Nebraska Department of Education
Persistently Lowest Achieving Schools Selection Process

Introduction

When Nebraska accepted the State Fiscal Stabilization Funds of the America Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to provide additional aid to the school districts, the state agreed to four school reform assurances. One of these assurances requires the state to identify low-performing schools known as Persistently Lowest-Achieving Schools (PLAS).

PLAS is yet another way of looking at school performance to identify specific schools for assistance. PLAS does not replace the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) of No Child Left Behind. All Title I schools identified as being in need of improvement under AYP are now also considered PLAS. High schools with graduation rates below 75 percent over a period of three years are considered PLAS. Secondary schools that are eligible for Title I funds but not served that are the lowest ranked among all the schools in the state are also considered PLAS.

Schools identified as PLAS will have the option of applying for a School Improvement Grant that is funded with Title I, 1003(g), funds. To award these funds, the state must divide the PLAS schools into levels or the following Tiers:

Tier I Schools mean the five (5) or 5% (whichever is greater) of the lowest-achieving Title I schools identified to be in needs improvement, corrective action, or restructuring plus any Title I served secondary school with a graduation rate of less than 75 percent over the three latest years that was not identified in the five (5) or 5% (whichever is greater) of the lowest-achieving Title I schools.

- For every year after the initial year, previously identified Tier III schools that have a Section 1003(g) School Improvement Grant will be included and Tier I schools with school improvement waivers that are implementing the Turnaround model will be excluded.

Tier II Schools mean the five (5) or 5% (whichever is greater) of the lowest ranked secondary schools where the "all students" group meets the minimum n-size (30) for AYP that are eligible for, but do not receive, Title I funds plus any secondary school that is eligible for, but does not receive, Title I funds that has a graduation rate of less than 75 percent over the three latest years and was not identified as one of the five (5) or 5% (whichever is greater) of the lowest ranked secondary schools.

- For every year after the initial year, previously identified Tier II schools that have a Section 1003(g) School Improvement Grant will be excluded and Tier III schools that fall within the bottom five (5) or 5% (whichever is greater) of the pool of schools for Tier II will be included.

Tier III Schools mean any Title I school identified to be in needs improvement, corrective action, or restructuring that is not a Tier I School and any school that is ranked as low as the Tier I and Tier II schools but has no groups of at least 30 students.

Schools without grades included in the assessment system (i.e., K-2) will be given the same NeSA/AYP status and held to the requirements of the school to which the majority of their graduates attend. This also applies to districts or schools with no students in the grades assessed. NOTE: This process is also applied when calculating PLA (Persistently Lowest Achieving) Tier I, Tier II, and Tier III Schools.

Identifying Tier I Schools

Title I Performance Rank

Using the latest available AYP data of the "all students" group for all the Title I schools identified to be in needs improvement, corrective action, or restructuring, add the number of students considered proficient (proficient and advanced levels) in Reading and the number of students considered proficient in Math divided by the combined number of students enrolled a full academic year for AYP (FAY) in Reading and Math to derive a performance proficiency. Rank this new percent proficient in ascending order to determine the **performance rank** for each school.

NOTE: FAY (Full Academic Year) includes students who were enrolled on the last Friday in September and received a performance ranking on NeSA.

Title I Progress Over Time Rank

Using AYP data of the "all students" group for the past three years (initial list used 2006-07, 2007-08 and 2008-09) for all the Title I schools identified to currently be in needs improvement, corrective action, or restructuring, add the number students considered proficient (proficient and advanced levels) in Reading and Math for each of the three years and divide by the sum of the number of students enrolled a full academic year for AYP (FAY) for both Reading and Math for all three years to derive a progress over time proficiency. Rank this new percent proficient in ascending order to determine the **progress rank** for each school.

Title I Final Rank

To determine the final rank for PLAS for Tier I, double the performance rank and then add the progress rank. Rank the schools in ascending order based on this new combined rank (performance rank and progress rank) to determine a **final rank** for each school. The five schools or 5% of the schools (whichever is greater) with the lowest final rank become the Title I Tier I schools that are considered the persistently lowest-achieving schools.

