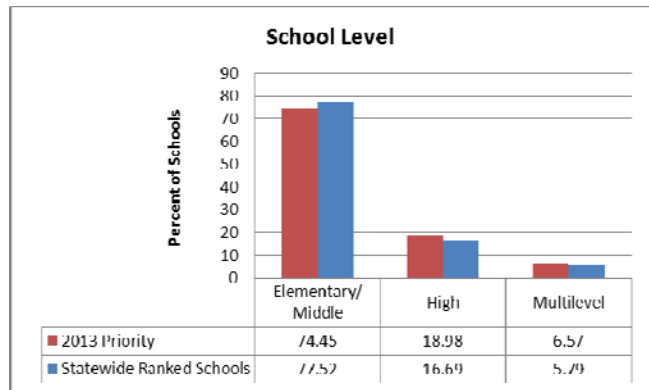


## 2013 Priority Schools in Brief

**Priority Schools** are the bottom five percent of schools on the 2013 Top to Bottom (TTB) List, or those ranked in the 0-4 percentiles. The TTB List is a performance ranking of schools based on achievement, improvement and within-school achievement gaps. In 2012, the Priority school designation replaced the Persistently Lowest Achieving (PLA) designation used in 2010 and 2011 to identify low-performing schools. This brief discusses characteristics of the 2013 Priority School List and also highlights some changes in the composition of Priority/PLA schools over time.

### Characteristics of the 2013 Priority List

- 137 schools received the Priority designation in 2013. 52 of these schools are on the Priority List for the first time, while 85 of these schools received Priority or PLA designation in past years.
- The majority of Priority schools are elementary or middle schools. Seventy four percent of Priority schools are elementary or middle schools, 19% are high schools and 7% are multilevel schools. This composition is very similar to the distribution of all ranked schools statewide: 77% of all schools are elementary or middle schools, 17% are high schools and 6% are multilevel schools.
- Most Priority schools are located in urban areas. Sixty nine percent of Priority schools are found in urban areas, 24% are in suburban locations, and 7% are in rural areas. However, only 22% of schools statewide are found in urban areas, whereas 48% are in suburban areas and 30% are in rural locations.
- Public School Academies (PSAs) are overrepresented on the Priority School List: 19% of Priority schools are PSAs, though PSAs make up only 8% of all ranked schools.
- The mean enrollment in Priority schools is 490 students, which is slightly less than the mean enrollment of 510 students in schools statewide.
- On average, there are higher proportions of minority<sup>1</sup> students in Priority schools than in schools statewide. Priority schools average 78% minority students, whereas the statewide average is 27% minority students.
- Priority schools have higher proportions of economically disadvantaged (ED) students than non-Priority schools. On average, 82% of students in Priority schools are categorized as economically disadvantaged, compared to an average of 48% ED students in non-Priority schools.
- On average, Priority schools have smaller relative achievement gaps<sup>2</sup> than other schools statewide.



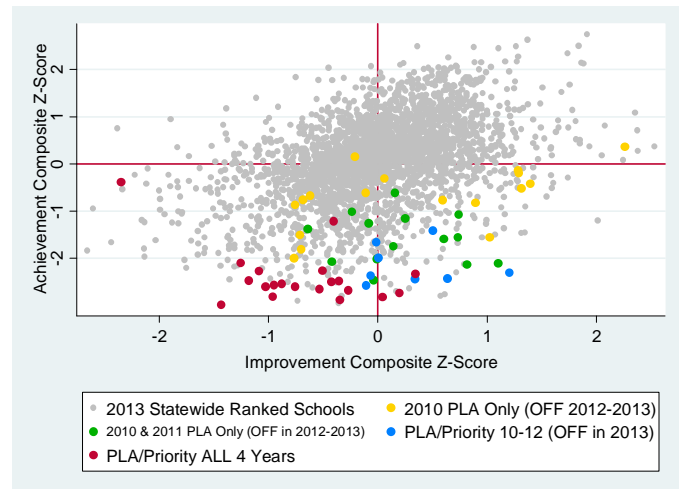
<sup>1</sup> Minority includes all ESEA-designated racial/ethnic subgroups: black, Asian, Hispanic, Native American, and multiracial.

<sup>2</sup> Achievement gap is defined as the gap in performance between the top 30% and bottom 30% performing students.

## How the Composition of PLA/Priority Schools is Changing Over Time

*Many formerly designated PLA or Priority schools are showing improvement:*

- Many schools that were designated as PLA or Priority in past years are showing improvement over time. For instance, of the schools designated PLA in 2010, 45% are not Priority schools in 2013.<sup>3</sup> These schools have TTB rankings from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 88<sup>th</sup> percentile, with an average 2013 ranking of 23<sup>rd</sup> percentile.
- Twenty seven percent of 2012 Priority schools increased their TTB ranking to 5<sup>th</sup> percentile or above in 2013, and thus are not among 2013 Priority schools. The TTB rank of these schools increased by an average of 7 percentiles from 2012 to 2013.
- Though many former PLA/Priority schools still show below-average achievement, their demonstrated improvement moves them up in the TTB rankings. The graph below shows the relationship between achievement and improvement.<sup>4</sup> The schools in red have been designated as PLA/Priority in each of the past four years. We can see that in 2013, these schools remain far below average in achievement and most have below average improvement. The gold markers represent schools that were designated PLA/Priority from 2010-2012, but are no longer designated Priority in 2013. These schools show that the likely path off of the Priority List is to demonstrate above-average improvement—most of these schools have improvement values above average. The green and blue markers, representing schools that have been off the Priority List for two and three years, respectively, show that year-over-year, schools who come off the Priority List improve and have higher achievement relative to schools that remain on the Priority List. These schools have moved closer to the average achievement and improvement values among 2013 schools and some have shown significant improvement.



*The Priority metric identifies a more complete picture of schools than the PLA metric.*

- The PLA metric over-selected high schools compared to the proportion of high schools in the state. In 2010 and 2011, about 50% of PLA schools were high schools. However, the Priority metric designates a proportion of high schools (19% in 2013 and 20% in 2012) more comparable to the statewide proportion of buildings that are high schools (17%).

<sup>3</sup> Thirty percent of 2010 PLA schools received the Priority designation in 2013, 22% of 2010 PLA schools have closed and 3% of 2010 PLA schools are not eligible for the 2013 TTB ranking due to low enrollment.

<sup>4</sup> For both achievement and improvement composites, a negative z-score signifies improvement or achievement is below average and a positive z-score signifies improvement or achievement is above average. On the TTB Ranking, achievement determines about 50% of a school's ranking; improvement counts for about 25% (the achievement gap measure constitutes the other 25%).