



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

May 27, 2025

The Honorable Kevin Dehmer
Commissioner
New Jersey Department of Education
100 Riverview Plaza
Trenton, NJ 08625

Dear Commissioner Dehmer:

I am writing in response to New Jersey's request to the U.S. Department of Education (Department) to amend its approved consolidated State plan under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). New Jersey first submitted its request on December 9, 2024 and submitted a revised version on March 21, 2025.

I have determined that the amendment requests meet ESEA requirements; accordingly, I am approving New Jersey's amended State plan. A summary of New Jersey's amendment is enclosed. This letter, as well as New Jersey's revised ESEA consolidated State plan, will be posted on the Department's website. Any further requests to amend New Jersey's ESEA consolidated State plan must be submitted to the Department for review and approval.

Please be aware that approval of this amendment is not a determination that all the information and data included in the amended State plan comply with Federal civil rights requirements, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. It is New Jersey's responsibility to comply with these civil rights requirements.

Thank you for the work New Jersey has invested in its consolidated State plan under the ESEA. If you need any assistance regarding its implementation, please contact the Office of School Support and Accountability at: OESE.TitleI-A@ed.gov.

Sincerely,

Hayley B. Sanon
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary
and Acting Assistant Secretary
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education

Enclosure

cc: Diana Pasculli, New Jersey Department of Education

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The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.

Amendment to the New Jersey Consolidated State Plan

The following is a summary of New Jersey's amendment request. Please refer to the Department's website (<https://www.ed.gov/about/ed-offices/oese/key-documents>) for New Jersey's complete consolidated State plan.

Title I, Part A: Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies

- *Eighth Grade Math Exception*

NJDOE described how it will assess and include assessment scores in its accountability system for students taking advanced mathematics courses in 6th, 7th, and 8th grades.

Specifically, 6th-grade students who take the Algebra I assessment are also required to take the grade-level assessment; the 6th grade student's grade-level assessment score will be used in the accountability system when the student is in 6th grade and the Algebra I assessment score will be used in the accountability system when the student is in 9th grade. Each student in 7th or 8th grade who takes the Algebra I assessment will be required to take either the Geometry or Algebra II assessment in high school, consistent with the waiver the Department granted to NJDOE on December 2, 2021.

NJDOE also described its strategies to provide all students in the State the opportunity to be prepared for and to take advanced mathematics coursework in middle school (e.g., professional learning opportunities for educators, development of multiple model course pathways).

- *Native Language Assessments*

NJDOE updated its terminology to refer to English learners as multilingual learners, which the State notes are synonymous terms in New Jersey.

NJDOE revised its definition for languages other than English that are present to a significant extent in the participating student population. Previously, NJDOE's definition was a language spoken by more than 20 percent of the total tested student population in a given county. The State has revised its definition to include (1) the most common language other than English spoken by the tested English learner population and (2) any native language other than English that is present in the multilingual learner population for three or more years, spoken by more than five percent of the total tested student population overall or in a given grade span. Spanish continues to be the only language meeting the State's definition.

NJDOE updated its existing assessments in languages other than English to reflect its current science assessments in grades 5, 8, and 11 (rather than grades 4, 8 and the New Jersey Biology Competency Test) are available in Spanish.

- *Student Subgroups*

NJDOE clarified that it will include former English learners in its accountability system (i.e., for four years after a student exits English learner status) in the Academic Achievement and Other Academic indicators. Previously, the State also included former English learners in its chronic absenteeism School Quality or Student Success (SQSS) indicator. For purposes of the Graduation Rate indicator, any student who was an English learner at any point during high school will be included in the English learner subgroup.

Finally, NJDOE updated how it will apply the exception under ESEA section 1111(b)(3)(A)(i) for recently arrived English learners. The State indicates that (1) for any English learner enrolling in a U.S. school for the first time after June 1 of the prior school year, the student will be exempt from one administration of the statewide reading/language arts (R/LA) assessment in the current year and (2) for any student, including recently arrived English learners, enrolling in a school after December 1, the student's results in R/LA and mathematics assessments will not be included in the academic achievement or student growth measures.

- *Academic Achievement Long Term Goals*

NJDOE revised its long-term goals, measurements of interim progress, and the underlying baseline data and methodology it will use in its calculations. Previously NJDOE's long-term goal was that 80 percent of all students and each subgroup of students in each grade or subject would be proficient in school year 2031-2032. Now, the State set a long-term goal in six years (i.e., the 2028-2029 school year) of closing the gap by 20 percent between baseline performance in school year 2022-2023 and 100 percent proficiency for all students and each student group and unique to each school's baseline data. In order to calculate the measurements of interim progress for each year, NJDOE evenly divides the expected increase across the six years.