Identifying Tier III Schools

One of the criteria in determining if a school is a Tier III school is:

- Any Title I school identified to currently be in needs improvement, corrective action, or restructuring, but was not identified as a Tier I School will be considered a persistently low achieving Tier III school.

Note: A Title I School identified to be in needs improvement that does not have 3 years of data to calculate the Progress over Time Rank will not have a Final Rank and will be included in the Tier III list.

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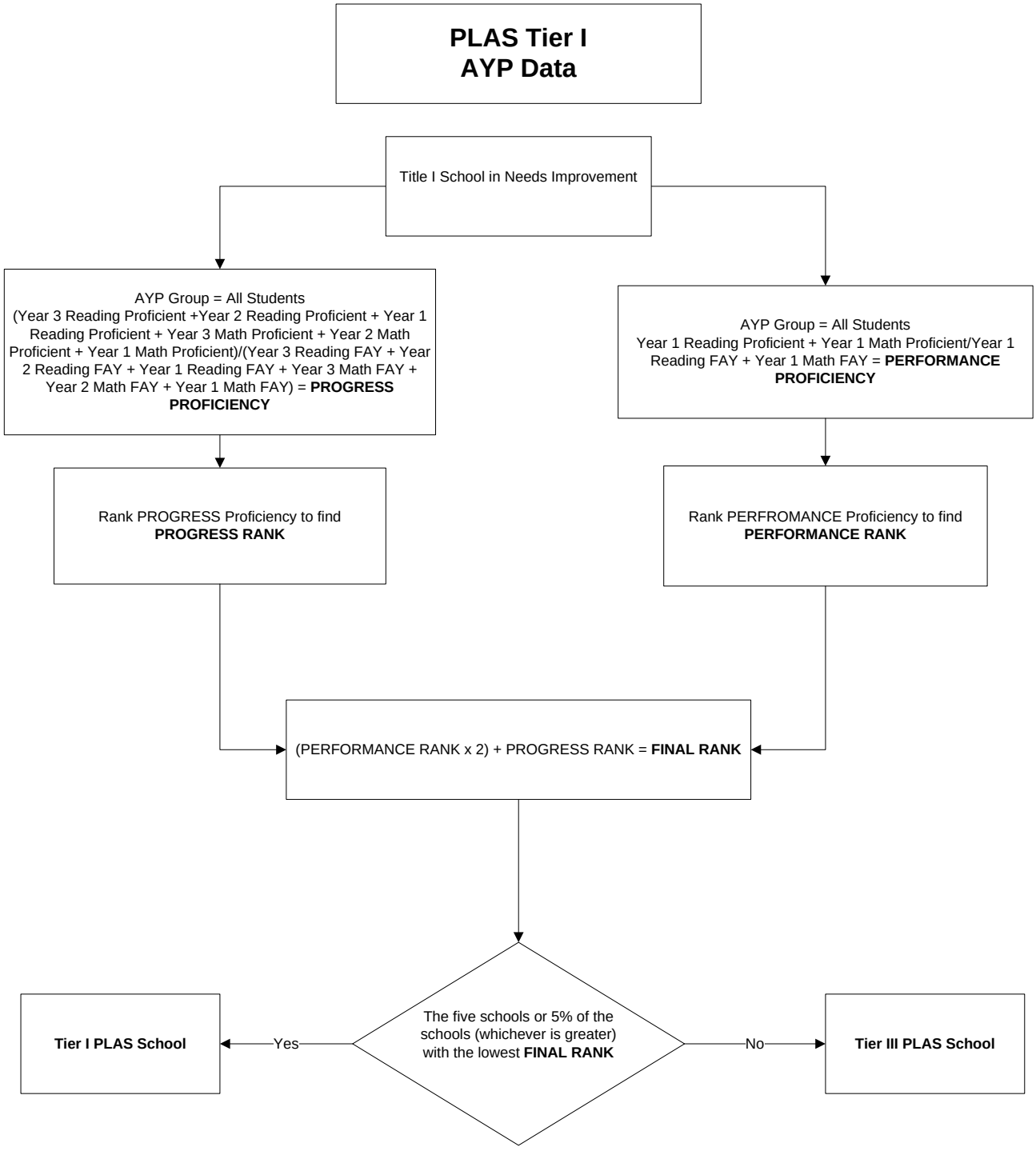

