



STATE OF NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A Memo from the New Jersey Department of Education

Date: October 5, 2022
To: Local Educational Agency Leads
Route To: School Business Administrators, Web User Administrators, Principals, School Leads
From: Kathy Ehling, Assistant Commissioner
Division of Educational Services

ESSA Accountability School Identification and Exit Process for 2022

Under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), states are required to identify schools that are in need of comprehensive and targeted support. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) received waivers from the United States Department of Education (USED) in both [March 2020](#) and [March 2021](#) that waived accountability-related requirements under ESSA, such as calculating summative scores and identifying schools for support, for the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years. NJDOE also submitted an approved [COVID-19 State Plan Addendum](#) (Addendum) which requested changes to how the NJDOE will implement the ESSA accountability system in 2022.

In addition to the changes related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the NJDOE is required to make other changes to the ESSA school accountability system in response to USED's FY 2019 Federal Performance Review Report (Performance Review), which was outlined in an [April 28, 2021 broadcast memo](#).

As part of the [March 2021](#) waiver, states were required to assure that they would identify schools for comprehensive, targeted, and additional targeted support and improvement in fall 2022, using data from the 2021-2022 school year. As a result, the NJDOE will resume implementing the ESSA school accountability this fall. This memo will outline the NJDOE's plan for implementing the accountability system and highlight changes to the system for the 2022-2023 school year.

Academic Achievement

The NJDOE is required to make changes to the previous methodology for calculating the academic achievement indicator for mathematics in response to the federal Performance Review. Under ESSA, all students must test at least once in high school and the academic achievement indicator must measure participation and proficiency based on the required high school assessment. The NJDOE has defined the required high school assessment for mathematics as Algebra I, so the academic achievement indicator for high schools will be based on Algebra I performance, with exceptions for students who take the Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) assessment or for students who take Algebra I in middle school.

Under the previous methodology, all students taking high school end-of-course assessments in grades 9 and 10 were included in the calculations for participation and proficiency, so many students were measured twice in high school and some students may not have been measured at all.

Under the new methodology, all high school students taking Algebra I, regardless of grade level, will be included, as well as students taking the DLM assessment in grade 11. Students who take Algebra I in grade 7 or grade 8 will be required to take either Geometry or Algebra II in high school and the results of the first assessment they take in high school will be used for accountability purposes. If students take Algebra I or Geometry in grade 6, those students will take both the Mathematics Grade 6 and the corresponding end-of-course assessment (Algebra I or Geometry) as 6th graders and the end-of-course assessment results will be used when the student enters grade 9.

Additionally, the NJDOE will review all grade 12 students each year to ensure that all students have taken Algebra I or qualify for an approved exception in high school. Students who have not taken the required assessment and have not previously been included as a non-participant in participation rate calculations will be included in the denominator of the participation calculation, which is the total universe of registered and tested students, as grade 12 students.

Academic Progress

The ESSA New Jersey State Plan (State Plan) was designed to put an emphasis on academic progress based on extensive stakeholder engagement. The NJDOE uses median student growth percentiles (mSGPs) to measure academic progress for non-high schools in the school accountability system. However, mSGPs require the use of one or two years of prior year assessment results to calculate each student's student growth percentile (SGP). Due to the cancellation of the New Jersey Student Learning Assessment (NJSLA) for both 2019-2020 and 2020-2021, the NJDOE received approval in the [COVID-19 State Plan Addendum](#) to use a modified approach to calculate academic progress for 2021-2022 only.

The modified measure will look at a school's average scale score on the 2021-2022 NJSLA as compared to schools with similar average scale scores on the 2018-2019 NJSLA. This methodology attempts to mirror the SGP methodology at the school level. The NJDOE plans to resume the calculation of SGPs and mSGPs for the 2022-2023 school year, using 2021-2022 data as prior year results. More details about the calculation of this modified growth indicator will be included in the ESSA Accountability Profile Companion Guide, which will be released this fall.

Graduation

The NJDOE was required to make changes to adjusted cohort graduation rate calculations beginning in 2021 based on the [federal Performance Review](#). In 2021, the NJDOE began reporting two versions of the adjusted cohort graduation rate: a **state version** that includes all students that earn a state-endorsed diploma as graduates (in the numerator) in the calculation and the **federal version** that aligns with federal ESSA guidance for calculating graduation rates.

In 2021, students with disabilities who did meet either the state course and/or the local attendance requirements for graduation because of a modification or exemption in their Individualized Education Program (IEP) were not included as graduates (in the numerator) in the federal version of the calculation. For students graduating with the class of 2022, the students with disabilities who did not meet state course, local attendance, or state graduation assessment requirements because of modifications or exemptions in their IEPs will not be included as graduates in the federal version of the calculation.

In the ESSA school accountability system, the previous year's graduation rates are used. This means that for the 2022 implementation of the accountability system, the Cohort 2021 four-year and Cohort 2020 five-year graduation rates will be used.

