

## **Focus School Methodology**

Title I schools with in-school gaps in achievement that are above 3-year state average (38.7%) when averaging gaps in the previous year and at least one of the two prior years between the highest-achieving subgroup and lowest-achieving subgroup.

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Title I schools with “proficiency score-R/M” with a subgroup with a proficiency score below 50% in the previous year and one of the two prior years.

The number of Focus Schools will be equal to 10% of the number of schools in Title I School Improvement in 2010-11, i.e., 130 schools.

If the number of schools from the gap analysis is higher than 130, the list will include the top 130 schools ranking from high to low the proficiency gap in the previous year. Otherwise, the list will include all schools from the gap analysis plus as many as needed to reach 130 from the proficiency analysis ranking from low to high the lowest proficiency subgroup in the previous year.

## **NOTES AND DEFINITIONS**

### **A. Contributing to Achievement Gaps in the State**

NC is defining contributing to the achievement gap in the State as a school that has an in-school achievement gap between its highest-achieving subgroup and its lowest-achieving subgroup that is above the 3-year state average (e.g., above 38.7% for 2010-11, 2009-10 and 2008-09). The “all students” subgroup is not included in the gap analysis.

### **B. Subgroup Lack of Progress**

NC is defining “lack of progress” as a school that has a subgroup or subgroups that 1) had a proficiency score-R/M below 50% in the previous year, AND who 2) had a proficiency score-R/M below 50% in one of the two prior years (e.g., less than 50% in 2010-11 and less than 50% in either 2009-10 or 2008-09). The “all students” subgroup is not included in the lack of progress analysis. The subgroup or subgroups can be different across years.

### **C. High Schools**

A high school is any school that:

- graduates students, or
- has any of the following grades: 9-13

### **D. Number of Years**

When determining whether a school has gaps in proficiency score-R/M and/or graduation rate over a number of years, NC considers the last three years of data for a school. For example, schools identified as having a lack of progress must fall under the necessary criteria for the previous year, and at least one of the two prior years.

### **E. Proficiency Score – R/M**

For the definition of Focus Schools, North Carolina created a composite of English/language arts and mathematics assessments, to be known as the Proficiency Score – R/M.

## **F. Included All Schools**

In the analysis to determine the Focus Schools, all active schools in North Carolina in 2011-12 were considered. This includes charter schools, alternative, and special schools. A school is considered active if its operational status is new or open in the Educational Directory and Demographical Information Exchange (EDDIE) system. There were 2,578 active schools in 2011-12.

## **G. Included Assessments**

The assessments used in determining each school's Proficiency Score – R/M include the State's assessments in English/language arts and mathematics, and they include the State's general assessments, alternate assessments based on alternate academic achievement standards, and alternate assessments based on modified academic achievement standards in those subjects.

Specific assessments used include:

- End-of-Grade Reading, Grades 3-8
- End-of-Grade Math, Grades 3-8
- Grade 10 Math\*
- Grade 10 English\*

\*For Grade 10 Math and English, banked student scores are used during the calculation. For mathematics, Algebra I scores of current 10th graders are used, including the scores of those 10th graders who have taken Algebra I prior to 10th grade (i.e., "banked" scores). For Grade 10 English, scores are based on students who are proficient in both English I and the Grade 10 Writing Assessment. NC used the English I scores of current 10th graders; including the "banked" English I scores of those 10th graders who have taken English I prior to 10th grade.

Note: In counting the total number of students who are proficient and the total number of students assessed, include the number of proficient students with disabilities who have taken an alternate assessment (based on alternate academic achievement standards or modified academic achievement standards) and the total number of students with disabilities who have taken an alternate assessment. For this calculation, NC included all schools, including alternative, charter and special schools.

## **H. Minimum Number of Students**

For the proficiency score R/M to be considered, the subgroup must have a minimum of 80 assessments taken when adding reading and math denominators. For the graduation rate to be considered, the subgroup must have a minimum of 40 students in the graduation denominator. Additionally, if the graduation numerator is zero for "all students," the graduation rate is set to null for all subgroups, including the "all students" subgroup, regardless of the value of the graduation denominator.

