9. Federal and State School Designations

Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) and Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) school designations are defined in the North Carolina ESSA State Plan. North Carolina General Statutes [115C-105.37](#), [115C-105.37A](#), [115C-105.39A](#) and [115C-218.94](#) define low performing school and district designations. Information on state-level designations are in subsection 9.8 of this guide.

There are three categories of CSI schools and two categories of TSI schools. The identification criteria, first year of identification, frequency of identification, exit criteria, and timeline for applying exit criteria for each designation are detailed in this section of the guide.

Note: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and waivers from accountability for the 2019–20 and 2020–21 school years, timelines, identification, and exit criteria have been adjusted in accordance with the ESSA Addendum approved by the USED in April 2022. In addition, an amendment to the ESSA State Plan was approved in May 2024. This amendment adjusted the identification timeline of all CSI designations as well as TSI–Additional Targeted Support to the start of the 2025–26 school year.

The categories of each designation are as follows:

Comprehensive Support and Improvement Schools (CSI)
    CSI-Low Performing (CSI-LP)
    CSI-Low Graduation Rate (CSI-LG)
    CSI-Additional Targeted Support Not Exiting Such Status (CSI-AT)

Targeted Support and Improvement Schools
    TSI-Consistently Underperforming (TSI-CU)
    TSI-Additional Targeted Support (TSI-AT)

K–2 feeder schools. K-2 schools are identified as CSI/TSI schools based on the school they feed into in an identification year. When exit criteria is applied for an CSI/TSI identification, if the school that identified the K-2 school is exited, so is the K-2 school. If, in a future identification year for the same CSI/TSI identification currently assigned, the K-2 school is feeding into a different school, the K-2 school will assume the status of the new school and will be dropped from the previous school's identification status.

9.1 Comprehensive Support and Improvement Schools
North Carolina must identify schools for comprehensive support and improvement as defined in the ESSA State Plan. The three categories of identification are as follows:
- CSI-Lowest Performing Schools (CSI-LP)
- CSI-Low Graduation Rates (CSI-LG)
- CSI-Additional Targeted Support Not Exiting Such Status (CSI-AT)

For the 2018–19 identification year, only CSI-LP and CSI-LG schools were identified. Due to the implications of COVID-19, the second identification of CSI-LP and CSI-LG schools was shifted to the fall of 2022–23. Due to the 2024 amendment, CSI-AT will first be identified in the fall of 2025–26.

9.2 CSI-Low Performing Schools

CSI-LP schools are the lowest performing 5% of all schools receiving Title I, Part A funds (served) in the state.
- Process of identifying the lowest 5% during an identification year:
  - Identify the total number of Title I served schools in the previous school year.
    - Determine the number of schools that comprise 5% of Title I served schools.
  - Remove from consideration closed schools, schools in the identification year that have become non-Title I schools, and, on a case-by-case basis, schools whose configuration has changed (i.e., supporting less than 50% of the same student population excluding natural grade promotion).
  - Determine the overall SPG score of the highest performing school in the bottom 5% of current Title I served schools.
  - All eligible schools with the same score or lower are identified as CSI-LP.
    - Ties at the highest score may result in greater than 5% of schools identified.
- CSI-LP schools are identified every three years. The first identification occurred in 2018–19, and the second identification was in the fall of 2022–23, using 2021–22 data. Due to the 2024 amendment, the next identification will occur in the fall of the 2025–26 school year, using 2024–25 data.
  - The first year of identification for CSI-LP schools was a planning year with implementation for three additional years.
- CSI-LP schools can exit every four years.
- CSI-LP schools can also be identified as CSI-LG schools.
- CSI-LP schools cannot be identified as TSI-Consistently Underperforming Subgroups (TSI-CU), TSI-Additional Targeted Support (TSI-AT) or CSI-Additional Targeted Support Not Exiting Such Status (CSI-AT).

CSI-LP exit criteria. Achieve above the lowest 5% of Title 1 served schools for the most recent and previous school year *and* meet measure of interim progress for the All Student subgroup in all subjects (i.e., reading and math).

9.2.1 Steps for CSI-LP Identification
- Exit schools that meet the CSI-LP exit criteria in subsection 9.2.
  - Schools identified at the start of the 2018–19 school year, that cannot exit, stay in Tier 2. This tier indicates that schools will receive additional support to implement more rigorous interventions. (Tier 2, Group 1)
  - Schools identified at the start of the 2022–23 school year, that cannot exit at the end of the 2024–25 school year will move into Tier 2, Group 2. Until their exit year, they will continue to stay in Tier 1, Group 1[1].
- Identify the bottom 5% of Title I schools that meet the identification criteria in subsection 9.2.

