

FAQ: Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) and Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI)

1. What's the difference between "designation" and "classification"?

Accountability and support are closely linked, but a school's classification does not always reflect their level of designation. The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) wants to focus on resources and supports for schools that have varied needs. To help the NDE identify the resources needed, there are different levels of support including Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) and Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI). You can read more about the different support levels at aquestt.com/resources/.

2. How did my school get identified for this level of support?

Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) and Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI) are federal designations relating to student group performance that is disparate from their peers. The student groups are:

- Black/African American
- Hispanic/Latinx
- Native American/Alaskan Native
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- Two or more races
- Asian
- White
- English Learners
- Students with disabilities
- Economically disadvantaged students

Student group performance is then evaluated through the following AQuESTT indicators:

- Status (Academic Achievement)
- Growth, Improvement, Non-Proficiency (Academic Progress)
- Progress Towards English Language Proficiency
- 4- and 7-Year Cohort Graduation Rate
- Chronic Absenteeism, Science, Evidence-Based Analysis (School Quality/Student Success)

If student group performance is below the lowest quarter of Title I schools, then a school is identified for Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI).

If student group performance is below the lowest 5% of Title I schools, then a school is identified for Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI). Put another way, schools identified for ATSI serve student groups who are performing at or below the state's CSI schools.

3. Why is there a focus on student group performance?

“Research informs us that outcomes of educational policies have shorted historically marginalized students, and as these inequities persist, so do the disparities in student performance. Therefore, we must move away from solely burdening outcome based performance on students and families, and focus on creating equitable opportunities to learn.” Learn more about [Reframing the Achievement Gap: Ensuring All Students Benefit from Equitable Access to Learning](#), from the Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center.

Put another way, opportunity gaps precede achievement gaps. The TSI and ATSI designation point out potential opportunity gaps and provide resources to address them.

4. What does the NDE mean by educational equity?

As a state agency, the NDE acknowledges an international history of bias and bigotry resulting in societal disparities and inequities, and the NDE commits to confronting this history by leading for educational equity. Educational equity means that all students have access to the educational resources they need at the right moment, at the right level, and with the right intensity, to not only reach high expectations for learning, but also to discover and explore their passions and make meaningful connections within the context of their postsecondary interests. Equity requires that these opportunities and outcomes exist across race, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, sexual orientation, family background, adverse events, and/or family income. Equity efforts will ensure that all students are known, heard, and supported while having access to the opportunities and resources needed to be ready for success in their post-secondary learning experiences, careers, and civic lives. Read more about the [NDE's commitment to educational equity](#).

5. What will this mean for my school?

TSI and ATSI are district-led improvement efforts with support from the NDE and ESUs. Districts are required to:

- Notify schools of their designation and the student group(s) identified for support.
- Support schools in creating a plan for improvement to be held with the district.
- Monitor the implementation of plans.

6. Am I required to submit a new plan?

No. The NDE recommends taking stock of current plans (Continuous Improvement Plans, Targeted Improvement Plans for addressing needs of students with disabilities, Title 1 plans, MTSS plans, etc.) being implemented at the school, and considering ways to adapt or augment these plans rather than creating a standalone plan. However, these plans must:

- Be developed in partnership with multiple stakeholders in your local community
- Be informed by all accountability indicators (ELA and math proficiency and growth, progress towards English proficiency, graduation rates [where applicable], reduction in chronic absenteeism, and science proficiency and improvement)
- Specifically for ATSI schools, include plans for addressing resource inequities uncovered through a [resource allocation review](#).

The NDE is supporting schools in this work by providing the following *optional* resources:

- *Comprehensive Needs Assessment*: A tool to help identify the greatest needs for growth and assets to leverage.
- *Leading for Equity in our Schools Resource*: An equity-centered professional learning resource.
- *Planning Guide for Improvement*: Schools may use other improvement guides or current frameworks to create a plan for improvement.

The NDE will not collect these improvement plans, but may check on implementation and progress at any time. The NDE also encourages continued partnerships with ESUs, and community-based organizations to support this work.

7. What is the anticipated timeline for when my school should expect to receive support? How much time will my school have to exit this level of support?

The NDE will notify districts (9/25) who will then notify schools of their designation and student group(s) identified for support. Districts and ESUs can then provide support to schools through professional learning opportunities as well as utilizing materials that the NDE has compiled.

TSI schools will be reviewed annually. ATSI schools can exit this status when all identified low-performing student groups show sufficient growth and no longer meet the criteria for identification for two consecutive years.

8. What if a school is unable to exit this level of support?

A school that does not exit TSI or ATSI after three years will be identified for a higher level of support, Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI).

9. How is TSI different from AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress)?

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), a No Child Left Behind initiative, set 100% proficiency targets for student groups. While this measure created a valuable conversation about student group performance, and led to important work around data disaggregation, AYP focused on punitive actions without differentiated support for schools.

TSI and ATSI are designed to pair designation with support. Additionally, while AYP focused on a single measure of accountability, proficiency, TSI and ATSI looks across all indicators including graduation rate, chronic absenteeism, growth, and proficiency.

10. How will TSI/ATSI be reflected in AQuESTT classifications?

Beginning in 2019, any school with consistently low-performing student groups may not be classified as Excellent. The NDE believes a school can only be considered Excellent if all students and each student group are being served at the same high quality.

Key Messages

Below are some key messages that summarize and explain Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) and Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI).

- The State Board of Education and the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) have created a system for classifying schools and designating schools for support. The system is called AQuESTT, which stands for Accountability for a Quality Education System, Today and Tomorrow
- AQuESTT classifies schools as Excellent, Great, Good and Needs Improvement.
- The NDE also designates schools that require different levels of support. The levels range in order from the most to least intensive, Priority Schools, Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI), Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI), and Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI). Documents explaining this can be found here: [Classification and Designation](#) and the [Family's Guide to Nebraska School Improvement](#).
- The NDE believes that all schools can improve and most importantly, a student's demography does not determine their destiny. TSI and ATSI designation provides an opportunity to reflect on practice and work collaboratively to build upon the assets and address the needs of underserved student groups. Support for schools can come from their local district, school community, Educational Service Units (ESUs), and the NDE.
- Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) and Additional Targeted Supported and Improvement (ATSI) analyze a school's student group outcomes and identifies student groups whose outcomes from school are disparate from their peers. The student groups are:
 - Black/African American
 - White
 - Hispanic/Latinx
 - Native American/Alaska Native
 - Asian
 - Two or more races
 - Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
 - Students with disabilities
 - English Learners
 - Economically disadvantaged students.

- This identification is more than just test scores. A wide variety of indicators go into the classification beyond just test scores. Student group performance is evaluated through the following AQuESTT indicators:
 - Status (Academic Achievement)
 - Growth, Improvement, Non-Proficiency (Academic Progress)
 - Progress Towards English Language Proficiency
 - 4 and 7-Year Cohort Graduation Rate
 - Chronic Absenteeism, Science, Evidence-based Analysis (School Quality/Student Success)

- The NDE views TSI and ATSI as a time to consider what [opportunity gaps](#) exist that lead to [achievement gaps](#) in outcomes. Historically, there have been populations of students that have been underserved by educational systems. These disparities continue into today. TSI and ATSI is an opportunity to develop common, asset-based language when planning for improvement about specific student groups. Broadly, the outcomes we see in student achievement are a point to build upon the assets that students bring into school with them while creating systems that are inclusive and adaptable to all.