



STATE OF NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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New Jersey Department of Education Invites Public Comment on Draft of 2024 ESSA State Plan

Trenton, NJ – The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) is inviting public comment on New Jersey’s 2024 Draft Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) State Plan. The proposed updated plan builds upon the initial ESSA State Plan, which received approval from the United States Department of Education (USED) in 2017.

“We are pleased to present our latest iteration of proposed changes, which reflect our goal of continuous improvement to meet the evolving needs of our public education system,” said **Kevin Dehmer, Acting Commissioner of Education**. “In particular, I am proud of the extent to which these changes were informed by meaningful engagement with the New Jersey education community.”

Each state is required to adopt a State Plan under the 2015 ESSA, the federal law that replaced the No Child Left Behind Act and reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. ESSA’s purpose is to ensure all students have access to an equitable and high-quality education, with the goal of closing achievement gaps in each state. Specifically, a foundational element of the ESSA State Plan sets the structure for how the NJDOE collects information that identifies the schools in need of support.

New Jersey’s existing ESSA State Plan, last updated in 2023, remains largely unchanged. Some examples of the proposed updates relate to:

- Adding a six-year graduation rate, where only the four- and five-year rates are currently measured. This is in response to stakeholders’ calls for New Jersey to utilize approaches that better capture the progress of students who need more than four years to graduate.
- Updating long-term goals and interim targets in the system of identifying schools in need of comprehensive and targeted support from the State. The existing State Plan established a rigid 14-year goal for all schools, and the proposed revisions would allow for realignment of State goals every six years. Additionally, the State is proposing a reporting category that includes a school’s *growth* toward achieving goals instead of the current structure that only provides “pass-fail” information about meeting specific benchmarks.
- Exploring additional changes to accountability metrics to provide a more nuanced snapshot of school performance. Example updates include reviewing options to provide more detail in reporting on proficiency, and adding a new metric of student success to include rates of student persistence in high school. At this time, the NJDOE is signaling only a further review of these policies and metrics, as any changes would need USED approval and would be done only after collaboration with stakeholder groups.

The draft ESSA State Plan also communicates New Jersey’s educational priorities; for example, the introduction to the plan explains New Jersey’s efforts to increase access to high-quality preschool, effective literacy instruction, pathways to graduation, and comprehensive mental health supports.

The proposed updates to the ESSA State Plan can be viewed online at the NJDOE [website](#) and the 30-day public-comment period will run until August 28, 2024. Comments and questions can be submitted via email to essa@doe.nj.gov. After reviewing public testimony, the NJDOE will incorporate changes as appropriate, and the revised State Plan will be sent to the USED for its approval.

Meaningful Consultation

The NJDOE’s comprehensive review process of the ESSA State Plan involved acquiring feedback and consultation from a working group representing more than 40 education organizations, researchers, stakeholders, parent groups, and other state agencies.

“The NJDOE has done an excellent and thorough job of involving stakeholders in the ESSA revision process,” said **Betsy Ginsburg, Executive Director of the Garden State Coalition of Schools**. “In the wake of all the challenges faced by educators, reinvigorating ESSA in this comprehensive way keeps it alive, meaningful, and relevant.”

“The NJDOE’s proposed changes in the revised ESSA State Plan are the result of a thoughtful process focused on continually improving the State’s system of identifying the schools that need the most resources and support,” said **Paula White, Executive Director of JerseyCAN**. “It is important to review the federal school accountability system collectively and to ensure New Jersey’s goals are ambitious and achievable.”

“As the NJDOE submits its ESSA state plan, NJPSA would like to thank the NJDOE for their work, notably how they have openly engaged with stakeholders in education, like our association, and the communities most in need of assistance, realigning state goals to bolster availability and access to systems of support to best meet the needs of the students, schools, and districts facing the biggest challenges,” **said Karen Bingert, Executive Director of the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association.**

"Being one of the many participants in the ESSA Stakeholder Working Group, it was clear to me that the NJDOE is committed to ensuring that every student receives equitable access to high-quality education," **said John J. Mulholland, Jr., Executive Director of ASAH, which represents private special-education schools and agencies in New Jersey.** "Throughout the work group sessions, the NJDOE facilitated open and honest conversations with the group that ensured that the ESSA State Plan responded to the realities that students and their schools are facing. The ESSA State Plan sets meaningful goals, that will be updated during the plan's lifespan, to better support the efforts to improve educational outcomes for students throughout New Jersey."

The NJDOE is grateful for New Jersey stakeholders taking the time to engage on these critical topics and for their support and guidance regarding improving NJDOE’s ESSA accountability and support systems. Stakeholders representing the organizations below engaged in a series of five work sessions. The NJDOE is committed to continuing to engage with stakeholders as it improves its ESSA State Plan.

- American Federation of Teachers New Jersey (AFTNJ)
- Arts Ed NJ
- Association of Schools & Agencies for the Handicapped (ASAH)
- Autism New Jersey
- Boys & Girls Clubs in New Jersey (BGCNJ)
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Monmouth County
- Center for Future Educators (CFE) at the College of New Jersey (TCNJ)
- Education Law Center (ELC)
- Garden State Coalition of Schools (GSCS)
- Garden State Equality
- JerseyCAN
- Junior Achievement of New Jersey (JANJ)
- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) New Jersey State Conference
- New Jersey Affiliate of the Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development (NJASCD)
- New Jersey Association of School Administrators (NJASA)
- New Jersey Association of School Business Officials (NJASBO)
- New Jersey Association of School Librarians (NJASL)
- New Jersey Association of School Psychologists (NJASP)
- New Jersey Children's Foundation (NJCF)
- New Jersey Coalition for Inclusive Education (NJCIE)
- New Jersey Congress of Parents and Teachers (New Jersey PTA)
- New Jersey Council for Exceptional Children (NJCEC) Ramapo College
- New Jersey Council for the Social Studies (NJCSS)
- New Jersey Council of County Vocational-Technical Schools (NJCCVTS)
- New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities (NJCDD)
- New Jersey Education Association (NJEA)
- New Jersey Head Start Association (NJHSA)
- New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association (NJPSA)
- New Jersey Public Charter Schools Association (NJPCSA)
- New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA)
- New Jersey Senate Majority Office
- New Jersey State School Nurses Association (NJSSNA)
- New Jersey Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages/NJ Bilingual Educators (NJTESOL/NJBE)
- New Jersey Tutoring Corps (NJTC)
- New Jersey's Afterschool and Out-of-School Time Professional Organization (NJSACC)
- Paterson Education Fund (PEF)
- Save Our Schools NJ (SOSNJ)
- Special Olympics New Jersey (SONJ)
- Statewide Parent Advocacy Network (SPAN)
- Teach For America (TFA) New Jersey
- Teacher Apprenticeship Network
- The Arc of New Jersey

