DEMONSTRATING THAT AN SEA'S LISTS OF REWARD, PRIORITY, AND FOCUS SCHOOLS MEET ESEA FLEXIBILITY DEFINITIONS

A State educational agency (SEA) that requests ESEA flexibility must identify reward, priority, and focus schools that meet the definitions of those categories of schools set forth in the document titled *ESEA Flexibility*. The U.S. Department of Education (Department) anticipates that many SEAs will do this by developing a method to generate lists of schools that meet those definitions. However, some SEAs have proposed identifying their reward, priority, and focus schools using school grades or ratings from their overall differentiated recognition, accountability, and support systems. This method of identifying reward, priority, and focus schools is permissible so long as the SEA demonstrates that it has identified the requisite numbers of schools that meet the ESEA flexibility definitions. Following is some additional information on how an SEA might provide this demonstration. Please note that this document is intended to provide examples an SEA might find helpful, but an SEA may develop an alternative method of making this demonstration.

In addition, please note that, for the purposes of ESEA flexibility, only schools that meet the definition of a reward, priority, or focus school may count toward the number of schools that an SEA is required to identify (although an SEA may identify additional Title I or non-Title I schools). In other words, an SEA proposing to use pre-existing school grades or ratings to identify reward, priority, and focus schools must demonstrate how those grades or ratings capture the right number of schools that meet the definitions under ESEA flexibility.

REWARD SCHOOLS

A reward school is either a "highest-performing school" or a "high-progress school." In identifying reward schools, an SEA must identify at least some "highest-performing schools" and some "high-progress schools."

Definition:
- A "**highest-performing school**" is a Title I school among the Title I schools in the State that have the highest absolute performance over a number of years for the "all students" group and for all subgroups on the statewide assessments that are part of the SEA's differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system, combined, and, at the high school level, is also among the Title I schools with the highest graduation rates. A highest-performing school must be making adequate yearly progress (AYP) for the "all students" group and all of its subgroups. A school may not be classified as a highest-performing school if there are significant achievement gaps across subgroups that are not closing in the school.

- A "**high-progress school**" is a Title I school among the ten percent of Title I schools in the State that are making the most progress in improving the performance of the "all students" group over a number of years on the statewide assessments that are part of the SEA's differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system, and, at the high school level, is also among the Title I schools in the State that are making the most progress in increasing graduation rates. A school may not be classified as a high-progress school if there are significant achievement gaps across subgroups that are not closing in the school.

Definition Summary:
A highest-performing school must:
1. Be a Title I school;
2. Be among the Title I schools within the State with the highest absolute performance over a number of years for the "all students" group and for all subgroups, and, at the high school level, be among the Title I schools with the highest graduation rates;

3. Be making AYP for the "all students" group and all subgroups; and
4. Not have significant achievement gaps across subgroups that are not closing.

A high-progress school must:
1. Be a Title I school;
2. Be among the top ten percent of Title I schools in the State in improving the performance of the "all students" group over a number of years, and, at the high school level, be among the Title I schools making the most progress in increasing graduation rates; and
3. Not have significant achievement gaps across subgroups that are not closing.

Demonstrating Alignment with the Definition of Reward Schools:

In order to demonstrate that a list of reward schools generated by the overall grade or rating in an SEA's accountability system (*e.g.*, a list of reward schools that includes all schools graded "A" or rated "Level 1") meets the definition above, an SEA might:

- With respect to the highest-performing schools:
  o Generate a list that rank-orders Title I schools in the State based on aggregate performance in reading/language arts and mathematics for the "all students" group over a number of years (using a formula the SEA develops for this calculation).
  o Generate a list that rank-orders Title I high schools in the State based on graduation rates for the "all students" group over a number of years.
  o For each list, set a cut point that separates highest-performing schools from other schools.
  o Remove from the lists all schools not making AYP for the "all students" group and all subgroups (based on the most recent data available).
  o Remove from the lists schools that have significant achievement gaps that are not closing (using a formula the SEA develops to determine which schools have such gaps).

The SEA would then demonstrate that a reasonable number of the schools that it has identified as highest-performing reward schools based on being at a certain level in its accountability system are also on the lists of the schools it has generated through the steps above. For example, an SEA could highlight, on the lists of schools it has generated through these steps, the schools that are on the SEA's list of "A" schools.