## **I. Largest Within School Gaps**

Any time the definition calls for identifying Title I schools that have the largest within school gaps, NC selected Title I schools that had an average achievement gap between the highest-achieving subgroup and the lowest-achieving subgroup of more than the 3-year state average in the previous and at least one of the two prior years.

## **J. Total Number of Focus Schools**

Any time the definition calls for identifying a total number of Focus Schools in a State, NC selected a number of Title I schools equal to at least 10 percent of all Title I schools in 2010-11, which was a total of 1,296. 10% is 130 schools.

## **K. Title I Schools**

Any time the definition calls for identifying Title I schools, NC selected schools that were served with Title I funds in 2010-11 and 2011-12.

## **STEPS FOR DETERMINING THE FOCUS SCHOOLS IN NORTH CAROLINA**

### **A. Calculate the Proficiency Score-R/M**

**Step 1:** Calculate the total number of proficient students in the “all students” group in English/language arts by adding the number of proficient students in each grade tested in a school. Calculate the total number of proficient students in the “all students” group in mathematics by adding the number of proficient students in each grade tested in the school.

**Step 2:** Add the total number of proficient students in English/language arts and mathematics.  
**This is the Numerator.**

**Step 3:** Calculate the total number of students in the “all students” group in the school who have taken the State’s English/language arts assessment and the total number of students in the “all students” group who have taken the State’s mathematics assessment.

**Step 4:** Add the total number of students in the “all students” group in the school who have taken the State’s English/language arts assessment and the total number of students in the “all students” group who have taken the State’s mathematics assessment. **This is the Denominator.**

**Step 5:** Divide the numerator (step 2) by the denominator (step 4) and multiply by 100 to determine the percent proficient in English/language arts and mathematics in the school. This is called the proficiency score-R/M for a school. Calculate this for all schools.

Note: In counting the total number of students who are proficient and the total number of students assessed, include the number of proficient students with disabilities who have taken an alternate assessment (based on alternate academic achievement standards or modified academic achievement standards) and the total number of students with disabilities who have taken an alternate assessment. For this calculation, NC included all schools, including alternative, charter and special schools.

### **B. Determine Title I Schools with Average Achievement Gap above the 3-year State Average Gap**

**Step 6:** From the list of active schools mentioned in Note F, select all schools that are Title I schools. (1,230 schools)

**Step 7:** Using the schools selected in step 6, calculate the average achievement gap for the past three years for those schools with achievement gap data in the previous and at least one of the two prior years. (1,114 schools)

**Step 8:** Select schools from step 7 with an average achievement gap above the 3-year state average for the previous year (38.7% for 2010-11). (110 schools)

**Step 9:** From schools identified in step 8, remove schools previously identified as Priority Schools. (109 schools)

### **C. Determine Title I Schools with Subgroups with Proficiency less than 50%**

**Step 10:** Select schools from step 6 who have demonstrated a subgroup “lack of progress” in performance (i.e. those that have any subgroup with proficiency score-R/M of less than 50% for the previous year and at least one of the two prior years). (245 schools)

**Step 11:** From schools identified in step 10, remove schools previously identified as Priority Schools. (217 schools)

**Step 12:** From the list of schools from step 11, remove schools previously identified in step 9. (131 schools)

**Step 13:** Rank the list of schools from step 12, from lowest to highest using the subgroup with lowest proficiency score- R/M for the most recent year. (131 schools)

**Step 14:** From the list of schools from step 13, select from top to bottom as many schools as needed to reach 10% of Title I Schools, i.e., 10% minus the # of schools from step 9. (21 schools)

### **D. Compile the List of Focus Schools**

**Step 15:** Create an unduplicated list of the schools identified in steps 9 and 14. This is the list of **Focus Schools**. (109+21=130 schools)