

School Improvement: ESSA Updates for 2017-18

Since 2012, Tennessee has identified its lowest performing 5 percent of schools and awarded competitive grants to districts and schools to implement plans for turnaround. From these intervention options, we have seen over 20 schools move out of the bottom 5 percent. We have also learned both from the successes and struggles in our Priority schools. As we developed our continuum of intervention and support for our lowest performing schools, much of what we have learned is embedded in our model. First and foremost, we know that improving low-performing schools is challenging work and requires additional capacity, funding, and opportunity to innovate. Tennessee's theory of action is an evidence-based one that will set priorities and boundaries for the state's turnaround efforts.

Our guiding principles for school improvement are evident in the framework and processes established to support our lowest performing schools:

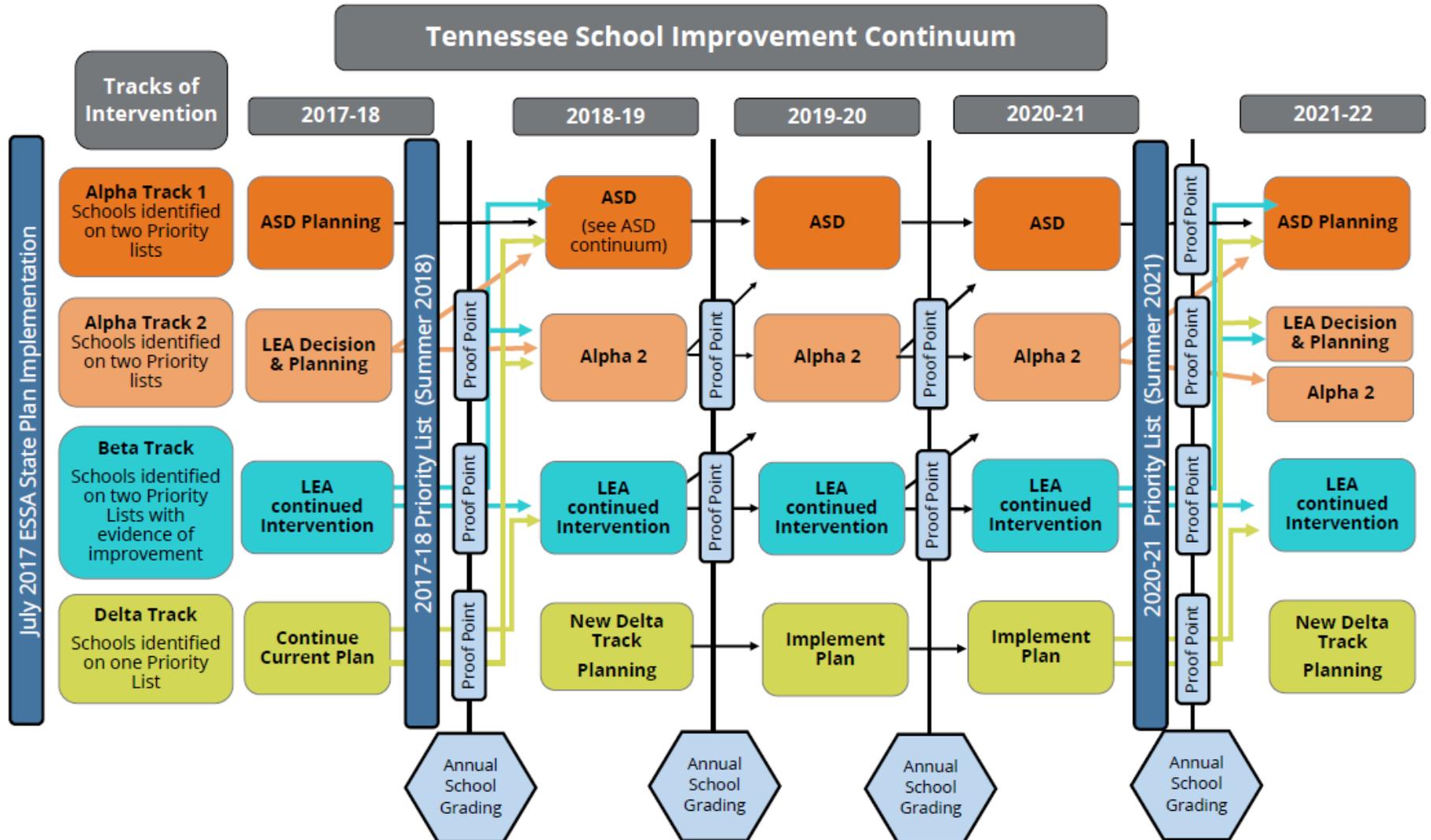
- **First, empower districts.**
 - Districts should have an opportunity to improve Priority schools first with state support, if the schools are new to Priority list.
 - The department will establish and communicate clear criteria for the Achievement School District (ASD) eligibility through the school improvement continuum.
- **Invest in what works.**
 - Schools that are exceeding growth expectations should be supported to sustain those gains.
 - Evidence-based strategies that support strong leadership, effective instruction, and supportive learning environment (wrap-around student supports) will be the focus of school improvement planning.
- **Students can't wait.**
 - Schools that have been historically underperforming and are not showing adequate growth must have state intervention.
 - Schools with a history of underperformance do not begin with a clean slate and will require intervention within the three years before a new Priority list is run in accordance with the school accountability framework.