Identifying Tier II Schools

Secondary Schools Performance Rank

A file is received from the Grants Management System (GMS) that contains all the secondary schools that are eligible for, but do not receive, Title I funds based on the information found in the latest available NCLB application. Using the latest available AYP data of the "all students" group for all the secondary schools that are eligible for, but do not receive, Title I funds, add the number of students considered proficient (proficient and advanced levels) in Reading and the number of students considered proficient in Math divided by the sum of the number of students enrolled a full academic year for AYP (FAY) in Reading and Math to derive a performance proficiency. Rank this new percent proficient in ascending order to determine the **performance rank** for each school.

Secondary Schools Progress Over Time Rank

Using AYP data of the "all students" group for the past three years (initial year used 2006-07, 2007-08 and 2008-09) for all the secondary school that are currently eligible for, but do not receive, Title I funds, and have data available for the past three years, add the number students considered proficient (proficient and advanced levels) in Reading and Math for each of the three years and divide by the sum of the number of students enrolled a full academic year for AYP (FAY) for both Reading and Math for all three years to derive a progress over time proficiency. Rank this new percent proficient in ascending order to determine the **progress rank** for each school.

Secondary Schools Final Rank

To determine the final rank for PLAS for Tier II, double the performance rank and then add the progress rank for each identified secondary school. Rank the schools in ascending order based on this new combined rank (performance rank and progress rank) to determine a **final rank** for each secondary school. The five schools or 5% of the schools (whichever is greater) with the lowest final rank where the "all students" group for the latest available school year meets the minimum n-size for AYP become the secondary Tier II schools that are considered the persistently lowest-achieving schools.

Identifying Tier III Schools

One of the criteria in determining if a school is a Tier III school is:

- Any school that is ranked as low as the Tier I or Tier II schools but the "all students" group for the latest available school year does not meet the minimum n-size for AYP will be considered as a persistently low achieving Tier III school.

