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## **Persistently Lowest-Achieving Schools in the District of Columbia**

The U.S. Department of Education issued guidance that all state education agencies must define the “persistently lowest-achieving schools” using the following definition:

Persistently lowest-achieving schools means, as determined by the state:

- (i) Any Title I school in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring that
  - (a) Is among the lowest-achieving five percent of Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring or the lowest-achieving five Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring in the State, whichever number of schools is greater; or
  - (b) Is a high school that has had a graduation rate as defined in 34 CFR 200.19(b) that is less than 60 percent over a number of years; and
- (ii) Any secondary school that is eligible for, but does not receive, Title I funds that
  - (a) Is among the lowest-achieving five percent of secondary schools or the lowest-achieving five secondary schools in the State that are eligible for, but do not receive, Title I funds, whichever number of schools is greater; or
  - (b) Is a high school that has had a graduation rate as defined in 34 CFR 200.19(b) that is less than 60 percent over a number of years.

To identify the lowest-achieving schools, a state must take into account both

- (i) The academic achievement of the “all students” group in a school in terms of proficiency on the state’s assessments under section 1111(b)(3) of the ESEA in reading/language arts and mathematics combined; and
- (ii) The school’s lack of progress on those assessments over a number of years in the “all students” group.

For more information, see the U.S. Department of Education’s *Guidance on School Improvement Grants Under Section 1002(g) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* (<http://www.ed.gov/programs/sif/guidance-20091218.doc>).

OSSE created a definition for the persistently-lowest achieving schools in the District of Columbia that assigns points to every school in the District based on its standing with the following three elements: current year improvement status; overall growth in the percentage of students scoring proficient or above in the school from 2007 to 2009 in both reading/language arts and mathematics; and whether the percentage of students overall in the school scoring proficient or above is more than half the distance from the annual measurable objective (AMO) over a two- or three-year period in both reading/language arts and mathematics. OSSE added the points assigned to each school based on these data elements and ranked school based on total points. Per federal requirements, OSSE defined a “Tier I” and “Tier II” based on the definition above.

### **Tier I Schools**

In order to determine the number of schools that meet the definition of Tier I schools (as defined in (i) above), OSSE used the following method:

- There are 131 schools receiving Title I funds in the District of Columbia that are identified for improvement in the 2009-2010 school year.
- Five percent of that total is 7 schools. OSSE must identify the seven lowest-achieving Title I schools as the persistently lowest achieving.

- OSSE assigned points to every public school in the city based on the following three factors. Points are awarded to all schools (a total of 90 point are available) and then schools are ranked based on total points. In this definition, the worst-case scenario would mean a school has 90 points.
1. Improvement status. Schools were assigned points based on the current year’s improvement status, which is an indicator that factors in persistence: schools in restructuring have missed AYP for six years.
    - 10 points if they are in improvement year 1;
    - 20 points if they are in improvement year 2;
    - 30 points if they are corrective action;
    - 40 points if they are in restructuring planning; or
    - 50 points if they are in restructuring implementation.
  2. Overall growth. Schools were assigned points if the aggregate percentage of students scoring proficient or above did not increase over a period of years, in both reading and mathematics (*i.e.*, lack of growth). This indicator is intended to give credit for schools that may be identified for improvement, not making adequate yearly progress, but that are improving student achievement.
    - 10 points if there was a decrease in reading from 2007 to 2009; and
    - 10 points if there was a decrease in mathematics from 2007 to 2009.
  3. Distance from the annual measurable objective (AMO). This measure combines a school’s overall proficiency rate with a persistence factor. Schools were assigned points based on whether the school has repeatedly had an overall percentage of students scoring proficient or above in reading or mathematics that is less than half the state’s AMO for that year. The AMO is the target a school needs to reach in order to make adequate yearly progress.
    - 5 points if the percentage proficient or above in reading is less than half the AMO for 2008 and 2009;
    - 5 points if the percentage proficient or above in reading is less than half the AMO for 2007, 2008, and 2009;
    - 5 points if the percentage proficient or above in mathematics is less than half the AMO for 2008 and 2009; and
    - 5 points if the percentage proficient or above in mathematics is less than half the AMO for 2007, 2008, and 2009.
- OSSE also identified any high school with a graduation rate less than 60 percent in the two most recent years.

The following ten schools in the District of Columbia meet the definition of Tier I “persistently lowest-achieving” for the 2009-2010 school year, either for being one of the lowest-achieving five percent of Title I schools identified for improvement or for having a graduation rate below 60 percent in each of the two previous years:

**Lowest achieving 5 percent**

Browne JHS  
 Dunbar SHS  
 Hamilton Center  
 Kenilworth ES  
 Options Public Charter School  
 Prospect LC  
 Spingarn SHS

**Low graduation rate**

Anacostia SHS  
 Eastern SHS  
 Luke C. Moore Academy

### **Tier II Schools**

Each state is also required to define its Tier II schools that meet the definition outlined above in (ii). Currently, there are no secondary schools in the District of Columbia that are eligible for, but do not receive, Title I funds. All secondary schools are currently receiving Title I funds. As a result, there are no Tier II schools, as defined by the U.S. Department of Education.

In future years, should there be any Tier II schools, OSSE will identify the persistently lowest achieving Tier II schools, using the same procedure as outlined above for Tier I schools. Thus, at this time, since there are no Tier II schools, none have been turned around, restarted, closed, or transformed.

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