



STATE OF NEW JERSEY

# DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A Memo from the New Jersey Department of Education

Date: February 19, 2021  
To: Chief School Administrators, Charter School and Renaissance School Project Leads  
From: Lisa J. Gleason, Ed.D., Assistant Commissioner  
Division of Academics and Performance  
Deadline: March 5, 2021

## NJDOE Invites Public Comment on ESSA Statewide Assessments Waiver Request

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) is making available today for public comment a draft of its request to the United States Department of Education (USED) to waive the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requirement to administer the statewide assessment system for the 2020-2021 school year.

As COVID-19 continues to cause severe disruptions to students' education, school communities must focus on the social and emotional health, safety, and wellness of their students and staff. Educators are also providing academic instruction to students through a large array of modalities and in a variety of learning environments. The NJDOE is requesting this waiver to ensure that New Jersey schools can continue to focus on these priorities and to dedicate time and resources to delivering instruction and providing students with the necessary systems of individualized supports.

Accordingly, on behalf of New Jersey students, educators, and districts, the NJDOE is requesting a one-year waiver of the requirements to administer the New Jersey statewide assessments, including: New Jersey Student Learning Assessment (NJSLA) in English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science; Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM); and ACCESS for ELLs.

In addition, the request is also seeking a one-year waiver of all related accountability and reporting requirements. This waiver request is designed to supplement the request for ESSA State Plan flexibilities that the NJDOE made available for public comment on [January 27, 2021](#) and [February 3, 2021](#). A complete listing of these waivers and flexibilities can be found on the NJDOE's [ESSA State Plan webpage](#).

The waiver request is part of a broader series of coordinated initiatives to expand the NJDOE's efforts to identify and address the academic and mental health impacts of COVID-19 on New Jersey students and educators. These initiatives additionally include a pair of federally funded [grant opportunities](#), making the Start Strong assessment available in the fall 2021 and beyond, and piloting the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment. The Department remains committed to ensuring that school districts are measuring students' progress toward mastery of grade level and content area standards.

### Public Comment

The waiver request is available for review on the NJDOE's [ESSA State Plan webpage](#). Comments, concerns, and general feedback must be submitted by email to [ESSA@doe.nj.gov](mailto:ESSA@doe.nj.gov) by March 5, 2021 at 5:00 p.m.

### Contact information

Please contact [ESSA@doe.nj.gov](mailto:ESSA@doe.nj.gov) if you have any questions or need additional information.

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