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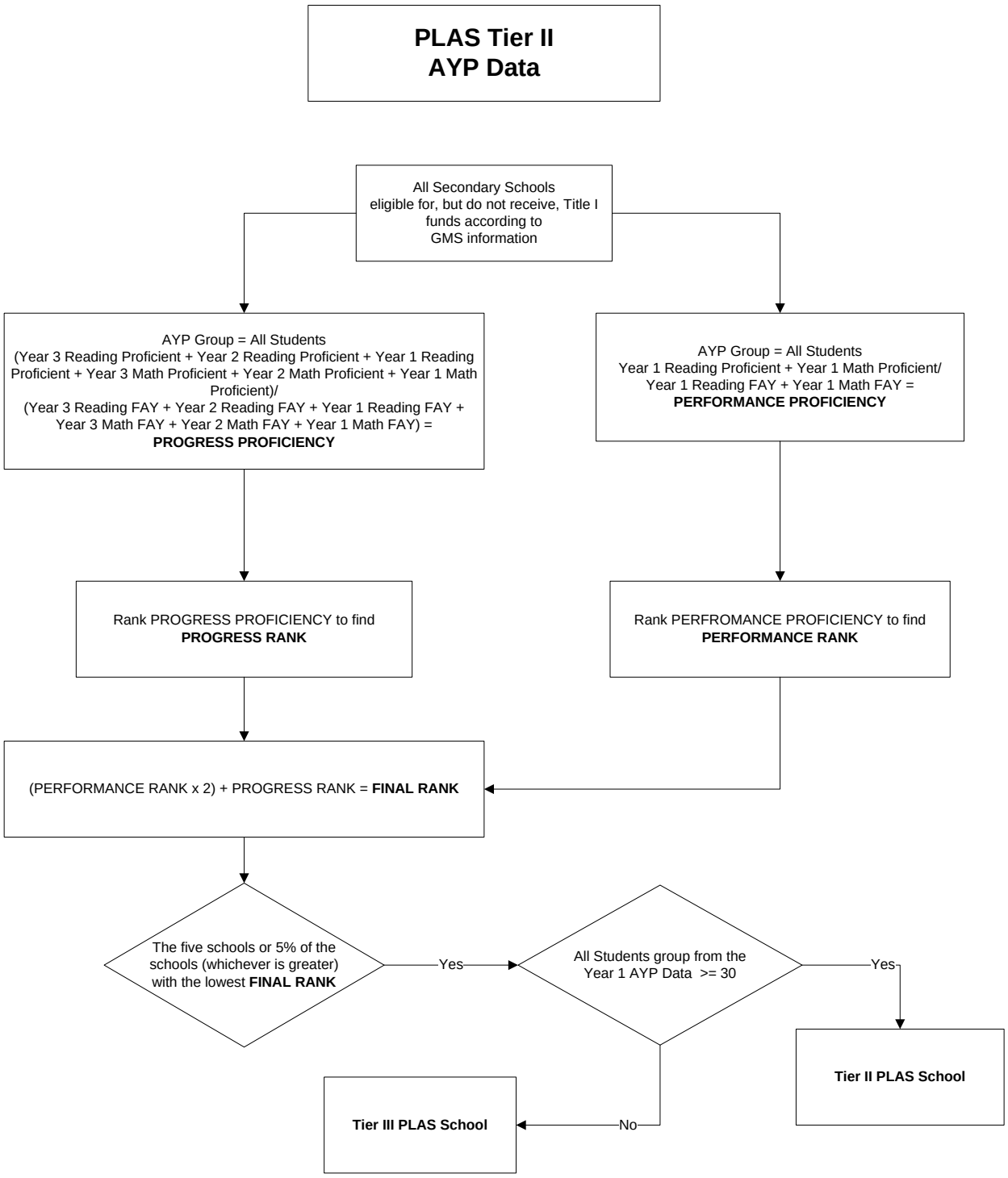


Graduation Rate

AYP Graduation Rate

For Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) reporting as required by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), the graduation rate from the previous year is used because graduation rate data for the current year is not available in time to allow for the release of AYP data under the law's requirements. The high school diploma recipients are completers who graduate with a regular high school diploma. The graduation rate definition allows for high school diploma recipients who graduate in the summer following grade 12 to be included. The graduation rate definition does not allow for the exclusion of dropouts or a dropout to be considered as a transfer.

Nebraska has received approval in the Nebraska Accountability Workbook (Critical Element 7.1) to include the following students in the calculation of the graduation rate for AYP.

- Students with disabilities who graduate with a regular diploma in a program described in their Individualized Educational Program that may take five, six or seven years.
- English Language Learners (ELL) who enroll for the first time in a U. S. School at some point in the middle or high school grades and graduate with a regular diploma in the fifth year of high school. Inclusion of ELL students must be made on a case-by-case basis determined by the district.

$$\frac{\text{High School Diploma Recipients [(Year 4) + ELL (Year 5) + Special Education (Year 5, 6, 7)]}}{\text{Dropouts [(Grade 9 (Year 1) + Grade 10 (Year 2) + Grade 11 (Year 3) + Grade 12 (Year 4)] + High School Diploma Recipients [(Year 4) + ELL (Year 5) + Special Education (Year 5, 6, 7)]}}$$

The high school diploma recipients (the numerator) and the dropouts plus the high school diploma recipients (the denominator) are determined based on AYP graduation rates provided by the districts. The AYP_GRADUATION_RATE_BY_SCHOOL table stores the total graduates and the AYP graduation rate. The numerator is the total graduates (or High School Diploma Recipients). The denominator (dropouts plus high school diploma recipients) is a derived value. By dividing the total graduates by the AYP graduation rate's decimal equivalent, a number is created that represents the dropouts plus the high school diploma recipients for each school.