- Fall 2025–26 identified schools that are not already Tier 2 schools (newly identified) will be labeled Tier 1, Group 1. This tier indicates the school has been newly identified and will be provided additional support to implement interventions[1].
- The CSI-LP list contains both Tier 1 and Tier 2 schools and may exceed 5% of Title 1 schools.

[1] When groups change tiers, their group number will change as well.

9.3 CSI-Low Graduation Rates

North Carolina identifies high schools with a four-year cohort graduation rate less than 66.7% as needing comprehensive support and improvement regardless of Title I status.

- Process of identifying low graduation rates:
    - Determine whether the minimum-n for the cohort graduation rate is greater than or equal to thirty students.
    - If it is, identify schools with a cohort graduation rate below 66.7%.
- CSI-LG schools are identified every three years.
    - The first identification occurred in 2018–19. The next identification group was in the fall of 2022–23, using 2021–22 data. Due to the 2024 amendment, the next identification will occur in the fall of the 2025–26 school year, using 2024–25 data.
    - The first year of identification for CSI-LG schools was a planning year with implementation for three additional years.
- CSI-LG schools can also be identified as CSI-LP schools.
- CSI-LG schools that are not identified as CSI-LP can also be identified as TSI-CU, TSI-AT, or CSI-AT schools.

CSI-LG exit criteria. Schools can exit CSI-LG identification every four years if the following exit criteria are met:

- Have a four-year cohort graduation rate greater than or equal to 66.7% in the most recent year and the previous year.

9.3.1 Steps for CSI-LG Identification

- Exit schools that meet the CSI-LG exit criteria in subsection 9.3.
    - Schools identified in 2018–19, that cannot exit, stay in Tier 2. This tier indicates that schools will receive additional support to implement more rigorous interventions. (Tier 2, Group 1)
    - Schools identified in 2022–23, that cannot exit at the end of the 2024–25 school year will move into Tier 2, Group 2. Until their exit year, they will continue to stay in Tier 1, Group 1[1].
- Identify schools that meet the CSI-LG identification criteria in subsection 9.3.
    - Fall 2025–26 identified schools that are not already Tier 2 schools (newly identified) will be labeled Tier 1, Group 1. This tier indicates the school has been newly identified and will be provided additional support to implement interventions[2].
- The CSI_LG list will contain both Tier 1 and Tier 2 schools.

[1] When groups change tiers, their group number will change as well.

9.4 CSI-Additional Targeted Support Not Exiting Such Status
- Title I served schools unable to exit the TSI-AT identification by the end of the six-year identification period associated with TSI-AT are identified as CSI-AT.
- CSI-AT schools are identified every six years.
  - Due to the 2024 amendment, the first year of identification will occur in the fall of the 2025–26 school year, using 2024–25 data.
- CSI-AT schools cannot be identified as TSI-CU, TSI-AT, or CSI-LP.
- CSI-AT schools can also be identified as CSI-LG.
- Schools exit CSI-AT identification if the requirements of exiting TSI-AT are met during the CSI-AT exit year (i.e., every four years).

Exit Criterion. Schools exit CSI-AT identification after four years if the subgroup(s) identifying the school as CSI-AT meets one of the following exit criterion in the exit year:
- Identified subgroup(s) achieve a three-year growth index of 1.0 or higher[1]; or
- are on track to meet the subgroup(s) twelve-year proficiency goals in reading and math; or
- there is no longer a subgroup whose overall performance as measured by the School Performance Grade score is at or below the score designated for CSI-LP identification and previously identified subgroup(s) improved performance on the School Performance Grade score as compared to the score at the time of identification.

[1] The three-year growth index calculation will require three years of growth indices, be an average of the index scores, use the most recent three years of available data, and require a minimum-n of thirty for each of the three years used.
[2] The score designated for CSI-LP identification is recalculated at the time of CSI-LP identification. The score calculated for the most recent identification year will be used for exit purposes during non-identification years.

9.5 Targeted Support and Improvement Schools
North Carolina must identify schools for targeted support and improvement as defined in the ESSA State Plan. These schools receive support at the local level for the identified underperforming subgroups. The following are the two categories of identification:
- TSI-Consistently Underperforming Subgroups (TSI-CU)
- TSI-Additional Targeted Support (TSI-AT)

TSI-CU is identified annually using the most recent and previous two years of data.

