



## New Jersey Annual School Planning Process

### Background

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The federal *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)* provided the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) the opportunity to reevaluate supports offered to schools and districts. In an ongoing effort to simplify and align federal and state requirements and processes for schools and districts, in accordance with the state's *ESSA* plan, NJDOE has developed the New Jersey Annual School Planning Process. The New Jersey Annual School Planning Process consolidates multiple needs-assessment processes and systems into one coherent system by replacing the Title I Schoolwide Plan for non-categorized schools and the School Improvement Plan for Priority and Focus schools, promoting a more coordinated and effective use of school-level resources. The purpose of the New Jersey Annual School Planning Process is to create one aligned system for developing a school-level plan. Annual school planning teams, including administrators, staff and stakeholders, all have a role in the Annual School Planning Process. There is more information available regarding [Stakeholder Guidance](#) on the NJDOE website. Schools identified as Comprehensive or Targeted, as well as any school applying for Title I Schoolwide status, will be required to adhere to the Annual School Planning Process. While not required for all other schools, the Annual School Planning Process, the [Annual School Planning System](#) (the electronic version of the Annual School Planning Process) and resources are available to all schools.

### Annual School Planning Process

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The New Jersey Annual School Planning Process (Figure 1) serves as a framework for school-wide strategic planning, leading to the implementation of evidence-based practices with fidelity and improved student performance on accountability indicators. The Annual School Planning System should be used to capture what is developed at each step; entering information into each section should occur after teams work through protocols to complete the work of each step of the process. To implement the process, an annual school planning team, including the principal, teachers representing various grade levels, content areas and subgroups, service providers, the school counselor and stakeholders, is convened. Stakeholders may include parents, families, community members or technical assistance providers as outlined in *ESSA*. For more information on stakeholder engagement, consult the Department's [Local Stakeholder Engagement Under \*The Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\): A Guide for District and School Leaders\*](#) for strategies and resources for including all interested parties in school-based decisions.

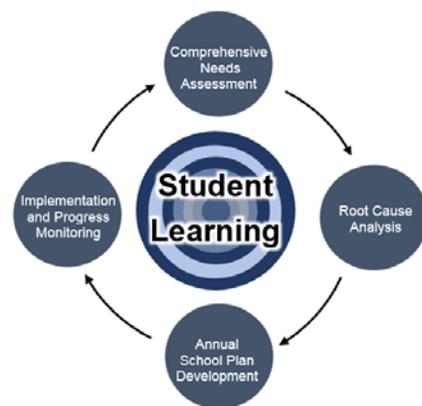
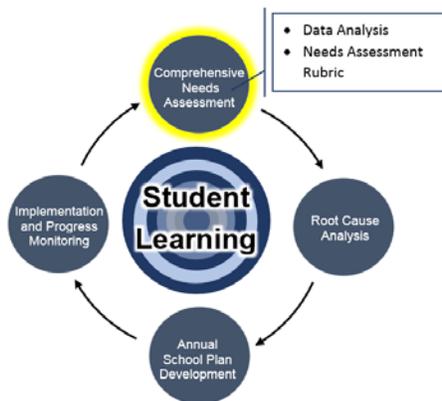


Figure 1 Annual School Planning Process

The four steps of the Annual School Planning Process include:

1. Comprehensive Needs Assessment;
2. Root Cause Analysis;
3. Annual School Plan Development; and,
4. Implementation and Progress Monitoring.



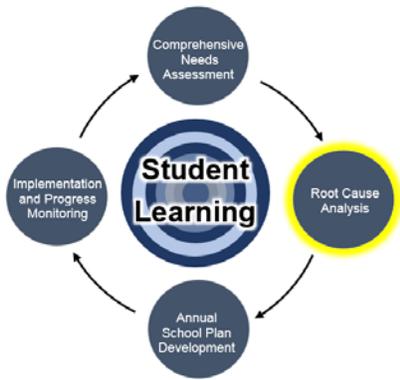
### Step 1: Comprehensive Needs Assessment

The first step in the New Jersey Annual School Planning Process is to complete a Comprehensive Needs Assessment allowing annual school planning teams to reflect deeply on practices of the previous year, identify areas of strength, as well as areas of focus. There are two components to a comprehensive needs assessment, beginning with data analysis, including both qualitative and quantitative data, and trend data to examine progress over multiple years.