- With respect to high-progress schools:
  o Generate a list of Title I schools in the State making the greatest aggregate progress in improving achievement in reading/language arts and mathematics based on performance of the "all students" group over a number of years (using a formula the SEA develops for this calculation).
  o Generate a list of Title I high schools in the State making the greatest progress in increasing graduation rates for the "all students" group over a number of years.
  o For each list, set a cut point that separates high-progress schools from other schools.
  o Remove from the lists schools that have significant achievement gaps that are not closing (using the same formula the SEA develops to determine which highest-performing schools have such gaps).

The SEA would then demonstrate that a reasonable number of the schools that it has identified as high-progress reward schools based on being at a certain level in its accountability system are also on the list of the schools it has generated through these steps. For example, an SEA could highlight, on the list of the schools it has generated through these steps, the schools that are on the SEA's list of "A" schools.

PRIORITY SCHOOLS

Definition:
- A school among the lowest five percent of Title I schools in the State based on the achievement of the "all students" group in terms of proficiency on the statewide assessments that are part of the SEA's differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system, combined, and has demonstrated a lack of progress on those assessments over a number of years in the "all students" group;
- A Title I-participating or Title I-eligible high school with a graduation rate less than 60 percent over a number of years; or
- A Tier I or Tier II school under the School Improvement Grants (SIG) program that is using SIG funds to implement a school intervention model.

Definition Summary:
A priority school must be at least <u>one</u> of the following:
1. Among the lowest five percent of Title I schools in the State based on both achievement and lack of progress of the "all students" group;
2. A Title I-participating or Title I-eligible high school with a graduation rate less than 60 percent over a number of years; or
3. A currently-served Tier I or Tier II SIG school.

Demonstrating Alignment with the Definition of Priority Schools:

In order to demonstrate that a list of priority schools generated based on the overall rating in an SEA's accountability system (*e.g.*, a list of priority schools that includes all schools graded "F" or rated "Level 5" out of five possible levels) meets the definition above, an SEA might:

1. Determine the number of schools it must identify as priority schools (*i.e.*, five percent of its Title I schools in the 2010–2011 school year).
2. Identify the schools on the list generated by the overall rating in the accountability system that are currently-served Tier I or Tier II SIG schools.
3. Identify the schools on the list generated by the overall rating in the accountability system that are Title I-participating or Title I-eligible high schools that have had a graduation rate less than 60 percent over a number of years.
4. Determine the number of additional schools the SEA needs to identify as among the lowest-achieving five percent of Title I schools in the State to reach the minimum number of priority schools it must identify by subtracting the number of schools identified in steps 2 and 3 from the number identified in step 1.
5. Generate a list that rank-orders Title I schools in the State based on the achievement of the "all students" group in terms of proficiency on the statewide assessments, combined, and lack of progress on those assessments over a number of years. To generate this list, an SEA might use the same method that it used to identify its persistently lowest-achieving schools for purposes of the SIG program, but apply that method to the pool of all Title I schools in the State.
6. Using the list from step 5, identify which schools fall within the lowest-achieving five percent.
7. Demonstrate that the list generated based on schools' overall rating in the accountability system includes a number of schools at least equal to the number determined in step 4 that are also on the list of lowest-achieving five percent schools identified in step 6. Note that the schools counted for this purpose must not have been counted as currently-served SIG schools or low graduation rate schools. The table below provides an example of how this might work in a fictitious State.

State

Category of Priority Schools	Number of Schools
Total number of Title I schools	1000
Total number of priority schools required to be identified	50
Total number of schools on list generated based on overall rating (*e.g.*, schools graded "F") that are currently-served Tier I or Tier II SIG schools	20
Total number of schools on list generated based on overall rating (*e.g.*, schools graded "F") that are Title I-eligible or Title I-participating high schools with a graduation rate less than 60 percent over a number of years	10
Total number of schools on list generated based on overall rating (*e.g.*, schools graded "F") that are among the lowest-achieving five percent of Title I schools	20

FOCUS SCHOOLS

Definition:
- A Title I school that has the largest within-school gaps between the highest-achieving subgroup or subgroups and the lowest-achieving subgroup or subgroups or, at the high school level, has the largest within-school gaps in graduation rates ("within-school-gaps" focus school); or
- A Title I school that has a subgroup or subgroups with low achievement or, at the high school level, low graduation rates ("low-achieving subgroup" focus school).

An SEA must also identify as a focus school a Title I high school with a graduation rate less than 60 percent over a number of years that is not identified as a priority school ("low-graduation-rate" focus school).