Cohort Four-Year Graduation Rate

The Cohort Four-Year Graduation rate will be used by NDE to calculate and report the graduation rate at the high school level starting with the 2011 cohort using NSSRS longitudinal data. A cohort represents the set of students sharing an expected graduation year. The expected graduation year is determined by adding four years to the school year when the student reaches 9th grade for the first time and remains unchanged. The 2011 cohort is the group of students who entered 9th grade for the first time in the 2007-08 school year. The Cohort Four-Year Graduation rate follows a cohort, or a group of students, who begin as first-time 9th graders in a particular school year and who graduate with a regular high school diploma (High School Diploma Recipients) in four years or less. The cohort is "adjusted" by adding any students transferring into the cohort and by subtracting any students who transfer out, emigrate to another country, or die during the years covered by the rate. The cohort graduation rate definition allows for high school diploma recipients who graduate in the summer following grade 12. The graduation rate definition does not allow for the exclusion of dropouts or a dropout to be considered as a transfer.

$$\frac{\text{High School Diploma Recipients (Year X)}}{\text{(First-time ninth graders [Year X - 4]) + (Transfer in) – (Transfer out)}}$$

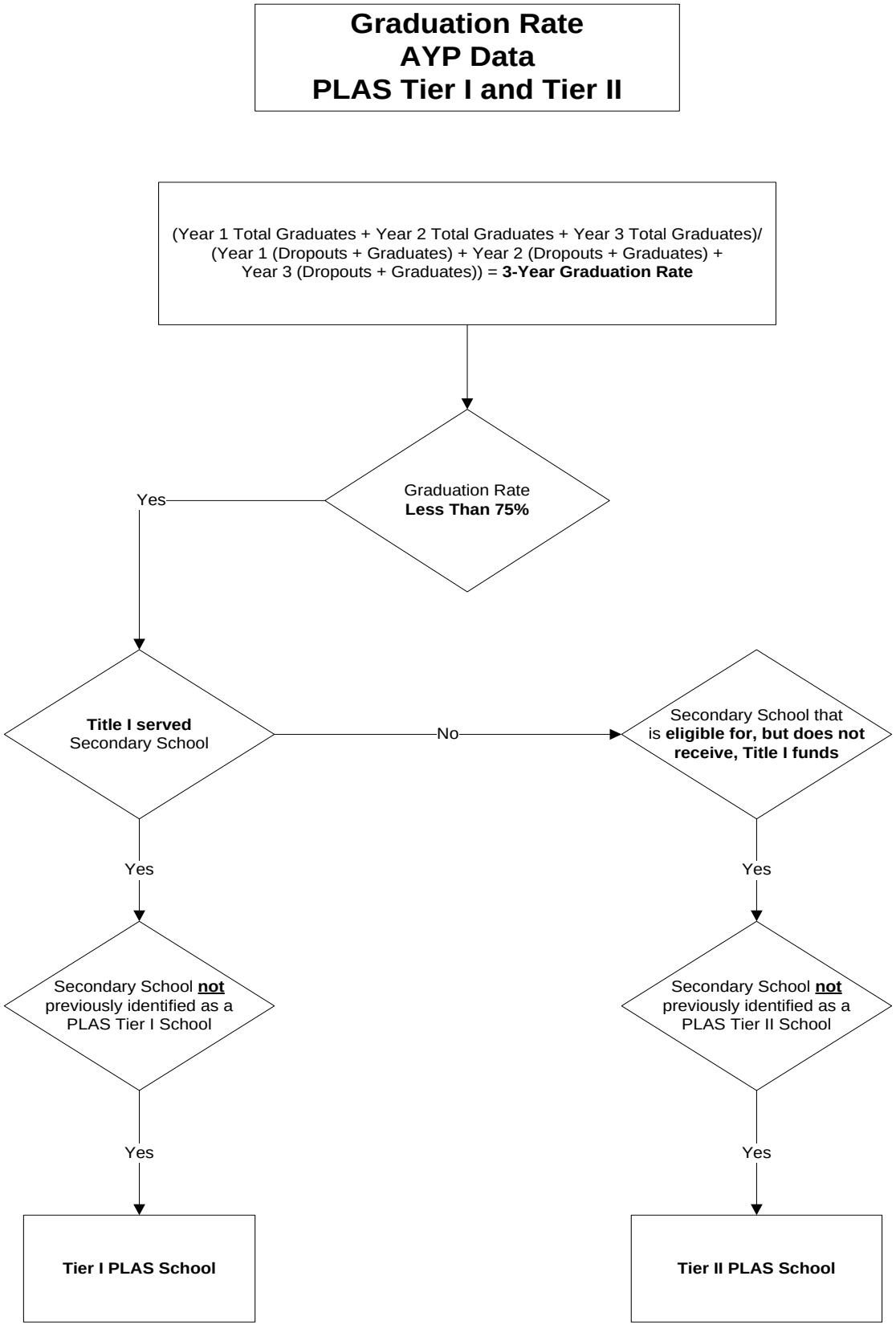
The high school diploma recipients (the numerator) and the first-time ninth grader plus students who transfer in minus students who transfer out (the denominator) are determined based the school enrollment records provided by the districts. The COHORT_GRADUATION_RATE_BY_SCHOOL table stores the total graduates, total number of students in the cohort (the first-time ninth grader plus students who transfer in minus students who transfer out) and the Cohort Graduation rate.