The Annual School Planning System will prepopulate certain data into the Data Analysis section. NJDOE provides several key additional sources of data to districts and schools to be used in this process (e.g., district special education profiles). Other sources of data will be generated at the school level and may include results of universal screening or benchmark assessments, assessment results from interventions implemented in the prior year, attendance data, discipline data, as well as climate and culture data. As part of a data analysis, annual school planning teams might also engage in interviews, focus groups or surveys in order to reflect on practices to develop a clearer understanding of possible needs.

The second component of a comprehensive needs assessment, which may be done in tandem with data analysis, is to complete a needs assessment rubric. The NJDOE, with stakeholder input, has developed a needs assessment rubric as a tool for schools to use. This rubric is *required* for Comprehensive (Level III) and Targeted (Level II) schools, and *optional* for Title I Schoolwide schools (Level I). The needs assessment rubric is aligned with the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders approved by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration in October 2015 and adopted by the New Jersey State Board of Education in April 2017. The Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, formerly known as the ISLLC standards, aim to ensure district and school leaders are able to improve student achievement and meet new, higher expectations. As annual school planning teams work through this process, areas of strength, as well as areas of focus, will begin to emerge. The team should identify areas of focus that could be contributing to negative data trends in preparation for the next step of the process.

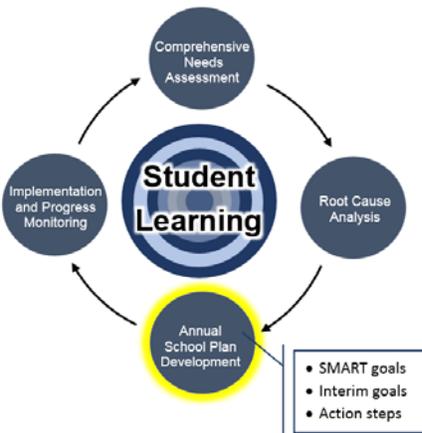
Conducting both a data analysis of current and prior year intervention data and using a needs assessment rubric allows annual school planning teams to develop a comprehensive understanding of emerging areas of focus which will be the starting point for Root Cause Analysis.



### Step 2: Root Cause Analysis

Upon completion of the Comprehensive Needs Assessment, annual school planning teams should have identified strengths, data trends and areas of focus that may be contributing to negative performance on accountability indicators. At this point the annual school planning team should prioritize three to four areas of focus. The next step is to determine possible root causes by identifying sources that may be the cause of each area of focus.

This process will be completed for each of the three or four areas of focus. Annual school planning teams may find the use of a root cause analysis protocol helpful when attempting to determine the root causes. The root causes identified will later guide annual school planning teams in the creation of an Annual School Plan containing [SMART goals](#) and action steps for implementation focused on academic success in Step 3.



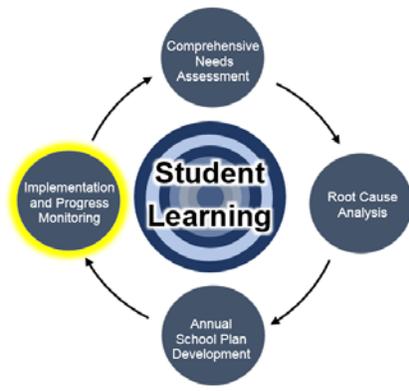
### Step 3: Annual School Plan Development

In Step 3, annual school planning teams create the Annual School Plan, including three to four SMART goals to be the focus for the entire school year. A SMART goal must be specific, measurable, ambitious but achievable, relevant, and time-bound. Not only is setting goals the most intensive part of this step in the process, but it is also the most important. An achievable goal must be realistic, while remaining rigorous enough to move student achievement forward.

