

Identifying Focus Schools: A Field Guide

General Information

As part of its approved [ESEA Flexibility Request](#), Kansas agreed to identify Title I schools with the greatest achievement gaps as *Focus* schools. The number of focus schools identified must equal or exceed 10% of Title I schools. Kansas also agreed to design an accountability system around closing the achievement gap (see *Gap Reduction AMO Fact Sheet*). The gap analysis used for both of these purposes compares the lowest performing 30% of students in each building to a state benchmark representing the highest performing 30% of buildings in the state.

Goals

The goals below served as guidelines for designing Kansas's method for focus school identification:

- Provide an index for gap reduction that is specific to each school
- Emphasize gains across all five of Kansas's performance categories
- Eliminate double counting students across subgroups

Definition of the Achievement Gap Score

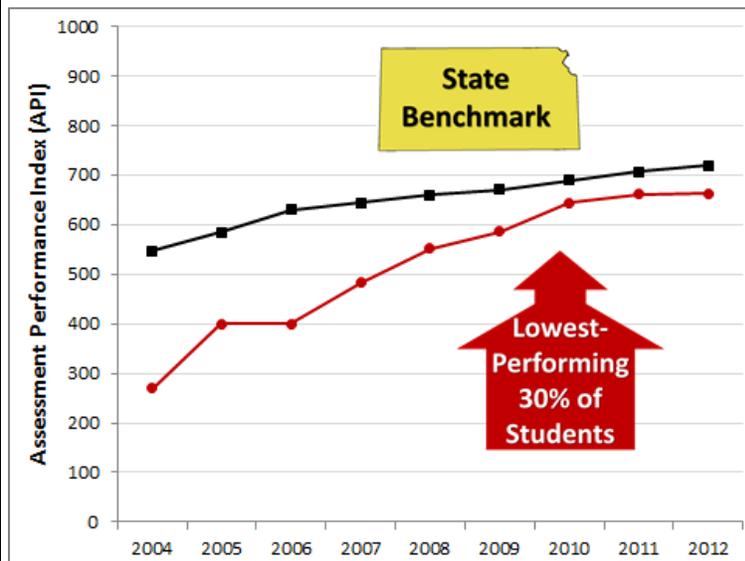
An achievement gap score provides information on the performance of a building's lowest performing 30% of students relative to the performance of top performing buildings in Kansas. Larger gap values suggest more disparity between the top performing buildings in the state and a building's lowest performing students.

Assessment Performance Index (API)

Gap reduction calculations use the assessment performance index (API). An API converts Kansas's five performance categories (*academic warning, approaching standard, meets standard, exceeds standard, and exemplary*) into point values (see table below). Once each score is weighted by the points associated with the performance category, the sum of the accrued points is divided by the total number of scores in the calculation to provide an average performance value (or API).

Performance Category	Points per Score	# of Scores	Total Points
Exemplary	1,000	15	15,000
Exceeds Standard	750	22	16,500
Meets Standard	500	20	10,000
Approaching Standard	250	7	1,750
Academic Warning	0	2	0
Totals		66	43,250
$API = 43,250 \div 66 = 655$			

Visual Display of Gap Reduction



State Benchmarks

State benchmarks index the achievement of the top performing buildings in Kansas. State benchmarks for focus school identification are based on assessment data from the four years previous to the current year for both math and reading. The state benchmark is equal to the API score for the building at the 70th percentile across the state.

Building's Lowest Performing 30% of Students

The score compared to the state benchmark is the API value for the lowest performing 30% of students within a building. The two most recent years of assessments, for math and reading, are used for this calculation.

Focus Schools

Focus schools are identified after Priority schools are identified, thus a Priority school cannot be identified as a Focus school. Non-Priority, Title I buildings with the greatest achievement gap between the state benchmark and their lowest performing 30% of students are identified as focus schools. A high school can also be identified as a focus school if its graduation rate is below 60%.

Exiting Focus School Status

In order to exit focus school status, a building must decrease in annual equal increments half the gap distance between the lowest performing 30% of students and the state benchmark by the 2016-2017 school year. To be removed from the Focus School list, a school must maintain progress toward annual gap reduction for two consecutive years, or the combined two-year gap reduction must meet or exceed twice the amount of expected annual gap reduction. A focus school may also exit focus school status by demonstrating –for two consecutive years-- an API score of 500 or greater for its lowest performing 30% of students.

