

## 2016 School of Distinction Awards

### Methodology Brief

Now in its 10<sup>th</sup> year, the *School of Distinction* (SOD) awards were created in the summer of 2007 to recognize the highest improving schools in Washington State. The awards are not intended as a replacement for state and federal accountability measures of school performance, but rather as a supplemental measure to recognize and celebrate school staff, students, and leaders who ***improve performance for all students*** over a sustained period of time in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. This paper presents our approach to the 2016 SOD awards.

The design principles of the *School of Distinction* awards have remained unchanged over 10 years.

- Recognize sustained improvement using five years of improvement in performance data.
- Performance is defined based on two foundational skills—literacy and numeracy. Specifically, results from the state assessments over those five years of data in English language arts (ELA) **and** mathematics.
- Use publicly available data to ensure transparency and ease of interpretation.
- Recognize that across our K-12 system there are different performance characteristics by grade bands (elementary, middle/junior high, and high schools). We will recognize the top 5% in each band for both traditional public schools and in alternative public schools.
- Recognize meaningful improvement:
  - A small number (5%) of schools who have demonstrated sustained improvement in both ELA and math over a 5-year span (elementary and middle/junior high schools) and a sustained improvement in graduation rate (high schools).

### Summary of What's New in 2015/2016 due to SBA

#### Accurate and Authentic Measure of Improvement with SBA

- **SOD 2016 and 2015 uses percentile ranks (normalized data) over 5 years in Reading/English Language Arts and Math (Elementary & Middle School Awards).**

In the past, percent meeting standard for reading and math was the measure used in SOD. As we saw with the results of SBA in 2015, the percent meeting standard in ELA and math has dropped at all grade levels. Since it's difficult to have "improvement" when the entire state declined at all grade levels due to the use of a different measurement tool, instead of using percent meeting standard as the measure, CEE has translated percent meeting standard to percentile ranks for each year and each content area for each grade level. For example, if a school is at the 65th percentile, then it is performing above 65% of the schools in the state at that grade and subject area.

These percentiles are calculated for each year by combining reading/ELA and math percentiles. The 5-year trend of improvement for each year is then used to measure improvement (in percentile ranks) over the 5-year period.

- **Use 4-year and 5-Year graduation rate for High Schools.**

After consulting with ESD leadership, district leadership, and building principals from around the state, CEE determined that SBA could not be used at the high school level due to the irregularities in the testing this year (primarily the nearly 50% refusals state wide for HS testing in 2015). The overwhelming recommendation from the field was to use a combination of both 4-year and 5-year adjusted cohort graduation rates and look at improvement in these rates over time.

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Specifics of the methodology used to determine 2016 winners.

#### Methodology

Note: Data source is the OSPI reported data from the data downloads section of the state report card

<http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/DataDownload.aspx>.

#### Elementary and Middle/Junior High School Bands

- Three grade bands are used for calculation. For elementary schools—grades 3, 4, and 5. For middle/junior high schools—grades 6, 7, and 8. A school must have data in two of three grades in each year to be considered for that level in that year.
- Across the 5 years, a school must have data in 2016 and at least two other years (for a total of 3 years of data).
- For each year, CEE created a normalized data set for reading/ELA and math. Normalization places each school relative to the others based on the median for all the schools in the state with data at each grade level. The median represents the 50th percentile. Each school's data is then used to determine their percentile rank for that year, in that grade, in each content area.
- This “normalized” view enables us to calculate a trend of improvement over the 5 years. For example, a School that was at the 35th percentile in 2012, the 40th percentile in 2013, the 45th percentile in 2014, the 50th percentile in 2015, and the 55th percentile in 2016 would have shown a trend of improvement of 5 percentiles of improvement each year. Percentiles allow us to compare relative performance from year to year. This method is used for both the elementary and middle school categories of SOD awards.