Tennessee's system of performance management for district and school plans will operate through the newly created school improvement continuum. The state will provide support to districts with Priority schools through a new Office of School Improvement (OSI) and the processes outlined in the continuum. Tennessee commits to making the state's lowest performing schools, and the improvement of these schools, a priority.

Tennessee's School Improvement Continuum will go into effect July 1, 2017 with current Priority schools. The continuum defines three tracks of intervention (Alpha, Beta, and Delta) for Priority schools based on multiple factors, including but not limited to:

- (1) previous identification as a Priority school
- (2) overall TVAAS composite
- (3) one-year success rate across all tested subjects
- (4) length of time in current intervention
- (5) feeder pattern for the schools through which students progress
- (6) graduation rate

Tennessee's next Priority list will be released in summer 2018. The 2017-18 Priority list will be based on data from 2015-16, 2016-17, and 2017-18. This will allow for the inclusion of data from the new TNReady assessment and historical TCAP science assessment. Releasing the 2017-18 list in summer 2018 also creates alignment with the first designation of A-F school grades as well as the first opportunity for a Focus school to be eligible for comprehensive support. The Priority list in 2020-21 will include three years of new science and social studies tests, as well as TNReady assessments for ELA and math.



Determining Intervention Tracks in 2017

The School Improvement Continuum begins with the 2017-18 school year, as ESSA implementation begins July 2017, with current Priority schools immediately being designated for tracks of intervention. The 2017-18 school year will be a planning year for school improvement with full implementation in the 2018-19 school year. The cycle for intervening in Priority schools is illustrated in the continuum graphic above and represents processes which repeat as new Priority lists are generated every three years. This cycle allows for the department to differentiate support to schools —through districts—utilizing the OSI.

Alpha Track: Priority schools that have been identified on the **two most recent Priority Lists** and have earned a composite TVAAS score of 3 or less. These schools are eligible for the state-led intervention by the Achievement School District. Schools in the Alpha track will be reviewed based on feeder pattern, success rank/rate, graduation rate, and other relevant indicators to determine whether Alpha 1 or Alpha 2 is the more appropriate track of intervention. The Commissioner will ultimately determine which schools are on Alpha Track 1 (and immediately eligible for the ASD) or Alpha Track 2 based on the comprehensive review of all relevant indicators. If a school is on Alpha Track 2, there are annual proof points before transition to the ASD (Alpha Track 1).

Beta Track: Priority schools that have been identified on **two most recent Priority lists and demonstrate evidence of improvement or progress.** These schools are not immediately eligible for the ASD and will work in partnership with TDOE to ensure that the plan for intervention is appropriate based on identified need and level of evidence. If a school is on the Beta track, there are annual proof points that could result in eligibility for the ASD (Alpha Track 1 or 2).

Delta Track: Priority schools that have been identified on **one Priority list.** Schools on the Delta track will undergo a rigorous school improvement planning process, including a readiness review led by TDOE leadership and will implement new, district-led, evidence-based interventions. These schools are not immediately eligible for the ASD. If a school is on the Delta track, the proof points occur at three years to determine eligibility for the ASD. No school will continue on the Delta track for more than three years.

Priority School Exit Criteria

Schools will exit Priority status by meeting one of the following exit criteria:

- The school is not identified on the next Priority school list, and therefore is no longer in the bottom 5 percent
- The school exceeds the 10th percentile in the state using a one-year success rate for two consecutive years
- The school earns a level 4 or 5 TVAAS performance in all subject/grade content areas for two consecutive years
- The school exceeds the 15th percentile in the state using a one-year success rate
- If identified for consistently underperforming subgroups, schools may exit by meeting AMO targets for that subgroup for two consecutive years
- If identified for graduation rates below 67 percent, schools may exit by exceeding graduation rate of 67 percent for two consecutive years

Achievement School District (ASD): The state-level intervention is a statewide district, which was created to improve the outcomes of students in the bottom 5 percent of schools. After no more than 10 years, the ASD returns these schools to local districts with sustained capacity and higher achievement. By 2025, the ASD will close achievement gaps for students in Priority schools. Through partnerships with charter school operators and increased flexibility at the school level, the ASD will continue to improve educational opportunities and academic achievement for students in Priority schools.

- A school in the ASD will remain in the ASD for no more than 10 years, and it may have the opportunity to exit and begin the transition back to the district after two Priority list cycles.

