

National ESEA Distinguished Schools

Overview and Selection Process¹

Program Overview

The National Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)



Distinguished Schools Program is a project of the [National Association of ESEA State Program Administrators](#) (NAESPA) that publicly recognizes qualifying federally funded schools for positive educational advances and the outstanding academic achievement of their students.

Established in 1996, the program showcases hundreds of schools identified by states for their success in one of three categories:

- Category 1: Exceptional student performance and academic growth, as determined by each state
- Category 2: Closing the achievement gap between student groups, as determined by each state
- Category 3: Excellence in serving special populations of students (e.g., homeless, migrant, English learners, economically disadvantaged, etc.)

Each year, Tennessee is invited to nominate two public schools for this award. Visit the [National ESEA Distinguished Schools](#) website for more information and to view [stories of success](#) from past awardees.

National ESEA Distinguished School Eligibility

Schools are named by the state and collectively exhibit the following common characteristics:

- A poverty rate of at least 35 percent for the selected year
- Demonstrated high academic achievement (which may include high academic growth)
- Met or exceeded state-determined accountability criteria
- Must be federally funded by one or more ESEA programs

¹ Adapted from the [National ESEA Distinguished Schools](#) website

National ESEA Distinguished School Annual Timeline

Note: Timeline may vary slightly from year to year based on guidelines from NAESPA.

Date	Event
October	Department analyzes TCAP results to determine nominations.
Early November	Nominations are finalized, and schools are notified.
Mid-November	Department submits nominations for National ESEA Distinguished Schools to NAESPA.
December - January	Schools work with NAESPA to complete their online profile and prepare for conference recognition.
February	Schools are recognized at the annual National ESEA Conference .

Tennessee Selection Process

Tennessee adheres to the following business rules/steps:

Step 1. Select the first two schools from the top 15 percent in TCAP overall performance composite score (using success rate percentile). Schools must:

1. Be in the top 40 percent in all tested subgroups
2. Be in the top 15 percent in graduation rate (high schools only)
3. Have at least 100 students enrolled and have assessment data for at least 10 students in each tested grade for reading and math
4. Have an assessment participation rate of at least 95 percent
5. Have no history of testing irregularities
6. Have been in existence for the last five years, and all tested grades at least three years
7. Be a Title I school with a poverty rate of at least 35 percent
8. Be eligible in one of three categories:
 - a. Category 1: Exceptional student performance and academic growth as determined by each state
 - b. Category 2: Closing the achievement gap between student groups, as determined by each state
 - c. Category 3: Excellence in serving special populations of students (e.g., economically disadvantaged, homeless, migrant, English learners, etc.)
9. Have not received the Blue Ribbon or National ESEA Distinguished School award in the last five years

Questions?

Contact

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