Defining Consistently Underperforming Subgroups for Targeted Support:

New York Regents Discussion Document

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Given:
- the requirements defined within statute regarding how consistently underperforming sub-groups should be defined;
- the state’s values, priorities, and theory of action as reflected in the accountability system design; and
- the implications associated with classification as a consistently underperforming sub-group school...

What criteria should the state use to identify “consistently underperforming” subgroups and, consequently, schools for Targeted Support and Intervention?

To answer this question, a state must define their priorities with respect to a variety of factors:

1. **Consistency**: What does the state consider the target of the label “consistently underperforming”?
   - a) **across multiple indicators** (e.g., a subgroup fails to perform at an expected level, or progress at an expected rate, across multiple indicators within a given year)
   - b) **across multiple years** (e.g., a subgroup fails to perform at an expected level, or progress at an expected rate, on one or more indicators across multiple years)
     - If defined in terms of performance over time, how many years should be considered? What factors/data should influence this determination?
       - how “underperforming” is defined and the amount and type of change necessary to move out of this classification

2. **Relative Performance**: How should “underperforming” be defined (i.e., relative to what)?
   - a) Criterion Referenced: performance of sub-group relative to state-defined long term goals and interim progress measures for academic achievement, graduation rate, progress toward attainment of ELP or other state-selected indicators.
   - b) Norm Referenced: performance of sub-group relative to performance of the state, district or the school.
     - Must determine what norm group is most appropriate/reasonable given the type of information you are seeking and the characteristics of the school
3. **Type I vs. Type II Error**: Given the implications of identification of a school for targeted support and improvement because of a consistently underperforming sub-group, what does the state believe is more detrimental: identifying a school for targeted support that does not have a consistently underperforming sub-group, or failing to identify a school for targeted support when it that has a underperforming sub-group?

   - Need to consider the positive and negative implications of establishing a conservative definition that identifies a large number of schools and subgroups.

**Examples for Discussion and Consideration**

The examples provided below reflect different priorities related to 3 factors listed above. They are intended to facilitate discussion around the way in which “consistently underperforming” might be defined and the potential pros/cons associated with different specifications. Clearly each example could be modified in a variety of ways based on the state’s theory of action and thinking related to the factors outlined above.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Definition of Consistently Underperforming Subgroup</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>1. A sub-group for which calculated performance on the Content Mastery indicator and the Progress component of the accountability system is lower than that calculated using the <strong>bottom 25%</strong> of students in the school for the given school year.</td>
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| **Calculation:**  
Achievement:  
Within a grade band, identify the bottom 25% of performers on each test (based on valid scaled scores). Use those students to calculate the content mastery score for the school. Calculate the content mastery score associated with each sub-group in a similar manner. Compare the points earned (e.g., out of 20 possible) |
| Progress:  
Within a grade band, identify the bottom 25% of SGP associated with each test. Calculate the progress points for the school using those students. Calculate the progress points associated with each sub-group. Compare the points earned across the two groups (e.g., out of 40) |
| Primary question: Are there specific sub-group(s) showing lower proficiency and growth than that of the lowest performing 25% of students within the school? |
| **Pros:**  
o Focus is on identifying differential academic subgroup performance within the school\(^1\).  
o Utilizing the same group currently used for achievement gap calculations (bottom 25%)  
o Gives schools the benefit of the doubt by using a conjunctive approach to flagging.  
o Relatively easy to explain and interpret. |
| **Cons:**  
o If schools are relatively homogeneous, using the bottom 25% in the school as the norm-group may be problematic (i.e., it may be comprised predominantly of students from one sub-group)\(^2\).  
o Conjunctive flagging rule may be difficult to defend. Suggests that a sub-group that shows growth above that of the bottom 25%, but lower proficiency rates should not be flagged for support. Is this reasonable?\(^3\)  
o Ignores other academic indicators within the Achievement Component, making the definition based solely on test performance.  
o Does not consider sub-group performance on all indicators in the accountability system. |

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1. This in contrast to the identification of low performing sub-groups which are based on all indicators relative to the performance of the lowest performing schools in the state (comprehensive support)  
2. Could put rules in place that indicate schools that are too homogeneous, such that the lowest 25% in the district is a more reasonable norm group.  
3. Could also consider a compensatory approach where a sub-group must earn a score on the elements that is greater than that observed in the lowest 25%.
2. A sub-group for which performance on any reported component of the accountability system is at the lowest performance level for 2 consecutive years.

*Calculation:* Calculate the “score” associated with each reportable component of the system using performance data for students in a particular sub-group. Apply the established cut scores (or classification rules) to determine the performance level for that sub-group on each indicator. Flag subgroups performing in the lowest performance level on one or more indicators for 2 years in a row.

**Primary question:** Are there sub-groups that consistently perform at the lowest performance level on one or more key accountability indicators for 2 years in a row?

**Pros:**
- Considers and values performance on all indicators, not just test based.
- Transparent and easy to understand.

**Cons:**
- If performance levels are were defined specifically to support meaningful differentiation among schools, this may result in in large numbers of sub-groups and schools being flagged for support.\(^4\)
- For some indicators, it may be unreasonable to expect movement from one performance level to another within a 2-year period.
- Logistically cumbersome to track/monitor performance on all indicators over multiple years.

3. A sub-group that does not meet the state-defined interim progress goals for their sub-group related to: academic achievement (as defined in terms of proficiency on the state test) OR increased progress in achieving ELP, OR graduation rate for three years in a row.

**Primary question:** Which sub-groups are not tracking toward meeting the state’s long term goals?

**Pros:**
- Acknowledges and incentivizes progress toward the state goals and measures of interim progress.
- Clearly ties the provision of support to the state’s long term goals and measures of interim progress.
- May be easy to explain and interpret – depending on how easily state goals generalize to a school level

**Cons:**
- Assumes the state-defined interim progress goals are reasonable and fair to use for this purpose.
- May result in a large number of schools and sub-groups being flagged for support.
- Logistically cumbersome to track/monitor performance on all indicators over multiple years.

\(^4\) Would require careful consideration of the broader implications of indicator-level cut scores during the standard setting process OR, potentially identify different cut-scores that are associated with classification as a consistently underperforming sub-group
| 4. A sub-group that has not met the required 95% participation rate on the state test OR for which the rate of chronic absenteeism is higher than that observed in the lowest performing 5% of schools **for 2 years in a row.** | o It will be difficult for a sub-group to get back on track after 3 years of not meeting interim progress goals |
| | Pros: | Cons: |
| | o Transparent and easy to calculate | o Does not consider all indicators within the accountability system. |
| | o Focuses on different elements of the accountability system than are considered in the identification of low performing sub-groups | o Schools having small sub-groups are more likely to be flagged for not meeting participation rates than larger schools (e.g., A sub-group of 30 must have 29 students participate to meet 95%). |
| | o Serves to incent participation on the state test especially for schools that may not otherwise be flagged for targeted supports |