



STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM

TO: District Superintendents

FROM: Matthew Ferguson
Deputy Superintendent, Division of College, Career & Military Readiness

DATE: October 17, 2023

RE: Notification of Designation as Underperforming School or District

Upon release of the School Report Cards, S.C. Code Ann. §59-18-1625 (2002) requires the Department to formally notify the district superintendent, the local school board, and the local delegation of a school's or district's status as "underperforming."

Underperforming School Designation:

Pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. §59-18-1615 (5)(a), an "underperforming school" is defined as a school receiving an overall school report card rating of below average or unsatisfactory.

For all underperforming schools, the district is required to consult with school and community stakeholders to review and revise the school and district's strategic plan with the assistance of the School Improvement Council, to include a turnaround plan component (Continuous Improvement Plan). The turnaround plan must include input from the community. The turnaround plan must be approved by the local school board and then submitted to the SCDE Office of School Transformation for approval by January 15, 2024.

For schools with an underperforming rating, the district, local board of trustees, and school principal are responsible for notifying parents about the rating.

Requirements for Schools Receiving an Unsatisfactory Rating:

A district with a school that has an overall unsatisfactory report card rating is required to notify parents of students who attend the school and hold a public meeting within thirty (30) days of receiving the unsatisfactory overall report card rating to explain the school's rating, its implications, and how it will implement a revised strategic plan for improvement. The deadline to hold this public meeting is November 17, 2023. Additionally, for schools with unsatisfactory ratings, the revised strategic plan, once approved by the local school board and the SCDE, must be included as a topic on the local school board meeting agenda at least once a quarter.

Chronically Underperforming Schools:

A chronically underperforming school is a school that receives an overall report card rating of unsatisfactory for three consecutive years, or in the absence of the annual school report card apply the same metrics as established in the state and federal accountability model. Chronically Underperforming Schools will be determined in 2024, using data from 2021-2022, 2022-2023, and 2023-2024.

The State Superintendent of Education may seek a state-of-education emergency declaration for a school that (s)he has the capacity to serve under the following circumstances:

- (1) The school is chronically underperforming;*
- (2) The school's accreditation is denied; or*
- (3) The State Superintendent of Education determines that a school's turnaround plan results are insufficient. (S.C. Code Ann. §59-18-1635 (A))*

Underperforming District Designation:

An "underperforming district" is a district in which sixty-five percent or more of the schools in the district have an overall rating of unsatisfactory or below average on their annual school report cards (S.C. Code Ann. §59-18-1635 (4)).

The State Superintendent of Education may seek a state-of-education emergency declaration for a district that (s)he has the capacity to serve under the following circumstances:

- 1) the district is identified as underperforming for three consecutive years;*
- 2) the district's accreditation is denied;*
- 3) the Superintendent of Education determines that a district's turnaround plan results are insufficient; or*
- 4) the district is classified as being in a fiscal emergency status pursuant to Section 59-20-90, or financial mismanagement resulting in a deficit*
- 5) it has occurred. (S.C. Code Ann. §59-18-1640)*

Support from SCDE:

The South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) is required to implement a tiered system for providing technical assistance, professional development, and monitoring for underperforming schools and underperforming districts. Tiers are determined by the school's Accountability Index Rating, the Continuous Improvement Rubric (CIR) rating, and the number of consecutive cycles a school or district has been designated for improvement.

Contact:

For questions regarding underperforming school or district designations, please reach out to Kimberly Mack, kemack@ed.sc.gov, or Matthew Ferguson, mferguson@ed.sc.gov.

District specific notification letters will be forthcoming. We appreciate your attention to this important matter. We are committed to collaborative efforts to continuously improve our schools and districts.