

SY2016-17 School Progress Report
School District of Philadelphia
Business Rule Documentation

PEER GROUPS

Peer groups are groups of schools that serve similar grade spans and similar student populations. These groups are developed as a recognition that schools serving different populations may have different opportunities, challenges, and priorities; and serve as an additional way of contextualizing a school's progress and performance.

For the School Progress Reports, peer groups are constructed within a given report type (Elementary School, K-8 School, Middle School, and High School) and are based on four factors: the percentage of students who are identified as low-income, the percentage of students who are black or Hispanic, the percentage of students with limited English proficiency, and the percentage of students who have Individualized Education Programs (i.e., are receiving special education services).

The percentage of students who are black or Hispanic, percentage of students with limited English proficiency, and percentage of students who have Individualized Education Programs are calculated from School District data. Students are attributed to a school if they were enrolled there on October 1, 2016. Beginning with the 2015-2016 SPR, the percent of students who are identified as low-income comes from the Pennsylvania Department of Education's documentation regarding the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP). More information regarding the CEP can be found on the PDE website.¹

Peer groups are generated through a statistical process known as hierarchical clustering.² This process identifies groups of schools that are most similar based on all of the characteristics in the model. Each of the four factors are given equal consideration.

In order to prevent human biases from influencing the process, the District generally does not adjust the groups that are generated via this statistical method. However, in special cases, District personnel will make minor adjustments. For example, in 2016-2017, the clustering process originally created K8 Peer Group 1 and K8 Peer Group 2 as one group; K8 Peer Group 4 and K8 Peer Group 5 as one group; and HS Peer Group 1 and HS Peer Group 2 as one group. Each of these groups was split in order to provide schools with a manageable number of peers against which to compare themselves.

All groups otherwise reflect the results of the clustering process.

All schools are placed in a peer group. If a school receives two SPRs, it is placed in one peer group for each report. At such schools, students in grades 9-12 are attributed to a school's High School report, and students in grades 8 or below are attributed to a school's other report type (i.e., K-8 or Middle School).

¹ <http://www.education.pa.gov/Teachers%20-%20Administrators/Food-Nutrition/Pages/Community-Eligibility-Provision.aspx#tab-1>. Note that this data lags several years; for the SY2016-17 peer groups, the CEP data reflects the rate of students identified as low-income during the 2015-16 school year. If a school provided documentation demonstrating a different percentage of students who were low-income according to the definitions on the CEP page of the PDE website, the school's documentation was accepted in place of the state data.

² Specifically, Ward's method.