

# Frequently Asked Questions on School Accountability



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## What's New in 2015-16

This FAQ provides a description of the current accountability system. This document is not an endorsement of the state accountability system and the negative impact it has had on public school teachers and students.

## How does the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) that replaces NCLB Affect New York's accountability system?

The recently released school accountability lists are **not** the result of the new ESSA law. ESSA went into effect December 10, 2015, but established a transition period for a new school accountability. In general, each state and school district that receives federal funds under the NCLB Waiver must continue the NCLB Waiver accountability program through the 2016-17 school year. Once the US Department of Education (USDOE) proposes and subsequently adopts regulations for ESSA, the process of developing a New York specific accountability plan will begin. Beginning in 2017-18, New York will need to implement a new accountability system that is consistent with ESSA. NYSUT has begun the process of developing guidelines/principals to use in advocating for a new accountability system.

## What are the different accountability designations under the CURRENT ACCOUNTABILITY system which require some type of intervention?

The vast majority of schools are listed as “in good standing” or are high performing schools (Reward

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School, Recognition School). The following represents the accountability designations which require some form of intervention.

<b>Accountability Designation</b>	<b>Intervention Required</b>
Local Assistance Plan (LAP) School	School level plan - determined by the district, must address identified areas
Focus District	District level plan - district comprehensive improvement plan (DCIP)
Focus School	School level plan - locally developed plan must address identified areas and findings of SED Integrated Intervention team (IIT) using the Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness (DTSDE)
Priority School	School level plan - SED approved intervention plan, must address identified areas, turnaround principles and findings of the SED IIT team.

### **What is a Priority School?**

Based on the **current** NCLB waiver a school becomes a “Priority School” when it is one of the 5 percent lowest performing school buildings in New York. “Performance” is defined by either the combined ELA and math scores on state tests, or high schools that have graduation rates below 60 percent. In New York there are 188 Priority Schools for 2016-17. Of the 188 Priority Schools, 113 of these schools are new to the Priority School list.

### **How many years of underperformance does it take for a school to become a Priority School?**

There are no set number of years that a school must “underperform” to be identified as a Priority School. The Priority Schools list is based on how schools perform relative to other schools. The initial list came out in 2012 and since that time schools that made progress could get off the list but no new schools were added. The new list that was released in February 2016 was the first time the list was developed using the Common Core aligned math and ELA tests and it is the first time that schools have been added to the Priority School list since 2012.

### **When is a school placed into “Receivership?”**

After three consecutive years of being a Priority School, that school is placed into Receivership. Receivership comes solely from New York state law and it is not required by any federal law, rule or regulation either under NCLB, the related NCLB waiver, or ESSA. None of the federal accountability requirements impose the requirement for Receivership. NYSUT continues to oppose Receivership and is working to repeal the law.

### **How does a Receivership school come out of Receivership?**

There are two ways to exit Receivership. First, if a school exits the Priority Schools list then the school automatically exits Receivership. Second, a school under Receivership may make “demonstrable

improvement” on a combination of state-determined and school-selected indicators; some examples of these indicators include student attendance levels, graduation rates, academic performance on state exams, and student suspensions.

### **If a school leaves Receivership, can it still be a Priority School?**

Yes, schools that make enough progress (called demonstrable improvement) on the state and district determined indicators can exit Receivership but may not “improve” enough to lose Priority School status.

### **If my school is in Receivership and is removed from the Priority Schools list, is it out of Receivership too?**

Essentially yes. If a school comes off the Priority School list then it exits Receivership at the end of that school year. Schools that are Receivership Schools now and came off the Priority School list for 2016-17 will exit Receivership at the end of the 2015-16 school year. The recently released accountability list removed 69 schools from the Priority School list. However, districts will be required to continue the “interventions” in the school building incorporated into the SED approved intervention or comprehensive education plan even after it is removed from the Priority Schools list. These interventions can include but are not limited to, strategies to improve student achievement and address achievement gaps, school climate, positive behavior supports and community engagement. ***However, the Receivership agreements and any actions imposed on employees by the Receiver also end at the end of the school year when a school building exits Receivership.***

### **My school was just added to the Priority School list for 2016-17 – is it now a Receivership School?**

No, a school must be a Priority School for three consecutive years before it enters Receivership.

### **What is a “Focus School”?**

A school becomes a “Focus School” based on a two-stage process. First, the state will identify the districts with the lowest-performing student subgroups and designates them as Focus Districts. Student subgroups include: English language learners, low income students, special education, and various racial designations (black or African American, Latino, etc.)

Second, the district identifies schools that had one or more student subgroups in ELA and math and/or graduation rate that are at or below the performance cut points established for identification, these schools are identified as Focus Schools. Approximately 10 percent of school buildings in the state are designated Focus Schools. Focus Districts must develop a Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) for its Focus Schools designed to mitigate the academic issues in the school.

Focus Schools do not automatically become Priority Schools at some point. Focus Schools are designated based on student subgroup performance levels whereas Priority Schools are designated based upon all student performance levels relative to performance of other schools.

While some Focus Schools may be designated a Priority School on future accountability lists, there is no direct connection between the two designations. Also, a Focus School does not become eligible for Receivership at any point. A school must be a Priority School for three years before it is designated for Receivership.

### **How many years of underperformance does it take for a school to become a Focus School?**

There is no set minimum number of years of “underperformance” needed to be identified as a Focus School. The Focus School list is developed based on how the student subgroups perform at each school relative to all other schools. As noted above, approximately 10 percent of all schools are identified as Focus Schools.

### **What is a Local Assistance Plan (LAP) Schools?**

SED has not yet designated any LAP schools for 2016-17. It is expected that SED will designate LAP schools in the near future. In the past, LAP schools were identified by SED for either failing to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for a student subgroup for multiple years; having large and increasing gaps in performance between a subgroup and other students; or for schools not in Focus Districts, having a subgroup perform at or below the cut point that would have resulted in a district being designated as Focus for the performance of that subgroup on an accountability measure. (Note: AYP has been eliminated as a performance measurement under ESSA.)

### **Is there a list of schools and their accountability status?**

Yes attached is a link to the list of the accountability status of every school building in the state as well as separate lists of Priority Schools and Focus Schools

<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/accountability/ESEADesignations.html>

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