- *Graduation Rate Long Term Goals*

NJDOE revised its long-term goals, measurements of interim progress, and the underlying baseline data and methodology that it will use in its calculations. Previously NJDOE's long-term goal was that 95 and 96 percent of all high school students and each student group would graduate in four and five years respectively in school year 2031-2032. Now, the State set long-term goals in six years of closing the gap by 25 percent between baseline performance in school year 2022-2023 and 95, 96, and 97 percent of students graduating in four, five, and six years, respectively, for all students and each student group and unique to each school's baseline data. In order to calculate the measurements of interim progress for each year, NJDOE evenly divides the expected increase across the six years.

- *ELP Long Term Goals*

NJDOE revised its long-term goals, measurements of interim progress, and the underlying baseline data. The State's methodology has remained the same. Previously NJDOE's long-term goal was that 55.5 percent of English learners in the State would make progress towards attaining English language proficiency (ELP) in school year 2025-2026; NDJOE also had separate or stratified goals for schools serving students up to and including grade five (65.7 percent) and schools serving grades past grade five (51.8 percent). The "artificial" baseline data for school year 2017-2018 for the percent of English learners making progress towards attaining ELP was: 50.5 percent of all English learners in the State, 60.7 percent of English learners in schools only serving up to grade 5, and 46.8 percent of English learners in all other schools.

NJDOE's new long-term goal is that 34.6 percent of all English learners in the State make progress towards attaining ELP in school year 2028-2029 with separate or stratified goals of

49 percent for schools serving grades 5 and below only and 27.7 percent for schools serving grades above grade five. The new baseline data for school year for the percent of English learners making progress towards attaining ELP is: 28.6 percent of all English learners in the State, 43.0 percent of English learners in schools only serving up to grade 5, and 21.7 percent of English learners in all other schools.

In order to calculate the measurements of interim progress for each year, NJDOE evenly divides the expected increase across the six years.

- *Academic Achievement Indicator*

NJDOE did not make any changes to its methodology for its Academic Achievement indicator but described its plan to explore an index-based measure of proficiency during the 2024-2025 school year and reporting such a measure for one year.

- *Graduation Rate Indicator*

NJDOE added the six-year adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR) to its methodology for its Graduation Rate indicator. NJDOE indicates that the four-year ACGR will continue to account for 50 percent of the indicator, and the five- and six-year ACGRs will account for 25 percent each (previously the five-year ACGR accounted for 50 percent of the indicator).

- *Progress in Achieving ELP Indicator*

NJDOE did not make any changes to this indicator but added a description of its plan to partner with researchers and stakeholders to improve the effectiveness of this indicator.

- *School Quality or Student Success (SQSS) Indicator: Chronic Absenteeism*

For purposes of including a student in its chronic absenteeism SQSS indicator, NJDOE changed the number of days that a student must be in enrolled in school from 45 to 90 days.

- *SQSS Indicator: High School Persistence*

NJDOE added, for purposes of reporting but not accountability, a high school persistence indicator as a new SQSS indicator. NJDOE stated that this indicator will first be reported in school year 2024-2025 and be included in the accountability system in school year 2025-2026 (i.e., in accountability determinations that are provided in fall 2026 based on data from the 2025-2026 school year). It is the percentage of students in the six-year adjusted cohort who either (a) graduate with a State-endorsed diploma within six years, including students with disabilities who graduate with exemptions or modifications due to their individualized education plans (IEPs) or (b) remain actively enrolled through the end of year six.

Before using this indicator in its accountability system, NJDOE must propose a State plan amendment, that is approved by the Department, to fully describe how it will be included in its State accountability system (i.e., how the new indicator will be factored into the system of annual meaningful differentiation).

- *Annual Meaningful Differentiation*

New Jersey's current system of annual meaningful differentiation uses two approaches: (1)

summative scores and (2) indicator performance level. For the first approach, each school receives a summative score based on the raw indicator scores and a corresponding summative rating. The summative score is used to identify schools for comprehensive and additional targeted support and improvement.

For the second approach, each school and student group is assigned a performance level for each indicator annually. The indicator performance level is used for reporting and to identify schools for targeted support and improvement based on student groups that are consistently underperforming. Indicator performance level is based on annual performance. For example, New Jersey's currently approved State plan defines four performance levels for Academic Achievement: "No Improvement," "Target Not Met," "Met Target", and "Exceeds Expectation." NJDOE identifies schools for TSI with one or more student groups that missed annual targets or standards for all indicators for two consecutive years.

For purposes of its Academic Achievement, Graduation Rate, and Progress towards Achieving ELP indicators, NJDOE separated the "Target Not Met" category of each indicator's performance level into two categories ("No Improvement," "Progress, Target Not Met") in order to further differentiate among schools. This change is only relevant for the State's identification of targeted support and improvement schools. The raw indicator scores are used to identify schools for comprehensive and additional targeted support and improvement.

