

2014 "At-a-Glance" Overview:

Focus Schools

What are Focus Schools?

Focus Schools are schools with the largest achievement gaps, defined as the difference between the average scale score for the top 30% of students and the bottom 30% of students.

These schools are derived from the achievement gap component within the Top-to-Bottom ranking.

How are they determined?:

Focus Schools are based on the Top-to-Bottom ranking methodology which includes data from achievement, improvement, and achievement gaps in standardized scores.

Included in the ranking are all open schools with two years of data for 30 or more students in two or more tested subjects.

Schools may be excluded from designation if the bottom 30% cohort shows high achievement or high improvement. If the lowest performing 30% of students are performing or improving at a high rate compared to the state average, they are excluded from identification.

What happens once a school is named a Focus School?

The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) will offer support in

- analyzing achievement data,
- facilitating professional dialogue, and
- customizing interventions.

MDE will develop and provide a District Toolkit designed for districts that have schools identified as Focus Schools. The toolkit is meant to help districts identify where their schools need the most support. MDE will provide technical assistance to districts on

the use of this toolkit in the form of MDE- trained and paid-for District Improvement Facilitators (DIFs). With the assistance of their DIFs, these districts will be asked to self-diagnose and self-prescribe changes in their supports to Focus Schools based on the resources in the toolkit.

A Focus School identified in the 2012-2013 cohort and not identified in the 2013-2014 cohort is conditionally suspended from all required set-asides, strategies, and interventions provided the school is not again named a Focus School through the 2015-2016 school year. This would be similarly applied to a school first named Focus in 2013-2014 and not 2014-2015.

How does a school exit Focus School status?

To exit Focus School status, the school,

- following the end of Year 4, must make Accountability Scorecard progress (attaining Green, Lime, Yellow or Orange designation), including meeting the safe harbor target for the bottom 30% subgroup. (Scorecard designation made in August following end of Year 3);
- must submit a report to MDE documenting the ongoing steps that will be taken to sustain the effort.

If a school fails to exit Focus School status following the beginning of Year 4, they continue on as a Focus School and have the opportunity on a yearly basis to exit if they meet the Accountability Scorecard criteria shown above.