Baselines for Priority, Focus and Reward Schools

Priority School- A Title I school that, based on available data, has been identified among the lowest-performing schools in the state. The state must identify at least 5 percent of Title I schools as priority schools. While these schools might have achievement gap problems, they also have systemic, across-the-board issues with proficiency and growth. Priority Schools are required to work with their LEA and the State to implement research-based turnaround models.

Focus School- A Title I school that, based on available data, is contributing to the achievement gap in the state. This category of schools includes schools with the largest achievement gaps, the lowest-performing subgroups and graduation rates below 60 percent. The state must identify at least 10 percent of Title I schools as focus schools. Focus Schools are required to work with their LEA to implement an improvement plan that addresses the specific issues in that school. The State is required to provide technical assistance and support to LEAs working with Focus Schools, and to ensure that Focus Schools are subject to research-based interventions.

Reward School- A Title I school that, based on available data, is either one of the highest-achieving or has made substantial progress despite obstacles within the past year. There is no set percentage of schools that must be identified as Reward Schools but half must be identified as the "highest-performing" and half must be identified as the "highest-progress."

- There are approximately 843 Title I schools in Minnesota, meaning we must identify 42 Priority Schools and 84 Focus Schools.
- The list of Priority and Focus Schools must be submitted with the application on November 14. These schools will maintain this identification for the 3-year duration of the waiver unless they meet exit criteria.
- Of the 42 Priority Schools, 19 will be SIG (OTAS) schools leaving 23 additional schools to be identified.
- There are 18 Title I high schools in Minnesota with a graduation rate of less than 60 percent. These schools must be identified as either Priority or Focus.
- All told, of the 126 schools that must be identified as either Priority or Focus Schools, 37 will be identified based on SIG status or Graduation Rate, leaving an additional 89 to be identified by some method.
- There is no set percentage that must be identified as Reward Schools. The list of Reward Schools is updated annually.