

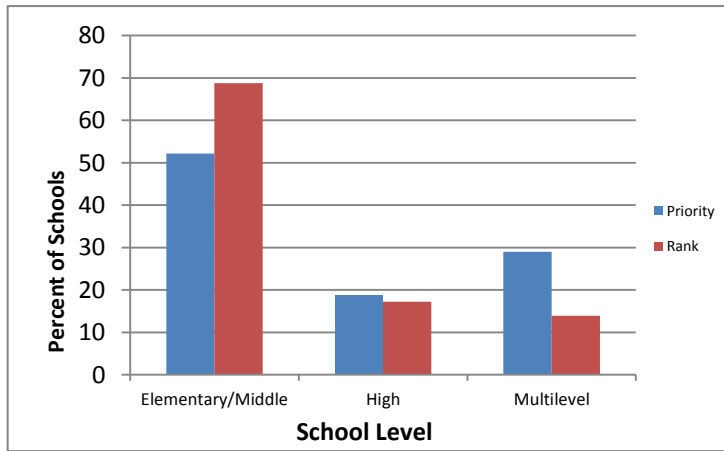
### **2014 Priority Schools in Brief**

**Priority Schools** are the bottom five percent of schools on the 2014 Top-to-Bottom (TTB) List, or those ranked in the 0-4 percentiles. The Top-to-Bottom 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 Low Achieving (PLA) designation, used in 2010 and 2011 to identify low-performing schools. This brief discusses characteristics of the 2014 Priority School List, and also highlights some changes in the composition of Priority/PLA schools over time.

#### **Characteristics of the 2014 Priority List**

- 138 schools received the Priority designation in 2014. 59 of these schools are on the Priority List for the first time, while 79 of these schools received the Priority or PLA designation in past years.

The majority of Priority Schools are elementary or middle schools, followed by multilevel schools. 52% of Priority Schools are elementary or middle schools, 19% are high schools, and 29% are multilevel schools. Unlike the previous year, this composition is not relatively similar to the distribution of all ranked schools statewide: 69% of all schools are elementary or middle schools, 17% are high schools, and 13% are multilevel schools.



School Level	Elementary/Middle	High	Multilevel
Priority	52.18	18.84	28.99
Rank	68.82	17.22	13.96

- Most Priority Schools are located in urban areas. 69% of Priority Schools are found in urban areas, 26% are in suburban locations, and 5% are in rural areas. However, only 21% of schools statewide are found in urban areas, whereas 48% are in suburban areas and 31% 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 9% of all ranked schools. It is significant to note, that these 2014 levels are consistent with 2013 levels.

- The mean enrollment in Priority Schools is 252 students, which is larger than the mean enrollment in schools statewide of 220 students.
- On average, there are higher proportions of minority students<sup>1</sup> in Priority Schools than in schools statewide. Priority Schools average 75% minority students, whereas the statewide average is 27% minority students. It is significant to note that these minority enrollment levels are consistent with those in 2013.
- Priority Schools have higher proportions of economically disadvantaged (ED) students than non-Priority Schools. On average, 83% of students in Priority schools are categorized as economically

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

disadvantaged, compared to an average of 49% ED students in non-Priority schools. It is significant to note that these levels are consistent with 2013 levels.

- On average, Priority Schools have smaller relative achievement gaps<sup>2</sup> than other schools statewide.

### **How the Composition of Priority Schools is Changing Over Time**

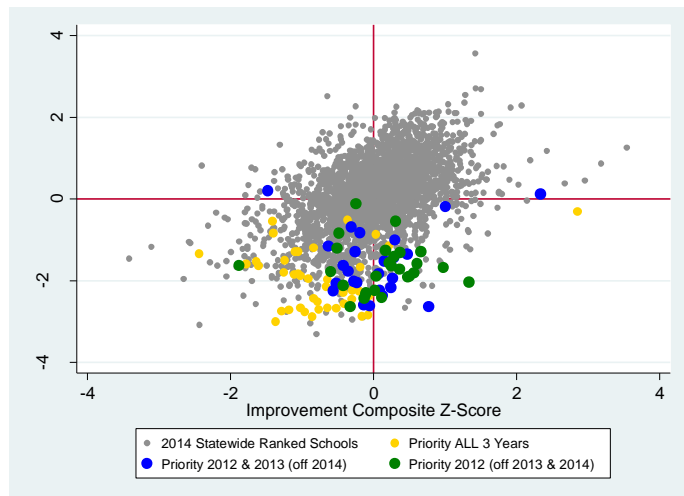
*Many formerly designated Priority Schools are showing improvement:*

- Many schools that were designated as PLA or Priority in past years are showing improvement over time. For instance, of the schools designated Priority in 2012, 37% are not Priority Schools in 2014.<sup>3</sup> These schools have rankings from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile, with an average 2014 ranking of 15<sup>th</sup> percentile. Note that the average percentile has dropped from the 23<sup>rd</sup> level in 2013 to 18<sup>th</sup> level in 2014 and that the range of rankings had increased from 5<sup>th</sup> to 80<sup>th</sup> (2013) to 5<sup>th</sup> to 85<sup>th</sup> (2014) percentile.
- 34% of schools designated Priority in 2013 increased their ranking to 5<sup>th</sup> percentile or above in 2014, and thus are not among the 2014 Priority Schools. The rank of these schools increased by an average of 11 percentiles from 2013 to 2014.

- Though many former Priority Schools still show below-average achievement, their demonstrated improvement moves them up in the rankings. The graph below shows the relationship between achievement and improvement. <sup>4</sup> The schools in gold have been designated as Priority in every of the past three years (2012, 2013, and 2014). We can see that in 2014, these schools remain far below average in achievement, and most have below average improvement.

The blue dots represent schools that were designated Priority in 2012 and 2013, but are no longer designated Priority in 2014. 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 at or above average. The green dots, representing schools that have been off the Priority List for two years, show that schools that 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 levels among 2014 schools, but still require growth in achievement to be above average, indicating the gradual growth over time.



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

<sup>3</sup> 30% of 2012 Priority schools received the Priority designation in 2014, 17% of 2012 Priority schools have closed, and 16% of 2012 Priority schools are not eligible for the 2014 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%).

*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 2014 and 2013, and 20% in 2012) more comparable to the statewide proportion of buildings that are high schools (17%).