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Calculating a Building's Gap Score

Gap calculations which identify focus schools combine two years of math and reading scores. A building's gap score indexes the performance difference between a building's lowest performing 30% of students and a state benchmark. This gap calculation also determines a Focus building's Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) for gap reduction. Gap scores use the Assessment Performance Index (API).

Example Assessment Data

Performance Category	2010-2011		2011-2012		Total
	Math	Reading	Math	Reading	
Exemplary	21	25	20	26	92
Exceeds Standard	26	38	29	35	128
Meets Standard	58	47	61	54	220
Approaching Standard	12	11	13	7	43
Academic Warning	8	4	2	3	17
Totals	125	125	125	125	500

API for Whole Building (optional step)

Using the most recent two years of math and reading data, a whole building's API looks like this:

Whole Building API			
Performance Category	Points per Assessment	# of Assessments	Total Points
Exemplary	1,000	92	92,000
Exceeds Standard	750	128	96,000
Meets Standard	500	220	110,000
Approaching Standard	250	43	10,750
Academic Warning	0	17	0
Totals		500	308,750
<i>Assessment Performance Index (API) = 308,750 ÷ 500 = 618</i>			

API for Building's Lowest Performing 30%

Step 1: Determine number of students comprising lowest performing 30% of students.

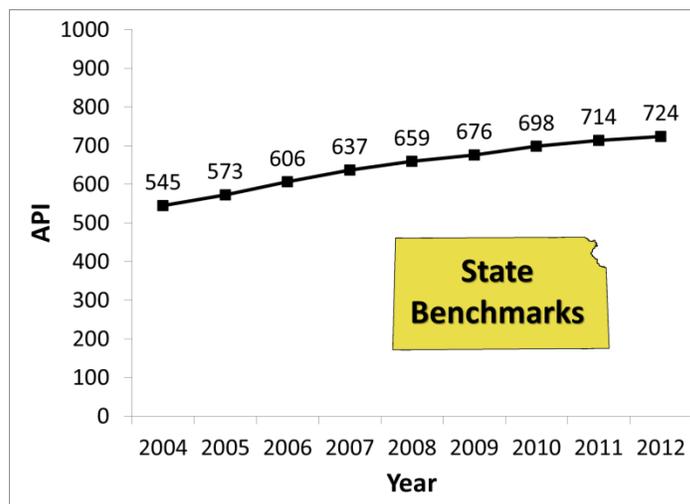
$$\text{Total \# of Assessments} \times 30\%$$

$$(500 \times .30) = 150$$

Step 2: Construct a new API table using assessment scores starting from the lowest performance categories and work upward. The number of assessments should equal 30% of the total number of assessments.

Building's API for Lowest Performing 30% of Students			
Performance Category	Points per Assessment	# of Assessments	Total Points
Exemplary	1,000	-	-
Exceeds Standard	750	-	-
Meets Standard	500	90	45,000
Approaching Standard	250	43	10,750
Academic Warning	0	17	0
Totals		150	55,750
<i>Assessment Performance Index (API) = 55,750 ÷ 150 = 372</i>			

State Benchmarks for Focus School Identification



Calculating a Building's Achievement Gap Score

Step 3: Subtract the state benchmark from the API for Lowest Performing 30%.

$$\text{State Benchmark} - \text{Lowest Performing 30\% API}$$

$$724 - 372 = 352 \text{ API Points}$$

Calculating a Building's Gap AMO

To make the Gap Reduction AMO, a building must reduce its gap in half over 6 years.

Step 4: Split gap in half.

$$\text{Building's Gap Score} \div 2$$

$$352 \div 2 = 176 \text{ API Points}$$

Step 5: Divide resulting gap value by six years.

$$\text{Value from previous step} \div 6$$

$$176 \div 6 = 29.3 \text{ API Points for Year}$$

In order to make the gap AMO, the Focus school in the example above must increase the API for its lowest performing 30% of students by 29.3 API points each year. Or, raise the API for its lowest performing 30% of students to 500 or higher.

More Information

E-mail questions to: waiver@ksde.org