



November 25, 2019

Mr John Rushefski
Old Forge SD
300 Marion St
Old Forge, PA 18518

Dear Mr John Rushefski:

Last year, consistent with federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requirements, Pennsylvania designated Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) schools (schools facing the most significant challenges in academic achievement, student growth, and other areas), as well as Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (A-TSI) schools (schools in which performance by one or more student groups is at or below the criteria used to designate CSI schools). Under ESSA, both CSI and A-TSI schools must be designated at least every three years, and these schools have up to four years to meet state-defined improvement targets. Pennsylvania will designate a new cohort of CSI and A-TSI schools in Fall 2021.

ESSA also requires states to annually designate schools for Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI), a locally managed cycle of school improvement, beginning 2019-20.

What is TSI?

Under Pennsylvania’s ESSA Plan, TSI designations function as an early warning system for at-risk student groups and as a signal to schools that may be at future risk for more intensive support and improvement strategies. Accordingly, criteria that drive a TSI designation are more rigorous than criteria associated with CSI and A-TSI designations that relate to the lowest performing five percent of schools. Another important distinction between cyclical (i.e., every three years) CSI and A-TSI designations and annual TSI designations is that TSI procedures draw on the most recent single year of performance data, while higher-stakes CSI and A-TSI procedures draw on multiple years of data from each three-year cycle. **The methodology used to designate schools for TSI, including specific cut points, is attached (School-Specific Designation Profile).**

Why are we receiving this letter?

The following school building in your local education agency (LEA) has been designated for TSI.

School
Old Forge JSHS

What does this mean for our school community?

Schools designated for TSI are required to develop building level improvement plans that analyze school community strengths and challenges, and that set conditions for improved student outcomes—both academic and non-academic. These plans require LEA approval from the Board of School Directors or Charter School Board Trustees. Unlike schools designated for CSI or A-TSI, schools designated for TSI determine the duration of their improvement plans. Additionally, TSI designations are not tied to state-defined exit criteria since new designations will occur annually based on the most recent data for all indicators; in other words, improved student group performance in one or more areas may result in a positive change in designation in Fall 2020.

While TSI is a locally managed and less intensive school improvement designation, TSI schools will still have access to the tools and resources that intermediate units (IUs) provide to A-TSI schools, as well as the opportunity to join networked learning sessions facilitated by IUs.

What comes next?

This advance notice requires no formal action on your part; however, we encourage school leaders to use the next two weeks to communicate with stakeholders ahead of the public posting of TSI designations on December 13, 2019.

How will the Department message TSI designations? How should I communicate around the designations?

When the Department releases TSI designations, it will be deliberate in its descriptions of designated schools. As with our CSI and A-TSI designations last year, we will emphasize that accountability determinations provide opportunity and resources for continuous improvement, and we will counter any efforts to describe accountability designations using unhelpful or inaccurate language.

ESSA asks states, LEAs, and schools to be more accountable for the closure of gaps between historically advantaged and historically underserved populations, and this accountability carries with it a communications imperative. The Department stands ready to provide support to ensure that discussions around any accountability designation—especially those that relate to individual student groups—reinforce a sense of collaboration and community.

These TSI designations represent another step in a fundamentally different approach to continuous school improvement in Pennsylvania—one that emphasizes shared responsibility for the quality of our public education system at every level; that sets conditions for effective, engaging instruction in every classroom; and that ensures every student is college, career, and community ready. We thank you for your daily efforts on behalf of kids and look forward to partnering with your school community.

Sincerely,



Matthew S. Stem
Deputy Secretary
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education