The first group of TSI-AT schools were identified in the fall of 2018–19. Due to the implications of COVID-19, the second identification of TSI-AT schools was shifted to the fall of the 2022–23 school year. Due to the 2024 amendment, the next identification for TSI-AT will occur in the fall of the 2025–26 school year.

9.6 TSI-Consistently Underperforming Subgroups
All schools, regardless of Title I status, are eligible for the TSI-CU identification. Schools already identified as CSI-LP cannot be identified as TSI-CU. Schools are identified annually as TSI-CU when one or more subgroup(s) receive an "F" School Performance Grade for the most recent and previous two years.
- The identification criteria for TSI-CU schools:

- One or more of the same subgroup(s) with a designation of "F" on the NC statewide system of annual meaningful differentiation (i.e., School Subgroup Performance Grades) for the most recent and previous two years.
- Schools can exit TSI-CU identification if the following exit criteria is met:
  - Achieve a letter grade of "D" or higher on the NC statewide system of annual meaningful differentiation (i.e., School Subgroup Performance Grades) for previously identified subgroups in the most recent and previous year.
  - Exit criterion are applied annually.

9.7 TSI-Additional Targeted Support (TSI-AT)
All schools, regardless of Title I status, are eligible for TSI-AT identification every three years.
- Schools are identified as TSI-AT when:
  - the school has one or more subgroup(s) where the subgroup performance grade score is at or below the highest identified CSI-LP school's All Students group during the identification year[2], and
  - the school is on the TSI-CU list for the subgroup(s) for the current year.
- TSI-AT schools cannot be identified as CSI-LP or CSI-AT
- TSI-AT schools can also be identified as TSI-CU and CSI-LG.

Exit Criterion. Schools can begin exiting TSI-AT identification after three years and then exit criterion is applied annually for three additional years. If the subgroup cannot exit after six years, and the school is Title I served, the school is identified as CSI-AT. If the subgroup cannot exit after six years, and the school is not Title I served, the subgroup will remain in its identified cohort and continue to have exit criterion applied annually. Subgroup(s) identifying the school as TSI-AT can exit TSI-AT status if one of the following exit criteria is met in an exit year:
- Identified subgroup(s) achieve a three-year growth index of 1.0 or higher[1]; or
- are on track to meet the subgroup(s) twelve-year proficiency goals in reading and math; or
- there is no longer a subgroup whose overall performance as measured by the School Performance Grade score is at or below the score designated for CSI-LP identification and previously identified subgroup(s) improved performance on the School Performance Grade score as compared to the score at the time of identification.

[1] The three-year growth index calculation will require three years of growth indices, be an average of the index scores, use the most recent three years of available data, and require a minimum-n of thirty for each of the three years used.
[2] The score designated for CSI-LP identification is recalculated at the time of CSI-LP identification. The score calculated for the most recent identification year will be used for exit purposes during non-identification years.

9.7.1 Steps for TSI-AT Identification
- Exit schools that meet the TSI-AT exit criteria in subsection 9.7.
- Schools identified in 2018–19 (using 2017–18 data) and are unable to exit, are labeled as Cohort 1.
- Schools identified in 2022–23 (using 2021–22 data) and are unable to exit, are labeled as Cohort 2.
- Schools newly identified in 2025–26 (using 2024–25 data), are labeled as Cohort 3.
- Cohorts are used to track the school's status for annual exit prior to possible identification as CSI-AT.

The information displayed on the following tables provides graphic representations of all CSI and TSI identifications.

TABLE 9.7.1. CSI identification criteria

Designation	Eligible schools	Year of identification (Start of school year)	Identification timeline	Identification criteria
Comprehensive Support and Improvement-Low Performing (CSI-LP)	All Title I served schools	Group 1 2018–19 Group 2 2022–23	Every 3 years	Lowest 5% SPG score of Title I served schools using the NC statewide system of annual meaningful differentiation (i.e., School Performance Grades)
Comprehensive Support and Improvement-Low Graduation Rates (CSI-LG)	All high schools	Group 1 2018–19 Group 2 2022–23	Every 3 years	Graduation rate below 66.7%
Comprehensive Support and Improvement-Additional Targeted Support Not Exiting Such Status (CSI-AT)	Title I Served TSI-AT identified schools	2025–26	Every 6 years	Subgroup is unable to exit TSI-AT after six years

