

## **FOCUS SCHOOL METHODOLOGY 2014**

### Analyzing achievement gaps across subgroups

South Carolina will identify underperforming schools with the largest subgroup performance gaps, and schools with significantly underperforming subgroups will be designated **focus schools**.

In analyzing subgroup performance, gap analysis can be calculated in a variety of ways. Based on input from stakeholders, educators, and school district administrators, we choose to look at the average (mean) performance of subgroups across content areas (ELA and mathematics), subtract the subgroup average (mean) scores to determine the performance gap, identify schools that had a significant performance gap in one or more subgroups, and average the significant gaps across content areas to produce a ranking of the significant performance gaps for each school.

#### Methodology for Identifying Focus Schools

The general approach presented below approximates the method we propose for determining Focus schools.

Step 1—Annually identify Title I schools for the previous and current school year.

Step 2—Identify schools with at least one tested grade.

Step 3—Identify schools with enrollment greater than or equal to 30 students in any subgroup used for analysis.

Step 4—Identify and exclude schools whose subgroups have met or exceeded all AMOs.

Step 5—Calculate an average performance gap for each elementary, middle, and high school.

- a. Using ELA and Math scale scores, calculate for each subject and school an average (mean) score for each subgroup.
- b. By subject and school, subtract mean scores (for example, Limited English Proficient (LEP) subtracted from non-Limited English Proficient) to produce the achievement gap score by subject. Exclude negative gaps. Average the mean gaps across both subjects (ELA and Math) for each subgroup.
- c. Select schools with significant achievement gap(s) in one or more student subgroups.

1. For this purpose, a significant achievement gap in subgroup performance is defined as a gap equal to or greater than one standard deviation above the mean achievement gap for that particular subgroup across all schools of that same type state-wide. For example, if the mean achievement gap for LEP students in middle schools is 15 scale points and the standard deviation is 6.0, then any school with an LEP achievement gap of 21 points or more would be considered to have a significant subgroup achievement gap for LEP students. A significant subgroup achievement gap in any other subgroup will be determined in similar fashion as equal to or greater than one standard deviation above the mean achievement gap for that particular subgroup, across all schools of that same type state-wide.

2. Calculate the difference between the subgroup mean gap and the state mean gap for each subgroup in the school that has a significant gap.
3. Sum the differences from step B across all subgroups in the school that have a significant gap.
4. Sum the number of subgroups in the school that have a significant achievement gap.
5. Divide the results of C3 by C4 to determine schools with the largest significant gaps.

Step 6—Rank order the schools by the significant gaps from largest to smallest and identify schools with the largest significant gap to equal at least 10 percent of the Title I schools in the state. If the number of schools identified using Step 5 does not equal at least 10% of the Title I schools in the state, rank order the remaining schools by their average achievement gap from largest to smallest and identify from the remaining schools those with the largest achievement gap to complete the list of Focus schools to equal at least 10 percent of the Title I schools in the state.

Step 7—At the high school level, identify the Title I schools with low graduation rates (less than 60 percent) for both years assessed.

Step 8—Identify schools that have persistent achievement gaps over a number of years that have not been previously identified in the above steps. For schools with persistent achievement gaps over several years, we propose to use the same achievement gap analysis we currently use for Title I schools.

For achievement gap analysis, the SCDE will compare each subgroup performance with the corresponding non-subgroup comparison group. For example, the performance of African-American students in a particular school will be compared with the non-African-American students and the gap in performance calculated. Similarly, looking at the performance of LEP students, a comparison of the LEP subgroup performance will be made to the performance of non-LEP students. Then, all of the gap differences in all of the subgroups will be calculated and the average of all of the observed achievement gaps will be compared in order to determine the mean achievement gap across all subgroups.

To track the progress (or lack of progress) of schools, and in particular schools with persistent achievement gaps over time, individual subgroup achievement gaps and the average (mean) achievement gap across all subgroups will be monitored. Schools with specific subgroup achievement gaps that persist over time will receive targeted interventions for that subgroup, as part of the overall Focus school interventions.