Once goals have been established, annual school planning teams must determine the action steps necessary to achieve each goal. This can be done by exploring evidence-based practices and the steps necessary to implement them or improve the fidelity of practices already in place. For each action step, the plan should include who is responsible, source(s) of evidence of completion, source(s) of funding, and a timeline for implementation. The Annual School Plan should also include how and when progress toward achieving goals will be measured in addition to what evidence will be used to determine the status of implementation of the action steps.

There is no set number of action steps required, but annual school planning teams should consider the span of the school year and the stages of implementation of any evidence-based practices included in the plan to achieve the goals. The budget sections of the Annual School Plan are designed to ensure interventions, programs and activities are necessary, reasonable and allocable.

When goals, action steps and funding have been determined, annual school planning teams must share this information publicly (i.e., post on the school’s website, include in the school handbook, etc.) with those stakeholders who were not part of the planning process. This plan belongs to the entire school community and is the main driver in student achievement. Once the Annual School Plan is in place, annual school planning teams will begin the process of implementing the plan and monitoring progress toward goals.



#### **Step 4: Implementation and Progress Monitoring**

When the Annual School Plan with SMART goals is completed, it will become the school’s blueprint for implementation throughout the year. Annual school planning teams must be sure to monitor progress in accordance with the plan’s timelines to ensure continued progress. This provides an opportunity to reflect on the implementation of the Annual School Plan and the school’s progress toward academic success for all students.

At the beginning of the school year, annual school planning teams should create a meeting schedule with established check points to determine the progress being made toward achieving goals. The Annual School Plan includes an interim goal section for each SMART goal with quarterly dates for check-ins. Once the plan is implemented, annual school planning teams should review the interim goal section of the Annual School Plan regularly to reflect on the school’s progress. Annual school planning teams also must make decisions about sharing this information in a timely manner with all stakeholders and continually using these data to drive all instructional decisions.

Throughout the school year, the annual school planning team reviews both summative and formative data to determine whether action steps have been implemented and whether goals have been achieved. As annual school planning teams move from year to year, decisions will be made about continuing with established goals or moving in a different direction. As always, data should drive decision making with the goal of increased student achievement.

#### **Timeline**

When thinking about the Annual School Planning Process, it may be helpful to consider a timeline of when the steps in the process may occur (See Figure 3). At the beginning of a school year, in this case named “Year A”, annual school planning teams will perform a comprehensive needs assessment beginning with a data analysis and a needs assessment rubric. The Comprehensive Needs Assessment will likely continue into the winter of Year A due to the release of various data. After a data analysis is conducted and a needs assessment rubric is completed, annual school planning teams will then identify root causes for the areas of focus which surfaced in the first two components of the Comprehensive Needs Assessment. Beginning in the spring and continuing into the summer of Year A, teams will develop an Annual School Plan.

As the next school year begins, in Figure 3 named “Year B,” annual school planning teams will simultaneously implement the Annual School Plan developed in the summer of Year A and conduct a Comprehensive Needs Assessment to begin the process outlined above again. Annual school planning teams will monitor the progress of the Annual School Plan from Year A throughout Year B.

Year	Fall	Winter	Spring	Summer
Year A	Conduct <b>Data Analysis</b> and complete a <b>Needs Assessment rubric</b>		Identify <b>Root Causes</b>	Develop <b>Annual School Plan</b>
Year B	Implement <b>Annual School Plan</b>	<b>Progress Monitor</b>	<b>Progress Monitor</b>	<b>Progress Monitor</b>
	Conduct <b>Data Analysis</b> and complete a <b>Needs Assessment rubric</b>		Identify <b>Root Causes</b>	Develop <b>Annual School Plan</b>

Figure 1 Annual School Planning Process Timeline

**For More Information**

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- [Stakeholder Engagement guidance](#)
- [SMART goal sample](#)
- [Email Title 1](#) for Schoolwide Title 1 planning assistance
- [Email the Office of Comprehensive Support](#) for Comprehensive and Targeted School planning assistance
- [Email Annual School Planning System](#) for system technical support
- [Unlocking Your Federal Funds: Making the Funds Received Under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act \(ESEA\) as Amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\) Work More Effectively for Students and Educators](#)

For Information on Improvement Science

- [Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching](#)
- [National Implementation Research Network](#)