



# STATE OF NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A Memo from the New Jersey Department of Education

Date: February 16, 2022  
To: Chief School Administrators, Charter School and Renaissance School Project Leads  
From: Kathy Ehling, Assistant Commissioner  
Division of Educational Services  
Jorden Schiff, Assistant Commissioner  
Division of Field Services  
Deadline: March 2, 2022

## **NJDOE Invites Public Comment on 2021-2022 COVID-19 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) State Plan Addendum Request**

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) plans to submit a 2021-2022 COVID-19 ESSA State Plan Addendum (“Addendum”) request to the United States Department of Education (USDE) for temporary flexibility in implementing components of the State’s ESSA accountability system. As required by ESSA, the NJDOE is seeking public comment and feedback on the request.

The 2021-2022 COVID-19 ESSA State Plan Addendum request seeks change to how NJDOE will implement its ESSA accountability system based on data from the 2021-2022 school year for school identification in fall of 2022, a one-time change to the schedule of school identification, certain flexibilities in how school years affected by the COVID-19 pandemic contribute to a school’s identification and exit criteria, a one-year change to the methodology for the “Other Academic Indicator” for elementary and middle schools, and shifting the timeline for certain long-term and interim goals. Below, this Broadcast memo provides additional detail on the flexibilities that NJDOE is seeking through the Addendum. The full draft of the Addendum request may be found on the [NJDOE’s ESSA webpage](#).

### **Background**

In March 2020, USDE waived assessment, accountability, and school identification requirements under ESSA for all 50 states to address the COVID-19 public health emergency. The waiver of these requirements, and the ensuing flexibilities that were provided for the 2021-2022 school year, impact how states can implement their ESSA accountability systems based on data from the 2021-2022 school year and for school identifications in fall of 2022.

Therefore, states may now submit an Addendum request to USDE to account for one-year changes to their accountability systems for the next school year (2022-23) and changes to certain accountability timelines. Other changes beyond those allowed under the Addendum template, such as changes for future school years, may need to be made using the regular State plan amendment or waiver process.

### **2021-2022 COVID-19 ESSA State Plan Addendum Request Summary**

The NJDOE’s draft 2021-2022 COVID-19 ESSA State Plan Addendum request seeks the following flexibilities:

- Shift the timeline for long-term and interim goals for academic achievement, graduation rate, and progress toward English language proficiency for the State and each school and district forward by two years.

- Revise NJDOE’s indicator for Public Elementary and Secondary Schools that are Not High Schools (Other Academic Indicator). The NJDOE uses median student growth percentiles to measure Academic Progress for the Other Academic Indicator. However, New Jersey does not have two consecutive years of prior year assessment results, which are used to calculate individual student growth percentiles. For one year only, the NJDOE is proposing to calculate academic growth using a school's aggregate improvement at the schoolwide and student group level by comparing the 2018-19 New Jersey Student Learning Assessment (NJSLA) and the 2021-22 NJSLA, rather than being based on median student growth between two consecutive years of NJSLA.
- Implement a one-time change to the schedule of school identification. Schools identified for Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) or Targeted Support and Improvement for Low Performing Student Groups (ATSI) in fall 2022 will be eligible to exit status in fall 2023 if the fall 2023 school identification results show that the school met exit criteria when considering NJDOE’s original ESSA approved indicators. Schools that do not qualify to exit will have the ability to exit when the next cohort of schools is identified in fall 2026. The schools identified in fall 2023 will not replace or supersede the list of schools that are identified in fall 2022.
- Exclude the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years toward the number of years in which a school must meet the criteria to exit status. This allows for schools that were identified in the 2016-17 and 2017-18 school years to continue receiving support, consistent with their identification status.
- Modify the methodology the State uses to identify schools for Targeted Support and Improvement for Consistently Underperforming Subgroups (TSI) for the fall 2022 identification only. Schools are identified for TSI if a school contains at least one subgroup that, for two consecutive years, falls below its interim targets in academic achievement, including below the 90 percent confidence interval, and graduation rate (for high schools), and when the subgroups performance falls below the State average for all students in each indicator. Consecutive years of data, as originally defined in New Jersey’s approved ESSA State Plan, are not available due to challenges related to COVID-19. New Jersey is proposing to temporarily modify the State’s description of “consistently underperforming” for the fall 2022 identification only. This modification would allow for years 2018-19 and 2021-22 to be considered “consecutive years” for the purposes of school identification.

The goal of this Addendum proposal is to maintain the integrity of New Jersey’s ESSA state accountability system and its fidelity in identifying schools that require the most comprehensive and targeted NJDOE supports. Considering the challenges presented by COVID-19, the proposal ensures the system is grounded in high-quality, tested, and true indicators of school performance that yield actionable data on the supports that schools most need. The above proposals meet USDE’s requirements while minimizing the use of new data measures or accountability criteria for high stakes accountability in the 2021-2022 school year without the proper stakeholder engagement or notice to districts.

The changes that the NJDOE is proposing under the Addendum can be amended after they are submitted to USDE if it is determined that additional changes are required, and they do not prevent the NJDOE from pursuing additional flexibilities in the future.

#### **Public Comment**

The 2021-2022 ESSA State Plan Addendum request, using the template provided by USDE, is available for review on the NJDOE [ESSA webpage](#). Comments, concerns, and general feedback must be submitted by email to [ESSA@doe.nj.gov](mailto:ESSA@doe.nj.gov) by March 2, 2022 at 5 p.m.

c: Members, State Board of Education  
 Angelica Allen-McMillan, Ed.D., Acting Commissioner  
 NJDOE Staff

Garden State Coalition of Schools  
 NJ LEE Group  
 Statewide Parent Advocacy Network