In addition to the graduation rates being used to calculate summative scores, any schools with a federal four-year graduation rate of 67% or less will be identified as in need of Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI): Low Graduation Rate.

Long-Term Goals and Interim Targets

Under the [March 2020](#) and [March 2021](#) waivers, the NJDOE did not measure school progress toward long-term goals for the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years. The [COVID-19 State Plan Addendum](#) will shift the timeline for long-term goals and interim targets forward by school years for academic achievement, graduation rate, and progress toward English language proficiency. This means that the long-term goals for academic achievement and graduation have been shifted from 2030 to 2032 and the previously established targets for 2019-2020 will be shifted by two years and used for 2021-2022.

Additionally, in response to the requirement to change the methodology for calculating the adjusted cohort graduation rate, an adjustment has been made to the graduation targets for 2021-2022, since existing baselines and targets reflect the previous methodology. For any school or student group, the target for 2021-2022 was reduced by the percentage of 2021 graduates who did not meet either the state course and/or attendance requirements for graduation. However, the maximum that any target was reduced was the statewide percentage of students not meeting state course and/or attendance requirements for the given student group. Adjustments to future year targets will be made on a yearly basis to reflect the ongoing changes to methodology.

School Identification and Exit

Under the [March 2020](#) and [March 2021](#) waivers, no new schools were identified for comprehensive or targeted support in 2020 or 2021 and all schools that had been identified for support during the 2019-2020 school year retained the same status for the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school years. All currently identified schools will be eligible to exit at the end of the 2022-2023 school year, if the [NJDOE's Exit Criteria](#) are met.

The NJDOE will be identifying schools across four different categories in fall 2022:

- Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI): Overall Low Performing
 - Schools with a summative score in the bottom five percent of Title I schools
- Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI): Low Graduation Rate
 - High schools with a federal four-year graduation rate of 67% or less
- Additional Targeted Support and Improvement: Low Performing Student Group (ATSI)
 - Schools with at least one student group with a summative score that would be in the bottom five percent of Title I schools
- Targeted Support and Improvement: Consistently Underperforming Student Group (TSI)
 - Schools with at least one student group that missed annual targets for two years in row

Schools currently identified as needing comprehensive support that fail to meet the State's exit criteria will be identified as Comprehensive II in accordance with the More Rigorous Interventions requirements under the State Plan and N.J.A.C. 6A:33.4.1. Comprehensive II schools will be eligible to exit at the end of the 2023-2024 school year if all exit criteria are met.

Under the [COVID-19 State Plan Addendum](#), the identification of schools for TSI status in fall 2022 will look at student group performance in 2018-2019 and 2021-2022, since two consecutive years of data are not available for all indicators.

The State Plan outlines that schools will be identified for CSI and ATSI status every three years and TSI status annually. The NJDOE requested a one-time change to this timeline under the [COVID-19 State Plan Addendum](#) where the NJDOE will identify schools for CSI and ATSI status in both fall 2022 and fall 2023. Schools identified for CSI or ATSI status in fall 2022 will be eligible to exit status in fall 2023 if all exit criteria are met. Schools identified for TSI status will be eligible to exit annually if exit criteria are met.

Under the federal Performance Review, the NJDOE is also required to make changes to ensure that all public schools are included in the system of annual meaningful differentiation. Previously, schools that did not have sufficient data to calculate a summative score were not included in the system and were held accountable through their annual School Performance Report. Starting with 2022, all schools will be reviewed and included in the identification process. To determine if a school is in need of comprehensive or targeted support, the NJDOE, depending on school situation, may be:

- Generating a modified summative score for schools that have proficiency data but no growth or graduation data;
- Linking elementary schools that have no proficiency or growth data with a receiving school(s) in the district and using the status of the receiving school(s) to determine the feeder school status;

- Combining data for districts where one high school serves grade 9 and another high school serves grade 12 in order to calculate a combined summative score; or
- Conducting a comprehensive school review.

Timeline for the 2022 Accountability System

Districts will be able to review their data for all indicators in the accountability system through the redesigned ESSA Accountability Profiles in November 2022. The profiles will show school and student group performance on each of the accountability indicators and status in meeting annual targets or standards for 2021-2022.

In addition to the school-level accountability profiles, the NJDOE plans to post student-level academic achievement and progress toward English language proficiency files on NJDOE homeroom folders for each district to use to understand which students are included in the indicator calculations.

The NJDOE will finalize the identification and exit decisions by December 2022 and notify districts by January 31, 2023 and provide mandatory technical assistance training to staff from identified schools and districts. The identification and exit decisions will not be released publicly until the School Performance Reports are released in spring 2023.

Contact Information

Contact the NJDOE's Office of Performance Management with any questions about the accountability system at PerformanceManagement@doe.nj.gov.

c: Members, State Board of Education
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