- *Targeted Support and Improvement - Consistently Underperforming Subgroups (TSI)*
Consistent with NJDOE's change to performance levels described above, NJDOE updated its methodology for identifying schools for targeted and support and improvement due to consistently underperforming subgroups (TSI) to replace "Target not Met" with "No Improvement," and "Progress, Target Not Met."
- *Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) Exit Criteria*
NJDOE clarified that if a school identified for CSI does not meet the exit criteria in three years, it will be subject to more rigorous State-determined action.
- *Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI) Exit Criteria*
NJDOE clarified that if a school identified for ATSI does not meet the exit criteria in three years, it will be identified for CSI based on failing to meet ATSI exit criteria.

NJDOE states that if a school identified for ATSI meets some but not all of the exit criteria, the State may place the school on probation for a period of one year. If after that probationary year, the school has still failed to meet the ATSI exit criteria, it would then be identified for CSI.

- *Resource Allocation Review*
NJDOE updated its process to conduct resource allocation reviews in each LEA with a significant number of schools identified for CSI, TSI, and ATSI. These reviews will occur every three years after identifications and include an examination of the LEA's resource allocation profiles to identify trends, engagement with LEAs, and guidance to LEAs on

conducting resource equity reviews. NJDOE indicates that these reviews will include both intra-LEA comparisons of school demographics, resource allocations and student outcomes and inter-LEA comparisons on per-pupil spending and student data.

- *Technical Assistance*

NJDOE revised how it will provide technical assistance to LEAs serving a significant number of schools identified for CSI, TSI, and ATSI. For example, NJDOE removes its intensive data review that occurs after two years for CSI schools that fail to make progress and updated its description to reflect recent changes in State regulations.

- *Disproportionate Rate of Access to Educators*

NJDOE revised its description and tables showing rates at which students are taught by ineffective, out-of-field, and inexperienced teachers. The State's tables show rates for (1) students overall, (2) low-income students in Title I schools, (3) non-low-income students in non-Title I schools, (4) minority students in Title I schools, and (5) non-minority students in non-Title I schools. The State also revised its definition of an inexperienced teacher to be an educator with fewer than four years of prior experience in general rather than fewer than four years of experience within a given LEA.

Title I, Part C: Education of Migratory Children

- *Supporting the Needs of Migratory Children*

The State describes how it will identify and address the unique educational needs of migratory children through joint planning and integrated services.

- *Promote Coordination of Services*

The State described how it will use Title I, Part C funds to promote interstate and intrastate coordination of services for migratory children, including how the State will provide for educational continuity through the timely transfer of pertinent school records, including information on health, when children move from one school to another, whether or not such move occurs during the regular school year.

- *Use of Funds*

The State described its priorities for the use of MEP funds, and how such priorities relate to the State's assessment of needs for services in the State.

Title III, Part A: English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement

- *Entrance and Exit Procedures*

NJDOE revised its statewide entrance criteria for identifying multilingual learners to promote clarity, reduce subjectivity, and ensure consistent implementation across LEAs. The updated three-step process includes the home-language survey, LEA records review, and performance below the State's ELP assessment cut score, strengthening alignment with ESEA and remaining within the State's statutory authority.

- *Monitoring and Technical Assistance*
NJDOE expanded on its efforts to support LEAs submitting their consolidated local plans and also described the various monitoring and technical assistance framework to support LEAs.

Title IV, Part A: Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants

- *Use of Funds*
NJDOE updated its list of State-level activities for Title IV, Part A. To support implementation of the New Jersey Tiered System of Support (NJTSS), NJDOE will create professional learning and an intervention and referral services technical manual to assist educators in schools and LEAs that choose to implement NJTSS to better meet each student's unique needs. NJDOE will also continue to provide resources and guidance to support data-based decision making for addressing chronic absenteeism.

Title IV, Part B: 21st Century Community Learning Centers

- *Awarding Subgrants*
NJDOE amended its plan to remove a notice of grant opportunities to award a grant to provide training and technical assistance to subgrantees.

Title VII, Subpart B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act: Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program (McKinney-Vento Act)

- *Student Identification*
NJDOE revised its plan to incorporate additional State-level procedures and updated descriptions of collaborative efforts for identifying homeless students and assessing their needs. The updated narrative now includes the use of annual "Homeless Counts Data Workbooks" provided by the State to support LEA identification and analysis.
- *Dispute Resolution*
NJDOE revised this item to clarify that disputes must be resolved within 48 hours of receipt of the dispute.
- *Support for School Personnel*
NJDOE revised its description of professional development efforts and updated the status of implementation across key initiatives.
- *Access to Services*
NJDOE revised the plan to integrate procedures related to preschool, academic and extracurricular activities, and nutrition programs and updated it to reflect current state practices, such as the initiatives for ensuring access to secondary education, support services, and credit accrual.
- *Assistance from Counselors*
NJDOE revised the plan to describe a new strategy focused on providing college readiness support for homeless youth through direct partnerships. The State described a new pilot program where a regional local operating agency collaborates with a community college to establish dedicated liaisons, provide specialized training, connect students with resources like

housing and food assistance, and offer direct support for critical steps such as FAFSA completion, financial aid, applications, and admissions procedures.