These determinations must be based on the achievement and lack of progress over a number of years of one or more subgroups of students identified under ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II) in terms of proficiency on the statewide assessments that are part of the SEA's differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system, combined, or, at the high school level, graduation rates for one or more subgroups.

Definition Summary:
A "within-school-gaps" focus school must:
1. Be a Title I school;
2. Have the largest gaps in achievement, or at the high school level, in graduation rates, between subgroups within the school; and
3. Have had a lack of progress over a number of years of the lowest achieving subgroup or subgroups in terms of proficiency on the statewide assessments or, at the high school level, graduation rates.

A "low-achieving-subgroup" focus school must:
1. Be a Title I school;
2. Have one or more subgroups with low achievement or, at the high school level, low graduation rates; and
3. Have had a lack of progress over a number of years of the lowest achieving subgroup or subgroups in terms of proficiency on the statewide assessments or, at the high school level, graduation rates.

Note that an SEA might consider "school-to-State gaps" to meet this definition.

A "low-graduation-rate" focus school must:
1. Be a Title I school;
2. Have had a graduation rate less than 60 percent over a number of years; and
3. Not be identified as a priority school.

Note that all schools that meet this definition must be identified as focus schools.

<u>Demonstrating Alignment with the Definition of Focus Schools</u>:

In order to demonstrate that a list of focus schools generated based on the overall rating in an SEA's accountability system (*e.g.*, a list of focus schools that includes all schools graded "D") meets the definition above, an SEA might:

1. Determine the number of schools it must identify as focus schools (*i.e.*, a number equal to ten percent of the State's Title I schools).
2. Identify the schools on the list generated by the overall rating in the accountability system (*e.g.*, the schools graded "D") that are Title I-participating high schools that have had a graduation rate less than 60 percent over a number of years (and are not identified as priority schools) ("low-graduation-rate" focus schools).
3. Identify any additional Title I-participating high schools that have had a graduation rate less than 60 percent over a number of years and have not already been identified as priority schools (*e.g.*, from among schools graded "B" or "C") ("low-graduation-rate" focus schools) and add those schools to the list of focus schools.
4. Determine the remaining number of schools that the SEA needs to identify as focus schools by subtracting the number of schools identified in steps 2 and 3 from the number identified in step 1.
5. With respect to the State's "within-school-gaps" schools:
   o Generate a list that rank-orders Title I schools in the State based on achievement gaps between subgroups in a school over a number of years (using a formula the SEA develops for this calculation);
   o If an SEA elects to do so, generate a list that rank-orders Title I high schools in the State based on graduation rate gaps between subgroups in a school over a number of years (using a formula the SEA develops for this calculation);
   o For each list, set a cut point that separates highest achievement or graduation rate gap schools from other schools.
6. With respect to the State's "low-achieving-subgroup" schools:
   o Generate a list that rank-orders Title I schools in the State based on the achievement of subgroups, which may be based on gaps between subgroups in a school and subgroups in the State, over a number of years (using a formula the SEA develops for this calculation);
   o If an SEA elects to do so, generate a list that rank-orders Title I schools in the State based on subgroup graduation rates, which may be based on gaps between subgroups in a school and subgroups in the State, over a number of years (using a formula the SEA develops for this calculation);
   o For each list, set a cut point that separates lowest achievement or graduation rate schools from other schools.
7. Not counting any schools already identified through steps 2 and 3, demonstrate that the schools that the SEA has identified as "focus schools" based on being at a certain level in its accountability system are (A) above the cut points set for the lists generated in steps 5 and 6, and (B) total at least the number determined in step 4.

The following table provides an example of how this might work in a fictitious State:

State

Category of Focus Schools	Number of Schools
Total number of Title I schools	1000
Total number of schools required to be identified as focus schools	100
Total number of schools on list generated based on overall rating (*e.g.*, schools graded "D") that are Title I-participating high schools that have had a graduation rate less than 60 percent over a number of years	10
Total number of additional Title I-participating high schools that have had a graduation rate less than 60 percent over a number of years and are not identified as priority schools	5
Total number of schools on the list generated based on overall rating (*e.g.*, schools graded "D") that have the greatest within-school gaps	25
Total number of schools on the list generated based on overall rating (*e.g.*, schools graded "D") that have a subgroup or subgroups with low achievement or, at the high school level, low graduation rates	60