Tier I

Using the AYP graduation data for the "all students group" in all public high schools in the state for the last three years (initial year used 2005-06, 2006-07, and 2007-08), a three-year graduation rate is calculated. The numerator is calculated by adding the number of high school diploma recipients for each school for the defined three years. Likewise, the denominator is calculated by adding the number of dropouts plus high school diploma recipients for each school for the defined three years. A three-year graduation rate is calculated for each school. Each Title I served secondary school with a graduation rate of less than 75 percent over the defined three years that was not identified as one of the five (5) or 5% (whichever is greater) of the lowest-achieving Title I schools (Tier I), will be considered as a persistently low achieving Tier I school.

Tier II

Using the AYP graduation data for the "all students group" in all public high schools in the state for the last three years (initial year used 2005-06, 2006-07, and 2007-08), a three-year graduation rate is calculated. The numerator is calculated by adding the number of high school diploma recipients for each school for the defined three years. Likewise, the denominator is calculated by adding the number of dropouts plus high school diploma recipients for each school for the defined three years. A three-year graduation rate is calculated for each school. Each secondary school that is eligible for, but does not receive, Title I funds that has a graduation rate of less than 75 percent over the three latest years and was not identified as one of the five (5) or 5% (whichever is greater) of the lowest ranked secondary schools, will be considered as a persistently low achieving Tier II school.


Graduation Rate
AYP Data
PLAS Tier I and Tier II
(Year 1 Total Graduates + Year 2 Total Graduates + Year 3 Total Graduates)/ (Year 1 (Dropouts + Graduates) + Year 2 (Dropouts + Graduates) + Year 3 (Dropouts + Graduates)) = 3-Year Graduation Rate
Graduation Rate Less Than 75%
Yes
Title I served Secondary School
No
Secondary School that is eligible for, but does not receive, Title I funds
Yes
Yes
Secondary School not previously identified as a PLAS Tier I School
Secondary School not previously identified as a PLAS Tier II School
Yes
Yes
Tier I PLAS School
Tier II PLAS School