the right to refuse (i.e. reject the plan) based on evidence (i.e. best practice) and/or the school’s proposed budget.
3. Maintain and improve ODE’s progress monitoring (i.e. internal ODE work).
4. District superintendent needs to be involved in planning and regular check-ins on progress. District superintendent keeps the school board up to date through an annual check-in.
5. Increase funding (more than $40-60,000/school) for supports and interventions.
6. Provide a challenge grant to Tribes and/or community-based organizations to support school improvement efforts.

### Recommendation #7: What to do if identified schools do not improve after 3-4 years

The Department’s 2014 ESEA Flexibility Advisory Committee (roster of participants on page 3-4) developed the following plan for intervening in Focus and Priority schools if progress is not being made. This taskforce largely recommended implementing their plan, with a few revisions included below.

## Intervention Step One

* A diagnostic review, to be conducted by an external team, to understand the school’s context and issues preventing progress:
	+ Diagnostic reviews may happen after years two, three, or four of Priority or Focus status, depending on what the data show and progress made. The data triggers that determine whether or not it’s after year 2, 3, or 4 need to be defined.
	+ Since our Focus and Priority schools are finishing their 2nd year, the earliest this first diagnostic review could happen would be Spring 2015 or Spring 2016.
	+ A clear rubric for the diagnostic review needs to be used and shared with the school beforehand.
	+ Results of the review will be shared with the superintendent, school, and school board.
* Make-up of the review and planning teams:
	+ External Review Team is made up of staff who are not in the school or district. They must have proven experience in school turnaround and respect and credibility from the field.
	+ Internal Planning team then creates the plan based off of the review and is made up of internal school and district staff and two members from the external review team. School board members shall be kept appraised of the process and recommendations.
* After the review:
	+ Plan would need to be recommended for approval by the external team, with final approval from the Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction.
	+ School implements plan.
	+ Implementation is monitored.
	+ Plan is adjusted as needed.
* There are two main distinguishing features between the plans in Step 1 & 2:
	+ In Step 1, the plan is developed locally and may include, not shall include, the following:
		- Ensure effective and appropriate formative and interim assessments are in place.
		- Ensure the district and school are in a process of learning from similar schools.
		- Engage the school board in professional development and accountability discussions.
		- Provide additional resources and supports in the form of staffing, for example counselors, social workers, etc.
	+ In Step 1, the plan cannot include replacing superintendent, district staff, principal, and/or teachers.

## Intervention Step Two

* It is possible to by-pass Step 1 and move directly to Step 2 if the situation is egregious. Such as improvement plans are not implemented and/or there is blatant disregard for engaging in the process.
* One or more supports and interventions shall be required to be implemented, depending on the results of the diagnostic review, consisting of but not limited to:
	+ Replace staff in leadership positions with turnaround leaders, for example-
		- Superintendent
		- District staff
		- Principal
	+ Limited staff replacement.
	+ Direction over budget.
	+ Increased instructional time.
	+ Identify the district as at-risk and place accountability on the district for more involvement in school improvement efforts.

## Intervention Step Three

* The Deputy Superintendent is tasked with the process and selection of the leader for the school and/or district.

## Supports and Interventions for Underperforming Districts

## Recommendation #8: After identifying the bottom three districts, the following six steps should occur:

1. Deputy Superintendent and/or Chief Education Officer meet with the district superintendent.
2. A second meeting is held with both the superintendent and School Board.
3. Leadership coach is put in place for superintendent.
4. Review process begins.
	1. Internal review team starts with a self-assessment.
	2. External review team begins as well.
5. District develops improvement plan based on what emerges through the review process.
6. Plan is recommended for approval by the external review team, with final approval by the State Deputy Superintendent.

### These four things *shall* be included in all district plans:

* Embedded professional development centered on instruction.
* Time for teacher collaboration.
* Freedom from any non-essential ODE requirements and reports.
* District must meet minimum number of instruction hours (i.e. 990), and state will then invest in a 5% increase of instructional time beyond the minimum.

### Menu of supports/interventions *may* be included in district plans:

* Access to leadership professional development, may include a Summer Leadership Institute.
* Partnership with other organizations like ESDs or other districts.
* Budget for other district visits to find/see best practices.
* Money to implement plan.
* Organizational Assessment (currently underway in four school districts with Strategic Investment resources).
* Work with professional organizations.
* Contract with high performing school district.
* Board engagement and aligning priorities to instruction.
* Suspend state science and social studies testing for the school/district.
* Access to team of highly skilled teachers and instructional coaches to provide job embedded professional development.
* ODE staff support to district.
* Resource for extended time/ summer programs.
* Reduction in class sizes K-2.
* Implementation of full-day kindergarten.
* Physical improvements for buildings.
* Support collaboration with unions and leadership.
* Placement of additional coaches in district and/or schools.
* Community engagement.
* School Board mentorship/coaches and/or training.

## Recommendation #9: What to do if districts do not improve after 2-4 years

* Follow the same three-step process as described on pages 8-9 for schools that do not improve.