TABLE 9.7.1.1. TSI identification criteria

Designation	Eligible schools	Year of identification (Start of school year)	Identification timeline	Identification criteria
Targeted Support and Improvement-Consistently Underperforming Subgroups (TSI-CU)	All Schools Except CSI-LP	2022–23	Annually	One or more of the same subgroup(s) with a designation of "F" on the NC statewide system of annual meaningful differentiation (i.e., School Performance Grades) for the most recent and previous two years
Targeted Support and Improvement-Additional Targeted Support (TSI-AT)	All TSI-CU schools	Group 1 2018–19 Group 2 2022–23	Every 3 years	Subgroup(s) performance grade at or below highest CSI-LP identified school and school's subgroup(s) is identified as TSI-CU in the identification year

TABLE 9.7.1.2. CSI exit criteria

Designation	Eligible schools	Year of identification (Start of school year)	Exit criteria	Exit year (End of school year)
Comprehensive Support and Improvement- Low Performing (CSI-LP)	All Title I Served schools	Every 3 years Group 1 2018–19 Group 2 2022–23	Achieve above the lowest 5 % of Title 1 served schools for the most recent and previous school year *and* meet measure of interim progress for the All Student subgroup in all subjects (i.e., reading and math)	Every 4 years Group 1 2021–22 Group 2 2025–26
Comprehensive Support and Improvement- Low Graduation Rates (CSI-LG)	All High schools	Every 3 years Group 1 2018–19 Group 2 2022–23	Graduation rate greater than or equal to 66.7% in the most recent and previous year	Every 4 years Group 1 2021–22 Group 2 2025–26
Comprehensive Support and Improvement- Additional Targeted Support Not Exiting Such Status (CSI-AT)	Title I Served TSI-AT Identified Schools	Every 6 years Group 1 2025–26	Same as TSI-AT in the exit year: 1. Identified subgroup(s) achieve a three-year growth index of 1.0 or higher; or 2. are on track to meet the subgroup(s) twelve-year proficiency goals in reading and math; or 3. There is no longer a subgroup whose overall performance as measured by the School Performance Grade score is at or below the score designated for CSI-Low Performing identification and previously identified subgroup(s) improved performance on the School Performance Grade score as compared to the score at the time of identification.	Every 4 years Group 1 2028–29

TABLE 9.7.1.3. TSI exit criteria

Designation	Eligible schools	Year of identification (Start of school year)	Exit criteria	Exit year (End of school year)
Targeted Support and Improvement-Consistently Underperforming Subgroups (TSI-CU)	All schools except CSI-LP	Annually	Achieve a letter grade of "D" or higher on the NC statewide system of annual meaningful differentiation (School Performance Grades) for previously identified subgroups in the most recent and previous year.	Annually
Targeted Support and Improvement-Additional Targeted Support (TSI-AT)	All TSI-CU identified schools	Every 3 years Group 1 2018–19 Group 2 2022–23	1. Identified subgroup(s) achieve a three-year growth index of 1.0 or higher; or 2. are on track to meet the subgroup(s) twelve-year proficiency goals in reading and math; or 3. there is no longer a subgroup whose overall performance as measured by the School Performance Grade score is at or below the score designated for CSI-Low Performing identification and previously identified subgroup(s) improved performance on the School Performance Grade score as compared to the score at the time of identification.	After 3 years, and then annually Group 1 2021-22 (annually) Group 2 2024–25 (annually)