#### High School Band

- In the past, CEE used the 10th grade HSPE Reading and the EOC-Math-1 and 2 assessments results for percent meeting standard to calculate the awards. The move to SBA presents several issues for SOD in high schools.
  - 10<sup>th</sup> graders are no longer assessed for accountability purposes (and thus, OSPI does not publish their results). With SBA, the 11<sup>th</sup> graders are assessed in ELA and math. However, the 5 years of historical data used for SOD are based on 10<sup>th</sup> grade results. OSPI is no longer publically reporting the 10<sup>th</sup> grade assessment results, which is a requirement to be used in the SOD award calculations.
  - Misleading 11<sup>th</sup> grade data: Across the state, nearly 50% of the 11<sup>th</sup> grade students refused to participate in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade assessments in 2015; therefore, these data do not represent a valid view of performance of each school this year.
- Over May through August 2015, CEE consulted with ESD, district, and school leadership from around the state on possible solutions for the high school SOD calculations. The widespread consensus was that the only meaningful and authentic measure of high school performance that was available for every high school in the state is the graduation rate data. CEE has implemented the SOD awards for 2016 by measuring improvement in combined 4-year and 5-year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates (ACGR).

#### General Methodology Notes

- A school may be considered in multiple bands, e.g. a K-8 school would be eligible in both elementary and middle/junior high bands. Alternative learning environments are considered independently in each of the three grade bands.
- A school must have data in at least three of five years to be considered—one of which must be 2015.
- “Improvement” is defined as the slope of linear trend over the five years.
- The number of schools comprising 5% is based on the number of schools at each grade band with valid 2015 data.

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#### How can a school be named a *School of Distinction* and also be designated as a Priority or Focus School?

The possibility exists whereby a school that has been designated Priority or Focus could also be identified as a *School of Distinction (SOD)*. On the surface this may seem counterintuitive, but a further drill down into the data yields results that substantiate both designations. How is this possible? The answer underlies the purpose of the SOD Award—sustained improvement for all students over 5 most recent years.

#### PRIORITY

The Priority designation is based on a school's reading and math percent of all students meeting standard over a three-year period. Of all the schools in the state, Priority schools represent the bottom 5% of Title-I schools based on combined reading and math proficiency. Priority schools have been identified based on achievement results in three phases:

- Priority—SIG-Cohort-1 (School Improvement Grants<sup>1</sup>): 2007, 2008, and 2009 test years for Cohort 1 and 2008, 2009, and 2010 for SIG Cohort-2.
- Priority and Focus: The Priority/Focus schools identified in the Spring of 2015 were designated based on 2012, 2013, and 2014 assessment results. The majority of schools are “continuing Priority and Focus” and were designated based on 2010, 2011, and 2012 assessments or 2011, 2012, and 2013 assessments. There were no new Priority or Focus schools identified in the spring of 2016.
- Schools must be served for a full 3 years before being considered for exiting Priority status. Federal/state regulations require that a school be served for a full three years, regardless of improvement. Therefore, a school identified in the Spring of 2015 based on 2012, 2013, and 2014 data would start receiving services in fall of 2015 (2015-16 school year). This school must be served for three years—or the 2015-16, 2016-17, and 2017-18 school years, regardless of their improvement in these later years.

Specifically, the data used to identify these schools as Priority and Focus is two to five years old. If they have demonstrated extremely high improvement in the recent state assessments including 2015 and 2016 SBA, they could be in the top 5% of improvement and receive an SOD award, while still being labeled Priority or Focus. That is because those designations are based on data which is two to five years old and *School of Distinction* improvement would be based on more current data. Despite having this designation, this improvement in these schools should be celebrated as this shows the impact of the Priority/Focus/SIG.

#### FOCUS

The Focus designation is based on subgroup performance. Subgroups include limited English (ELL), students with disabilities (SWD or special needs), and the five ethnic subgroups. As a result, a school can be identified as Focus due to a very small group of students. For the three years of the Focus designations, ALL Focus schools have been identified based only on either the limited-English or the students with disabilities (special needs) subgroups. As an example, a middle school with a 680 student population could be designated as a Focus school based on 22 students with disabilities (special needs). When we analyze the performance of all 680, if they are in the top 5% of improvement, they are designated as a SOD.

The SOD awards are based on all students at a particular school. The Focus designation points out the need for targeted intervention for the subgroup; however, if the remainder of the school (all students) shows improvement in the top 5% of the state, we owe it to the students and staff in these schools to recognize their accomplishment through the SOD award.

<sup>1</sup> School Improvement Grants were awarded in 2010 and 2011 from the U.S. Department of Education as a result of the Stimulus Package from the Obama Administration.