



STATE OF NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A Memo from the New Jersey Department of Education

Date: February 3, 2021
To: Chief School Administrators, Charter School and Renaissance School Project Leads
Route To: Principals
From: Lisa J. Gleason, Ed.D., Assistant Commissioner
Division of Academics and Performance
Daryl Minus-Vincent, Acting Assistant Commissioner
Division of Field Services
Deadline: February 17, 2021

NJDOE Invites Public Comment on ESSA Targeted Support and Improvement Waiver Request

Following an open period for public comment, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) plans to submit a request to the United States Department of Education (USED) to waive the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) requirement to identify schools for Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) for Consistently Underperforming Student Groups for fall 2021. The intent to submit this request was initially communicated in the [NJDOE Broadcast regarding the ESSA State Plan Addendum request](#) on January 13, 2021.

TSI Identification Overview

ESSA requires the annual identification of schools for TSI status. In New Jersey's [approved ESSA State Plan](#), the methodology outlined to identify schools annually for consistently underperforming student groups is based on data for all indicators from two consecutive school years. The next required identification is fall 2021 and would be based on data from the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years. USED has determined that due to the ongoing challenges related to COVID-19, states may request a waiver for this requirement for fall 2021.

As a result of the March 2020 USED waiver of assessment, accountability, and school identification requirements under ESSA, data for all indicators is not available for the 2019-2020 school year. As noted in the [January 13, 2021 Broadcast](#), the NJDOE has requested a COVID-19 ESSA State Plan Addendum, which, if approved by USED, will mean that data for all indicators will also be unavailable for the 2020-2021 school year.

Due to both the approved waiver in March 2020 and the proposed COVID-19 State Plan Addendum, New Jersey will not have the two consecutive years of data needed to identify schools for TSI status in fall 2021. The NJDOE is therefore requesting a one-year waiver at this time, which would delay the next required identification until fall 2022.

Under this waiver request, any schools currently identified for TSI status would remain in status until the next TSI identification occurs. These schools will continue to receive the supports associated with that status. These supports may include, but are not limited to:

- Engaging school leaders in the continuous improvement process through analysis of quantitative and qualitative data and ongoing development of Annual School Plan goals and action steps;
- Collaborating with school and district leaders to analyze data and ensure utilization of formative assessments aligned to board-approved curricula;

- Coaching school and district leaders to build capacity through informal meetings, professional learning communities (PLCs), professional growth opportunities, instructional and process feedback based on implementation science, data, and evidence-based practices;
- Facilitating progress monitoring of the Annual School Plans throughout additional years; and
- Collaborating with school and district leaders on classroom and instructional learning walks, including scheduling and development of protocols with school and district leaders.

Public Comment

The TSI Waiver request is available for review on the [NJDOE ESSA webpage](#) and comments, concerns, and general feedback may be submitted by email to ESSA@doe.nj.gov by February 17, 2021 at 5 p.m.

For more information about New Jersey's school accountability system, see the following resources:

- New Jersey [ESSA state plan](#) and [overview](#);
- [Technical Guide to Summative Ratings and the Identification of Schools in Need of Support and Improvement](#); and
- [School Performance Reports](#).

c: Members, State Board of Education
Angelica Allen-McMillan, Ed.D., Acting Commissioner of Education
NJDOE Staff
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network
Garden State Coalition of Schools
NJ LEE Group