TABLE 9.7.1.4. CSI school identification timeline

CSI Timeline for Identification of Schools									
	2017–18	**2018–19**	**2019–20**	**2020–21**	**2021–22**	**2022–23**	**2023–24**	**2024–25**	**2025–26**
CSI-Low Performing	**Identification criteria.** Perform in the lowest 5% of all Title 1 served schools using the NC statewide system of annual meaningful differentiation (i.e., School Performance Grades).								
	Continue services for priority schools using NC ESEA flexibility definition	2018–19 CSI schools (planning year)	Maintain support for 2018–19 identified schools	Maintain support for 2018–19 identified schools	Maintain support for 2018–19 identified schools	Exit criteria applied for 2018–19 identified schools	Maintain support for 2018–19 and 2022–23 identified schools that did not meet exit criteria	Maintain support for 2018–19 and 2022–23 identified schools that did not meet exit criteria	Exit criteria applied for all previously identified schools
						Identify 2022–23 CSI schools			Identify 2025–26 CSI schools
	Exit criteria. Achieve above the lowest 5% of Title 1 served schools for the most recent and previous school year *and* meet measure of interim progress for the All Student subgroup in all subjects (i.e., reading and math).								
CSI-Low Graduation Rate		**2017–18**	**2018–19**	**2019–20**	**2020–21**	**2021–22**	**2022–23**	**2023–24**	**2024–25**	**2025–26**
	Identification criteria. High schools with a four-year cohort graduation rate below 66.7%.								
	Continue services for priority schools using NC ESEA flexibility definition	2018–19 CSI schools (planning year)	Maintain support for 2018–19 identified schools	Maintain support for 2018–19 identified schools	Maintain support for 2018–19 identified schools	Exit criteria applied for 2018–19 identified schools	Maintain support for 2018–19 and 2022–23 identified schools that did not meet exit criteria	Maintain support for 2018–19 and 2022–23 identified schools that did not meet exit criteria	Exit criteria applied for all previously identified schools
						Identify 2022–23 CSI schools			Identify 2025–26 CSI schools
	Exit criteria. Achieve a four-year cohort graduation rate above or equal to 66.7% for the most recent and previous school year.								
CSI-Additional Targeted Support Not Exiting Such Status		**2017–18**	**2018–19**	**2019–20**	**2020–21**	**2021–22**	**2022–23**	**2023–24**	**2024–25**	**2025–26**
	Identification criteria. Failure to exit TSI-Additional Targeted Support status after six years and receive Title 1 funds.								
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Identify 2025–26 CSI Schools
	Exit criteria. Same as exiting Additional TSI status: (1) Identified subgroup(s) achieve a three-year growth index of 1.0 or higher, or (2) are on track to meet the subgroup(s) twelve-year proficiency goals in reading and math, or (3) there is no longer a subgroup whose overall performance as measured by the School Performance Grade score is at or below the score designated for CSI-LP identification and previously identified subgroup(s) improved performance on the School Performance Grade score as compared to the score at the time of identification.								

TABLE 9.7.1.5. TSI-Consistently Underperforming school identification timeline

	TSI Timeline for Identification of Schools								
	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25	2025–26
TSI-Consistently Under Performing	**Identification criteria.** One or more of the same subgroup(s) with a designation of "F" on the NC statewide system of annual meaningful differentiation (i.e., School Performance Grades) for the most recent and previous two years.								
	Continue services for focus schools using NC ESEA flexibility definition	Watch list (modified identification criteria)	Identify Consistently Under Performing subgroup schools	Due to COVID-19 impact, schools were not identified or exited	Due to COVID-19 impact, schools were not identified or exited	Identify Consistently Underperforming subgroup schools	Identify Consistently Underperforming subgroup schools	Identify Consistently Underperforming subgroup schools	Identify Consistently Underperforming subgroup schools
						Exit criteria applied for 2018–19 identified schools	Exit criteria applied for 2022–23 identified schools	Exit criteria applied for 2023–24 identified schools	Exit criteria applied for 2024–25 identified schools
	Exit criteria. Achieve a letter grade of "D" or higher on the NC statewide system of annual meaningful differentiation (i.e., School Performance Grades) for previously identified subgroups in the most recent and previous year.								

TABLE 9.7.1.6. TSI-Additional Targeted Support school identification timeline

TSI Timeline for Identification of Schools									
	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25	2025–26
TSI-Additional Targeted Support	**Identification criteria.** Schools where any subgroup's performance is less than the top CSI identified school's All Students subgroup total score and have been identified as schools with one or more consistently underperforming subgroups for the identification year. For 2022–23 identification, the pool is all schools whose subgroup's performance is less than the top CSI identified school's All Students subgroup and the school's subgroup(s) is TSI-CU for the current year. %.								
	N/A	Identify 2018–19 TSI schools using 2017–18 score	Maintain TSI identification	Maintain TSI identification	Maintain TSI identification	Maintain TSI identification of 2018–19 identified schools unable to exit	Maintain TSI identification of 2018–19 identified schools unable to exit and 2022–23 identified schools	Maintain TSI identification of 2018–19 and 2022–23 identified schools unable to exit	Maintain TSI identification of 2018–19 and 2022–23 identified schools unable to exit
						Identify 2022–23 TSI schools using 2021–22 data			Identify 2025–26 TSI schools using 2024–25 data
						Exit criteria applied for 2018–19 identified schools	Exit criteria applied for 2018–19 identified schools	Exit criteria applied for 2018–19 and 2022–23 identified schools	Exit criteria applied for 2018–19 and 2022–23 identified schools
	Exit criterion. (1) Identified subgroup(s) achieve a three-year growth index of 1.0 or higher, or (2) are on track to meet the subgroup(s) twelve-year proficiency goals in reading and math, or (3) there is no longer a subgroup whose overall performance as measured by the School Performance Grade score is at or below the score designated for CSI-Low Performing identification and previously identified subgroup(s) improved performance on the School Performance Grade score as compared to the score at the time of identification.								